



LITERATURE REVIEW

Stella Morabito, *The Weaponization of Loneliness: How Tyrants Stoke Our Fear of Isolation to Silence, Divide, and Conquer* (New York, NY: Post Hill Press, 2022), 278 pp.

What compels individuals to loot and burn businesses in the United States in the 21st century like they did in Portland in 2020 during the Black Lives Matter protests under the delusion that their actions are generating social justice and correcting historical wrongs? How does a suburban mom justify spitting at and yelling in policemen's faces,¹ behavior she would not ordinarily condone in herself or her children? Why do so many people stand by when a vocal minority pushes discriminatory and unjust policies? Most importantly, what can individuals do to counter mechanisms that generate and feed on vicious impulses that isolate people from each other and make them more susceptible to manipulation by what the author calls the power-hungry class? In her book *Weaponization of Loneliness: How Tyrants Stoke Our Fear of Isolation to Silence, Divide, and Conquer*, Stella Morabito discusses tools that totalitarian states use to divide the population to make it easier to control and, with concrete examples, illustrates efforts to implement the same methods in the United States.

The book begins with an historical overview of Cromwell's Puritan revolution, Robespierre's rule of terror after the French Revolution, Communists' brutal pursuit of classless society, and Hitler's genocidal quest for *Übermenschen*. The selection is deliberate; a closer examination shows that the tools these regimes utilized to compel individuals to go along with their destructive goals differed only in time and place, not in kind. Regrettably, as the author illustrates, these tools are alive and well and at work in the United States: from political correctness demanding restrictions on freedom of speech, to resegregation of Blacks, estrangement of women, identity politics on hyperdrive, cancel culture, and failure to provide solid public education while wanting to treat homeschooling parents like domestic terrorists. The mechanisms at work "appeal to the same forces: a craving for status, the need for belonging, obedience to overwhelming propaganda, hatred of a common perceived enemy, terror of being lumped in with the 'unfit,' and fear of ostracism by the in-group," as Morabito states in her book. Today's revolutions lack a central figure, like Mao or Cromwell. Rather, they are a hydra-like conglomerate of various actors with overlapping interests, including members of Big Tech, Big Media, Big Government, or Big Pharma groups.

Psychological research shows that humans' natural fear of loneliness is the utopian radicals' most valuable asset in their drive to isolate individuals, instill mob mentality, and use these manipulated individuals to silence those who disagree with their goals. In the pursuit of utopia, and satisfying an unquenchable lust for power, one can do no better than severing family, faith, and community ties that ground humans with the purpose of their existence. Such is the goal and effect of identity politics, political correctness, and mob agitation. It serves to divide Americans into ever smaller groups alienated from each other and rewards self-censoring, which inhibits the development of closeness that follows

¹ Stella Morabito, "Why Do So Many White Women Hate Themselves?" *The Federalist*, July 9, 2020, available at <https://thefederalist.com/2020/07/09/why-do-so-many-white-women-hate-themselves/>.



genuine friendships and free opinion exchanges. The ultimate aim of a utopian radical is to destroy the private sphere and supplant real relationships with an overarching dependence on the state. That is because “families, faith, and community are such extraordinary sources of strength to individuals” and provide a degree of protection from authoritarians’ efforts to control them, which is why utopian radicals are compelled to destroy them.

Awareness of these mechanisms at work is the prerequisite to resisting them. Morabito ends the book on a high note: it is possible to counter the machinery of loneliness. First, by launching “propaganda awareness” book clubs in which (preferably face-to-face) discussions of these important topics can flourish and friendships can be created. Such book clubs can inoculate one’s mind to cult-like tactics and methods authoritarians use to extract obedience. Individuals’ studies should also include a wealth of social psychology research on conformity impulses, mob psychology, and cult methods. Second, by becoming actively engaged to recover the original missions of education, medicine, entrepreneurship, and community building. There are also smaller ways in which individuals can throw a wrench in the machinery of loneliness, including reviving comedy, filling gaps in general knowledge, investing in the local community, and supporting the revival of beauty in the public square. Hopefully it is not too late for the United States to reclaim a sense of community on which democracies may continue to flourish.

*Reviewed by Michaela Dodge
National Institute for Public Policy*

Charles Glaser, Austin Long, and Brian Radzinsky (eds.), *Managing U.S. Nuclear Operations in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2022), 287 pp.

When most people consider the issue of nuclear deterrence, they think of nuclear weapons and the delivery systems that carry them, including the U.S. strategic Triad of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), sea-based submarines and sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers. However, it is not possible to appreciate fully the intricacies and complexities of nuclear deterrence without understanding the other elements so critical to its effective functioning. These include policy, strategy, and doctrine; nuclear employment guidance; civilian oversight of the military; alliance considerations; the nuclear command and control (NC2) system; and the role of arms control.

