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## Arms Transfers under Nixon, A Policy Analysis

Mitchell Reiss

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Sorley, Lewis. *Arms Transfers under Nixon, A Policy Analysis*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983. 231pp. \$22

Too many books in recent memory dealing with problems of national defense and security have shown a predilection for focusing on numbers and characteristics of specific weapons systems, as if this were the stuff of strategy and foreign policy. The strength of Lewis Sorley's *Arms Transfers under Nixon* is that he avoids this trap, instead outlining the Nixon administration's foreign policy objectives and then analyzing to what degree arms transfers promoted or frustrated these goals.

The incoming Nixon administration was confronted with a new international environment that placed severe constraints on an activist foreign policy: parity in nuclear armaments with the Soviet Union, international and especially domestic opposition to the Vietnam war, and the beginnings of a new period of American isolationism. These factors combined to present difficulties for the United States in meeting its international obligations and duties. In this situation, military aid became one of the few remaining sources of American influence; arms transfers were thus elevated to "a primary instrument of policy."

Sorley is most cogent when describing arms transfers to Israel and Egypt, the recipients of some \$8.5 billion in US military assistance from 1972 to 1974. Sorley argues that the administration's goals of weaning Egypt away from the Soviet Union and creating

new "realities" with Israel were due in large measure to the calculated transfer of military equipment to both countries. A subsidiary theme of the book, that arms transfers by themselves count for little in the absence of intelligent diplomacy, comes through most clearly in this section.

If arms transfers were a necessary adjunct to US success in the Middle East, they were a cause of divisiveness among America's European allies. The arms trade with western Europe was "the most counterproductive aspect of US arms transfer policy" in the Nixon administration. American sales to Europe and her competing so aggressively for Third World markets undermined the viability of European arms manufacturers (to whom exports were essential in depreciating research and development expenses and in defraying unit costs). Here poor arms transfer policies made for poor diplomacy with allied governments.

Arms transfers to Latin America, Africa, and Asia (excepting Southeast Asia, which is not discussed), are handled in one all-too-brief chapter. Sorley offers the valuable lesson that at least in the Latin American case, US abstention in transferring arms had no effect on recipients' intentions; the Latin American countries simply shifted to alternative suppliers. The author concludes with the interesting prediction that the boom period of arms transfers may be coming to a close, due to the growth of indigenous arms production capabilities, the decreased cost of some weapons systems particularly well-suited to the needs of the developing countries, and

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the financial constraints imposed by increasing debt burdens.

*Arms Transfers under Nixon* does contain some weaknesses. Sorley displays the annoying habit of dismissing certain issues after devoting insufficient attention to them. Surely the Angola case study deserves more than five paragraphs? Iran, where the Nixon policy of unrestrained arms transfers attracted much criticism, is not treated adequately. Possible limitations on the utility of arms transfers, as President Carter discovered with South Korea, are not discussed. The problem of reverse linkage between clients and suppliers is not mentioned.

What *Arms Transfers under Nixon* does do well, however, is make the useful point that leverage in controlling arms races and limiting conflicts can only come from a policy of selling arms. And, at a higher conceptual level, it reminds us that all defense decisions rightfully belong within the larger framework of foreign policy formulations.

MITCHELL REISS  
St. Antony's College  
Oxford University

Harkavy, Robert E. *Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1982. 368pp. \$34.50

Robert Harkavy, a political scientist at Pennsylvania State University, has produced an ambitious work about the struggle among the great powers for access to overseas bases. This important subject did not receive adequate attention during

the 1950s and 1960s. The "behavioral revolution" consumed the energies of scholars treating international relations while strategic thinkers concentrated on subjects such as deterrence, limited warfare, and counterinsurgency. More recently crises such as those in Iran, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa have revived interest in access to overseas bases. Harkavy believes that a study of this subject is one way of understanding "the broader contours of contemporary strategy and the long-range evolvment of the major powers' global power balance," a means of coping with what he calls the "current malaise" in American strategic thought.

Chapters 3-5, the heart of this book, provide a grand compendium of highly useful information about the basing policies of all the great powers since the First World War. Harkavy treats the interwar period (1919-1939), the early post-World War II years to the 1960s, and finally the "modern era." The fruit of this historical survey is a "secular trend" that is summarized neatly: "the basis of access first shifted from colonial control to military alliances, and then somewhat from the latter to various forms of quid pro quo, often in the absence of formal alliances. Though it is by no means the entire story, the evolving nexus between arms transfers and access to facilities has been central to the more recent changes."

Harkavy makes explicit use of "systems theory" as derived from Morton Kaplan and Richard Rose-