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Commentaries and Replies

On "American Landpower and Modern US Generalship"

Thomas E. Ricks

This commentary is in reply to David G. Fivecoat's article "American Landpower and Modern US Generalship" published in the Winter-Spring 2013 issue of Parameters (vol. 42, no. 4/vol 43, no. 1).

Thank you for running Lieutenant Colonel David G. Fivecoat's essay on "American Landpower and Modern US Generalship" (Winter-Spring 2013). I don't agree with everything he writes, but nonetheless am pleased to see Fivecoat's article because it is exactly the type of work I hoped my book *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* would provoke. I had thought that General Brown's articles in ARMY magazine might launch such a discussion, but that magazine shied away from engaging, without explaining why, as if discussing the quality of leadership in today's Army somehow was impolite.

Most of all, I am fascinated by Fivecoat's finding (page 74) that leading a division in combat in Iraq seems to have hurt an officer's chances of promotion. That worries me. What does it mean? That discovery of his indicates that the Army of the Iraq-Afghanistan era is out of step from the historical tradition that for an officer, time in combat is the royal road to advancement. I cannot think of other wars in which service in combat hurt an officer's chance of promotion. It is, as Fivecoat almost (but not quite) says, worrisome evidence that the Army for close to a decade persisted in using a peacetime promotion system in wartime.

In addition to breaking new ground intellectually, Fivecoat's article is also courageous. It is one thing for me, a civilian author, to question the quality of American generalship in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is quite another thing for an active duty lieutenant colonel to do so, especially since the Army's official histories have tiptoed around the issue of the failings of senior leadership in our recent wars.

Two final observations:

- I think Lieutenant Colonel Fivecoat lets today's Army off too easily on its lack of transparency. To me this reflects a bit of drift in the service, a loss of the sense of being answerable to the nation and the people. Being close-mouthed about its leadership problems gives the impression that the Army's leaders care more about the feelings of generals than the support of the American people.
- Finally, I have to question Fivecoat's assertion that minimizing disruption optimizes performance. It wasn't the case in World War II. Why would it be the case in Afghanistan or Iraq? It may be—but it remains an unproven assumption, and to my mind, a questionable one. The opportunity cost of averting disruption can be large, because such passivity (or "subtlety," as he terms it) results in the apparent rewarding of risk-averse or mediocre commanders. What would Matthew

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Ridgway say about such a policy of minimizing disruption?

Thank you again for running such an illuminating and thought-provoking article.

The Author Replies

David G. Fivecoat

Mr. Thomas Ricks's book *The Generals* did a superb job at generating discussion across the military on the merits of American generalship since World War II. My article, "American Landpower and Modern US Generalship" in the Winter-Spring 2013 edition of *Parameters*, was my attempt to add depth to the dialogue about the major generals who led division-sized formations in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11.

To be sure, the article is not all encompassing. Although the post-9/11 group of major generals is a small data set, it is almost one-third the size of the World War II cohort and will continue to grow while the United States military assists the Afghanistan government's counterinsurgency operations for the next several years. Strictly speaking, it might not be significant by the mathematical definition; but the division commanders of Iraq and Afghanistan are a notable group in the historical sense. While I concede the mathematical limitations of the evidence presented in the article, there is enough hard evidence to allow us to move beyond questions of correlation and to discuss the matter of causation, which, in the end, is far more important.

I acknowledge Mr. Ricks's questioning whether military organizations should place a premium on reducing disruption. In forming my thoughts on the adverse outcomes of firings, intellectually I drew upon literature studying similar experiences in business and professional sports. During a year as a battalion commander in Afghanistan, I (and I'm sure my higher headquarters) wrestled with how to improve the performance of subordinate units in an extremely ambiguous environment. Reliefs rarely seemed the best way forward for my unit or our counterinsurgency campaign. There is a finer line to be drawn on this measure than Ricks concedes.

Thanks again for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. I hope others are able to expand on and contribute to the conversation.

On “Drones and US Strategy: Costs and Benefits”

Ulrike Franke

This commentary is in response to Alan W. Dowd’s “Drone Wars: Risks and Warnings”; W. Andrew Terrill’s “Drones over Yemen: Weighing Military Benefits and Political Costs”; Greg Kennedy’s “Drones: Legitimacy and Anti-Americanism”; and Jacqueline L. Hazelton’s “Drones: What Are They Good For?” All articles were published in the Winter-Spring 2013 issue of Parameters (vol. 42, no. 4/vol 43, no. 1).

