

BOOK REVIEWS

A SCENARIO OF THE FUTURE

Deitchman, Seymour. *On Being a Superpower*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2000. 335pp. \$32

This self-characterized “think piece” about the future of U.S. national security is the stuff of war college curricula, brought to us by one of the nation’s leading thinkers and practitioners on the subject. Seymour Deitchman here describes a likely world into which the only superpower will be thrust and offers some reasonable and insightful advice for maintaining this preeminence.

Military planners routinely concoct scenarios of future wars to illustrate the types of strategy and forces that would most likely be effective in overcoming projected enemies. Deitchman uses this technique with great skill to depict the requirements of a U.S. global security strategy. His scenarios for each part of the world are designed to leave anyone who has ever worked in national security affairs with sweaty palms. However, all such scenarios are merely educated guesses, often created to support the author’s predispositions and conclusions.

The value of envisioning a particular future his primarily in the stimulation of new ways of seeing and thinking about a problem, rather than in any predictive accuracy. These scenarios are intended to

rattle one’s comfortable mindset. That is, while no single element of any of them is implausible, that any one could unravel as unfortunately as these do stretches credulity. Deitchman does recognize that any of his assumptions may be “ridiculously wrong” by the time the book is published, and he is absolutely right on this score.

Deitchman has his biases, and he is not ashamed of them. He is an internationalist, and does not shy away from the necessity for the U.S. military to conduct military operations other than war. He does not favor national missile defense, for both technical and political reasons. However, Deitchman’s most controversial contention is that there will be only a few overseas bases and that these bases will always be “politically” vulnerable to limitations by the host country. Indeed, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM vindicated this claim, as we saw Army and Air Force participation limited for some time to Special Forces, strategic bombers, and long-range refueling assets. This postulate about overseas bases leads Deitchman to the conclusion that naval forces (i.e., the Navy and Marine Corps) should dominate the future American

military. He devalues by this logic large portions of ground and tactical air forces supplied by the Army and Air Force, particularly in recognition of likely diminishing defense budgets. He is not opposed to joint warfare. He supports all the catchphrases (dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full-dimensional protection, focused logistics) popularized in the chairman's Joint Vision documents. He just feels that, provided space and information superiority, the sea services can execute the bulk of this strategy.

While Deitchman argues that the book is *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*, its strongest points are its prescriptions for developing a rational and affordable national military strategy. In particular, his arguments for the development of technology-driven armed forces with information superiority are compelling. His case against "lean" armed forces and overreliance on the civilianization of military jobs is equally powerful.

Deitchman's principal contribution to the strategic debate is his approach to handling two major regional contingencies (MRCs), if required. He opts to build technologically sophisticated and highly maneuverable conventional forces to address any military challenge (or to fight one MRC) while explicitly threatening a nuclear "rain of destruction" on anyone irresponsible enough to attack American vital interests while the United States is so occupied. As a true strategist, he thereby matches "ends" to "means" by allowing himself the opportunity to reduce the size of the relatively expensive conventional forces.

A large portion of the book is a seemingly unnecessary primer on America and the "exceptional" traits that either explain its greatness or foretell its doom. Whether or not the American education system is

fundamentally flawed or Americans are losing their work ethic obviously are debatable points. However, Deitchman's insistence that the United States engage in this self-examination is useful and meaningful. Most monographs on national security simply skip over this realm and presume the solution.

Deitchman forces the reader to delve deeper and to understand the social, economic, and psychological forces underpinning American security strategy. It is a journey well worth taking, even though a reader may disagree with the author as often as not.

Unless one is fortunate enough to spend a year at one of the nation's war colleges contemplating this subject, there is no better way to view the process of developing U.S. national strategy than to spend some time with this book.

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Tucker, Jonathan B. *Scourge: The Once and Future Threat of Smallpox*. Berkeley, Calif.: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001. 304pp. \$26

In real estate, the three most important things are "location, location, location." In nonfiction book writing, the counterpart is "timing, timing, timing." The publication of *Scourge* in early September 2001 could not have been more timely. The book is not a rapidly compiled, superficial response to the attacks of 11 September but an in-depth study of smallpox. Jonathan B. Tucker traces the history of the disease from ancient Egypt through India to China, where it was called "Hunpox," apparently because it was believed to have been imported by the Huns. Smallpox, we are reminded,

contributed to the defeat of Athens by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War.

Unlike anthrax, smallpox is extremely contagious, and it is readily transmitted from one human to another. It can have a fatality rate of greater than one third, making it a candidate as a weapon of mass destruction. However, as a weapon, it is uncontrollable, and the using side may become victim to it unless its members have been inoculated.

