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National Interests and Presidential Leadership: The Setting of Priorities

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8. These facts have to be analyzed by each person for himself . . . .

Linebacker II, one of the USAF's Southeast Asia monographs, is an excellent acount of men at war, complete with vignettes of individual participation and even transcripts of radio and intercom transmissions over downtown Hanoi. It is a testimonial to the leadership, courage, loyalty and comradeship of the men of the Strategic Air Command and an important piece of the Vietnam puzzle that someday will all be put together.

R. CRAYTON
Captain, U.S. Navy

Monsarrat, Nicholas. *The Master Mariner: Running Proud.* New York: Morrow, 1978. 524pp.

Twenty-seven years after the *The Cruel Sea,* perhaps the finest maritime novel of World War II, Nicholas Monsarrat writes once more of the sea. This time, however, his scope is nothing less than a fictional history of British seafaring. *The Master Mariner: Running Proud* is the first of two volumes of this audacious and generally successful effort.

The main weakness of the book is partly a result of Monsarrat's scheme to tie the 400-year history together. His protagonist, Matthew Lawe, is a fairly ordinary British seaman whose act of cowardice during Drake's engagement with the Spanish Armada, combined with a witch's curse, dooms him to sail the seas indefinitely, until his sin is expurgated. Thus Lawe never ages, never dies, and really never develops as a character through the first 200 years encompassed by the novel. As a result, unlike *The Cruel Sea* (or even Monsarrat's excellent *The Kappillan of Malta,* his fictional recounting of the World War II siege of Malta), there is no achievement here in the portrayal of the main character's personal struggle. Instead, the novel's success and appeal lie in Monsarrat's dramatic and moving recreation of great British seafaring events, and in the portraits of the men responsible for them. We voyage not only with Drake, but with Henry Hudson in his last attempt to find the Northwest Passage, with Capt. James Cook on his navigation of the St. Lawrence River to take General Wolfe to the siege of Quebec, with Cook in his later voyage into the South Pacific, and eventually with Nelson in his great triumphs and death. Although some of these episodes can't by themselves be as good as the books they summarize or highlight—Southey's *Life of Nelson,* for example, or Esquemeling's *Buccaneers of America,* for Lawe also sails as a pirate with Henry Morgan in the Caribbean—others are probably better. In any case, each is suitably dramatic and often moving. Certainly the account of the Spanish Armada that begins the book gives a good sense of the stakes involved in that battle, while the account of Nelson's death at Trafalgar ending the book has emotional power second to none. At the same time, one gets a good feeling for the typical life of a British seaman: his suffering, occasional heroism and, especially, his pleasures.

Thus, while this novel cannot be put in the class of a unified literary epic, and while it is clearly meant for a popular audience, it is nonetheless well worth reading. As a relatively brief and highly palatable recounting of this particular era of British maritime history, it is probably unsurpassed. When the second volume appears in a few years, that history will be complete. From the proposed title of that second volume, *Darken Ship,* it seems that Nicholas Monsarrat believes the great age of British seafaring is essentially over.

ROBERT SHENK
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Naval Reserve

Nuechterlein, Donald E. *National Interests and Presidential Leadership; The Setting of Priorities.* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978. 346pp.

As suggested by the title, this work comprises a suggestion to return to

National Interest as the level of analysis in the understanding of international politics. This is noteworthy chiefly because the entire approach was so discredited when taken to extreme by the so-called Power Realist school. In reaction to the obvious shortcomings of that approach, most younger scholars in the field turned away from National Interest as a level of analysis and shifted their intellectual focus to Bureaucratic Politics, Interest Group Politics, or some other focal point where International Politics was an *outcome* of the process being examined; or to the National Actors themselves, where international politics was an *input* to actions of the Actor being examined. It is time that the concept was reexamined.

Nuechterlein classifies national interests in four basic categories: *Defense* interests, *economic* interests, *world order* interests, and *ideological* interests. He also suggests four categories to assess the intensities of interests that compete for attention and resources at any moment: *Survival, Vital, Major,* and *Peripheral.*

With Interests as ordinates and Intensities as abscissa, he produces a matrix for comparing clashing interests between national actors. This may be of some use in very obvious cases, but the categorization of an interest and the assignment of intensities presume a homogeneity in assessment on both sides that is lacking in most serious cases. "Rationality" is a concept that must be considered in the plural case in international politics in order to avoid the blunders that have produced some of the more unfortunate wars of modern history. We can ill afford them in the presence of nuclear weapons. One may *guess* at how an opponent may judge a crisis or an interest, but one cannot ever be certain that he has succeeded in getting into the mind of his antagonist. Thus this matrix-based comparison must be viewed with caution.