In the Winter-Spring 2013 issue of *Parameters*, four authors discussed the new military tool the media has dubbed “drone” and which military officials prefer to call Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) or Remotely Piloted Vehicle (RPV). Alan W. Dowd, W. Andrew Terrill, Greg Kennedy, and Jacqueline L. Hazelton assist the reader in gaining a better grasp of one of today’s most debated issues—the increasing use of UAVs by the US military and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in countries such as Pakistan and Yemen.

Unfortunately, there is not as much scholarship on drones as one might think. Consequently, the articles in the forum, in particular Alan Dowd’s “Drone Wars: Risks and Warnings,” are predominantly based on newspaper editorials and other media reports. Academia has indeed been slow to respond to the unmanned (r)evolution in warfare. This can be explained in part by the scarce source material—information on military UAVs and their use is largely kept secret; reliable information on missile strikes via UAVs is difficult to find, but is becoming more available. The relative lack of scholarly work on the military and political impact of UAVs, however, illustrates a general problem academia confronts when working on current affairs: the difficulty, if not inability, of the academic peer-review process to keep abreast with fast-changing, constantly developing current affairs. Jacqueline Hazelton should, therefore, be given credit for using a considerable amount of scholarly literature in her article “Drones: What Are They Good For?”

It is understandable, therefore, if authors sometimes revert to using general media sources when academic literature is sparse. There is, however, no excuse for using notoriously unreliable media reports for information such as casualty assessments after drone strikes or for the number of UAV users worldwide. In the last few years, several organizations started to gather more accurate information on these issues in a methodologically sound fashion. Instead of using *BBC News* information on Pakistani drone strike casualties, Greg Kennedy should have referenced numbers from the New America Foundation, the *Long War Journal*, or the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (which incidentally is

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where *BBC News* gets its numbers).¹ Instead of quoting *USA Today* concerning numbers of countries with UAVs, Alan Dowd could have used the International Institute for Strategic Studies publication *The Military Balance* or governmental information such that provided by the United States Government Accountability Office.²

All four papers share one major—admittedly common—flaw: the implicit equation of drones, MALE (Medium Altitude, Long Endurance) UAVs, and armed UAVs/UCAVs. It is immensely important to make these distinctions clear: “drone” is a term being used (incorrectly) to describe all kinds of unmanned aerial vehicles. (The better term to describe modern unmanned aircraft is Unmanned Aerial Vehicle [UAV].³) Modern UAVs, or drones, range from insect-sized aircraft to airplanes the size of commercial airliners. A very small number of UAVs can be armed, mostly with air-to-ground missiles. Accordingly, the terms drone and UAV can describe both the Black Hornet—a small (4.7 inches, 16 grams) reconnaissance drone—as well as the Global Hawk, a 14 ton aircraft with a 130.9 ft wingspan. Because UAVs come in so many different forms and can be used for a large variety of tasks, an increasing number of classifications and categorizations has been introduced. Usually, a distinction is made between mini, tactical, MALE, and HALE (High Altitude, Long Endurance) UAVs. The most notorious UAVs—the General Atomics Predator and Reaper which get by far the most attention in the media—are both MALE UAVs. The term UCAV (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle) describes armed UAVs. Armed UAVs can theoretically come in all sizes; for the moment, however, most armed UAVs are MALE UAVs. The Reaper is the most potent UCAV currently in use and can be armed with up to fourteen Hellfire missiles or a combination of missiles and laser-guided bombs.

All four authors use the term drone, but none of them believes it necessary to define what exactly is meant by it. By their writing it becomes clear, however, they are not discussing drones in general, but rather a very specific type of UAV used for a very specific purpose. Jacqueline Hazelton notes “They can kill, disable, support fighters on the ground, destroy, harry, hinder, deny access, observe, and track.” This is not exactly false—but most of these attributes pertain to only a small fraction of today’s drones, namely armed MALE UAVs. She also writes,

1 Bureau of Investigative Journalism, *Covert War on Terror—The Datasets*, January 3, 2013, <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drone-data/>; New America Foundation, *The Year of the Drone*, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones>; Bill Roggio and Alexander Mayer, “Charting the Data for US airstrikes in Pakistan, 2004-2013,” *Long War Journal*, April 17, 2013, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/pakistan-strikes.php>.