Managing U.S. Nuclear Operations in the 21st Century provides a comprehensive review of some of these lesser-considered aspects of U.S. nuclear operations. It is an updated version of a similar volume, also published by the Brookings Institution, in 1987. As two of the editors note in the Introduction, “Debates about U.S. nuclear policy tend to focus on a small set of high-level issues.... While these are certainly important, U.S. nuclear policy entails much more” (pp. 1-2). They also acknowledge that “much has changed since the publication of that [earlier] book,” (p. 5) including the overall strategic environment since the end of the Cold

War, technological advances, and the growth in adversary nuclear capabilities and more threatening nuclear postures. Among the more significant insights they highlight are 1) the growth in civilian involvement in nuclear planning and targeting issues since the 1980s; 2) the impact of today's more dangerous international security environment on U.S. strategy and the planning process; and 3) the importance of a more resilient and adaptable nuclear command and control system.

The book's chapters are written by noted subject matter experts, most of whom previously served as senior military or civilian officials in the U.S. government with responsibilities for U.S. nuclear policy. The pedigree of each of the authors is impressive and is demonstrated by their expertise and level of understanding of nuclear issues.

After the editors provide a basic but necessary description of the relationship between deterrence and nuclear strategy, former DoD and National Security Council senior official Franklin Miller discusses the evolution of civilian oversight under successive presidential administrations. Citing historical evidence of a Cold War "disconnect" between the need to ensure the president has flexible deterrent options and the actions necessary to allow for implementation of those options, (p. 65) he concludes that significant improvements have taken place in the nuclear planning process since the Cold War and argues that these improvements must be sustained through continued efforts to improve cooperation between the civilian and military leadership. Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy James Miller reviews the civilian-military relationship in the Obama Administration and notes that "sustained discourse" between civilian overseers and military implementers with respect to nuclear planning "is critical to ensuring that policy goals can be achieved" (p. 89). Former USSTRATCOM Deputy Director for Strategic Plans and Policy Michael Elliott rigorously details how presidential guidance is translated into nuclear operational plans. He notes that "Meticulous planning is the foundation of a military posture designed to maintain the peace" and concludes, "When dealing with nuclear weapons, policy, plans, and operations, there can be no mistakes" (p. 129).

Former USSTRATCOM Commander Gen. Robert Kehler (USAF, Ret.) discusses the "human dimension" of nuclear operations, including the role of morality, legality, and ethics in the nuclear decision process. He writes that "Nuclear weapons have prevented nuclear use and major conventional war since 1945 and will continue to do so as long as the United States' nuclear forces remain credible and the men and women who perform the mission receive the unequivocal support of the nation that demands their efforts. Establishing and sustaining their trust and confidence in the chain of command is the most important requirement of all" (p. 163). In commenting on nuclear command and control (NC2), John Harvey, a former senior DoD and Department of Energy (DoE) official, and John Warden, an Institute for Defense Analyses contributor to numerous DoD studies, note that the United States relies on an NC2 system designed during the Cold War and argue that "In the current security environment, the likely pathways to major conventional conflict and nuclear escalation are far different" (p. 167). Therefore, they argue that modernization of the legacy "Thin Line" NC2 system is essential. An objective of NC2 is to "increase the time that the president has to make decisions on nuclear weapons employment." They assert that

“increasing the time available for information gathering and deliberation,” will “reduce the likelihood that the pressure to quickly decide to employ nuclear weapons leads to unsatisfactory outcomes” (p. 184).

Elaine Bunn, who served in various official capacities at DoD, addresses the related issues of extended nuclear deterrence and assuring allies, calling for more extensive discussions with Japan and South Korea, for example, noting that allied views are “not monolithic” (p. 222) and concluding that shoring up the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence guarantees is necessary to avoid “deterioration, and even an end to the U.S. network of alliances—and consequently, more nuclear-armed nations” (p. 229). Finally, although acknowledging that “Arms control is not an end in itself but a tool to enhance national security and international stability,” Linton Brooks, a former Deputy Administrator at the National Nuclear Security Administration with over six decades of experience, argues that “Nuclear operations and arms control are inescapably linked....” (p. 276). Given the complexities of today’s international environment, he concludes that “New approaches to agreements will be required...involving multiple parties” (p. 277). Although some might question the utility of arms control in today’s environment, Brooks contends that “The most important impact arms control has on nuclear operations is in setting the size and to some degree the composition of strategic nuclear forces” (p. 276). And while noting that “in an era of great-power competition, many believe we may need to increase nuclear forces at some time in the future,” he acknowledges that other than through a cumbersome amendment process, “we have no way to reflect that need in our current arms control approach built around legally binding treaties” (p. 276).

