



Future War and the Defence of Europe by John R. Allen, Frederick Ben Hodges, and Julian Lindley-French.

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Writing about the immediate future is both tempting and risky, given the hazard of events. The threat environment outlined in *Future War and the Defence of Europe* has already been altered by the Ukraine crisis less than a year since it was published. The claim by its authors¹ that “the defence of Europe is not quite yet at peril” (272) prompts wry reflections in March 2022. For instance, they stress challenges posed by hybrid warfare and cyber war, rather than the brute force of artillery bombardments and tank assaults. They do, however, note the Russians’ doctrine of using the threat of nuclear weapons to consolidate gains made by their conventional forces.

The wider strategic environment is unevenly handled here. China, but not Korea, gets due attention. Each is highly relevant to any discussion of Europe because of the US ranking of concerns will be crucial, not least to the new trans-Atlantic relationship that the authors advocate. Any such ties will depend on complex trade-offs and the ranking of first and second order challenges as determined by the United States, not Europeans and others focused on European questions. The Ukraine crisis makes the book seem prescient in assessing a need to respond in a certain fashion, even if the threat environment of the challenge itself was poorly assessed. Yet, that may be a flawed assessment if China, North Korea, or Iran exacerbate matters and thereby undermine the prospectus offered here and reflect the greater foresight of the shift to Asia outlined by President Barack Obama and continued by Donald Trump. Indeed, the willingness, even eagerness, of China, North Korea, and Iran to threaten core American interests is patent and will likely grow, since the United States is the direct sponsor of the existing order in the Asia-Pacific to an extent not seen with Ukraine.

As far as hybrid and cyber warfare go, the former is scarcely new, and the latter is a variant of anti-societal strategy. The authors clearly understand the need to confront both, since the ability to do so ensures the deterrent role they ably identify as NATO’s central task. At the same time, the book stresses that NATO’s frontiers do not provide the same clarity in these forms of conflict as in the case of conventional frontal assaults. Hence, they judge that “the consequences of the West’s failure in Syria are profound” (133) and decry the lack of a distinctly European political strategy for the Middle East. The latter is naïve, given the profound differences among Western states; the call for re-establishing “strong, legitimate states across the region” (134) can be decried as folly. Moreover, in light of the 2022 crisis in Eastern Europe, the prescription of large-scale and semi-permanent intervention in the Middle East is patently absurd.

This judgment of the book may seem harsh, but, once reduced to the specifics of its analyses and advice, it repeatedly becomes problematic. Especially problematic is its lack of engagement with broader strategic complexities and the difficulties of imposing this or indeed any analysis on the chronologies of contingency in the future; the same may be said of the dilemmas posed by acute domestic issues, tensions, and differences within democratic societies and alliance structures. In short, the subject remains wide open.

1. Viz., Allen (Brookings Inst.), Hodges (Ctr. for European Policy Analysis), and Lindley-French (Inst. of Statecraft).