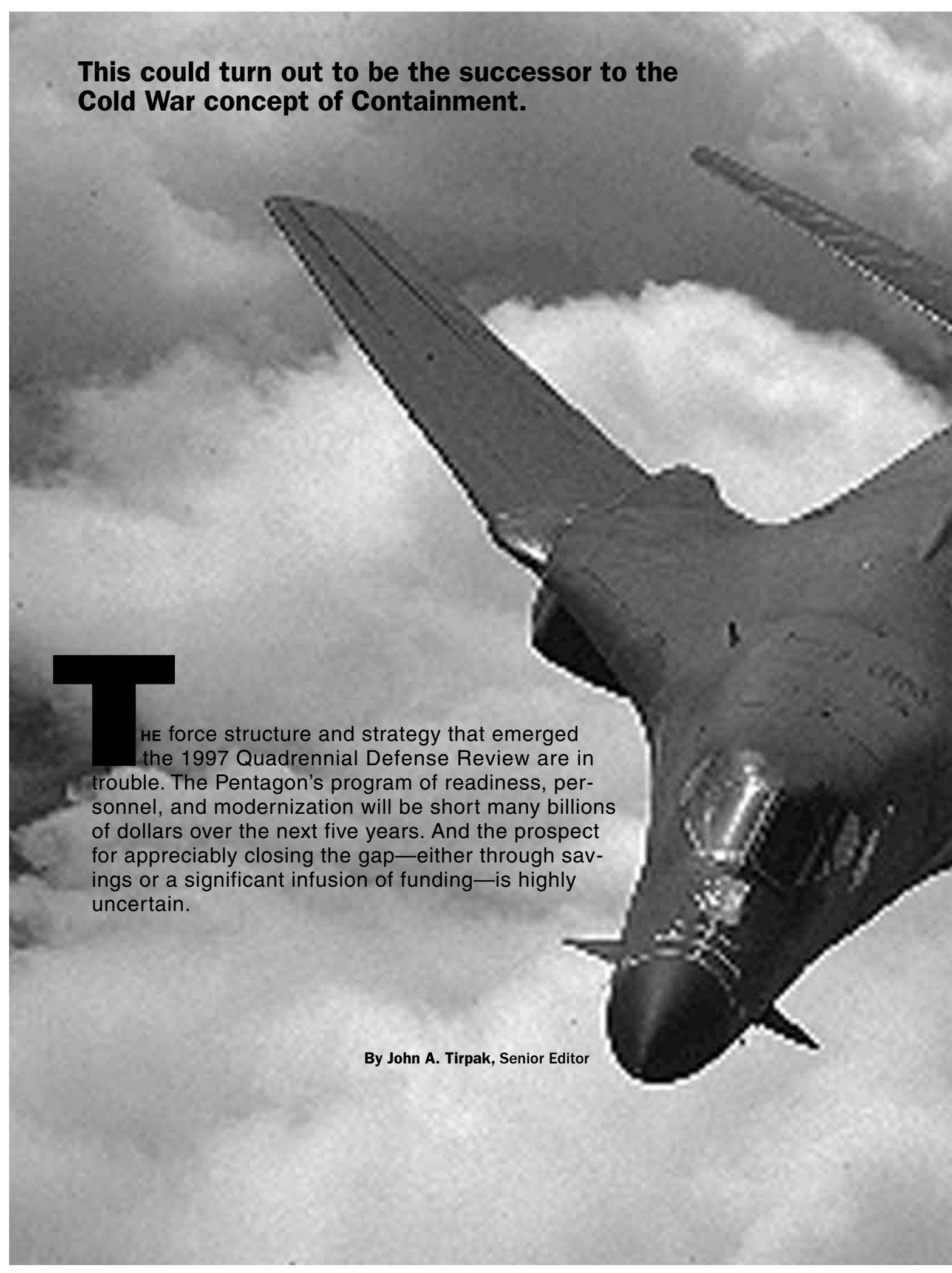


This could turn out to be the successor to the Cold War concept of Containment.



THE force structure and strategy that emerged the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review are in trouble. The Pentagon's program of readiness, personnel, and modernization will be short many billions of dollars over the next five years. And the prospect for appreciably closing the gap—either through savings or a significant infusion of funding—is highly uncertain.

