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### **The Strategic Stability Dialogue: Think Before You Speak**

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### **Introduction**

The United States and Russia will soon begin a much-heralded strategic stability dialogue “to lay the groundwork for future arms control.”<sup>1</sup> Deterrence “stability” typically is equated to a condition in which there exist decisive disincentives *against* the employment of nuclear weapons. Establishing disincentives to nuclear war, of course, is the priority goal, and in

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principle, there is nothing amiss with the contemporary initiation of U.S-Russian “stability talks.”<sup>2</sup> In practice, however, prior to engaging in a “strategic stability dialogue” with Moscow, the United States ought to first establish a contemporary consensus understanding of what constitutes deterrence stability, and how U.S. deterrence policies and forces can contribute to that stability, i.e., the words must have an agreed, contemporary meaning—at least domestically. That most certainly does not exist. Until the United States establishes an understanding of what “strategic stability” means in light of contemporary geopolitical realities—and the implications of that meaning for policy and forces—it will have little basis other than transient political fashion for discussing its own or others’ policies, doctrines, or forces for deterrence or arms control purposes.

To risk understatement, there has been a paucity of official thinking, military or civilian, devoted to this subject for decades—government interest appeared to dwindle with the end of the Cold War and the rise of the terrorist threat.<sup>3</sup> While this lack of attention has now come to an end, Cold War thought and jargon about deterrence stability continue to abound in much Western thinking and most public commentary. Yet, that thought and jargon provide dubious useful guidance at this point, particularly now that Moscow seems to envisage nuclear first-use threats and possible limited nuclear first use as a means for advancing Russia’s expansionist geopolitical goals—a notion wholly contrary to any Western conceptualization of deterrence “stability.”

It is important to recognize that Russia’s and China’s rhetorical commitments to the phrase “strategic stability” create images in Western minds of defensive, non-aggressive intentions—given the traditional meaning of those words in Western thinking and commentary. But a non-aggressive conception of “strategic stability” does not comport with Russia’s or China’s expressed geopolitical goals, doctrine or force deployments. Their public lip service to the phrase appears to be hollow virtue-signaling designed only to soothe Western audiences. Given the character of the post-Cold War threat environment, and particularly apparent Russian views regarding the first use of nuclear weapons, the still-prominent U.S. Cold War stability paradigm and its typology of stabilizing vs destabilizing forces offer little useful guidance for meeting today’s challenging deterrence realities or guiding U.S. arms control goals.

### **The Cold War Stability Paradigm and Arms Control**

During the early years of the Cold War, American civilians developed a particular nuclear deterrence paradigm that was the basis for deterrence policies known popularly as a “stable balance of terror” or “mutual assured destruction” (MAD). Despite these different labels, the common ingredient of this paradigm was the expectation that a reliable condition of U.S.-Soviet mutual societal vulnerability to nuclear retaliation would ensure “stable” mutual deterrence. Generally, a stable condition was defined as one in which mutual deterrence would function



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reliably because the potential cost of employing nuclear weapons first or taking highly provocative steps would be too high. For sensible U.S. and Soviet leaders, no goal short of an imminent threat to national existence could be worth the risk of taking an action that could trigger the opponent's possible nuclear retaliation. *Mutual U.S.-Soviet societal vulnerability to nuclear retaliation* was expected to ensure an overpowering disincentive to either's nuclear provocation or to large-scale conventional attacks that could escalate to nuclear war.

While in office in the 1960s, Secretary of Defense McNamara defined the U.S. side of this balance of terror as being based on an "assured destruction" threat to Soviet population and industry.<sup>4</sup> As the late Nobel Laureate and renowned deterrence scholar Thomas Schelling emphasized, this deterrence paradigm mandated that, "Human and economic resources were hostages to be left unprotected."<sup>5</sup> Deterrence was expected to be stable when both sides were so mutually vulnerable.

