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# Power, Prospects, and Priorities

## Choices for Strategic Change

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Richard K. Betts

**W**HAT WILL U.S. ARMED FORCES BE CALLED ON to do early in the twenty-first century? Some educated guesses are necessary to guide defense planning. Without them, procurement, doctrine, and military organization become arbitrary, the result of inertia rather than strategy. This article offers a few arguments to challenge inertia:

- The benign security environment of the 1990s abets domestic political confusion about which potential types of conflict should govern military planning.
- Since the end of the Cold War, official planning has remained too preoccupied with maintaining current capability and has not been attentive enough to finding inventive ways to cover longer-term dangers. The main such danger would be having to remobilize quickly to Cold War levels of preparedness to confront a great power (or “peer competitor,” in the current bureaucratic term of art). This danger will be magnified if two such powers ally in opposition to U.S. policy.
- In crises involving a hostile great power in the future, the dangers of miscalculation and escalation may well be greater than they were in the latter part of the Cold War, because of the more delicate and controversial nature of territorial disputes and flashpoints (most notably, Taiwan, Ukraine, or the Baltic

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states). This mandates more consideration of the proper bounds of policy objectives that determine the demands placed on the military for deterrence or defense.

- Three general levels of the use of force have been at issue in recent planning: first, small-scale “peace operations” to police negotiated settlements or stabilize civil conflicts in small countries; second, “major regional conflicts” (MRCs, to use the bureaucratese) against medium powers like Iraq, Iran, or North Korea; and third, war against, or deterrence of, a great power. Of these, only the latter presents a convincing rationale for an equal strategic combat role for the Navy as compared to land-based air and ground forces, or as distinct from the Navy’s role in supporting the operations of the other services.

- If a “revolution in military affairs” pans out, it will offer a net advantage to the United States, but it could also have a “second edge” that creates problems for stability in deterrence relationships with weaker great powers.

No forecast should be considered anything more than heuristic. Any sensible reader should beware of articles (like this one) that pretend to say anything about the future, since by definition they cannot really know what they are talking about. When they set out to estimate future developments, most forecasts extrapolate from current trends, guessing the future from the trajectory on which events seem to be traveling. But a world in transition seldom works just one way for long.

Charles Burton Marshall once wondered what someone in 1961 who was asked to forecast security developments would have said. He concluded that such a forecast would probably have missed most of the crucial events: “the Cuban missile crisis, the ensuing Soviet military build-up, the war in Vietnam and its outcome, the rise of terrorism, the Middle East wars of 1967 and 1973, the petroleum embargo, pervasive inflation, the strategic arms negotiations, the Greek-Turkish quarrel over Cyprus, . . . numerous discontinuities in political leadership and especially the American presidency, and the weakening of executive authority in the United States.”<sup>1</sup> And of course, who would have predicted the end of the Cold War—or at least who would have done so without the risk of being committed to a mental hospital?

Nevertheless, we have to try. Strategy has to peer ahead somehow, or else give up hope of shaping events. While it is foolish to predict specific developments, it is more reasonable to estimate the general types of problems that may arise and to identify tradeoffs in which hedging against one type compromises the ability to deal with another.

It was easier to do this for most of the second half of the twentieth century than it is now, because two things made the period from 1940 to 1990 different from the situation today. First, through World War II and the Cold War, it was

clear that the overriding issue for military policy was the threat posed by hostile great powers. Second, the implications of America's material interests and moral interests converged. That is, material interests in a favorable balance of military power and in easy economic access to resources, and moral interests in promoting human rights, international law, and democracy, all pointed toward resisting German fascism, Japanese militarism, and Soviet communism. Nothing like these fusions of hostile power and ideology exists now.<sup>2</sup>

Today, new fixations on *comparatively* unimportant problems (interventions or peace operations in countries where truly vital U.S. interests are not involved), and old habits of thought from the Cold War, substitute for the sort of long-term strategic plans that should be the first order of business. One old habit is focusing primarily on current capability and readiness for war rather than on mobilization strategy or, in a term current a few years ago, "reconstitution." Related to this is the tendency to worry about threats from medium powers such as Iraq and North Korea as if they were like the old Soviet threat. In one sense these preoccupations are good, because historically, before the Cold War, the United States was never sufficiently prepared for the wars that it fought. Today, however, politicians and defense planners are overcompensating for that historic pattern of mistakes and not focusing enough on husbanding resources to deal with larger threats in the longer term.<sup>3</sup>