By John A. Tirpak, Senior Editor





How America fights will be forever changed by the ability to find, track, target, and destroy anything of significance on the surface of the Earth. Doing much of the mission from home base, like these GPS controllers, reduces US vulnerability.

To live within its means, the US military probably will have to make painful changes, but so far the services have chosen to become smaller versions of their Cold War selves rather than set off in radically new directions. Various panels of experts have pressured DoD to get a new, coherent vision to rationalize forces and “transform” the military into something entirely new, but none have endorsed a truly original vision.

One is now emerging. Air Staff officials are developing a new concept, called “Strategic Control,” which offers a fresh, alternative framework for discussion of US military strategy and capabilities. It is congruent with real-world situations and with genuine American national interests. It offers a realistic means for weaving together the common threads of the various single-service doctrines.

In November, the Air Force sponsored a symposium on Strategic Control in Cambridge, Mass., working in concert with the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Participating were serving and retired military officers as well as national security scholars. The purpose of the conference was to promote awareness of the Strategic Control concept and stimulate debate about its benefits as a new overarching US national strategy.

This new concept—cast as neither service-specific doctrine nor a budget bargaining chip—offers a guide to

configuring the US military in such a way that it is relevant regardless of world conditions. It takes into account both the technological capabilities of US forces as well as the sensibilities and values of the American people. It offers a way to harmonize the various service-specific doctrines as well as a logical context in which to set priorities for spending.

The US military is not focused on conquest, but on getting aggressors to live peacefully among their neighbors. The ability to rapidly put dominant airpower over an enemy's territory—able to control airspace, conduct precision attacks, and stop whole armies on the march—can be a powerful tool of coercion on an aggressor. Fast-moving “packages” of land-based airpower, like these B-52s and F-15Es, will also play an increasingly important role in preventing crises from getting out of control.



The Lion's Share

While meant to be a broad framework for thinking about proper roles and missions, Strategic Control confers much of the responsibility for future US military operations on aerospace forces—particularly land-based airpower. Since the most advanced systems, doctrine, and heritage associated with aerospace forces are resident in USAF, Strategic Control will likely receive a cool reception from the other services, who are principally occupied with surface conflict, rather than war in three dimensions.

In fact, opposition was evident almost from the time it appeared. Offered to the National Defense Panel by the Air Force, it was quickly—and permanently—tabled, on the basis that, after heated debate, no consensus could be reached to embrace it.

Nevertheless, USAF is devoting a strong effort to the exploration of Strategic Control, as a counterweight to the more narrow “visions” of the other services, which have enjoyed some success in getting their particular points of view before Congress and the public.

Described by some as more of a “movement” than a static proposal, Strategic Control could turn out to be

a successor to Containment, which served the US well during the Cold War. Strategic Control builds on Parallel Warfare and Rapid Halt, two Air Force concepts that have grown in stature since the former succeeded in the Gulf War and the latter was embraced as a key to the QDR's two-Major Theater War strategy.

Strategic Control can be explained by summing up its key elements: rapidly seizing the initiative in any military action, controlling the adversary's ability to act, minimizing the use of violence as a political tool, and giving national leaders the greatest number of options for resolving conflict. It takes advantage of the Revolution in Military Affairs—technologies and concepts—to swiftly control an aggressor through precision strike rather than through the firepower and attrition of massed armies. It answers the question: After Rapid Halt, what next?

Rather than always "buying time" for a large land force to arrive in theater and mount a counteroffensive, the United States under Strategic Control would take advantage of the fact that aerospace capabilities alone sometimes can prevent an enemy from reaching his objectives, and with a minimal forward footprint.

Mere Survival

Having the tables turned on him, the enemy must concentrate on defense and staying alive, rather than offense. His goals are lost, and the US has quickly regained the initiative. From that point on, the enemy will have lost the initiative to do anything of military significance. Strategic Control recognizes that the American public has a low tolerance for putting massed American follow-on forces within range of enemy weapons.

What makes Strategic Control possible is the unprecedented ability, at the turn of the century, for US aerospace forces to find, track, target, and engage anything of significance on the surface of the Earth. Combining this capability with bewildering speed and simultaneity of attack, precision munitions, and stealth makes for a situation where the enemy is left with fewer options by the minute, even as those for the US increase steadily.

