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SURVEYING THE LITERATURE: RECENT BOOKS ON NATIONAL SECURITY

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This is a quarterly series of reviews focusing on recently published books dealing with topical and noteworthy national security issues. Authors and publishers interested in submitting their books on national security for review may contact the Editor at informationseries@nipp.org.

Jacquelyn K. Davis and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, *Coalition Management and Escalation Control in a Multinuclear World* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2020), 240 pp.

Reviewed By: Michaela Dodge
National Institute for Public Policy

The eddies and currents in today's fluid and complex international security environment require a more sophisticated understanding than in the past of the intricacies of interstate politics and the drivers of conflict. The book *Coalition Management and Escalation Control in a Multinuclear World* sets out to examine these international security environment trends and their impact on escalation dynamics and coalition management. The authors—both highly regarded national security experts with significant academic credentials and long-time practical expertise in defense and deterrence issues—ominously warn: “We have entered a



period in which larger numbers of actors seeking greater international influence have access to an unprecedented range of capabilities, such as nuclear weapons, cyber warfare techniques, and advanced conventional technologies.” These realities, they note, “have altered the historic significance of distance and geographic barriers” and “have significantly broadened the number of options for limited war, crisis escalation, deterrence, escalation control, and crisis termination.”

The book points out that advances in non-nuclear technologies, cyberwarfare, space-based and space-related capabilities “have created unprecedented opportunities for managing deterrence and escalation.” These new technologies can not only “put the onus for nuclear escalation decisions on an adversary,” but also “enhance our ability to disable an opposing nuclear force and eliminate or substantially reduce the threat of nuclear retaliation.”

The authors argue that in a conflict, the United States must consider escalation dynamics and the implications for crisis management. They emphasize the need for the United States to engage in detailed coalition planning for a broad range of crisis scenarios. The book underscores that future adversaries may not share our value system or ways to fight and that these differences have implications for interactions with future adversaries. They correctly note that alliance management must be embedded in considerations of crisis situations.

The book then goes on to describe challenges to escalation management in the Euro-Atlantic region, Asia, and the Middle East—issues of contemporary importance. The book comments on Russia’s dependence on its energy sources for revenues and notices a worrisome trend of considering conventional and nuclear operations on an overlapping continuum, rather than keeping them distinct. Indeed, Russia’s notions of using nuclear weapons in a conventional conflict to signal resolve and potentially “de-escalate” were some of the major driving factors behind the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review’s supplementary capabilities: a low yield submarine launched ballistic missile warhead in the short-term and a nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile in the long-term.

Unlike in Europe, where the United States is a part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, there is no comparative alliance structure in Asia. Rather, the United States relies on bilateral relations with China’s neighbors and other regional powers, most notably Japan and South Korea, to protect U.S. and allied interests. China’s assertiveness in the South China Sea and its potential territorial ambitions with respect to Taiwan offer ample opportunities for cross-domain escalation, as do China’s investments in modern technologies aimed at limiting U.S. freedom of action.

As the authors note, the conflict with North Korea is another situation ripe for potential escalation challenges and alliance management problems. North Korea not only possesses nuclear weapons but is disproportionately independent of the internet and connectivity that



marks advanced societies. This generates vulnerabilities on the part of the United States and its allies that North Korea can easily take advantages of in a conflict, particularly due to its investments in ballistic missile technologies.

According to the authors, the Middle East “looms large among escalation control and coalition management contingencies for the United States.” Complex relationships among countries in the region and U.S. alliance with a reportedly nuclear-armed Israel create a multitude of challenges for U.S. efforts in the region. The difficulties of balancing long- and short-term objectives abound.

The regional factors are made more complex by modern technologies, which shape escalatory options available to the United States (but also to its adversaries). The authors particularly highlight the following innovation priorities for the United States: anti-access/area-denial, precision targeting, long-range manufacturing and prompt response, cyber warfare, and defense technologies. Some of these technologies, for example missile defense, have the potential to move the United States more toward implementing deterrence by denial concepts.

