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The Pentagon and the Art of War. The Question of Military Reform

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valuable and incisive strategic analysis, but we find it tucked away as an article in *Revista de Historia Naval* (No. 6, 1984), where it might have served to provide structure for the larger work. He allows himself to make sweeping assertions based on inadequate evidence, or conversely is satisfied simply to report conflicting data and interpretations and then to remain aloof from making a judgment. Having only mastered Spanish language sources, he is unable to probe very far into the interventions of those foreign nations that gave the conflict characteristics of a coalition war. He misses, for example, the active role of German U-boats or the self-blinding assumptions of Soviet naval advisers. The texts of documents appended to each volume are too often inaccurately copied. Much more care should be expected with editing and production.

This overwhelming assemblage of semidigested data may put off some readers. Yet a close reading will demonstrate once again that when one is constructing and employing a navy, the qualities of mind that one cannot easily tally on a ledger sheet are those of decisive significance. The ships and weapons, though necessary, are merely the tools.

Luttwak, Edward N. *The Pentagon and the Art of War. The Question of Military Reform*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984. 332pp. \$17.95

Ed Luttwak is both a provocative thinker and a clear and forceful writer. This book is no exception and the subject he focuses on (what the dust jacket calls "our outmoded military establishment") lends itself to his talents. Luttwak tends to make rather pungent, broad judgments and recommends more change than is likely to be forthcoming. Also, curiously for someone who has been immersed in defense detail, Luttwak's book is an outsider's evaluation which lacks the perceptions most of those with extensive military service share.

The subtitle of the book is: *The Question of Military Reform* and that is in fact the book's thrust. In eleven

chapters, Luttwak proceeds from an initial discussion of "the anatomy of military failure" and the "lessons of defeat . . . unlearned" to the "enormity of the [U.S.] defense establishment," a chapter on the Soviets, one on why the "materialist bias," then two chapters on "the officer surplus," three chapters on "the great budget game" and its consequences and effects, with a final chapter called "toward reform." Putting it another way, he has an assessment of Vietnam and recent military operations off Lebanon and on Grenada, followed by something of a broad net assessment (including intellectual attitudes toward military problems), branching over to a figure-laden discussion of a senior officer-heavy officer structure, on to the interplay between budget and strategy, and ending with a specific recommenda-

tion for a really “purple suit” joint staff.

Luttwak’s criticism of the Vietnam War is very pointed. “By 1968 there were 110 generals and admirals actually in Vietnam, 64 of them for the Army alone; a small number were actually in command of forces in the field, but most were in Saigon, along with hundreds and hundreds of colonels.” In discussing Desert One he renews his continuing criticism of what he calls “the ‘unified’ model” which patches forces together—some for you and some for you, meaning some for everybody. He has scant praise for the Grenada operation either, saying that “ever since Korea, each test of combat has revealed gross deformations in the making of strategy, in the absence of operational art, and in tactics made willfully clumsy.” Luttwak is arguing that the very structure of our national defense is defective and its very size makes that difficult to grasp. The problem becomes even more acute when we have to take the enormity of the Soviet defense effort also into account.

He argues that the immense size of the defense effort spurs us to pick on small, understandable items to criticize, like the cost of toilet seats or hammers. Perhaps his most telling (or at least interesting) criticisms, buttressed by figures, have to do with what Luttwak calls “the officer surplus.”

In 1945, with more than 12 million under arms, the ratio of enlisted to junior officers stood at about 10:1 and has more or less remained so since. But the middle and senior rank (colonel-

captain) picture has been very different: 1945, 100 enlisted, 1.3 such officers; 1950, 100:4.0; 1952, 100:2.9; 1958, 100:4.3; 1960, 100:4.7; 1969, 100:4.5; 1973, 100:5.8; 1983, 100:5.3. Luttwak says this inflation represents a redundancy to allow mobilization expansion to the large numbers à la 1942 but thinks this not very likely to happen. In the meantime, he says, these officers inflate staffs and create new staff layers whose main effect is to stifle the efficient development of new weapons systems. He especially focuses in on the Air Force Systems Command. He says: “During the twenty-year period 1965-1984 . . . the Air Force has developed a grand total of only two bombers, one of them merely a converted fighter . . . ; only three fighter-class aircraft . . . ; only one transport aircraft and a single trainer.” He has harsh words, too, for the now defunct Navy Material Command and the Army’s Materiel Development and Readiness Command, calling the M-1 tank “very advanced and very desirable in every way—except in combat” and criticizing the Navy for having too few convoy escorts.

When he turns to the budget process he condemns the vast energy expended which could be better applied to making strategy and reorganizing defense, and says that our expenditures on our forces reveals “a fundamental imbalance in American strategy”—by which he means that “instead of seeking to establish land-power parity, which is the required counterpart to strategic-nuclear parity, the declared goal is to build a ‘600-ship Navy’” He

considers "naval operations . . . largely irrelevant . . . for Soviet military action in the major continental theaters of war . . ." He especially condemns the large carrier.

In chapter 11, he comes to his reforms. "Absolutely the first priority is to provide a central military staff" of "national defense officers" who would opt for joint careers, and place that staff under a Director. The operational chain would be through SecDef direct to the unified and specified commands. Only "national defense officers" could hold such commands. Luttwak thinks this change would provide better "joint" advice.

Luttwak does not really tangle with some thorny questions, like the apparent operational disconnect between the joint staff and the unified and specified commands. I find no real attention to what the new joint staff would really do that would be so much better than we do now. Luttwak apparently thinks that having career "national defense officers" both in Washington and at the unified and specified commands will create like thinking both at the center and in the field. Since he believes a thoroughgoing world war III is "imaginary" but that minor regional contingencies are likely, the author is not concerned with how a worldwide contingency or war would be coordinated or prepared for.

His book is readable and provocative. On his reform "solution" and related questions, however, the Senate 1983 hearings are more useful.

Rearden, Steven L. *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: Vol. I, The Formative Years, 1947-1950*. Washington: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984. 667pp. \$25

The creation of a unified national security establishment turned out to be a much tougher proposition than anyone supposed it would be. But a start was made in 1947 and the story of the first two secretaries was one of somewhat more success than failure—though the shortfalls were serious and frustrating. But this history of those first two Administrations is a clear success.

The author of *The Formative Years* has good experience, appropriate credentials and a sound attitude on what official history can and should be. He is a graduate of the University of Nebraska and holds a Ph.D. from Harvard. He is experienced as a teacher at Harvard and Boston College, as a consultant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and as a researcher at Johns Hopkins University. His research seems to be painstaking and his writing style clear, economical and readable.

Formative Years is organized along topical lines. Its first part covers the initial structuring of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and next comes the treatment of the external national security problems it faced in its first four years. Finally, it handles the domestic problems—largely ones of trying to get the services to live together in harmony and of helping divide the scarce dollars of the immediate postwar years.