

Revolution in Military Affairs

Discussion

Our success in the Gulf War and the explosive growth of information technologies have given rise to speculation that the character of warfare is profound transformation. Such an assessment holds that we are in the midst of a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). Many believe that information technology can help those who master it win large wars at long distances with small forces.



There are, however, several weaknesses to an information dominant approach. First, information dominance is of less value and is largely irrelevant in today's "smaller-scale contingencies". Second, the sophisticated information systems on which the RMA is predicated will themselves be vulnerable to information warfare. Third, the use of weapons of mass destruction may be stimulated by a Revolution in Military Affairs, since adversaries will be left no other effective means of attack. Fourth, the diffusion of information technology will permit potentially hostile states to acquire military capabilities pioneered at great cost by the United States. Some argue, in fact, that the RMA might lead

to a high-tech arms race that will eventually leave U.S. interests less secure.

On the other hand, that which many think of as a single RMA is really a series of potential improvements. It is not known which information systems, biotechnology, space systems, unmanned systems, directed energy and biological warfare can be exploited for military applications. Without a true understanding of how to leverage these technologies, it remains unclear how the RMA will influence the character and nature of war in the next century. Whatever technologies emerge, the degree to which future security challenges can be addressed by RMA technologies remains uncertain.

Ultimately, our national security strategy and our vital interests will not be assured by technology alone. We must develop capabilities to respond to a broad range of crises and conflicts. The forces we design today for “the day after tomorrow” must be capable in all operating environments, from deserts to densely populated urban centers. Our forces must be able to handle those things that technology alone cannot solve. By proper application of both the “science” and the “art” of war we will ensure success on the battlefields of the future.

Marine Corps Position

The Marine Corps believes that only when technology is combined with changes in military doctrine and organizational concepts that alter the conduct of operations do we achieve revolutionary leaps in capability. The Marine Corps focuses on a “system of systems” approach that brings together the human, conceptual, and technological dimensions of conflict.