The book offers a comprehensive overview of factors that potentially complicate U.S. alliance management and escalation problems in near-future conflicts. It highlights the existence of “cross-domain relationships” and elaborates on how selected technologies have the potential to change near-future conflicts that may arise due to clashes between U.S. and adversaries’ interests. For example, the authors correctly note that the contemporary strategic setting “underscores the need for creative thinking about nuclear coalitions,” citing the complicating dynamics of wrestling with potential opponents “who were also part of a coalition in which one or more parties possessed nuclear weapons.”

Importantly, while the authors succinctly elucidate fundamental challenges to managing escalation and collaborating with allies in a dynamic, fast-paced, and complex threat environment, the book’s recommendations are general. It is certainly true that modern technologies complicate the escalatory process and alliance dynamics, and the book identifies a number of key questions that must be addressed, such as how to leverage escalation options by a potential opponent, how non-nuclear capabilities can be employed in support of U.S. deterrence and escalation management goals, and how best to assure non-nuclear allies in a “multinuclear” world. The next order questions include identifying where are adversaries’ escalatory thresholds, what to do about them, and how to build de-escalatory offramps without sacrificing U.S. national security interests and allies. These are issues that the current and subsequent administrations will need to wrestle with as they consider how to adapt U.S. national security strategy to the new realities highlighted in this book.



Keith B. Payne, *Redefining “Stability” for the New Post-Cold War Era* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2021), 85 pp.

Reviewed By: Rebecca L. Heinrichs
Hudson Institute

Since the Second World War, U.S. military and political leaders have viewed nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort. Their primary utility is in preventing large-scale war, not fighting a war. And for decades U.S. government leaders and civilian analysts and commentators held to a common assumption that all nations with nuclear weapons view them the way the United States does. By word and deed, leaders in authoritarian nations like Russia, China, and North Korea are communicating that they see their utility differently. For these autocratic regimes, their nuclear weapons are tools to advance their political objectives, and a combination of factors in the contemporary geopolitical landscape makes nuclear employment increasingly plausible.

In his latest *Occasional Paper* entitled, *Redefining “Stability” For the New Post-Cold War Era*, Dr. Keith Payne issues a stark warning about the potential fragility of deterrence and the unacceptable danger of permitting the outdated Cold War stability paradigm and archaic force typology to misguide contemporary strategists and civil servants. Public commentary must shift; it must seriously consider the contemporary threat and technology environment and reasonably and fairly judge U.S. nuclear policy and forces as U.S. government officials strive to meet the modern challenges to maintain peace and stability. Dr. Payne points the way forward, based on evidence, reason, and in line with American mores – an indispensable consideration for credible deterrence.

In the 1960s, as U.S. strategists inside the government and theorists outside the government contemplated how to deter nuclear war, a consensus settled on a particular nuclear deterrence paradigm. That Cold War paradigm was labeled a “stable balance of terror” or “mutual assured destruction” (MAD). The central animating principle for this paradigm, as Dr. Payne explains, is the mutual threat of societal destruction. Thus, what constituted “stability,” to the minds of many considering U.S. nuclear capabilities, deployments, and policies, was maintaining this precarious and morally dubious paradigm.

If one were to visualize the stability model, it might look something like a scale, wherein equal numbers of nuclear weapons that could reach the other country’s soil, maintained a balance. One could swap out the country the United States would seek to deter, and it would not matter. The stability paradigm was inflexible and seemingly mechanistic.

In the mid-1970s, military strategists inside the U.S. government began incorporating a more nuanced approach to nuclear policy including limited nuclear response options. Those



intellectuals who continued to hold to the MAD dogma criticized such moves as “destabilizing.” By the mid-1980s, the United States eschewed its earlier balance of terror-oriented declarations that openly threatened Soviet society. Instead, the United States would seek to avoid such targets. And President Ronald Reagan’s 1983 Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) speech threatened to upset the entire MAD formula. Once more, anti-nuclear theorists and advocates criticized these adaptations to U.S. nuclear force planning and policy as “destabilizing.” The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty put the brakes on SDI.

