

The Illusion of Control

FORCE AND FOREIGN POLICY
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Seyom Brown

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION PRESS
Washington, D.C.

Contents

Foreword	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
1 Introduction: Force and Foreign Policy Revisited	1
2 The Disposition to Use Force: Crisis Reaction or General Trend?	16
3 The Changing Structure of World Politics	49
4 The Changing Shape of War	78
5 The Just War Tradition Revisited	105
6 The Control of Illusions: Using Military Power Judiciously	142
APPENDIXES	
A Excerpts from <i>A National Security Strategy for a New Century</i>	179
B Excerpts from <i>On Military “Transformation”</i>	181
C Excerpts from <i>The National Security Strategy of the United States</i>	185
Index	189

Foreword

Seyom Brown's carefully reasoned and powerfully argued book could hardly be more timely. It appears in the midst of a national debate about the role of the United States in the world and the appropriate means of pursuing and securing our nation's interests. While the focus of that debate in early 2003 was the wisdom of war to disarm Iraq and change the regime in Baghdad, a much larger and more enduring issue has come to the fore: What kind of global order is required to sustain our way of life in a world of growing interdependence? Seyom, now Lawrence A. Wien Professor of International Cooperation at Brandeis University and a former senior fellow (1969–76) in Foreign Policy Studies here at Brookings, focuses on the military dimension of that question, particularly the challenge of grand strategy: When and for what purposes are the use of U.S. military power appropriate? What rules should govern its use?

Contrary to expectations that the end of the cold war would introduce an era of peaceable diplomacy, coercive threats and the use of force have been prominent features of U.S. foreign policy since the early 1990s. The post–September 11 war on terrorism and threats to wield military power against Iraq reflect a growing disposition among policymakers to employ the military as an instrument of diplomacy. Seyom shows that this disposition to reach for the military instrument is in part a reaction to systemic developments in the structure and conduct of world politics. But he argues that while it is understandable and at times realistic, the contemporary inclination to resort to force is also the product of optimistic views associ-

ated with the so-called revolution in military affairs about the efficacy of force as an instrument of U.S. diplomacy. Adapting traditional “just war” concepts to contemporary strategic, political, and technological realities, Brown offers a set of guidelines to help ensure that use-of-force decisions are approached with the judicious care and gravity they warrant. The guidelines also can serve as a framework to aid members of Congress and the American public in assessing the appropriateness and legitimacy of military actions undertaken in the name of the people of the United States.

Seyom forecasts what he calls “polyarchic” challenges to U.S. global hegemony: a weakening of alliances, a growing difficulty in mounting an organized international response to aggression, and the increasing militarization of diplomacy. He sees the United States living in a violence-prone polyarchy that makes U.S. citizens, assets, and interests targets of hostility and terrorism. The result is bound to be popular outrage in the United States and pressures for forceful counteraction, including “preemptive” and “preventive” military operations. The disposition to resort to force—unilaterally, when others will not join in—is likely to be strengthened by America’s high-tech military superiority, creating the illusion that whatever the battlefield, the conflict can be readily and reliably controlled in the service of U.S. interests.

Whatever the near-term outcome of the crisis in the Gulf, the trends that Seyom identifies will be with us for a long time to come. A new species of threat has engendered an increase in the geopolitical and technological temptation for the United States to use force, and a rise in popular support for that option in the American body politic. Policymakers, opinion-makers, and citizens would all do well to bear Seyom’s prescription in mind: judicious deliberation and careful weighing of the consequences of action throughout the policy process, not just before the nation steps across the threshold of war but during hostilities as well, when prudence is in danger of being overwhelmed by the fog and friction of the battlefield and passions on the homefront.

