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The Reagan Defense Program: An Interim Assessment.

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SACLANT Point of View” in 1971. Going over the list of articles one is struck, too, by the growing contribution of academics to defense literature. In the selections, we note the names of such well-known writers as Alistair Buchan, Michael Howard, John Erikson, and Lawrence Freedman. Notable, too, are the writings of senior officers and defense officials, ranging from Winston Churchill’s statement in the House of Commons as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1914, to J.M.A.H. Luns on NATO defense in 1978, to the final article by the current Chief of the British Defence Staff, Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fieldhouse, on “British Defence Issues, 1986.”

Throughout its history, *Brassey’s Annuals* have sought to provide intelligent commentary and accurate information on defense matters. Utilizing well the nature of the material at hand, Brian Ranft has made a judicious selection of commentaries from the wealth of *Brassey’s Annuals*, providing historical insight into the development of modern defense thinking.

With these six volumes, one can sense a widely reaching change of emphasis in writing naval history. It is not a new development, but one that has occurred slowly over a long period of time. What is new, however, is the proliferation of the broad perspective in linking naval affairs with society at large. This is something which should be welcomed not only in academic circles, but within the navy itself.

Cimbala, Stephen J., ed. *The Reagan Defense Program: An Interim Assessment*. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1986. 215pp. \$35

Stephen Cimbala deserves praise for presenting a symposium in print that allows the reader to be led in quick succession from the realities and appearances of the present and previous National administrations through a discussion of decisionmaking processes, or the seeming inconsistencies thereof, to a remarkably clear discussion of defense manpower by Lawrence Korb. The middle of the book features a chapter on “Special Operations Forces in the 1980s” and a chapter on the War Powers Resolution that includes, as an appendix, the text

of the 1973 resolution that was passed over President Nixon’s veto. The remaining 40 percent concerns the Reagan record on strategic weapons—“Ballistic Missile Defense: The Strategic Defense Initiative,” arms control, and a summary of the Reagan Strategic Offensive Modernization Program. All contributors to Cimbala’s symposium are academic political scientists who carry out their assessments from the viewpoints of that discipline.

In a brief review designed to help the professional naval audience decide the potential value of this addition to the literature, and perhaps also its value as a personal accession, it would be folly to attempt to discuss and

argue with each of the eight authors, so a brief view of the landscape will have to do.

The Oliver and Nathan chapter describes the Reagan policy of “horizontal escalation” without any identification of the “vital” Soviet assets that are thought to be at risk to such a U.S. policy. Perhaps the problem is that the viability of a horizontal escalation policy can only be determined through quantitative examination of options and capabilities available to both sides.

In the chapter entitled “Decision Making, Decision Makers, and Some of the Results,” Vincent Davis notes that the Reagan administrations have violated the first rule in forming a government, i.e., decide how to decide. This has led to muddled organizational and procurement decisionmaking nightmares in the White House and the Pentagon, and an apparent lack of a national strategy. The reader should ponder his generalization: “the Air Force had too few modern weapons, the Army had too few people, and the Navy had too few thinkers.” He also noted the questionable state of readiness of the services, except for the Marine Corps.

Cimbala seems to dismiss major conventional wars as being too difficult to think about. Does he imply that the Reagan defense program is relying on “nuclear overhang”? By ignoring the defense policy aspects of full mobilization and protracted conflict, Cimbala and his colleagues are missing initiatives the Administration is taking that

may well redress concerns about sustainability and readiness of conventional forces. Omission of these areas of concern lessens the value of this book because of the inescapable linkages among manpower, budget, and strategy.

Sarkesian’s one-sided discussion of “Special Operations Forces in the 1980s” fails to recognize the Soviet Spetsnaz or the roles played by modern unconventional forces from the Franco-Prussian War and on. Those who would ponder special operations forces should visit France and its myriad plaques to heroes of the French Resistance, or Burma where the American General Peers raised an indigenous enemy in the tradition of Lawrence of Arabia. Better yet, read Anthony Cave Brown’s monumental *Bodyguard of Lies*.

“Ballistic Missile Defense” by Donald M. Snow undertakes the Herculean task of outlining the elements of the strategic debate and the Reagan Strategic Defense Initiative. He fairly outlines some of the pros and cons, but absent is a very convincing assessment of technological factors—will it work? Nor does Snow outline the assumptions and conditions that have to be met for it to work. Substantive matters of physics and engineering are seemingly subordinated to ideological arrangements.

Charles R. Gellner and Jeanette Voas call the Reagan approach to arms control an evolving record of hope. There are many who would question the authors’ implicit asser-

tions that the Administration is dedicated to arms control. They clearly describe the increasing complexity of attaining arms control objectives, a result of the continuing build-up of defensive systems, which remains a nonnegotiable part of the discussions. Here again questions of technological feasibility seem to have been eclipsed by economic and political considerations.

Stephen Cimbala contributes the final chapter on the "Reagan Strategic Offensive Modernization Program." He develops some interesting dichotomies in the simultaneous modernization of the strategic offensive forces and the introduction of the Strategic Defense Initiative. He touches on the idea of "escalation dominance," the credibility and controllability of the limited nuclear option and on the concept of "launch on warning." He comments that even if the U.S.S.R. were to spend itself into bankruptcy, it would not necessarily provide for a more stable international environment. Cimbala does not comment on a bankrupt U.S. position.

In summary, *The Reagan Defense Program* is useful if topical reading. Whether it can be called an assessment is doubtful as few assessment criteria are presented. To paraphrase the 1980 campaign—has the U.S. national security posture been improved or decreased as a result of the high expenditures made and promised for the future? The book does not answer, except in a peripheral manner. But there is much material for the serious student to ponder and

much to argue about if one introduces technical considerations and objective measures of effectiveness. Cimbala's book closes the gap between science and politics by offering practitioners of each discipline a glimpse into the other. Unfortunately, if accurate technical material exists, it is in the classified literature and of limited utility for purposes of the defense debate.

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Epstein, Joshua M. *The 1988 Defense Budget*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987. 57pp. \$8.95

Joshua Epstein, a research associate in the Brookings' Foreign Policy Studies program and author of the Brookings' study of the FY87 defense budget, has written a study of the proposed FY88 defense budget in which he holds to the arguments presented in his previous work. Drawing on the research of other analysts as well as his own previous studies, Epstein concludes that the defense budget could be reduced by over \$47 billion in budget authority in FY88-89 without adversely affecting the security of the United States. The budget cuts would be focused on the "investment accounts" (procurement, research and development, and military construction) in both strategic nuclear and conventional forces.

Epstein would reduce spending on strategic nuclear programs by canceling the Midgetman missile and the