

## RESEARCH REPORTS

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*Reviews of new research by public agencies and private institutions*

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### **"Maritime Strategy or Coalition Defense?"**

Abt Books, 55 Wheeler St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. 116 pp. \$19.00.

Author: Robert W. Komer

America's loss of its nuclear "edge" over the Soviet Union during the 1970s makes U.S. conventional military strategy more important than ever before.

Indeed, Washington has been forced to ponder the kind of choice that eventually confronts all great powers: Should the nation adopt a land-based "continental" defense (in Western Europe) or a global "maritime" strategy? Komer, a long-time senior U.S. defense official now at the Rand Corporation, fears that the United States is "drifting by default" toward the maritime alternative.

Led by Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, advocates of "blue-water" strategy believe that Western Europe is practically indefensible. Better to base our defenses on the oceans, they say, using the U.S. Navy not chiefly to defend vital shipping lanes, as it does today, but as an offensive force to attack Soviet vulnerabilities.

The maritime strategists favor responding to a Soviet thrust into Western Europe, for example, with strikes by carrier-based jets at Russian client states, such as Cuba and Angola, or perhaps at naval bases in the Soviet Union itself.

Lehman has already won congressional authorization to build the 600-ship Navy (an increase of nearly 100) needed to carry out a maritime strategy. In 1983, the Navy claimed 34 percent of the Pentagon's budget for conventional nonnuclear forces, the Army only 23.7 percent. But Komer complains that Congress has approved bigger Navy budgets without considering the implications and

shortcomings of the strategy that goes with them.

The bold carrier attacks that Lehman and his allies envision would amount to no more than "naval pinpricks," even if successful. The "real prize" in any Soviet-American contest would be Eurasia (Western Europe, Japan, the Persian Gulf), Komer insists; and even if the U.S. Navy "swept the Soviets from all the seven seas," Moscow could easily triumph on the ground in the all-important Eurasian theaters.

Indeed, Komer argues, "the single greatest remaining U.S. strategic advantage over the U.S.S.R. is that we are blessed with many rich [European] allies, while the Soviets have only a handful of poor ones."

Komer recognizes the need for a stronger Navy. But control of the seas, he suggests, can be won with the 13 aircraft carriers that the Navy already has. The four to five new U.S. carrier battle groups (carriers plus support ships) now planned will cost some \$17 billion each. Spending that much would lock the United States into a heavily maritime strategy.

Komer favors diverting these extra dollars to continental forces—ground troops, tanks, support aircraft—for the defense of Western Europe, Japan, and the Persian Gulf. He would also demand greater efforts from our allies. A revitalized Western coalition, Komer believes, would have little to fear from Moscow, but the Soviets would have little to fear in Europe or elsewhere from a United States that pursued a unilateral, almost irrelevant, maritime defense.

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**“Processing the News:  
How People Tame the Information Tide.”**

Longman Inc., 1560 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036. 241 pp.  
\$27.50 cloth, \$15.95 paper.  
Author: Doris A. Graber

Some critics of the nation's news media believe that America's newspapers and TV networks are omnipotent persuaders, capable of molding public opinion at will.

Graber, who teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago, studied 21 residents of Evanston, Illinois, for a full year (1976) to see just how much influence the news media have. Her conclusion: not much.

Graber's subjects kept regular "diaries" of their TV and newspaper consumption and were interviewed periodically. They had developed a simple solution to the "information explosion"—they blocked out most of what the news media told them. In interviews, they could remember only one of the 15 to 18 stories on TV newscasts that they had viewed the night before. They paid more attention to newspapers, reading about one-third of the stories on any given day.

(Interestingly, Graber's subjects were convinced that they got most of their news from TV, but when asked where they first learned of a particular story, nearly half cited a newspaper. Only 27 percent pointed to TV.)

Graber's subjects did not, however,

sort the news randomly. They tended to focus on information that could be fitted into their existing mental "schemas"—they paid more attention to information that confirmed what they already believed. Graber calls this the "I thought so" syndrome.

These schemas were fairly impervious to news-media influence. For example, the 21 subjects viewed crime as largely the work of young, non-white males, even though 70 percent of the criminals identified in Evanston-area newspapers were white men over age 25. Nor could the news media make people pay attention to subjects that did not interest them. While foreign developments, such as Soviet and Cuban activity in Africa, were constantly in the news during 1976, few of Graber's subjects could recall much about particular events overseas.

