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Review Essays

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Review Essays

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Update on Nuclear Proliferation

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In December 1995, after NATO jet fighters silenced Serbian artillery barrages directed against civilian targets in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russian President Boris Yeltsin warned that continued Western operations in the Balkans could result in "a conflagration of war throughout Europe." A scant month later, *The New York Times* quoted a Peking official's boast that the United States would not oppose China's threat to bombard Taiwan with conventional missiles because America's leaders "care more about Los Angeles than they do about Taiwan."

Does this fiery rhetoric from Moscow and Peking mean the Clinton Administration is flat wrong in the belief that nuclear weapons have little national security value in the post-Cold War era? Or does it place the first nail in the coffin of the rogue state doctrine formalized in the Pentagon's 1993 Bottom-Up Review?

Professor Kenneth E. Waltz at the University of California, Berkeley, would probably answer yes to both questions. Writing in *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate*, Waltz states, "As ever in international politics, the biggest dangers come from the biggest powers; the smallest from the smallest. We should be more fearful of old nuclear countries and less fearful of recent and prospective ones."

If Waltz is correct, then the United States made a significant error in reformulating military and foreign policy after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Michael Klare, Professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College, joins Waltz in rejecting the rogue state doctrine, not because of the on-again, off-again belligerence of Russia and China or nuclear proliferation, but because "global chaos" poses the real threat to our national security.

Writing in *Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws: America's Search for a New Foreign Policy*, Klare notes that between 1947 and 1989 the Pentagon spent \$11.5 trillion on defense. The main objective of the post-Cold War rogue state doctrine, according to Klare, was to refill the "threat bank" with an enemy notorious enough to assure continued congressional support for high defense budgets.

Rather than blaming the Pentagon, Klare credits former President Ronald Reagan for first envisioning the new enemy of the 1990s. Four years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, in a speech before the American Bar Association on 8 July 1985, the "Great Communicator" warned his audience of "a confederation of terrorist states . . . trained, financed, and controlled" by a group of "outlaw states" seeking to undermine US foreign policy objectives. The Third World powers who would later replace the Soviet Union as the top threat to US national security were identified by Reagan as Cuba, Iran, Libya, Nicaragua, and North Korea. In a quirk of history, it was Iraq (the "outlaw state" not mentioned in President Reagan's speech because the United States was then allied with Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran) that later convinced the American public of the validity of the rogue state doctrine.

Dissenting from the conventional wisdom on the importance of Desert Storm, Klare states, "The fact that it accomplished so little of a lasting political nature should caution against placing much confidence in the ability of military action to achieve US objectives in a period of such turmoil and uncertainty." This perspective leads Klare to advocate a military whose overriding goal is the "reduction of global discord and violence." This would be accomplished through the contraction of international arms trade, strengthening of international peacemaking institutions, promotion of economic and social welfare, and prevention of environmental decline.

If Klare has an aversion for using force to settle disputes in the New World Order, Paddy Griffith, former senior lecturer in War Studies at the Royal Military Academy, offers a modern cultural explanation. Writing in the fifth annual report of the UK-chartered Verification Technology Information Centre (VERTIC), *Verification 1995: Arms Control, Peacekeeping, and the Environment*, Griffith observes "the use of conventional ground forces by advanced Western governments has today become almost as unthinkable as the use of nuclear weapons became after 1945 or the use of chemical weapons after 1918."

Griffith's chapter in the VERTIC anthology, "The Body Bag as Deterrent and Peace Dividend," uses examples from history to defend his thesis. The West's practice of burying its dead on foreign soil ended with World War II. The once remote fields of white crosses came home to America during Vietnam as each casualty was flown back to the United States for burial. Thanks to television, the death of a soldier was an intimate and tragic event involving everybody's next-door neighbor. The effect was profound: the body bag became as important a determinant of policy as national interest. Consequently, President Carter cancelled the 1980 Teheran hostage rescue after eight deaths at Desert One. President Reagan ended attempts to intervene in the 1983 Beirut Crisis after 231 Marines were killed by a suicide bomber. And President Clinton called off the Somalia peacekeeping operation in 1994 after 18 Rangers died during a firefight in Mogadishu.

