

**FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE**

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Future conventional arms limitation efforts should focus first on solving the problems within the NATO alliance and coordinating Western overseas arms sales policies, the authors argue. Only then, will it make sense to talk to Moscow about limiting *its* sales of conventional arms.

*Machines, Men,  
and Warfare*

"Technological War: Reality and the American Myth" by Donald R. Baucom, in *Air University Review* (Sept.-Oct. 1981), Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

In the spring of 1943, Axis troops were dug into high ground near the North African city of Tunis. The American commander watched as a heavy artillery barrage smothered the enemy's emplacements, then turned to a war correspondent and said: "I'm letting the American taxpayer take this hill." Citing this incident, historian Allan Nevins later wrote that U.S. technological prowess in World War II had brought "not only speedier victory but victory purchased with fewer (American) lives."

Faith in a "technical solution" to the horrors of the battlefield now underlies much popular and professional thinking about U.S. military preparedness, writes Lieutenant Colonel Baucom, deputy director of research at the Airpower Research Institute. It helps to explain the Pentagon's increasing reliance on sophisticated matériel (e.g., precision-guided munitions, satellite telecommunications). Unfortunately, Baucom concludes, it also "diverges dangerously from the realities of modern war."

U.S. military men were once slow to adopt new technology. World War II changed that. Nazi Germany's Blitzkrieg, Japan's lightning air attack on Pearl Harbor, and the intensive Allied investment in military research and development that eventually turned the tide—all demonstrated the importance of technology in warfare.

But the lesson was learned too well. Many Americans came to believe that "we won World War II because of highly reliable M-4 tanks" and "overwhelming numbers of superb B-17s, B-24s, P-47s, and P-51s," not because of the brave who manned them. The increased prominence of technology did correlate with relatively low American casualties in the two World Wars (fewer than one percent of the U.S. population killed or wounded in each) but the U.S. experience was atypical. The United States entered both wars late and fought them abroad.

Thinking of war as a "great, big engineering project" is bad strategy and bad psychology: It undercuts the real importance of the "good, well-trained soldier" and obscures the inevitability of "human sacrifice." Vietnam was widely described as the technologically most advanced conflict in history. At the same time, Americans deemed "unacceptable" the loss of 55,000 lives over 10 years. Is this, Baucom asks, more than a coincidence?