2 *The Military Balance* lists UAVs above 20 kg for all countries. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2013* (London: Routledge, 2013). The US Government Accountability Office has published a list of all suspected UAV users in 2012. “Non-proliferation: Agencies Could Improve Information Sharing and End-Use Monitoring on Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Exports,” US Government Accountability Office, July 2012, GAO-12-536: 10.

3 The definition of a drone is “an unmanned vehicle which conducts its mission without guidance from an external source.” This means that once launched, a drone’s flight path cannot be changed. Modern unmanned aircraft are, therefore, better described by the term UAV, “a powered, aerial vehicle that does not carry a human operator, uses aerodynamic forces to provide vehicle lift, can fly autonomously or be piloted remotely, can be expendable or recoverable, and can carry a lethal or nonlethal payload. Ballistic or semiballistic vehicles, cruise missiles, and artillery projectiles are not considered unmanned aerial vehicles”. (All definitions taken from the “NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (English and French),” NATO Standardization Agency (NSA) 2008, AAP-6(2008), <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/other/nato2008.pdf>. These definitions are also used by the US Department of Defense and other governmental agencies.)

“They are claimed to do less collateral damage than either missiles or manned aerial bombing,” practically equating UAVs and missiles. Alan Dowd writes that drones are “hitting targets from Asia to Africa,” equipped with missiles fired “by a remote-control warrior sitting in the safety of a nondescript building outside Las Vegas.” He considers them “a cheap alternative to long-range, long-endurance warplanes.” None of these statements applies to the large majority of drones, which are small to medium-sized unarmed tactical surveillance UAVs. The statements are only true for MALE UCAVs.

The misuse of the term drone is not only an analytical nuisance—it has direct implications for the readers’ understanding of the issues surrounding UAV use. When Alan Dowd discusses UCAVs over nine pages and then mentions an “estimated 75 countries have drone programs underway,” there clearly is a risk readers will assume that 75 countries have or will soon have armed MALE UAVs. In reality, of these 75 countries, only three are known to have UCAVs (the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel) and two (China and Iran) are suspected to have UCAVs. Most states do not have MALE UAVs. It might be the author was unaware of the distinctions. Quoting an *Economist* article which states, “Training UAS [Unmanned Aerial System] controllers . . . costs less than a tenth as much as turning out a fast-jet pilot,” Dowd replaces UAV with UCAV and writes “training UCAV controllers costs less than a tenth what it costs to train traditional combat aviators.”

Most importantly, it is crucial not to confuse the tool, i.e., armed UAVs, with the strategy—targeted killing. A drone is an aircraft that can be used (and is indeed being used) in conventional war settings or for civilian purposes. It is not synonymous with targeted killings or signature strikes, nor with surveillance or tapping, crop dusting or real estate photography (all of which drones have been used for). Using the term in a way that makes the reader confuse the tool and the task, especially if the task is highly contentious and potentially illegal, holds a risk of public opinion turning against the tool which can be, if used the right way, of considerable military value.

The military and political value of using armed UAVs for missile strikes in undeclared conflict zones is a question all four authors approach. The shared sentiment is that the undeniable tactical victories of targeted killings and signature strikes via UCAVs are lessened or even neutralized by strategic setbacks. Andrew Terrill, in his excellent study of US UCAV use in Yemen, states the use of military armed drones “appear to have made a significant difference in helping the Yemeni government cope with AQAP [al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula] while reducing that organization’s ability to conduct international terrorism.” He, however, identifies the drone program as “deeply unpopular with many Yemenis.” UAVs have been criticized for violating national sovereignty, for putting psychological pressure on local populations in areas routinely monitored by UAVs, and for causing high numbers of civilian casualties. Terrill assesses there is, therefore, the “potential for serious backlash over any drone-related disaster.” Greg Kennedy draws attention to the risk of fuelling anti-American resentment and alienating allies through the inconsiderate use of UCAVs. Alan Dowd cites former US ambassador to NATO, Kurt Volker, who warns drone strikes might play into terrorists’ hands by helping them recruit new followers.