The use of "overwhelming force" manifested in Desert Storm, in addition to guaranteeing a quick military victory, also had a corollary goal to limit casualties. While successful--coalition losses numbered around 700 killed and wounded--the easy defeat of the world's fourth largest military power had an unforeseen consequence: if a major army can be defeated with such a "trifling loss," operations against smaller powers can now presumably be conducted without any casualties at all. The truth of this observation by Griffith is evident in the cautious US deployment in Bosnia-Herzegovina where minimization of casualties is more important than mission success.

This growing unwillingness to take losses associated with combat operations gives renewed importance to arms control and disarmament treaties. Here again, ambiguities of the post-Cold War era work against US interests. Shortly after releasing the Bottom-Up Review, then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin offered a rationale for making the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) the cornerstone of US arms control policy. "The new nuclear danger is a handful of devices in the hands of rogue states," Aspin noted, and "the engine of the new danger is proliferation."

Recent experience in Iraq and North Korea (two Third World nations that joined the NPT, underwent on-site inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], and yet either came close to developing or did in fact develop nuclear devices) casts doubt on the effectiveness of the 1971 treaty. Going a step further, at least one prominent writer is swimming against the anti-proliferation tide in the apparent belief that "more may be better."

In a lively point-counterpoint exchange, two leading authorities on nuclear proliferation trade verbal volleys in a rhetorical version of the Big Game where Stanford and UC Berkeley meet on the gridiron. Believing there is little to fear from the slow spread of nuclear weapons, Berkeley political scientist Kenneth Waltz (*The Spread Of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate*) says even rogue states behave more responsibly after joining the nuclear club. Noting there has not been a world war since two atomic bombs ended the last one, Waltz believes "nuclear weapons make wars hard to start." The same nuclear taboo that restrained the Soviet Union and the United States during the bipolar Cold War should extend into the coming era of multipolarity as regional rivals opt for small nuclear arsenals.

Countering that "more will be worse," Stanford political scientist Scott Sagan believes the new nuclear states will lack the organizational structures to ensure safe and rational control of superweapons. While accepting Waltz's theory that more nuclear states may be our fate, Sagan chides his rival and other proliferation optimists for confusing "what rational states should do with predictions of what real states will do."

So, what to do about the coming dilemma of proliferation? "Very little" would likely be Waltz's reply, since "new nuclear states will feel the constraints that present nuclear states have experienced." Sagan would minimize the danger with a proactive agenda where US diplomats support civilian control of weapons in the new nuclear states, share secure basing technology to ensure a deterrent promoting second-strike capability, and share technology perfected in the West promoting nuclear safety.

Going a step beyond the Stanford vs. Berkeley verbal joust, Steven Lee's essay "Nuclear Proliferation and Nuclear Entitlement" (*Ethics & International Affairs*) asks if it's morally permissible for a nonnuclear state to acquire nuclear weapons. Citing just war theory, Lee observes that while aggression is impermissible, self-defense is permissible only to the extent it satisfies conditions of discrimination and proportionality. In Lee's analysis, nuclear deterrence never passes the discrimination test because the destructive power of nuclear weapons makes it virtually impossible to attack combatants without injuring noncombatants (or innocents).

The proportionality (benefit exceeds harm) tenet is met if nuclear weapons offer the only means for survival against a clearly superior foe. Even in this rare case (Lee cites Israel as meeting the proportionality test while South Africa's now defunct arsenal did not), Lee concludes that proliferation is outside just war bounds, even in survival cases, because possession of nuclear weapons violates one of the theory's two conditions. Citing the apparent conflict between morality and prudence, a conflict within morality itself according to Lee, the author concludes that the just war theory is an inadequate tool for assessing the acceptability of proliferation when a nation's survival is at stake.

