

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

“Computer Exports and National Security: New Tools for a New Century.”

Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1800 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. 68 pp.

Paperback, \$21.95. Author: *James A. Lewis*

Since the Cold War, it's been widely assumed that keeping high-performance computers and microprocessors out of the hands of potential U.S. adversaries is vital to national security. This assumption is badly outdated, according to this report of a commission on technology security, whose co-chairs include former defense secretary James R. Schlesinger and former Central Intelligence Agency director R. James Woolsey.

The dramatic increase in computing power over the last decade, and the ever expanding access to such power via the Internet, the commission says, have broken “the connection between high performance computing and weapons proliferation.”

“Military applications do not require much computing power,” the commission declares. The F-22, the most advanced U.S. fighter jet, was designed with a “supercomputer” that had only about one-fourth of the

computing power now found in an ordinary Pentium chip. In building modern weapons, years of experience at integrating different technologies count for more than computer power, the commission says. In designing nuclear weapons, “access to data derived from nuclear weapons explosions is more important.” And much of America's military edge today derives from superior *software* and the ability to use it in the management of military operations.

The commission urges elimination of U.S. export controls based on computational power. Washington should focus instead on safeguarding its unique software applications, developed through “years of operational experience and extensive testing.” And it should focus on the development of new military software applications by working more closely with universities and with private information-technology companies.

“Declining Share of Children Lived with Single Mothers in the Late 1990s.”

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 820 First St., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002. 13 pp. Available

at www.centeronbudget.org/6-15-01wel.htm. Authors: *Allen Dupree and Wendell Primus*

It was bad news for the traditional family last spring when the Census Bureau revealed that the number of families headed by a single mother increased 25 percent between 1990 and 2000. Now, some (qualified) good news: The proportion of children under 18 who live with their divorced or unwed mother and no father or surrogate father declined by nearly eight percent in the late 1990s.

The proportion of youngsters in such circumstances fell from 19.9 percent in 1995 to 18.4 in 2000, report Primus, director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' Income Security Division, and Dupree, a research associate. They used the Census Bureau's annual Current Population Survey data for their analysis.

The proportion of children living with their mother and an unmarried adult male (who might or might not be the child's father) increased somewhat, from 2.6 percent to 3.0 percent. That could be good news for the children, if the male fulfills the paternal role—or bad news, if he doesn't.

The proportion of children living with two married parents remained essentially the same between 1995 and 2000: about 70 percent.

Still more good news: The proportion of black children living with two married parents substantially increased—from 34.8 percent in 1995 to 38.9 percent five years later. Meanwhile, the share of black children in single-mother homes with no father or surrogate father present declined by more than eight percent—from 47.1 percent to 43.1 percent.

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Last year, 83.6 percent of children in “higher-income” families (i.e., families at more than twice the official poverty level) were living with two married parents. (That was down from 85 percent in 1995.) Only half the children in “lower-income” families were so fortunate.

Year-to-year shifts in such statistics tend to be small, the authors note, but between 1999 and 2000, strikingly, some changes “were large enough to be statistically significant.” For example, the overall proportion of children liv-

ing with a single mother who was not cohabiting fell from 19.6 percent to 18.4 percent.

The good news seems clear, but the authors are silent on what’s responsible for the trends. Some analysts have pointed to the welfare reform law of 1996 as a factor. Ironically, Primus quit his position at the time in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to protest President Bill Clinton’s signing of the measure. “In some ways, it is working better than I thought,” Primus said recently.

“The Performing Arts in a New Era.”

RAND, 1700 Main St., P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, Calif. 90407–2138. 137 pp. Paperback, \$20.

Available at www.rand.org. Authors: Kevin McCarthy, Arthur Brooks, Julia Lowell, and Laura Zakaras

The performing arts in America appear to be flourishing these days, but beneath the glittering surface, “a fundamental shift,” with some possibly worrisome implications, may be taking place, McCarthy and his fellow RAND researchers find.

While a few big commercial organizations and nonprofits, such as the New York City Ballet, are getting larger and putting on more elaborate productions, many “midsized” nonprofits— theater groups, symphony orchestras, opera companies, and dance companies—are finding it hard to attract large enough audiences to cover the costs of paid staff and professional artists. “Many of these organizations are likely to disappear,” the researchers say.

These woes come in the midst of an apparent arts boom. Even the audience for opera grew four percent between 1992 and 1997. In a 1997 survey, 42 percent of those polled said that they had attended at least one live performance during the preceding year; the average among those surveyed was five performances.

