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Robert M. Farley, *Grounded: The Case for Abolishing the United States Air Force*. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2014. Pp. 244. ISBN 978-0-8131-4495-5.

Review by Christopher Rein, U.S. Air Command and Staff College (crein1992@gmail.com).

In *Grounded*, political scientist Robert Farley (Univ. of Kentucky) offers a thoughtful critique of the rationale for a separate United States Air Force (hereafter, USAF). It should be read by military and political leaders alike for its thought-provoking discussion of national defense reorganization and the priorities and potentials of the country's military services at a time when many policy-makers seem poised to curtail the prevalent militarism that has shaped US foreign policy for the past seventy-five years.

Farley surveys and clarifies the principal arguments of those who question the use of airpower in general and the need for a separate Air Force in particular. But his argument for reform, the disestablishment of an independent Air Force, and the absorption of its resources, roles and missions by the US Army and Navy, is not well supported by the evidence he musters. For example, he only superficially discusses (in his conclusion) the "Canadian Model," in which all services are joined into a single national "Defense Forces" entity. This is regrettable, since the Canadian Model holds the best promise of greater efficiency, less redundancy, and restrained inter-service infighting over procurement programs and budgetary issues. Thus, Farley's work introduces a range of options available for future defense reorganization, without identifying a definitive or even viable solution.

The author relies mostly on secondary literature rather than primary-source research into either US or foreign defense establishments, budgets, and organizational disputes. He structures his book both chronologically and thematically. The first three chapters chronicle the relationship between the country's air arm and the rest of the defense establishment (1. "American Airpower and the Military Services"), the USAF's own, perhaps excessive and detrimental independent streak (2. "Air Force Independence and Air Force Culture"), and the questionable and evolving relationship between airpower and the morality of war (3. "Airpower, Morality and Lawfare"). The next four chapters offer a more traditional, chronological focus, tracing the Royal Air Force's origins and their impact on the American defense establishment (4. "The Struggle for the RAF and the Roots of American Airpower"), the emergence of the USAF (5. "From Army Air Service to Air Force"), the service's struggles in the atomic era (6. "American Airpower in the Era of Limited War") and, finally, airpower's renaissance as the weapon of choice in the "small wars" of the last quarter-century (7. "Global Reach, Global Power in the Post-Cold War Era"). The final two chapters (8. "Drone Warfare" and 9. "The Way Forward") return to thematic content, exploring the significance of aerial robotics and the service's alleged reluctance to embrace that mission and offering a detailed dismemberment of the USAF's major commands and functions. In chapter 9, Farley also both dismisses the Canadian Model ("all the soldiers this writer has talked to, would have to state that [it] was an unmitigated disaster" [177]) and heralds it ("Canada continues to employ airpower both in the service of hemispheric defense and in support of Canadian ground and naval operations around the world" [179]).

Farley's argument for the abolition of the USAF is three-pronged. First, the *raison d'être* for an independent air force—the ability to resolve conflict without commitment of ground or naval forces—has proved illusory. Second, as a discrete service, the USAF has exacerbated bureaucratic duplication of certain functions of the other two service branches and the bitter wrangling over procurement and budgetary matters. Finally, the mirage of a "cheap and easy" victory through airpower has too often led Washington to engage in ill-advised military adventures.

It is inarguable that the USAF cannot decide wars alone. Nor can either the Navy or Army, yet Farley does not therefore call for their elimination. Further, were those services to take over many of the USAF's current functions, including, for instance, supervision of ICBMs and cyber warfare initiatives, such "sharing"

of assets and responsibilities would not yield, as Farley believes, cost savings and other efficiencies. Both remaining services would have to secure funding and allocate assets to air defense and many other missions in direct competition with each other.

Farley's discerning review of the Army Air Force's claim that it could win wars independently shows his familiarity with the relevant literature and the ideological zeal that motivated many early proponents of a new, independent USAF. Over the first century of manned flight, airpower alone has not proved sufficient to secure decisive victory. Since the creation of the USAF in 1947, its officials have had the freedom to pursue their own strategic ideas in a period of dramatic change in the history of warfare.¹ The advent of nuclear weapons, in particular, has forced a re-evaluation of the ways and means of warfare; not surprisingly, the first generation of political and military leaders in the atomic age got several things wrong. USAF commanders initially concentrated too much on strategic rather than tactical issues (5). Similarly, after Vietnam, the Army failed to formulate effective counterinsurgency doctrine and returned to a preoccupation with conventional war-making; this emphasis served it well during the Gulf War (1990–91), but not in America's wars in Iraq (2003–11) and Afghanistan (2001–14). Farley, nonetheless, issues no call for the disestablishment of the Army (or its integration into a far more agile and responsive Marine Corps). The fact that first generation USAF planners and practitioners made some mistakes does not mean the architects of the 1947 National Security Act were likewise in error.