While there has been much talk in the last few defense reviews



Strategic Control means the enemy's options steadily narrow, as his assets are steadily destroyed or immobilized. Once crippled—and having lost his goals—the enemy's choice will be to endure more punishment or give in.

about enemies who will seek to use asymmetric means to attack the US, Strategic Control represents America's asymmetric advantage. No other nation possesses the ability to do it.

This concept doesn't depend on a particular foe or scenario. It can be applied in peace or war and through all the gray areas in between. It will, however, require the recognition that some concepts of warfare still practiced by the US military may be outmoded and in eclipse and that some military capabilities will be disproportionately more useful than others in years ahead.

As a peacetime concept, Strategic Control offers a conventional deterrent against adventurism, especially if the armed forces become highly practiced at assembling and deploying forces on a moment's notice. USAF Air Expeditionary Forces, in particular, are honing this concept with a never-ending effort to put hard combat forces forward and ready to fight in less than a day, with the smallest possible take-along support.

Salami Is Baloney

At the Cambridge conference, Gen. Michael J. Dugan, a retired former Air Force Chief of Staff, charged that the various blue-ribbon panels and reviews tasked to overhaul the military for the post-Cold War world have done little more than ask the services "to continue to do whatever they've been doing but with a little

bit less." This "salami-slicing" of the defense budget, he said, "exacerbates the issue of cost vs. value. ... It is much easier to establish the cost of a weapon ... than its value."

The relative merits of various capabilities have not been fairly assessed, and Dugan reproached the "analyses" performed by these panels, charging that they "have been intentionally distorted to suppress outcomes that reveal that certain investments yield disproportionately greater military effects over a wide range of operational scenarios."

He also railed against the fact that "attempts to remove Rapid Halt language from joint publications ... continue to occur. ... Joint modeling, analysis, and experimentation on the concept have been designed for failure."

As a result, Dugan said, "The nation continues to make force structure and modernization trade-offs that discount high-value-added-capability systems."

Dugan noted that Rapid Halt "is a joint concept." He said that Army Chief of Staff Gen. Dennis J. Reimer "agrees," though he uses a different term. "He says 'Strategic Pre-Emption' is the ability to halt or prevent a conflict, before it becomes debilitating or protracted, before it spreads out of control," said Dugan. "He and I are on the same frequency, but we have a different name for the tool."

Noting that US aerospace forces have an enviable track record of

success from the Gulf War to the present, Dugan chafed at the fact that, even though “aerospace power has forever changed the conduct of modern war, that change is not reflected in our joint doctrine, our acquisition priorities, our basic war plans, or resources that support the forces.” The time has come, he said, to “change our thinking about that.” Strategic Control requires new thinking “about what constitutes military victory.”

That view was seconded by retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Charles D. Link, who led USAF’s preparation for the QDR and the National Defense Panel, which Congress created to scrutinize the QDR’s results. America is “not about conquest,” said Link. The world would scarcely tolerate America as the sole military superpower if there were genuine concern that the US would use its capabilities for conquest, Link argued.

“This construct that we are calling Strategic Control proceeds from the realization that our ... disputes are defensive in nature,” Link said in addressing the symposium.

America’s wars “are not about acquiring our adversary’s territory or resources, not about enslaving or taxing his people,” Link observed. “It assumes that our disputes are about our adversary’s behavior. We will wish to control his behavior at the strategic level.”

Link added that the term “strategic” must take on a new meaning. In the

“inherited construct” of American military thinking, he said, strategic success has typically been gained through “an accumulation of tactical successes.” In Strategic Control, the term applies to settling things at the highest levels. Mindful that some nations might misread American intentions from the term “Strategic Control,” he expressed his hope that a better name for the concept will emerge from debate.

Ancient Idea

It is time, Link said, in an interview with *Air Force Magazine*, to abandon the “ancient idea of conquest, which assumes that, to win, you must close with and destroy the enemy.” America is “no longer excited about ... getting as many young people as we can within range of the enemy’s guns.” Moreover, “as it turns out, we don’t want to kill hardly anybody,” as the “CNN factor ... has created an unprecedented intimacy” with the grim realities of war. The low tolerance of the American people for casualties means that wars must be fought more quickly and won by decisive, though not necessarily overwhelming, force, Link asserted, especially in the absence of a direct, obvious threat to the homeland.

