



**Eugene Gholz, "The Curtiss-Wright Corporation and Cold War-Era Defense Procurement: A Challenge to Military-Industrial Complex Theory", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Winter 2000): 35-75.**

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Michael Barnhart provides a good, concise summary of my article in the *Journal of Cold War Studies* in his review. In general, I want to stay out of any inter-disciplinary polemics on the value of theory: I appreciate Barnhart's restraint when he suggests that social scientists should be weaned away from "a preoccupation with theory." I would just note briefly that I would not support his wish that my article have that effect -- and, in fact, I am interested in the Curtiss-Wright history primarily because I think it provides a critical test of the Military-Industrial Complex framework.

That said, the history itself is intrinsically interesting, and I want to clarify briefly two points that Barnhart mentions with respect to Curtiss-Wright and Cold War history. First, I address Curtiss-Wright's "well-deserved reputation for refusing to cooperate in co-production or sub-contracting arrangements" in the context of a possible way to salvage the MIC theory. Early on (primarily in the 1940s), Curtiss-Wright did have problems dealing with other firms, and those problems alienated some of its allies in the industry. Bad relationships with peers might have hampered Curtiss-Wright's participation in a winning political coalition, which is one key mechanism by which the MIC might seize influence. Perhaps Curtiss-Wright's failure to collaborate well could be a way to reconcile the company's failure with the core argument that a political MIC coalition set procurement policy. However, I argue in the article that by the 1950s, when Curtiss-Wright really collapsed, the company had learned to be a team player. It expanded its subcontracting relationships, undid its troublesome vertical integration, and generally cleaned up its act. So even the "repaired" MIC theory fails to account for Curtiss-Wright's decline.

Second, my article explicitly addresses four hypotheses about Cold War defense procurement rather than the three Barnhart mentions. He correctly notes that I discuss the MIC, a bureaucratic-strategic theory, and a technological determinist theory. But I also include a "market" theory, which in many respects is what Barnhart calls for in his review when he recommends a focus on management. The market theory that I examine would explain Curtiss-Wright's collapse because their managers could not satisfy Wall Street -- that is, Curtiss-Wright could have failed for the economic / business strategy reasons that they teach managers about in business school. But I argue that the evidence does not support that contention. The management shake-up in 1947-48 to which Barnhart alludes cannot explain changes in Curtiss-Wright's business strategy or their relationships to their key customers. Barnhart is right that I blame management in large part for Curtiss-Wright's demise: I think that they believed in the MIC theory and that was a key mistake. But that is hardly a generalizable failing separate from the main point of the article: the MIC theory was wrong.

Ultimately, I think Barnhart -- in mentioning my "implicit" emphasis on "the role of procurement decision makers--meaning senior military officers" -- is pointing to the same bureaucratic-strategic theory that I propose. I agree whole-heartedly that we should study the procurement bureaucrats and their incentives in studying Cold War weapons acquisition. My point is that the mechanism by which those bureaucrats gain the freedom to dominate the decision-making process has to do with the level of strategic threat faced by the United States and the links that they draw between the weapons that they hope to purchase and America's national military strategy. As far as I can tell, Barnhart and I agree in our overarching views of Cold War defense procurement.

Thank you to H-Diplo for hosting discussions of articles from the *Journal of Cold War Studies*. There should be more forums like this one. And thank you especially to Michael Barnhart for reviewing my article.

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