STROBE TALBOTT
President

Washington, D.C.
February 2003

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Force and Foreign Policy Revisited

U.S. government officials have been exhibiting a surprising willingness to use military force as an instrument of foreign policy. The strategies called for and the capabilities sought by the president and high national security officials constitute more than a response to terrorist threats against the U.S. homeland. Previous strategies that would restrict the use of military force to situations in which the country's vital interests or the lives of its citizens are threatened are giving way to force-use doctrines premised on the need to counter a wide range of threats to the country's far-flung global interests as well. Earlier predictions that in the twenty-first century military power would play a reduced role in U.S. foreign policy are being revised.

After September 11, 2001, the preoccupation with protecting the United States against terrorism—indisputably a vital national interest—and the debate over military action against Iraq have overshadowed the increased willingness of national officials to resort to force on behalf of a widened array of U.S. interests. Official dispositions to employ military power broadly as an instrument of diplomacy were on the rise well before the fall of 2001 and show every sign of persisting into the future. In the years ahead resorting to force may often seem to be a reliable way to establish control over a disorderly world and situations that threaten U.S. interests around the globe. But to expect to gain and maintain control through military prowess and muscle flexing could turn out to be a dangerous illusion.

This book analyzes the growing willingness of U.S. government officials to use force; critically assesses the strategic, political, and moral implications for the United States; and offers guidelines for avoiding consequences that are adverse to basic U.S. interests. Written in the midst of the national debate over the prospects of a “preemptive” war to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and to remove Iraq’s president Saddam Hussein from power, it addresses the most basic—and inherently controversial—questions about force and foreign policy:

- For what purposes and when should U.S. military power be used?
- What rules should govern its use?

The answers given by the Bush administration and the Congress and reflected in their choice of grand strategy, force-posture alternatives, and budgetary options—as well as in the conduct of coercive diplomacy and military operations—are potentially of greater significance to the future security and well-being of the people of the United States than any of the international policies or actions that the United States has undertaken since the end of the cold war.

Analysis and Argument

The contemporary pressures for a muscular diplomacy are the product of three fundamental developments:

—*The relatively orderly superpower-dominated world of the last half of the twentieth century is giving way to a disorderly and increasingly “polyarchic” world in which the hegemonic power of the United States is being challenged by numerous actors, both state and nonstate.*¹ Early post-cold war visions of the United States exercising global hegemony in a “unipolar” international system, largely through its economic power and its dominance in multilateral diplomacy, are proving to be overly optimistic simplifications of the more complex realities that are now materializ-

1. *Polyarchy* (a term coined by political scientist Robert A. Dahl to describe patterns of participation and opposition in domestic politics) is used here to denote a pattern of *international* relationships featuring many different kinds of actors—government and nongovernment—characterized by diverse alignments and adversary relationships subject to change issue by issue and lacking a dominant axis of cooperation and conflict. The polyarchic system is one of the global systems analyzed in chapter 3. For Dahl’s original usage, see his book *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (Yale University Press, 1971). I first began to use the term to describe a possible post-cold war international system in my book *New Forces in World Politics* (Brookings, 1974).

ing. The United States, the only remaining superpower, continues to be the most influential actor, and often its cooperation or opposition can determine the fate of other nations' policies and programs. But as the twenty-first century progresses, the United States will hardly be in a position, even on matters affecting global peace and security, to call all the shots—metaphorically or literally.

—*There is an increasing disposition on the part of U.S. officials to threaten to use force in order to keep the most dangerous aspects of the emerging polyarchy under control, particularly the growing hostility to U.S. global hegemony and presence.* The often resentful and sometimes violent reactions to U.S. hegemony and presence have not brought on a new era of U.S. isolationism. Especially following the demonstration on September 11 of how vulnerable even the U.S. homeland has become to direct attack, U.S. elite and public attitudes have tended to back assertive international involvement. There is now widespread support in the administration, the Congress, and the public at large for a foreign policy that features credible threats to exercise U.S. military power to defend the country's global interests.

