

A Book Review

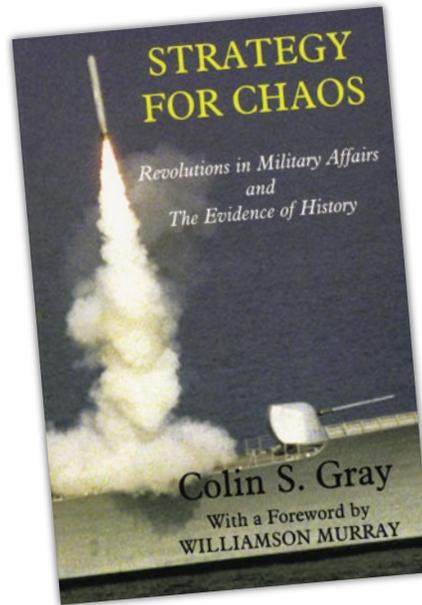
By BARRY WATTS

Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History

by Colin S. Gray
London: Frank Cass, 2002
310 pp. \$33.95
[ISBN: 0-714-65186-9]

Strategy for Chaos by Colin S. Gray is an uneven work of good intentions. Its goal is to use the concepts of revolutions in military affairs (RMAs) and nonlinearity to improve understanding of war and strategy by balancing pure theory and the singularities of military history. Gray observes that social scientists have been prone to force square pegs of military history into round holes of theory regardless of the resulting distortions. Conversely, military historians have been chary of even modest generalizations from the historical record on the grounds that events are unique both in themselves and in context. *Strategy for Chaos* attempts to avoid erring in either direction by elucidating the “nature, structure, and dynamics” of both war and strategy while respecting history by reviewing the RMAs of the Napoleonic period, World War I, and the Cold War nuclear era.

There is much that is sensible, praiseworthy, and even true in the resulting book. Gray argues, for example, that insofar as strategy and war are fundamentally about use of organized violence between opposing polities to achieve their conflicting ends, their natures have never changed, nor are they likely to regardless of how “revolutionary” alterations in warfighting may prove to be. Conversely, he insists that the character of war and strategy is “ever changing” in response to changes in society, economics, technology, and politics.



Gray’s first point was made repeatedly by Carl von Clausewitz, perhaps most memorably when he observed that war can have its own means or “grammar,” but not its own ends or “logic.” Gray’s second point is more obvious to those who have lived through the emergence of nuclear weapons and airliners being flown into buildings than it may have been to Clausewitz. Both theoretical claims have broad empirical support and, taken together, offer a needed corrective to much of the conceptual and verbal excesses in the RMA and nonlinearity-of-war literature. Gray is right to condemn incautious assertions—even by American Secretaries of Defense—that precision munitions or cyberspace weapons are altering the *nature* of war or strategy.

Nevertheless, the book is not entirely successful in laying out either theory or evidence. Because certain misconceptions have become so widespread in RMA debates, this review attempts to clarify two key points: the central implication of nonlinear dynamics for war and strategy, and the historical origins of the RMA hypothesis in the Department of Defense (DOD).

Gray’s deepest concern about nonlinearity and strategy is their seeming incompatibility. If war is chaotic, how can purposeful strategy be possible? Gray’s

solution is to argue that “the proposition that it is the nature of war to be chaotic [is] an insightful fallacy.... A misreading of Clausewitz on the importance of friction, chance, risk, and uncertainty in war, combined with an appreciation of the chaotic conditions of actual combat, has encouraged a newly orthodox view that chaos rules in war and, in reality, over strategy.” This orthodoxy, he concludes, is mistaken.

The main argument behind these conclusions is in Gray’s fourth chapter. Given the confusion between *nonlinear* and *complex-adaptive* systems evident in phrases such as “chaos-complexity-nonlinearity theory,” Gray’s reasoning is not easy to follow. For example, he appears unaware that the dynamical systems of physics, whether linear or nonlinear, process information strictly through mechanical iteration, whereas complex-adaptive systems such as humans and stock markets look for regularities or patterns that can be condensed into schemata describing aspects of reality and then act on those schemata, a radically different way of processing information. Moreover, he concedes that “strategy is nonlinear in that strategic consequences, or effectiveness, can show radical discontinuities.” Such discontinuities clearly suggest a loss of universal predictability in strategy, which is a key feature of nonlinear systems. Yet Gray also insists that “much of strategic behavior is linear” and subject to “sensible prediction,” and therefore purposeful predictive strategy can confound chaos. In summarizing his assessment of three historical RMAs—Napoleonic France, imperial Germany, and the Soviet Union in the nuclear era—he argues that all three were “massively overmatched by their enemies,” which is to say that “the bigger battalions” eventually won all three contests. Ignored, however, are cases such as the American failure in Vietnam and the Spanish conquest of the Incas in which the bigger battalions lost.