The case for this judgment is developed below. But in any event, it is clear that there is no settled opinion on the question of U.S. defense policy in the body politic, which is where the bounds of choice will be decided. It is not unusual for policy debate in a democracy to be confused and inconsistent, but for most of the time since December 1941 Americans were accustomed to a high degree of consensus and continuity in national security policy. It may be hard to resolve confusion until some pattern of crises and shifting power relationships clarifies a new threat.

### Isolation or Intervention?

The most fundamental inclinations of foreign policy are still up for grabs: whether the United States should back away from active intervention in the affairs of troubled regions, returning to something like what used to be called (inaccurately) isolation—or should continue the other tradition of protecting its interests by drawing defense lines far forward, in other regions, and by using force to shape the rest of the world in its image.

The United States was never truly isolationist in the strict sense. The concept referred mainly to aloofness from the European balance of power. U.S. military forces have remained committed in East Asia ever since 1898, for example, and Americans have always meddled in their own backyard—the Caribbean and

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Central America. In terms of the general question of whether Washington should refrain from military involvement except where vital interests are threatened, however, it is now harder to argue against the isolationist view than at any time since the 1930s, because it is harder to demonstrate that failure to intervene in foreign disputes will necessarily endanger U.S. material interests. It is much easier to show that nonintervention will leave moral interests unsupported. More Americans are willing to spend blood and treasure for the former, however, than for the latter.

Since the Cold War, political inclinations to intervene abroad have flip-flopped. The liberals who became disillusioned with American activism after the Vietnam War went sour are now leading the charge to use U.S. forces to bring peace, justice, and democracy to places like Bosnia and Haiti, while the conservatives who were the most ardent Cold Warriors are now the most skeptical of any such involvement. This change is something of a reversion to pre-World War II patterns. It is rather ironic, however, because it goes together with a strategic and budgetary contradiction, a mismatch between economic resources and military requirements in the logic of both factions. The liberals who want to use American forces more want to *buy* fewer of them, while the conservatives who want to buy more forces do not want to *use* them.

No one should expect this sort of political and strategic confusion to abate as long as the current situation lasts: ambiguity about external threats, and divided government within the United States. The latter has become the norm since World War II, and especially since the temporary crackup of the Cold War consensus in the late 1960s. (Opposing parties controlled the executive and one or both houses of Congress for thirty of the fifty years since the first postwar election, and for twenty-two out of the twenty-eight years after the Cold War consensus broke down at the end of the Johnson administration.)

Lack of serious anxiety about current security also means that the defense budget will probably continue to erode, reducing the possibility of covering disagreements by buying forces for the “high end” of the disputed requirements. Many in the military establishment who compare the recent downsizing with the Cold War norm see a defense budget that has been cut to the bone. But the Cold War norm was a historic anomaly. Today’s reduced budget is still astronomically higher (either in real dollars or as a percentage of gross national product) than it ever was in peacetime before the Cold War. If national debate about fundamental budget choices remains where it has been mired ever since Ronald Reagan—with the public simultaneously demanding a balanced budget, tax cuts, and preservation of all the government programs where the real money is—continuing to shave the defense budget could be the path of least resistance.

Even if military spending remains constant, the modesty of apparent military threats to the U.S. homeland will probably allow other political pressures to divide

defense resources less efficiently, and with more attention to domestic functions than to strategic rationality. In the 1990s both Democrats and Republicans seem inclined to shovel more of the defense budget into pork-barrel projects or nondefense programs, smuggling in items like funding for cancer research or mandating productions of weapon systems, like the B-2 bomber or the *Seawolf* attack submarine, that the Pentagon leadership does not want but that generate jobs at home.

These sorts of strategic deformities reflect the domestic political freedom of maneuver that is allowed by the external freedom of strategic maneuver the United States now has in the world. Without the old Soviet threat, there is no clear concept or simple slogan, nothing like "containment," to bring order and consensus to strategy. Instead, the Clinton administration has given us "engagement and enlargement"—a flabby national security strategy if ever there was one—and the Republicans have offered nothing better.