—*The so-called revolution in military affairs (RMA) promises to bring an unprecedented degree of controllability to the conduct of war.* The message of the champions of the RMA is that “Bound to Lead” need not mean “bound to bleed.”² Whether it amounts to a revolution or an evolution—or a “transformation” (the preferred Pentagon term)—the increasing integration of advanced information technologies into military weapons design, strategies, and operations does foretell progressively greater precision in attacking enemy targets and a widening range of military options. Technological innovations promise the ability to keep casualties suffered by U.S. and friendly forces very low and to avoid killing noncombatants. They also signal a steadily improving ability to keep the commander-in-chief and the regional and functional military commands com-

2. The first phrase echoes the argument for a vigorous internationalist U.S. foreign policy presented by Joseph S. Nye Jr. in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (Basic Books, 1991). The second phrase, “bound to bleed,” is a play on the words—although serious—in Nye’s title. It should be noted, however, that in neither *Bound to Lead* nor its sequel, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (Oxford University Press, 2002) does Nye equate vigorous internationalism with increased reliance on military power. Indeed, both books plead for more reliance on economic power and on what Nye calls “soft power”—the attractive traits of American society that others want to emulate—as a means of gaining international cooperation.

prehensively informed of the details of ongoing military operations, allowing them to manage the operations from afar.

Together these three developments portend an increased proclivity to employ military force as an instrument of international conflict prosecution and control. In situations in which U.S. adversaries remain intransigent despite efforts to modify their behavior with nonviolent inducements and sanctions, the temptation to undertake military action will increase as the means to do so seem to permit precise delivery of attacks with minimal blood-and-treasure sacrifices by the United States.³

The enlarged menu of U.S. international interests that might have to be secured by force plus the promise of new capabilities for conducting highly controlled military operations have strengthened the disposition among policymakers to use force as an instrument of diplomacy. The subsequent chapters of this book develop the argument that this tendency has been determined as much by fundamental international political developments and changes in the shape of war as by unwise foreign policy decisions made at the top levels of the U.S. government. The Bush 2000 election campaign complained that the Clinton administration had been overly disposed to intervene with force in conflicts in which U.S. vital interests were not at stake. But the Bush administration has been no less inclined to brandish threats of force to deter or to respond to provocative actions against U.S. interests around the world. It is my contention that such provocations and the temptation to respond with threats of force are likely to increase in the years ahead. Meanwhile, the RMA's promise of low-risk, highly controllable military operations will reduce the inhibitions against going to war.

I argue that in the increasingly polyarchic world of the twenty-first century the assumption that international terrorist activities, wars, and civil conflicts that threaten U.S. interests can be controlled by employing

3. In predicting official frustration with the nonviolent instruments of international persuasion, I do not mean to denigrate efforts to rely more on the "carrots" than the "sticks" of diplomacy. One of the implications of my analysis is that policymakers and analysts should devote even more attention to the imaginative development of the economic inducements and soft power that Joseph Nye emphasizes and to "reassurance" policies of the kind outlined by John D. Steinbrunner in his *Principles of Global Security* (Brookings, 2000). For theoretical insights, see Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Harvard University Press, 1982). See also Kenneth A. Oye, "The Logic of Contingent Action," in Kenneth A. Oye, ed., *Economic Discrimination and Political Exchange* (Princeton University Press, 1992). Lessons from recent U.S. foreign policy efforts featuring positive inducement are found in Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, eds., *Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy* (Brookings, 2000).

the new military technologies is unwarranted and can lead to unwise decisionmaking. A foreign policy animated by optimistic estimates of the efficacy of force, particularly if premised on the RMA-generated expectation of highly controllable military operations, is likely to pull the nation into excessive commitments and imprudent action.

To step across the threshold between applying nonviolent pressure and using lethal force is a profound act—a step into an arena in which opponents constrained by very few rules are compelled to prevail by inflicting death, destruction, and psychological suffering on one another. However carefully planned at the outset, even small doses of violence delivered incrementally can provoke a spiral of retaliation and counterretaliation that escalates to a level of warfare that is disproportionate to the value of the interests initially at stake.

