

Losing Military Supremacy: The Myopia of American Strategic Planning

Author Andrei Martyanov, book review by The Saker, 8 July 2018

The fact that the US is facing a profound crisis, possibly the worst one in its history, is accepted by most observers, except maybe the most delusional ones. Most Americans definitely know that. In fact, if there is one thing upon which both those who supported Trump and those who hate him with a passion can agree on, it would be that his election is a clear proof of a profound crisis (I would argue that the election of Obama before also had, as one of its main causes, the very same systemic crisis). When speaking of this crisis, most people will mention the deindustrialization, the drop in real income, the lack of well-paid jobs, healthcare, crime, immigration, pollution, education, and a myriad of other contributing factors. But of all the aspects of the “American dream”, the single most resilient one has been the myth of the US military as “the finest fighting force in history”. In this new book, Andrei Martyanov not only comprehensively debunks this myth, he explains step by step how this myth was created and why it is collapsing now. This is no small feat, especially in a relatively short book (225 pages) which is very well written and accessible to everyone, not just military specialists.

Martyanov takes a systematic and step-by-step approach: first, he defines military power, then he explains where the myth of US military superiority came from and how the US rewriting of the history of WWII resulted in a complete misunderstanding, especially at the top political levels, of the nature of modern warfare. He then discusses the role ideology and the Cold War played in further exacerbating the detachment of US leaders from reality. Finally, he demonstrates how a combination of delusional narcissism and outright corruption resulted in a US military capable of wasting truly phenomenal sums of money on “defense” while at the same time resulting in an actual force unable to win a war against anything but a weak and defenseless enemy.

That is not to say that the US military has not fought in many wars and won. It did, but in the words of Martyanov:

Surely when America fought against a third-rate adversary it was possible to rain death from the skies, and then roll over its forces, if any remained by that time, with very little difficulty and casualties. That will work in the future too against that type of adversary—similar in size and flimsiness of Iraqi Forces circa 2003. But Ledeen’s Doctrine had one major flaw—one adult cannot continue to go around the sandbox constantly fighting children and pretend to be good at fighting adults.

The main problem for the US today is that there are very few of those third-rate adversaries left out there and that those who the US is trying to bring to submission now are either near-

peer or even peer adversaries. Martyanov specifically lists the factors which make that kind of adversary so different from those the US fought in the past:

1. Modern adversaries have command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities equal to or better than the US ones.
2. Modern adversaries have electronic warfare capabilities equal to or better than the US ones
3. Modern adversaries have weapon systems equal to or better than the US ones.
4. Modern adversaries have air defenses which greatly limit the effectiveness of US airpower.
5. Modern adversaries have long-range subsonic, supersonic and hypersonic cruise missiles which present a huge threat to the USN, bases, staging areas and even the entire US mainland.

In the book, all these points are substantiated with numerous and specific examples which I am not repeating here for the sake of brevity.

One could be forgiven for not being aware of any of these facts, at least if one considers the kind of nonsense written by the US corporate media or, for that matter, by the so-called “experts” (another interesting topic Martyanov discusses in some detail). Still, one can live in an imaginary world only as long as reality does not come crashing in, be it in the form of criminally overpriced and useless weapon systems or in the form of painful military defeats. The current hysteria about Russia as the Evil Mordor which is the culprit for everything and anything bad (real or imaginary) happening to the US is mostly due to the fact that Russia, in total contradiction to all the “expert” opinions, not only did not crash or turn into a “gas station masquerading as a country” with her economy “in tatters”, but succeeded in developing a military which, for a small fraction of the US military budget, whose armed forces are in reality far more capable than the US forces.

