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A Reasonable Defense

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Some of them are stunning in their detail, clarity, and perspective. The absence of sailors on the decks of Soviet ships is always curious. The *Typhoon* looks as menacing as one imagines Captain Nemo's *Nautilus* did. Surely the *Typhoon* is the first real submarine with space enough for a pipe organ in the wardroom.

Readers of *Soviet Military Power* should be aware that it is not a net assessment and does not purport to tell us who might "win." No estimate is made of the quality or reliability of Soviet weapons nor of the caliber of the men who might use them. U.S. systems are shown for comparison as they are the familiar reference point. The publication should be treated only as a list of problems with which the Defense Department must deal in program planning.

At the same time, the publication can be faulted for not distinguishing clearly between matters of hard, observable fact, such as the speed of an airplane, and matters of judgment, such as Soviet political and military intent. It would have been better had the authors used the traditional intelligence analysis words such as "estimated" or "assessed," for the latter.

As noted, *Soviet Military Power* covers many areas beyond strategic and naval forces. We will leave them for the reader to discover and ponder. The authors do not paint the Soviets as 10-foot tall, just a very robust and thought-inducing 6 feet.

Kaufmann, William W. *A Reasonable Defense*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1986. 113pp. \$8.95

This is the latest addition to what is arguably the most prestigious series of titles devoted to U.S. military matters, the Brookings' *Studies in Defense Policy*. The title is not only fully worthy of that honor, but it seems to this reviewer that the work is somewhat less driven by the parochial aspirations of the political party not presently occupying the White House, than have been past efforts.

Politics aside, this concise and brilliant study suffers from only one significant fault: its title is excessively bland. Mr. Kaufmann offers much more than just a few hackneyed ways to slash the defense budget and make it more "reasonable" in cost. Rather, he examines three distinctly different defense postures for America, weighing them against each other in terms which should allow vastly better *reasoning* in debates over what we buy and why. As a result, this book is already required reading for students at the Naval War College.

Mr. Kaufmann has quite a number of theses, most of which contradict rather starkly the current Pentagon wisdom. The book begins with a review of the historical trends in defense spending, debating points, and the "net assessments" which dominate the force planning process. He then evaluates three alternative (and to varying extents hypothetical) constructs as a basis for testing his arguments: the *baseline force* (predicated on what the Reagan administration

inherited in 1981); the *combat force* (based on Kaufmann's personal beliefs about defense planning); and the administration's *programmed force*. His core contention is that the administration's *programmed force* is vastly more expensive than, but also inferior in performance to, the *combat force*, which he advocates. These are the same arguments which the Congressional "Military Reform Caucus" has been making for the past several years, but Mr. Kaufmann gives them stronger academic backing and broader impact than they have previously enjoyed.

He attributes the supposed disadvantages of the *programmed force* to: the declining power of the Secretaries of Defense since McNamara, whom he eulogizes; the decline of the Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS), which he analyzes with vigor and concise insight not available from other sources; and to exaggerated threat estimates from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). These chestnuts are old, but Kaufmann shows his willingness to distribute blame evenhandedly by also faulting Congress for its inexperience or lack of "time and inclination to grapple with the important issues of force planning." He directs some of his sharpest harpoons at the armed services, accusing them of inherent inefficiency caused by their proclivity for needless rapid modernization of older weapons, redundant purchases, and incoherent preparations for drastically different wars, according to the diverse hopes or fears of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

These are important criticisms which have been reverberating for some time throughout the defense community. They deserve careful attention from anyone seeking to understand or implement the growing concern for "jointness" in military education, training, planning, and organization.

Precisely because of Mr. Kaufmann's superb credentials for writing this ground-breaking study, his rare displays of bias or haste are doubly annoying. One is struck by his description of Soviet behavior in the 1970s as relatively "cautious," compared to the "rambunctious" actions in Berlin and Cuba decades ago. He devalues this partial truth by failing to contrast those spectacular failures with the more recent pattern of successful—(albeit costly)—intrusions by the Soviets and their proxies into Afghanistan, Vietnam, Kampuchea, Angola, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. His one-paragraph indictment of the "inefficiency of the nuclear force planning process" seems similarly weak, since it explores none of the rationale for maintenance of the strategic triad which Mr. Kaufmann understands perfectly well and which he has analyzed so cogently elsewhere. Military professionals may object to these occasional oversimplifications, but they will find the conceptual core of his study to be an analytical *tour de force*.

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