Unsurprisingly, because of this mixed picture, none of the authors unequivocally argues in favor or against the increasing use of UCAVs. Alan Dowd seems most favorable towards the new technology, but underlines “there exists no simple solution to the drone dilemma.” Andrew Terrill puts it best, indicating “drones are on probation” for the moment. Much will depend on the United States’ handling of its growing unmanned air force. It is important that academia actively participate this discussion. It is insufficient to observe the development from afar and to hide behind academic impartiality and objectivity. “Sparking further analysis of drone strikes,” as Jacqueline Hazelton aims to, is not enough. More pathbreaking scholarship on US drone use is needed. Of the four articles presented in this issue, Andrew Terrill’s detailed analysis of US drone use in Yemen and its military and political benefits and costs meets these requirements best.

These four articles provide a useful introduction and overview of central issues surrounding U(C)AV use. More analysis is to come, and, as Hazelton points out, “Many good minds are already at work, and more evidence should become available as time passes and, perhaps, as the United States makes its drone programs more transparent.” Those interested in the future of drone use in the United States and worldwide have a lot to look forward to.

On occasion, we receive commentary to articles published in the journal. We offer our authors the opportunity to review and respond to that commentary. The following reply is from Alan W. Dowd, author of “Drone Wars: Risks and Warnings.”

One Author Replies

Alan W. Dowd

Although Ms. Franke does not appear to challenge the central premise of my essay—that drone warfare opens the United States to a range of geostrategic, geopolitical, constitutional, and public policy challenges the American people and their elected representatives have not fully considered—she offers some helpful insights. Among the most important of these is the notion that we should “not confuse the tool, i.e., armed UAVs, with the strategy—targeted killing.” Regrettably, that appears to be what is happening in policymaking circles, as targeted killing with UCAVs—a tactic—has taken the place of strategy. Even so, I share her view that UCAVs can be a tool of considerable military value, but only if their use is more restrained and better defined by policymakers.

Her commentary emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between UAVs and UCAVs. This admonition is well taken. My essay made sure to note, “In the past decade, the US drone fleet has swelled from 50 planes to 7,500, though the vast majority of these drones are not UCAVs,” and made a distinction between the Army’s fleet of reconnaissance/surveillance drones and strike drones. I did use the “UCAV” acronym in discussing the disparity between manned and unmanned

training costs. It is worth noting that even some Pentagon documents use the umbrella term “UAS”—or “unmanned aerial systems”—in discussing strike and nonstrike drones. Moreover, there is a significant difference in the costs of training drone operators and traditional pilots. A recent Air Force report discussing MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers—importantly, the report describes the MQ-1 as focusing on “interdiction and armed reconnaissance against critical, perishable targets” and the MQ-9 as “a persistent hunter-killer”—concluded that using nonaviators to operate these armed drones could save several hundred thousand dollars per pilot/controller.

Ms. Franke takes issue with my mention of 75 countries having drone programs underway. My essay did not say that all of them are UCAV programs, but some are. In fact, Russia is developing what it calls “automated strike aircraft.” Germany is procuring armed drones. After its experience in Libya and Mali, France is keenly interested in acquiring the Reaper. And then there are the known unknowns: Are Hezbollah’s drones armed? Has North Korea retooled its drones into offensive weapons? To whom will China sell its armed drones? Moreover, a drone does not have to be armed to trigger an international incident, as the United States and Iran have learned, which is one of my broader points: Drones could usher in a new age of accidental wars.

A final caveat on sourcing—the commentator writes, “There is not as much scholarship on drones as one might think; most of the articles . . . are predominantly based on newspaper editorials and other media reports,” and warns against using “notoriously unreliable media reports.” First, I am aware of no “notoriously unreliable media reports” cited in my essay. Second, owing to the nature of this new, evolving weapons system, the use of media reports as supporting material is unavoidable. Third, just as it is problematic to conflate “UAV” and “UCAV,” it is problematic to conflate “editorials” and “media reports.” Of the 49 footnotes in my essay, one comes from an editorial: a *New York Times* editorial expressly cited to convey how armed drones are being promoted by the press. Two come from authoritative essays penned by topic experts: a former US ambassador and a former National Security Council official. There are 20 news sources cited, 6 Defense Department reports, 5 books, 3 scholarly journals/reports, 2 military briefings/interviews, 2 polls, one State Department briefing, one treaty, and one statute.