The "mirror-imaging" presumption underlying this reasoning was obvious: U.S. and Soviet leaders were expected to calculate and act according to a particular set of reasonable goals, norms and values, i.e., those prominent in the United States. The Cold War stable deterrence paradigm presumed this shared U.S. and Soviet understanding of what constitutes rational deterrence-related thought and behavior. As Herbert York, former Director of Defense Research and Engineering in the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations said during the 1970 SALT I hearings, "We imagine them trying to deter us as we try to deter them."<sup>6</sup>

This ethnocentric mirror-imaging was the basis for the Cold War stability paradigm—it was assumed that for any rational leader, an action that might threaten to escalate to nuclear war, and thus mutual nuclear destruction, was "unthinkable." Schelling pointed to this presumption of shared goals with his 1991 observation that the fundamental deterrence assumption was "that NATO and the Warsaw Pact, in the event of war in Europe, would do everything possible to keep nuclear weapons out of that war."<sup>7</sup> Starting with the expectation that both sides were fully committed to avoiding nuclear use was fundamental—it reflected the belief that neither could rationally risk the use of nuclear weapons to advance its geopolitical or military goals.

This mirror imaging was critical to the stable deterrence paradigm and its application to U.S. arms control policy. The functioning of deterrence was considered predictable precisely because U.S. and Soviet perceptions and decision making pertinent to deterrence were assumed to be similarly cautious and well understood—and thus predictable. The functioning of deterrence was thought to be understood in such detail that different types of strategic forces could be categorized as having a predictably stabilizing or destabilizing effect on deterrence. Armed with this supposed precise knowledge of how deterrence would function and whether particular forces were stabilizing or destabilizing, the former could be embraced and the latter eliminated or subjected to limits via arms control—the goal being to codify a stable balance of



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terror. So understood, establishing and sustaining deterrence stability became the priority criterion for judging the effect of various capabilities and the purpose of U.S. strategic arms control efforts. Schelling observed in his 1991 retrospective on arms control that “the purpose of arms control was to help make certain that deterrence worked.”<sup>8</sup> And, the paradigm so informing how deterrence was expected to “work” and the related purpose of U.S. strategic arms control was a stable balance of terror.<sup>9</sup>

Specifically, U.S. nuclear policies or programs that contributed to mutual societal vulnerability were said to be stabilizing, while those U.S. forces that might impede the Soviet nuclear retaliatory threat to U.S. society were judged unnecessary for deterrence and likely destabilizing. The U.S. development and deployment of such strategic forces also was thought to be the prime cause of the arms race. The logic behind this latter thought – derived from the stability paradigm – was simple: because the Soviet Union was presumed to adhere, at least roughly, to balance of terror norms, U.S. “destabilizing” moves that might threaten to degrade the Soviet nuclear deterrent threat would compel Moscow to react by increasing its own capabilities so as to sustain its side of the stable balance of terror,<sup>10</sup> thus extending the arms race. The Soviet Union typically was cast as the responder to destabilizing U.S. actions in this supposed U.S.-led “action-reaction” cycle driving the arms race.<sup>11</sup> This 1960s argument that deems the United States culpable of instigating an arms race continues to be a familiar staple of contemporary commentary.<sup>12</sup>

This stable deterrence paradigm and related explanation of the arms race became the basis for much U.S. arms control policy.<sup>13</sup> Together, they led to U.S. arms control efforts being about codifying “strategic stability” by attempting to control technical parameters of weapon systems and their (largely) quantitative restrictions.<sup>14</sup> As one commentator observed, “Stability became an essential metric for evaluating nuclear forces, particularly regarding the wisdom of new nuclear capabilities and deployment options. Equally important, stability became the new rationale for U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms control.”<sup>15</sup> The purpose of arms control was to codify the balance of terror and thereby stop the action-reaction arms race cycle; U.S. arms control policy came to be geared to that end.<sup>16</sup> The pursuit of “stability” meant that the United States should avoid weapon programs that might undermine the Soviet retaliatory deterrent threat to U.S. society and thus avoid compelling the Soviet Union to react to U.S. actions in a new cycle of the arms race. Such U.S. restraint would lead to an “inaction-inaction” cycle that would end the arms race and possibly initiate a “peace race.”<sup>17</sup> Arms control could advance this happy outcome by limiting or prohibiting destabilizing systems and thereby slow down if not stop the purported action-reaction dynamic underlying the arms race.

