



LITERATURE REVIEW

Yaroslav Trofimov, *Our Enemies Shall Vanish* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2024), 400 pages.

Yaroslav Trofimov's *Our Enemies Shall Vanish* is a heart-wrenching account of the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Trofimov, a Kyiv-born and raised correspondent of *The Wall Street Journal*, begins by illuminating the most important moments in Ukraine's post-Cold War history. His main focus, however, is Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion, or an expansion of the conflict Russia began with its takeover of Crimea and invasion of Donbas in 2014. He chronicles Ukraine's heroic defense and the incredible toll on the people, resources, and land.

Russia's full-scale invasion found Trofimov himself in Ukraine. The book draws on interviews, often conducted by the author himself at significant risk, with the Ukrainians first preparing for the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, resisting the invaders, witnessing the destruction of the occupied territories, beating the Russians back in some places, and failing to do so in others. Trofimov's interviews show Ukraine's heart: determined, unyielding, desperate.

The account also incorporates interviews with Western policymakers. It is a frustrating read for Ukraine's supporters. In hindsight, Western policymakers were too slow to provide substantive help—and the Ukrainians paid dearly. These politicians must have known of the scale of atrocities that the Russians committed in areas they conquered, and particularly in those they were forced to leave behind. Russia's is committing war crimes against the Ukrainian people on occupied territories. How different could the situation have been if the Ukrainians had been properly armed prior to Russia's full-scale invasion? How different could the situation have been if the West had not been deterred from providing advanced weapon systems until months after February 2022?

Few politicians thought Ukraine could survive as an independent state on the eve of Russia's February 2022 invasion. They were wrong and no one deserves more credit than the Ukrainians themselves for making it so. The author does not gloss over the fact that *some* Ukrainians welcomed the invaders. Kupyansk's mayor urged citizens to collaborate with the Russians and would not have the city put up any significant resistance. It fell into Russia's hands without firing a shot. Kherson, too, "turned out to be Ukraine's vulnerable underbelly," writes Trofimov. Other cities, like Okhtyrka and Kharkiv, stood against overwhelming odds and paid for their resistance by becoming targets of Russia's indiscriminate shelling. Mariupol, a city of nearly half a million people at the beginning of the full-scale war, was reduced to rubble in a months-long fight. So was Bakhmut, and many others. The Russians have caused devastation on a scale that Europe has not witnessed since World War II.

The individuals' stories make the book quite powerful. A comedian-turned-president refusing to leave Ukraine despite a significant danger to him and his family. Soldiers, ready to defend their homes and families, knowing all they hold dear will be erased if they yield. Volunteers cleaning up street debris after Russia's shelling to improve the morale. A mother killed by the Russians with her children trying to escape Moscow's imperialist clutches for



the second time, the first being after Russia's 2014 invasion of Donbas. Especially poignant are the stories of those that the Russian soldiers hurt, killed, and abused: women, children, and the elderly, by the millions. The luckier ones were displaced by Russia's war and became refugees in the West. The fighters and the helpers, ordinary people made extraordinary by the force of circumstances.

Ukraine's enemies shall vanish like dew in the morning sun, as the national anthem goes. Indeed, this review writer sincerely wishes it would happen sooner rather than later, and recommends Trofimov's book to everyone.

*Reviewed by Michaela Dodge
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Report on Deterrence in a World of Nuclear Multipolarity, Department of State, International Security Advisory Board, October 2023, 33 pages.

The Department of State's International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) is a little known federal advisory committee that provides independent advice to the State Department on a variety of international security issues, including arms control and disarmament matters. Its latest study, *Report on Deterrence in a World of Nuclear Multipolarity*, was commissioned by the State Department to consider "how to use the mutually reinforcing tools of deterrence and arms control to address the challenges of two future nuclear-armed strategic peers—Russia and China."¹