The larger question in *Strategy for Chaos* is whether the absence of

Lieutenant Colonel Barry Watts, USAF (Ret.), is a senior fellow with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

universal predictability for combat outcomes renders strategy moot. This reviewer's answer is a resounding no. If combat outcomes were computationally reducible in the way the movements of the planets around the sun are, then appropriately programmed computers could replace strategists. War's nonlinearities are what make strategy an art, demanding rare levels of discernment and judgment (Clausewitz's *coup d'oeil*). Rather than rejecting nonlinearity in strategy, Gray the strategist ought to embrace it. But like 18th- and 19th-century physicists such as Pierre Simon de Laplace, he feels compelled to insist that strategy is for the most part predictable, when in truth predictability can vanish in the next moment with devastating strategic consequences.

Turning to the origins of RMA discussions in DOD, Gray asserts that "various official and commercial patrons . . . in the 1990s undoubtedly were motivated largely by parochial—albeit legitimate—concerns of U.S. defence policy and even simply by business opportunity." Given his acknowledgement of Andrew Marshall's role in pushing him to declare where he stands on the RMA debate, this denigrating characterization of how and why the debate emerged does not reflect the facts as this reviewer understands them. After Marshall became the Director of Net Assessment in 1973, he saw the need to develop plausible Soviet assessments of the nuclear competition with the United States and the military balance in Europe. While that effort took over a decade to mature, it became the single most important body of research he pursued from 1973 to the end of the Cold War. Besides a substantial impact on the major assessments Marshall's office produced during the 1980s, this research also provided insight into Soviet thinking about past and future military-technical revolutions (MTRs).

Reflection on Soviet theorizing together with ongoing technical advances in guided weapons, sensors, and automated control systems led Marshall, through the late-1980s Commission

on Long-Term Integrated Strategy, to conclude that changes in the conduct of war lay ahead. Further, based on historical research into the period 1918–1939, he suspected that these changes, when integrated with new operational concepts and organizational arrangements, would be as significant for war's *conduct* as was the rise of *blitzkrieg*, strategic bombardment, and carrier aviation during the interwar period. Marshall's subsequent decision to undertake an MTR assessment for the Secretary of Defense, far from being either parochial or casual, was made for the eminently serious purpose of alerting senior DOD decisionmakers to prospective changes in the conduct of war. Moreover, Marshall substituted the term *revolution in military affairs* for MTR in July 1993 to emphasize the importance of operational concepts and organizational adaptations in turning technological advances into greater military effectiveness. *Strategy for Chaos* distorts the origins of the RMA debate by ignoring this early history.

Contrary to Gray's claim that the debate was merely about definitions, Marshall's choice of the term *hypothesis* to refer to the possibility of far-reaching changes in war signified that the reality and character of the conjectured revolution were matters of fact. Gray's argument that RMAs are moot unless they can directly produce victory is itself predicated on a definitional sleight of hand, namely conflating *strategic* and *military* effectiveness.

Williamson Murray's assessment that *Strategy for Chaos* "has framed debate about RMAs for the foreseeable future" seems overblown. First, the changes in American military practice from 1991 to 2003, of which growing reliance on guided weapons is but the tip of the iceberg, are too substantial to be dismissed on such grounds as the weakness of Arab opponents. Gray may be correct in arguing that the military's growing use of guided weapons does not equate to an order-of-magnitude increase in strategic effectiveness, but there seems little doubt that such increases in military effectiveness have occurred.

Second, there are historical cases in which increases in military effectiveness did drive the strategic outcome. Again, the conquest of Amerindian civilizations in the early 1500s is high impossible to explain without acknowledging the roles of Spanish weaponry (including horses), tactical cohesion, and military culture. In the Andes, for example, Spanish *tactical* superiority crushed Incan forces time and again no matter how heroic, tenacious, skillfully led, or numerically superior they were.

