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Foreign Policy into the 21st Century: The US. Leadership Challenge

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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

“An Ordered and Organized Approach to the World”

Johnston, Douglas, ed. *Foreign Policy into the 21st Century: The U.S. Leadership Challenge*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996. 160pp. \$20

ORDER AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL are qualities that appeal to the military professional, and they are certainly vital in the execution of military duties. In this reviewer's experience as a military operator and planner, the greatest difficulties arose in situations where organization and appropriate detail were lacking in the objectives we were trying to achieve. I have often felt that the incoherence of some U.S. military operations and thinking was not really the fault of the operators and planners but should be left at the doorstep of U.S. civilian masters and their vague and often conflicting political aims. Vietnam surely would support that premise.

Conversely, many military types look at international relations today and see a world so fragmented and confusing that they ignore it and hark back, almost wistfully, to the days of “us and them.” I have always hoped that the Department of State, with appropriate guidelines from the National Command Authority, would define rational, overall goals and policies and then further refine them into regional policies. But it has seemed that such a formal and specific document would be a long time in coming.

Hope is not lost! *Foreign Policy into the 21st Century* provides just such an orderly and scholarly analysis of our global and regional foreign policy objectives. It is a group project, chaired by Douglas Johnston and cochaired by Zbigniew Brzezinski,

152 Naval War College Review

Lee Hamilton, and Richard Lugar. There is also a long list of coauthors who participated in the regional analyses. Over fifty people contributed, and the book's ultimate usefulness is strengthened by the broad base and collaborative nature of its authorship, which blunts any particular ideology or political viewpoint.

This study states that U.S. foreign policy should follow a path consistent with U.S. interests that can be understood and supported by the American public. These interests are defined and prioritized in this book for geographical areas of greatest strategic importance to the United States; they include Asia, Europe, Russia, the Middle East, and the newly independent states. They cover three functional areas: international security, international economies, and a final category labeled "global problems and opportunities." The prioritization of U.S. interests is based on whether they are deemed to be "vital," "important," or "beneficial" from a geopolitical point of view. The study continues with a synopsis of each geographic area, looking at vital interests and policy specifications. Later individual chapters flesh out those concepts in greater detail and talk of trends, interests, and policy prescriptions.

An underlying thesis of this study is that industrialized democracies are among the least likely to go to war with one another and have significant trade-related incentives for resolving lesser conflicts in a cooperative manner. It also further assumes that these democracies will have the financial resources to deal with troubled regions of the world to reduce the threat of crises and conflicts.

This study gives priority in defense planning to:

- Expeditionary, mobile, deployable forces, including an effective theater missile defense capability to deter or otherwise cope with external threats to U.S. interests.
- Forward military presence adequate to buttress U.S. diplomacy, build effective security relationships with friendly governments, and deter regional threats.
- A posture of incremental readiness in which the highest levels are maintained for nuclear-equipped forces, forward-deployed units, and expeditionary naval, air, and ground forces, with lower levels of readiness for components that are expected to deploy later.
- Preferential funding of military research and development as a way of maintaining technological superiority.
- Increasing the operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the defense establishment.

Obviously these defense priorities point to naval forces and our forward-deployed units. The implication of these priorities is that the United States is a maritime nation rather than a continental power.

I highly recommend this book for the reader who is interested in an ordered and organized approach to the world, and in a rational basis for international and regional policy considerations. You and I may not agree with every iota of information it provides, but this study does give us a common base for continued dialogue and discussion.

Arthur S. Weber, Jr.
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps

Khalilzad, Zalmay, ed. *Strategic Appraisal 1996*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996. (Available from National Book Network) 329pp. \$20

Binnendijk, Hans, and Patrick Clawson, eds. *1997 Strategic Assessment: Flashpoints and Force Structure*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense Univ. Press (Institute for National Strategic Studies), 1997. (Available from U.S. Govt. Print. Off.) 300pp. \$27

Both Project Air Force's (the division of RAND that produced this book) *Strategic Appraisal 1996* and the Institute for National Strategic Studies [INSS] *1997 Strategic Assessment* provide wide-ranging reviews of the world's security climate. The latter "is aimed at policy makers, analysts, and informed members of the public who want a serious summary of the threats facing the United States in the next decade," while the former adds a putative "emphasis on the future role of aerospace power." Since they cover much of the same territory, they offer an excellent opportunity for comparison.

Strategic Appraisal 1996 begins by promising an examination of "the question of U.S. grand strategy for the new

era." I looked forward to the discussion of three alternative grand strategies (neo-isolationism, return to multipolarity, and global leadership), agreeing that "a strategic vision and a grand strategy are important because they . . . provide the United States a strategic direction that will guide long-range planning in the Department of Defense and the services." The discussion, however, was disappointingly thin, and, in the end, primarily an advocacy piece for the global leadership strategy. *Strategic Appraisal's* criticism of current U.S. strategy—which focuses on fighting two major regional contingencies—was more interesting. It correctly notes that the current strategy fails to deal with Europe and in general runs the risk of creating a gap "between the military strategy and the capabilities available to carry it out." The remainder of the book consists of excellent papers on various areas of the world.

The *1997 Strategic Assessment*, which examines "flashpoints and force structure," is the third volume in a series that began in 1995. The first assessment surveyed "the world strategic environment," and the second (1996) "looked at the instruments by which the U.S. government can influence the behavior