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EDITOR'S NOTE

Stephen I. Schwartz

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Among those who advocate either deep cuts in nuclear weapons or their elimination, there is a common assumption that the fewer weapons there are, the lesser the risks associated with their stockpiling and potential use. In addition, it follows that significant reductions in the two largest nuclear arsenals in the world will help control the further spread of nuclear weapons worldwide, not least by demonstrating a commitment to Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which requires all parties to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures" to end the accumulation of nuclear weapons and on nuclear disarmament.

But what if these assumptions aren't correct, or at least not fully thought through? What if beliefs honed in the bipolar Cold War era aren't fully applicable in today's more multipolar world? What if, in some cases, fewer weapons equals *greater* risks? And what if reductions below a certain level spur US allies to acquire (or at least consider acquiring) nuclear weapons of their own? These questions and more are the focus of a timely, thoughtful, and informative special section in this issue, "The Regional Implications of Low Nuclear Numbers on Strategic Stability," researched and written by a team of seven scholars at the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), both based in Monterey, California.

The special section includes six articles focusing on a particular geographical region, as well as a concise overview by **James Clay Moltz** (NPS). While there are many difficulties associated with reductions to low levels of nuclear weapons, Moltz stresses that it is vital to take particular regional concerns into account, and that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the problem.

David S. Yost (NPS) surveys the risks for strategic stability in Europe should the United States and Russia reduce their total nuclear arsenals to 1,000 or fewer weapons. He identifies a number of potential concerns including: eroding the credibility of extended deterrence, a shift from counterforce to countervalue targeting, a future bilateral arrangement that is good for the United States and Russia but leaves Europe out in the cold, a shift toward a launch-on-warning posture, and an increased likelihood of conventional conflict and arms competitions. Yost suggests that retaining US nuclear weapons in Europe, ensuring the ability to quickly reconstitute US nuclear forces there, and maintaining enhanced conventional capabilities in the region can all help to reduce such risks.

Nikolai Sokov (CNS) assesses Russian attitudes toward phased but deep US nuclear cuts. Russia remains focused on the US nuclear stockpile, although it is also concerned about the Chinese and Indian nuclear arsenals. Maintaining a balance with the United States remains paramount, with an eye toward the important balance with Europe (including UK and French nuclear weapons). How best to accomplish this, even as the US and Russian nuclear arsenals continue to decline, is an open question.

James A. Russell (NPS) reviews the relationship between a smaller US nuclear arsenal and strategic stability in the Middle East. Because US security relationships with states in the Middle East are based on conventional deterrence—including multiple

forward bases in the region—and because US nuclear weapons have never played a significant role in the region, Russell finds that further US nuclear reductions aren't likely to affect the strategic balance in the Middle East as long as the United States continues to provide conventional deterrence for its allies.

S. Paul Kapur (NPS) looks at the potential impact of deep cuts in US nuclear weapons on South Asia. He reports that the only way low numbers of US nuclear weapons are likely to affect India and Pakistan is if the “informal” deterrence the United States provides via its active international presence is perceived to be weakening.

Christopher P. Twomey (NPS) casts an eye on Chinese views of nuclear stability at low numbers and finds cause for pessimism. Although China's own nuclear arsenal has always been quite small (certainly relative to the United States and Russia), its concerns about nuclear stability today have more to do with the risks it sees from missile defenses and precision conventional weapons. Because further US (and Russian) nuclear reductions are unlikely to directly address these key issues, China seems unlikely to find such reductions advantageous from a stability standpoint. And while Twomey believes China is not likely to increase its nuclear stockpile just to match the lower levels deployed by the United States or Russia, he suggests that as China grows more confident about its arsenal, it may become more assertive.

Finally, **Wade L. Huntley** (NPS) considers the cases of Japan and South Korea, two states living under the US nuclear umbrella. Huntley finds that in East Asia, the concerns about deep nuclear reductions have less to do with a specific arsenal size and more with the ability of the weapons that remain to address evolving threats and demonstrate a sufficient US commitment to the alliance. Although the alliances can be maintained with lower levels of nuclear weapons, Huntley warns that deterioration in the relationships with either or both states could undermine important US nuclear policy and nonproliferation goals. However, greater consultation and cooperation with both Japan and South Korea should be sufficient to assuage such concerns.

In addition to the special section, this issue also takes a careful look at two important related nuclear weapon issues. **Dallas Boyd** and **James Scouras** (independent national security analyst and fellow, The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, respectively) examine the similarities and differences between President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and President Barack Obama's initiative to seek a world without nuclear weapons. Together, these represent two means to the same end: eliminating the risk that nuclear weapons could be used in anger, or by accident. Boyd and Scouras delve into both efforts and suggest lessons from the SDI experience that are applicable to the ongoing effort to create a nuclear weapon-free world.

Carl A. Lundgren (economist and founder of www.JonahSpeaks.org) assesses the expected probability of a nuclear war since the dawn of the nuclear age by looking at three possible pathways (an international crisis leading directly to a nuclear war, an accident or retaliation for an attack that never actually occurred, and a conventional war leading to nuclear war). He does this by applying Bayes's theorem and other statistical reasoning. Lundgren's calculations show that over this entire period, this probability was in excess of 50 percent, unacceptably high in his opinion. Although Lundgren argues that

further research is required to better refine these estimates (and to understand the potential routes to war), he also calls for greater efforts to reduce the risk altogether.

This issue concludes with three reviews of important books. **Michael D. Gordin** (Princeton University) evaluates arguments that nuclear weapons lack military utility and should not be treated as though they do. **Sumit Ganguly** (Center on American and Global Security at Indiana University, Bloomington) carefully considers a history of Pakistan's nuclear weapon program and an assessment of the management of India's nuclear forces. And **Mark Hibbs** (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) critiques a new theoretical argument about why nuclear weapon programs succeed or fail.

Stephen I. Schwartz, Editor
sschwartz@miis.edu