On the issue of deterrence, the report concludes that in an "era of nuclear multipolarity... it is no longer taken as a given that what is necessary to deter a single nuclear peer like Russia is adequate also to address the deterrence and assurance challenges posed by increasing nuclear arsenals in the PRC [China] and other states."² It acknowledges the risks of "opportunistic aggression," coercive nuclear threats, and the prospect of Sino-Russian "collusion."³ Given these risks, the reader might conclude that a recommendation to strengthen U.S. nuclear deterrence capabilities would be forthcoming. Instead, although the report acknowledges the need to tailor deterrence and assurance to individual circumstances, it states that the United States "does not need to pursue a strategy that relies on outnumbering" adversary nuclear forces for deterrence and assurance purposes. In fact, it argues that the credibility of the U.S. extended deterrent "cannot be successfully managed through enhanced nuclear or military capabilities," but rather "should be enhanced through

¹ Memorandum for Under Secretary of State Bonnie D. Jenkins, October 31, 2023, reprinted in Department of State, International Security Advisory Board, *Report on Deterrence in a World of Nuclear Multipolarity*, October 2023, available at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ISAB-Report-on-Deterrence-in-a-World-of-Nuclear-Multipolarity_Final-Accessible.pdf.

² Department of State, International Security Advisory Board, *Report on Deterrence in a World of Nuclear Multipolarity*, October 2023, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

diplomatic and other efforts.”⁴ It notes that “the United States should avoid unnecessary risk of arms races or crisis escalation” and should “continue to pursue appropriate and verifiable force reductions among nuclear powers.”⁵

Unsurprisingly, the report—drafted by a working group led by Jon Wolfsthal, a long-time arms control advocate and advisor to then-President Obama and Vice President Biden—argues for greater U.S. emphasis and reliance on arms control as a tool to enhance U.S. security. As the report asserts, “there should be *no question* that pursuing arms control and achieving it, backed by verification, remains in the U.S. security interest...”⁶ Such a proclamation is consistent with the Biden Administration’s *2022 Nuclear Posture Review*, which baldly asserted, “Mutual, verifiable nuclear arms control offers the most effective, durable and responsible path to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our strategy and prevent their use.”⁷ Indeed, the ISAB report asserts that “Arms control has played an important role in managing the risks associated with nuclear deterrence, reducing the dangers of a conflict erupting or spiraling out of control.”⁸

In fact, there should be *every question* about the utility and effectiveness of arms control, as practiced, to ensure security and reduce the risks of conflict, given the long and problematic history of arms control agreements. This includes the near-unbroken record of Soviet and later Russian cheating on agreements that ultimately negated any possible benefit they might have had for U.S. security, as well as repeated examples of U.S. strategic self-restraint that went unreciprocated. For example, the dramatic Russian advantage in theater-based nuclear weapons that now rightly causes such concern in Europe is a direct result of Washington’s drive to reduce the role of nuclear weapons while Moscow moves in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, the ISAB report calls for taking a “broader” arms control approach “across domains, partners, and types of arrangements.”⁹ In other words, the answer to arms control’s historic failures is...more arms control.

Of course, the authors of this report must have realized the impracticality of their recommendations. Throughout the report, their advocacy of arms control agreements is caveated with phrases such as “even if the chances of pursuing and sustaining such talks are low,” “Even in the absence of success,” and “Even in a period where the prospects for arms control are unlikely.” These are valid caveats. They suggest the likely futility of the policy course the report espouses and contradict its theme of relying heavily on arms control to address America’s looming security challenges. Arms control options that are not practicable are not options.

⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

⁶ Ibid., p. 11. (emphasis added)

⁷ Department of Defense, *2022 Nuclear Posture Review*, p. 1, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>.

⁸ Department of State, International Security Advisory Board, *Report on Deterrence in a World of Nuclear Multipolarity*, op. cit., p. 16.

⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

Nevertheless, the authors essentially subordinate deterrence to arms control, saying that “deterrence itself is not an end unto itself” and that “The United States should also demonstrate a commitment to processes that enhance U.S. security and lead to nuclear reductions and eventually disarmament, in support of long-standing U.S. policy.”¹⁰ Of course, the U.S. commitment to these goals, codified in Article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is evidenced by the dramatic reduction in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile by some 88 percent from its Cold War peak¹¹—a reduction that now looks increasingly imprudent in light of the plethora of coercive nuclear threats made by Russia and China, underwritten by the expansive growth in their respective nuclear arsenals.