Despite these objections, *Strategy for Chaos* will be of interest to those who follow the RMA debate. The book is an invaluable goad for thoughtful readers to think beyond the RMA bumper stickers and slogans Gray rightly condemns and to determine their own positions on the subject. **JFQ**

A Book Review

By JAKUB J. GRYGIEL

The Modern Prince: What Leaders Need to Know Now

by Carnes Lord
New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003
304 pp. \$26.00
[ISBN: 0-3001-0007-8]

For a variety of reasons, ranging from swinging academic trends to the democratic dislike of great men, the study of leadership is not a popular field in modern political science. Carnes Lord offers a valuable work that goes against the prevailing fashion and underscores the importance of leadership in modern politics. The author, a professor of strategy at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, brings to his work an impressive scholarship combined with extensive policy

Jakub J. Grygiel is assistant professor of international relations at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at The Johns Hopkins University.

experience in the executive branch.

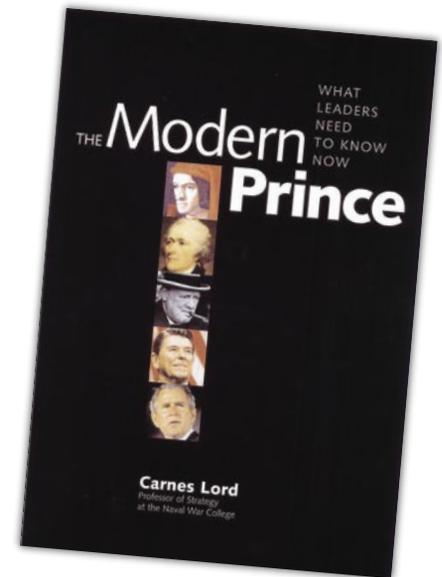
The Modern Prince is a highly readable book in which classical wisdom on leadership is incorporated with modern examples of leaders. The result is a work that analyzes such political theorists as Aristotle, Tocqueville, James Madison, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and Machiavelli—and illustrates its points using 20th-century leaders from Bill Clinton to Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and France's Charles de Gaulle.

The methodology is analogous to that of the original *Prince*, written by Niccolò Machiavelli. Like Carnes Lord, the Florentine was a practitioner of politics, but also, and most famously, a writer and political theorist in 15th- and 16th-century Italy. The purpose of Machiavelli's *Prince* was to present, as he wrote in the dedication, "knowledge of the deeds of great men which I have acquired through a long experience of modern events and a constant study of the past." Lord does exactly that, updating both the "modern events" and the "past" to reflect current political life.

The subject of *The Modern Prince* is leadership. Lord begins by justifying the need for leadership in a democracy. There is a strong temptation to look at

history as an effect of impersonal forces, not individuals. Democracies, according to this view, are ruled by laws, not men, and consequently great leaders are not necessary for the well-functioning of the state. But, as Lord observes, the tendency in many modern democracies is the opposite: the executive power is becoming stronger, underscoring the importance of knowing what leaders are expected to do, what skills they need, and what their strategic priority should be. Moreover, democracies need leaders, especially in moments of crisis when "authoritative decisionmaking" capable of resolving dangerous disputes between different interests is indispensable for the survival of the polity. Finally, leaders are necessary because, in Lord's words, they are "a vital mechanism for bringing political knowledge to bear on the business of politics." This political knowledge is the key to understanding the meaning of leadership.

What then should the "modern prince" know? Lord shuffles through the areas of indispensable knowledge, from understanding strengths and weaknesses of democracies to the ability to manage elites in a society. On a fundamental level, great leadership



means a combination of what the ancients defined as *ars gerendi* and *ars administrandi*, which loosely translate to the art of leadership and the art of administration, strategy, tactics, vision, and management.

The leader—the prince—cannot limit his knowledge to one or the other because that would imply knowing how to administer politics without knowing the goal, or vice versa, knowing the objective but being ignorant of how to attain it. Because leaders must be adept at both vision and management, what they need,

National Defense University Foundation Building a Stronger and Safer America

Congratulations to the authors of winning essays in the 2005 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Strategy Essay Competition.

Providing awards for the Chairman's essay contest is just one of the many ways the NDU Foundation provides direct support to cutting edge national security research.

Keep informed about activities with the National Defense University Foundation *Spectrum*.

Visit us online at www.nduf.org



National Defense University Foundation, 251 Third Avenue, Building 20, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C. 20319
TEL: (202) 685-3726 FAX: (202) 685-3582

according to Lord, is common sense. Writing about strategy, which is one aspect of leadership, Lord argues that it “is a plan of action; it applies means or resources to achieve a certain end; and it presupposes an adversary. Understood in such terms, strategy is really an element of common sense, something that pervades much of daily life.” Leadership, therefore, is grounded in common sense. Specifically, it needs prudence, which is “the faculty we use in applying general principles to particular circumstance that require decision and action.”

