

complications and uncertainties about the future of warfare and particularly for the control of WMD proliferation. In the post-Cold War era, given the nature of possible threats and military operations, nuclear weapons seemed to lose their utility and the RMA was encouraged. The United States had developed the RMA to allow it to apply forces quickly, accurately and with minimal cost in instances where its interests require it to intervene against distant adversaries. America also, though, has raised the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction especially with regard to rogue states. Yet it is operations against these very states which is used to justify the RMA. To complete the circle, it turns out that nuclear weapons do have a utility, to deter the use of biological weapons against the United States and its forces in the event that it has to apply RMA technologies against these states.

Thus, like the nuclear arsenals of the Cold War, the RMA has its own intractable paradoxes and uncertainties, despite the fact that it involves conventional weaponry, especially with regard to questions of threshold--the point at which an RMA conventional attack would elicit a WMD response. How much damage from a conventional attack would be considered "unacceptable"? What level of likely WMD response would compel the United States not to intervene militarily?

While fear of WMD response to an RMA attack is driving much thinking in the West, it is hard to imagine any government or group tempting fate by employing WMDs against the United States or its allies. It may well be possible for small, weak states to employ chemical and biological weapons, but once this threshold is crossed, yes, all the advantages go to the larger attacking country in terms of response and in terms of the reaction of neighbouring states and the international community. "Ugliness is no proof of military utility."¹⁰⁹

Yet this only brings up the question of whether in fact the United States would cross the nuclear threshold in response to a chemical or biological attack, especially one confined to American forces in the field. If deterrence fails, how usable are limited nuclear strikes? What level of attack on American forces would be sufficient? In one sense, they are more usable simply because their use against a rogue state would not carry with it the prospect of escalation to a global strategic nuclear war. Moreover, while the use of any nuclear weapons would risk global condemnation, so would an attack upon American and allied forces that employed chemical and biological weapons. Indeed, an American nuclear response might well be viewed as a justifiable means of ending, or forestalling, further attacks and reinforcing deterrence to others who might contemplate them.

On the other hand, Blank points the particular problems of associated with a nuclear response to an RMA attack.

"All nuclear threats challenge the United States' thinking about war. U.S. doctrine and strategy aims to control war and force it into congenial forms, however nuclear war's danger

¹⁰⁹ Martin Libicki, "Rethinking War: The Mouse's New Roar?" *Foreign Policy* (117) (Winter 1999-2000), p. 34.