Among the report’s more questionable recommendations are calls to “prepare to pursue future arms control with Russia and the PRC,” “encourage strategic stability dialogues with Beijing,” and “Build domestic consensus around the importance of... strengthening strategic stability, and future risk reduction and arms control efforts.”¹² These recommendations appear divorced from the report’s acknowledgement of the current geo-political environment. Moreover, the report parrots the supposed wisdom that U.S. nuclear deterrent options will be “less sustainable” without a commitment to “diplomatic solutions” like arms control. To suggest that a “sustainable” nuclear deterrent requires a commitment to reducing those systems that sustain the effectiveness and credibility of the U.S. deterrent in the first place puts a misplaced primacy on the latter objective rather than the former.

In general, the ISAB report and its recommendations might carry more weight and deserve more serious consideration if they were written in 2010 rather than in 2023. The then-expectations of a more benign security environment with Russia as a cooperative partner and China as a rising but cooperative power have been demolished by the contemporary realities of a more aggressive and assertive anti-American posture by both. While the ISAB report gives an obligatory nod to this reality, the disconnect between its assessment of the increasingly dangerous international security environment and its conclusions and recommendations to double down on arms control and disarmament efforts reflect the lost idealism of previous decades. While the current administration may believe in the triumph of hope over experience, this seldom leads to sound policy. A future administration should take heed.

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¹⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹ Department of State, “Fact Sheet: Transparency in the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile,” October 5, 2021, available at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Fact-Sheet_Unclass_2021_final-v2-002.pdf.

¹² Department of State, International Security Advisory Board, *Report on Deterrence in a World of Nuclear Multipolarity*, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

Luke Griffith, *Unraveling the Gray Area Problem: The United States and the INF Treaty* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023), 312 pages.

The United States left the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019 after years of trying, unsuccessfully, to persuade Russia to cease its violations and return to compliance—but the INF Treaty still has much to teach students of diplomacy, arms control, and strategy. Luke Griffith, professor of government and history at New Mexico Junior College, utilizes recently declassified U.S. documents as well as new interviews with U.S. officials who participated in the leadup to and negotiation of the INF Treaty to produce his new book, *Unraveling the Gray Area Problem: The United States and the INF Treaty*.

The “gray area problem” Griffith ably recounts was the growth of Soviet intermediate range nuclear forces during the late 1970s through the 1980s. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) between the United States and the Soviet Union had limited intercontinental range nuclear forces, but a cap in one area inadvertently promoted competition in another area: intermediate range nuclear forces. At least, that is how the Soviet Union reacted—building up its SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) that could carry up to three warheads each to threaten NATO targets throughout Europe and, secondarily, targets in China. The United States and its NATO allies were caught flat-footed by the Soviet buildup, a symptom perhaps of the Nixon and Carter Administrations’ commitment to détente.

With caps on intercontinental range nuclear forces and no appetite in NATO or the United States to attempt negotiating limits on theater-range nuclear forces (generally those with 500 km range and less) which were needed to offset the massive Soviet conventional force advantages, intermediate range nuclear forces became the focus of concern. One of the strengths of Griffith’s work is that it describes just how problematic this “gray area problem” was for both the Carter and Reagan Administrations. At home in the United States, prominent Democrats in Congress were committed to not rocking the boat of détente by producing new or more nuclear weapons to counter the Soviet threat, while prominent Republicans saw the Soviet intermediate-range nuclear buildup as evidence of détente’s failure. Abroad, there was a discordant chorus of allies seeking U.S. leadership and assurance in solving the gray area problem, but strong contingents of domestic anti-nuclear peace groups and differences in preferences on negotiating goals made solutions incredibly difficult to imagine. In short, fractions at home and fractions among allies abroad should have made the INF Treaty a near impossibility—but as Griffith demonstrates, the confluence of the right leaders at the right time made it possible.