The Aristotelian virtue of prudence is very different from what we moderns expect from policymakers. It is not expertise. Leaders should not, and cannot, be foreign policy, regional, social policy, or economic experts. Leadership is not mathematical knowledge and leaders are not technocrats. But they must possess a reasoned knowledge that allows them to choose among the various policy options that are presented to them. As an example, the President cannot be an expert in every field of policy under his control, but he needs sound judgment in the choice of his advisers. They are the experts; he is the leader. As Lord writes, leaders are “general contractors” of sorts:

[They] do not have detailed knowledge of all the crafts that are needed to build a house. What they must know, rather, is how to coordinate and integrate the activities of the specialized craftsmen who work for them. And, equally important, they must be capable of judging the final products of these craftsmen, in terms both of their intrinsic excellence and of their contribution to the success of the overall enterprise.

In fact, there is a danger in experts taking over the decisionmaking process. Experts, by the nature of their specialization, are more prone to see only the interests of their own field and are reluctant to make decisions on the basis of the “common good.” Lord gives the example of the scientific community being unable, and perhaps unwilling, to stop the “morally monstrous undertaking” of human cloning, in large

measure because of the belief in the need to continue scientific progress regardless of its social, human, and moral costs. It is in such cases that leadership—or prudential judgment—is most needed to preserve the common weal.

How does one acquire common sense or prudence? It appears deceptively easy, in large measure because it does not require struggling through degrees, academic theories, or books. In fact, prudent judgment cannot be attained, according to Lord, in a library or a school. It is not a technical expertise that can be studied as one studies architecture or economics. Prudence, or reasoned knowledge, is a rare talent, similar to another characteristic of leadership, charisma. And there is no easy formula to acquire prudence. Lord again cites Aristotle, who argued that prudence could be developed only through experience.

Carnes Lord concludes by examining the main challenges faced by democracies. This final chapter is a modern version of the last chapter of the *Prince*, which Machiavelli wrote as an “exhortation to liberate Italy from the barbarians.” In the 15th and 16th centuries, Italy was divided among several city-states, unable to offer a united front to the growing powers of Spain and France. Luckily, modern democracies are prospering and do not appear near collapse, but Lord cautions against complacency. In chapter 26, he exhorts us to “preserve democracy from the barbarians.” Democracies may appear stable, but like past regimes, they are also prone to collapse under external or internal pressures. The external threats are perhaps the most evident. Over the past few years, the “holy warriors of a radicalized Islam are . . . the obvious barbarians at the gates of the new Rome of Western liberalism.” But the threats to democracy come also from within, in the form of unassimilated minorities from immigration or decay of democratic ideals and practice. Lord is particularly critical of the rise of plebiscitary leadership, which leads to decisions based on public opinion polls

and the abdication of difficult decisions, especially in science and technology.

The Modern Prince makes ancient wisdom accessible and relevant to modern policymakers. It brings back to political science insights that have been lost amidst sterile academic theories. In many ways, the greatest praise for this book is the fact that it restores rather than innovates. **JFQ**

A Book Review

By RANDALL J. LARSEN

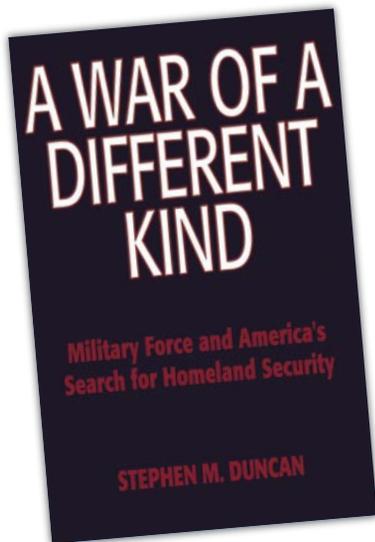
A War of a Different Kind: Military Force and America's Search for Homeland Security

by Stephen M. Duncan
Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004
366 pp. \$29.95
[ISBN: 1-5911-4220-2]

In the preface to *A War of a Different Kind*, Stephen Duncan quotes an observation from Will and Ariel Durant: in 3,421 years of recorded history, there have only been 268 years free of war. Furthermore, Duncan states that since 1783 the United States has sent sizable military forces into harm's way every 20 years. In a world of rapid change, war is therefore a constant. However, warfare in the opening decades of the 21st century will be “a different kind of war.” Duncan's superb analysis of this new threat, new battlefield (both at home and abroad), and new challenges, requirements, and missions for the Armed Forces makes this a must-read for all military officers and for those interested in national and homeland security.

