

BOOK REVIEWS

“ON THE CUSP OF A STRONG ALLIANCE?”

James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russian Relations*. Asia in the New Millennium. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2010. 360pp. \$50

China's rise increasingly forms a dominant theme of discussion in newspapers and academic journals alike, as Beijing's rapid growth will likely have a major impact on the security of the United States and its prosperity in the twenty-first century. A vital element to understanding the implications of China's rise is to examine closely the most important of Beijing's foreign-policy relationships.

This book, edited by James Bellacqua, fills a vital niche in this regard and belongs on the bookshelves of students of East Asia, Central Asia, and European security, as well as on those of general practitioners of international relations. Numerous crucial insights emerge from this rich volume, but among the most important themes is the apparent consensus among the contributors that Russia and China are not on the cusp of a strong alliance to oppose Washington. Rather, as one might expect, this relationship between these massive neighbors is uneasy, awkward, and rife with complexity.

Bellacqua deserves ample credit for bringing together an all-star cast of

writers for this work. Thus Gilbert Rozman begins with sounding a warning that the China-Russia relationship should not be “underestimated,” observing that “all . . . forces in recent years have failed to deter Russia's leaders from turning ever more toward China.” On one hand, contributors warn that Russia-China military exercises have grown in scope and sophistication, while on the other hand, there are those who note that Russian arms sales to China seem to be in a rather precipitous decline. Rozman's analysis of the effect of Putin's leadership on the relationship is especially interesting. For example, he notes that Putin did not hesitate to remove a regional governor who had been stoking anti-Chinese sentiment in the Russian Far East.

An evaluation of the volatility in the evolving Russia-China energy relationship is a particular strength of this book. Indeed, the detailed chapter by Erica Downs is worth reading especially carefully. She makes a strong and logical argument that the twists and turns of their energy relationship have largely been determined by price. Downs

writes, “During the 1990s, when oil prices were low, Russia pushed for expanded energy cooperation, but China . . . was reluctant. . . . The rise in world oil prices . . . turned the tables. . . . China became more eager . . . [and] Russia became increasingly reluctant to commit to deeper energy integration.” Whether this “uncertain courtship” in the energy sector becomes a more serious relationship will depend on “world oil prices, China’s willingness to pay more for natural gas, China’s willingness to play by Russia’s ‘rules of the game’ . . . and Russia’s concerns about the ‘China threat.’”

Another valuable contribution is the collection’s examination of the interaction of regional security issues, such as in Central Asia or on the Korean Peninsula, with the Russia-China relationship. While the Taiwan issue is amply discussed, another regional security issue could well have a similarly potent influence on the trajectory of the overall relationship between the two countries. If Russia goes forward with a large planned sale of weaponry to Vietnam, including Kilo-class submarines, it will no doubt cause new tensions between Moscow and Beijing. This example serves to illustrate the broader importance of understanding the Russia-China relationship for world politics across all regions and therefore underscores the importance of this valuable book.

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Francis, David J., ed. *U.S. Strategy in Africa: AFRICOM, Terrorism, and Security Challenges*. Oxford, U.K.: Routledge, 2010. 216 pp. \$114

After a period of involuntary neglect due to pressing business elsewhere, the United States appears to appreciate Africa’s elevated strategic importance in terms of counterterrorism and energy security, among other things, and to regard regional stability, democratic development, economic reform, good governance, humanitarian assistance, and the fight against HIV/AIDS as subsidiary objectives that are conducive to serving those two interests. This development makes this work by David Francis, holder of the Chair of African Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Bradford, timely. Fortunately, it is also thematically well conceived, with part 1 laying out U.S. security policy and part 2 discussing African responses, the two comprising a broadly complementary set of earnest assessments by perceptive analysts.

In Washington, the conventional wisdom on U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) seems to be that although the Pentagon established it so awkwardly in 2007 that African leaders and populations worried that it was an instrument of neocolonialism, subsequent adjustments in strategic communication have largely allayed African fears. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Theresa Whelan’s tidy and professional précis of the American strategic perspective incorporates standard Pentagon palliatives and spin control. The next three chapters are more probing and provocative.

Daniel Volman makes a forceful argument that “the difference between AFRICOM and other commands—and the allegedly ‘unfounded’ nature of its implications for the militarization of the continent—are not as real or as

genuine” as advertised. Nevertheless, he appears to exaggerate the importance of AFRICOM as a geopolitical bulwark against China, as well as the role of the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), AFRICOM’s sole major ground asset, as a platform for kinetic counterterrorism operations. Furthermore, the evolution of AFRICOM over the past two years has cast doubt on Volman’s characterization of the command as inimical to “an international and multilateral partnership with African nations.” J. Peter Pham, in his chapter on terrorism and security challenges, provides a fuller and more accurate picture of CJTF-HOA’s primary function (essentially defense diplomacy) and a nuanced account of how AFRICOM might help harmonize African and American security interests.

