Jim Popkin, *Code Name Blue Wren: The True Story of America's Most Dangerous Female Spy—and the Sister She Betrayed* **(Toronto, Canada: Hanover Square Press, 2023), 337 pp.**

In January 2023, Ana Belén Montes was released from a federal penitentiary in Fort Worth, Texas after serving more than 21 years for espionage on behalf of the Cuban government. Montes was a highly decorated Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) intelligence analyst responsible for assessing developments in Cuba and Latin America, information that was used to develop U.S. policy toward the region. A U.S. citizen of Puerto Rican descent, she was a rising star within the intelligence community who successfully spied for Cuba for nearly 17 years until she was finally discovered and arrested.

In *Code Name Blue Wren*, Jim Popkin tells the gripping story of how Montes was recruited; how she received her directions from the Cuban intelligence service, the DGI, via coded shortwave radio transmissions; how her double life of espionage activities went undetected by her colleagues at DIA; how bureaucratic disputes between DIA and the FBI bogged down progress on the case; and how it took analysts at other agencies, including the National Security Agency, to overcome the bureaucratic impediments, sometimes risking their own professional careers, to uncover the truth about Montes' spying that ultimately led to her arrest.

Unlike other well-known spies such as Robert Hansen and Aldrich Ames, who were motivated by money, Montes was motivated by ideological sympathy for the Cuban regime and a belief that U.S. policy toward the island and Latin America in general was immoral and a vestige of America's colonialist and imperialistic past that imposed unfair suffering on the Cuban people. In 1977, while studying abroad in Spain during her junior year in college, she met and became involved with a politically active Argentinian friend who stoked her sympathies for the victims of dictatorial regimes in Latin America that enjoyed U.S. support. As a CIA account noted after her arrest, "She viewed various European Communist parties as most capable of responding to the population's social needs…her early sympathies may have enhanced her later desire to assist a Communist government, such as Cuba." After getting an entry-level job at the Department of Justice, she was recruited as a spy by a graduate school friend who was in reality a Cuban intelligence agent and who was aware of her criticisms of U.S. foreign policy. That Montes' ideological leanings did not raise suspicions among her colleagues much sooner than it did is itself surprising. Indeed, her betrayal of the public trust that she was granted by serving the demands of a foreign adversary led to her estrangement from her own family—especially her sister, who spent her career working for the FBI to identify Cuban spies operating in the United States.

Popkin's narrative moves briskly, with many chapters only several pages long. It is based on numerous interviews with Montes' relatives and friends, U.S. officials, and official transcripts of depositions with Montes and other documentation. The story it tells provides a disturbing example of how groupthink can lead otherwise intelligent people to ignore signs of deceit when they consider it unimaginable that a trusted colleague could be serving the

interests of America's enemies. In personal relationships, such deceit can be emotionally tragic. In the intelligence community, it can be utterly devastating to U.S. national security.

Popkin notes that Montes "is sometimes called the most important spy you've never heard of." He notes that she "not only poisoned nearly every secret plan that American intelligence officials hatched in Cuba, but she also helped author some of the U.S. government's own policies on the region." In fact, she won various intelligence awards and was honored with the National Intelligence Certificate of Distinction by none other than then-Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet. The nation's first National Counterintelligence Executive, Michelle Van Cleave, called Montes "one of the most damaging spies in U.S. history." In notes and letters Montes wrote from prison, she stated, "I owe allegiance to principles and not to any one country or government or person," and criticized U.S. policies toward Latin America, including efforts to "unjustly overthrow the government of Nicaragua in the 1980s."

Operation Blue Wren ultimately led to the capture of this notorious Cuban spy. But the fact that Montes was able to ply her trade so successfully for so many years raises the question of who else may be working within the U.S. government on behalf of a foreign adversary to undermine American national security policies. As Popkin notes, Cuba "operates a totalitarian regime that spies on its people and stifles dissent. [It] covets the information that the United States holds dear and runs a scrappy spy agency capable of prying those classified secrets loose. Trained by the Soviet spy services and run by hard-line Communist party members, the DGI remains hungry. And mercenary."

Regardless of what one thinks of American foreign policy or the U.S. relationship with Cuba, Popkin argues that Montes' actions were "dangerous, immoral, and traitorous. She's not more virtuous than Hansen or Ames because she was motivated by ideology instead of cash. Illegal is illegal and wrong is wrong."