But, in 2002, President George W. Bush withdrew from the ABM Treaty so the United States could defend the country against rogue state missile threats. That too, was condemned as destabilizing in public commentary and by leading political figures, including at the time then-Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Joe Biden. For many prominent theorists and analysts today, the concept of mutual societal vulnerability continues to be the indispensable characteristic necessary to reach the bipartisan American aspiration of “stability” between nuclear states. The practical implications of this dogma are that U.S. analysts judge and often criticize everything the United States considers for strategic deterrence against whether it comports with this Cold War notion of stability. It is no surprise that U.S. adversaries echo those same criticisms, constantly condemning U.S. moves to defend or promote U.S. security as “destabilizing” while simultaneously engaging in actions and deploying forces that are “destabilizing” according to the formula.

Dr. Payne breaks through the groupthink and challenges the dogma, as he has often done throughout his research and analysis. But in his latest manuscript, by illuminating the archaic dogma within our current geopolitical context, he shows just how foolish holding on to that Cold War formula is. And, with a sense of urgency we should not ignore, he offers a new, flexible framework to replace the old rigid one that relied on other nations thinking and calculating based on how U.S. strategists think they reasonably should. Rather than that inflexible, mechanistic scale metaphor, Dr. Payne proffers something new:

A more apt stability metaphor is the blocking and channeling of rising torrents of water in diverse rivers and streams that will expand beyond their established banks where and when there is an opportunity and nothing to prevent flooding. The necessary system of resilient levees and dams must prevent flooding in the context of good weather and hurricanes.

He emphasizes that it was risky enough that during the Cold War the United States placed great confidence in the Soviets behaving “reasonably,” based on U.S. notions of reasonableness. But in this post-Cold War multidimensional threat context, with multiple nuclear-capable enemies that possess diverse worldviews and advanced military capabilities to implement their unique national objectives, the archaic and reductionist Cold War stability paradigm stands out as wildly imprudent and dangerous.



Dr. Payne argues that much of the public commentary from anti-nuclear theorists and advocates simply does not consider the numerous factors that affect the credibility and functioning of deterrence. These factors include diverse national motivations and goals, and differing risk calculations. This diversity means that there are scenarios wherein an enemy of the United States may decide that limited nuclear employment against U.S. forces or against a U.S. ally in pursuit of what they have deemed is a national interest, is worth the risk. The United States should constantly evaluate what each of our adversaries is doing, how they are thinking, how they might come to different risk calculations than our own and from one another, and the possibility of dealing with multivariate nuclear threats concurrently.

Take, Russia, for example. Modern Russia has revanchist national objectives, and just as it did in Ukraine, it could invade another sovereign nation on the erroneous belief that a population of Russian speakers gives Moscow a rightful claim to territory and use of nuclear coercion to accomplish its aims. An official from NATO ally Latvia, for example, publicly noted that Russian wargaming exercises practice such a scenario.¹ Russia has also threatened to employ nuclear weapons to dissuade the United States from deploying missile defenses in Poland.² Then-Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis warned Congress in 2018 of Russia's belief that they could use a low-yield nuclear weapon on the battlefield in the hopes that the United States and NATO would sue for peace and give Russia what it wanted rather than retaliate with a nuclear weapon and risk escalating the conflict to a broader regional war – or worse.

The emphasis on nuclear weapons in Russian military planning and strategy is apparent. Regardless of the Biden administration's five-year extension of the New START Treaty, Russia has been steadily improving its nuclear weapons arsenal and about two thousand tactical nuclear weapons remain unconstrained by the treaty. The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. General Ashley, in 2019 at Hudson Institute, said that Russia is modernizing its stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons "with an eye towards greater accuracy, longer ranges and lower yields to suit their potential war-fighting role."³

¹ Joel Gehrke, "Nuclear 'blitzkrieg': NATO ally Latvia fears Russia will stage swift invasion using small nukes," *Washington Examiner*, March 5, 2020, available at <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/defense-national-security/nuclear-blitzkrieg-nato-ally-latvia-fears-russia-will-stage-swift-invasion-using-small-nukes>.