Graber makes clear that Americans do not screen out *all* new information. Average folk, she says, customarily extract "enough meaningful political information from the flood of news . . . to perform the moderate number of citizenship functions [e.g., voting] that American society expects of them."

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**“Violence and Crime in Cross-National Perspective.”**

Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. 06520. 341 pp.  
\$30.00.

Authors: Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner

Common sense suggests that big cities have higher crime rates than do small cities. Statistics bear this out. Yet data on individual cities show that crime does not always grow in tandem with increases in population. How, then, do big cities get high crime rates?

Archer and Gartner, sociologists at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Britain's Brunel University, respectively, studied crime reports from 110 countries and 44 cities for the years 1900 to 1970 to answer this and other questions.

Oddly, data from 34 of the cities showed that while crime, as measured by homicides, did indeed grow worse as the city expanded in one-half of the cases, it *fell* in the other half. The authors argue that what is important is not a city's absolute size but its size relative to the rest of the country—how “urban” the city is. Once a town crosses the urban threshold and becomes a “city”—however that is defined in different lands—it will suffer higher crime.

They note that while New York and Paris both had roughly seven million residents in 1970, the sidewalks of New York were considerably more dangerous. In the French capital, there were an average of .61 murders annually per 100,000 people between 1966 and 1970; the rate for New York was 11.54. Both cities suffered homicide rates nearly double their national averages. Thus, by French standards, Paris was a dangerous high-crime zone.

Is the death penalty an effective deterrent? Archer and Gartner contend that it is not. In eight of the 14 nations in their study that banned capital pun-

ishment, homicides actually dropped in the year following abolition. Even many years after executions were discontinued, only five nations—including Austria, Canada, Denmark, England, and New Zealand—experienced more murders. There may be good arguments for the death penalty (e.g., retribution), the authors say, but deterrence is not one of them.

Homicides almost always rise in the wake of war, the authors found—even though war takes the lives of those who are statistically most likely to commit murder: young men. In only seven of the 50 cases that the authors examined did a national homicide rate drop in the five years following a war. Another seven cases showed no change; the remainder showed increases.

Winners and losers of wars both suffered higher postwar homicide rates. In terms of violent crime, the citizens of countries that had lost the fewest men during each war suffered less severely during the peace that followed. War, they conclude, legitimizes violence and temporarily boosts postwar murder rates.

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### “Population Profile of the United States: 1982.”

U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. 79 pp. \$3.00. (Series P-23, No. 130).

In 1982, the median age of the U.S. population reached 30.6 years, the highest ever in American history. The proportion of the population over age 65 grew to 11.6 percent—another all-time high.

These are among the findings in a U.S. Bureau of the Census summary of recent demographic trends in the United States.

The total U.S. population reached 233.3 million at the close of 1982, a one percent increase for the year. (The

South and West accounted for 92 percent of the population gain.) According to the Bureau's “middle projection,” U.S. population should peak at about 309 million in the year 2050; Americans' median age is projected to be 41.6 that year. By 2030, the proportion of the population over age 65 will have climbed from 11.6 percent to 21.1 percent. And population growth will be highest among those over 85.

The graying of the U.S. population



*First came the Baby Boom, now there is a lesser "Baby Blip": Births in the United States numbered 4.3 million in 1957, 3.7 million in 1982.*

is chiefly the product of changing "lifestyle" patterns among the younger set. The maturing Baby-Boom generation is marrying later and having fewer children than its predecessors—the average childbearing rate per woman has dropped to 1.8. (Nevertheless, that represents a slight increase over the nadir of 1.7 reached in 1976.) But because there are so many Baby-Boom grown-ups, the *number* of births has been on the upswing since 1976. There were about 3.2 million births that year, as compared to 3.7 million in 1982.

There are signs that increasing numbers of Americans may choose never to marry. Among women in their early thirties in 1982, for example, 11.6 percent had never been married, nearly a 100 percent increase over the 1970 level. Just over 17 per-

cent of the men in this age group in 1982 had never walked down the aisle, also close to a twofold increase.

Meanwhile, divorce statistics are far from encouraging. The "divorce ratio"—the number of divorced persons per 1,000 married people—more than doubled between 1970 and 1982. There were 47 divorced adults per 1,000 married folk in 1970, 114 in 1982. (The divorce ratio is a conservative gauge, since people who have divorced and remarried—which is the pattern in most marital breakups—are counted as married people.)

Today's trends are not, however, set in concrete. While the Census Bureau's best guess is that U.S. population will peak at about 309 million, for example, its high and low estimates cover a very great range—from 429 million souls to 262 million.