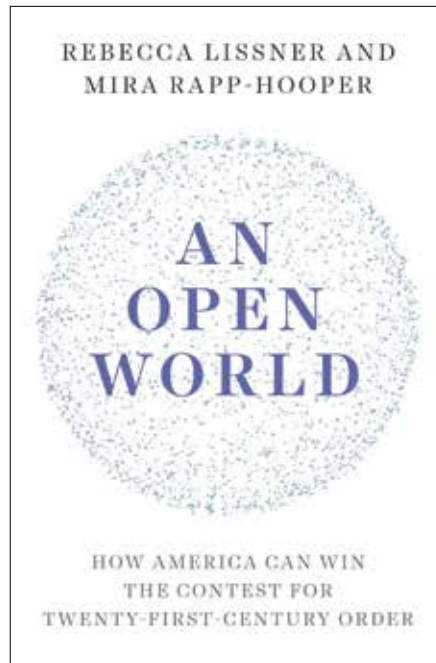as Hannibal, while a master tactician, lost his war to a better strategic commander in Scipio Africanus.

The joint force will find worthwhile lessons in this discussion of "strategic genius." As we focus on the operational and strategic levels of war, the United States and the Western world in general are often overly focused on creating master strategists or the next god of war. In reality, that is impossible.

As wars grew in size and scope following the rise of nation-states and the rapid evolution of technology, it is unlikely that a Napoleon, Grant, or George C. Marshall will ever again emerge to fully command war as some historical figures appeared to do. And even if the next god of war arises, it will likely have little to do with what school of joint professional military education he or she attended or if every known joint publication was successfully digested. That does not mean we should not try. But perhaps we should shift away from canned lessons, pedantic rubrics, and poor assessments and toward a clearer focus on history, writing, and critical thinking. That is, perhaps, the greatest lesson of *Gods of War* to joint military education professionals.

Gods of War is an excellent example of what professional military historians should strive to write. It is easy to read and neither pretentious nor overwrought. It strikes a fine balance between popular or narrative history and scholarly or professional history. Joint professional military education students and professors will see elements of Williamson Murray's edited collection *The Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300–2050* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) throughout the text, which is still read by all students at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. While the book lacks rivalries between naval commanders or any discussion of airpower, *Gods of War* is a useful book that will appeal to the most scholarly of historians and nascent strategists, as well as to those who simply desire a more cerebral book for the beach. **JFQ**

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REBECCA LISSNER AND
MIRA RAPP-HOOPER

AN
OPEN
WORLD

HOW AMERICA CAN WIN
THE CONTEST FOR
TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY ORDER

An Open World: How America Can Win the Contest for Twenty-First-Century Order

Rebecca Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper
Yale University Press, 2020
202 pp. $22.93
ISBN: 978-0300250329

Reviewed by Christopher P. Mulder

In *An Open World*, Dr. Rebecca Lissner and Dr. Mira Rapp-Hooper provide a compelling argument for a new U.S. strategy of "global openness." Readers will find much to consider as the book is presented as an executable blueprint for a new Presidential administration. It is worth noting that many elements of their strategy are already in motion on the global stage.

The authors bring a wealth of foreign policy experience and fresh perspectives to the topic. Rebecca Lissner is an assistant professor at the U.S. Naval War College and Mira Rapp-Hooper is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Yale Law School. Familiar names such as Jake Sullivan (President Joseph Biden's National Security Advisor), Michèle Flournoy, James Mattis, Stephen Hadley, Emma Ashford, and Chris Preble were listed in the

acknowledgments and should be a leading reflection of the policy prescriptions one will find within.

According to Lissner and Rapp-Hooper, global openness is a "novel strategic framework" that diverges from past grand strategies and falls somewhere between Neo-Isolationism and Primacy. It is an approach resigned to the fact that the United States will not remain the sole global superpower. Therefore, to maintain global order, the authors argue that the United States needs to remain globally engaged by courting new and emerging relationships, reinvigorating atrophied relationships, or developing new and unconventional relationships that are favorable to U.S. objectives. The United States will not be able to rely on its military primacy or rest on old institutional laurels; it must advocate for creative ways to maintain order and reform legacy institutions—or create new ones.

The authors offer a foundational perspective on the post–World War II international order and its evolution into the current state of affairs. Lissner and Rapp-Hooper take the time to examine domestic issues such as political polarization, disinformation, income inequality, technology investment, and workforce challenges, alongside global issues such as technology governance, China's rise, Russia's slow descent, and other regional challenges, pulling these threads together with a unique strategy (and thoughtful policy recommendations) that ultimately attempts to "prevent closed spheres of influence, maintain free access to the global commons, defend the political independence of all states, modernize existing institutions, and build new forms of order." In essence, "openness" is a nuanced strategy with the flexibility to adapt to evolving global dynamics.

The authors illustrate how a global approach based on openness would apply to each of the world's primary regions—Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Western Hemisphere, and Africa. They broadly outline the goals, aspirations, and limitations inherent to their strategy in each region. The authors were thoughtful in their examination of potential downsides. Projecting winners and losers

and weighing the potential negative effects are difficult, but their openness to critique should generate useful discussion among strategists and policymakers.

