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Strategic Appraisal 1996; 1997 Strategic Assessment: Flashpoints and Force Structure

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I highly recommend this book for the reader who is interested in an ordered and organized approach to the world, and in a rational basis for international and regional policy considerations. You and I may not agree with every iota of information it provides, but this study does give us a common base for continued dialogue and discussion.

Arthur S. Weber, Jr.
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps

Khalilzad, Zalmay, ed. *Strategic Appraisal 1996*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996. (Available from National Book Network) 329pp. \$20

Binnendijk, Hans, and Patrick Clawson, eds. *1997 Strategic Assessment: Flashpoints and Force Structure*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense Univ. Press (Institute for National Strategic Studies), 1997. (Available from U.S. Govt. Print. Off.) 300pp. \$27

Both Project Air Force's (the division of RAND that produced this book) *Strategic Appraisal 1996* and the Institute for National Strategic Studies [INSS] *1997 Strategic Assessment* provide wide-ranging reviews of the world's security climate. The latter "is aimed at policy makers, analysts, and informed members of the public who want a serious summary of the threats facing the United States in the next decade," while the former adds a putative "emphasis on the future role of aerospace power." Since they cover much of the same territory, they offer an excellent opportunity for comparison.

Strategic Appraisal 1996 begins by promising an examination of "the question of U.S. grand strategy for the new

era." I looked forward to the discussion of three alternative grand strategies (neo-isolationism, return to multipolarity, and global leadership), agreeing that "a strategic vision and a grand strategy are important because they . . . provide the United States a strategic direction that will guide long-range planning in the Department of Defense and the services." The discussion, however, was disappointingly thin, and, in the end, primarily an advocacy piece for the global leadership strategy. *Strategic Appraisal's* criticism of current U.S. strategy—which focuses on fighting two major regional contingencies—was more interesting. It correctly notes that the current strategy fails to deal with Europe and in general runs the risk of creating a gap "between the military strategy and the capabilities available to carry it out." The remainder of the book consists of excellent papers on various areas of the world.

The *1997 Strategic Assessment*, which examines "flashpoints and force structure," is the third volume in a series that began in 1995. The first assessment surveyed "the world strategic environment," and the second (1996) "looked at the instruments by which the U.S. government can influence the behavior

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of other governments.” *Strategic Assessment* is a wonderfully coherent volume, not simply a collection of well written but separate studies. It discusses flash-points in four areas: among major powers, in significant regions, in troubled states, and those relating to transnational problems. Project Air Force’s *Strategic Appraisal 1996* takes a more traditional approach and discusses the world region by region. The boldest claim made in either book is that major power relationships “will reemerge in the next five to ten years as the centerpiece of world affairs.” If true, what these volumes report about the major powers is important. Hence, I will basically restrict the geopolitical portion of this review to what is said about Russia, Europe, China, and Japan. I have also included a short paragraph on North Korea, because both volumes insist that it remains a very dangerous place. I conclude with a brief discussion of force structure.

Russia. *Strategic Appraisal 1996* notes that “the current Russian revolution is only in the beginning stages of what is certainly going to be a long travail” and that “Russia remains fundamentally unstable.” *1997 Strategic Assessment* agrees that the “future of political reform in Russia remains in question,” arguing that for the next ten years “Moscow will be preoccupied with its internal economical and political turmoil and, to a lesser extent, with maintaining its domination of the former Soviet Union.”

Europe. Both volumes view Europe as critical for America’s future. *Strategic Appraisal 1996* concludes that the “United States [is] no longer Europe’s protector but rather a permanent participant in

European affairs.” It asserts that this benefits the United States, because “Europe is our natural partner.” *1997 Strategic Assessment* agrees, averring that “Europe is a region second to none in America’s interests.” It also concludes that sustaining the Nato alliance “remains among America’s deepest interests.”

China. *1997 Strategic Assessment* states that “Beijing shows no evidence of any willingness to allow its ties with Washington to collapse or evolve towards military conflict.” *Strategic Appraisal 1996* argues that maintaining “reasonably good reasons with the United States” is in China’s best interests, since it “serves many critical Chinese security goals.” Nevertheless, the INSS worries that China’s growing military strength “could embolden Beijing to resort to coercive diplomacy or direct military action in an attempt to resolve in its favor various outstanding territorial claims or to press other vital issues affecting the future economic and security environment of the region.” Despite its sanguine observation that China is not likely to find reason for conflict with the United States, *1997 Strategic Assessment* believes that “dealing with China as a rising power is the most compelling of all of the many complex challenges facing the United States and its regional allies.”