In 1790 an English country doctor named Edward Jenner noticed that milkmaids appeared not to contract the disease, an observation that ultimately led to the use of the cowpox virus as a vaccine against smallpox. The science of the mechanism was not understood until recently, but over the next 170 years vaccination banished smallpox in industrialized countries, although it continued to infect the developing world. (In 1939 it was discovered that the vaccine in use was “*vaccinia*,” which was genetically distinct from both smallpox [*variola*] and cowpox. Where *vaccinia* had come from and how it became the standard inoculant remains a mystery.)

In 1967 the World Health Organization launched a global campaign to eradicate smallpox, and within a decade the last natural outbreak was snuffed out. The success of the eradication program was to a great extent owed to the leadership of D. A. Henderson. The history of smallpox might have ended there, but for the defection of the Soviet military scientist Kanatjan Alibekov (a.k.a. Ken Alibek) who revealed that the Soviet Union maintained an active program to weaponize smallpox. Smallpox vaccination does not induce lifelong immunity, so should the disease be reintroduced, revaccination would be required. Currently, the whole world is susceptible, much as the Native

Americans were when Europeans brought the disease to the New World.

The debate continues as to whether smallpox has ceased to be a potential scourge of mankind. There are two known collections of the smallpox virus, located in Atlanta, Georgia, and in Moscow. The World Health Organization has been attempting to destroy all the viral stock, but it has been blocked by the United States and Russia, as well as some in the scientific community. At this writing, the deadline for its destruction is spring 2002. The deadline for the final destruction of all stockpiles has been changed in the past, and that may happen again.

Scourge: The Once and Future Threat of Smallpox is not alarmist; it gives a balanced, in-depth account of the history, politics, and science one should know about the disease. No technical background is required to understand the complexities of the political issues. The book may be read as three separate parts: chapters 1 to 4 deal with the historical understanding of smallpox and its relation to mankind; chapters 5 to 7 describe the successful global eradication effort; and chapters 8 to 12 discuss current politics and worst-case scenarios for reintroduction of the disease.

Jonathan Tucker is well qualified to write this book, having an undergraduate background in biology and a Ph.D. in political science. He was on the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment project technical staff that wrote the respected 1993 reports *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, *Assessing the Risks*, and *Technologies Underlying Weapons of Mass Destruction*. His book is recommended reading for anyone who wishes to claim competent opinions on

weapons of mass destruction and bioterrorism.

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FitzGerald, Frances. *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000. 499pp. \$30

In 1984, while the Cold War was raging, then-Senator Gary Hart expressed a sentiment shared by many then and now: “It’s unfortunate and tragic. The Reagan Administration has to understand that our relationships with the Soviet Union spring from whether or not we’re achieving arms control. If we’re not achieving arms control, then it spills over into and colors every other aspect of our relationship.” While it purports to be something else, Frances FitzGerald’s *Way Out There in the Blue* adopts the same theme. It is virtually impossible to turn to any page in the book and not find a critical discussion of arms control—mostly, of course, regarding the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Folks who work in the U.S. government often say, “We know we don’t get it right all of the time, but can we really get it wrong all of the time?” The author, however, can find no redemption for the Reagan years—they got it wrong, at every step, all of the time. Those who toiled in Washington through those years were both wrongheaded and wrong-hearted, according to FitzGerald. As a consequence, as analysis the book is deficient; it qualifies more appropriately as applied ideology. As a wag once put it, “Ideology is a filter through which facts pass for interpretation.”

So, the story of *Way Out There in the Blue* is of a simple-minded President

Reagan surrounded and captured by hard-line anticommunists, bent on confrontation with the Soviet Union and heating up the arms race in pursuit of a foolish dream. On essentially every page one feels the author’s contempt and disdain, derision and ridicule, for the “star wars” program and for the benighted approach of the two Reagan administrations. This is not a balanced attempt to understand the policy and politics of the Reagan years but a savage skewering.

The book’s focus is on politics and arms control, but the author’s lack of understanding of strategy deeply undermines her already flawed presentation. Throughout the book FitzGerald ridicules the notion that a defense, any defense, can be perfect. However, strategists recognize that perfection is not at issue. A defense need be only good enough to forestall an attack. If an attacker can be made to believe that his offensive thrust will fail, then the defense will not be challenged. For example, if an attacker has twenty ballistic missile warheads and is faced by a defense with interceptors each of which is judged to be 80 percent effective, he might, if he chooses to disarm himself by firing all of his warheads, expect to have four warheads penetrate the defense. Well, that might be true if the defense shoots only one interceptor at each incoming warhead. On a given day, the defense might opt to use more than one, so its effectiveness might be significantly better than 80 percent. Accordingly, a reasonable strategic assumption of would-be attackers would be that opposing defenses will work, and will work well.