M. A. Mohamed Salih is less sanguine on that score. His doubts, however, rest not on assumptions of malign American intent but rather on the insusceptibility of Africans’ profound human-security problems to military solutions. In turn, Shannon Beebe, a senior Africa analyst in the U.S. Department of the Army, considers a human-security model for Africa that is self-consciously at odds with the traditional “state-centric realist paradigm.” This may seem like pie in the sky to some, but it does contain some concrete elements—for example, free-trade zones to short-circuit corruption and lubricate economic activity.

The rejoinders on Africans’ behalf range from wholesale condemnation to selective criticism of U.S. policy. According to Jeremy Keenan of the University of London, Africans predominantly see Washington’s profession of concern for development and security

as transparent cover for hegemonic assertions of “imperialist power.” Wryly acknowledging the “cottage industry in policy discourse” that the establishment of AFRICOM has produced, Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, a Ghanaian, focuses on the interplay of AFRICOM and the African Union (AU). He notes while the two are ostensibly compatible, partisan dialogue between Africans who fear that American preoccupation with oil supplies and counterterrorism will subordinate the AU and those who hope that AFRICOM will enable the AU the better to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts has stalled U.S.-African multilateralism. He constructively urges conceptualizing the relationship in terms of hard, soft, and smart power in order to clarify AFRICOM’s optimal contribution.

David Chuter offers a sweeping big-picture essay containing several sharp, if downbeat, insights. In particular, he suggests that the optimistic Western “assumption that a strong organisation can be created on the basis of weak states” is especially dubious in the African context. In his view, Africa needs to develop a model of security that “does not take Western ideas and experiences as a starting point.” After Josephine Osikena’s balanced survey of activity between Africa and other international actors (especially Brazil, India, and China), Francis himself provides a trenchant conclusion on the future of U.S.-African relations. Cued by signs of the potential privatization of U.S. military and security operations in Africa and by the disinclination of Western analysts to see salient links in Africa between poverty and political violence, he duly questions the capacity and will of the United States to do much more

than attend to its own core security interests on the continent. More optimistically, he recognizes that the United States must remain open to debate on AFRICOM's proper role. Thus he recapitulates the sensible tone of this fine edited collection—hard-nosed but not hopeless.

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Koblentz, Gregory D. *Living Weapons: Biological Warfare and International Security*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2009. 272pp. \$35

Gregory D. Koblentz, the deputy director of the Biodefense Graduate Program and assistant professor of government and politics at George Mason University, has written an outstanding analysis of one of the most significant national security challenges of the modern era. The author devotes five crisp chapters, written in easily understandable terms, to the complexities of the potential use of biologicals in modern warfare.

He describes the national security implications of the potential use of biological weapons by state actors as well as those with no state affiliation. One of the areas Koblentz addresses, in necessary detail, is the existence of many barriers to preventing proliferation of biological weapons by states, nonstate actors, and terrorists.

Koblentz uses case studies to review the biological warfare programs of Iraq, Russia, and South Africa, speculating on the strategic assessment of the risks and benefits each country may have considered in determining whether to proceed with the development of these

offensive weapons. With each example the reader is able to understand better the nature of the biological threat and how truly difficult it is to control such a weapon once in an aggressor's hands.

The United States has the most powerful military force of modern times but is having a most challenging time defeating an asymmetric adversary in Afghanistan. When one considers the potential of a lesser state actor or a terrorist group to develop and use biological weapons against a militarily superior force, one is forced to ask *when* the use of this weapon will occur, not *if*. As Koblentz astutely points out, "Biological weapons were the first weapon prohibited by an international treaty, yet the proliferation of these weapons increased after they were banned."

This book is a must-read not only for the professional military officer, diplomat, and politician but for the average citizen as well. It is for anyone who wishes to gain a better understanding of the current biological weapon threat and is interested in or responsible for protecting the nation's vital interests.

