

may persuade some countries to retain or expand WMD capabilities as potential asymmetric responses in the event of attack by a country using RMA capabilities. This in turn will cause difficulties in maintaining, enforcing and expanding those existing arms control regimes. Not only could the inequality of those regimes be perceived as being exacerbated, but the more advanced RMA surveillance technologies could be employed to monitor compliance by NTMs as the United States responds to potential asymmetric threats.

Yet the impact of the RMA on the future international security environment and hence on arms control and verification needs to be kept in perspective for a number of reasons. First of all, while the world has witnessed some impressive applications of the RMA, during the Gulf War and the conflicts in the Balkans, it is not at all evident that it will live up to its optimistic predictions. As noted in the discussion above, the circumstances of the Gulf War were in many ways unique and there has been no repeat of such large scale inter-state conflict involving massed forces since. In Bosnia and Kosovo, the new technologies appeared to be effective in bringing about a temporary end to hostilities and compliance with NATO demands, but once the stand-off weapons did their job, more traditional forces had to be deployed, albeit with the support of new surveillance technologies. The conclusion of a permanent peace in the region seems to have little to do with the new technologies of warfare. Moreover, as Stephen Blank stresses, the promise of short decisive wars based upon technological superiority is not a certainty. States confronted with the RMA may utilize strategic surprise followed by attrition tactics.

Secondly, the international strategic environment is not just a function of weaponry and differences in relative military capabilities. The current and foreseeable future security setting will be one dominated by the United States. It will also be an environment marked by continued regional instability and ethnic conflict. The RMA is not so much a product of this environment as a response to it, in the sense that it is designed to afford America ability to intervene when it chooses. But as critics of American "boosterism" and "unipolarism" such as Samuel Huntington caution, "However much foreign policy elites may ignore or deplore it, the United States lack the domestic political base to create a unipolar world."<sup>114</sup> A recent poll taken by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations found that seventy-two percent of respondents did not believe American vital interests were at stake abroad, the lowest since 1978.<sup>115</sup> This situation, combined with the fact that the vital interests of the United States are often not at risk in regional conflicts suggests that is not self-evident that the 1990s trend of U.S. interventionism will continue. Here again, a protracted involvement in the Balkans, as well the confrontation with Iraq may well temper future enthusiasm for applying force, however technologically impressive, abroad. To the extent that the RMA is linked to America's willingness to harness this capability to continued regional interventions, its import may well be less than expected.

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<sup>114</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs* (78) (March/April 1999), p. 40.

<sup>115</sup> William Pfaff, "Today's Americans Prefer to Mind Their Own Business," *International Herald Tribune* (18 March, 1999), <[www.iht.com/IHT/TODAY/THE/ED/edpfaff.2.html](http://www.iht.com/IHT/TODAY/THE/ED/edpfaff.2.html)>