The Cold War stability paradigm became a governing basis for U.S. strategic arms control goals and policy: The belief that strategic systems defined as destabilizing or unnecessary per the Cold War stability paradigm were the cause of the arms race and thus should be limited or prohibited via arms control was broadly applied to U.S. strategic forces, but particularly to



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strategic missile defense and ICBMs carrying multiple warheads (MIRVs). Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger summarized this dynamic as follows: “The primary U.S. goal in negotiations was to enshrine forever the strategic doctrine of mutual vulnerability. By putting caps on each side’s strategic nuclear arsenals and foregoing the deployment of all but the most limited anti-ballistic missile systems, strategic stability was to be enhanced.”<sup>18</sup>

### **An Inconvenient Truth**

This approach to arms control follows from the underlying Cold War stability paradigm and its mirror-imaging presumption. Assuming opponents’ decision making to be based on known and shared parameters is the basis for the corresponding beliefs that the conditions that constitute stable deterrence are fully understood and the functioning of deterrence is so predictable that strategic forces can be categorized as stabilizing or destabilizing. This mirror imaging presumption was highly questionable during the Cold War;<sup>19</sup> it is even more so now because the contemporary international threat environment is far more diverse and unpredictable.<sup>20</sup> Some contemporary adversaries may well not share the U.S. definition of reasonable, value system or decision-making process. In particular, they may not share U.S. perceptions of nuclear risk or consider U.S. balance of terror-style threats sufficiently credible to be deterred by them.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, their goals and decision making may drive behavior that recklessly threatens U.S. and allied security in ways deemed “unthinkable” per the Cold War stability paradigm.

The United States now confronts a multi-dimensional nuclear environment and a diverse set of threats. Most notably, it must contend with new adversaries armed with sophisticated missile and nuclear capabilities, revanchist powers willing to employ coercive nuclear first-use threats to achieve their revisionist geopolitical goals,<sup>22</sup> and countries with worldviews fundamentally different from, and opposed to those of the United States and its allies. These states see the United States as the impediment to their revisionist geopolitical goals. Indeed, the presumptions underlying the Cold War stability paradigm are now so divorced from the realities of the international environment that it can no longer be considered a prudent guide for U.S. deterrence or arms control considerations.

Thomas Schelling observed in 2013, “Now we are in a different world, a world so much more complex than the world of the East-West Cold War. It took 12 years to begin to comprehend the ‘stability’ issue after 1945, but once we got it we thought we understood it. Now the world is so much changed, so much more complicated, so multivariate, so unpredictable, involving so many nations and cultures and languages in nuclear relationships, many of them asymmetric, that it is even difficult to know how many meanings there are for ‘strategic stability,’ or how many different kinds of such stability there may be among so many different international relationships, or what ‘stable deterrence’ is supposed to deter in a world of proliferated weapons.”<sup>23</sup>



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As Schelling suggested, relatively new post-Cold War conditions require a new understanding of deterrence stability – an understanding different from that of the Cold War paradigm that has for decades dominated U.S. arms control policies and much public commentary – if not all actual U.S. nuclear policy. A new understanding of deterrence stability must take into account the great variability and diversity in adversaries’ beliefs, perceptions, and goals. Whereas the Cold War stability paradigm assumed similarly reasonable Russian decision-makers with essentially defensive deterrence goals, at least some contemporary opponents appear to see nuclear weapons as tools of coercion, and the United States may have only modest understanding of the diverse decision-making processes and value systems in “key parts of the world.”<sup>24</sup>