More than 8,000 theater groups and other organizations gave live performances in 1997. Up to three-fourths of those among them operating year-round had revenues of less than \$500,000 that year. Performing arts groups are concentrated in California and New York, but on a per capita basis the District of Columbia leads the nonprofit pack, with 45 groups per million inhabitants. On the for-profit side,

Nevada tops the list, with 77 taxable groups per million inhabitants.

While the number of commercial organizations increased more than 40 percent between 1982 and 1997, the number of nonprofits shot up more than 80 percent. Most of the new nonprofits are small, local groups (often with annual revenues of less than \$100,000), relying heavily on unpaid labor.

In the face of increased competition, large nonprofits have been relying more on “star-studded blockbuster productions,” say the authors, much like their commercial counterparts. Midsized nonprofits have turned to “warhorse” traditional works in an effort to attract general audiences, and small organizations have looked to niche markets.

“Despite intensive efforts at marketing” and higher ticket prices, the authors note, the nonprofits’ bottom lines have not improved. Government contributions amount to only about five percent of aggregate revenue (in 1997). Donations from individuals (15 percent) have grown, but so have fundraising costs. Grants from corporations and foundations (14 percent) increasingly have strings attached.

McCarthy and his colleagues see a performing arts world emerging that is divided not between “high art” nonprofits and “mass entertainment” for-profits, but between big and small arts organizations. The distinction between “high art” and “popular art” will continue to erode, and professional live performances of the high arts will increasingly be concentrated in big cities. Small groups,

dependent on unpaid volunteers, will continue to proliferate. Midsized nonprofits, meanwhile, will likely be pressed by reduced

demand, rising costs, and stagnant or declining contributions to become much larger or much smaller—or else simply to shut their doors.

WILSON CENTER DIGEST

“Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, Prospects.”

Wilson Center Press. Distributed by Stanford Univ. Press, CUP Distribution Center, 110 Midland Ave., Port Chester, N.Y. 10573-4930. 425 pp. \$60 (paperback, \$22.95).

Editor: *Gordon H. Chang*

In 1970, there were fewer than one million Asian Americans; today there are some 10.9 million. With heavy concentrations in three key electoral states—California, Texas, and New York—Asian Americans have become an attractive political prize and a potentially potent political force.

Asian Americans “are becoming important as activists, as voters, as candidates, as political contributors, and as participants in policy debates,” writes Chang, a historian at Stanford University and the editor of this volume of essays that grew out of a 1998 Wilson Center conference. A count made before the November 2000 election showed 516 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders holding public office, including two U.S. senators, five U.S. representatives, two governors, 49 state representatives, 89 city council members, 26 mayors, 133 school board or higher-education board members, and 210 judges. Asian Americans have appeared in a less positive political light as well, notably during the controversy over illegal campaign fundraising practices in the Democrats’ 1996 presidential drive.

Before 1996, Asian Americans were widely regarded as politically apathetic, write Frank H. Wu, a Howard University law professor, and consultant Francey Lim Youngberg. (Among those considered Asian Americans are people of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Hawaiian descent.) But despite their relatively low turnout at the polls, “Asian Americans have always contributed money to political candidates.” Since 1988, the major political parties have actively pursued their dollars and their votes.

But neither party has those votes locked up, write political scientists Wendy K. Tam Cho, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Bruce E. Cain, of the University of California, Berkeley. Their 1996 survey of California Asian Americans showed that although Japanese Americans are predominantly Democratic, Asian Americans (unlike blacks and Latinos) “are a genuine swing group . . . not bound by strong partisan identifications.” Which party they choose “seems to have less to do with race and immigration policy” than with its stands on economic and foreign policy matters.

The emergence of an immigrant majority (58 percent in 1996) among Asian American voters is reshaping their collective political orientation, observe Paul M. Ong, a professor of urban planning and social welfare at the University of California, Los Angeles, and David E. Lee, executive director of the nonpartisan Chinese American Voters Education Committee. In both liberal northern California and conservative southern California, for instance, foreign-born Asian Americans generally are more likely than U.S.-born ones to identify themselves as Republicans. Self-appointed “progressive” spokespersons have a hard time claiming to represent all Asian Americans.

Asian Americans are a diverse group. Some highly affluent members have long family histories in the United States, while others are relatively recent arrivals. But recent immigrants also include poor rural folk from Cambodia and middle-class urbanites from South Korea. No activist of any stripe is likely to succeed in molding them into “a coherent political pan-ethnic force,” Chang observes.