No grand claims are made by the author for the matrix, and he expands the "how" of its intensity derivation with a cost/gain listing for the statesman. Again, the problem lies in the facile assumption that the values are comparable, that perceptions are similar, and that the equation is of the same order on both sides. None of these necessary conditions may be present, and in particular the valuing methodology connoted by the equation analogy may be as different as arithmetic and differential calculus.

The theoretical section of the book, presenting and justifying the method, occupies but 37 pages. The remainder consists of application of the method to case studies, four historical (Wilson's and Roosevelt's Perceptions of National Interest; Truman's and Johnson's Perceptions of National Interest, Comparing Presidential Decisions in Four Foreign Wars, Nixon's View of U.S. National Interest in Cambodia); one that examines the National Security Council and the War Powers Act; and three contemporary problems that are examined in terms of the analytic method, (The Panama Canal Issue, The Prospect of Quebec's Separation from Canada, and the Threat of Race War in South Africa). The final chapter is entitled "A Challenge to Carter"; it makes a familiar plea to consider carefully whether *vital* national interests are involved before committing the United States to action overseas.

None of this is very earth-shaking stuff, as most students of international politics could develop similar listings of comparative interests—provided of course, that the assumptions of similar valuing systems, etc., are made. The case studies are tiresome, and there is no new evidence presented. Consequently this is not a book essential to understanding an event, nor is it so intended. Rather, it seems to be offered as a basic cookbook for practitioners in international politics, and for that it is much too simplis-

tic. The assessments postulated are part and parcel of the daily sifting of cost/gain alternatives at the upper levels of both State and Defense Departments, and there they are done with far more precision than the crude categorization suggested by the author. A similar process takes place within the White House staff itself. Nuechterlein apparently offers his lists as an improvement on the intuitive judgment that he assumes springs forth fullblown from policymakers. Of course, this is not the case, and his intuitively derived cost/gain categories are small improvement over the misconception that was common among suspicious graduate students in the late 1960s and early 1970s. We are well beyond this point in the assessment of alternatives in international politics, at least in the executive branch of the Government of the United States, and it is obviously time for an insider to outline that process as it now exists. The discipline of political science awaits his disclosure.

J.B. BONDS
Commander, U.S. Navy

Palmer, Gregory. *The McNamara Strategy and the Vietnam War: Program Budgeting in the Pentagon, 1960-1968.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978. 169pp.

This is an ambitious and, for the specialist, interesting attempt to tie Defense Secretary McNamara and his management approach to events in Vietnam during the escalation of that war.

Recall that the primary management tools that McNamara initiated were the Planning-Programming-Budgeting Systems (PPBS) and systems analysis. PPBS provided both an information base and a control device, linking together long-range planning and shorter-range budgeting through programs costed over a 5-year period.

Systems analysis, on the other hand, was the instrument by which data were compared as a means of determining the cost of various options. It also provided a means of judging the logic of the many proposals (sometimes conflicting) that came to the Secretary from throughout the Department of Defense.

When the author uses the term PPBS, which he does frequently, he is not, however, referring specifically to that system but to McNamara's entire management apparatus.

Palmer's thesis is that because of PPBS both the President and Congress, for different reasons, were unable to play their normal role in the decisionmaking process as pertains to the escalation of the war. Thus he says that PPBS "was largely responsible for the United States force increases in South Vietnam" by preventing a debate during those years "within the administration, Congress and politically significant sections of public opinion over the ultimate objectives of the war." Palmer feels that LBJ played a small part in all this. His role, as the author sees it, was restricted to "making normative decisions about broad policy objectives, which were sometimes presented as stark alternatives."

As for Congress, Palmer argues that the PPBS approach resisted the normal wartime policy of seeking large appropriations, and instead justified overspending appropriations, and subsequently requesting supplementals. This as an alternative to the ceiling approach by which Congress would have set the value that they placed on the objectives of the war. Under McNamara there was no ceiling, Palmer says: "As victory came no nearer, the military requirement was increased. The United States was at the mercy of an adversary . . . " who could raise our requirements by committing more troops.

Alain Enthoven tells us in *How Much Is Enough* that PPBS played very small part in decisionmaking during the esca-