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### Book Reviews

Ojserkis, Raymond P.

#### **Beginnings of the Cold War Arms Race: The Truman Administration and the U.S. Arms Build-Up.**

London: Praeger, 2003. 248pp.

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This is a detailed account of decisions relating to the US military build-up during the early Cold War. Ojserkis focuses on a central thesis that “without the Korean War, or an incident similar to it, it is doubtful that America would have engaged in an arms build-up or deployed its forces around the globe” (p.3). The argument is constructed by tracing post-war policy through: demobilisation to the development of NSC 68; the outbreak of the Korean War; the deployment of troops in Europe; and the actualization of planned defence spending. To develop his argument, Ojserkis poses a number of supplementary questions including: whether the US were in a position of relative weakness vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in conventional forces; how the shift in policy to build-up forces was achieved and financed; why Congress supported troop deployment to Europe; and whether the decision to engage in an arms build-up was a sound one.

These supplementary questions aid the development of the argument that the Korean War was pivotal in the decision to start the Arms Build-up. Ojserkis is not the first scholar to make the connection between the Korean War and the increase in military spending. However, Ojserkis’ detailed analysis emphasises Truman’s role within the decision to engage in military build-up and explores the rationale for subsequent troop deployment to Europe. This analysis is based on close reading of documents from numerous sources tracking the changes in the drafting of policy and budgetary requirements.

The strength of the work is in the analysis of the change in military spending during peace time as a result of the Korean War. However, while Ojserkis provides a balanced approach to the discussion of policymaking, including the ideological elements of NSC 68, occasionally the analysis strays from an analysis of purely military factors to engage with other points of conflict within the Cold War. These sections fail to live up to the standard Ojserkis has set for himself in his analysis of decisions directly relating to military capability. For example, there is a one page discussion of CIA and OPC operations that hints the increase in these operations can be attributed to the Korean War. The evidence offered is limited to a brief mention of the rise in financial support after 1949. Given the very brief discussion attached to such comments they appear unnecessary and weak asides to the central argument.

The intent of this book is to demonstrate the factors that were pivotal in the decision to engage in the military build-up following the outbreak of the Korean War, and in this respect Ojserkis is successful. However, away from the central thesis of his work, Ojserkis is lured into making comments about other elements of the Cold War that are not as strong as the body of his research. Despite these minor, unnecessary, limitations this book provides a clear interpretation of a series of decisions that regularly receive only limited attention in analyses of Truman's Presidency or the Cold War.