

1980

"The FY 1981-1985 Defense Program: Issues and Trends," and "Setting National Priorities: Agenda for the 1980s"

John A. Walgreen

Lawrence J. Korb

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

Recommended Citation

Walgreen, John A. and Korb, Lawrence J. (1980) ""The FY 1981-1985 Defense Program: Issues and Trends," and "Setting National Priorities: Agenda for the 1980s," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 33 : No. 6 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol33/iss6/14>

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.

104 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

prohibits the author from fully developing the many issues and events that interacted during the decade. Nonetheless, this book provides a thought-provoking and challenging view of America's military since Vietnam and where it stands today.

DON RIGHTMYER
Captain, U.S. Air Force

Korb, Lawrence J. *The FY 1981-1985 Defense Program: Issues and Trends*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980. 63pp., and Pechman, Joseph A., ed. *Setting National Priorities: Agenda for the 1980s*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1980. 563pp.

Events in the Middle East during the past year have brought home to Americans the need for military forces and the fact that our current level of forces is not all that we need in today's world. Reflecting these concerns, the budget submitted by President Carter for fiscal year 1981 and the 5-year defense program for the FY1981-1985 period show a considerable increase in proposed defense spending, whether measured in total obligational authority or in outlays; defense spending is projected to exceed a trillion dollars over the FY 1980-1985 period. Are these proposed increases enough? Are they in the right areas? These questions and others are ably addressed by the volumes reviewed here.

Their authors, Lawrence J. Korb and William W. Kaufman for the chapter on Defense Policy in the Brookings' volume, are recognized authorities on defense programs. Korb is resident director of defense studies at the American Enterprise Institute and a former professor of management at the Naval War College. Kaufman is a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a consultant to the Secretary of Defense.

The works complement one another. Korb's monograph provides considerable detail on the FY1981-1985 defense program as well as on historical patterns of defense spending. His volume contains forty-two tables and two figures. Kaufman gives relatively little data of the type contained in Korb's study, but has an illuminating discussion of the policy issues for national defense in the decade of the 1980s.

Both authors see a need for a significant effort to increase U.S. military strength. Kaufman says that many people will argue that "the problems of the 1980s will not yield to military solutions." His reply to this criticism is to admit that military power may not be a sufficient condition for international stability in regions of concern to the United States, but military power is a necessary condition for stability. "It affords this country the opportunity and the time to use the other measures on which it prefers to rely—diplomatic, economic, legal, and administrative. Without it, nothing much is likely to work at all." (p. 315)

Kaufman and Korb each believe that even though U.S. defense spending is programmed to rise by a considerable amount in real terms over the next 5 years, it may not be enough. Korb thinks the proposed program is insufficiently funded because it has not allowed enough for higher energy costs, personnel costs, and general inflation and because "the FY 1981-1985 defense program slows down but does not arrest the deterioration of the U.S.-Soviet military balance." (p. 62) In his study Korb provides graphic detail to document how the military position of the United States has declined relative to the Soviet Union. Both the executive branch, which failed to propose large enough defense programs, and the Congress, which has consistently cut the overall defense appropriations of the President since the mid-1960s, have

PROFESSIONAL READING 105

brought us to our present position. With the CIA predicting that the Soviet Union will continue to increase its defense spending in real terms at the 4 to 5 percent a year rate that it has maintained since 1965, Korb's evaluation rings true.

Kaufman argues that the first priority of effort should be to bring the existing military force structure up to full effectiveness; and both he and Korb show how personnel and materiel constraints pose considerable obstacles to an immediate rapid expansion beyond presently programmed force levels. However, the present Defense Department planning concepts that call for forces sufficient to deal simultaneously with one major and one minor contingency may not be enough for the 1980s. Kaufman fears that the United States may have to face three contingencies at the same time, and it should start planning its nonnuclear forces for such an unpleasant possibility. But Kaufman also believes that it is essential to recognize our present military capabilities as well as the need for future improvements in them. "[E]xaggerated statements . . . can lead to despair instead of the determination and higher budgets that are sought." (p. 303)

Both analysts see the need for the MX missile and other improvements to U.S. strategic forces. Kaufman points out, however, that as necessary and as expensive as the improvements to strategic and theater nuclear forces may be, in the end what we obtain is nuclear stalemate, a credible deterrent to the use of nuclear weapons by others. Once that is done we still need adequate conventional forces to meet the threats posed by the Soviet Union's and other potential adversaries' conventional forces.

Kaufman provides a good general assessment of our nonnuclear capabilities. He thinks it prudent in light of possible multiple simultaneous contingencies in the future to improve

the readiness of Reserve units, upgrade our training base, and either stockpile more military equipment or have production facilities in a standby status that can rapidly be brought on line. The last suggestion is at the heart of the concerns of Army industrial preparedness planners.

In connection with our nonnuclear capabilities, Korb gives cogent analyses of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) and of the Navy. Because of decisions made in previous budgets, there have been wide swings in shipbuilding budgets and the target size of the fleet. Korb says that Navy shipbuilding program still suffers from a lack of consensus on what naval missions should be given priority. And the creation of the RDF highlights, but does not solve, the requirements for more seaborne and airborne mobility.

Korb and Kaufman are in essential agreement on the need for more military spending, although Kaufman seems more sanguine than Korb about present U.S. capabilities. These studies will be of great value to military professionals and to any person concerned about U.S. defense policy. The Brookings' volume also contains analyses for other key policy areas of the 1980s. There are chapters on U.S. economic policy, world economic interdependence, energy, social regulation, medical care, education, the Soviet Union, China, Japan, the Middle East, the Atlantic Alliance, the developing nations, and U.S. inter-governmental fiscal relations, and it concludes with a chapter on the decline of public confidence in government. The authors are experts in their respective fields and provide high quality analyses. Discussions of public policy do not make light reading, but they are well worth the time spent as we look forward to coping with the difficult problems of the 1980s.

JOHN A. WALGREEN
Wheaton College