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Assessing the Threats

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BOOK REVIEWS

A NEW DISORDER

Newhouse, John, ed. *Assessing the Threats*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Defense Information, 2002. 119pp. \$20

It is no cliché to argue that the terrorist attack that befell the United States in September 2001 was a climacteric event, a watershed in the post–Cold War world. Henceforth, all analyses of American national security policy will demarcate events as having occurred either *before* or *after* the horrendous events of that day.

While some issues like national missile defense, nuclear proliferation, and terrorism predated “9/11,” others arose out of the rubble of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon: the threat of sophisticated global terror networks dedicated to the perpetration of violence against the United States and its interests; the imminent danger of weapons of mass destruction (especially in the hands of rogue states or in those of international terrorists like al-Qa‘ida); and the profound, ongoing debate among America’s national security elites over the pursuit of a multilateralist foreign policy or one underwritten by unilateralism.

In *Assessing the Threats*, each of these issues is addressed with varying degrees of emphasis by a group of international scholars. The book was conceived as an

effort to examine threats to security and stability cross-nationally. The quality of the research conducted by each of the contributors, and the timeliness of their inquiries make this work a valuable resource for readers of the *Naval War College Review*. John Newhouse is an experienced strategic policy analyst who is currently a senior fellow at the Center for Defense Information, under the auspices of which the present work was undertaken.

Newhouse plants himself firmly in the multilateralist camp, in an article with the same title as the book: “Nothing less than *sustained* multilateralism will enable major powers to neutralize the interactive problems of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.” In another salient observation, Newhouse contends that “Russia’s warning system against submarine missile attack, designed around a new generation of satellites, is still inoperable.” In this assertion, Newhouse has confirmed that Russia has no credible defense from fleet ballistic missile submarines of the Trident II type, armed with D-5 missiles.

Such asymmetries between the strategic and financial capabilities of the United

States and Russia are confirmed by Alexei Arbatov, the veteran Russian analyst of American institutions and foreign policy. In his "Russian Security and the Western Connection," Arbatov describes the destabilizing effect the American abrogation of the ABM Treaty would have upon Russia's conventional forces. They would be degraded to the point where they would be "hardly sufficient for even one local contingency and several peacekeeping operations." Like Newhouse, Arbatov is particularly critical of the present American foreign policy, arguing that the "quality and wisdom" of its design is no longer commensurate with the financial and military power of the United States.

Similarly, Ivan Safranchuk has presented an equally fascinating *tour d'horizon* in his analysis of "An Array of Threats to Russia." Safranchuk effectively entombs the Cold War with the argument that today Russia's primary strategic posture is defensive. This point is demonstrated by his assertion of Russian action. Surrounded by pariah regimes such as exist in Iraq and Iran and possessing the potential for deploying weapons of mass destruction, Russia, Safranchuk argues, now accepts penetration of its Central Asian and Caucasus borderlands by the United States. This is a theme worth exploring.

Thérèse Delpech's query with reference to "A Safe and Secure Europe?" echoes British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd's contrapuntal prediction of a decade ago of "a new disorder," against former President Bush's proclamation of a "New World Order." Delpech portrays the "9/11" attacks as events "which gave asymmetric warfare a horrific shape." In order to "tame" the

current perceived U.S. penchant for a triumphalist unilateralism, Delpech would echo Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound* and envelop or constrain Pax Americana with the bonds of multilateralism.

I was struck by the book's lack of a comprehensive introduction or concluding chapter to sum up and assess the future in a meaningful way. Instead, the reader is left with several conclusions, which detracts from a sense of cohesion about the book's contents. Nevertheless, each individual contribution has something of value to offer, and taken in that context, each is significant to our understanding of the power calculus at work today.

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O'Hanlon, Michael E. *Defense Policy Choices for the Bush Administration*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001. 244pp. \$18.95

O'Hanlon presents his blueprint for how U.S. resources should be spent based on thorough strategic and military assessments. He recommends that the Bush administration set priorities and make the difficult choices. However, the terrorist attacks of "9/11" and the completion of the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) have changed fiscal conditions and defense strategy.

O'Hanlon is a senior fellow in foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution. He is the author of numerous books and articles on U.S. defense strategy, with special emphasis on defense budgets and military technology. His