By its very nature, war is a volatile phenomenon that resists control. At the highest levels of government, it is essentially an act of coercive bargaining, an attempt to alter the cost-benefit calculations and objectives of an adversary. Yet for military commanders whose units are engaged in battle, it often becomes a contest of brute force whose immediate objectives are independent of the reasons of state that brought it on. And back in the offices of the political leaders who ordered military action, war remains an act of high geopolitics on one hand and an object of domestic politics on the other. Typically, some domestic constituencies insist on negotiations and the early termination of armed conflict while others demand total victory. The resulting directives to the military, though perhaps “rational” from the standpoint of domestic politics, may be unresponsive to the dynamics of the battlefield from the perspective of military commanders and irrational from the perspective of geopolitical grand strategists. During the multiple cycles of feedback between battlefield commanders and political authorities, hopes for closely calibrating military operations to serve diplomatic purposes are very difficult to realize.

I say that U.S. applications of military power *can* get out of control, not that they will. There are circumstances in which the threat or employment of force can convince adversaries to cease and desist or physically prevent them from undertaking actions that would be even more dangerous.⁴ We do not know, for example, whether a timely and convincing threat in Munich in 1938 against Hitler’s move on Czechoslovakia would have

4. On the difficulties in determining in particular cases whether military threats will deter or compel or provoke an adversary, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 58–113.

prevented World War II. Would an early and unambiguous threat against Kim Il Sung in 1950 have deterred him from invading South Korea? How crucial was the Kennedy administration's threat to destroy the Soviet missiles in Cuba to the final resolution of the crisis? The inability to generalize reliably about the conditions under which threats or the use of force deter or provoke enemies and the difficulty in evaluating the outcomes of wars fought or avoided do not contradict the central argument of this book: namely, that the promise of controllable war, precisely calibrated to serve the country's foreign policy objectives, needs to be called what it is—an illusion.

Those who would support increased reliance on force as an instrument of diplomacy by invoking Clausewitz's often-quoted aphorism, "War is a continuation of political bargaining by other means," should reread their Clausewitz. The great nineteenth-century military theorist's principal argument was that although war's "rational purpose" is to destroy the enemy's armed forces and to subordinate all strategy and tactics to that end, the "politics" of the societies waging war and the often irrational, unpredictable, and uncontrollable dynamics of the battlefield combine to subvert war's rational purpose. The thrust of his analysis was to show just how difficult it is to keep war from getting out of hand. To understand "real war," as distinct from purely theoretical war,

We must allow for natural inertia, for all the friction of its parts, for all the inconsistency, imprecision, and timidity of man; and finally we must face the fact that war and its forms result from ideas, emotions, and conditions prevailing at the time . . .

If this is the case, . . . it follows that war is dependent on the interplay of possibilities and probabilities, of good and bad luck, conditions in which strictly logical reasoning often plays no part at all and is always apt to be a most unsuitable and awkward intellectual tool.⁵

Currently, even in the wake of three high-tech U.S. military campaigns widely regarded as successful—Desert Storm, the coercive bombing of Serbia, and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan—skepticism regarding the possibilities for reducing the friction and lifting the fog of war through the RMA is still warranted. Those campaigns, which pro-

5. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 580.

gressively relied on precision weapons and superior information systems, call for updating Clausewitz's basic insight that war, once unleashed—although now worked out in sophisticated computer programs and subject to highly integrated command and control—will tend to develop a dynamic and ends of its own.

It is an illusion to believe that war's inherently limited controllability can somehow be fundamentally transformed through technological innovation. Suppose, for example, that in the future the technologically superior side uses its nonlethal "cyberwar" capabilities to wipe out its enemy's political-military control centers. What is likely to happen? Complete paralysis and surrender of the enemy? Possibly. But it could just as likely produce uncoordinated yet highly lethal acts of destruction on the part of remnant fighting units. Alternatively, if it still had the will to fight, an enemy command whose modern electronic means of communication were rendered inoperative could revert to clandestine delivery of messages to order the ambush of local U.S. allies, with demoralizing effect; it also could coordinate terrorist networks capable of perpetrating attacks in the United States and other countries like those of 9/11. If, collaterally, civilian sectors are destroyed or temporarily disabled, what will be the consequences for negotiating a reasonable end to warfare, let alone an enduring post-war relationship between victor and vanquished? Would the victor's forces need to undertake the long-term occupation of their former enemy's territory to ensure an acceptable reconstitution of its society, as happened in Germany and Japan following World War II? Again, we have to admit, we don't really know.