When it comes to espionage and anti-U.S. activities, the Cuban government actively targets American sympathizers in academia and in positions of responsibility within the U.S. government. To this day, there are concerns that Cuban intelligence operations are not only sophisticated but dangerously unorthodox in their methods. For example, there is lingering conjecture that Cuba initially may have been responsible for so-called "Havana Syndrome," a debilitating illness thought to be caused by the use of directed energy radio waves as a weapon to attack the neurological system of unsuspecting U.S. embassy diplomats in Havana, causing serious brain injuries. The U.S intelligence community contends that the incapacitating effects of radio frequency energy evidenced by more than a thousand U.S. officials were likely not the result of a hostile foreign power targeting U.S. personnel. Yet many of those who experienced anomalous health issues have been critical of the apparent attempt to blame such symptoms on environmental or preexisting medical conditions, arguing that "weapons capable of causing these types of injuries are known and have existed for decades."[1] Although no direct link to the Cuban government has emerged to date, suspicions remain.

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[1] *Statement by Advocacy for Victims of Havana Syndrome on ODNI Report on Anomalous Health Incidents*, March 1, 2023.

Code Name Blue Wren makes an important contribution to understanding how adversaries target classified U.S. information and the risk of insider threats. It also provides an example of the damage that can be done when an individual entrusted with U.S. national security secrets works clandestinely to support the objectives of a hostile government. Though it reads like a novel, *Code Name Blue Wren* is as truthful as it is disconcerting. The case of Ana Montes it highlights may just be the tip of the iceberg. As Thomas Jefferson reportedly stated, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." May we as a nation be eternally vigilant.

Reviewed by David J. Trachtenberg
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Mark Galeotti, *Putin's Wars: From Chechnya to Ukraine* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2022), 384 pp.

Writing a book on a developing topic is always fraught with peril, particularly if one writes about post-Cold War Russia and its numerous wars, including its latest one: the largest land force invasion of Europe since World War II. Mark Galeotti's work rises to the challenge. Granted, his main focus is not an in-depth analysis of Putin's psyche as the explanation leading him to invade countries near and far. Neither is Putin the main focus of the book, as one may be pardoned for thinking given its title. Rather, Galeotti analyzes the *making* of Russia's post-Cold War military forces and discusses wars that shaped them into the fighting force they are today, or rather what some analysts thought they were prior to Russia's escalation of its war against Ukraine in February 2022. The book incorporates preliminary reflections from about six months' worth of war developments; a reader can usually tell which parts were a later addition.

The book maps the most and least successful aspects of Russia's armed services' transformation from a mammoth, inefficient, underfunded, and poorly led Soviet-style military to today's more professional fighting force. The book is organized chronologically, discussing the woes that shaped Russia's military after the break-up of the Soviet Union, particularly its poor performance in the First and Second Chechen Wars (1994-1996 and 1999-2000). The latter paved the way for Vladimir Putin's leadership takeover. His appreciation for the realities of hard power politics led him to support the military as an oft-used instrument of Russia's state policy and as a tool to reward his cronies at the same time.

Putin could not have turned the military around by himself, and one of the more interesting sections of the book introduces operatives that helped Putin do so—some of whom are still in service (for now). Among them is Sergei Ivanov, a former Defense Minister and Deputy Prime Minister who initiated military reforms despite the resistance of the General Staff; Anatoly Serdyukov, another former Defense Minister who enforced those reforms, enabled by the abysmal performance of Russia's forces in Georgia in 2008; and Sergei Shoigu, the rebuilder and current Minister of Defense.

If there is one thing to criticize, it is Galeotti's treatment of the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Here he somewhat thoughtlessly repeats Russia's line that it does not have intermediate-range missiles, despite the United States raising compliance concerns as early as 2013,[2] and finding Russia in violation of its INF Treaty obligations in the 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 editions of the State Department's compliance report.[3] At the end of 2018, the United States assessed "that Russia has fielded multiple battalions of SSC-8/9M729 missiles" in violation of the INF Treaty, indicating a progressive increase in the scale of the violation.[4] The United States finally withdrew from the Treaty in 2019, but only after years of extensive efforts to bring Russia back into compliance.[5] Galeotti's equal treatment of Russia's fake and U.S. real allegations of INF Treaty violations does not do justice to a full and fair understanding of the issue. Despite this hiccup, Galeotti has written an insightful, interesting, and timely book.

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Center for Global Security Research (CGSR) Study Group, Brad Roberts, Chair, *China's Emergence as a Second Nuclear Peer: Implications for U.S. Nuclear Deterrence Strategy* (Livermore, CA: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, CGSR, Spring 2023), 74 pp.

The United States faces a wounded Russia more heavily reliant on its nuclear arsenal, headed by a President on increasingly friendly terms with another leader-for-life, Xi Jinping of China. Xi, for his part, has ordered the massive expansion of the Chinese nuclear arsenal such that it could reach 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035, up from its estimated 400 currently.[6]

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[2] U.S. Department of State, *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments Report*, July 31, 2014, available at https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2014/230047.htm#inf2.