Without the Soviet Union breathing down America's neck, there is a limit to how much strategic clarity can be expected. One step in the right direction, however, would be to focus more on the distinction between strategy and capabilities needed now and greater demands that could be imposed down the road.

### Current versus Future Threats

It would of course be foolish to exaggerate how benign the security environment is in the mid-1990s. The world does not look as rosy today as it did a few years ago, when democracy was breaking out all over and the United States had reasonably good relations with Russia and China. Indeed, the volatility of politics within Russia, uncertainty about Chinese leadership after Deng Hsiao Ping, and other questions are reminders that these relationships could deteriorate dangerously at any time.

It is hard, however, to exaggerate how much better the West's *military* situation still is than it was during the Cold War. Even if Moscow were to become a bitter enemy again, it would pose a far weaker danger than the old Soviet Union did. Russia no longer controls East Germany, the rest of Eastern Europe, or even half of what used to be its own country (when it was part of the USSR) but is now a set of independent states largely unfriendly to Russia. The industrial war machine of the Soviet Union is half collapsed. In Europe, Russian troops and tanks are now lodged hundreds of miles further east than they were throughout the Cold War. Just to get to the same point at which they were then deployed, they would have to fight their way through Ukraine, Poland, and a chunk of Germany. Given the performance of Russian forces in Chechnya, that task looks like more than they can be expected to perform for some time.

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Russia may recover, and it can easily cause bad trouble even now for countries on its border; but it has a long way to go before it could ever reconstitute the Soviet military threat to Western Europe as we once knew it. Russian nuclear striking power will still be more than enough to devastate the United States, but it is most useful for deterrence, or coercing nonnuclear adversaries, than for forcing Washington to do Moscow's will.

The fact remains that at the moment, no one directly threatens U.S. territory, power, or prosperity to anywhere near the degree that foreign powers did for a half-century after 1940. Certain problems, particularly the danger that a weak state or group could use nuclear or biological weapons against an American city, are new and serious. But this is more a problem for intelligence, diplomacy, or covert special operations than for regular military strategy and force structure. In terms of the traditional currency of military force and the capabilities and intentions of other great powers, the United States at the moment has comparatively little to fear.

Why then do officials agonize about whether the U.S. military can fulfill the requirements of the Bottom-Up Review\* and fight two nearly simultaneous MRCs against countries like Iraq and North Korea? Perhaps they are politically and bureaucratically accustomed to planning for a demanding war, and the two-MRC assumption was the most demanding plausible standard for the Bottom-Up Review. This is not to say that American forces could never find themselves in the two-MRC situation, nor is it to say that U.S. strategy should not aim to deter these countries. The point is simply that the risks in being unable to cope efficiently with this scenario are nothing like the risk in the Cold War that 175 Soviet divisions might be able to roll to the English Channel, take control of the European continent, overturn the global balance of power, and leave the West with little prospect of recovery.

What Iraq, Iran, or North Korea could do would be bad for American allies and important American interests, but not for its truly vital interests. "Vital," after all, means literally *necessary to life*. (For domestic political reasons U.S. leaders always have to say that anything the nation would fight for is a vital interest, but that overstatement obscures the real distinctions among interests that are "nice to have" and "need to have.") With the important exception of using nuclear or biological weapons of mass destruction, what so-called "rogue states" could do that is damaging to U.S. interests are things that American armed forces could roll back if they had to, as they did the invasion of Kuwait.

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\* The "Bottom-Up Review" was a six-month study, directed by the president, of the defense needs of the United States in the post-Cold War world. Until it is revised, this document functions as the equivalent of the administration's strategic plan and guidance to the armed services. See Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, October 1993).

## Great-Power Threats?

The emergence of another superpower to rival the United States around the globe, or of any hostile great power that could dominate an important region, is the primary contingency that should govern U.S. defense planning. That is what could genuinely threaten U.S. *vital* interests. It is proper to continue planning against medium or small threats, but there is no doubt that the United States can handle the conventional military power those countries can project—especially if it enjoys significant allied participation in the effort, as it did in all its wars in this century except Vietnam.

