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America the Vincible: U.S. Foreign Policy for Twenty-first Century by Earl H. Fry, Stan A. Taylor, and Robert S. Wood.

David Campbell

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America the Vincible: U.S. Foreign Policy for Twenty-first Century. By Earl H. Fry, Stan A. Taylor, and Robert S. Wood. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994. 356p.

Fry, Taylor, and Wood take a refreshing look at America's role in the next century. They are not doomsayers, arguing (like Paul Kennedy) that America is a great power quickly falling to has-been status. Nor are they naive, blind to the significant challenges facing the United States in a world full of rising rivals in the military, economic, and technological spheres. Their title has been chosen carefully to reflect their thesis. America is "vincible," not *invincible* nor vanquished. The authors, in considering America as vincible, answer their own call for "a sober assessment of the conditions and responsibilities of a great power" (6).

The book is split into three parts. First is a discussion of how U.S. foreign policy is made. The analysis runs the gamut from constitutional matters to American society and culture. In particular, there is a thorough explanation of the role played by the National Security Council in foreign policy formulation. The authors advocate having the Secretary of State assume the responsibilities now held by the constitutionally unaccountable National Security Advisor. Vital energy is sapped by internecine bureaucratic battles within the executive branch. "Presidents need to focus on resolving conflicts between America and other nations, not on resolving conflicts between competing sections of their administrations" (67).

Second, *America the Vincible* moves on to U.S. defense policy. Fry, Taylor, and Wood have

taken pains to examine America's role in a post-Cold War world, by detailing the history of U.S. defense policy and then considering the strategic considerations ahead in the next few years. Specifically, the chapter on terrorism reinforces their thesis that in an increasingly interdependent world, Americans (both at home and abroad) are vulnerable to terrorist attack. They assert that "an appropriate perspective may be the single most important weapon to use against terrorists" (256). The perspective offered is that, while there are some specific steps to be taken to combat terrorism (which they detail), there are nonetheless more serious threats to American interests.

The third section of the book deals with economic policy, which "may have now moved up to the top tier on the U.S. foreign policy agenda" (241). Not only is the reader offered a concise explanation of how America fares in the web of nations which constitute the world economy, but also a sober look at the environmental challenges facing the nation. The result is an argument for both further economic engagement internationally, and "decisive" government action to prevent further degradation of the environment.

This is not a textbook. It is a book by foreign policy experts for foreign policy experts. But those who would enjoy the book are by no means restricted to the experts--whether undergraduate political science students or just interested lay-

men. The data and sources used are impressive, even if the frequency of their use is inconsistent. Some chapters have nearly one hundred endnotes, others fewer than ten. Throughout, however, the book is written with a clarity and style which set it apart from much academic work. Whether as a source for research papers or

merely for stimulating reading, *America the Vincible* stands as a book worth adding to one's library.

David Campbell
Senior, Political Science