In short, *Managing U.S. Nuclear Operations in the 21st Century* is a well-written and well-documented treatise on virtually all aspects of nuclear deterrence, planning, and operations. In light of the fact that nuclear weapons are here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future, and the growing volatility of the international security environment, this book adds enormously to an understanding of the factors that must be considered to ensure that U.S. nuclear policy and strategy are soundly formulated and aligned with national deterrence objectives. At a time when discussion of nuclear weapons and deterrence generates strong emotional reactions that tend to discount important issues and nuances, the contributors to this volume have done an important public service.

*Reviewed by David J. Trachtenberg
National Institute for Public Policy*

Edward Kaplan, *The End of Victory: Prevailing in the Thermonuclear Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022), 280 pages.

Nuance and nuclear weapons do not appear to be natural partners. Can fine distinctions really be associated with the most destructive instrument (yet) invented by mankind? At the sunset of the atomic age and the dawn of the thermonuclear age, a highly secretive group of

military leaders set out – at the direction of President Eisenhower – to answer the strategic question of the decade: if not “victory,” then what? The answer lay in a new and nuanced strategy: prevailing.

Dr. Edward Kaplan, a former USAF Colonel and currently the Dean of the School of Strategic Landpower at the U.S. Army War College, has written a fascinating account of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee (NESC), the products of which have only very recently been mostly declassified. President Eisenhower directed the National Security Council to establish the NESC, at first as an organizational experiment, to conduct a dispassionate analysis of America’s worst nightmare – a Soviet “bolt out of the blue” nuclear attack against the U.S. homeland. Later iterations of the NESC’s annual reports modified and added to this scenario based on Presidential guidance by adjusting warning times, projected Soviet bomber and ICBM capabilities, and other factors. NESC report results – helpfully republished in the book – make for a grim read as it becomes difficult for the reader to comprehend the scale, scope, and suddenness of thermonuclear war. Yet, Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy both thought that these cold calculations were integral for developing U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, the foundation for U.S. defense policy overall.

The creation of the NESC was grounded in necessity as much as frustration. President Eisenhower was no stranger to the long-running tension between officials in charge of intelligence and officials in charge of U.S. military plans. Both groups were reticent, even hostile, to sharing information with the other and thus, U.S. policy suffered as a result. Something was needed to rise above these siloed departments and the raging interservice rivalries of the U.S. Air Force, Army, and Navy.

As Kaplan ably relates, the NESC was unique organizationally – reporting only to the President who then decided on the distribution of reports on a case-by-case basis – and this, naturally, led to tradeoffs. The NESC’s small membership and highly secretive nature allowed the President to ask some of the most politically sensitive questions (and be given blunt answers) relatively freely. Yet, secrecy also had its drawbacks. The NESC’s annual reports were tightly controlled (usually only two copies existed, one in the NSC and one in a “disaster file” for continuity of government), and thus its conclusions were not always relayed to other U.S. defense officials who could have benefited from the information, or questioned NESC assumptions.

The NESC, Kaplan demonstrates persuasively, played an outsized and, till now, nearly unrecognized role in the formation of U.S. nuclear strategy – namely the shift from seeking to achieve “victory” in the Clausewitzian sense to “prevailing.” The difference between “victory” and “prevailing” may seem overly academic to some, but to the most senior U.S. defense officials at the time, it was a distinction with a difference. Kaplan shows that the NESC helped lead a change in U.S. goals from utterly dominating the Soviet adversary at minimal cost (“victory”), a holdover from World War II thinking, to the more realistic goals of surviving as a functioning society with “acceptable,” though horrific, costs (“prevailing”). In a memorable summary sentence, Kaplan describes the difference between the two strategies by remarking that countries typically held “victory parades,” not “prevailing parades” – such would be the case after a general nuclear war.

This reviewer found nothing of substance to criticize in this work – even though it is traditional for a reviewer to do so. The sources are extensive, Kaplan’s grasp of the secondary literature is sound, and even more impressive, he deftly and clearly explains nuanced concepts (victory vs. prevailing; net assessment vs. systems analysis; deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment) in ways non-experts can easily understand.

Kaplan’s focus on the NESC as a microcosm of broader U.S. nuclear strategy debates at the time rewards readers whose interests may range from organizational theory, U.S. nuclear policy, nuclear targeting, operations, war gaming, and Presidential decision-making. *The End of Victory* is, quite simply, required reading for the nuclear policy professional today. Kaplan is a knowledgeable guide through the history of U.S. officials translating policy into operations from the 1950s through the 1960s – a grim business, but one that produced the foundation for U.S. nuclear strategy, and deterrence, for decades to follow.

*Reviewed by Matthew R. Costlow
National Institute for Public Policy*