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Potholm, Christian P. *Winning at War: Seven Keys to Military Victory throughout History*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010. 304pp. \$39.95

Winning at War is the product of over forty years of academic inquiry into the nature of war by Christian Potholm, a professor of government at Bowdoin College. He proposes that throughout history there have been seven keys to

military victory: “superior weapons and technology entrepreneurship, superior discipline, sustained but controlled ruthlessness, receptivity to military and integrative innovation, the ability and willingness to protect capital from people and rulers, the centrality of superior will, and the belief that there will always be another war.” Drawing on an array of historical examples from the Peloponnesian wars to the present, Potholm builds a case that there is a predictive formula for success. Application of this formula depends on strict objectivity, which explains why he applies a template of Mars through which to analyze the decision for war, its execution, and final results. Viewing human conflict through the cold, dispassionate lens of the god of war, for whom winning is all that matters, advances the process of distilling war to its essence.

The premise of this book is provocative for a couple of reasons. First, it may seem to the student of military history problematic that a scholar without prior military experience would presume to write authoritatively on war. After all, many classics of military theory and history were written by scholars who cut their teeth on the battlefield, such as Carl von Clausewitz, Mao Zedong, and Sir Basil Liddell Hart, who are among those with extensive military experience whose works are eminent today in the classrooms of our nation’s service academies and war colleges. Second, the book provokes the curious to see whether the author really is on to something, having produced a work of unique value for policy makers and military strategists.

In fact, the quality of analysis in *Winning at War* debunks the myth that

military experience is necessary to write authoritatively on war. Like Sir Julian Corbett, who never served in the Royal Navy yet became Britain’s foremost theorist on joint strategy, Potholm’s work deserves our attention because of his distinguished credentials. That being the case, what value does this book have to offer that cannot be derived from Thucydides, Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, or contemporary works like Colin Gray’s *Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on War, Peace, and Strategy* (2007)? Unlike these classic authors, Potholm draws his conclusions from a comprehensive survey of military history of over 2,500 years, being candid about his inclusion of non-Western examples in the analysis. Thus, the seven keys were derived from a vetting process that sought to eliminate the constraining factors of time and space. Yes, there is familiarity in each of the seven keys, but when considered collectively they provide a unique, succinct guide for when to avoid, initiate, conduct, or end a war.

Potholm addresses the book’s relevance by applying the template of Mars to the current war against “radical jihadist Salafists.” Holistic application of the template leaves one hopeful about American potential for defeating this type of “postmodern” insurgency. Ultimately, however, the author understands that Mars is rarely pleased by the way humans conduct war and that war is a contest of wills that are subject as much to emotion as to rationality. The objection to this book, if any, will be put forward by those who do not believe that war is a fundamental part of the human condition.

LT. COL. PAUL C. KRAJESKI, U.S. ARMY
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Murray, Williamson, and Jim Lacey, eds. *The Making of Peace: Rulers, States, and the Aftermath of War*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009. 408pp. \$93

There are countless books written on war but fewer on the problems of post-war or even intrawar peacemaking. This work thus offers top-quality case studies on a subject of enormous relevance. It will be of value to policy makers, academics, and general readers alike.

The Making of Peace is a collection of essays written by eminent historians known mainly for their writings on war. Sir Michael Howard's preface sets the bar high, observing that the usual war/peace dichotomy is artificial, since the historical default is perpetual conflicts "that need not necessarily be resolved by force, and it is the business of statesmen to ensure that they are not."

The book's central argument is that effective peacemaking requires in-depth knowledge of the past; a healthy awareness of the political, historical, and cultural context within which a war has taken place; and a full appreciation of the characteristics of the "other." As Murray writes in the introduction, "Without guideposts from the past to suggest paths to the future, then any road, no matter how irrelevant and inappropriate, will do. And such roads will inevitably lead to future conflicts." However, that is not to imply that there are easy solutions. At the core of this book are eleven rich case studies of postwar peacemaking in the Western world, including chapters by, of course, Williamson Murray, as well as Paul Rahe, Derek Croxton and Geoffrey Parker, Fred Anderson, Richard Hart Sinnreich, James McPherson, Marcus

Jones, John Gooch, Colin Gray, Jim Lacey, and Fred Kagan. Sinnreich offers a thoughtful conclusion, "History and the Making of Peace," which ties together the major themes and offers three interesting "theories" of peace, all the while echoing B. H. Liddell Hart's dictum that the best way to formulate effective grand strategy is to look beyond a war to the nature of the peace.

Curiously, the editors stress the importance of knowing your adversary in peacemaking, but the volume suffers from scant attention to non-Western case studies. Although they anticipate this criticism, their ethnocentrism detracts from an otherwise sterling collection of cases, especially when the United States and its Western allies actively chase peace with non-Western adversaries. A more minor flaw is the absence of a bibliography of key sources on peacemaking, or even just those used in this book. Nonetheless, this is an impressive collection for students of strategy and history, as all serious policy makers, practitioners, and informed citizens ought to be.

