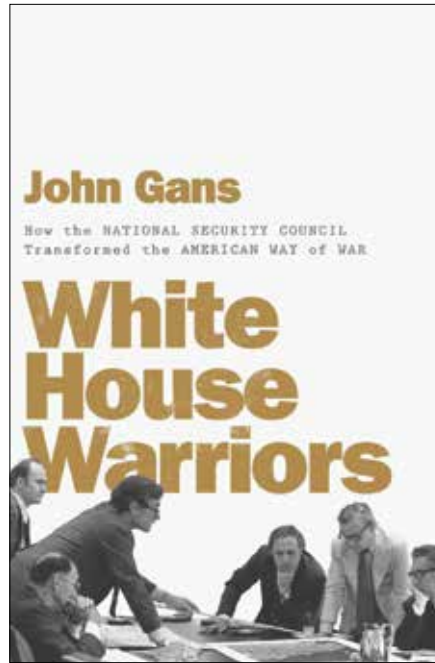


of Chiba by a typhoon in October 2019 have necessitated broader interpretations of national security that require the capabilities of the SDF in ways the architects of Article 9 did not envision. Smith argues convincingly that Japan's ability to increase its crisis management capability will entail SDF expansion and greater freedom of action. These changes are not uncontested politically but are emerging out of necessity and come with broad implications for the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Japan Rearmed is not prescriptive, but Smith does an extraordinary job of offering a diagnosis of the many challenges ahead for the SDF and U.S.-Japan alliance. For national security professionals and those in the joint force focused on the region, *Japan Rearmed* is the most authoritative account available on the SDF, its political, organizational, and legal challenges, as well as a reminder of the importance of U.S.-Japan cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. JFQ

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White House Warriors: How the National Security Council Transformed the American Way of War

By John Gans
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299 pp. \$28.95
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Reviewed by Edward G. Salo

O ver the past several years, the position of the National Security Advisor has been subject to sensational media attention. From war hawks to war heroes, recent national security advisors routinely command the headlines. While media attention centers on their singular power to shape foreign policy, we have ignored the members of the National Security Council (NSC) staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes to craft that policy. In *White House Warriors: How the National Security Council Transformed the American Way of War*, John Gans explores how the NSC staff evolved from a group of clerks tasked with recording meetings and passing proposals to a cadre of national security professionals, sometimes wielding

extraordinary influence on American foreign and national security policy.

Gans, a former chief speechwriter for Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, draws on interviews, oral histories, and declassified archives to provide a meticulously researched insider view of the NSC. Gans explores its evolution and growing influence from the trials of the Truman administration to the tribulations of the Trump administration. He spotlights the NSC staff during critical moments in history, using case studies to examine the influence of regular staff on the development of national security policy and raising perennial questions about the efficiency and structure of the organization, as well as the centralization of power and the need for greater transparency.

The case studies aptly demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of different staff compositions and organizational types. Gans argues that effectiveness depended on a manageable size and diverse mixture of officials (staff on temporary duty from the military, intelligence, academic, and diplomatic communities, etc.) with an effective National Security Advisor. Gans highlights General Brent Scowcroft, the only man to be National Security Advisor under two different Presidents, as running the most effective NSC. Scowcroft had served on the Tower Commission investigating the Iran Contra scandal, which resulted from the NSC overstepping its role, a concern that has persistently dogged the NSC. Gans also points to the NSC in the second term of George W. Bush's administration as successful, highlighting its instrumental role in guiding the Surge in Iraq. While other administrations had some success, many were crippled by either micromanagement, an ineffective National Security Advisor, or distrust among the Cabinet-level departments that inhibited effective coordination.

In addition to his comprehensive organizational analysis, Gans succeeds in putting human faces on an otherwise obscure piece of the national security enterprise. For example, he highlights the work of Richard Haass, a regular

staffer, who became an architect of much of the policy during the first Persian Gulf War. Likewise, Gans starts the book by introducing the reader to Meghan O’Sullivan, a staffer who helped redevelop the strategy during the 2003 war in Iraq after the initial failures of the conflict. This focus on individuals strengthens the argument that the NSC works best when staffers are empowered as “honest brokers” and that “nameless staff” can have a significant influence on national policy and the way the Nation engages in conflict.

While the selective use of case studies effectively demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of the NSC as a policy coordinating body, it lacks attention to the role of the NSC in crisis management. A close look at NSC influence during the Iranian hostage crisis or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, for example, would have provided a more balanced perspective.

White House Warriors is an important read for the joint force at all levels. The lessons learned can serve as a guide to future officers serving on the NSC or at regional commands. Gans offers up colorful anecdotes of how the NSC worked most efficiently when it was empowered to find solutions. Of course, each Presidential administration is different, and there is no roadmap of what to expect. Many administrations intended to reform or reduce the size of the NSC, yet its size and influence continued to expand. When paired with autobiographies of national security advisors, the full scope and influence of the NSC is illuminated. *Nerve Center: Inside the White House Situation Room* (University of Nebraska Press, 2004) by Michael Bohn would complement *White House Warriors* by exploring the role of the NSC as a conduit and gatekeeper of information to the President and his aides.

Today, the need for an efficient and effective NSC supported by dedicated staff is paramount. Gans demonstrates the importance of experts with bureaucratic, functional, and area expertise to maintain a strong national security policy. Rather than the threat to democracy many see in these officials, Gans

successfully conveys the NSC’s dedication to keeping the Nation safe from threats we do not yet know exist. *White House Warriors* is an important read for national security professionals looking to peer behind the curtain of the foreign policy and national security decision-making process. JFQ

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Strategic Forum 304

Baltics Left of Bang: Nordic Total Defense and Implications for the Baltics Sea Region

By Håkon Lunde Saxi, Bengt Sundelius, and Brett Swaney



The efforts of Norway, Sweden, and Finland to enhance societal resilience through unique “total defense”

and “comprehensive security” initiatives are unlikely to change the near-term strategic calculus of Russia. Over time, however, a concerted application of total defense in harmony with Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty will aid in the resilience to, and deterrence of, Russian hostile measures and hybrid warfare, and serve as a complement to a regional denial-based deterrence strategy. The Nordic states could “export” resilience to the greater Baltic Sea Region by strengthening participation in European Union energy and infrastructure projects with the Baltic states, amplifying efforts to connect infrastructure links among allies and partners and decouple from adversaries.



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