Of course, Lissner and Rapp-Hooper highlight China as the number one foreign policy challenge facing the United States—something our nation's leaders seem to agree on regardless of political affiliation. How best to approach the challenge of China, however, is still up for debate. The current framing based on Great Power competition often boxes the United States, allies, and partners into a win-or-lose proposition. Instead, the authors argue that the United States must learn to live with an authoritarian near-peer in Asia while continuing to protect vital interests: "American strategy must hedge against the possibility that China's regional aspirations are fundamentally irreconcilable with openness." At this point, readers will recognize that the strategy of openness diverges significantly with more hawkish approaches and is sure to generate useful discussion and debate about the goals of U.S. strategy toward China.

As *An Open World* suggests, this will require a more nuanced U.S. strategy toward China. In his seminal work *On China* (Penguin, 2011), Henry Kissinger compares Chinese strategy with the game Go, in which strategic encirclement is used to generate strategic flexibility. The metaphor is apt for Lissner and Rapp-Hooper, as their proposed strategy hinges on preventing China from strategic encirclement, dominating key regions, and closing off vital commons.

A key and often overlooked contribution the authors make is a discussion on "building strength at home," acknowledging that some of the greatest challenges affecting any potential U.S. strategy in the next 10 to 15 years will come from within. They recommend reinvesting in the American people, economy, and democracy to bolster the foundations of our national power. Taken to their fullest extent, these ingredients might constitute a nascent National Resilience Strategy. While this kind of investment does not represent traditional thinking on foreign policy, it is crucial to the success of a strategy based on openness. Drawing a more

explicit link between the domestic context and U.S. foreign policy and strategy builds on the prior narrative that Rapp-Hooper has advanced in her recent book, *Shields of the Republic* (Harvard University Press, 2020), in which she also argues that both U.S. domestic strength and its international objectives must properly align to maintain alliances that advance U.S. interests.

While well researched and argued, some will certainly contend that *An Open World* does not give enough credence to the Russian threat, which the authors argue does not pose a fundamental threat to "openness." Russia is saddled with many challenges that may weaken its position in the coming decades, but it still wields formidable nuclear and gray zone tools with considerable effect. This will require significant attention by the United States and its allies. Finally, the authors rightly acknowledge that existing global institutions need to be modernized, but they argue that the domestic support to accomplish this task will need to come from the private sector. This approach may solve some short-term U.S. foreign policy challenges, but long-term challenges will need "We the People" buy-in to have a lasting effect.

An Open World is an enjoyable and nuanced read that offers an alternative strategic vision with significant implications for future U.S. foreign policy. Anyone interested or currently engaged in U.S. national security and defense challenges should read *An Open World*. Jim Mattis has called it "mandatory reading." And when the "warrior monk" identifies a book as mandatory reading, warrior-scholars should take note. In the current geopolitical environment, it is more important than ever to read, think about, and discuss different options and viewpoints. *An Open World* provides exactly that—a chance for the joint force to view the world differently and consider new options for foreign policy and national security. **JFQ**

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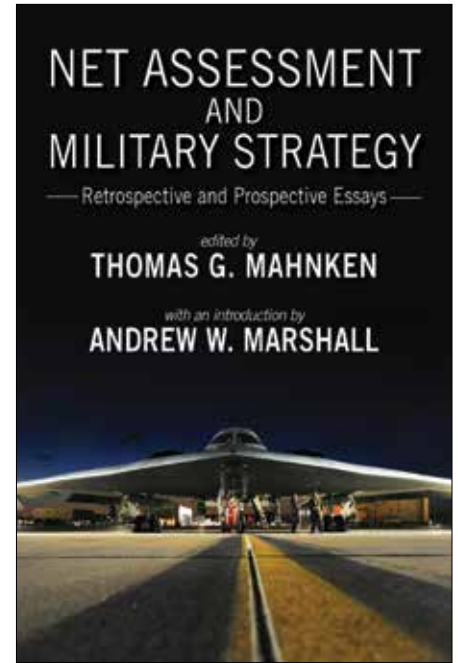
Net Assessment and Military Strategy: Retrospective and Prospective Essays

Thomas G. Mahnken, ed.
Amherst, NY: Cambria 2020
272 pp. $39.99
ISBN: 978-1621965398

Reviewed by Frank Hoffman

Net Assessment and Military Strategy, a timely collection of essays, offers an important look at the history, application, and future of the multidisciplinary analysis approach called *net assessment*. In American practice, net assessments aim to capture the dynamics of national or coalition military strengths and weaknesses for comparison with the capabilities of competitors and adversaries. Net assessments offer critical insights to senior leaders on the relative military power of the United States over time.

The purpose of net assessments is to help senior decisionmakers break through the fog of uncertainty that can paralyze decisions on defense investments in order to allocate scarce resources where they have the biggest payoff. Such diagnostic analyses can help define strategic advantages or uncover vulnerabilities in an