Yet there is another overarching strategic factor at work here. To shoot missiles at the United States is not the same as shooting them at Australia or Belgium; whether or not any missiles get through

the American defenses, one must anticipate a devastating nuclear reply. This strategic fact is bound to affect anyone who is not merely suicidal. Therefore, on the prospect that the defense might work well enough, and given the certainty of a powerful response, a nonsuicidal enemy will have considerable hesitation about attacking. That hesitation is increased—it is in no way decreased—by an in-place ballistic-missile defense. As a consequence, strategically speaking, the issue of “perfect” defense is a phony one. Moreover, the author shows no understanding whatsoever of the power of separate layers of defense. The fact that a three-tiered defense in which each tier has 80 percent effectiveness has an overall system effectiveness in excess of 99 percent goes completely unremarked.

Also, much is made here of the notion that the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) sought to make nuclear weapons “impotent and obsolete.” This is closely related in the book to the ridiculous notion of “perfect” defenses. In his speech of 23 March 1983, however, President Reagan called upon the scientific community to “give us the means of rendering those nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.” The strategic argument—that it is when one is convinced that an attack could not succeed that those weapons become “impotent and obsolete”—has totally escaped FitzGerald.

Most serious, however, is the failure of FitzGerald to understand that the Reagan administration set out deliberately to return, after the debacle of the Carter administration, to an active containment of Soviet imperialism and to accelerate the erosion of the Soviet system from within. The SDI was part of this overall strategy, which was set forth in National Security Decision Directive 75, dated 17 January

1983, entitled “U.S. Relations with the USSR.” Although this document—originally classified “Secret Sensitive”—was declassified and released in 1994, the book makes no mention of it. Clearly this information was available to FitzGerald, and one is left to speculate as to reasons for its absence. Perhaps it is because NSDD-75 says clearly that the United States “should continue to resist Soviet efforts to return to a U.S.-Soviet agenda focused primarily on arms control.” That, of course, offends the very essence of *Way Out There in the Blue*.

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Russian General Staff. *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*. Edited by Lester W. Grau, translated by Michael A. Gress. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2002. 364pp. \$45

This book, edited by Lester Grau of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is the last of a trilogy that covers the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979–89. His translator, Michael Gress, served in the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. Volume 1, *The Bear Went over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, was an early translation of original Russian documents prepared by student-officers—who had direct combat experience in Afghanistan—at the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow. It was first published in Russian in 1991, then republished in English in 1996 by the National Defense University. For the second volume, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahedeen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* (1996, U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Va.), Grau had the valuable assistance of Ali

Jalali, a former colonel in the Afghan army.

The third volume was written by a team of Russian military academicians led by Colonel Professor Valentin Runov, with contributions from officers who had served during the war. It is a systematic critical analysis from the perspective of the Russian General Staff, providing a significant amount of information regarding the type of conflict the Soviets faced in Chechnya and Central Asia. It describes how the relatively high-technology Soviet troops fought in a protracted war of attrition with a low-technology, ill-disciplined, but highly motivated guerrilla force until the Soviets were forced to withdraw. In contrast to volume 1, on Soviet combat tactics in Afghanistan, this volume provides an in-depth analysis of how different branches of the Red Army interacted and fought in specific raids and ambushes. When Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979, they applied textbook techniques for launching a mass linear blitzkrieg attack against Nato forces in Europe. However, they found these techniques of little use against the Afghans and switched to nonlinear tactics, increasing their use of high-precision weapons, which are better suited to the treacherous mountainous terrain. Grau describes well the three visible tactical improvements that the Soviets applied in the field: the combined-arms brigade; the materiel support battalion; and the smallest units, *bronegruppy*, consisting of three to five tracked or wheeled armored vehicles. There are also discussions on the role of the *Spetsnaz*, the special reconnaissance and commando units, and air assault techniques using helicopters, which were widely employed until the Afghans began effectively using Stinger missiles.

