

Futures of War: Toward a Consensus View of the Future Security Environment, 2010-2035

by Sam J. Tangredi
Newport, RI: Alidade Press, 2008
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Reviewed by
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Futures of War is a follow-on work to Sam Tangredi's *All Possible Wars? Toward a Consensus View of the Future Security Environment, 2001-2025* (NDU Press, 2000). Like its predecessor, *Futures of War* aims to provide a comparative analysis of multiple studies of the future security environment of 2010-2035, focusing on points of consensus and divergence in these studies. The components of the future security environment under consideration include "oncoming threats to national security; future elements that will or will not contribute to our political, economic, or military strength; trends in relations between national governments and between national governments and non-state actors; and all other factors that impact the physical security and continued existence of the United States" (p. 11).

Tangredi uses the same methodology as in his earlier work: that of a meta-study. He surveys future security environment literature published in the last decade by both government and nongovernment sources. He then classifies the position in each study on a number of propositions related to threats, military technology, and opposing strategies.

The author concludes that there is consensus throughout the community on a number of propositions. Concerning *threats*, for example, "There will be ideological rivals to democracy, but . . . there will not be a rival military coalition" to threaten the United States in this timeframe (p. 61). Under *military technology*, "advanced military technology will continue to become more diffuse, [but] . . . if there is a 'technological surprise' innovation, it is likely it will be developed by the U.S. or [an] ally" (p. 61). The consensus about *opposing strategies* is that "the homeland of the United States will become increasingly vulnerable to 'asymmetric attacks' . . . and [that] 'information warfare' . . . will become increasingly important" (p. 61). Each of these consensus points is examined in detail, with contrary views also identified and explained.

It is both encouraging and illuminating that most of the sources agreed on so much. However, there were some areas where the sources present divergent views. On the *nature of future conflict*, Tangredi notes the contrast between the propositions that "globalization, transformation, and fourth generation warfare have fundamentally changed the nature of war" and that "the nature of war is immutable" (p. 123). Concerning *threats*, the view that "a near-peer competitor is inevitable over the long term; we need to prepare now" is at odds with the belief that "preparing for a near-peer will create a military competition (thus creating a near-peer)" (p. 123). In the area of *opposing strategies*, the proposition "conventional military force will not deter terrorism or non-state threats" conflicts with the proposition that "U.S. military capabilities will retain considerable deterrence or coercive effects against terrorism and non-state threats" (p. 124).

A chapter on "wild cards" introduces the notion that certain world events could have an outsized effect on many of the predictions included in the study; one of these wild cards is the

advent of "a worldwide economic collapse" (p. 150). Although the state of the economy at the end of 2008 did not meet the definition of a worldwide collapse, the tremors were of sufficient magnitude to prompt one to ask if any of the report's conclusions should be revised on the basis of the new situation. Since this study was completed before those events, the true effect is not included in the analysis.

However, in his prediction of the possible effect of an economic collapse, Tangredi notes that there are three potential implications for U.S. defense policy. The first is either greater engagement by U.S. forces in conflict caused by economic problems around the world or the reverse: a movement in the United States toward neo-isolationism. The second is strained relations with traditional allies if the United States or its allies (or both) are in the throes of economic collapse. The third implication is pressure for a substantial reduction of the defense budget. It will be interesting to see if any or all of these predictions are realized in the current economic crisis.

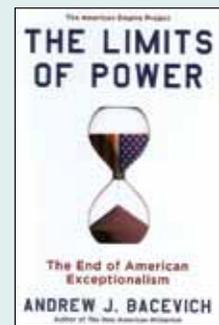
The penultimate chapter—and the focus of the book's efforts—is dedicated to developing a "consensus scenario," one that is true to the points of agreement and points of divergence addressed above. Tangredi does a creditable job with this, noting that there is agreement among almost all sources that U.S. military forces need to prepare for contingencies such as "high level[s] of information warfare," "attempts by a regional competitor or non-state actor to attack the U.S. homeland using 'asymmetrical' means," "continual diffusion of military technology to potential competitors and non-state actors," and "involvement in failed states, SSTR [stability, security, transition, and reconstruction], and humanitarian actions" (p. 165). On this last point, Tangredi argues that such "involvement in failing states will become less discretionary as long as there is the potential for terrorist sanctu-

aries within such states" (p. 166). A brief final chapter is devoted to the challenges of defense planning in general.

As Yogi Berra once put it, "Prediction is very hard, especially about the future." This aphorism applies to this book. But considering the dire predictions made during the Cold War, the reader should be buoyed by the consensus that neither strategic nuclear war, nor global war against a military near-peer, nor even any significant alliance against the United States is considered likely during this period.

Overall, Tangredi's book is illuminating, but one wonders what will come of it. Will the consensus of opinion on many of these issues be taken as basis for policy, or will it disappear through the cracks like so many of the studies that Tangredi references? **JFQ**

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The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism

by Andrew J. Bacevich
New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008
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Reviewed by
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Having authored, co-authored, or edited 10 previous books and published nearly 40 major articles, Andrew Bacevich is one of the most prolific and thought-

provoking commentators on contemporary American defense and security issues. A West Point graduate, Vietnam veteran, cavalry regiment commander during the Persian Gulf War, and currently a professor of international relations at Boston University, Bacevich has long been a straight shooter when targeting the folly of military and political leadership. His first book, *The Pentomic Era* (NDU Press, 1986, 1995), took aim at the Army of the 1950s for its ill-conceived pursuit of relevance as part of President Dwight Eisenhower's nuclear-tipped, fiscally austere "New Look" strategy. As aggressive as he is eloquent, Bacevich continued his critique of American foreign and military policy in *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Harvard, 2002) and *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (Oxford, 2005).