In fact, there were valid reasons for creating an independent USAF in 1947. Both the Army and the Navy secretaries, as cabinet members, had direct access to the commander in chief, without having to go through the Secretary of Defense. Farley never indicates whether he would prefer reverting to this arrangement, if the USAF were eliminated, or leaving the Secretary of Defense in charge of the two remaining military departments. The new USAF did successfully consolidate various roles and missions, including continental air defense and the development of a nuclear missile deterrent, the two most critical important defense considerations of the Cold War. This was hardly a record of "sixty years of failure" (187).

The nationalist insurgency in Vietnam was not the fault of a flawed American defense organization. Further, the Army and USAF did cooperate in the acquisition of aircraft and other resources needed to implement "AirLand Battle," including, for example, the A-10 Thunderbolt II close air support aircraft, the C-5 Galaxy transport plane, and the E-8 command and control aircraft, all of which proved their worth during the Gulf War. And, more recently, the Navy and USAF have collaborated in "AirSea Battle" operations, in which Air Force assets protect and support the fleet with long-range reconnaissance and "over the horizon" strike capabilities. Where Farley sees only failure, other observers find cause to foresee an era of extended American global influence or, at worst, preservation of national security in a perilous time of international terrorism.

Farley's plan for resorption of the USAF into the other two services would risk a recurrence of the bicameral gridlock of the "War" and "Navy" departments that plagued American military affairs for the century and a half prior to 1947. Rather than easing bureaucratic strife over roles, missions, and procurements, we would see rampant inefficiencies damage the ability to wage the aerial warfare so essential to operations on both land and sea. Farley himself admits that "every military mission requires aircraft.... Airpower is critical to the national security of the United States [N]o professional force in the world can operate without sufficient air support" (1, 5, 188). Permanently delegating responsibility for the supervision of airpower between competing services with their own specific roles and missions would hamper consolidation of assets in times of emergency, complicate leadership functions, lead to logistical waste, and degrade support functions.

Having spent some twenty years as both a naval flight officer and Air Force navigator, I have witnessed at firsthand the relative importance each service places on its aviation arm. While the Navy certainly em-

1. Farley argues (3–4) that airmen have rejected Clausewitz's theories of warfare, at their peril. But recent works have stressed the Prussian theorist's relevance to airpower in light of its effects on ground forces. Cf. Sir Julian Corbett's Clausewitzian theory of naval warfare, highlighting the destruction of fielded forces and the ability to influence events ashore. See further my *The North African Air Campaign: U.S. Army Forces from El Alamein to Salerno* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2012).

employs its aircraft with great expertise, naval aviators remain second-class citizens even within their own service. Sailors had gone to sea for millennia before the invention of the airplane; it is not surprising that the US Navy should still place a very high premium on nautical skills. Its aviators must complete “disassociated tours” away from their aircraft as part of a ship’s company. They may not even wear their special “flight suits” off base. Naval air doctrine still emphasizes the primacy of the fleet over ground-based or joint operations. Granting the Navy control over strategic air assets and cyberspace communications systems might well result in a disproportionate stress on the support these elements might provide for fleet operations rather than the defense establishment as a whole.

Those in favor of reorganization or reform of the structure of US military services would do well to proceed with caution and to emulate the framers of the Goldwater–Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Aside from ushering in an era of unprecedented service cooperation, Goldwater–Nichols proved that politicians from across the aisle could identify and implement solutions that have served the American public well in the long term. It is worth mentioning that both men served in the Second World War, Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona) as an Army Air Force transport pilot and William F. Nichols (D-Alabama) as an artillery officer who lost a leg to a land mine in the brutal Hürtgen Forest campaign. If these two disparate individuals—one a wealthy Republican scion of department store owners, the other a “Boll Weevil” Democrat agronomist—could find common ground to resuscitate the US military establishment in the 1980s, today’s military professionals should be able to work together in support of American military interests, regardless of their ideological or institutional loyalties.