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Decontroling Strategic Technology, 1990-1992: Creating the Military Threats of the 21st Century

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BOOK REVIEWS

A book reviewer occupies a position of special responsibility and trust. He is to summarize, set in context, describe strengths, and point out weaknesses. As a surrogate for us all, he assumes a heavy obligation which it is his duty to discharge with reason and consistency.

Admiral H.G. Rickover

"Who Should Decide?"

Leitner, Peter M. *Decontrolling Strategic Technology, 1990–1992: Creating the Military Threats of the 21st Century*. Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America , 1995. 242pp. $47

PETER LEITNER, A SENIOR STRATEGIC TRADE ADVISOR with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, explores the realm of national security policy making within the Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom). His focus is on negotiations conducted between 1990 and 1992, which resulted in the decontrol of a wide variety of strategic technologies. He contends that those decisions will create serious military threats for the United States in the twenty-first century.

CoCom, an informal body largely composed of Nato countries plus Japan and Australia, began negotiations in June 1990 pursuant to President George Bush's January 1990 initiative to review U.S. export control policies. The review, reflective of improved East-West relations, identified fifty technologies in such fields as telecommunications, cryptography, navigation, electronics, and computers for complete or partial decontrol. This "core" list, as the author refers to it, formed the basis of CoCom's debates.

Leitner goes down two tracks in this book. The first illustrates how various technologies that were decontrolled can be turned into military applications. For instance, he refers to a May 1987 incident in which Mathias Rust evaded Soviet air defenses in a small Cessna aircraft, eventually landing in Red Square. This led the Soviets to acquire illegally U.S. computer technology through the Swedish firm DataSaab. By contracting with DataSaab for a civilian air traffic control system, the Soviets were able to obtain technology that was ultimately utilized to upgrade their air defense systems.

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The second track is an analysis of CoCom's negotiations. The author uses Graham Allison's models, Irving Janis's "groupthink" theory, Paul K. Davis's and John Arquilla's "limited rationality" hypothesis, and concepts from Roger Fisher's and William Ury's problem-solving dynamics to explain the motivations of the U.S. negotiators that led to the sweeping decontrol decisions. In conclusion, he proposes an alternative model—cybernetics—as more suitable than "political haggling" for determining future technology transfer policies.

Leitner provides convincing evidence of how CoCom's decisions to decontrol various strategic technologies could result in a compromise of U.S. national security. However, his utilization of Allison's and other conceptual models to support his argument that the CoCom negotiations were "sub-optimized" is superficial and unconvincing. He has clumsily peppered his book with names and quotes from renowned group-dynamics theorists, moving with insufficient depth from one to the other in an attempt to justify his position. The result is an incomprehensible leap from analysis to conclusions. Notwithstanding this, Leitner raises some provocative questions. Should government representatives with limited expertise in science and engineering be determining public policy regarding increasingly complex technological matters? Can they fully understand the potential future ramifications of their decisions?

Leitner's book is timely reading for political scientists, students of national security policy, and government policy makers.

Carol J. Figerie
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Ullman, Harlan K., and James P. Wade, with L. A. Edney et al. *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance.* Washington, D.C.: National Defense Univ., 1996. 199pp. (Available by request)

Sponsored by the National Defense University's Advanced Concepts, Technologies, and Information Strategies directorate, a seven-member study group composed of distinguished scholars and retired general officers has sought to provide the national security community with a radically new military strategy for a rapidly changing world. The result of their endeavor is *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, a futurist-oriented work that seeks "to explore alternative concepts for structuring mission capability packages . . . around which future U.S. military forces might be configured."

At the outset the authors sound a cautionary note. The military and political leadership of the United States, confronting an uncertain world and an era of rapid technological change, must abandon the current military-industrial structure born of World War II and the