

PROFESSIONAL READING LIST

The Defense Acquisition Professional Reading List is intended to enrich the knowledge and understanding of the civilian, military, contractor, and industrial workforce who participate in the entire defense acquisition enterprise. These book reviews/recommendations are designed to complement the education and training that are vital to developing the essential competencies and skills required of the Defense Acquisition Workforce. Each issue of the *Defense Acquisition Research Journal (ARJ)* will contain one or

more reviews of suggested books, with more available on the *Defense ARJ* Web site.

We encourage *Defense ARJ* readers to submit reviews of books they believe should be required reading for the defense acquisition professional. The reviews should be 400 words or fewer, describe the book and its major ideas, and explain its relevance to defense acquisition. Please send your reviews to the Managing Editor, *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*: Norene.Fagan-Blanch@dau.mil.



Featured Book

Adapting to Flexible Response, 1960-1968

Series:

History of Acquisition in the Department of Defense, Volume II

Author:

Walter S. Poole

Publisher:

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Historical Office

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Hard/Softcover:

Hardcover, 467 pages

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Review:

John F. Kennedy had won the 1960 Presidential election and entered office with a strong and growing Soviet menace held at bay by his predecessor's threat of mutual assured nuclear destruction. The Cold War strategy of containing communism also meant fighting surrogate brush wars and conducting bold—sometimes rash—covert operations. Many of these were underway in Europe, Southeast Asia, and in the Caribbean. Vietnam was quickly becoming a focal point for U.S. military support and intervention in this ideological battle of wills. For the United States, 1960–1968 was a time of strategic change abroad and brewing social upheaval at home. This was the environment President Kennedy stepped into when he took the oath of office in 1961.

Meanwhile, within the Pentagon, under the newly appointed Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, change would likewise become the order of the day. Supporting President Kennedy's shift from a military strategy of mutual destruction to one of "flexible response" meant moving away from near total reliance on nuclear weapons to building capable new conventional forces and weapon systems. This tumultuous period of change and refocus is the backdrop of Walter Poole's book, *Adapting to Flexible Response, 1960–1968*. This important book is the second volume in the acquisition series from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office (released in 2013).

Poole discusses the acquisition of new systems to support the flexible response strategy. Some of these included producing and fielding helicopters in large numbers and in direct combat roles for the first time, continuing to build nuclear submarines and surface ships, and creating fleets of aircraft including the F-111 fighter-bomber and heavy cargo lift C-5A. To produce these systems, defense acquisition management changed dramatically under McNamara's Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System and Five Year Defense Plan. The Office of the Secretary of Defense and McNamara's "whiz kids" applied systems analysis to requirements and acquisitions, and encroached as never before on what had previously been Service prerogatives.

Poole's book masterfully sets the stage for this complex drama and describes the forces inside and outside the Pentagon that drove defense acquisition during this period. He then dives deeply into individual weapon systems acquisition, creating rich case studies that give us

glimpses into the policies and practices that went well—and those that did not. For instance, he compares the successful C-141 with the troubled C-5A programs to provide long-range airlift and describes the Army's fascinating political struggle to choose between the M-14 and the AR-15 to outfit its infantry. He discusses Navy shipbuilding and the love-hate relationship with Admiral Hyman G. Rickover and nuclear power, as well as the reliability issues of the Navy's "3-T" missile (Talos, Terrier, and Tartar) and the move toward a "standard missile" replacement program.

Poole's tome is highly recommended reading for today's acquisition professionals. Many of the challenges Poole highlights from programs in the 1960s will seem familiar to those encountered in today's programs—stringent requirements, tight schedules, emerging technologies, a risk-averse bureaucracy, and an assertive Congress that purports to "help." Set in a tumultuous period of evolving threats, international crises, domestic social unrest, and Pentagon bureaucratic struggles, there are important lessons to be learned and insights to be gained from Poole's well-written and thoroughly researched history.