² "Poland is making itself a target. This is 100 per cent certain. It becomes a target for attack." (Gen. Anatoly Nogovitsyn, then-Deputy Chief of Staff, commenting on Poland's agreement to host U.S. missile defenses, August 2008). Cited in "Russia's Nuclear Posture," National Institute for Public Policy, 2015, available at <https://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Russias-Nuclear-Posture.pdf>.

³ Rebecca L. Heinrichs, "Transcript: The Arms Control Landscape ft. DIA Lt. Gen. Robert P. Ashley, Jr.," Hudson Institute, May 31, 2019, available at <https://www.hudson.org/research/15063-transcript-the-arms-control-landscape-ft-dia-lt-gen-robert-p-ashley-jr>.



But Russia is not the only one that erroneously views the current U.S.-led order as deeply unjust. As U.S. leaders have repeatedly said, the Chinese Communist Party goals are to replace the United States as the world's leading power. To carry out its national objectives, it has invested heavily in its military generally and in its nuclear weapons program specifically. It is investing in a triad of delivery systems, and according to the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, Admiral Charles Richard, not only is China committed to achieving a triad of nuclear delivery systems, "China's nuclear weapons stockpile is expected to double (if not triple or quadruple) over the next decade."⁴

In September 2020, China practiced carrying out an attack with a nuclear-capable bomber against the U.S. territory of Guam at the same time it practiced seizing Taiwan.⁵ And, since the security of democratic Taiwan is key to the United States preventing Chinese regional hegemony, and permitting China to take Taiwan would be the undoing of America's ability to maintain its security commitments to U.S. allies in the region, the stakes are extremely high. Today, Chinese missiles can destroy the ships, aircraft, and bases that the United States relies on to project power into the western Pacific. There is no guarantee that a conventional conflict over Taiwan would remain so. And, not to be ignored, Russia and China have increased their military cooperation; a Chinese official spokesperson recently hailed the "strategic partnership" between the two revanchist nations as having "no limits."⁶

In the two most recent official documents outlining the U.S. nuclear postures, the Obama and Trump Nuclear Posture Reviews embraced a flexible nuclear deterrent and a triad of delivery systems as the best, most credible means of deterring large scale war in the modern era. Indeed, consistent with previous U.S. policy statements, the Obama Administration publicly rejected old deterrence stability notions based on intentionally threatening an opponent's society ("countervalue" threats), and also stated that defending the U.S. homeland is a top priority. And when the Obama administration negotiated the New START Treaty, President Obama agreed to Republican Senators' demands that the aged U.S. nuclear deterrent undergo full modernization and clarified that the United States would not limit missile defenses to accommodate Russian objections.⁷

⁴ ADM Charles A. Richard, "Forging 21st-Century Strategic Deterrence," *Proceedings*, U.S. Naval Institute, February 2021, Vol. 147, Issue 2, available at <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2021/february/forging-21st-century-strategic-deterrence>.

⁵ Richard Wood, "China air force video appears to show simulated attack on island resembling Guam," 9News, September 22, 2020, available at <https://www.9news.com.au/world/chinese-military-video-shows-simulated-bombing-attack-on-us-base/bcab6fa-9414-487a-8786-489c189842bc>.

⁶ "No limits for Russian-Chinese cooperation, says Beijing," TASS, January 19, 2021, available at <https://tass.com/world/1246563>.

⁷ David Alexander, "Obama reassures lawmakers on missile defenses," *Reuters*, December 17, 2010, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6BD54220101218>.



The Trump administration concurred and went further, placing missile defenses in a prominent role in its *Nuclear Posture Review*. To the Trump administration, deterring adversaries from aggressively prompting a large-scale war would require not strategic nuclear weapons in an old “balance of terror” framework; it would require a variety of nuclear weapons, with differing ranges and nuclear yields, conventional weapons, as well as active and passive defenses, to disabuse U.S. adversaries of a “theory of victory” that could involve the limited first use of nuclear weapons in a regional context.