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Iguchi, Takeo. *Demystifying Pearl Harbor: A New Perspective from Japan*. Translated by David Noble. Tokyo: I-House, 2010. 343pp. \$60

This carefully researched book painstakingly corrects the diplomatic history surrounding Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. The author is a retired Japanese ambassador who was the young son of the Japanese counselor in Washington, D.C., on 7 December 1941. Unlike too many Japanese writers, Iguchi

is no apologist for the sneak attack. Rather he objectively analyzes recently released empirical evidence that reveals the individuals truly responsible for delaying lawful notice to the United States about the coming attack. The fault did not rest with the embassy staff, as portrayed to the Tokyo war crimes tribunal, but with a conspiracy to cover up facts, a conspiracy that is now traceable to high-level officials who deliberately delayed Foreign Ministry telegrams. Moreover, the Japanese notes delivered to then–secretary of state Cordell Hull shortly after the attack were not declaration-of-war ultimatums as required by international law but watered-down notices about the termination of bilateral negotiations. The unmistakable conclusion from the evidence is that the officials in power wanted to catch the Americans off guard.

Iguchi writes from firsthand experience and with convincing passion about those in Japan who even now do not want to accept responsibility for their country's perfidious actions. He cites authoritatively from official, insider records, not only placing blame where it belongs but also clearing up the record to allow closure, moving to more open and honest U.S.-Japanese relations.

The book provides a detailed time-line context for the foreign policy pursued by Japan throughout 1940–41, when the focus of the Japanese military was on China and the Soviet Union. Iguchi rejects the thesis that American economic sanctions and demands for a complete withdrawal of Japanese forces from China forced Japan into war. Iguchi identifies powerful Japanese strategic thinkers who believed that the only way resource-poor Japan could win a war against the United States and Great

Britain was by a quick and devastating surprise attack. Iguchi also documents contrary views held by influential Japanese leaders at the time who tried to halt the momentum for war.

Iguchi does not believe there was an American conspiracy to provoke war with Japan. He also rejects such myths as that Roosevelt knew in advance of the Pearl Harbor attack or that Churchill was responsible, meaning to draw the United States into war against Hitler.

The value of this book is in how candidly and accurately Iguchi documents the historical context for the Pacific War. He explains Japanese motives based on his unique personal experiences, reinforced by formerly classified internal Japanese records. There is no forgiving Japan's cowardly attack on Pearl Harbor, but there is much to admire about a senior Japanese diplomat who courageously does his best to set the record straight.

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Thomas, Evan. *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Empire, 1898*. New York: Little, Brown, 2010. 413pp. \$29.99

American journalist and historian Evan Thomas has once again proved why he is among the foremost modern scholars of American history, culture, and politics. *The War Lovers* is a captivating chronicle of war fever and calculated crisis manipulated by key leaders in the run-up to the twentieth century and culminating in the Spanish-American War. Thomas assembles a compelling

historical record for the case that the war was a conflict of choice, shaped by powerful politicians and statesmen and exploited by a rabidly sensationalist newspaper editor. Reasons for their conduct abound, from simple machismo to earnest belief in the national interest, from greed to pure self-indulgence and an insatiable appetite for controversy. Thomas reveals an instructive case study for current military and civilian national security professionals on the causal factors for war and the agendas that influence national decision making. He weaves the archetypal cautionary tale, making clear that conflict is sometimes the product of irrational and intensely personal calculus rather than the pure strategic *realpolitik* taught in universities and the war colleges.

The author recasts the image of Theodore Roosevelt from that of the conventional wisdom—the loyal, altruistic model nationalist—to that of a sophisticated, scheming demagogue willing to stage-manage U.S. foreign policy to his own egotistic ends and driven by psychological factors, including an extreme case of father worship. Roosevelt's self-loathing, in this view, was so complete that it transformed his outlook with absolute sincerity—introspection was not Roosevelt's strong suit. Similarly, Thomas paints the statesman and virtual New England hereditary peer Henry Cabot Lodge as a puppeteer, dancing marionettes across a stage to demonstrate his power and influence. William Randolph Hearst's legend as a muckraking proprietor of "journalism that acts" needs little exposition, but Thomas fleshes out his character with a healthy degree of cynicism and edgy historical humor. The author develops

a plotline of interaction between these three principal actors and establishments—the Washington political establishment, embodied by Speaker Thomas Reed, the Boston Brahmin social establishment, and the Harvard set—showing the tensions and their resolutions in a way that makes the characters at once real, competent, ludicrous, vulnerable, haughty, adventurous, and patriotic.

