

Naval War College Review

Volume 47
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 11

1994

"Our New National Security Strategy: America Promises to Come Back" and "Reconstituting America's Defense: The New U.S. National Security Strategy"

James L. George

James J. Tritten

Paul N. Stockton

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

George, James L.; Tritten, James J.; and Stockton, Paul N. (1994) ""Our New National Security Strategy: America Promises to Come Back" and "Reconstituting America's Defense: The New U.S. National Security Strategy"," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 47 : No. 2 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol47/iss2/11>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

BOOK REVIEWS

A book reviewer occupies a position of special responsibility and trust. He is to summarize, set in context, describe strengths, and point out weaknesses. As a surrogate for us all, he assumes a heavy obligation which it is his duty to discharge with reason and consistency.

Admiral H.G. Rickover

"A Time of Change"

Tritten, James J. *Our New National Security Strategy: America Promises to Come Back*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1992. 196pp. \$45

Tritten, James J. and Stockton, Paul N., eds. *Reconstituting America's Defense: The New U.S. National Security Strategy*. New York: Praeger, 1992. 178pp. \$42.95

ON 2 AUGUST 1990 PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH arguably made the third most important post-World War II speech on national security, ranking with John Foster Dulles's 1954 "Massive Retaliation" and Robert McNamara's 1962 "Flexible Response" announcements. Yet Bush's defense strategy and its analysis have generally gone unnoticed by the press and much of the academic community, with the exception of a few scholars such as Professor James Tritten, formerly of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, even though it became the basis for our defense policy—a policy which, during this important transition era from the Cold War, to date still forms the foundation for the Clinton administration's defense strategy.

There are three reasons why the policy has generally gone unnoticed. First, as many readers may remember, the president's speech was given on the same day that Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait, and that event, of course, dominated the front pages. Second, and perhaps more important, instead of a snappy two-word catch-phrase like "Massive Retaliation" or "Flexible Response," the new national security strategy has four "Foundations," eight "Strategic Principles," and a "Base Force Framework" that is further broken down into four conceptual force packages and supporting capabilities totaling over twenty different concepts. Undoubtedly this reflects the new jointness approach, but from a public relations standpoint it brings to mind the old saw that a camel is a horse designed by a committee. The result is that with no formal, sexy, title,

it was simply known as the “new” national security policy—hardly memorable. The third reason is simply that defense news has moved to the back burner, and that is the real reason why these books are so important. They are, to the best of this reviewer’s knowledge, the only works on the Bush national security strategy and are therefore a must-read for anyone interested in defense matters. Despite the similarity of the titles, the books are complementary. Jim Tritten’s *Our New National Security Strategy* focuses on the new strategy itself, whereas *Reconstituting America’s Defense*, a collection of essays, looks at functional problems such as new intelligence requirements and the possible changes in Asia and Europe.

Our New National Security Strategy opens with a chapter on the sources of the new policy, followed by two chapters on strategy. Tritten explains that the new strategy has four foundations: Strategic Deterrence and Defense, Forward Presence, Crisis Response, and Reconstitution. But, as he notes when quoting former secretary of defense Dick Cheney, the real change is that “We no longer believe it is necessary for us to be prepared to fight a major land war in Europe.” This led initially to a two-year, and then an eight-to-ten-year warning-time assumption for any possible European-centered global war with the former Soviet Union. During this long period, the United States could, if necessary, rebuild or reconstitute wholly new forces. Therefore, reconstitution may be the real key. Tritten points out that it is not just mobilization or regeneration or reliance on the Reserves but could mean totally new forces.

Another chapter explains the so-called Base Force Framework, which consists of four force packages (Strategic, Atlantic, Pacific, and Contingency) and four supporting capabilities (Space, Transportation, Reconstitution, and Research and Development). This chapter also provides information on the actual military units that would be assigned to each force package for presence, crisis response, and reconstitution. Although many readers may be familiar with the overall Base Force numbers, which for the Navy was 451 ships, this chapter goes into considerably more detail than that.

The following two chapters cover new “Nato Initiatives” and “The Former Soviet Union”; next is a most interesting chapter on the “Impact on the Navy and Marine Corps.” Tritten notes, “it appears that the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps should and will change the least of all the military services,” by virtue of such missions as crisis response, which has been the Navy’s bread and butter since World War II. However, he also states that the Navy cannot ignore the new changes, since “The Air Force appears to have accepted the coming debate over roles and missions.” There are also discussions on the changes in each of the main Navy forces: submarines, aviation, and surface combatants. The book concludes with interesting chapters on “Issues for Discussion,” “Critical Success Factors,” and a questioning “Defense Business as Usual?” All should be required reading for the Clinton team.

120 Naval War College Review

Although *Reconstituting America's Defense* does have an introduction by Tritten summarizing the new strategy, most of this work contains completely new information.

Tom Grasseley looks at the problems regarding intelligence requirements in the post-Cold War period, reminding us of the historic fallacy of relying on two-year warnings. Asian expert Ed Olsen looks at the new American strategy in the Pacific, while European and naval expert Jan Breemer provides a detailed chapter on "The Search for a Mission," about U.S. forces in Europe. Former START negotiator Bruce MacDonald writes on "Strategic Nuclear Policy in a Time of Change," noting every alteration that has taken place in that still vital area.

As a former Capitol Hill staffer, this reviewer enjoyed Paul Stockton's chapter on "The Congressional Response." In his discussion on "Pork and Policy," Stockton rightly states that "Policy considerations, and not pork alone, play a crucial role in shaping congressional actions," a point that is sometimes overlooked. Although the B-2 bomber was a "job bonanza" it simply did not fit into the new post-Cold War policy in most congressmen's minds.

These books are not without flaws, the major problem being that rapidly moving events have dated some of the facts, although the Clinton administration has made few strategy changes. In fact, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin's "Bottom Up Review" of defense, made public in the summer of 1993, has been described as something of which President Bush would have approved.

However, independent of Aspin's review, these books are important for three reasons: they represent the history and thoughts of those in charge of national security during the transition from the Cold War; they can serve as important benchmarks for judging any new policy; and finally, both books are well documented and have excellent bibliographies that should prove indispensable for scholars in the future. In short, if you are interested in national security, both works should definitely be on your bookshelf.

James L. George
author of
*The U.S. Navy in the 1990s:
Alternatives for Action*

Brown, Frederic. *The U.S. Army in Transition II: Landpower in the Information Age*. McLean, Va.: Brassey's (US), 1993. 205pp. \$24

This is a book about land power and the need for vision in changing times. As an integral and frequently decisive component of national military power, land