It would be a mistake so to optimize current capability for two MRCs as to erode potential capability to mobilize quickly against a new great-power threat. Given budget constraints, however, that is what straining to meet a two-MRC standard might do. For a remobilization strategy the first priority is to keep intact and primed the economic, technological, industrial, and organizational base for quick expansion of military capability. This means emphasizing research, development, and prototypes over current production (and this plainly would require new ways of doing defense business);<sup>4</sup> subsidizing the maintenance of pools of skills and production potential rather than relying on market forces to keep them intact; experimenting with new types of military units and organizations and keeping up conventional staffs (even in preference to manning combat units); stressing cadre development more than deployment of full-strength formations; and so forth. The defense establishment is attentive to these issues, and in some respects dealing with them fits quite well with maintaining current force structure. But at least at the margins, stretching to keep force structure up as the budget stagnates or declines must chip away the resources—and just as importantly, the attention of the leadership—that are devoted to the remobilization priority.

Until a great-power threat does reemerge, however, some significant attention will be concentrated on lesser military functions, such as peace operations in future Bosnias, Somalias, and Haitis. In a basically benign security environment these are where the action is. But these challenges represent no threat at all to U.S. interests in material terms. The United States has gotten engaged in such places almost entirely on behalf of *moral* interests. Moral interests may well be important; that is a matter for policy and the democratic political process to decide. But evidence so far suggests that when the crunch comes, moral interests never evoke as much concern or sacrifice in U.S. foreign policy as do material interests like the balance of military power and assured access to cheap energy supplies. In international relations, for better or worse, fear remains a more potent motive than love.

The impetus to participate in peacekeeping missions is that they are judged to be low-cost ways to relieve suffering and promote stability. Peace “enforce-



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ment,” which raises the possibility of combat, is riskier. In either case, two main problems compromise the urge to act.

One is the issue of selection. Chaotic civil wars and human tragedies have been occurring in many places, and even the most ardent proponents of peace operations admit that the United States cannot deal with all of them. But what should be the criteria for acting in one place but not another? If Bosnia, why not Burundi? If Haiti, why not Liberia? A reasonable approach is to choose those cases in which the operation is likely to be effective, the political or humanitarian payoff from intervention is likely to be high, and the costs are likely to be low. The problem lies in how to know beforehand what these probabilities are.

The second problem is that the effectiveness of peace operations often requires reform and stabilization of the domestic political order in the countries at issue—and stabilization with a fair chance of outlasting the intervention. In most cases this will require staying for a long time and making a commitment to “nation building” (more accurately, *state-building*). There is scant support for doing either one, and both ideas are least popular within the U.S. military, which would be called upon to implement them. But it scarcely makes sense to spend any blood or much treasure to hold a shaky peace together only for the duration of the U.S. deployment, only to postpone the reckoning between the local belligerents.

American participation in peace operations will probably require a deal in which agreement depends on conditions of the type that appear to have been assumed in the plan for joining the Implementation Force in Bosnia: first, low chances that U.S. forces will wind up in significant combat; and second, a short stay (in other words, where the exit *strategy* is tied to an exit *date*—or, in effect, the exit *is* the strategy). The latter constraint avoids entanglement in inconclusive conflicts or in state-building but evokes the associated risk: simple postponement of the forcible resolution of the local dispute, making the U.S. intervention almost pointless.

Whether well conceived or not, participation in limited peace operations poses some problems for the professional military in terms of organization, budgets, and training. It does not pose major problems in terms of the military’s main mission, conventional combat (unless it becomes so frequent and extensive that it drains away the bulk of regular units). This brings us back to the question of preparing for future great-power threats.

### Anticipating the Next Big Adversary

It is not inevitable that a major “peer competitor” will develop the combination of capabilities and intentions needed to threaten U.S. interests in the next couple of decades. Prudence simply dictates being ready for the situation if luck runs out. Who are the candidates for such a threat?

One fanciful possibility touted by some alarmists a few years ago was the estrangement of Japan and a replay of the rising competition in the Pacific of the 1930s. It is hard to take this seriously, given the long-standing postwar security relationship with Tokyo, although it is true that stranger things have happened (such as winning the Cold War by just watching Mikhail Gorbachev give away the store). It is even harder to construct a plausible scenario for another run of the German Problem, despite the anxiety of Margaret Thatcher and the French government in 1990 when German reunification suddenly became possible. Unlike Japan, Germany has become thoroughly enmeshed in a web of regional institutions, including Nato, and new traditions of regional unity. Germany may dominate a united Europe through its economic clout, but it will not need to threaten war to do so.