Given the great diversity of opponents, and the types of capabilities that may be necessary to deter them, the rigid Cold War categorization of forces derived from bipolar mirror imaging no longer makes sense, if it ever did. Forces necessary for deterrence may vary greatly depending on the opponent and context. In particular, technical characteristics alone cannot be the basis for declaring a capability to be stabilizing or destabilizing – understanding opponents’ goals and perceptions also is key, particularly the purposes they envisage for their nuclear arsenals. Are those purposes essentially defensive, i.e., for the preservation of an existing order and boundaries? Or, are they essentially offensive, i.e., for the destruction of an existing order and boundaries? The same types of nuclear weapons may be put into service for either purpose, and correspondingly, the same types of weapons may be stabilizing or highly destabilizing depending on the intended purpose. This reality upends the apolitical stabilizing vs destabilizing categorization of forces derived from the Cold War stability paradigm.

It must now be asked: How do Moscow’s leaders, and the leaderships of other nuclear-armed states, perceive the risks associated with limited nuclear first-use threats or employment? And, what nuclear risks are these leaders willing to accept in pursuit of their expansionist goals, including Moscow’s goal of re-establishing the hegemony in much of Eurasia that Russian leaders believe the West unfairly wrested from Moscow. And, more to the point, how *credible against Russian and other limited nuclear first-use threats* (that may avoid U.S. territory entirely) is the old U.S. balance of terror-oriented deterrence threat when the consequence for the United States of executing such a strategy could be its own destruction? The same questions must be asked of China’s leadership and its thinking about nuclear weapons use and risk – especially with regard to Taiwan, and of North Korea’s leadership regarding the Korean Peninsula.

A 2020 study by the U.S. State Department captures this contemporary Russian dynamic: “Russia seeks to restore its sphere of influence, both in the countries of its so-called ‘near-abroad’ (e.g., Ukraine and Georgia) and by acquiring client states farther afield (e.g., Syria) through the use of blatant military aggression, proxy forces, political and military



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subversion....The Kremlin is also notably risk-tolerant in its policy choices, not shying away from reckless gambles and extravagant provocations..."<sup>25</sup> Presuming that opponents will predictably share U.S. definitions of what constitutes reasonable goals, cost, and risk – the basic mirror imaging-methodology of the Cold War stability paradigm – may now be quite dangerous. Adversaries' reasoning may not resemble U.S. calculations, goals, and decision-making whatsoever. *This certainly is not to say that they are irrational*, but that their perceptions, norms and understanding of what constitutes reasonable behavior and their calculation of risk vs gain can be fundamentally different from American norms and expectations. Opponents' contemporary use of coercive nuclear first-use threats to advance revisionist geopolitical goals certainly reflects behavior that the Cold War deterrence paradigm simply dismisses as impossible for any rational leadership. The contemporary reality of those goals and threats demolishes the mirror-imaging-derived Cold War categorization of systems as "stabilizing" or "destabilizing," and correspondingly, the basic Cold War notion that arms control should be about focusing on those systems that the Cold War stability paradigm defines as "destabilizing."

For example, a newly-released U.S. Navy strategy document reportedly expresses concern that large-scale U.S. nuclear deterrent threats may not be sufficiently credible to deter if Russia were to anticipate that "some kind of initial targeted, yet crippling [Russian] first strike tactical nuclear attack could enable rapid take over [of] a disputed area, all while raising the risk level so high that the U.S. simply might choose not to respond to avoid global catastrophe."<sup>26</sup> Given this concern, "many prominent U.S. military leaders are clear that the Pentagon's ongoing efforts to engineer and deploy low-yield tactical nuclear weapons can actually strengthen deterrence by ensuring an immediate response to any kind of Russian nuclear weapons use."<sup>27</sup> This conclusion simply recognizes that a broader and more diverse range of U.S. threat options than is accepted under the Cold War stability paradigm is needed if deterrence is to apply to opponents who require other than a potentially incredible threat of massive societal destruction to be deterred. A spectrum of deterrence threat options seems only prudent in the post-Cold War threat environment given the diversity of opponents, their expressed nuclear threats, and the potential variability of their decision making.

