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Emily O. Goldman. *Power in Uncertain Times: Strategy in the Fog of Peace.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010. 272 pp. $25.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8047-7433-8.

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With America's involvement in the war in Afghanistan winding down, the U.S. security establishment and its many subcomponents, contractors, and advisors are once again contemplating the nation's security strategy, a task begun several times since the end of the Cold War but never finished. It is a task that is made exceptionally difficult by the absence of a peer competitor or an effective coalition of challengers. You need a reason to have a coherent strategy. The United States is a military colossus commanding dominating forces that are uniquely global in their reach and that are backed by decades of unparalleled investments in weapons technology research. The imagined threats to its dominance are few and unimpressive. Russia is the surviving but very weak fragment of a collapsed Soviet Union. Although rapidly rising economically, China fears internal unrest and potential blocking by its many large and not especially friendly neighbors. Radicalized Islam, the sea in which a now depleted al Qaeda swims, is churned by sectarian rivalry and the continuing pressures of modernization. There is barely a heartbeat in any of the threats that Americans can list, but surely a deadly danger to the nation lurks somewhere out there in the many regional conflicts and several intense civil wars that are obscured in the fog of major power peace.

Emily O. Goldman, a professor of political science at University of California, Davis and director of the university's Washington Center, seeks to provide a framework for examining how leaders respond strategically to the complex and uncertain security environments found in times of interstate peace. The work is both theoretical and historical in format. Goldman detects a gap in international relations theory for dealing with periods absent intense major power conflicts, and seeks to fill it by exploring possible strategic responses based on leader perceptions of their state's relative power positions modified by an understanding of the prevailing international trends. In her scheme there are three types of strategic responses–shaping, adapting, and reforming/reconstituting.

Shaping involves a state's attempts to alter the nature of international competition it faces via coercive (e.g., preventive war, trade interference) or noncoercive (e.g., aid, innovation, strategic communications) means and, as the most risky of strategies, is usually favored by rising states seeking to assert their advantages. Adapting involves incremental adjustments in the international arena and tends to be the preference of preeminent but weakening powers seeking to preserve the existing power relations. And the strategy of reform and reconstitution is the effort of weak powers seeking to rebuild their societies in order to arrest and reverse decline. Goldman further offers a variety of propositions about the choices among the strategic alternatives, including the effects of domestic politics, institutional biases, cognitive factors, and variations in systemic conditions. She tests the propositions in three structured historical cases and briefly in the business literature.

The cases that Goldman selected reflect her theory's need for the existence of formal military planning which she argues first occurs in the mid-nineteenth century among great powers, the diffusion of the Prussian general staff innovation. The first case is the post-Crimean War era, 1856-1910, and focuses on Russian and British responses to uncertainty. The second examines the interwar period, 1918-39, and British and American responses. And the third studies the American experience in the post-Cold War era, defined as 1990-2010 though it is still ongoing. For the non-historian at least, the cases are exceedingly well done–concise analyses of the puzzles, pressures, and planning options facing the antagonists as they try to cope with possible threats hidden in their fogs of peace. They are data rich and clearly written efforts that emphasize military budgets and strategic planning.

The lessons from all of this for a United States still lacking a coherent post-Cold war grand strategy, however, are pretty thin. Goldman sees the United States in

a gradual, mostly but not totally graceful power decline, sort of a mix of a post-Crimean Russia ineffectively seeking a restoration of its royal grander and interwar Britain hoping no one notices its decline and knowing that many will. She is clear on what will not work. Game changing technological innovation will not likely be the strategic answer as Donald Rumsfeld's vision for military transformation demonstrated in the manpower intensive struggles to tame Iraq and Afghanistan. Beyond that conclusion Goldman is left with the mush of suggesting a balance use of hard and soft power in foreign policy and a domestic restoration of the economic and educational pillars of true national strength. The theoretical framework that she offers, seemingly so promising at the start, fades from sight and expectations of utility by the end of the book.

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