At the same time, Americans do not want to retreat into isolationism, he said.

“We as a nation find it hard to

sit by and watch other people’s suffering,” he pointed out. The heavy load of interventions in the past seven years may be a taste of things to come, but he was quick to point out that “even though [Smaller-Scale Contingencies] may be more common, that doesn’t make them any more vital to our national security interests.” It is important for the nation to keep its eye on the big picture and in relating the military’s configuration to, directly or indirectly, defending the nation.

Aerospace power permits the US to project its military influence “without projecting vulnerabilities,” according to Link. Precision weapons and strict rules of engagement also serve to sharply curb collateral damage. In this way, Strategic Control harmonizes with American values.

Dugan echoed Link’s remarks, asserting that “the nature of conflict has changed. Napoleonic warfare ... massed armies attriting massed armies in battle, seeking to control territories and populations, is no longer a synonym for war itself.” Rather than “the” paradigm of war, this notion is now “a” paradigm of war [which] will not always apply across the spectrum of 21st century conflicts.”

The pace of conflict, Dugan said, has also sharply accelerated, “partly due to military capabilities, partly due to political reality.” Advances in sensors, information processing and dissemination, stealth, range, and precision weapons “are the backbone of new military capabilities.” The political realities, he said, are “driven by ... 24-hour news channels.”

Time and Space

At the same time, the “mutually reinforcing notions of awareness, knowledge, and force has changed the relationship between time and space,” Dugan said.

In “the new American way of war, the value of time may be more important than the value of space.” Commanders around the world may soon be on a “universal time” in which all “may experience the same reality at essentially the same time, even if they are hundreds or thousands of miles apart. The potential benefits of this degree of situational awareness should be obvious.”

If indeed “manipulating time is in principle more important than



Future crises may not offer the luxury of months to move massed troops and vehicles into position for a large ground war. Such strategies also serve the enemy’s purpose by putting American troops at risk.

manipulating space, seizing the initiative from the opponent becomes *the* goal of military operations,” Dugan said.

“Rapid, decisive operations conducted by effective but underwhelming forces will be the order of the day. The goal will no longer be to secure key areas by destroying or attriting an adversary through traditional means. Instead, the goal is now to pursue objectives directly and at a level of conflict that can have the most immediate impact. Some call it Dominant Maneuver, some call it Strategic Pre-Emption, some call it Strategic Control.”

These ideas, Dugan maintained, are “continuing to coalesce and mature into overall joint concepts. ... They are beginning to make their way into draft service documents.” The Army’s Strategic Pre-Emption, he noted, makes much of keeping crises from spinning out of control.

“We’re on the same wavelength,” Dugan asserted, noting that many of the service-specific doctrines that have come out since the early 1990s have jabbed at the same kind of from-a-distance stamping out of problems before they become full-blown crises.

“Each of the services [has] seized on the ... payoffs devolving from the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs,” Dugan noted.

In these doctrines, “there’s consistency without congruence, there’s convergence without cooperation. ... We need to build the basis for some of that.”

All the services, Dugan maintained, “seem to agree that the nature of conflict is undergoing a profound change.” Now the only issue regarding the Revolution in Military Affairs is “whether to delay its onset, accept it routinely, or to embrace and accelerate its maturation.”

If the way is to go forward, he said, it requires more than “doing the traditional military task better, smarter, faster. Change involves reinventing the tasks in light of new capabilities. We are not in the mold of doing more with less. We need to reinvent ourselves. We need to be true to our values but flexible in our methods. Notions of speed, effectiveness, responsiveness, survivability, precision, and the use of violence are becoming universal criteria for the new American way of war.”



As this Desert Fox image shows, there’s little question that US airpower will hit what it aims at. In Strategic Control, emphasis is added to picking the targets that will most rapidly collapse the enemy’s willingness to fight on.