There are really only two plausible candidates for a great-power adversary early in the twenty-first century: Russia and China. For Russia to fill the bill, it will have to move in two opposite directions: forward economically and backward politically. Economic recovery will be necessary to regenerate the capabilities that would make Russia a power to be reckoned with on a par with the old Soviet Union. Political regression—internal authoritarianism and external revanchism—will be necessary to turn resentment against the West into serious strategic opposition.

For China to play the role of main adversary, however, all that is necessary is the continuation of recent trends. One is rapid economic growth. The phenomenal 8–12 percent rates of recent years (which would give China a gross national product greater than that of the United States early in the twenty-first century) cannot continue indefinitely, but even at half those rates Chinese power will grow substantially. The economic miracle could grind to a halt, as accumulating contradictions come to a head; if so, the People's Republic may not become a global superpower but it would still be the main military power in the East Asian region, which is now the world's center of economic expansion. Political strains could degrade Chinese power by crippling the country with internal conflict, as happened in the first half of the twentieth century. That possibility is not reassuring, since Chinese fragmentation in that period was a tremendous source of international political instability.

The second current trend that would need to continue for the Chinese threat to become pressing is the growing political tension between Beijing and Washington. The late Cold War entente directed against the USSR dissolved quickly once the common threat was gone. Beijing now sees the United States as out to prevent China's rise to world power, and as China's main adversary.

In one sense the prospect of confronting Russia or China is less daunting than during the Cold War, since neither has appreciable allies, and Russia is barely half the size of the old Soviet Union. It will be some time before their capabilities

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look as great as Moscow's used to look. Intentions, however, are what most drive the probability of war, and the danger could be greater in those terms now than during the Cold War.

This is not because either country is more aggressive. Rather, their willingness to risk war could turn out to be greater today because the flashpoints or catalysts of conflict are harder to control than they used to be. Stakes on which future crises hinge may seem vital to leaders in Beijing or Moscow—probably more vital than did the main flashpoints of the Cold War like Korea, Berlin, or Cuba. These stakes may also seem matters of right as well as interest to these countries—not demands for “new” territory that did not belong to them but matters of bringing “lost” territories back into the motherland. All Russia has to do to shatter the post-Cold War calm is to seek to recover what it lost in 1991: one or two of the new states that used to be republics within the Soviet Union. All China has to do is to act to enforce claims to territory it has always viewed as Chinese.

The danger of miscalculation over Taiwan, by Washington as well as Beijing, is better understood since the saber-rattling in the Straits in early 1996. To the Chinese, this is an internal matter. Moreover, all the parties involved—Taipei, Beijing, and Washington—have agreed on the principle that Taiwan is part of China. Yet a blockade or invasion attempt could provoke powerful political pressures in the United States to defend Taiwan.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most dangerous situation is one in which both sides in the dispute consider the other the aggressor.

Similarly, the West has pocketed the gains of victory in the Cold War and considers the independence of former Soviet republics a settled fact. There is little evidence, however, that Russian opinion considers the severance of Ukraine from Russia to be either natural or permanent. A crisis over the Russian population of Crimea or some other irritant could evoke Russian pressure or threats against Ukraine. This in turn could provoke demands in the United States to support Ukraine. While responsible strategists would not start out to commit Nato or the United States to its military defense, a spiral of threats and counter-threats could transmute what started out as rhetorical support into creeping commitment.

The first aim for the United States should be to forestall the acceleration of tension between Washington and either Russia or China. But at what price? Diplomatic efforts to stay on good terms could require compromises that would be seen in the United States as retreats or appeasement. If Americans agree to one such compromise (for example, most-favored-nation trading status), what about the second case and the third?

The second aim, the fallback position, should be to prevent an *alliance* between Russia and China against the West. Many inside the Washington, D.C., Beltway have gotten accustomed to assuming that conflicts of interest between those two countries preclude strategic collaboration. But Sino-Russian relations have

improved lately, to include trade in arms. A common and sometimes disputed border ordains some intrinsic friction in the relationship, but a common enemy in the form of the United States cuts in the other direction. There is no insurmountable obstacle to recreating the united Moscow-Beijing front that made the first half of the Cold War seem so perilous.

