

Integral with its technological implications for national security policy and the future of warfare, the American RMA has promoted much discussion about changes in doctrine and military organization. Doctrinally, the emphasis is on “decisive victory and friendly casualty limitations,” in an effort by the military “to balance military and political power with military societal compatibility.”²⁸ The RMA doctrine also suggests that America will be able to apply force anywhere in the world even with reductions in overseas bases in peacetime and smaller forces, especially ground troops, in war. The lure of the RMA is that it “promises a way to overcome what many military men believed were the reasons for our loss in Vietnam.” It not only results in minimal casualties but “even constrains the media’s ability to portray the war other than the way the generals want it.”²⁹ The RMA also fosters the notion that the United States can further reduce its overseas permanent bases. “How much nicer it would be,” notes Michael O’Hanlon, “if U.S. troops could stay home until called upon in a crisis or conflict. Then according to RMA believers, they could lash out rapidly, inter-continently, and lethally from bases” utilizing space power and long range air power.³⁰

The United States is rejecting preparation for a long war because of the dangers of a protracted conflict including public discontent. The National Military Strategy states explicitly that “Everything is staked on a short, decisive war,” in which adversaries are rapidly defeated. “Failure to halt an enemy invasion would make the subsequent campaign to evict enemy forces from captured territory much more difficult, and costly. Such failure would also weaken coalition support, undermine U.S. credibility, and increase the risk of conflict elsewhere.”³¹ The doctrine is said to be applicable in a variety of scenarios and that large scale, protracted war would become less likely, as the RMA “translated into more options in the application of military force in low intensity conflicts or operations other than war.” (OOTW)³²

This doctrine may result in a new division of labour between the United States and its allies or coalition partners. Already somewhat apparent in the Balkan interventions, this trend would see the United States contribute high tech capabilities such as long-range precision strike, global logistics, space capabilities, and information dominance, while regional allies would provide the bulk of the troops, especially for peace-keeping duties after target country or groups were subdued

²⁸ David Jablonsky, *The Owl of Minerva Flies At Twilight: Doctrinal Change and Continuity and the Revolution in Military Affairs* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College, 1994). p. 57.

²⁹ Blank, “How We Will Lose the Next War with Russia,” p. 122.

³⁰ O’Hanlon, “Can High Technology Bring U.S. Troops Home?”, p. 74.

³¹ As quoted in Stephen Blank “The Illusion of a Short-War,” *SAIS Review* (20) (Winter Spring 2000), p. 136.

³² Gongora and von Riekhoff, “Introduction,” p. 3.