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## Book Reviews

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# BOOK REVIEWS

*A book reviewer occupies a position of special responsibility and trust. He is to summarize, set in context, describe strengths, and point out weaknesses. As a surrogate for us all, he assumes a heavy obligation which it is his duty to discharge with reason and consistency.*

*Admiral H.G. Rickover*

## “A Non-Nuclearist Future”

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Larkin, Bruce D. *Nuclear Designs: Great Britain, France and China in the Global Governance of Nuclear Arms*. New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction, 1996. 354pp. \$34.95

**T**he most salient feature of nuclear weapons is their singularity. I.I. Rabi, the Nobel laureate in physics, witnessed the birth of the atomic age. So moved was he by what he had seen that morning in July 1945 that he offered the following appreciation: “A new thing had just been born; a new control; a new understanding of man, which man had acquired over nature.” The advent of nuclear weapons therefore wrought a revolution in the management of large-scale organizations (as exemplified by the Manhattan Project), in the conduct of statecraft, and the concomitant operation of deterrence itself. Robert McNamara, a former U.S. Secretary of Defense, noted this phenomenological development in a particularly revealing observation: “Nuclear warheads are not military weapons in the traditional sense and therefore serve no military purpose other than to deter one’s opponent from their use.” In McNamara’s caveat, then, lies the single politico-strategic *raison d’être* for possession: deterrence.

In this book, Bruce D. Larkin makes explicit the connection between nuclear capability—that of Great Britain, France, and China—and political influence over great power behavior: “Anyone considering nuclear futures must take the British, French, and Chinese forces into account. How Britain, France, and China respond to nuclear futures must have enormous impact on what global future is chosen.” The recognition of the operational dynamics of deterrence in this context is one of the most important contributions of *Nuclear Designs*. Larkin’s basic thesis, then, is that these three “minipowers” (as he calls them) are the only nuclear states armed

with sufficient thermonuclear capability to exert decisive leverage over the United States and Russia, and ultimately abandon their own nuclear weapons. These “minipowers” would be the exemplars not only to the great powers but also to the other nuclear aspirants, such as India, Pakistan, and Israel.

Having thus presented what is clearly an operational definition of nuclear deterrence, Larkin advances a thesis that appears to be paradoxical: the advocacy of denuclearization and with it the abandonment of the very instrumentality for geostrategic influence in a world of sovereign nation-states. Thus he declares, “I see no reason to be sympathetic to nuclearists who imagine that their states gain by holding nuclear weapons—gain in prestige, or ‘influence,’ or economic access, or deference . . . because I believe that holding people at risk of incineration to achieve prestige or satisfy greed cannot possibly be consistent with a secure global future.” The great paradox of *Nuclear Designs* is that Larkin has pursued a path to a non-nuclearist future, paved as it were with the instruments of thermonuclear deterrents. His conclusion is illustrative: “China, France, and Britain could choose to bring their weight to bear on Russia and the United States, either toward fuller disengagement, or to abolition itself.”

In this manner, Larkin has identified the primary feature of the nuclear age, described so eloquently by Sir Winston Churchill as “a stage . . . where safety will be the sturdy child of terror, and survival the twin brother of annihilation.” Larkin presents a superbly researched analysis that draws heavily from primary and secondary literatures. Yet what he has forgotten is Churchill’s assessment of the “Game of Nations” in the nuclear age. It fell to Francis Pym, the British minister of defence, speaking in the House of Commons on 15 July 1980, to remind us all of the comparatively small price paid by civilization for nuclear deterrence—nuclear peace. Britain’s “deterrent capability exists to preserve the peace. It exists not to be used. It is the threat of the use that is the deterrent. It is not as expensive as a war.” This is an assertion that has no answer, save recognition of its existential reality, which Larkin rejects. Nevertheless, *Nuclear Designs* presents a systematic and credible assessment of the nuclear weapons establishments of Great Britain, France, and China, and it is especially strong in its presentation of technical data on weapons systems. This study advances the most authoritative and passionate argument for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and on that account it may become the definitive work for students of conflict resolution and peace research.