Unraveling the Gray Area Problem proceeds chronologically, and Griffith wisely begins with the Enhanced Radiation Weapon (ERW) or “neutron bomb” fiasco, a little less than a year before the Carter Administration’s dual-track decision of proceeding with intermediate-range nuclear force modernization in combination with arms control negotiations. The ERW was meant to help assure NATO allies that the United States would not be decoupled from defending Europe against a Soviet invasion. President Carter, however, deferred the development of the ERW at the last minute, taking many allies by surprise, in large part because the allies had not been forthcoming with firm commitments to host the ERW when

it was ready for deployment. A deeply strained NATO alliance, a commitment to learn from mistakes, and the Carter Administration's desire to shore up its defense *bona fides* before an upcoming election all contributed to the development of the dual-track decision.

As Griffith makes clear throughout his book, U.S. political and defense leaders did not think of the U.S. Pershing II IRBMs and Gryphon ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) purely as bargaining chips to trade for the Soviet SS-20s. Instead, U.S. military leaders saw the high-flying Pershing IIs and the low-flying Gryphons as unique stressors on the Soviet air defense network, with the lethal combination of speed and accuracy as added benefits to the force. U.S. and allied political leaders, meanwhile, agreed that forces based in Europe would have a greater assurance and extended deterrence effect than could be provided by air- and sea-based forces alone. The military and political reasons for deploying these intermediate-range systems produced the secondary benefit of conferring value on these systems for arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union—the only question was what an agreement might look like.

The Carter Administration sought to cap or reduce intermediate-range systems, labelling the “zero option” that the Reagan Administration ultimately came to favor as being too implausible. Here, Griffith helps clarify the historical record by demonstrating that Reagan Administration officials like Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle were not trying to inject poison pills in the INF process by advocating for hardline negotiating tactics, as some historians have alleged; rather, they saw the United States as increasing its military and economic advantages over the Soviet Union in important areas—a development that enabled U.S. officials to pursue President Reagan's ultimate goal: moving past caps to obtain *reductions* in nuclear arms.

Unraveling the Gray Area Problem offers a concise history of the INF Treaty, from birth to death, and does so with copious citations of primary and secondary sources—splitting the book almost perfectly in half between text and endnotes. Griffith only stumbles in two areas, one minor and one of more significance. On the minor issue, the writing can at times be overly rigid, repeating whole phrases or sentences from previous chapters nearly word-for-word. On a more substantive note, Griffith unconvincingly seeks to apply the lessons learned from the INF Treaty to the current security environment. He assumes, more than argues, that since the INF Treaty, in his opinion, was a net benefit to U.S. security before, then the same can be said for a similar approach to current Russian and Chinese threats. This is not to say that the lessons he deduces from the INF Treaty (the importance of bargaining leverage, strong alliance communication, deep study of the adversary) are wrong—they are, in fact, correct; rather, it is not clear currently that a U.S. pursuit of caps or the elimination of intermediate-range forces in and near Russia and China would be inherently beneficial to U.S. or allied security. In short, current deterrence and assurance requirements are evolving so rapidly that the rigid application of the INF Treaty template on the situation is unhelpful.

Setting these concerns aside, *Unraveling the Gray Area Problem* is a deeply researched historical corrective on the leadup to and negotiation of the INF Treaty. Interested readers

and area specialists will both benefit from the text and its extensive endnotes—demonstrating once again that the INF Treaty still has more to teach.

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Jared M. McKinney, Peter Harris, *Deterrence Gap: Avoiding War in the Taiwan Strait* (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College Press, January 2024), 113 pages.

The most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security is the PRC's] coercive and increasingly aggressive endeavor to refashion the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences.

*2022 National Defense Strategy*¹³

As the National Defense Strategy states, the most serious security challenge the United States faces is from a revisionist PRC (People's Republic of China) and its desire to reshape the international order to better suit its desires. Central to this desire is the status of Taiwan and the PRC's long-term goal to unify with the island on its terms and settle the unfinished business of the Chinese civil war. Tensions over the status of Taiwan have increased dramatically in recent years, underscored by the PRC removing the language of "peaceful reunification" in the government's report given at the National People's Congress in March 2024.¹⁴ The United States, long the guarantor of Taiwan's security, has a strategy to deter the PRC from forceful unification that is based on strategic ambiguity, with U.S. policy stating that the U.S. military must have the capability to defend Taiwan without necessarily committing to its defense.¹⁵

It is in this increasingly tense and uncertain environment that Jared M. McKinney and Peter Harris have published their book *Deterrence Gap: Avoiding War in the Taiwan Strait*. McKinney and Harris take a holistic view of the problem space, reviewing how the United States and Taiwan deterred the PRC from 1949 to the present, examining how that deterrent has deteriorated over the years and outlining the key factors in the PRC's determination to unify with Taiwan in the near future. Finally, they conclude by exploring the implications for deterrence. The analysis builds throughout their research to paint a concerning downward trend in the deterrence of PRC aggression against Taiwan without any quick solutions to reverse this course.