The need for credible deterrent options other than, and more flexible than the massive society-destroying threats envisioned in the Cold War's stable balance of terror deterrence paradigm is now obvious, but not new. As President Carter's Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, observed in 1979: "Effective deterrence requires forces of sufficient size and flexibility to attack selectively *a range of military and other targets*, yet enable us to hold back a significant and enduring reserve. *The ability to provide measured retaliation is essential to credible deterrence.*"<sup>28</sup> The much greater diversity and complexity of the contemporary threat environment now makes flexible, tailored deterrent options even more critical for deterrence. In short, the deterrence requirement for flexibility, i.e., a spectrum of options, is not new – *but it likely is magnified greatly by the uncertainties of the post-Cold War environment, opponents coercive nuclear first-use threats, and*



*the multiplication of opponents and threats.* Correspondingly, U.S. deterrence policies and capabilities must now be resilient, flexible and tailored to support *credible* deterrence policies across the growing and diverse range of strategic threats to us and our allies—including capabilities criticized as “destabilizing” or unnecessary according to the antiquated Cold War paradigm.

### **Stability and Missile Defense**

The Cold War stability paradigm’s presumption against U.S. strategic missile defenses continues today, with various commentators labeling them “destabilizing” and unnecessary based on the familiar Cold War arguments.<sup>29</sup> Yet, U.S. arms control planning must recognize that the Cold War stability paradigm is no longer the relevant tool by which to judge U.S. strategic defenses. The inherent uncertainties of deterrence, magnified by contemporary threat realities, have profound implications for U.S. missile defense capabilities. The decision whether opponents will be deterred from using a nuclear weapon against the U.S. homeland or allies lies not in Washington, D.C., but in their respective capitals; it cannot be predicted with full confidence.<sup>30</sup> Because there are inherent and irreducible uncertainties regarding the functioning of deterrence, giving actors like Iran and North Korea an “easy” avenue to attack the U.S. homeland with ballistic missiles should be recognized as unacceptably imprudent.

In addition, defensive capabilities for the U.S. homeland and in regional theaters can help to remove the coercive leverage of opponents’ limited nuclear first use threats and discourage their expectation of freedom to move militarily regionally, i.e., defensive capabilities can contribute to effective deterrence. Given these considerations, a measure of strategic and theater missile defense capabilities should be considered both prudent and stabilizing—rather than dismissed reflexively as destabilizing folly.

In short, given changes in international environment over the past two decades, the Cold War stability paradigm’s presumption against missile defense is no longer the proper measure for U.S. strategic defensive systems. Instead, U.S. arms control efforts ought to help facilitate U.S. and allied defensive capabilities. Such an emphasis is now simply prudent—consistent with the government’s constitutional obligation “to provide for the common defense”—potentially stabilizing, and in line with international legal and Just War principles of protecting the innocent.

### **Conclusion**

The United States will engage in a dialogue with Moscow on strategic stability in preparation for arms control negotiations. For that dialogue to be useful, the United State must recognize that the aged Cold War stability paradigm and its mirror-imaging presumption are disconnected from current realities. It must avoid an approach to arms control that is





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predicated on the Cold War stability paradigm's rigid and narrow definition of what is adequate for deterrence and what constitutes stabilizing and destabilizing policies and capabilities. Instead, the United States must re-establish the meaning of strategic stability consistent with the new realities of the post-Cold War threat environment and identify an approach to arms control that contributes to the type of U.S. force posture and resilience that may be necessary to preserve peace and order in a highly-dynamic and uncertain threat environment. Understanding the problems with the archaic Cold War stability paradigm and with conducting arms control as a function of that paradigm is an imperative given the dramatic changes since the end of the Cold War.

