

disarmament forum

(R)evolution in military affairs

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Just as we were going to press the events of 11 September sent shock waves around the world. The questions raised by the contributors to this issue dedicated to RMA could not be more timely. The intersection of American military thinking, that country's fervent belief in high-tech solutions, and the reality of terrorism on its own soil will be a confusing crossroads for the American public and its government.

Experts, novices and pundits alike are debating what sort of 'war against terrorism' will be waged—will the United States stick to its belief in remotely fought wars with the assistance of technology, or will this be a conflict of an entirely different nature? What will be the costs? And what will be the longer term impact on American military strategy and thinking (and hence the perceived value of RMA)? As concisely noted by T. Delpech, 'The ability to listen to every single telephone conversation worldwide does not mean being informed and even less being able to convert this information into knowledge of the adversary.'

Despite the fact that nearly all of our authors wrote their contributions before the attacks, each one highlights that one serious repercussion of developing high-tech weapons is that unequally matched adversaries are likely to react using asymmetrical warfare—a fact chillingly confirmed in North America. Long discussed in the arms control community, asymmetric warfare—whether through terrorism, cyber-attack or acquisition of WMD—will need to be further discussed as we try to develop appropriate and effective responses.

The Bush Administration's previous single-minded pursuit of National Missile Defence—with all its financial, political and diplomatic implications—will undoubtedly feel the impact of public and political opinion. It is too early to tell how these attacks will influence both domestic and international perceptions of NMD and the greater issue of defence spending.

This event has drawn more people than ever before into the security debate; increasing numbers are considering what it means to be secure. What will be the trade-offs in a country that prides itself on the protection of individual freedoms? This growing discussion on human security—and security in a globalized world—is long overdue.

It is somewhat paradoxical that a crescendo of increasingly unilateral moves by the United States was shattered by the terrorist attacks. Nation after nation has stepped forward to pledge their support to a unprecedented multilateral effort to bring those responsible to justice. We can only hope that this co-operative attempt at coalition-building might give pause to those promoting increasingly isolationist security perspectives.

Lastly, the fact that technological evolution permits a constantly changing array of possibilities for new weapons systems is well documented. Yet nearly all of the debate to date has covered the implications of RMA for the current and future battlefield. By contrast, the central question to be addressed with this issue of *Disarmament Forum* is: what are the implications of RMA for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament? Current events make this question all the more relevant. While it is evident that the terrorist attacks on the United States will influence military, security, disarmament and arms control thinking—on the part of both doves and hawks—what remains to be seen is how security, disarmament and arms control can possibly be strengthened by these events and by the serious reflection that we must do regarding global and human security in the twenty-first century.

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