War, even high-tech war, should still be held in awe—not as a scientifically programmed set of actions guaranteed to serve U.S. interests rationally and reliably, but as the beast it has always been, capable of running away with and sometimes destroying those who try to control it. Accordingly, in showing the current strength of the disposition to wield military power as an instrument of diplomacy, the analysis in the following chapters also points up the need to buttress the prudent premise of the "just war" tradition: that those who call for the use of force bear a heavy burden of justifying its use. The book also explores the tension between the pressure to loosen the inhibitions on using force and the imperative of constraining its use and the implications for U.S. foreign and national security policy. Guidelines are offered to help ensure that the policies chosen are consistent with the country's basic interests and values.

Preview

Chapter 2 shows that the current disposition to threaten to employ and to employ U.S. military power as an instrument of diplomacy is the latest of four broad shifts in national security strategy since the end of World War II. Evidence from key national strategy papers of the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush is presented to support the proposition that the latest shift is not just a temporary reaction to crisis but a reflection of a general trend in elite thinking and public attitudes.

The first post–World War II sea change in thinking about military affairs and diplomacy was a reaction to the transformation of war into a phenomenon of total destruction of the enemy’s society, shown in the wholesale bombing of British, German, and Japanese cities and culminating in the nuclear incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For many policymakers and analysts, the advent of the era of weapons of mass destruction severed the traditional intimate connection between use of force and foreign policy. Thereafter the main purpose of the country’s basic military arsenal would be to deter war. The outbreak of war between the United States and a major power, particularly the rival superpower, would be a terrible failure of diplomacy.

The second significant shift was a counterpoint to deterrence-based thinking and was generated by the perceived need to develop military options that did not involve total war for countering aggressive expansionary moves by the Soviet Union or its allies. The threat to unleash all-out war, particularly as the Soviets developed their own nuclear arsenal, would lack credibility. However, the Truman administration’s decision to limit military operations to the Korean peninsula when North Korean communists invaded South Korea—and even after the Chinese communists entered the war—produced two divergent reactions among American strategists and analysts. On one side were those in the Eisenhower administration who proclaimed a strategy of nuclear reliance featuring the option of “massive retaliation” against the prime sources of communist power in order to resurrect the deterrent power of the nation’s defense posture. On the other side were the “limited war” strategists, many of them in academia and the think tanks, who argued that the lesson of Korea was that containment of further communist aggression required an announced readiness and the capacity to mount a “flexible response” and engage in “graduated escalation.” By the late 1950s, the limited war/flexible response strategists were the dominant voice in policymaking, and their ideas in-

fused national security policy during the administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

The third broad shift was a reaction to the U.S. failure in Vietnam. A generation of military officers returned to the Pentagon or the military academies convinced that it was the Kennedy-Johnson grand strategy of flexible response and graduated escalation (as managed by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara) that trapped the United States in the Vietnam quagmire and resulted in the communist victory there. Many of the ideas in the books and articles produced by that generation of military officers in the 1970s became the new military orthodoxy during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush in the 1980s. Given public expression in the doctrine announced by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger in 1984, the new orthodoxy held that the United States should not go to war except in defense of its “vital interests” and then only as a “last resort” and with sufficient public support and congressional commitment of resources to permit the decisive defeat of the enemy. The essentials of the Weinberger doctrine—relaxed somewhat to allow for military operations in support of less-than-vital national interests as long as the objectives and missions were carefully defined—were championed during the Gulf war by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin L. Powell.