Although the Soviet-Afghan war has often been compared with the U.S. war in Vietnam, it was very different. While American strength rose to over 500,000 troops, who were employed in sizable operations, the Soviet “Limited Contingent” (its official title) varied from 90,000 to 120,000 troops, packed into the Fortieth Army’s four divisions, five separate brigades, three separate regiments, and smaller support units, which were stretched to the limit to provide protection to more than thirty provincial centers and industrial installations. Moreover, up to 20 percent of its strength went to man over 860 picket posts throughout the country, and much combat strength was further drained by convoy duties.

In spite of valuable critical comments provided by the American editors at the end of each chapter, some important aspects of the war are hardly discussed. Only four pages are devoted to the role of loyal Afghan (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan) forces, which were about the same size as the Soviet Fortieth Army. We learn almost nothing about the special DRA Ministry of the Interior troops (*Sarandoy*), the military units of KHAD, the dreaded Afghan secret police, or the panoply of tribal militias intermittently cooperating with the Soviets against the guerrillas.

However, one should appreciate the revelations found in this book, such as the correct number of Soviet casualties since the 1979 invasion. Despite Mikhail Gorbachev’s trumpeted *glasnost*, his official number of 13,833 dead was apparently about half the actual number. The third volume also confirms earlier findings that, in spite of the systematic penetration of the military and administrative infrastructure of Afghanistan prior to the invasion, Soviet intelligence—especially

when trying to penetrate the *Mujahedeen*—was very poor.

Even with the shortcomings mentioned, this volume must be rated as one of the best in providing a systematic analysis of the Soviet armed forces on the tactical level. In addition to twenty photographs of soldiers and their weapons, there are about thirty maps illustrating various tactical operations. The translation from Russian to English is excellent. The book will be indispensable to students of military tactics, as well as area specialists, as its lessons continue to be pertinent to conflict in Central Asia.

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Connaughton, Richard. *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines*. New York: Overlook Press, 2001. 394pp. \$35

In the dark days following the onset of the Pacific War, American military successes were few and far between. The gallant, albeit unsuccessful, defense of the Philippines, however, captured the national spirit and made General Douglas A. MacArthur a national hero. His triumphant return to Manila three years later seemed to confirm his status as a commander of extraordinary military genius. Largely forgotten was his abortive defense of the archipelago in 1941 that ultimately led to the surrender of the largest number of American troops in history. In his prequel to *The Battle for Manila*, British author Richard Connaughton examines MacArthur's early campaigns and concludes that his subject was a courageous general but a deeply flawed man.

Connaughton begins his story with a brief narrative outlining America's involvement in the Philippines since the 1880s, the same decade that witnessed MacArthur's birth. Switching gears, he then follows MacArthur's career from his graduation from West Point in 1903 through his multiple tours in the Philippines. Connaughton pays special attention to his subject's activities in the years immediately preceding World War II, when MacArthur held the rank of field marshal of the Philippine Commonwealth. The MacArthur who emerges during this period was the kind of military planner whose strategic vision was based on the enemy's presumed intentions rather than the foe's capabilities.

When the Japanese attacked in December 1941, MacArthur's defensive plans proved hollow. Connaughton severely criticizes MacArthur for allowing the destruction of his air force on the ground at Clark Field and speculates that MacArthur, alone of the other senior Allied commanders who suffered defeat in the first days of the war, was not sacked but promoted to the temporary rank of general because he was "untouchable both politically and militarily." In his assessment of MacArthur, Connaughton joins a growing number of historians who find fault with the "Far Eastern General."

Nor is Connaughton laudatory about MacArthur's static defense of Lingayen Gulf, which he characterizes as "among the most lackluster, uninspiring defenses conducted throughout the duration of World War II." Within a week of the Japanese amphibious assault at Lingayen Gulf, MacArthur declared Manila an open city and withdrew the majority of his forces to the Bataan Peninsula and the island fortress of Corregidor. Unfortunately the garrison was ill equipped,

and adequate logistical supplies to support a prolonged defense had not been stored. The result was predictable—the garrison was soon on half-rations that sapped the strength of the defending force during the subsequent campaign.

In the author's view, as MacArthur advanced in seniority he increasingly became the "victim of his own ego and sense of infallibility, to the degree that he could not accept that it was human to err or to fail." Especially critical of MacArthur's decision to retain overall command of the Philippines from Australia, Connaughton contends that MacArthur deliberately misled the Army chief of staff, George C. Marshall, about the actual number of Bataan's defenders and frequently dictated optimistic dispatches that were belied by the deplorable condition of the defenders of Bataan and Corregidor.

