

1991

United States Overseas Basing: An Anatomy of the Dilemma

William Hickman

James R. Blaker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Hickman, William and Blaker, James R. (1991) "United States Overseas Basing: An Anatomy of the Dilemma," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 44 : No. 4 , Article 26.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol44/iss4/26>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

Herford, Germany: Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft mbH. 180pp.

This book, written by the prolific naval specialist Stefan Terzibaschitsch, is a class history of U.S. destroyer escorts and frigates, despite the facts that it is printed in the German language and has a U.S.-built Japanese destroyer escort on the dust cover. In the author's usual approach, it is a detailed summary, both pictorial and statistical, of the U.S. escorts built between 1943 and 1975. Its primary coverage is through the 1956 *Claud Jones* class, but it provides summaries of later destroyer escort (frigate) classes (the *Bronsteins*, *Garcias*, *Brookes*, *Knoxes*, and *Oliver Hazard Perrys*). The author has done similar books on U.S. carriers, cruisers, and destroyers, to name a few, all with similar statistics and photographic coverage. Without fail, all have been published in English and are available in this country, often through the Naval Institute Press in Annapolis, Maryland.

The photographic coverage in this volume is exhaustive and excellent. The line profiles are very good, and are hard to find in any other public source. The statistics used include those on operational organizations at the squadron and major battle group levels. Of particular interest are the destroyer escort classes created during World War II, with their wide range of powerplant types, and three-inch armament giving way to the standard five-inch 38-caliber gun. Many of this class continued to play a major role in the U.S. postwar navy as es-

corts, aircraft early warning ships, and as light transports, well into the sixties. Ship class characteristics, squadron designations, battle engagements, and individual fates are included for some seventy-one PFs and 485 DEs, the latter including the postwar *Dealey* class and the *Claud Jones* class. As chronicled, many are still serving in the world's smaller navies.

This book should prove interesting to the many who have served in these ships over the past forty-five years—particularly, once it is available in English. For those who can't wait, the pictures and profiles alone are worth the price of ownership. This is truly a book for the history buff, historian and aging crew member.

RICHARD F. CROSS III
 Alexandria, Virginia

Blaker, James R. *United States Overseas Basing: An Anatomy of the Dilemma*. New York: Praeger, 1990. 197pp. \$39.95

This is a timely and important book to anyone seriously interested in the military capability of the United States. As was proven most recently in the Desert Storm operation, the ability to concentrate U.S. military forces quickly can be an extremely effective foreign policy option. Important as this capability has proven to be, most analyses of this and other operations have focused on the strengths or weaknesses of the warfighting capability moved or

the equipment that moved it to the debarkation point. What has been overlooked is the key component, the well-established worldwide system of U.S. bases on foreign soil through which personnel and material are directed to the world's trouble spots. Former deputy assistant secretary of defense James Blaker has filled this analytical gap by providing the first systematic review of U.S. overseas basing.

Blaker writes with a clearly stated bias: that enhanced national security and successful foreign policy depend upon a credible capacity to move, employ, and sustain military forces abroad—as long as it doesn't cost too much. Because the United States will be required to engage in negotiations for continued access to bases in eleven separate nations between 1990 and 1993, he believes that it is necessary to understand the true value of these bases before effective decisions regarding them can be made.

Recognizing that many in the military would view any diminution in this area with alarm, Blaker provides an analytical framework for reviewing the current basing system that attempts to place relative strategic value on the individual bases by considering them as components of a worldwide system. Because this analytical approach allows a broader view of individual bases, the various external forces which are placing pressure on overseas bases (including host country demands for increasing

permissive payments, nationalist sentiments in some countries, etc.) do not assume the same significance that they hold when the base is considered in isolation. Although costs and political concerns are always major issues, Blaker argues that the most important criterion for determining the strategic value of a base should be the capacity of the overall system of bases to move and support military forces. This leads to the central paradox of the overseas basing system: that the number of overseas bases is declining while the cost of what remains is rising dramatically.

With this paradox Blaker articulates his essential concern, that at some point the trends of increasing cost versus decreasing numbers of bases may place such limits on the flexibility with which the United States can employ its military force, that the country will slip from the status of a great power. He believes this result could occur if the country is perceived as less capable of shaping world events to its benefit. Its capacity to use military force in its interests would be more circumscribed and, thus, much less credible. The final chapter of the book deals directly with this concern and provides several policy alternatives.

Blaker has made a significant contribution to the national security debate. No matter what position one takes on the issue of overseas basing, it will be difficult to find a more coherent articulation of the major arguments than are made in this book. It should be required reading for all

U.S. participants in future base negotiations.

WILLIAM HICKMAN
Captain, U.S. Navy
Newport, Rhode Island

Callahan, David. *Dangerous Capabilities: Paul Nitze and the Cold War*. New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1990. 511pp. \$24.95

In the last four years, three books have been published about Paul Nitze. In 1988, Stroble Talbot published *The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace*. A year later Nitze published his own memoir, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision*, and in 1990 we have David Callahan's *Dangerous Capabilities: Paul Nitze and the Cold War*.

While *Dangerous Capabilities* is similar to and covers much of the same ground as the other two books mentioned, Callahan himself is quite different. Unlike Talbot (who has been *Time* magazine's Moscow correspondent and head of *Time*'s Washington bureau) and Nitze, Callahan is no Washington insider. He is only three years out of college and barely twenty-five. Mr. Callahan started writing this book as a junior in college (presumably as a term paper) and spent two years finishing it after graduating.

Judged by even the most rigid standards, Callahan has produced a remarkable book. In *Dangerous Capabilities* he has given us a sweeping, authoritative, and readable history of

the men, the ideas, and the politics which formed American national security policy for the last fifty years. Callahan has focused his analysis on Nitze because the "gray fox" served six of the last eight presidents and was closely involved in most of the bureaucratic and political struggles which shaped Cold War policy. As Callahan notes in his preface, "to understand this [Nitze's] life is to begin to understand the Cold War." Or as Ronald Reagan's secretary of state, George Shultz, noted, "wise men come and wise men go, but decade after decade there is Paul Nitze."

Callahan has given a critical but thoughtful analysis of this complex personality who: debunked the myth of the impact of strategic bombing through his work on the strategic bombing survey; almost single-handedly created the "missile gap" and "window of vulnerability" through his overly mathematical analyses of the strategic nuclear balance; played a major role in shaping the successful policies that averted nuclear catastrophe in Cuba and Berlin; and saved arms control in the Reagan administration after nearly destroying it in the Carter years.

The Paul Nitze who emerges in Callahan's work is both a heroic and tragic figure. Unlike some who are appointed to high political posts, Nitze was both a master bureaucrat and a strategic thinker who grasped even the most arcane details of his various posts in the Departments of State and Defense, and as an arms negotiator. Moreover, unlike many