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2. White House, *Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability*, June 16, 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/16/u-s-russia-presidential-joint-statement-on-strategic-stability/>.
3. As a 2008 report by the Secretary of Defense stated, "...the lack of interest in and attention to the nuclear mission and nuclear deterrence...have been widespread throughout DoD and contributed to the decline of attention in the Air Force." See, Department of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management. Phase II: Review of the DoD Nuclear Mission*, December 2008, p. iii, available at <https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/PhaseIIReportFinal.pdf>.
4. See, Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), p. 175.
5. Thomas Schelling, "What Went Wrong With Arms Control?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Winter 1985/86), pp. 222.
6. See York's testimony in, U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Arms Control, *ABM, MIRV, SALT, and the Nuclear Arms Race*, Hearings, 91st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1970), p. 64.
7. Thomas Schelling, "The Thirtieth Year," *Deadalus*, Vol. 120, No. 1 (Winter 1991), p. 30.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
10. *Remarks by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara Before United Press International Editors and Publishers*, September 18, 1967, p. 28, available at [https://books.google.com/books?id=-AYAAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA26&lpg=PA26&dq=Remarks+by+Secretary+of+Defense+Robert+S.+McNamara+Before+United+Press+International+Editors+and+Publishers&source=bl&ots=Rxq5cPQTYn&sig=ACFu3U1wwSHoM4s9shoL\\_dj29PxyRDhXxw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjI7qzboIDxAhVLAp0JHXhLDx0Q6AEwBH0ECBEQA#w=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=-AYAAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA26&lpg=PA26&dq=Remarks+by+Secretary+of+Defense+Robert+S.+McNamara+Before+United+Press+International+Editors+and+Publishers&source=bl&ots=Rxq5cPQTYn&sig=ACFu3U1wwSHoM4s9shoL_dj29PxyRDhXxw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjI7qzboIDxAhVLAp0JHXhLDx0Q6AEwBH0ECBEQA#w=onepage&q&f=false). See also, Jerome B. Wiesner, "The Cold War Is Dead, But the Arms Race Rumbles On," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 23, No. 6 (June 1, 1967), pp. 5-9, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.1967.11455084>.
11. See for example Theodore Sorensen, "The ABM and Western Europe," in Abram Chayes, Jerome Wiesner, eds., *ABM: An Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Antiballistic Missile System*, Signet Broadside; #7 (New York: New American Library, January 1, 1969), p. 181; and Bernard Feld, "ABM and Arms Control, in *ABM: An Evaluation of the Decision to Deploy an Antiballistic Missile System*," in *Ibid.*, p. 190.