The New Goals

These criteria, he added, “say little about the tough decisions on how to allocate resources. Yet there is an emerging appreciation for smaller footprints, leaner logistics. More emphasis on effectiveness, less on mass. More consideration for parallel [operations], less for serial operations. More knowledge-based [force], less brute force. More reliance on high standards, less on filling the ranks. More emphasis on skill, less on sheer numbers. More focus on output and less on input.” All the services, he asserted, “seem to appreciate ... the quality revolution.”

Dugan also argued that the time has come to abandon the “history shows us ...” arguments against what Strategic Control offers.

He dismissed the Army’s insistence that wars can’t be won without physical occupation of an enemy’s territory. “The value of seizing and holding territory has not been historically constant,” Dugan said, noting Gen. Douglas A. MacArthur’s island-hopping campaign in World War II. MacArthur, he said, “essentially neutralized seven Japanese divisions without having to seize and hold territory.”

Dugan also voiced support for a notion of Gen. Charles C. Krulak, the commandant of the Marine Corps, that “jointness as originally conceived by [recent legislation] means using ‘the right capabilities, under the right circumstances, at

the right time.’ It does not mean ‘little league’ rules where everyone gets to play. It does not mean vanguard forces where units of all four services are inextricably woven together. And it certainly does not mean creating a climate of intolerance where honestly highlighting the relevant strengths of several service options, is, by definition, ‘unjoints.’”

He scoffed at critics who contend that airpower “has a history of overpromising what it can do” and who say that since airpower has not lived up to expectations in the past, they “expect that trend to continue forever.” There’s not much question anymore that, with highly precise navigation, targeting, and precision weapons, that ordnance will hit “the planned target,” Dugan said.

“The issue for Strategic Control ... [and] for national security in the future ... [is] the intellectual challenge of identifying the right target.” Those choices should be made well before the conflict starts, he asserted.

“The key will be [knowing that the targets] are strategic, knowing that through the eyes of your enemy, this will have a great impact on his strategic ability to continue the combat.” There should be “more joint energy” expended on “[picking] out those key nodes that do make a difference.”

Strategic Control probably should have appeared prominently in the report of the National Defense Panel, convened in 1997 to review



Speed is a hallmark of the Revolution in Military Affairs, and fast-moving Air Expeditionary Forces are a linchpin of Strategic Control. AEFs can be deployed, used, and turn for home in a matter of days.

and critique the QDR and tell Congress whether the QDR's findings made sense. Unlike the QDR, which put Rapid Halt as a fundamental enabler of the two-war strategy, the NDP did not even mention Rapid Halt or the Halt Phase, even though the concept was by then maturing with the convergence of Parallel Warfare and the Revolution in Military Affairs.

Shouted Down

As Dugan noted, Strategic Control was shouted down in the NDP by representatives emeriti of the other services. They saw too much opportunity in the concept for the reduction of the Army in favor of the Air Force. However, the concept of Strategic Control did turn up in NDP statements having to do not with the strategy of US forces but of operations.

"Power projection operations would focus on disabling the enemy's strategic center of gravity (including his warmaking potential and military forces) and occupying key terrain," the NDP found.

"In general, we must be able to rapidly target and access whatever an adversary values most, the loss of which would render him either unable or unwilling to continue his hostilities. ... Toward that end, we should try, as far as possible, to stop aggression through our own strategic initiative and control of the battlespace. Accomplishing this would likely require simultaneous

execution of a range of operations, conducting extended-range precision strikes, seizing control of space and information superiority, exercising ground and sea control, and providing missile defense."

Brig. Gen. David A. Deptula, who played a key role in designing the 1991 Desert Storm air war and originated the concept of Parallel

Warfare, was also a key figure in assisting the NDP with Air Force issues. In remarks he prepared for the symposium—delivered on his behalf by Link—Deptula said that the Gulf War signaled a transition point from the construct of conquest to that of achieving strategic ends through other means.

This transition point "calls on our national security institutions to either pursue change to fully develop this new capacity—to transform our legacy construct—or, at the nation's peril, ignore it."

The disappearance of a peer competitor to the US demands "rethinking the cost-benefit ratios" of massed armies sent in harm's way, Deptula said. He paraphrased Sun Tzu's dictum that "those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle."

Strategic Control, he said, offers the most useful codification of that idea in modern military terms—the potential of "resolving conflict before it occurs, or if it does, resolving it quickly."