In *The Limits of Power*, Bacevich examines the American cultural, economic, political, and military performance of the last 50 years and finds the Nation's citizens, political leaders, and soldiers wanting. He contends that the American reinterpretation of freedom, especially since the 1960s, "has had a transformative impact on our society and culture." The reader is asked to consider a series of seemingly simple, yet deceptively complex, questions: "What is freedom today? What is its content? What costs does the exercise of freedom impose? And who pays?" (p. 8). In his analysis, Bacevich believes American appetites for and expectations of "freedom" have grown exponentially and today far outstrip the ability of our domestic political economy to satisfy them. This situation has led a generation of self-selected "power elite" to pursue a foreign policy of exceptionalism and expansionism that in its execution looks, feels, and behaves a lot like the creation of an American empire—an empire whose maintenance, Bacevich offers, is antithetical to our tra-

ditional concept of freedom and now imperils the Nation.

Bacevich details with devastating effect the decline of American power since the end of the Cold War and the simultaneous rise of hubris governing the exercise of that power. He holds that quite paradoxically, in the early 1990s, during its self-coronation as the world's sole remaining superpower, America ended what some historians called the "Long Peace" and embarked on an incoherent series of military interventions that presaged the "Long War" to protect and preserve our self-indulgent concept of freedom. Along the way, he suggests, the Nation drank its own Kool-aid, became punch-drunk on its apparent success, and accelerated its descent toward domestic and international calamity.

Central to Bacevich's thesis are three self-induced, interlocking crises confronting America: an economic and cultural crisis (what he terms the "crisis of profligacy"), a political one, and a military one. In discussing these crises, Bacevich relies heavily on the works of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, whom he describes as "the most clear-eyed of American prophets." As a potential model against which future historians might analyze current U.S. security policy, Bacevich offers Niebuhr's judgment that every civilization is most pretentious, cocksure, and convinced of its own immortality at the moment it begins to decline.

For Bacevich, the crisis of American profligacy is all too obvious. Be it land, wealth, or material goods, he contends that the accumulation of *more* has characterized our national identity more than most Americans understand or are willing to admit. From the Louisiana Purchase to the current war in Iraq, Bacevich argues that Presidents have adhered almost universally to the American desire for *more* while failing to demand of the people a commensurate level of sacrifice. Citing America's transition over the last 40 years from being the world's leading

producer and creditor to being its leading consumer and debtor, he indicts the American people for their undisciplined pursuit of material "happiness." For Bacevich, the current "great recession" is proof of the "instant gratification" attitude that has paupered the Nation and taught a generation of obese schoolchildren (and adults) that hard work, self-sacrifice, and even the national defense is someone else's responsibility.

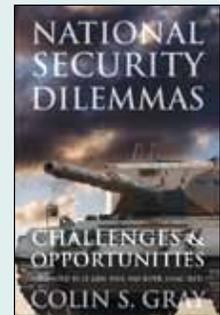
Bacevich is equally critical of America's political performance since the Great Depression. He argues that the Federal republic, as established by the Constitution with limited and specific powers, no longer exists. It has been replaced by a vast centralization of power at the Federal level and specifically within the executive branch. Members of Congress, more focused on getting reelected than balancing power, abetted this centralization. Equally guilty are the unseen courtiers who derive their livelihood from this centralization—the press, pundits, and "power elite" who cover, pontificate about, and populate the Federal Government. To Bacevich, none of this would matter if the Federal Government were not grossly incompetent.

The military crisis involves injurious attempts to "reinvent" war, enlarge the size of the Armed Forces, and continue the doctrine of "preventive war." Bacevich defends the troops, attacks their civilian and military leadership, and argues effectively that the failure to articulate and implement a coherent post-Cold War grand strategy further exacerbates our problems. He offers that a generation of leaders has replaced the need for a better appreciation for war's limited effectiveness with derivative strategies based either on specious ideology or military operations completely removed from their larger geostrategic context. Bacevich correctly concludes that the proponents of "shock and awe" or "net-centricity" confuse the enduring *nature* of war with temporary, often technologically determined, changes in the *conduct* of war. Bacevich,

however, saves particular scorn for General Tommy Franks, offering withering analysis of Franks' campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq and asking rhetorically, "Does knowing Doug Feith is stupid make Tommy Franks smart?"—a reference to Franks' now-famous characterization of the former Undersecretary of Defense as the "stupidest . . . guy on the planet."

Bacevich has written an aggressive and provocative yet eloquent book. Blogs, newspapers, and professional journals are full of opinions and judgments, but none approach *The Limits of Power* in their confident conceptualization and organization of knowledge. Military and civilian defense professionals will find much to consider in this small volume. The crises that Bacevich cites are not intractable, but they will be extremely difficult both to confront and to solve. **JFQ**

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National Security Dilemmas: Challenges and Opportunities

by Colin S. Gray

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Colin Gray has analyzed a wide array of strategic challenges in the course of his distinguished career,