Myron A. Greenberg  
Author of *Physics and Metaphysics of Deterrence:  
The British Approach*  
(Newport Paper Number Eight)

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Bolger, Daniel P. *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1995. 420pp. \$24.95

With the ascendance of the United Nations in the aftermath of the Cold War, Daniel P. Bolger's *Savage Peace* is a timely work, addressing the evolution of contemporary peacekeeping and security operations. According to Bolger, war is hell, but so is winning the peace. His treatment of operations other than war (OOTW) is an informative account of American involvement in a risky and perpetually ill-defined area of armed intervention. A serving Army infantry officer, Bolger writes from an insider's viewpoint about the military's attempt to grapple with this amorphous phenomenon. He measures the personal costs in resources—time, money, and lives. Essentially, it is a soldier's story.

The best parts of Bolger's work are his case studies. The human tragedy of Beirut is particularly poignant. The Marine presence under siege, through sniper fire, artillery volleys, and ultimately a terrorist bombing that would result in the largest Marine fatality rate for a single day in the Corps' history, shocks the conscience. Similarly, the confinement of the Army's Multinational Force and observers to the unrelenting monotony of the Sinai, where the heat, horizon, and hours stretch for eternity, is a glaring reality. The mean streets of Somalia and the urban grit of Sarajevo are other graphic illustrations. Bolger neatly spins a tale that is compelling, human, and matter-of-fact.

Paradoxically, the worst parts of the tale are in the narrative. The author's style makes the ugly American stand tall.

There is a persistent John Wayne quality that makes the United States come across as "the great white hope." American deaths, for example, are always a tragedy; anyone else's is only a statistic. Perhaps trying to be clever, Bolger indulges extreme expressions about the Third World that struck this reviewer as crass and callous. Additionally, the chronology of events reads like a Mickey Spillane novel, lurid and melodramatic. Allusions to American cultural symbols like Jimi Hendrix, Mad Max, 911, and *Magnum, P.I.* are liberally sprinkled throughout. The litany of hazards, kinds of killing, name dropping, and gory details sometimes reminds one of voyeurism at a car crash. The text is regularly too familiar, self-indulgent, and remarkably chauvinistic.

*Savage Peace*, however, is effective at providing an environment for understanding America's role in OOTW. The nature of operations, decision making, and execution is intelligently represented. The beginning chapters are especially pertinent in laying the groundwork for perceiving how policy is translated into practice in the subsequent case studies. Maps and diagrams are helpful in complex explanations. The appendices are of assistance as to operations and military command structures.

Lieutenant Colonel Bolger gives a pro-American and pro-military account. Written journalistically, his chapters are interesting, uncomplicated, and fluid. *Savage Peace* is a front-row view of the American engagement and enlargement policy through the mirrored sunglasses of the warrior. An excellent resource for readers unfamiliar

with the dynamics of the military, it is a study of modern peacekeeping operations. In the end, Bolger succeeds in showing that “demilitarized” zones usually are not, and that “peacekeeping” operations are anything but. What he does not provide, however, is the scholarly analysis that his Ph.D. in history might have led readers to expect.

CAROL LIVSEY LOEBLEIN  
Lieutenant Commander  
United States Naval Reserve

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Peebles, Curtis. *Dark Eagles: A History of Top Secret U.S. Aircraft Programs*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1995. 344pp. \$17.95

Through extensive research from a variety of sources, Curtis Peebles gives the reader a fascinating and informative look into the top secret world of “black aircraft.” He chronicles a dozen or so projects that produced such exotic planes as the SR-71 and the F-117, which were developed and first flown largely without public knowledge. The reason for all the secrecy was, of course, to keep foreign countries from knowing the extent of U.S. technological developments.

The beginning of the “black” projects came in September 1941, with the decision to build the first operational jet fighter, the XP59A, using the British Whittle engine. Wartime security demands by the British and American governments wrapped the project in the kind of secrecy and deception that was to be a model for later such projects. The Bell P-59 Airacomet was not successful as a fighter, but the Lockheed

P-80 was. The Shooting Star’s secret birthplace was the “Skunk Works,” the experimental design facility created by Clarence “Kelly” Johnson, Lockheed’s legendary chief designer. The Skunk Works, together with the secret test facility at Groom Lake, Nevada (nicknamed “the Ranch,” and also known as “Area 51”), produced a number of black aircraft that caught the public’s fancy once they were revealed, such as the U-2, SR-71, and F-117. Not all aircraft have made it to the production stage; those that did not are, therefore, less well known. Several of these, such as the D-21 Tagboard, were high-altitude unmanned reconnaissance drones. One of the more interesting current developmental efforts is to develop an “eternal” drone aircraft that will be able to stay aloft for months at a time using auxiliary solar power. Peebles predicts that such an aircraft, the Helios-SRA (Solar Rechargeable Aircraft), could become operational by 1998.

