

1993

America Recommitted: United States National Interests in a Restructured World

Albert M. Bottoms

Donald E. Nuechterlein

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

Recommended Citation

Bottoms, Albert M. and Nuechterlein, Donald E. (1993) "America Recommitted: United States National Interests in a Restructured World," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 46 : No. 2 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol46/iss2/27>

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.

166 Naval War College Review

including a chart showing the growth of liberal democracy from the French Revolution to the present. Fukuyama does not naively imply that this growth is constantly positive; he recognizes that there are setbacks—much like the cycles of the stock market—but states unequivocally that the trend is positive.

The essence of his thesis is that liberal democracy satisfies man's thymos better than any other regime and thus removes war from the context of international relations. Fukuyama thus arrives at the optimistic conclusion that the coming world of liberal democracy will no longer provide a catalyst for war, and since history is punctuated by war, a war-free world will mark the "end of history." He does not, however, fall into the trap of predicting when this might occur, and he clearly states in his concluding chapter that man is not yet there.

Fukuyama draws heavily on classical philosophers: Plato and Aristotle, as well as on Kant, Hegel, Hobbes, Locke, Nietzsche and Marx. In his expression of Hegel's concept of the "last man," he closely follows the works of Alexandre Kojève, Hegel's twentieth-century interpreter—so much so that the reader may think he ought to be reading Kojève instead of Fukuyama. This minor distraction aside, Fukuyama has written not only an interesting and optimistic thesis but an exciting, readable, educational blend of great philosophers and contemporary international relations theory.

Lively, thought provoking, and profound, *The End of History and the Last Man* is outstanding reading for students of the fundamental issues of human destiny, foreign policy, and the future of conflict and war.

J. BRUCE HAMILTON
Commander, U.S. Navy
Gig Harbor, Washington

Nuechterlein, Donald E. *America Recommitted: United States National Interests in a Restructured World*. Lexington: The Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1991. 268pp. \$28

This book might be classified as "analytical political science." It is the third in which Nuechterlein has used what he calls "the National Interest Matrix" to organize and categorize the interests of the United States, its regional allies, and its potential enemies. With the matrix it is possible to harmonize and gain perspective about much disparate data and fact. However, the categorizations of necessity involve judgment calls; therefore, different users could obtain different results.

The author states that the U.S. government has four long-term national interests that influence how it views the external world and the United States' place in it. In the absence of a reference, one must ascribe the definitions to the author. They are as follows: (1) defense of the United States and its constitutional system; (2) enhancement of the nation's economic well-being and promotion

of U.S. interests abroad; (3) creation of a favorable world order (international security environment); and (4), the promotion abroad of U.S. democratic values and the free market system. Their importance is categorized using the following indicators: survival (critical), vital (dangerous), major (serious), and peripheral (bothersome).

In passing, Nuechterlein notes that this paradigm, with appropriate but slight redefinitions, could have utility at the corporate planning level. The value is in systematization. However, the risk, in addition to imperfect judgment calls, is of falling into the trap of *forcing* the evaluation into "boxes" that are unnatural or inappropriate, which is a common peril among modelers.

In this work, Nuechterlein again displays the results of his lifelong study of American foreign policy. He divides the post-World War II period into epochs: the era of American preeminence, 1945–1965; the time of reassessment, 1966–1980; and the epoch of resurgent American power, 1981–1989. After short but perceptive accounts of the major events in each epoch, he applies the matrix. His background as a naval officer and a national security analyst is evident in some of his assessments, although he does recognize the countervailing forces of economics that serve to diminish the value of the successes in the security field.

Nuechterlein makes another uncited statement (in addition to the U.S. national interests) on page 47: that President Eisenhower secretly threatened

to use atomic bombs to obtain the Korean peace treaty. While plausible, a reference would be helpful to those who wish to document the impact of the nuclear umbrella.

The next three chapters examine U.S. interests and policies in North and South America, East Asia and the western Pacific, Europe, and the former Soviet Union. The last chapter is a discussion of the challenges to U.S. interests in the 1990s. These chapters provide an opportunity for Nuechterlein to introduce first-hand appreciations that result from his tours in Canada, Australia, and Germany as a visiting lecturer. The reader will emerge with a heightened sense of political events in Canada as that country's constitutional crisis deepens. How many readers have ever considered the possibility of American annexation of the Maritimes or of the Canadian "breadbasket"? This reviewer is going to spend more time listening to Radio Canada.

The political analyst of current events encounters ideological traps that the historian can avoid. Nuechterlein stepped into such a trap on page 240 when he expressed great satisfaction with the election of George Bush as president—the implication being that no other person could capture the "national will." Nuechterlein questions the extent of our commitments in his book, *America Overcommitted*. Now it appears that he endorses the continuation of America in the role of "world policeman." However, this poses no great damage to his thesis. In fact, realization of his

168 Naval War College Review

declared bias helps the reader to pose a few "what if?" questions that might reflect another bias.

While the purist would wish for more precise references to primary sources, Nuechterlein has again provided a book that is informative and serves as a methodological tutorial for the use of a tool that will aid an educated observer to understand events and their potential implications.

This work does not explicitly address "pariah" nations or how America should view the economic warfare that some feel is accelerating against us, but perhaps the author will address this subject in his fourth book. A subtitle might be "the paradox of military power and economic impotence."

There is an increasing opinion which suggests that the statement of interest (#4) in promoting the free market system should be replaced with "preservation of American dominance in the international marketplace." After World War II, The Bretton Woods and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) arrangement had this agreeable feature until the Japanese (and others) learned the rules and turned the tables on us. This is one illustration of the potential difficulties with the paradigm, with its subjective definitions of national interest.

ALBERT M. BOTTOMS
Charlottesville, Virginia

Lindsay, James M. *Congress and Nuclear Weapons*. Baltimore: Johns

Hopkins Univ. Press, 1991. 205pp.
(No price given)

This book is more about Congress than nuclear weapons. Readers of the *Naval War College Review* who expect to learn about congressional input regarding the use, policy, and strategy of nuclear weapons will find that the author, a political scientist, uses nuclear weapons as a means to measure congressional actions in that specific area of defense policy: used here, "nuclear weapons" means "nuclear weapons acquisition policy."

Lindsay's premise is that congressional actions can be categorized into three types, or lenses: deferential, parochial, and policy. Using these categories, the author examines four major nuclear weapon programs as examples to support his argument: the MX missile, Trident missile, Pershing II missile, and the Miniature Homing Vehicle (MHV) of the Anti-Satellite (Asat) program.

An example of the deferential lens is that when Congress does not possess the massive amount of information available to the Department of Defense (DoD), it must defer to military expertise concerning questions of nuclear weapons force structure and modernization.

This was business as usual through the 1960s for both the House and Senate committee chairmen. It enabled them to keep junior members quiet and in line or out of the decision loop entirely. But after Vietnam, especially with the growth of the subcommittee system in the 1970s, Congress did not hesitate to speak its