The book is readable, informative, and thought-provoking and is an invaluable reference tool. Many recent

Colonel Randall J. Larsen, USAF (Ret.), is CEO of Homeland Security Associates and was Director of the Institute for Homeland Security and Chairman of the Department of Military Strategy and Operations at the National War College.



works on this subject have been long on opinion but short on facts and analysis, but *A War of a Different Kind* combines well-documented facts and analysis with a minimum of opinion. The endnotes alone are of great value to the student of homeland security.

Duncan's analyses range from a perspective on strategic security ("conquering nations will threaten the U.S. less than failed nations"), to the

organizational challenges, planning, and coordinating defense "of a nation of 87,000 different and sometimes overlapping jurisdictions," to the technological revolution that makes the use of weapons of mass destruction by either small nations or even well-financed nonstate actors a certainty.

An overview of the "early years" (1993–2001) highlights the frustrations of those focused on the growing threat to the American homeland. Despite increasing numbers of attacks on diplomatic and military targets overseas and extensive intelligence analyses and high-level commission reports warning of attacks at home, the U.S. Government failed to take action much beyond cruise missile strikes aimed at empty buildings and tents in the desert. The General Accounting Office reported that no coherent counterterrorism strategy existed. Terrorism was treated as a crime. However, former Clinton administration officials have stated that neither the Congress nor the electorate would have supported significant military action

against al Qaeda or the Taliban in the 1990s. But that changed after 9/11. Terrorism transformed from a crime to a national security threat. Preemption became a topic of hot debate, and America once again looked to the Armed Forces for answers.

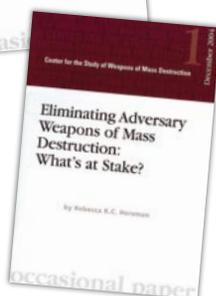
The military stepped forward, but according to Duncan, it was 40 percent smaller than in 1989 and had seen 37 separate deployments between 1991 and 1999. The events of 9/11 sent that military into hyperdrive. This overstressed force is a theme throughout the book. Of particular concern to Duncan are the demands on the National Guard and Reserve: "Army Reserve Soldiers have been deployed 10 times in the past 12 years. During the 75 years before that, the Army Reserve had been mobilized just 9 times." The problem of dual hatting is also highlighted. (A report from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University highlighted the problem of triple hatting, as with firefighters who moonlight as ambulance drivers and also serve in the

New from NDU Press



NATO Expeditionary Operations: Impacts Upon New Members and Partners by Jeffrey Simon

In this paper, a foremost NATO expert examines the lessons learned from recent operations and the implications for member and partner countries for transforming their defense postures. **Available from NDU Press only**



Eliminating Adversary Weapons of Mass Destruction: What's at Stake? by Rebecca K.C. Hersman

Published for the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction by NDU Press

Available from the WMD Center at: (202) 685-4234 or:
<http://www.ndu.edu/wmdcenter/index.cfm>



Visit the NDU Press Web site for more information on occasional papers and other publications at:
<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/press/nduphp.html>

Guard or Reserve.) Governors and mayors depend on first responders and expect augmentation from the Department of Defense in major crises. Yet in the summer of 2001, 652 officers and civilian employees of the Los Angeles Police Department and 236 deputies from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department were members of the Reserve component. (A U.S. Northern Command exercise demonstrated this problem when the Nevada National Guard activated military police units to assist during a mock attack on Las Vegas that resulted in the activation of scores of Las Vegas police officers. This procedure is not additive and can be disruptive.) Some would say the Reserve component was well organized, trained, and equipped for the challenges and requirements of the Cold War, but Duncan concludes that major changes in the Reserve component are necessary for this war of a different kind.

As the requirements change, so do the rules. The chapter on *posse comitatus* and the following chapter on due process and rules of war are arguably the highlights of the book.

Duncan, a highly experienced lawyer and a former Assistant Secretary of Defense who once served as the Pentagon's senior drug war official, explores the myths and facts of *posse comitatus*. Few legal issues are more misunderstood by the military—including some very senior officers. For years, military leaders have used *posse comitatus* to avoid certain missions. While understandable in terms of operations tempo and cultural prohibitions, the fact is that Federal forces have been used in the past to enforce the law within the American homeland, and they could be called on again.