[3] U.S. Department of State, *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments Report*, April 11, 2016, available at https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2016/255651.htm#INF%20TREATY; and U.S. Department of State, *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament*, 2017, available at https://2017-2021.state.gov/2017-report-on-adherence-to-and-compliance-with-arms-control-nonproliferation-and-disarmament-agreements-and-commitments/; and, U.S. Department of State, *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament*, 2018, available at https://2017-2021.state.gov/2018-report-on-adherence-to-and-compliance-with-arms-control-nonproliferation-and-disarmament-agreements-and-commitments/.

[4] U.S. Department of State, *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament*, August 2019, p. 13, available at https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Compliance-Report-2019-August-19-Unclassified-Final.pdf.

[5] C. Todd Lopez, "U.S. Withdraws From Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty," *U.S. Department of Defense*, August 2, 2019, available at https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1924779/us-withdraws-from-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-treaty/.

[6] U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2022), pp. 97-98, available at https://media.defense.gov/2022/Nov/29/2003122279/-1/-1/1/2022-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF.

Regrettably, much of the current literature tends to stop the analysis at this point, content to point out problems that need solutions.

The Study Group convened by the Center for Global Security Research, and headed by Dr. Brad Roberts, is an exemplary exception to this analytical malaise. Its report, *China's Emergence as a Second Nuclear Peer*, is methodical in its examination of the problems facing the United States, their implications, the resulting policy choices, and the relevant solutions or mitigating actions. Indeed, the diverse expertise of the Study Group's membership is reflected in the comprehensive set of recommendations that covers topics as varied as arms control, nuclear targeting, nuclear infrastructure, and deterrence policy.

The report begins by defining the problems the Study Group believes are most impactful, namely, a rising Chinese nuclear threat, a growing and unstable Russia nuclear threat, the burgeoning Sino-Russian friendship, the possibility of U.S. conflict with one or both simultaneously, and the "wild cards" of North Korea and Iran. The main focus of the report, however, is the unique set of stresses that the possibility of simultaneous or sequential conflicts with Russia and China may place on U.S. conventional and nuclear forces. These stresses cut across multiple areas of concern, including deterrence, extended deterrence, nonproliferation, arms control, damage limitation, and operational planning.

At this point, most reports on this subject would jump to proposing solutions – but the Study Group wisely presents alternative nuclear strategies, their pros and cons, and explains their preferred options. This method of analysis minimizes the chance anyone charges them with simply endorsing current policy without considering other choices, but it also presents a useful learning opportunity for those less-studied in the field to understand the factors at play in nuclear policy, force sizing, and targeting. The Study Group presents one of the best unclassified discussions of planning considerations the U.S. nuclear force structure in the available literature, an especially valuable addition to current debates as U.S. modernization programs are still at points where changes can be made where necessary.

After discussing how the two nuclear peer environment impacts nuclear deterrence strategy, the report presents chapters on U.S. nuclear forces, hedging, extended deterrence, force survivability, arms control, and strategic communications. Each chapter is valuable in its own right because the authors took the right amount of space to explain the unique aspects of their topic (which often takes the form of explaining to the reader how there are no easy answers) and how the United States can adapt in each area.

There are a few instances of statements in the report that required more explanation than was given. For instance, "It remains unlikely that Moscow or Beijing or both would decide to escalate to attacking the U.S. homeland in response to limited U.S. nuclear employment at the regional level (in response to their limited regional nuclear attacks)—as such an action would mean national suicide." (p. 26) This appears to be an unjustifiably definitive statement, especially given the fact that the Commander of U.S. Northern Command has testified that Russia and China are both acquiring the means to strike the U.S.

homeland, even and perhaps especially during a regional conflict, as a means of deterring U.S. action.[7]

Additionally, the report identifies advances in adversary air and missile defenses as an increasingly important factor in how the United States develops and modernizes its nuclear forces. Yet, instead of discussing what role U.S. homeland air and missile defenses can play in areas such as force survivability, hedging, and extended deterrence, the report stays mostly silent and chooses instead to recommend *limited* (emphasis in original) missile defense of nuclear command, control, and communication (NC3) assets. The authors do not elaborate on the deterrence or defense benefits of their recommendation, or why only NC3 capabilities should be protected instead of, for example, ports that are critical for military force projection.

Setting these relatively minor points aside, the report's authors should be commended for their clear writing, succinct explanations, and well-reasoned recommendations. This report is precisely the sort of analysis U.S. officials should consider as they adapt U.S. policy and forces to the two nuclear peer threat environment.

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[7] Glen D. VanHerck, *Statement of General Glen D. VanHerck, United States Air Force, Commander, United States Northern Command, and North American Aerospace Defense Command* (Washington, D.C.: Senate Armed Services Committee, March 24, 2022), available at https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/USNORTHCOM%20and%20NORAD%202022%20Posture%20Statement%20FINAL%20(SASC).pdf.