

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

POL 237: MODERN WEAPONS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FALL 2007

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Objectives: Whether it was the “smart” weapons used by the United States or the weapons of mass destruction it was looking for, the recent Iraq war confirmed again the central importance of weapons technology and capabilities in international relations. During the past century the pace of change in military technology has accelerated greatly. It is easy to forget that a mere one hundred years ago many of the weapons that we take for granted today did not even exist. There were, for example, no tanks, bombers, or missiles, not to mention nuclear weapons or laser-guided munitions. In the centuries before the industrial revolution military technology changed slowly whereas today it seems that revolutionary new weapons appear every few years. While the impact of changing military technology is most obvious in terms of the conduct of warfare, the effects do not stop there. Somewhat less obvious but by no means less important are the profound social and political consequences that often accompany changing military technology. In this course we will examine evolving military technology, both in terms of the immediate impact on the conduct and nature of war as well as the broader social and political implications of military change.

Many observers believe that we are at a critical turning point where new technologies are fundamentally changing the way nations (especially the United States) prepare for and fight wars. These changes could, in turn, have a tremendous impact on American society, its military, and its relations with the rest of the world. We will examine this so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) from a historical and contemporary perspective. We will compare the current RMA to past military revolutions, such as the gunpowder revolution of the 1400s and 1500s as well as the changes in warfare wrought by the industrial revolution. The bulk of the course, however, will focus on the debates and challenges of the current revolution. Among the questions we will explore: Can air power win wars in places like the Persian Gulf, Kosovo, and Afghanistan without the use of ground forces or extensive American and local civilian casualties? Can and should the United States build effective defenses against ballistic missile attacks? Can and should the proliferation of nuclear weapons be prevented? Can terrorist groups launch effective nuclear, chemical or biological attacks against the United States?

Requirements and Grading: There are two texts for this class that have been ordered for purchase: Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare and the Course of*

History (Gotham, 2006) and Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (Norton, 2003). There is also a reading packet (which can be purchased at Copymat) as well as a number of articles accessible online.

There will be three exams for this class, two during the term and a final. The exams will be combination of short answer and essay. Your grade will be based on the average of these equally weighted exams.

Make-Up Policy: If you miss an exam, you must notify me *before* the exam at the email address indicated above. Please retain a copy of the email as proof that you did notify me in time. If you fail to provide prior notification, you will not be allowed to take a make-up unless you can prove extreme extenuating circumstances (e.g., you were unconscious in the hospital or in a car accident on the way to class). Make-up exams for students with a legitimate excuse will be given one week after the regular exam during class time (they will be proctored by a teaching assistant in another classroom). You will be responsible for getting material missed in that class from a fellow student. Students should also refrain from making plans to leave campus at the end of the semester until the final exam schedule has been released. That you already made plans to leave before knowing the date of the final will not be considered a legitimate excuse for missing the exam at the scheduled time.

Teaching Assistants: There are two teaching assistants for this class. Their names, offices, office hours and email addresses are listed below. If you need help with class material, feel free to see any of the TAs during their office hours or schedule an appointment. If you have questions about grading, see the TA who graded the part of the exam you have questions about (this information will be provided when the exams are returned).

Salif Niang
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Hours:

Mark Peterson
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Hours:

SCHEDULE

8/21: Organizational/Thinking About Weapons 101

Scenes from *The Last Samurai*

PART I: MILITARY REVOLUTIONS IN HISTORY

8/23: What is a “Military Revolution”?

Boot, Introduction (pp. 7-16)

Williamson Murray, “Thinking About Revolutions in Military Affairs,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Summer 1997), 69-76. Accessed at:
www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/1416pgs.pdf

8/28: Gunpowder Revolution: The Military Roots of a Social/Political Revolution

Boot, pp. 19-24, 50-52, 57-67, 72-76

Geoffrey Parker, “The Gunpowder Revolution, 1300-1500,” in Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 106-117.
PACKET #1

8/30: The Napoleonic Revolution: The Social/Political Roots of a Military Revolution

Boot, 83-92.

John J Weltman, “Nationalism and Savagery: The Wars of the French Revolution,” in *World Politics and the Evolution of War* (Johns Hopkins, 1995), pp. 35-49. PACKET #2

9/4: The Industrial-Military Revolution: Technology and Early Manifestations

Boot, 116-146, 196-201

9/6: The Industrial-Military Revolution: European Global Dominance

Boot, 77-83, 146-169

9/11: Total War on the Ground: World War I and the Triumph of Weapons – The Rise and Demise of the Continuous Front

Robert O’Connell, *Of Arms and Men* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 241-246, 251-256, 265-269. PACKET #3

9/13: Total War in the Air: Theory

Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 76-81, 289-293. PACKET #4

9/18: Total War in the Air: Strategic Bombing and Blitzkreig

Boot, 268-294

9/20: Total War Recap

Boot, 295-304

VIDEO: *The Road to Total War*

9/25: The Legacies of Total War

9/27: EXAM #1

PART II: THE NUCLEAR REVOLUTION

10/2: The Dawn of the Nuclear Era

VIDEO: *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age I: Dawn*

10/4: Nuclear Strategy in the Cold War

10/11: Did Nuclear Weapons Matter (or was there a “nuclear revolution” at all)?

John Mearsheimer, “Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War,” *The Atlantic* (November 1990). PACKET #5

John Mueller, “The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons,” from *Retreat from Doomsday*, pp. 110-116. PACKET #6

10/16: Nuclear Proliferation: Why So Many Nuclear Powers? Why so Few?

10/18 and 23: Nuclear Proliferation: Might it be a Good Thing? What about Iran? And Terrorists?

Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 3-87

Christopher Layne, "Iran: The Logic of Deterrence," *The American Conservative* (April 10, 2006) access at:

http://www.amconmag.com/2006/2006_04_10/cover.html

10/ 25 and 10/30: Those Other Weapons of Mass Destruction: Biological and Chemical Weapons

VIDEO: *Plague Wars*

11/1: Exam #2

PART III: A NEW REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS?

(Note: the schedule and reading for this section are tentative and will be finalized by 11/1)

11/6: The Origins and Elements of the Current Revolution in Military Affairs

William Owens, "The Once and Future Revolution in Military Affairs," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Summer 2002), pp. 55-61. Access at:
www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/1131.pdf

Elinor Sloan, "What is the RMA?" From Elinor Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs* (McGill, 2002), pp. 3-17 (chapter 1). PACKET #7

11/8 and 13: The First War Against Iraq (1991): The Promise of the RMA?

Boot, Ch 10

11/15: The RMA in the 1990s

11/20 and 27: The Second War Against Iraq (2003): The Promise of the RMA?

Boot, Chs 11

12/4: The War in Iraq (2003 - ?): The Limits of the RMA?

Colonel Thomas X. Hannes, *The Sling and the Sword: On War in the 21st Century* (Zenith, 2004), Chs 1, 12, 13 (pp. 1-15, 172-206). PACKET #8

You might find it interesting to watch Colonel Hammes on Youtube at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM4wkcQEgdo>

12/6: The Future of the RMA and America's Role in the World

Frederick Kagan, "The Art of War," *The New Criterion* (November 2003). Access through E-journals on the library's THOR