Moving back to real world politics, Lee confronts the issue of anti-proliferation. What can the major powers do, beyond diplomatic measures, to prevent proliferation? Not much, in Lee's opinion. He objects to overt measures like Israel's 1981 attack against Iraq's nuclear reactor at Osirak, or even the extended security guarantees offered smaller states by major powers. Standing under an ally's nuclear umbrella, according to Lee, simply displaces the moral wrong involved in the direct acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Between Griffith's body bags and Lee's moral aversion to overt antiproliferation, arms control would appear to be the best hope for global civility in the New World Order. But here too there are flaws, according to David A. Kay's "Preventive Approaches: Expectations and Limitations for Inspections," one of 16 papers compiled in *Weapons of Mass Destruction: New Perspectives in Counterproliferation*. Citing an example from history that modern politicians ignore, Kay tells the sad story of the Versailles Peace Treaty enacted after World War I. To monitor German disarmament, the treaty allowed "anytime, anywhere, with anything" inspections. Between 1919 and 1927, some 1400 Allied officers and support personnel conducted almost 34,000 on-site inspections of suspected military facilities. Yet a bigger and deadlier second world war followed the most intrusive arms control treaty imposed in this century.

Acknowledging that on-site inspections don't always guarantee compliance, Kay uncovers the Achilles' Heel of modern arms control agreements. He chides the United States for assuming compliance is the norm for East-West agreements. Such complacency quickly brands anomalies as "mistakes" or the result of "disorganization." Disturbing trends such as Russia's "commercial" version of the START-limited SS-25 ICBM, deliberate underreporting of chemical weapons, and continued production of biological weapons in violation of a 20-year-old treaty add credence to Kay's warning.

Updating an especially disturbing trend by Uncle Sam to look the other way, Kathleen Bailey accuses the Clinton Administration of taking the easy way out in the North Korean challenge to the NPT. In "The Nuclear Deal with North Korea: Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?" Bailey lists three options available when Pyongyang ignored IAEA inspectors: negotiations, sanctions, and intervention. Choosing the first solution, Bailey believes, set a precedent for extortion with potentially far-reaching consequences to US interests in the Far East.

As the United States trims defense spending, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force is expanding its patrol area from coastal defense to a 1000 nautical-mile perimeter reaching close to Guam and the Philippines. The significance of potentially hostile operations within this perimeter (Chinese live-fire exercises in the Taiwan Strait and North Korea's No Dong missile tests in the Sea Of Japan) is certainly not lost on Tokyo. Without the US-Japan Security Treaty, an artifact of the Cold War that still extends the US nuclear umbrella over East Asia, a dangerous arms race among Japan, China, both Koreas, and Taiwan could emerge, threatening global stability. These observations are some

of the key issues discussed in *The United States, Japan, and The Future of Nuclear Weapons*. That Carnegie-sponsored report on US-Japan relations also notes a growing dependence on nuclear power in the region due to instability in fossil fuel supplies.

Joseph Cirincione's *Current History* article "The Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Nuclear Balance" notes that, while the nuclear weapon states have over 1500 tons of fissile materials in weapon stockpiles, there is an additional 900 tons held by civilian reactor programs. Japan alone has nearly ten tons of plutonium which could easily be formed into plutonium pits for nuclear weapons. That space-faring nation also has the missile technology to become a major military power if dwindling US interest in the region fuels an arms race in East Asia.

Republic of China writer Lin Yufang believes a dangerous arms buildup may have already started in East Asia. Fueled by political strife, increasing financial capability to purchase arms, and more open markets for arms exporters, growing tensions in the region cannot be curbed by a collective security system. Rather than arms control or regional political alliances, Yufang sees economic cooperation as the catalyst for restoring stability to East Asia. Yufang's observations are published in an anthology, *The Diffusion of Advanced Weaponry: Technologies, Regional Implications, and Responses*.

As new regional alliances form on the post-Cold War landscape, to borrow again from Waltz's warning about old nuclear powers, what about the other major nuclear states once closely allied with the United States or Russia? In *Strategic Views from the Second Tier*, the nuclear policies of France, Britain, and China are discussed from the viewpoint of writers native to those countries.

Russian-US arms control treaties give rising importance to the nuclear arsenals of the second-tier powers. During the Cold War, the combined warhead count of China, France, and England was only seven to ten percent of the superpower total. After START II is implemented, the figure will rise to 50 percent.