Both administrations’ official nuclear policies and force adaptations challenged the archaic stability paradigm, which has long emphasized mutual nuclear threats to society as the way to keep “stability” and a mechanistic formula for limiting U.S. capabilities according to that purpose. The more recent U.S. policy moves toward flexible capabilities as the basis for deterrence are much closer to the image Dr. Payne casts for an apt contemporary stability dynamic: blocking and channeling shifting torrents of water.

Thus, correctly viewing the challenges using this metaphor means analysts must reject the old “balance of terror” formulation and its force typology of stabilizing and destabilizing forces. This also means that strategic defense has vital role in modern deterrence and should not be written off as inherently destabilizing. It is eminently prudent to outpace the rogue nation missile threats in defense of the U.S. homeland, for example. Having a credible homeland defense against North Korean ICBMs would increase the confidence of our allies under the nuclear umbrella and within range of regional nuclear missile threats from Pyongyang. Countries like Japan and South Korea should be confident in the U.S. promise of nuclear deterrence in their defense, thereby strengthening assurance and nuclear non-proliferation. It also makes a great deal of sense to ensure U.S. strategic defense provides protection against a limited attack from peer nations (although Dr. Payne preferred the phrase “accidental/limited nuclear threats from any quarter.”) And, as Dr. Payne emphasizes in this *Occasional Paper*, it is also true that short of a miraculous diplomatic breakthrough or other means of destroying or setting back North Korea’s nuclear program, North Korea’s nuclear arsenal and delivery systems will continue to improve, and the distinction between rogue and peer threats will eventually be indistinguishable for the purposes of delineating defense of the homeland against only rogues and not in any meaningful way against peers. And, as he notes, keeping pace with rogue state missile threats should not be criticized by Moscow; Russia has for decades “deployed, maintained, and modernized a nuclear-armed strategic missile defense system that reportedly is considerably larger than the U.S. system – presumably to defend against limited or third country threats.”

Deterring major war and maintaining stability remain salient U.S. national goals. But we must refuse the temptation to skate over what we mean by stability, and analysts and commentators must interrogate old assumptions and logic concerning what is and is not “stabilizing,” and conclude the Cold War balance of terror paradigm is not suited for the current highly dynamic



threat environment. Making this shift in thinking in prevalent related commentary will aid in U.S. government analysis and assist in fostering the bipartisan agreement and collaboration necessary to realize credible U.S. deterrent and stability aims.

Ilan Berman, *The Fight for Iran: Opposition Politics, Protest, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Nation* (Lanham, MD, 2020), 104 pp.

Reviewed by: Alireza Nader
Foundation for the Defense of Democracies

The Iranian opposition to the Islamic Republic is often unknown to Western audiences, including American policymakers. Ilan Berman's new book, *The Fight for Iran*, seeks to fill a critical gap in U.S. knowledge of the opposition. In an excellent and comprehensive analysis, Berman closely examines several key individuals and opposition groups, from Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi to the Mujaheddin Khalq Organization (MEK) and prominent democracy activists. Berman successfully captures their flaws and strengths while making sound and realistic recommendations for U.S. policymakers. At times, his attempts at even-handedness obscures the nefariousness of certain groups, such as the MEK. Nevertheless, his book is an important addition to Iran studies.

The Islamic Republic has faced more than three years of popular uprisings, worker strikes, and peaceful protests seeking an end to the theocracy. Nationwide protests gripped Iran in late 2017 and early 2018; smaller protests and labor strikes continue. In November 2019, the regime confronted hundreds of thousands of Iranians pouring into the streets and blocking major highways. The 2019 uprising, like the one before it, was crushed, resulting in the death of at least 1,500 Iranians. The regime's brutality ensured its survival, but the Islamic Republic remains restive and unstable.