Terrorists operate outside the accepted rules of conflict, sometimes causing societies to change their rules regarding due process and war. Duncan provides insight, analysis, and comment on a subject that should be of great interest to all. The most interesting case concerned terrorists arrested on U.S. soil and tried in military courts. One suspect even claimed U.S. citizenship. All were convicted and sentenced to death. Appeals took the cases to the Supreme

Court, arguing that these individuals should be tried in Federal or state civilian courts. The Supreme Court upheld the military convictions. This case, known as *Ex Parte Quirin* from World War II, is of particular interest considering the ongoing controversy in the case of Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen currently held in a military brig for his alleged conspiracy to use dirty bombs on homeland targets.

These two chapters on the legal aspects of the post-9/11 environment are worth the price of the book. They provide a legal analysis that has sufficient detail for lawyers yet is understandable to laymen.

This book also provides a superb overview of Federal actions since the attacks of 9/11. From the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq to the bureaucratic and political battles on the home front, Duncan provides facts, analysis, and commentary on this critical period.

A War of a Different Kind provides a readable and informative history plus analysis of the war on terror. I recommend it to military officers and others interested in 21st-century national and homeland security. **JFQ**

Joint Force Quarterly is interested in your research!

Contributions

Joint Force Quarterly welcomes submissions of scholarly, independent research from members of the Armed Forces, security policymakers and shapers, defense analysts, academic specialists, and civilians from the United States and abroad.

Submit articles for consideration to *Joint Force Quarterly*, ATTN: Acquisition and Review Editor, 300 Fifth Avenue (Bldg. 62, Room 212), Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC 20319-5066; or via email to **JFQ1@ndu.edu** [ATTN: A&R Editor in the subject line].

Submitted manuscripts must be complete and in a Microsoft Word file. Please submit each figure and diagram in a separate file. Authors are asked to describe the manuscript in a cover letter and indicate the expected audience. Submissions are evaluated for originality, contribution to significant national security issues, and appropriateness for the overall publishing program of NDU Press. *JFQ* articles should be 3,000 to 5,000 words. See more information on NDU Press and *JFQ* online at **www.ndu.edu/inss/press/nduph.html** or contact the Acquisition and Review Editor at (202) 685-4377 or email **JFQ1@ndu.edu**.

JFQ reserves the right to edit all contributions. *JFQ* will afford authors an opportunity to review an edited version via email and will consider changes, updates, and comments within the given deadline.

Contributions are submitted to the Office of the Secretary of Defense for security review. Servicemembers and Government employees are not authorized payments or honoraria for publication of articles.

JFQ is actively seeking informative security studies essays or joint research on:

- Total Force and Reserve component issues
- War on terror, battling extremists, lessons learned
- Interagency coordination and integration—integrated operations
- Transformation, experimentation, and emerging capabilities
- Homeland security and defense
- Interoperability (allies, services, U.S. Government agencies, state and local government, support personnel, etc.)
- Coalition warfare/multinational response to conflict/disaster
- Logistics, intelligence, and stabilization operations
- U.S. security strategy or regional issues
- Joint military history

Subscriptions

To ensure regular, prompt delivery, *JFQ* recommends purchasing a subscription to *Joint Force Quarterly*. Military organizations; U.S. Government, state, and local government and agencies; international partners; and the private sector may purchase a subscription. More information is available online at **www.ndu.edu/inss/press/nduph.html**. *JFQ* is distributed in bulk to the field, fleet, staffs, and service schools through service publication distribution centers: Army—Army Publishing Directorate online at **www.usapa.mil**; or call (314) 263-7305 ext. 4/DSN 693-7305 ext. 4; Navy—Navy Inventory Control Point, Customer Service List Maintenance (Code 3343.09) FAX (215) 697-5914; Marine Corps—Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (Code ARDE); FAX (703) 614-2951/DSN 224-2951; Air Force—Air Force e-Publishing online at **www.e-Publishing.af.mil**; email: **afpdc-service@pentagon.af.mil**; call Air Force Distribution Center (410) 687-3330/DSN 584-4529; FAX (410) 436-4629/DSN 584-4629; Coast Guard—Headquarters, U.S. Coast Guard, ATTN: Defense Operations Division; (202) 267-2039.

Address corrections for direct distribution should be sent to *Joint Force Quarterly*, NDU Press, ATTN: Distribution, 300 Fifth Avenue (Bldg. 62, Room 212), Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC 20319-5066.