On "Reaffirming the Utility of Nuclear Weapons"

Robert H. Gregory

This commentary is in response to Bradley A. Thayer and Thomas M. Skypek's article "Reaffirming the Utility of Nuclear Weapons" published in the Winter-Spring 2013 issue of Parameters (vol. 42, no. 4/vol. 43, no. 1).

Bradley Thayer and Thomas Skypek make the following assertion: "Nuclear weapons deter enemies such as al Qaeda who would deliberately attack the United States as well as countries like China that might be tempted to attack the US homeland as the result of escalation from a crisis (e.g., Taiwan in 1995-96)." This assertion groups together state and nonstate actors in a problematic manner. Both components of the assertion are questionable. The claim that nuclear weapons can deter al Qaeda from attacking the US homeland, or China from attacking the US homeland in a potential Taiwan Straits crisis, lacks both nuance and evidence.

There are no historical examples to support the assertion that al Qaeda is deterred by nuclear weapons. On the contrary, al Qaeda has made several attacks against the United States despite our nuclear status. In those cases, the use (or threat of use) of nuclear weapons was not feasible because these weapons are too blunt to target anything of significance to a terrorist organization. Al Qaeda seems to be unaffected by traditional conceptions of deterrence as forged during the Cold War. Terrorist organizations may be deterred more by Special Operations Forces (SOF) raids, drone strikes, or the vigilance of local law enforcement than by fear of a nuclear strike. In fact, a nuclear strike might play into terrorist hands. Fear and credibility are central elements of deterrence. Deterrence and coercion require credibly putting something at risk an adversary holds dear. Some terrorists do not even fear losing their lives, so they are impossible to deter; however, this does not mean their efforts cannot be foiled, though not with nuclear weapons.

Would Chinese military strategists be "tempted" to consider attacking the US homeland with nuclear weapons to advance interests in Taiwan during a crisis? It was actually the other way around during the First Taiwan Straits Crisis when the Eisenhower administration considered using nuclear weapons against China. By the Third Taiwan Crisis, China was a well-established nuclear power, capable of putting some American cities at risk. That crisis involved two nation-states with nuclear weapons, yet these weapons did not alter the strategic calculus of either side. It started when the United States granted a visa for Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to visit and present a speech at Cornell University in May 1995. The speech was intended to trumpet the accomplishments of democratization in Taiwan and was seen by China as a public display of Taiwan's ambition towards diplomatic recognition and independence. China responded to this visit with a show of force

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consisting of missile launches into waters near Taiwanese ports, and live fire artillery exercises off the coast of mainland China adjacent to the Taiwan Strait. The United States subsequently responded with the deployment of two carrier battle groups to the region in March 1996. At no time during the crisis did either side make decisions solely based on the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons. Instead, both sides reacted to each other's deployments of conventional naval and land forces while simultaneously engaging in high-level diplomatic exchanges.

The United States' tit-for-tat strategy, with proportional displays of conventional force, eventually deterred further escalation—when combined with reassurance that the decision to grant a visa to Lee was not a change in the United States' official position regarding Taiwan. During the crisis, then President Clinton privately communicated in a letter to then President Jiang Zemin, “that U.S. policy opposed Taiwan independence, did not support Taiwan membership in the UN and did not support a two-China policy or a policy of one China and one Taiwan.”⁴ Neither side delivered a *fait accompli* during the crisis. Essentially, China's show of force caused the United States to reaffirm its refusal to recognize Taiwan, and the United States' reciprocal show of force affirmed America would not back down from its decision to grant Lee a visa. Even today, the United States does not formally recognize Taiwan; it continues to perform a similarly delicate balancing act with its position on Taiwan independence. This position is more one of diplomatic ambiguity to save face in a crisis rather than one of extended nuclear deterrence. Extending the nuclear umbrella to Taiwan does not serve as a credible deterrent. Should the United States risk American cities in a nuclear exchange with China to save Taiwan from a Chinese onslaught? During the Cold War, would we have risked losing New York to save Berlin? These are the dilemmas that would be created by the type of nuclear brinkmanship the authors espouse. Raising the stakes ever-higher to even the playing field is a strategy that stems from weakness.