The uprisings and demonstrations of the past three years have put the Iranian opposition in the limelight. Reza Pahlavi is the most visible and possibly most popular opposition leader. Berman views Pahlavi as "highly influential in many Iranian expatriate circles, as well as on the Iranian 'street.'" Pro-Pahlavi slogans have figured prominently in protests since late 2017. Pahlavi has also tried to share his message with Washington policymakers. Pahlavi's in-country popularity stems in great part from nostalgia for the modernizing reign of his father and grandfather (1925-79). Pahlavi has sought the regime's overthrow, making him a unique figure within the opposition, many of whom are or were affiliated with the regime's "reformist" faction.



Pahlavi supports the creation of a secular and democratic Iran and sees himself as an “advocate” for his people rather than Iran’s future leader. His stance has attracted non-monarchists as well as monarchists, making him a unifying figure in a diverse and often discordant opposition. Yet Pahlavi’s network is not as organized and well-resourced as the MEK.

Berman attempts to describe the MEK in relatively positive terms, but the group has a sordid and controversial past. The MEK played a major role in overthrowing the Shah and creating the Islamic Republic before falling out of favor with the revolution’s leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The MEK also sided with Saddam Hussein during the Iraq-Iran war, earning it an enduring hostility among many Iranians. Berman is correct in describing the MEK as being influential in Washington. However, the MEK appears to have a negligible base of support inside of Iran. None of the demonstrations in the last three years have featured calls for Mariam Rajavi, the MEK’s unquestioned leader and self-declared President-elect of Iran.

The Iranian population may be best represented by two women described by Berman: Masih Alinejad and Mariam Memarsadeghi, exiled activists who espouse democratic rule for Iran’s large and diverse population. Alinejad is perhaps the best known and most effective of the Iranian democracy activists. Her campaign against the compulsory hejab has made her wildly popular among Iranian women, and increasingly men as well. Alinejad believes that “the day that thousands of women take off their headscarves and burn them is the day the Islamic Republic is finished.”

Memarsadeghi is an outspoken advocate for democracy well-known in Washington circles and among Iranian activists. She is the former co-founder of Tavanaa, a Washington-based non-profit dedicated to building democratic capacity within Iranian society on topics like “women’s rights and Islamic reform and democratic values, issues which remain generally taboo within the Islamic Republic.”

Berman’s description of the Iranian opposition is rich in detail, covering Iran’s diverse ethnic make-up and the regime’s attempts to censor the internet. It also offers U.S. policy-makers sound recommendations, including ways to reform the U.S. government’s much criticized Persian-language media broadcasters, especially the Voice of America’s Persian language service. More importantly, Berman captures a truth often forgotten by U.S. opponents and proponents of “regime change” in Iran. It is the Iranian people who bear primary responsibility for overthrowing their oppressive regime and creating a more democratic nation. But that does not mean that Americans cannot stand in solidarity with them. The United States has often stood as a beacon of democracy to the world’s oppressed people, especially Iranians. Their voices deserve to be heard by American policymakers. Berman’s book is a good place for them to start.



Adam B. Lowther, editor, *Guide to Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of Great Power Competition* (Bossier City, Louisiana: Louisiana Tech Research Institute, 2020), 444 pp.

Reviewed By: Jennifer Bradley
Constellation West

Deterrence has remained a cornerstone of U.S. national security policy since the advent of nuclear weapons. However, the study of deterrence atrophied in the post-Cold War security environment, while the United States enjoyed primacy on the international stage and the principal national security priority was terrorism and non-state actors. But the security environment has changed. As the 2018 *Nuclear Posture Review* stated, there has been a “rapid deterioration of the threat environment” in the last fifteen years.⁸ Beyond deteriorating, the threat environment has also transformed into something the United States has not faced before: two potential near peer adversaries in Russia and China. The return of Great Power competition has spotlighted the need to reinvigorate thinking and study of nuclear deterrence.

Stepping into that spotlight is the *Guide to Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of Great Power Competition*, edited by Adam B. Lowther. The book is written principally as a tool to educate Airmen at Air Force Global Strike Command on the current role of nuclear weapons in national security, why nuclear deterrence should matter to the Global Strike operators, and their critical role in providing two legs of the nuclear deterrent for the United States. Yet the audience for this publication should not be limited to those operators. The authors in this book fill a vital need in reviving debate on how nuclear deterrence applies in the contemporary security environment, which benefits a much broader audience of deterrence professionals and practitioners.