Thomas himself is of relatively high birth, the son of a literary editor and grandson of a Princeton graduate and presidential candidate. Although educated at Phillips Andover, Harvard, and the University of Virginia's law school, he shows mercy in describing the conceit and self-importance of fellow Harvard men Roosevelt and Lodge.

The takeaway for this reviewer is that actors are more complex than the oversimplified caricatures that the modern press, the academy, and political society sometimes make them out to be. Roosevelt is often caricatured as a cigar-chomping outdoorsman and man of adventure, leading from the front in the Cuban campaign and earning accolades and medals for altruistic heroism. In reality, the picture of Roosevelt painted by Thomas is of a man not nearly so selflessly patriotic and capable but rather of one who was willing to subordinate the national interest to his own ends.

Thomas shows that in similar circumstances about a hundred years ago, similar actors with analogous agendas acted in comparable ways, perhaps for similar purposes. The image of Teddy Roosevelt, the purest American loyalist, charging up San Juan Hill to liberate Cuba from the malicious Spanish regime is insufficient to capture the total picture of the complex political,

military, and strategic confluence that led to the Spanish-American War. The question for the polity is how to design a system that marginalizes these personal agendas and ideologies to ensure that questions of war are indeed answered with morality, proper state behavior, and national self-interest as the foremost considerations. Books like *The War Lovers* are instructive in ensuring we are not doomed to repeat history, or at least that we can recognize it when we are.

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Lieven, Dominic. *Russia against Napoleon: The True Story of the Campaigns of War and Peace*. New York: Viking, 2010. 618pp. \$35.95

The Napoleonic Wars are not exceptions to the rule that the victor of war writes the history. Yet there is a strange omission: the mythic history of Napoleon and Russia has been produced almost wholly by the British and Germans and focuses on the events of 1813 and 1814. Yes, the disastrous French campaign in Russia is viewed as the beginning of the end and treated as Napoleon's mistake, but if the Russians are offhandedly thanked for the war of attrition they fought in 1812, their participation in Western Europe in 1813 and 1814 has been downplayed. This is despite the startling fact that 650,000 Russians operated in the West in those years and in fact trooped into Paris in March 1814.

Even historians of Russia have not made much of the role the Russians played in 1813–14. They could not do

so, of course, given the lack of archival access. But one must also consider the impact of the myth of 1812, promulgated in *War and Peace* and later reinforced by the “populism” of the Russian Revolution. Tolstoy's myth emphasizes weather, great distances, Napoleon's overconfidence, and especially the heroism of the long-suffering Russian people, who overcame not only the French but the incompetence of the tsar and his advisers and generals. All this resonated well with the subsequent need of nineteenth-century revolutionaries and Soviets to downplay the successes of the old regime.

Dominic Lieven's *Russia against Napoleon* corrects the existing omission by bringing to light Russia's preparation for and the execution of its involvement in the diplomatic, political, and military struggle against Napoleon from the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 until 1814. If Lieven is to be congratulated for being the first to use Russian sources, available only since 1990, he deserves greater praise for resisting the urge to make his story part of the eventual fall of the tsarist regime. One could really not ask for more in the way of a military history. It is exhaustively thorough, cognizant of the relationships of intelligence, diplomacy, and domestic politics to war, and properly limited in scope and conclusions.

Lieven convincingly demonstrates the real accomplishments in terms of strategy and execution of war of Alexander I, his foreign-policy advisers, Count Nesselrode's Paris intelligence apparatus, and military officers. His greater achievement, however, is his focus on logistics and—what might seem to be a minor matter—the role of the horse. These are perhaps the largest and most

interesting aspects of the Russian success story. If in 1807 the Russian state and army were inarguably “Old Regime” compared to the West, by 1814 the Russian ability to project military power beyond the country’s borders was formidable. This project depended, most of all, on the ability to move and feed men.

To some, the role of “horsepower” in early modern war will seem a revelation, even though the fact that Napoleon could replace men but not the horses in Russia in 1812 is already well-known. Lieven tells us that the

horse was the most significant military asset of its time: “The horse fulfilled the present-day functions of the tank, the lorry, the aeroplane and motorized artillery. It was in other words the weapon of shock, pursuit, reconnaissance, transport, and mobile firepower.” Interestingly, nowhere does he say what immediately leaps to the reader’s mind—that what the Russians knew about horsepower mirrored what the Soviets understood about tanks during World War II.

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