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From the Editor in Chief

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From the Editor in Chief

Welcome to the Winter 2023–24 issue of *Parameters*. This issue opens with two *In Focus* commentaries offering observations from the Russia-Ukraine War, two forums addressing deterrence and strategic influence, and the inaugural Director’s Corner for the China Landpower Studies Center (CLSC).

Our first commentary, “Was the Russian Invasion of Ukraine a Failure of Western Deterrence?” is by Bettina Renz, a contributing editor and member of the *Parameters* editorial board. She argues the West never articulated a clear strategy to deter Moscow’s invasion. Instead, she shows the West’s deterrence efforts were based on problematic assumptions about the Kremlin’s motivations. The second commentary, “Ukraine’s Lessons for Future Combat: Unmanned Aerial Systems and Deep Strike,” is by Harry Halem. He demonstrates how the reconnaissance-strike complexes used by both sides in the Russia-Ukraine War have changed modern combat. He pays special attention to Ukraine’s development of a battle-management system that fuses remotely piloted aircraft systems and satellite reconnaissance to coordinate deep strikes into Russia’s rear areas.

Our first forum, *Deterring Major Powers*, includes three articles providing insights into how America can develop and implement successful deterrence strategies. In “Deterring Russian Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons: A Revised Approach,” Cliff Parsons argues the US military should develop a restrained, deliberate, and empathetic strategy centered on minimalist military objectives. In the second article, “Ambivalent Offshore Balancer: America in the Middle East and Beyond,” John Schuessler questions the logic underpinning the strategy of offshore balancing; he makes the case that the United States is, in fact, an ambivalent balancer due to the “stopping power of water.” In the forum’s final article, “Integrating Army Capabilities into Deterrence: The Early Cold War,” Robert Williams draws parallels to the current strategic environment by assessing how the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations forced institutional change by integrating atomic weapons and other capabilities across multiple domains with allies and partners worldwide to deter the Soviet Union and China.

Our second forum, *Achieving Strategic Influence*, features two articles proposing ways America can better understand its allies and adversaries

to shape a more favorable security environment. In “Competing for Global Influence: How Best to Assess Potential Strategic Partners,” Brian Forester argues US military planners should consider how economic globalization shapes the preferences of potential defense partners. In the second article, “Reflexive Control: Influencing Strategic Behavior,” Maria de Goeij explains reflexive control through a complex-adaptive-systems framework, which she contends can help US military planners understand other actors and their behaviors, especially Russia.

Our *From the Archives: Civil-Military Relations* highlights the article, “Are Retired Flag Officers Overparticipating in the Political Process?” by Zachary Griffiths originally published in the Spring 2020 issue. He shows the active participation of retired generals and admirals in politics does little harm to US democratic institutions or to the nonpartisan reputation of the US military.

Finally, Colonel Richard Butler, the first director of the CLSC, introduces the Center, its mission, organization, capabilities, research agenda, and expected products. ~AJE