### Levels of Force and Types of Forces

Pundits and policymakers may debate the priorities among preparing the American military for peace operations, major regional conflicts against medium powers, or deterrence of a great power. Some measure of attention to all three problems, though, is inevitable. What are the respective implications of emphasizing any of these levels of the use of force for military planning and force structure?

*Different types of combat operations imply different degrees of importance* for the various armed services. Logically, marginal allocations from the aggregate defense budget should be affected by these differences.

If peace operations were to reign as the most prominent mission, the main responsibilities would fall to ground combat units of the Army and Marine Corps and to logistics elements of the other services. Airlift and sealift would be proportionately more important among the functions of the Air Force (which is unlikely to play much of a combat role except where peacekeeping operations go horribly wrong) and the Navy (which is unlikely to have any *necessary* combat role at all in such missions, since by definition they are only undertaken where the intervening powers have local support and access to land bases).

If operations against medium powers take precedence—the Iraqs, Irans, and North Koreas that are the notional adversaries in a strategic world defined by MRCs—there will probably be a nearly equal role for ground forces and land-based airpower, and a contributing but minor combat role for naval aviation. (In the Persian Gulf War of 1991, though the Navy stretched to deploy half the carrier fleet to the region, its aircraft flew less than one-fifth of the combat sorties.)<sup>6</sup> The Navy would probably succeed in claiming a need to apply carrier airpower (as it did in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf, despite the availability of land bases), but if cost considerations become more controlling than they were in the post-World War II environment, it will be harder to justify doing so. Aircraft carriers or ships armed with land-attack cruise missiles are the only, and thus the best, way to apply airpower in regions where the United States has no access to airfields on land, but otherwise they are an astronomically expensive means of dropping a limited amount of high-explosive ordnance on land targets.

The one contingency in which naval power would be likely to share an equal combat or deterrent role with the other services would be in deterring or fighting

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a great power that has an appreciable navy. The one unique thing naval combat forces can do is fight other blue-water navies. (The Marine Corps, of course, is part of the Department of the Navy, but it is included in the propositions about ground forces above.) With the exception of war at sea, naval combat power overlaps with the capabilities of the other services and fills few gaps that are completely uncovered. (One significant gap the Navy does cover is intervention in areas where there is no access to land bases.)

*If long-term planning for remobilization against great powers takes precedence, emphasis should go to experimentation with novel weapons, "systems of systems," organizations, and force structures. Planners should loosen ties to long-standing, "tried and true" organizational forms. They should seek to keep the military adaptable. An example would be a navy ready to build forces that are as different from the World War II-style carrier task forces that have dominated naval power and strategy for more than half a century as those forces are different from the ones Admiral Dewey sailed into Manila Bay—less than half a century before the battle of Midway.*

This sort of adaptability is much easier to preach than to practice, and preachments like this one coming from the ivory tower carry little weight with military professionals. Opening a large, successful, and complex organization to fundamental change is deeply difficult under any circumstances; there are always many good reasons not to question the essential traditions embodied in evolved force structure. It would be nice, however, to be able to figure out in peacetime what basic change is necessary rather than to have to find out through the costly trial-and-error process in the crucible of war itself.

*Technology poses both opportunities and risks.* It is axiomatic that development and integration of advanced technology is America's military comparative advantage. There is debate about whether the U.S. defense establishment is witnessing a "revolution" in military affairs; but there is no question that developments in integrating information, weapons, and surveillance systems are producing significant changes.<sup>7</sup> It appears that for at least quite some time no other country will be able to catch up to the United States in this process of adapting technology, force structure, and doctrine. Therefore, no other country is likely to be able to match American combat power pound for pound. The strategic advantages of the "RMA," or whatever else we might dub these developments, are obvious. There are, however, some risks.

First, these advantages may spawn excessive expectations or complacency, especially among laymen. And it is laymen—political leaders in the executive and legislative branches, pundits who shape public debate, and voters—who will determine where and when military forces are committed to combat and how much will be spent to keep them up to snuff in peacetime. The vivid television images of the Gulf war, in which all that most people saw were laser-guided bombs

making direct hits and American tanks sweeping into Iraq with next to no casualties, were not conducive to preventing overconfidence.