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12. "We're stumbling into an arms race that is largely driven by U.S. investments and missile defense," Jeffrey Lewis, quoted in Joby Warrick, "Signs that China is busy building silos for ICBMs," *Washington Post*, July 1, p. A1.
13. William Van Cleave, "The US Strategic Triad," in Ray Bonds, ed., *The US War Machine* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1978), p. 60.
14. *Draft Presidential Memorandum*, Secretary of Defense [Clark M. Clifford] to the President [Lyndon B. Johnson], Subj: Strategic Offensive and Defensive Forces, January 9, 1969, op. cit. p. 6.
15. Michael Gerson, "The Origins of Strategic Stability: The United States and the Threat of Surprise Attack," in, Elbridge Colby and Michael Gerson, eds., *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), p. 34.
16. *Draft Presidential Memorandum*, Secretary of Defense [Clark M. Clifford] to the President [Lyndon B. Johnson], Subj: Strategic Offensive and Defensive Forces, January 9, 1969, p. 6 (Originally classified; sanitized and declassified on January 5, 1983). This and other Draft Presidential Memoranda can be found online at the Master OFOI Reading Room, Department of Defense, available at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/FOID/Reading-Room/>.
17. See Jerome Wiesner in, U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *ABM, MIRV, SALT, and the Nuclear Arms Race: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States, 91st Congress, 2nd Session* (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1970), p. 404, available at [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b643705&view=1up&seq=7](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b643705&view=1up&seq=7).
18. Caspar Weinberger, "Strategic Defense Initiative Opponents Show Reluctance for Self-Defense," *ROA National Security Report*, No. 4 (November 1986), p. 2.
19. See for example Harold Brown in, *The Department of Defense Statement on Strategic Military Balance: Military Assessment*, before the U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, 96th Congress, 1st Session, July 11, 1979, p. 3. See also, Harold Brown, U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *MX Missile Basing System and Related Issues*, Hearings, 98th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1983); Edward C. Keefer, *Harold Brown: Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge 1977-1980*, Vol. IX (Washington, D.C.: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2017), pp. 139-145, 604-605. See also, the testimony by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown in, U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Nuclear War Strategy, Hearings, 96th Congress, 2nd Session (Top Secret hearing held on September 16, 1980; sanitized and printed on February 18, 1981), (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1981), p. 10. See, in the same Senate report the "Administration's Responses to Questions Submitted Before the Hearing," pp. 10, 16, 25, 29-30. See also, William E. Odom, "The Origins and Design of Presidential Decision-59: A Memoir" in, Henry D. Sokolski, ed., *Getting MAD: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction, Its Origins, and Practice* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, November 2004), pp. 182-184.
20. Colin S. Gray, *Defense Planning for National Security: Navigation Aids for the Mystery Tour* (Strategic Studies Institute: US Army War College, 2014), available at <http://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/2264.pdf>.
21. Henry Kissinger dismissed the credibility of such U.S. nuclear threats over four decades ago, saying, "...we much face the fact that it is absurd to base the strategy of the West on the credibility of the threat of mutual suicide...because if we execute, we risk the destruction of civilization." Henry Kissinger, "The Future of NATO," in Kenneth Myers, ed., *NATO, the Next Thirty Years* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), p. 8.
22. Noted Russian journalist Pavel Felgenhauer has concluded, "The reasons [for Russia] to use nuclear warheads are widespread and open to interpretation, effectively giving the Kremlin the legal right to ratchet up the [nuclear] threat whenever it pleases." Pavel Felgenhauer, "Moscow Clarifies Its Nuclear Deterrence Policy," *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, Vol. 17, No. 80 (June 4, 2020), available at <https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-clarifies-its-nuclear-deterrence-policy/>.



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23. Thomas Schelling, "Foreword," in Colby and Gerson, eds., *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations*, op. cit., pp. vii-viii.
24. See, for example, the discussion in, "US Intelligence Lacks Experts Unsure How to Reach 'Equilibrium' With Russia," *Sputnik News*, September 13, 2016, available at <https://sputniknews.com/military/20160913/1045275501/us-intelligence-experts-equilibrium-russia.html>.
25. U.S. Department of State, "Competitive Strategy vis-à-vis Russia and China," *Arms Control and International Security Papers*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 2020), p. 3.
26. See the discussion in, Kris Osborn, "The U.S. Navy Is Worried Russia Could Wage a 'Limited' Nuclear War," *National Interest Online*, June 4, 2021, available at <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/us-navy-worried-russia-could-wage-limited-nuclear-war-186901>.
27. Ibid.
28. Harold Brown in, *The Department of Defense Statement on Strategic Military Balance: Military Assessment*, op. cit., p. 3. (Emphasis added).
29. Ankit Panda, "A New U.S. Missile Defense Test May Have Increased the Risk of Nuclear War," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Commentary*, November 19, 2020, available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/11/19/new-u.s.-missile-defense-test-may-have-increased-risk-of-nuclear-war-pub-83273>.
30. See for example Therese Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence In the 21st Century* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2012), pp. 5, 14, 18; and Keith Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), pp. 38-79.

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