The book is divided into three parts that broadly cover key features of the nuclear deterrence discussion, including U.S. nuclear deterrence policy; adversary deterrence policy and capabilities; and finally, how U.S. capabilities contribute to nuclear deterrence.

Part one is called “Deterrence and National Security.” It details the current policy debate and the history surrounding it, the funding process and cost of nuclear weapons, the tension between deterrence and disarmament, and something not often covered in discussions regarding deterrence—the physics of nuclear weapons. This section contains chapters contributed by nine different authors including: Curtis McGiffin, Frank C. Miller, Matthew Kroenig, Michaela Dodge, Brooke Mitchell, Peter Huessy, Keith B. Payne, Frank G. Klotz and

⁸ Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review*, 2018, p. VI, available at <https://dod.defense.gov/News/SpecialReports/2018NuclearPostureReview.aspx>.



Lee Hobbs. Each author tackles a different aspect that contributes to nuclear deterrence, giving the reader a sense of how varied and complicated the issue is, but Peter Huessy, in his chapter, captured an overarching theme of part one, writing “Taking for granted that nuclear weapons will not be used is an unwise action.”

Discussions of Russia, China, North Korea and Iran comprise part two of the book called “America’s Adversaries.” During the Cold War there was an assumption that any rational leader could be deterred by a secure second-strike capability, making the unique attributes of adversaries unimportant. However, a key feature of modern deterrence is that cultural, strategic and decision-making factors are not interchangeable and impact what is necessary to reliably deter adversaries. The authors of this section, Mark B. Schneider, Richard D. Fisher, Jr., Matthew Kroenig, Bruce Klinger and Stephen Blank, dive into the varied nuclear policies and capabilities of those nations that pose a deterrence challenge to the United States.

While a majority of the section focuses on Russia and China as the most pressing threat to U.S. national security, chapters are dedicated to understanding the nuclear threat from North Korea as well as the nuclear aspirations of Iran. The last chapter of this section, called “Russo-Chinese Military Cooperation” is one of the most thought-provoking chapters in this book. It details the implications of a Russian-Chinese alliance through the lens of nuclear deterrence. Author Stephen Blank argues that Russia and China already meet the academic definition of allies, and proceeds to detail the nature of the alliance and the challenge it poses to the United States and its allies.

The final part of the book returns to a U.S. focus with the section titled “The Service Contribution to Deterrence.” Authors Mark Gunzinger, Peter Huessy, Adam Lowther, Shane Grosso, Richard W. Mies, Ian Williams, Jason Armagost, William Murphy, Steve Cimbala and James Ragland contribute chapters on the nuts and bolts of deterrence. This section covers each leg of the nuclear triad, nuclear command, control and communications, missile defense, and conventional and nuclear integration. Further, Steve Cimbala addresses the question “How much is enough?” with his discussion on Minimum Deterrence, outlining the arguments for and against reducing the size of the nuclear force.

This book is very thoughtfully laid out, beginning with discussions of U.S. policy, transitioning to detailing the adversary nuclear threats the United States and allies face, and ending with the capabilities the United States possesses to deter those threats. Throughout the chapters, the authors never lose sight that their audience is the Airmen of Air Force Global Strike Command, often directly pointing out how different aspects of the chapters pertain to their mission.

However, this book is incredibly timely for anyone involved in the nuclear weapons enterprise. With the beginning of a new administration, a new nuclear posture review will probably soon be underway. This will spur important policy debates that will articulate this administration’s



vision for the role of nuclear weapons in the security of the United States. Further, the United States has entered a crucial crossroads with regard to the recapitalization and modernization of the nuclear force. The ideas and concepts laid out in the chapters of this book will contribute and support those debates and decisions. Steve Cimbala may have said it best, stating, “Neither nuclear weapons nor other instruments of warfare can function to good effect unless subjected to the discipline of clear strategic thinking based on experience, insight, and commitment to national purpose.”

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