Second, if other great powers such as Russia and China—or lesser powers—recognize the U.S. advantage and are forced by their own technological limitations to concede it, they will be encouraged to increase their reliance on weapons of mass destruction as a counter. This would be an offset to the U.S. qualitative edge in the same way that Nato used the threat of deliberate escalation as an offset to perceived Soviet quantitative advantage.

These ambiguities do not provide a guide to operational planning and technical development (we should certainly not slacken in the development of technology just because it could have some dubious side effects), but they do suggest the need for careful communication between those who plan strategy and those who provide the operational tools for implementing it.

The general problem for strategy is that there is no clear and present danger to focus overall priorities in an unambiguous way. Analysts without responsibility for outcomes can toss out nostrums about future challenges and the creativity necessary to meet them far more easily than practitioners, who must face the consequences of guessing wrong. If priorities are not focused and the nation does not adapt in anticipation, however, the capability the United States has will be, when it is needed, only some nifty systems of gizmos grafted onto a shrunken and stretched version of the force structure of the second half of the twentieth century.

A fair amount of what should be done, of course, is consistent with what is *being* done. Moreover, strategists and operators may not be able to get it right in advance no matter how hard they try. But if they spend most of their time trying to find ways to keep up the force structure and immediate operational readiness mandated by the Bottom-Up Review, they will inevitably have less time to puzzle through the options for genuine creative change or to experiment with forms more appropriate to the next millennium.

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## Notes

1. Charles Burton Marshall, "National Security: Thoughts on the Intangibles," in James Schlesinger et al., *Defending America* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 81–2.

2. Some are inclined to cite radical Islamism, but that threat is dispersed among several technologically second-class states and nonstate groups, many of whom are evidently not yet well coordinated. See Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995).

3. These arguments are elaborated in Richard K. Betts, *Military Readiness* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), chap. 8.

4. Research and development used to be financed by companies competing for contracts; the winner would recoup the R&D cost out of profits from production runs. This is no way to pay for R&D that has no immediate prospect of serial production. See Thomas L. McNaugher, *New Weapons, Old Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1989), pp. 154–7.

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5. See Richard K. Betts, "Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War," *International Security*, Winter 1993/94, p. 67.

6. Elliot A. Cohen, ed., *Gulf War Airpower Survey, Vol. 5: A Statistical Compendium and Chronology*, Part I, Table 64 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1993), p. 232.

7. For the RMA debate, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and William A. Owens (Adm., USN), "America's Information Edge," and Eliot A. Cohen, "A Revolution in Warfare," in *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1996.

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**Parks, Edwards. *The Art of William S. Phillips: The Glory of Flight*. Shelton, Conn.: The Greenwich Workshop, 1994. 172pp. \$60**

Experienced *Review* readers will probably remember our Winter 1994 cover, the USS *Kitty Hawk* flying F-14s at sunset (on page 166): "That *can't* be a painting!" But it was, and here is a whole book of the work of its artist, William S. Phillips, who specializes in aviation. Throughout the book, and especially in the introduction by Stephen Coonts, one can find reasons why the paintings are so authentic and evocative. First, Phillips has not only done the research but has probably actually been there—in the aircraft (or at least replicas), on the ships, in the settings. Second, it seems that he truly sees what is before him; writes Coonts, he wants "to know how this airplane *looked*." Most of the paintings in *The Glory of Flight* are of military aircraft, of all vintages; the plurality, perhaps, are of World War II, and with a good many from Vietnam (where Phillips served in 1965–1966 in the Air Force). There are also several civilian subjects, especially images of the barnstorming and hair-raising early days.

Phillips seems to have at least two trademarks. One of them Edwards Parks (whose text is as evocative as the paintings—Parks was a P-39 pilot) points out in his text: "[Phillips] conveys power and speed very convincingly." (See *Chasing the Daylight*, whose primary subject is actually a steam locomotive.) A second trademark is that he not only depicts actual incidents but involves the surviving participants, on both sides, some of whom signed the paintings. Actually, a third might be his sunsets—but one already knew that. This is a beautifully designed and printed book, which aviation enthusiasts will be unable to resist buying once they see it.