The authors make reckless assertions regarding the utility of nuclear weapons. The rapid ability to cause massive, indiscriminate damage is not always militarily useful, particularly when dealing with a terrorist organization or another nuclear power. The authors contend that having less than 300 nuclear weapons will make the United States impotent. They do not consider the possibility that nuclear weapons have diminishing marginal utility for deterrence and coercion when possessed in ever-greater quantities. The highly destructive power of nuclear weapons, combined with the possibility a conflict may escalate to the point of nuclear exchange, demands a higher level of academic scrutiny when making assertions regarding the utility of these weapons. Unfounded assertions raise the potential for miscalculation in a crisis.

4 Robert S. Ross, “The 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and Use of Force,” *International Security* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 8.

The Authors Reply

Bradley A. Thayer and Thomas M. Skypek

We thank Robert H. Gregory for raising several excellent points and welcome the opportunity to respond. Gregory raises two objections: first, that nuclear weapons do not deter terrorists; and, second, that China would not attack the United States over Taiwan. We address each in turn in this brief reply.

We agree that deterrence of terrorists is a complex and multifaceted issue as terrorists are motivated by many ideologies and beliefs. In addition, we concur that deterrence of terrorism requires many tools in the toolkit, including those he suggests. Where we disagree is in the nature of the threat. First, if we focus specifically on al Qaeda and associated movements, we see they are dynamic and evolving organizations, whose motivations and capabilities might be even more dangerous and potent in the future. We would not want to dismiss the role that nuclear weapons—in this instance, low yield nuclear weapons—may play in targeting a potential underground facility, or providing US decisionmakers with the option of doing so. Second, as state sponsorship is a likely path for al Qaeda and associated movements to acquire fissile material or nuclear weapons, we recognize the important role nuclear weapons may play in deterring state sponsors of terrorism. It is critical any potential state sponsors of al Qaeda and associated movements know the United States will hold them accountable if weapons of mass destruction are shared with terrorist groups. Indeed, this has been proclaimed by senior US national security decisionmakers and was a major motivation for the French declaration in 2006 that limited nuclear strikes might be employed against a state that launched a terrorist attack against it.

Concerning China, there are two reasons we are less sanguine than Gregory about the willingness of the Chinese to escalate over Taiwan. The first reason is the balance of resolve: the Chinese believe Taiwan is a part of China, thus making their threats and readiness to use force more credible. The second reason is the Chinese are not transparent in strategic matters so we do not know in what circumstances the Chinese would believe escalation served their interests. We do not know if the Chinese conceive of escalation as the Soviet Union and the United States did during the Cold War, if escalation may be controlled, or what its thresholds are. Gregory ascribes the peaceful resolutions of the Taiwan crises to diplomacy alone. However, he fails to acknowledge the role played by nuclear weapons in establishing the environment that led to peaceful resolutions.

Accordingly, it is essential to acknowledge that the role of US nuclear weapons is to deter escalation over Taiwan or other significant territorial disputes. The United States must have the capability to deter Chinese escalation and coerce Beijing into deescalating. International stability, prudence, and the credibility of the United States require strategic superiority. This superiority requires robust strategic capabilities, including an arsenal large enough to meet multiple present and future

threats—coupled with the appropriate declaratory policy, doctrine, training, and other critical support.

No strategic tool solves all strategic problems. US nuclear weapons did not prevent America's loss in Vietnam, and, at present, China and the United States are fighting a cyberwar unclouded by their strategic arsenals. Yet, it would be a disastrous mistake to yield to a proclivity to minimize or dismiss the contributions of nuclear weapons to the security of the United States in the past, present, or future. The United States must have robust conventional and strategic forces to meet its many strategic commitments in a host of circumstances. Fundamentally, international politics has not changed. The role of military power and the need to deter and coerce opponents is the same today as in Metternich's or Sun Tzu's time. The strategic arsenal of the United States plays a major role in protecting the American people and its allies, and allows the United States to advance its interests against those who oppose it. Indeed, the lack of any great power wars since 1945 can be largely attributed to the environment, fraught with risks to be sure, created by these weapons. The value of the absolute weapon identified by Bernard Brodie almost 70 years ago remains true today.