So where does Douglas MacArthur rank among the great battle captains of the world? Not very high, states Connaughton. Citing with approval Roosevelt's assessment that MacArthur's defense of Luzon was more "criminal" than heroic, "more a rout than military achievement," Connaughton concludes that MacArthur avoided censure by maintaining the support of the Philippine government and the Philippine people, and because the removal of MacArthur by a Democratic president would have generated political backlash at a difficult time. Those factors, coupled with MacArthur's penchant for public relations by which he created an image of a lonely hero defending America on a distant shore, permitted MacArthur to occupy a position in the Valhalla of American military figures.

Douglas MacArthur has not fared well in recent historiography of his unsuccessful defense of the Philippines in 1941–42.

According to Connaughton, MacArthur made "monstrous blunders" in directing the defense of the archipelago. Strangely enough, however, Connaughton concludes with a more positive assessment, suggesting that MacArthur arrived in Australia a better soldier for having experienced defeat in the Philippines. From Australia MacArthur would embark upon a campaign that included eighty-seven amphibious landings in his progress toward ultimate victory and the liberation of the island chain that had witnessed his greatest defeat.

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Campbell, R. Thomas. *The CSSH. L. Hunley: Confederate Submarine*. Shippensburg, Penna.: Burd Street Press, 2000. 173pp. \$14.95

The Confederate vessel *H. L. Hunley* became the first submarine to sink an opposing vessel in time of war when, on 17 February 1864, it detonated a spar torpedo against the hull of USS *Housatonic*, which was on blockade duty off Charleston, South Carolina. The ship sank in shallow water with a loss of five lives. *Hunley* disappeared following the explosion. The manner of its loss, the location of the wreck, and the fate of the crew have puzzled and challenged Civil War buffs, historians, and underwater archeologists for more than a hundred years. Interest in the submarine intensified with the discovery of the vessel in May 1995 and the raising of the wreck intact in August 2000.

R. Thomas Campbell's book *The CSS H. L. Hunley: Confederate Submarine* continues the popular fascination with

the ill-fated submarine. Campbell follows closely in the wake of recent writers who have retold the familiar story of the *Hunley*. Campbell, a specialist in the naval history of the Confederacy and author of four books on the subject, here focuses on the history of this submarine from its construction in 1863 to its final history-making attack. He begins with Confederate attempts preceding the *Hunley* to construct a workable submersible. He then discusses the rationale for Confederate submarines and the hope they gave the Confederacy of breaking the Union blockade of its ports.

Hunley was built in Mobile, Alabama, in 1863 and shipped by train to Charleston to relieve the blockade. There the vessel proved deadly to its Confederate crews, sinking three times and killing twenty-two men, including its chief backer, Horace Lawson Hunley.

Campbell has compiled from primary and secondary sources an impressive amount of detail, which he incorporates in 120 pages of text and photographs, drawings, and maps. He has developed a lengthy bibliography. The photographs, while heavy on gun emplacements, illustrate the principal places and participants in the *Hunley* history. Seven appendices, totaling forty pages, are primarily concerned with postdiscovery news releases. The book was published prior to the vessel's salvage in August 2000 and so has no information related to the technical aspects of the salvage and subsequent findings by archeologists.

Campbell's narrative reads at times like a work of history and at other times like a magazine article, as the author alters his perspective from that of historian to

contemporary commentator. His style tends toward the melodramatic, and the book contains a good deal of enthusiastic supposition. Campbell, though usually generous in his footnotes, does not always make clear why he attributes particular thoughts, feelings, or actions to the *Hunley*'s crew or supporters.

Closer editing would have helped the book and eliminated misspellings, misplaced modifiers, and clichés. One might ask why it was necessary to include a map with a caption apologizing for its "very poor quality" instead of redrawing it.

The book contains minor factual errors. Matthew Fontaine Maury's middle name was not Fountain, and it was G. W. Blair, not Beard, who inspected the submersible *Pioneer*. There are minor inconsistencies between the main text and appendices. On page 47 Campbell names the five men who died in *Hunley*'s 29 August 1863 sinking; however, his list of the dead in appendix A states that one man is unidentified. Perhaps most surprising is the inclusion of four and a half consecutive pages of quoted text, used with permission, from a 1995 book about the *Hunley* by another author.

Disappointingly, Campbell chose to cede his conclusion to an unreconstructed Confederate survivor of the *Hunley*, William Alexander. Alexander's page-long diatribe, from a speech in 1903, is a condemnation of the actions of the United States during the Civil War, and it contains factual errors regarding the history of submarines. It is an ungraceful ending to the book.

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