France, a maverick during its absence from NATO's integrated military command structure, acknowledges no enemy. Instead, to quote a Defense Ministry official, "Our deterrent is at the service of our independence." England, which maintains nuclear weapons as general insurance in a changing world, does not want to leave the "anchor" role exclusively to the United States and Russia. Both France and England are moving the bulk of their nuclear forces to sea. Lacking a counterforce capability, London and Paris acknowledge the need to maintain a secure, second-strike capability and are opting for the survivability offered by a submarine force.

China looks to its growing nuclear capability as important to regional security in East Asia. Believing its large population offers a significant advantage in a nuclear exchange, China has maintained a "no-first-use policy" since exploding its first atomic weapon. Like France and England, China depends on concealment to promote survivability of its forces.

The second-tier states are unanimous in eschewing arms control: "Our arsenals are already at the minimum level." So far (China may soon become the exception) all three nations look to their nuclear forces for deterrence, not war-fighting. While many would see this as stabilizing, there is a downside in forces unable to escalate from tactical to strategic targets. The credibility of French, English, and Chinese nuclear forces, as currently postured, resides in a second-strike capability against cities. This policy has the ring of terrorism where pure destruction becomes the objective. A Chinese official offered a chilling summation of deterrence based on holding population centers hostage, "Does it matter if we hit the Kremlin or the Bolshoi Theater?"

Post-Cold War history, if these writers are correct, is clearly not following the rogue doctrine script. While US forces commit to peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, northern Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia, Waltz's "biggest powers"--China, North Korea, and Russia--probe Western resolve.

The latest initiative from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency calls for development of an operations concept and implementing technology to support small-unit operations. Squad-sized forces would operate autonomously in Third World countries or urban areas during peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. Unmanned airborne vehicles (UAVs) would patrol the skies during a small-unit operation, keeping a lid on the body-bag count. Meanwhile, diplomacy, arms control, and non-proliferation treaties are allegedly checking the hegemony of

the "biggest powers."

While China again looks at reunification with Taiwan, North Korea counts its latest ration of concessions from the United States, and the Russian Communist Party becomes a major contender in a national election, the West enjoys the fruits of a peace dividend. But when the band begins to play for Waltz's "biggest powers," will arms control, shuttle diplomacy, and sticky foam carry the day?

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Review Essay

An Earlier Revolution in Military Affairs

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As the military community struggles to define what it is calling a revolution in military affairs, it may be instructive to review the history of an earlier military revolution caused by the weaponry of the Machine Age, at about the last turn

of the century. Some historians of that era (including this reviewer) have identified strong cultural associations within an animal-powered society as the primary reason why late 19th-century military leadership declined to adapt to new weaponry. Recent scholarship on that era, however, has recorded a lively interchange of informed opinion within the educated elite of the officer corps of the military services on new weapons, and upon tactics to employ or defend against them. These scholars show that failure of the US military to modernize for the new 20th century was due, in the main, to the parsimony of military appropriations, and the absence of a modern potential enemy.

Graham Cosmas of the US Army's Center of Military History leads the school of those who write of that period who condemn the penury of a short-sighted US Congress for those glaring deficiencies in military effectiveness revealed by the Spanish-American War. In his landmark study, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War*, Cosmas shows that many of the shortcomings of the army that tumbled ashore in Cuba are traceable directly to lack of appropriations for weaponry, equipment, and even for subsistence supplies; he also traces many of the failures to petty interferences in organization, operations, and command by President William McKinley and by a Congress influenced by state militia leaders.

Cosmas's theme is echoed by most of the contributors to James C. Bradford's *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War and its Aftermath*. Contributing to this volume, Cosmas highlights the success of "ad hoc" joint operations between the Army and Navy, even though these operations were conducted under a cloud of mutual suspicion and distrust among the leaders of the two services. Bradford focuses this volume upon the significant command and administrative lessons learned from the war, and upon the "Root Revolution" in organization and staff operations provoked by US Secretary of War Elihu Root at the beginning of what became "The American Century."

