

1972

Professional Reading

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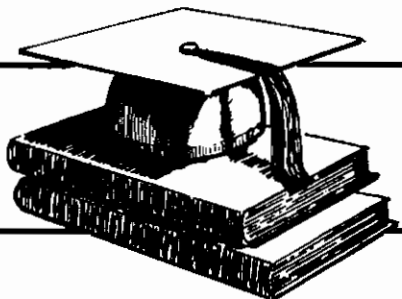
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Recommended Citation

Simpson, B. M. III and Barber, Stephan (1972) "Professional Reading," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 25 : No. 4 , Article 11.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol25/iss4/11>

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PROFESSIONAL READING

Barber, Stephan. *America in Retreat*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971. 19p.

America's will to lead has eroded. As a result, America is on the verge of turning right and inward. The meaning for Britain and Europe is clear: they had better be prepared to stand on their own. This is Stephan Barber's central thesis.

The arguments supporting the thesis are simple: The thousand days of Camelot under President Kennedy were a kind of Alexandrine flowering of American *esprit*. But, alas, the bubble burst, and the mystique was more high-flown rhetoric than anything else. As a result we blundered into Vietnam, which produced disenchantment and gave rise to radical nihilistic leaders. The possibility of an economic recession, the returning embittered soldiers (who are seen as the equivalent of the French Army in the 1950's), and the intractability of the race problem hopelessly compound America's problems.

The author sees Middle America turning inwards and to the right as a result of the problems of the 1960's. He also sees no solution to the race problem. To him American politics and government are irretrievably corrupt. To him the American spirit (whatever that is) is dead and America is doomed.

These gloomy predictions are made in overstatements, such as the 1960's saw American "spirits crack under the burdens of world leadership" (p. 41). The reader is told "The nation's leader class is on the verge of a nervous

breakdown of alarming proportions" (p. 182).

Such crude journalistic hyperbole is accompanied by several glaring factual errors. Woodstock, of Rock Festival fame, is placed in Connecticut and not in New York (p. 150). Amherst is a "private New England School" and not a college (p. 151). The Communist forces in Korea were insurgent forces and not North Korean (p. 101). The author implied General MacArthur crossed the 38th parallel on his own initiative (p. 101). As chief of London's *Daily Telegraph* Washington Bureau, Mr. Barber could at least have checked his facts, as any good reporter should.

Mr. Barber strains credulity by stating with religious certainty that Vice President Agnew has "subtly curtailed freedom of comment in America's leading newspapers." This may be dogma at the Washington Press Club, but it is hardly accepted *a priori* outside certain liberal, intellectual circles. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* can hardly be called tame and compliant.

America in Retreat seeks to address itself seriously to several profound problems. Unfortunately, the author relies extensively upon his own observations and experience to substantiate his conclusions, which have only a limited validity. The conclusions are superficial and simplistic, not only because they are based on limited data and generalizations, but also because the author lacks an understanding of American Government, the American people, and America generally. For example, the

author does not explain how the National Government can be cumbersome and "a great creaking engine," while at the same time placing "incredible executive power" in the hands of the President.

This is such a bad book that it should be an embarrassment to the author. One would hope that other foreign correspondents are more careful with their facts and are more perceptive in writing about America. Our problems are too complex to be addressed with only sarcasm and generalizations.

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Freidman, Wolfgang. *The Future of the Oceans*. New York: George Braziller, 1971. 132 p. Index

Hood, Donald, ed. *Impingement of Man on the Ocean*. New York: Wiley Interscience, 1971. 698p. Index

A topic of increasing impact upon the naval community is the use of the sea—ecologically and legally. Injunctions against the military commander's right to use a beach for maneuvers are an additional preoperational factor, as evidenced by the recent proceedings in the Bay of Maine. A rash of 200-mile territorial sea proclamations has dictated a revision of sea routes of innocent passage and establishment of new fishing areas.

The Future of the Oceans is a well organized primer addressing the question of international ownership of the oceans and the land underlying it. Of the more than 130 national states comprising the international community, 29 have no seacoast and only 24 have the present technological facilities to exploit the medium to a depth of even 200 meters. What rights does an advanced country such as Switzerland, with no seacoast but many rivers draining to the ocean, have? What rights does a nation such as the Somali Republic, poor economically and technologically,

and with a negligible continental shelf, but strategically located, have? Dr. Freidman argues the necessity of an able and strong international management of the ocean floor and the waters above it. Unlike much of international law and regulations, which correspond to and are often diluted by previous national postures, much of "Law of the Seabed" is unimpaired by precedent. This book is an excellent discussion of the problem, and is current and easy to read sans prior background.

Impingement of Man on the Oceans, by contrast, is an outstanding reference for anyone concerned with the oceanic environment. Donald Hood has compiled a series of papers dealing with subjects ranging from oceanic influences on the atmosphere to long-range pollution effects of petroleum products on oceanic biology. Every paper is current, the contributors are authorities in their fields, and the interrelation of the subject matter is logical. The pendulum swing, precipitated by the ecological concern over our lakes and rivers, has passed into the realm of hysteria occasionally, often without facts to justify it. Here one can find his subject of interest covered in detail, admittedly with some bias but not hysterical, allowing the reader to develop the attitudes and understanding necessary to discuss and deal intelligently with the subjects of pollution control and efficient control of the oceanic resources. This compendium is a logical element of the professional reading for everyone concerned with the sea and the world he lives in.

Both books complement each other well. The reader who reads *Future of the Oceans* and those parts of *Impingement of Man upon the Oceans* which further his particular interests will be well oriented, regardless of previous exposure.

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