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.
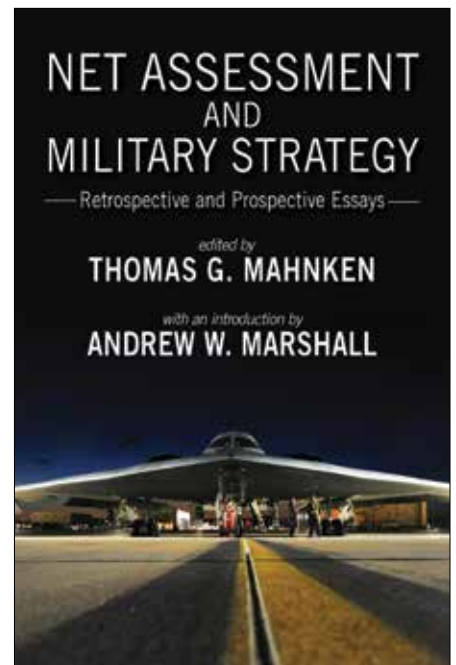
A key and often overlooked contribution the authors make is a discussion on "building strength at home," acknowledging that some of the greatest challenges affecting any potential U.S. strategy in the next 10 to 15 years will come from within. They recommend reinvesting in the American people, economy, 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

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

adversary for opportunistic exploitation. Such analyses are critical at focusing attention and investment dollars into areas where sustained competitive advantage against specific adversaries can be directed by Department of Defense leadership.

Net Assessment and Military Strategy was initiated and curated by Dr. Thomas Mahnken, the chief executive officer of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. He has extensive teaching experience at the U.S. Naval War College and has previously served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning from 2006 to 2009.

Related to this current volume, Dr. Mahnken edited *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History, and Practice* (Stanford University Press, 2012). He is also the editor of two relevant books on strategic competition with China, including *The Gathering Pacific Storm: Emerging U.S.-China Strategic Competition in Defense Technological and Industrial Development* (Cambria Press, 2018), and *Strategy in Asia: The Past, Present, and Future of Regional Security* (Stanford University Press, 2014).

Net Assessment and Military Strategy explores the practice and techniques of net assessment and persuasively argues the method has been a valuable approach to U.S. national strategic planning. The anthology offers a range of chapters on the history and current state of this analytical process. The foreword from the late Andrew Marshall, who served as director of the Office of Net Assessment (ONA) for nearly 40 years, underscores the role and history of his tenure in the Cold War. ONA, despite its small size, continues to burnish its reputation over the last several years with numerous studies that materially shaped the Pentagon's plans, including the 2018 National Defense Strategy.

There are many notable contributions to the anthology. Dima Adamsky's chapter on the role of ONA in exploring the revolution in military affairs highlights the invaluable role played by Mr. Marshall in raising critical intellectual questions to offset complacency or outdated assumptions. Surely one of ONA's signatures is its willingness to anticipate the future, and Adamsky rightfully notes, "the time might be ripe for the next round of anticipation." Defense analyst Jeff McKitrick produced the most important chapter on specific techniques used in conducting this form of analysis. His summation of the many activities that undergird good net assessments is extensive. Greater insights into historical examples on how to structure a diagnostic assessment would have been useful but is probably beyond the scope and classification level of this book. Readers will find suggestions in Barry Watts's chapter on Cold War assessments that will point them to declassified historical documents.

The last chapter assesses the future of net assessment. Andrew May, the present deputy director of ONA, offers several keen insights on the methodology as we approach a new era. Dr. May acknowledges that nonmaterial factors— "including military doctrine, training, skill level and operational competence"—are ripe for study and that "history indicates matter as much or more than the technical characteristics of weapons systems."

One complicating element in the application of a truly strategic net assessment is the need to explore factors beyond the pure military challenge, including strategic culture, economics, underlying resource constraints, and arcane national capacities such as productivity, innovation ecosystems, and human capital trends. The best location for this critical function is the one important issue untapped in this volume. As detailed in Mr. Marshall's foreword, it was originally placed at the National Security Council, where it would be able to task and integrate perspectives from across the U.S. Government, particularly in international and domestic economics. Mr. Marshall was asked to move to the Defense Department in the 1970s at the height of the Cold War by leaders who had a keen appreciation for rigorous and independent thinking. Given the short-term and crisis *du jour* focus of the NSC staff, such long-range thinking is shunted away from the critical longitudinal analyses that Marshall implanted at the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Yet the range of issues attendant to a long-term geostrategic competition with a state the scale of China suggests reconsideration of where future net assessments should be best positioned. It is not purely an intelligence function, which focuses on an adversary. The "net" in net assessment requires equally hard-nosed evaluations of our own strengths and weaknesses. Given its storied history and past contributions, alterations to the office's scope and location would risk subverting the independence and objectivity of this valuable cell. Best to leave well enough alone and exploit ONA's convening power and resources to best leverage the power of net assessments.

In all, Mahnken and his contributors should be congratulated for an informative product. The art and science of net assessment is critical to success in a new age of strategic competition. Such contests are ultimately about national systems and institutions, and keeping score is a challenge. Thus, *Net Assessment and Military Strategy* is exceedingly relevant to policymakers and military strategists as they seek to conceive of appropriate military strategies to preserve U.S. security. This is a timely topic and an important resource as the next defense and military strategy are developed. **JFQ**

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