Anticipating Dugan's question about picking the right targets, Deptula offered a formula. Strategic Control seeks simply to "exert influence" on the systems that the enemy relies on to conduct operations, "not

With aerial tanking, range is only limited by the endurance of the crew. Operating outside the range of enemy weapons—especially ballistic missiles and other weapons of mass destruction—will be a vital goal in the future.



necessarily to destroy those systems but to prevent them from use as the enemy wants.”

Soft Kill

This may sometimes involve what has become known as the “soft kill,” a concept Dugan said he has long favored. In any event, the goal is to render those systems impotent, in such a way that they leave the enemy “only those options of which we approve.” To destroy is “not necessarily a kinetic effect, nor ... always desirable,” Deptula said.

Aerospace power offers exactly the capabilities that are needed for Strategic Control: “speed, range, versatility, precision, and lethality,” Deptula said. Aerospace power will remain “a principal means for conducting Strategic Control during international disputes and conflicts.”

The new tools of aerospace power—stealth and precision weapons—have “redefined the concept of mass” since the Gulf War. A huge force is no longer necessary “to achieve a devastating effect upon a system of forces, infrastructure, government, or industry.”

Deptula hastened to emphasize, though, that surface forces “are an essential part of Strategic Control, particularly our [Special Operations Force] diplomat warriors.” But massed forces are no longer needed to exert strategic influence, as demonstrated in Operation Deliberate Force in Bosnia.

“The application of precision aerospace power,” Deptula said, “led directly to the Dayton peace accords without introduction of large numbers of US ground forces into a hostile environment.”

While not always a perfect solution, aerospace power has demonstrated in this recent, clearly understood way its ability to “control and reduce the level of violence.”

America has not used this tool in such a way very much yet, and “we are still learning how to use it,” Deptula said, but it has “tremendous potential in achieving political and military objectives when applying the art of war and the art of diplomacy.”

He encouraged embracing this construct quickly, “before someone else does.”

Dugan observed that the United



The F-22 epitomizes the speed, stealth, range, and precision required of all US systems—land- and sea-based alike—if Strategic Control is to succeed.

States today is “the only full-complement, full-dimensioned aerospace power. It’s a status for the United States to keep or lose as a matter of choice.” The continued pre-eminence of the US in strategic aerospace capabilities is “not a given. And of course, it’s not free.”

The “great joint staff” at the Pentagon has gone too far, sometimes, in trying to equalize the capabilities and resources of each service, Dugan said, adding that there is less interplay of ideas and “good debate” with the group’s dampening effect on controversy.

“Rapid Halt, in my view, is a subset of strategic control,” Dugan said. “The joint team must not be allowed to let Rapid Halt die. Or more accurately, the joint team ought not strangle Rapid Halt.”

The national security establishment doesn’t enjoy the luxury of time to gradually become accustomed to Strategic Control or whatever concept is ultimately chosen to guide the reshaping of the military. The urgency of the need for a new concept soon was highlighted by Adm. William A. Owens (Ret.), former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who noted that defense procurement has fallen 65 percent in the last decade.

Mortgage Payments

“We are mortgaging our future,” Owens asserted. If there is no sharp realignment of the US military very

soon, basic unaffordability will mean that “in 15 years ... we will have 170 ships, six Army divisions, and 12 to 13 tactical fighter wings, with 48 planes in each one.” With such a reduction will have to come harder choices about whether the US can become involved in any given crisis.

An overhaul is needed, “and we must do it,” Owens asserted.

“Why not us? Why not now? ... Our military is going away before our eyes.”

Owens also praised the Air Force for being, among the services, the most “out in front” in recognizing and thinking about the Revolution in Military Affairs and what it can mean to future conflict.

Another voice for rapid adoption of Strategic Control is Gen. James P. McCarthy (USAF, Ret.), who served on the NDP to provide an Air Force perspective.

Asked what it will take to actually get the services in step with each other and reshape for the 21st century, McCarthy said he expects there will be “some significant dollar shortfall” that brings the defense fiscal crisis into focus.

“There will be a recognition that modernization dollars are not going in the right places, and they won’t be able to get enough money [from force structure cuts] to deal with that,” he said. “In my view, that will, unfortunately, be the wake-up call.” ■