Japan. *Strategic Appraisal 1996* argues that “the Japanese have not fully come to terms with their actions preceding and during World War II” and that a failure to reach this catharsis “impede[s] development of a healthy defense establishment, while sustaining foreign suspicions of Japan as an international

actor." *1997 Strategic Assessment* agrees that Japan "is in the process of redefining itself" in the international arena; it reasons that maintaining strong relations with Japan is critical, because "Japan's history over the past century is one of stability and prosperity when in alliance with a leading maritime power, and one of conflict and instability when it pursues a posture of strategic independence."

North Korea. *Strategic Appraisal 1996* characterizes North Korea as a troublesome but doomed state, and *1997 Strategic Assessment* agrees that it "appears near economic collapse." Nevertheless, *Strategic Assessment* states that "given the military resources at its disposal, the otherwise grim circumstances in which it finds itself, and the poor prospects to halt and reverse its downward trajectory, North Korea in its current weakness and decline poses a greater threat to South Korea than at any time since the summer of 1950."

Force Structure. One of the strengths of the INSS *1997 Strategic Assessment* is how it ties its force structure discussion to the flashpoints and missions discussed earlier in the volume. *Strategic Appraisal 1996*, on the other hand, has little to say about force structure beyond the recommendation that "the United States should size its forces by requiring them to have the capability to defeat nearly simultaneously the most plausible military challenges to critical American interests that might be created by the two next most powerful military forces that are not allied with the United States." Not surprisingly, it suggests those two forces are likely to belong to Russia and China; even less surprisingly, it

recommends countering them with U.S. forces capable of "rapid global mobility and presence." In other words, it recommends adopting the basic tenets of the Air Force's *Global Reach—Global Power* and its successor, *Global Engagement*.

1997 Strategic Assessment presents a lengthy and balanced review of three possible modernization strategies: recapitalization of the existing force; accelerated development of a force that rapidly embraces emerging technology—that is, a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) force; and a full-spectrum force, which would balance the other two approaches. Although *1997 Strategic Assessment* hesitates to recommend any of these approaches, it comes very close to advocating the course leading to the full-spectrum force. "This is a logical approach to the broadened range of challenges the U.S. military may face over the next decade and a good way of hedging against the possibility of a major conflict before 2007. . . . It provides the continuity with today's doctrine and forces, as well as the force structure and numbers of personnel to cope with the broadening potential challenges at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. And it improves the capacity of the force to deal with challenges at the higher end, including potential confrontations with theater peers. But having what is in effect the best of both worlds (today's world in the form of the Recapitalized Force; tomorrow's world in the form of an RMA force) would be expensive." How expensive? "The Full Spectrum Force design path would cost more than either of the routes to the other two models

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and could end up costing considerably more than the 1996 force." That is probably too expensive.

For those desiring a concise review of the international security environment, I can recommend either volume. Both provide an extremely readable and highly informative *tour d'horizon*. However, for those desiring lots of maps, charts, diagrams, and color pictures to supplement their reading, there is only one choice—the INSS 1997 *Strategic Assessment*.

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Betts, Richard K. *Military Readiness: Concepts, Choices, Consequences*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995. 322pp. \$42.95

When asked, any veteran of our modern armed forces will readily define what "readiness" means, both in a theoretical and practical sense. If pressed, most can probably recall how readiness affected them during various aspects of their careers. It is also likely that the veteran can also recount an instance of how an evaluation of readiness (usually by one's superior) can go bizarrely wrong. In this reviewer's case, it was the "randomly selected" readiness sortie of my destroyer in 1975 after we had removed both our SPS-40 and SPS-10 radar antennae for repair. I am sure there are numerous other tales of misconstrued and misapplied readiness criteria that continue to this day. One can begin to understand why this phenomenon occurs by carefully reading this admirable book by Richard Betts.

The author is a professor of political science at Columbia University and a former senior fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution. He has spent his career studying the more complex aspects of modern political-military affairs. In this work he explains why the United States has continued to have serious problems in understanding, planning, implementing, and measuring the many aspects of military readiness. He uses various excellent examples from recent history to illustrate how difficult it is to deal effectively with this topic, and he offers some keen insights into how we can change our national approach to this subject now that we have emerged victorious from the forty-year Cold War.

In one section, Betts takes the topic of readiness and explores aspects of it by using some historical examples from the last seventy-five years. He points out that there can be two distinct definitions of readiness: readiness for *when*, and readiness for *what*. The former entails operational readiness much like that maintained during the Cold War; it is based solely on the amount of time needed to react or respond to attack. The second type is structural readiness, which refers to how effectively an infrastructure supports mobilization.

Betts's "readiness for when" is finite in sustainment and execution, for resources can remain at such a threshold only for a limited period of time; they must be rotated regularly to permit rest, retraining, resupply, and refurbishment. If these forces are committed to battle, there are few reinforcements, and victory must be swift. Betts is speaking here of almost a "come-as-you-are war."