The fourth shift—toward a more activist, interventionist national security doctrine in which the role of the military would be broadened to serve an expanded array of U.S. global interests—went too far for General Powell. His retirement coincided with the ascendancy of the liberal-interventionist school in the second Clinton administration, led by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Vice President Al Gore, national security adviser Sandy Berger, and United Nations ambassador Richard Holbrooke. The official definition of national security was enlarged to encompass more than the security of the U.S. homeland and those places and assets abroad that are essential to the security and prosperity of the United States. It now also meant securing, with military intervention if necessary, the country’s manifold economic, humanitarian, and general world order interests. The liberal interventionists were concerned that a posture that ruled out committing U.S. forces except to counter clear and present threats to the country’s homeland or vital interests abroad would only encourage foreign countries and groups less squeamish about using force to engage in behavior detrimental to U.S. interests and values throughout the world. Official thinking, encouraged by a revival of think-tank and academic studies of

coercive diplomacy, had come full circle. Force again would be regarded as the ready servant of diplomacy, not its antithesis.

The Bush election campaign of 2000 strongly criticized Clinton-Gore foreign policy for having too broad a definition of U.S. interests that might require the use of force, for assigning too many diverse tasks to the military, and for being prone to intervention. But once in power, well before the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the Bush team in the Pentagon began to openly champion the need for a transformed U.S. military capable of operating anywhere on the globe (or in outer space) in situations ranging from preemptive intervention to low-intensity combat to major war. Under the regime of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, efforts to closely integrate the use of force with U.S. foreign policy were no longer out of fashion.

Chapter 3 locates the sources of the increased disposition to employ military power on behalf of U.S. interests in the changing structure of world politics. I posit that the greater the number and variety of international coalitions and the looser the internal integration of the major coalitions, the more likely it is that international conflicts will escalate to the level of military hostilities. I argue that—NATO’s enlargement notwithstanding—multiple, loosely organized, and crosscutting coalitions represent the reality and the direction of change in the early twenty-first century.

Apart from conflicts of interest between the United States and China and the possibility of Russian efforts to secure hegemony in West and Central Asia, threats to U.S. interests or to international peace and security that might warrant a military response are unlikely to emanate from other great powers. In the foreseeable future the sources of internationally destabilizing actions or direct threats to U.S. interests are more likely to come from middle powers, “rogue states” and failed states, or from violent political movements and terrorist networks. As put by the Bush administration’s 2002 national security strategy paper, “America is threatened now less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few.”⁶ In the emerging polyarchic system, explosions of local and regional violence and military interventions across state borders have become common features of world politics, as ethnic and

6. Office of the President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (September 2002), available at www.whitehouse.gov/nsc [November 13, 2002].

religious groups and ambitious tyrants are tempted to resort to force in asserting their demands.

U.S. policymakers increasingly have come to expect that the country's globally dispersed commercial and military assets will become targets of hostility. Those assets will draw attacks upon themselves and U.S. embassies and other official facilities abroad, as well as upon the U.S. homeland. Even when conflicts are local and hostile acts are not directed against the United States, violence or the collapse of governments can lead to overwhelming humanitarian disasters, some of which can produce hordes of destitute refugees and scenes of human suffering that the United States and other industrial democracies will not be able to absorb or to ignore.

At the same time that threats to U.S. interests are proliferating, the transformation of world politics from the bipolarity of the cold war into a radically depolarized system (albeit one still under the substantial sway of U.S. hegemony) is having the paradoxical effect of making the use of force by the United States seem less dangerous. Under the cold war system, war anywhere had the potential to engulf the entire world. But in the decentralized polyarchy, with its loose and crosscutting alignments, the United States can intervene or stay out of local conflicts without fear of bringing on a global conflagration.

