

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) presents two related problems for arms control. First, is the susceptibility of the RMA itself to credible and verifiable arms control measures, second the possible adverse impact of the RMA on existing efforts to control Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). If the RMA has fostered a measure of obscurity and uncertainty, rather than clarity, about the future of warfare, it has done no less when it comes to arms control.

The RMA has generated considerable, and inconclusive debate as to whether it is a "true" revolution in the nature of warfare or only part of a continuing "evolution" in weapons technologies, military organization and doctrine. It is closely associated with the post-Cold War national security policy of the United States which seeks to maintain America's dominant position and freedom of action at acceptable costs through the application of advanced technology to warfare.

The lessons of arms control during the Cold War suggest that arriving at a regime which could control elements of the RMA will be difficult given the inherent paradoxes of the arms control process itself and the particular nature of the RMA. The fact that the weapons systems which comprise the RMA are considered "conventional" and the large role played by easily obtainable civilian technologies in these systems indicate that there is likely to be a "proliferation" of the RMA outside the West. Another factor promoting the spread of the RMA is the desire of countries to provide counters to the technological superiority of the United States and its allies.

While there is much that is observable in the spread of the RMA, especially in terms of military organization and doctrine, existing arms control methodologies and technologies do not lend themselves to the establishment of a credible verifiable regime which could curtail the spread of the RMA. Given the nature of the weapons technologies, such a regime would require a level of intrusive, on-site verification measures which few countries would accept and which would be extremely difficult to sustain. Moreover, any international effort to control the spread of the RMA, which is led by the United States and its allies, will be seen as an unequal application of arms control norms in a manner similar to the perception of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

One of the major concerns with the RMA is the possibility of an "asymmetrical" response using WMDs by states or group against which RMA technologies are to be used. This in turn has contributed to efforts by the United States and its allies to deal with the WMD threat through multilateral arms control measures, such as the NPT and efforts to control chemical and biological weapons. The West has also adopted unilateral counter-proliferation efforts. Amongst the latter is the retention by the United States and NATO of the threat of nuclear response in the event that WMDs are used against them in response to their use of RMA technologies in future military action. Thus the West now has a new reason not to fully abandon nuclear deterrence, fear of asymmetrical responses to the RMA.

Examining scenarios in which the United States threatens or applies RMA against states with varying degrees of conventional, RMA and WMD capabilities, suggests that the effectiveness of the