The US Navy of that time fared somewhat better than the Army, although penurious funding also prevented development of adequate seapower to protect the nation's rapid expansion of its commercial reach across the globe. This inadequacy is one lesson revealed by the Spanish-American War, according to A. B. Feuer, in his new book *The Spanish-American War at Sea: Naval Action in the Atlantic*. Feuer concludes, "The Spanish-American War was a sobering warning for the United States Army and Navy." He quotes from an article in the *Boston Globe* that the war "was a priceless lesson, and cheaply learned. If we had been compelled to learn it in the face of a formidable foe--like Germany--we would have had to go through an abyss of humiliation."

The formalization of after-action analyses by the US Army at the turn of the century is revealed in a slim monograph by Dennis J. Vetock, *Lessons Learned: A History of US Army Lesson Learning*. While Vetock extends his study through the War in Vietnam, he shows an increased appreciation of "lessons learned" with the onset of the 20th century. He also reveals the relegation of much of this valuable experiential information to dusty files.

With further respect to lessons learned, John T. Greenwood, in his article "The U.S. Army Military Observers with the Japanese Army during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)," reveals a lively questioning of the effectiveness of the new mass-casualty weapons and the tactics to employ or operate against them. While Greenwood admits that American observations, including those from US observers with the Russian side, led to mixed conclusions, his strongest findings are of the high level of scholarly disputation within the US Army officer corps. Greenwood concludes that the officers of the Old Army possessed "a remarkable degree of professionalism, intellectual vitality, and knowledge of modern military science, in view of their lack of higher military education, and the circumstances of their service in a largely frontier army."

Even the most innovative military thinkers struggled with little success to devise tactics that could maximize or neutralize the effects of the new weapons. A new book by Perry Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground: United States Army Tactics, 1865-1899*, catalogues the general belief in the late 19th century, growing out of the American Civil War, that the devastating firepower of improved small arms and artillery made defense dominant on the battlefields of the future. Many military writers of that period assayed the cost of "crossing the deadly ground" as prohibitive of success in any measure, while some few argued that maneuver of massed attackers could be successful on the deadly battlefield through high esprit alone. Committees and boards examined the problem of attacking seemingly impregnable defenses; these boards modified small-unit tactics for attack, generally by employing less vulnerable, dispersed formations.

A problem in spreading attack formations, which persists to this day, is the amount of dispersion between individual infantrymen that can be achieved without sacrificing control of the attacking formation. The greater the spread of the attackers, the more difficult it becomes for the tactical leader to exercise control through voice and gestures. Jamieson makes the point that this problem was at least partly solved in the 20th century with the development of the field radio; however, this reviewer's pertinent experience leads to the conclusion that the problem of close assault against final-protective fire is greater than one of control. It becomes very difficult to mass assault fires while attacking in spread formations. Until recently, infantry field manuals described "marching fire" as the solution, but this technique requires soldiers to assault together in upright posture, increasing their vulnerability to a protected enemy. Spreading formations also increases individual fear, as the spirit of group bravery is attenuated. Jamieson concludes that assaulting against modern fires was a harrowing experience through World War I. Crossing the deadly ground remains, and will remain, a death experience for many in the assaulting force.

Despite the intellectual ferment described above, most of the writers admit the inertia of the military of that day, and note the limited effectiveness of the "lessons learned" in provoking changes in tactics and procedures. Of this resistance, Jamieson says, "Most soldiers held on to their traditional ideas about tactics and resisted change, and others simply had no interest in the subject." One can find such sentiments expressed in many other military histories of the period.

A valuable complement to the texts cited above is Donald H. Dyal's *Historical Dictionary of the Spanish American War*. Offering a wide array of entries on events and personalities related to that war, Dyal includes a pithy preface on the significance of the Spanish American War to America's role in international affairs; he also summarizes existing scholarship and reference material on the period.

Something more than numerology leads to the expectation that the turn of a century brings about a new era in human affairs. Certainly one can, from the hindsight of history, verify the hopes and fears of those Americans who stood on the threshold of the 20th century struggling to understand the power of the machine. That their perceptual horizons were too limited, and their resistance to change ultimately futile, may be a lesson for today.

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