Thus far, U.S. reactions to the changing structure of world politics have been unsteady and often inconsistent. Reflecting changes in leadership and worldview at the highest levels of foreign policymaking since the late 1980s, U.S. responses have fluctuated along two dimensions: multilateral versus unilateral and isolationist versus "pax-Americana" interventionist. Despite the fluctuations, there has been a rough general movement from multilateralism toward unilateralism and from a neo-isolationist tendency to "bring the boys back home" toward global policing. I contend that this general movement toward a unilateralist/interventionist foreign policy is the default response, as it were, to the polyarchic challenges to U.S. hegemony. Unless vigorously and successfully countered by an alternative vision, it seems destined to become in fact the country's new foreign policy, because the existing swirl of alignments and animosities among multiple state and nonstate actors makes it difficult to organize a coordinated international response to political violence and terrorism. Such unilateralist interventionism provides both rationale and context for the willingness to use force—with or without UN authorization, with or without allies—as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy.

Chapter 4 relates the changing structure of world politics to the changing shape of warfare. The military capabilities being called for to counter threats in the polyarchic world—multilaterally or unilaterally—are quite different from the capabilities that were required to contain and compete with the one rival superpower. The forces now being sought under the rubric of “transformation” also differ in important respects from the forces that would be required for the United States to maintain its security and hegemony in a world threatened primarily by conflict between great powers.

The chapter contends that prospective and actual innovations in the military sphere are reinforcing the temptation among U.S. policymakers to use force preemptively to secure the country’s extensive interests and to serve its objectives regarding general world order. The result is a dynamic feedback cycle in which the disposition to resort to force stimulates innovations that permit military power to be used with greater flexibility and control, which in turn stimulates an even greater disposition to employ force. As put in the Bush administration’s 2002 national security strategy paper, “To support preemptive options, we will . . . continue to transform our military forces to ensure our ability to conduct rapid and precise operations to achieve decisive results.”

Strategists and military scholars have been debating whether the innovations called for or under way are revolutionary or evolutionary. Government and nongovernment specialists on department of defense programs and budgets disagree on the prospects for the full array of military “transformation” initiatives Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld proposed in his 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* and subsequent budget requests to Congress. But how revolutionary the prospective innovations are or how rapidly they occur is of less significance than is the basic *direction* of change.

Significant developments already under way and in evidence during the Gulf war and in Kosovo and Afghanistan include the expansion of the spectrum of warfare to include more options at both its lethal and nonlethal ends; more differentiation in the spectrum of warfare (in both type and degree of violence); more interservice coordination and joint operations (in all environments—land, sea, air, outer space); and greater integration of command and control (vertically, from top command to regional and functional commands to forces in the field; and horizontally, among commands and among combat units).

The promise of control *plus* flexibility seems to be materializing. The new information technologies are facilitating integration of command and

control and joint (interservice) conduct of operations. The U.S. military is developing an increasing ability to fight independently, regardless of the cooperation it receives from allies. The battlefield is becoming more transparent. Pilotless aircraft and precision-guided weapons launched from remote platforms are becoming a mainstay of U.S. military operations, reducing the need to choose between minimizing casualties to U.S. personnel and reducing “collateral damage” to civilians in the target area.

The more extreme RMA visions contemplate an American military establishment capable of fighting highly robotized wars by remote control, without allies if need be; wars with minimal risk to U.S. forces or civilians; wars in which enemy forces and infrastructure can be paralyzed temporarily with nonlethal weapons. But even if technological innovations do transform these fantasies into reality, there is no guarantee that any particular war, once started, will remain within the contemplated parameters. Enemies may not respond rationally to U.S. coercive strategies, and, typically, weak opponents may devise asymmetric strategies to counter U.S. military superiority and demoralize the public, such as new forms of terrorism or disruptive cyberwar attacks that do not require tremendous resources to carry out. And there are always the inevitable glitches, which often have greater consequences with advanced highly integrated technological systems, that can escalate or de-escalate warfare in unpredictable ways.

Despite the skepticism on the part of some military analysts regarding the technological transformation of military force into an instrument that can be precisely calibrated to achieve carefully defined missions, the promise of controllable war is becoming more seductive. The cumulative effect of that promise combined with the growing political temptation to invoke the country’s unrivaled military prowess on behalf of its varied and far-flung interests is to strengthen the hand of those disposed to integrate the threat and use of force more fully into U.S. foreign policy.