Curtis Peebles, a writer best known as an avid UFO debunker and the author of *Watch the Skies! A Chronicle of the Flying Saucer Myth*, devotes most of *Dark Eagles* to the development of these and other projects, as well as to their operational history. The promotional material on the back cover claims, “Peebles dug out the facts through FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] requests, complemented with interviews of the people who designed and flew these revolutionary aircraft.” However, the forty pages of endnotes reveal that very little information really came from these sources; the vast majority was taken from more authoritative authors whose books and articles

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are well known to anyone who has read much in this field.

Throughout Peebles' narrative, he makes a strong case that the U.S. government and the companies involved have done a masterful job of keeping the very existence of each of the black airplanes a secret for many years. Isolated, inaccessible, and restricted facilities, small and compartmented groups, deception, and public denial were effective in maintaining secrecy. However, at the end of the book Peebles takes the other side of this argument, throwing down the gauntlet at the feet of UFO believers. He strongly doubts the existence of Aurora, the rumored hypersonic spy plane, because it is intertwined with the issue of UFOs and rumors of captured alien flying saucers. The only person who publicly claims to have seen Aurora also claims to have seen nine alien saucers, together with their crews, at a super-secret facility at Groom Lake. Peebles apparently feels compelled to discount the Aurora claim in order to avoid giving credibility to the alien saucer story. However, about the only "evidence" he offers for the nonexistence of Aurora is that the U.S. government continues to deny it, which is exactly what we would expect if we are convinced by the previous accounts in this book.

Peebles launches into full-debunk mode when discussing Aurora, but his credibility is hampered by his heavy reliance on an unidentified "private source" and various notoriously unreliable e-mail messages evidently downloaded from an America On-Line discussion group. However, in the end he switches sides again and makes a case that the secret projects continue. Thus he concludes that they "represent

technological breakthroughs that will gain for the United States an advantage over an enemy in any potential future conflict. The secrecy surrounding these projects is necessary. They must be hidden, they must be guarded by extraordinary means, as would any treasure." Perhaps Aurora is one of these.

PORTER HALYBURTON  
Naval War College

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Martin, Tyrone G. *A Most Fortunate Ship: A Narrative History of Old Ironsides*. Revised edition. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. 440pp. \$35

In 1980, when the first version of this book appeared, reviewers called it the definitive study of the U.S. Navy's most famous ship, written by a man who was its fifty-eighth commanding officer between 1974 and 1978. Seventeen years after the first edition, as *Constitution* set sail in Boston harbor for the first time since 1881, the Naval Institute has published a revised and expanded version of the book.

The new book is attractively designed and larger than the original. Unlike other writers about the ship, Martin has been evenhanded in examining *Constitution's* two-hundred-year career, giving a full examination of it during and after the War of 1812, as well as of the events leading up to it. The author has thoroughly tested his previous work in the light of some significant new evidence. In particular, he has been able to give a more detailed description of the preparation and building of the ship and has revised his accounts of its three most famous battles in the War of 1812.

Most notably, Martin has radically altered the standard account of *Constitution's* engagement with HMS *Java*, showing that Captain William Bainbridge had been caught off guard and allowed *Java* to rake *Constitution*.

Equally interesting, Martin describes *Constitution's* several cruises in the Mediterranean, its round-the-world cruise in 1844–1846, its years with the Naval Academy in Newport during the Civil War, and even its very brief service as flagship for Commodore Stephen B. Luce's Apprentice Training Squadron in 1881. Those associated with the Naval War College will be interested to learn of the ship's repeated returns to Newport, from its first visit in 1798 to its last under sail in November 1881, when the ship caught fire and went hard aground on Goat Island. It visited Newport again, under tow, in 1931.

Martin's account of the various efforts to restore the ship and return it to its appearance at the time of its most famous battles is an interesting saga in itself, revealing much about the development of historical restoration as well as the change in attitudes about the service. Perhaps the most interesting insight of all is that the most recent dry-docking and restoration (1992–1995) revealed that the ship had been originally built with diagonal riders to strengthen its hull.

