14. Conventional Power and Contemporary Warfare

This chapter examines how conventional power shapes warfare in the contemporary world. It considers the present and emerging state of conventional military power, how conventional forces function in areas such as distant strike and urban warfare, and how their role differs from that of other forms of force, including terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The chapter first provides a historical background to demonstrate the important role played by conventional power in war before discussing the rise of new world orders in 1945, 1989 and 2001. It then describes states possessing power and hyperpower, along with the revolution in military affairs and how developing countries may trump it through various strategies. It also shows how the distribution of conventional power is changing, noting that Western countries are in decline and new world powers are emerging, especially China and India.