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# Strategic Challenges: America's Global Security Agenda

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and influence in Southeast Asia are not predicated upon military or economic prowess but rather on its “restraint in requesting adjustments in Southeast Asian policy,” and its support to existing ruling regimes that often come under intense pressure from the United States. Finally, Percival argues U.S. credibility problems in Southeast Asia arise from American “reluctance” to commit to a set of priorities and an unwillingness to devote the resources needed to achieve America’s strategic goals. As a result, U.S. policy has fallen victim to competing constituencies in the United States, which results in an ad hoc decision-making process that poorly matches means to desired ends.

*The Dragon Looks South* provides a clear and succinct analysis of complex issues and relationships that exist in a strategically critical region for both China and the United States. As such, it is a must-read for anyone wanting to gain a better appreciation of the issues that confront American security policy in Southeast Asia.

RON RATCLIFF  
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Flanagan, Stephen J., and James A. Schear, eds. *Strategic Challenges: America's Global Security Agenda*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense Univ. Press, 2008. 415pp. \$35

From time to time it is extremely useful for senior military and political leaders to take stock of the international landscape, rise above the incessant demands of the day, and think about where the currents of change are bearing their ships of state. This book takes a hard look at seven distinct security

challenges with which U.S. leaders can reasonably be expected to wrestle in the future.

In many ways, *Strategic Challenges* is exactly the sort of solid work that one expects scholars associated with the National Defense University (NDU) and the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) to produce. Its genesis was a two-year study of the international environment undertaken by NDU in response to a tasking from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This is a thoughtful work, well organized, well written, and well supported by cogent analysis. In short, *Strategic Challenges* is a gateway book that both illuminates important security issues and at the same time leaves the reader wanting to explore some of its topics in greater depth.

*Strategic Challenges* opens with an overview of the emerging global security environment, dedicating subsequent chapters to the issues of dealing with global terrorism, combating the threat of weapons of mass destruction, protecting the American homeland, defusing conflicts in unstable regions, engaging other major powers, and adapting alliances and partnerships. The final two chapters examine how the United States might transform its defense strategy and posture and secure its future. Each chapter makes a worthwhile contribution to the total volume; the chapters on “engaging other major powers” and “transforming defense strategy and posture” are particularly good. Indeed, the latter chapter provides an excellent thumbnail review of the history of transformation in the George W. Bush administration and the evolution of capabilities-based planning.

If there is a drawback to *Strategic Challenges*, it is that for all its high-caliber writing, the challenges it evokes seem oddly comfortable and familiar. This is not to imply they are not valid but rather there is widespread agreement that these are issues that will task future U.S. presidents. It would have been illuminating if the authors had taken a deeper look at more unusual challenges, such as the growth of feral cities, the ability of the international community to respond to pandemics, the security implications of global warming, and the impact of clearly established demographic trends. Some of these issues are mentioned, and others are actually examined to some degree, but a deeper look at each would have been welcome.

*Strategic Challenges* would seem destined to become required reading for students in the security studies field. It is suited for both the undergraduate and graduate level as well as lay readers looking to gain an overview of security threats in a minimum amount of time.

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Lieber, Keir. *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics over Technology*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2008. 226pp. \$21

Keir Lieber, a recent graduate of the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago, is presently an assistant professor and faculty fellow at the University of Notre Dame. This is Lieber's first book.

One of the first books to examine and criticize directly the current political science analysis on "offense-defense theory," this work is an analysis of the

debate as well as a well crafted refutation of the theory as a whole. The title, however, could have been a better fit with the content—this is not a book about war itself, or about engineers.

In the introduction Lieber outlines the foundations of current theory. Offense-defense theory, broadly, states that war and peace are dependent on technology and perceived power. If a country has offensive capabilities, it will attack and expand, overthrowing the status quo. When defense predominates (ideologically, technologically, or otherwise), cooperation and peace are more likely. Lieber questions this theory. To refute it, in later chapters he considers both *military outcomes* and *political outcomes* (italics original) in specific case studies. By analyzing offense-defense theory using its own vocabulary and definitions, he is able to deconstruct it persuasively. Using two case studies on "offensive" mobility (trains in the wars of German unification and tanks in World War I), and two on the evolution of "defensive" firepower (small arms in World War I and the "nuclear revolution"), Lieber turns the theory against itself. He effectively argues that neither offensive nor defensive capabilities pushed or prevented war during the periods in question.

In his conclusion Lieber offers an alternative argument, "technological opportunism," with just enough information to lead readers to look forward to his next project.

Lieber's use of sources, both primary and secondary, is extensive, and his bibliography provides a wealth of information. His book is well written, well argued, and concise. However, it is sure to cause controversy, outlining as it does both the offense-defense theory as