Scholars will regret that this beautifully produced new edition lacks the author's extensive quotations from original documents, detailed footnotes, and full bibliography. In the interests of economy, these are preserved only in a manuscript edition of the book, available to interested researchers at the USS *Constitution* Museum in Boston.

Nevertheless, this is a carefully researched study and a model of the genre that is often termed "ship biography."

JOHN B. HATTENDORF  
Naval War College

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Sheppard, Don. *Bluewater Sailor: The Memoirs of a Destroyer Officer*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1996. 334pp. \$24

*Bluewater Sailor* presents a warm and personal story of a mustang (ex-enlisted) junior officer aboard USS *Henshaw*, a fictitious *Sumner-Gearing* destroyer, in the late 1950s. For the hundreds of thousands who served in this type ship, the story makes a generous contribution to reliving the exciting days of yesteryear. Those who have never been to sea can receive vicariously the experience of doing so. The author takes the reader aboard with the character Ensign Stoddard as he reports to his first duty station after receiving his commission. The reader grows and matures with the ship and crew during Ensign Stoddard's initial tour. *Henshaw* is the author's creation, but it is no less real for that; the supporting cast members are easily recognizable as human. The ship is strong and secure and never lacks for human warmth within its steel sides. *Henshaw* is typical in configuration but like all ships unique in its personality. The officers and crew, with their idiosyncrasies, failings, and strengths, are not fictional but big as life. Once on board, Stoddard sails through the predeployment preparations for *Henshaw's* western Pacific deployment. He develops into an outstanding department head, the *Henshaw* into a mission-ready ship

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of the line, and the recently enlisted reader into a sailor. Using the traditional hallmarks of destroyer operations—can-do spirit, smart shiphandling, and precision maneuvering—against a backdrop of post-World War II tactics and *Summer-Gearing* equipment, the author captures the essence of destroyer operations. The reader experiences the excitement of alongside replenishments, antisubmarine warfare, life at sea, and liberty ashore. Over the course of its deployment, the ship and crew come to work together as one. The successful deployment ends, personnel transfers begin, and *Henshaw* enters the shipyard for modernization and rehabilitation. Ensign Stoddard, now a lieutenant, leaves for another duty station. The reader's cruise has ended.

Hulls like the *Henshaw* are no longer active, but the excitement of destroyer operations still abounds. Technological and tactical advances have marked the end of an era when high-speed steaming at close intervals, bent-line-screen reorientations, management of superheated steam, and a lack of stand-off weapons were routine. Each of these added to the excitement of daily operations. Today operations are more dispersed and distant.

Ensign Stoddard is a remarkable officer, even considering his prior enlisted service. As the hero in the novel, he stands more than head and shoulders above his contemporaries. In this regard, Sheppard's portrayal of his character is flawed. The duties, responsibilities, tactical acumen, and leadership role attributed to Ensign Stoddard are disproportionate to his experience and years of service. The officers, crew, events, and equipment depicted are more true to life than the central figure. As Sheppard states in his opening note, "Techno buffs may find fault with too much or too little description, but this is a story of men, the equipment is used as a backdrop." In general, however, and aside from a few minor details, the author's story is in the main how I also remember it, forty years later.

With Lieutenant Stoddard's departure from *Henshaw* the story should have ended. The remaining few pages are anticlimactic. The cruise is over. The adventure gone. The fun is over. Stoddard is no longer a part of *Henshaw*, but *Henshaw* will always be a part of us.

WILLIAM V. GARCIA  
Captain, U.S. Navy, Retired

### Contacting the Editorial Offices

By mail: Code 32, Naval War College, 686 Cushing Rd., Newport, R.I., 02841-1207

By fax: 401-841-3579/6224

DSN exchange: 948, all lines

Editor or circulation: 401-841-2236, [press@usnwc.edu](mailto:press@usnwc.edu)

Managing editor: 401-841-4552, [boyerp@usnwc.edu](mailto:boyerp@usnwc.edu)

Newport Papers, books (associate editor): 401-841-6583, [goodricp@usnwc.edu](mailto:goodricp@usnwc.edu)

Book reviews (assistant editor): 401-841-6584, [winklerp@usnwc.edu](mailto:winklerp@usnwc.edu)

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