¹³ United States Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D.C., 2022, p. 4.

¹⁴ Yew Lun Tian, Lauri Chen, "China Drops 'peaceful reunification' reference to Taiwan," *Reuters*, 5 March 2024.

¹⁵ See, Congress.gov. "H.R.2479 - 96th Congress (1979-1980): Taiwan Relations Act," April 10, 1979, available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479>.

The information space is rife with analyses of the potential for conflict with the PRC over Taiwan, but the strength in McKinney and Harris' *Deterrence Gap* is their discussion of deterrence from the lens of both constraints and restraints. Constraints are defined as factors that are applied externally, while restraints are part of the internal political, social and economic fabric that will also influence decision making. This provides a more holistic assessment of the factors impacting the PRC leadership decision calculus and acknowledges that self-imposed restraint can undermine deterrence. Using the constraints and restraints framework to better understand PRC leadership perceptions that are key to any decision to take Taiwan by force, McKinney and Harris are better able to assess how the deterrence strategy of the United States vis-à-vis Taiwan has eroded.

One of the key constraints identified by McKinney and Harris is the ability and resolve of Taiwan to defend itself. The figures the book presents on Taiwan's defense spending compared to that of the PRC are stark and concerning. Coupled with opinion polling data on the reluctance of Taiwan's society to support the effort that would be necessary to defeat a PRC invasion, it is not a stretch to question the resolve of Taiwan to resist. McKinney and Harris point out that this could increase the PRC's confidence in its ability to achieve a fait accompli when taking the island. The deep discussion in *Deterrence Gap* about Taiwan's ability to deter the PRC is refreshing. The vast majority of analyses produced about deterring PRC aggression against Taiwan focuses on the U.S. ability to deter that aggression, overlooking Taiwan's contribution or minimizing its importance. This removes Taiwan's agency in its own defense and in many ways infantilizes the island. *Deterrence Gap* reverses this trend, highlighting the necessity for Taiwan to be not only involved, but a leading force in any campaign to deter PRC aggression.

McKinney and Harris identify four restraints impacting the deterrence of PRC aggression against Taiwan, including the degradation of the silicon shield, the impending legitimacy crisis of the Chinese Communist Party and a closing window of opportunity. However, the deep dive analysis on the weakening of the One China framework is the most compelling. As the authors point out, even with diverging historical interpretations of the One China principle among the PRC, the United States and Taiwan, it still allowed for the PRC to consider the prospect of peaceful unification with Taiwan. However, this principle has been undermined by the actions of all three actors as *Deterrence Gap* details, often with the PRC, Taiwan and the United States degrading it in response to actions by one another. While the authors are careful not to assign blame, they do point out that if the One China principle is no longer perceived as a viable prospect, the PRC may perceive it has no choice but to unify with Taiwan by force. This is a highly motivating perception that will be difficult to influence in order to deter the PRC.

The warning McKinney and Harris outline in *Deterrence Gap* is dire, but not hopeless. Central to the recommendations the authors suggest is Taiwan taking the lead to address its shortfalls in order to increase the cost to the PRC of an invasion. Again, having Taiwan take a central and foundational role in reinforcing deterrence across the Taiwan Strait is an imperative first step, because, as the authors point out, Taiwan's will to resist is the center of deterrence gravity. Further, *Deterrence Gap* suggests a series of interlocking deterrence

measures by the United States and other Indo-Pacific powers both to constrain and incentivize the PRC to refrain from aggression against Taiwan. With *Deterrence Gap*, McKinney and Harris paint an increasingly dangerous and consequential situation, but offer concrete solutions to shore up deterrence in both the short and long term.

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