I realize that this last statement is quite literally “unthinkable” for many Americans and I submit that the very fact that this is so literally unthinkable greatly contributed to making this possible in the first place: when you are so damn sure that by some kind of miracle of history, or God’s will, or Manifest Destiny or any other supernatural reason, you are inherently and by definition superior and generally “better” than everybody else you are putting yourself in great danger of being defeated. This is as true for Israel as it is for the US. I would also add that in the course of the West’s history this “crashing in of reality” in the comfy world of narcissistic delusion often came in the form of a Russian soldier defeating the putatively much superior master race of the day (from the Crusaders to the Nazis). Hence the loathing which western ruling elites always had for everything Russian. In this book, Martyanov explains why, in spite of the absolutely catastrophic 1990s, the Russians succeeded in developing a modern and highly capable combat force in a record

time. There are two main reasons for this: first, unlike their US counterparts, Russian weapons are designed to kill, not to make money and, second, Russians understand warfare because they understand what war really is. This latest argument might look circular, but it is not: Russians are all acutely aware of what war really means and, crucially, they are actually willing to make personal sacrifices to either avoid or, at least, win wars. In contrast, Americans have no experience of real warfare (that is warfare in defense of their own land, family and friends) at all. For Americans warfare is killing the other guy in his own country, preferably from afar or above, while making a ton of money in the process. For Russians, warfare is simply about surviving at any and all cost. The difference couldn't be greater.

The difference in weapons systems acquisition is also simple: since US wars never really put the people of the US at risk, the consequences of developing under-performing weapons systems were never catastrophic. The profits made, however, were immense. Hence the kind of criminally overpriced and useless weapons system like the F-35, the Littoral Combat Ship or, of course, the fantastically expensive and no less fantastically vulnerable aircraft carriers. The Russian force planners had very different priorities: not only did they fully realize that the failure to produce an excellently performing weapons system could result in their country being devastated and occupied (not to mention their families and themselves either enslaved or killed), they also realized that they could never match the Pentagon in terms of spending. So what they did was to design comparatively much cheaper weapons systems which could destroy or render useless the output of the multi-trillion dollar US military-industrial complex. This is how Russian missiles made the entire US ABM program and the US carrier-centric Navy pretty much obsolete as well as how Russian air defenses turned putatively "invisible" US aircraft into targets or how Russian diesel-electric submarines are threatening US nuclear attack subs. All that at a tiny fraction of what the US taxpayer spends on "defense". Here again, Martyanov gives plenty of detailed examples.

Martyanov's book will deeply irritate and even outrage those for whom the US narcissistic culture of axiomatic superiority has become an integral part of their identity. But for everybody else this book is an absolute must-have because the future of our entire planet is at stake here: the question is not whether the US Empire is collapsing, but what the consequences of this collapse will be for our planet. Right now, the US military has turned into a "hollow force" which simply cannot perform its mission, especially since that mission is, as defined by US politicians, the control of the entire planet. There is a huge discrepancy between the perceived and the actual capabilities of the US military and the only way to bridge this gap are, of course, nuclear weapons. This is why the last chapter in the book is entitled "The Threat of a Massive American Military Miscalculation". In this chapter, Martyanov names the real enemy of both the Russian and the American people – the US

political elites and, especially, the Neocons: they are destroying the US as a country and they are putting all of mankind at risk of nuclear annihilation.

The above summary does not do justice to Martyanov's truly seminal book. I can only say that I consider this book as an absolutely indispensable "must read" for every person in the US who loves his/her country and for every person who believes that wars, especially nuclear ones, must be avoided at all costs. Just like many others (I think of Paul Craig Roberts), Martyanov is warning us that "the day of reckoning is upon us" and that the risks of war are very real, even if for most of us such an event is also unthinkable. Those in the US who consider themselves patriots should read this book with special attention, not only because it correctly identifies the main threat to the US, but also because it explains in detail what circumstances have resulted in the current crisis. Waving (mostly Chinese made) US flags is simply not an option anymore, neither is looking away and pretending that none of this is real. Martyanov's book will also be especially interesting to those in the US armed forces who are observing the tremendous decline of US military power from inside. Who better than a former Soviet officer could not only explain, but also understand the mechanisms which have made such a decline possible?

You can also get both versions of the book (paper & electronic)

here: <http://claritypress.com/Martyanov.html>

The book is also available on Amazon as a pre-order

here: <https://www.amazon.com/Losing-Military-Supremacy-American-Strategic/dp/0998694754/>

It is scheduled to become available on September 1st.