Chapter 5, prompted by the trends analyzed in the preceding chapters, revisits the “just war” tradition to mine this widely respected body of wisdom. Its concepts and insights can help policymakers keep their focus on the basic implications for U.S. and world interests when pressures are mounting to resort to war or to escalate an ongoing war.

According to the just war tradition, the country’s fighting forces should not be ordered into combat unless the decision to do so can pass a number of stringent tests: the reasons for going to war must be widely recognized as legitimate (traditionally called “just cause” and “right intention”). The

war must be ordered and conducted only by political entities having a widely recognized right to commit their constituents to battle (“proper authority”). The expected loss of life, property, and well-being on all sides must not dwarf the good results the war is expected to achieve (overall “proportionality”). Other more benign means of achieving the justified ends must have been found inadequate or too costly (war as a “last resort”). Finally, the contemplated military action must be judged by appropriate experts to have good prospects of achieving its objectives (“probability of success”).

The tradition also embodies a set of principles designed to keep wars, once begun, from expanding into paroxysms of destruction. The most important principle is the prohibition of the deliberate killing and injuring of people who are not part of the enemy’s fighting forces (“noncombatant immunity”).

The chapter shows, however, that various of the ascendant political and technological trends are complicating the meaning—and even calling into question the relevance—of some of the just war precepts. If the new geopolitics and new weapons indeed present more opportunities to use military power as an instrument of diplomacy and conflict control, does that reduce the burden of justification carried by those who advocate use of force? If the U.S. arsenal includes a wide array of weapons that can be delivered precisely on target with virtually no risk of collateral damage to noncombatants and civilian structures, does that not reduce the moral significance of crossing the threshold between nonviolent coercion and war?

But other current political and military trends point to the imperative of reaffirming and strengthening the principles of the just war tradition and adapting them to contemporary circumstances. As warfare becomes increasingly reliant on information technology, the military establishment is finding it advantageous to outsource not only research and development but also real-time military information processing to civilian firms, making the involved “cyberwarriors without uniforms” potential targets. Profound just war issues also are raised by the propensity to attack civilian infrastructure (roads, railways, dams, electric power plants, and the like) to destroy the enemy’s will as well as capacity to fight. Finally, the difficulty of maintaining civilian-military distinctions will still be with us as enemies place key combat personnel and equipment in hospitals, religious institutions, and schools and use civilians as human shields—a likely feature of urban warfare in places like Baghdad. In short, once a war gets

hot, the temptation to throw away the rulebook is likely to be as great as ever unless countered by strengthened political directives not to do so.

Chapter 6 takes up the challenge of adapting the wisdom underlying the just war tradition to contemporary circumstances. It recommends a set of guidelines for employing force that are designed to ensure a thorough assessment of the possible outcomes of escalating a conflict at any stage.

The initial and overarching guideline reiterates the need to reinforce and widen the threshold between nonviolent diplomacy and war. Subsequent guidelines emphasize the imperative to carefully weigh the values at stake, assess nonmilitary alternatives, and analyze the likely costs and risks of the contemplated military operations before committing the country to war. “Firebreaks” and decisionmaking routines are prescribed to ensure that any and all escalations of military operations are approached with the gravity and political scrutiny that they demand.

The guidelines are not designed to delegitimize the resort to force or coercive diplomacy in situations in which nonviolent instruments of statecraft would fail to serve the country’s interests adequately. Rather, they reflect the expectation that in the emerging polyarchic world, even more than during the cold war, the country may face situations in which refraining from war could mean a greater sacrifice of national interests and values than would going to war. A judicious approach to using military force assumes that balancing risks and choosing the “lesser evil” is one of the responsibilities of statecraft. And such an approach helps to ensure that wherever and whatever military options are chosen, they are indeed the lesser evil and truly advance the country’s interests.