

FOREIGN AFFAIRS



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Comments

Is There Still a Terrorist Threat? *John Mueller* 2

Despite all the ominous warnings of wily terrorists and imminent attacks, there has been neither a successful strike nor a close call in the United States since 9/11. The reasonable—but rarely heard—explanation is that there are no terrorists within the United States, and few have the means or the inclination to strike from abroad.

After Proliferation *Stephen Peter Rosen* 9

How to prevent nuclear proliferation is once again topping the U.S. security agenda. But few decision-makers are seriously considering what a postproliferation world would look like, even though such a world would inevitably require rethinking many of the policies that the U.S. government and others now take for granted.

The Next Secretary-General *Brian Urquhart* 15

The UN's top job is one of the hardest, and least defined, in the world. Canny officeholders have managed to turn it into an open-ended diplomatic and humanitarian post, but much depends on personality. So when the UN picks a new chief this year, it should focus on character; that, not experience, is the key to success.

Essays

God's Country? *Walter Russell Mead* 24

Religion has always been a major force in U.S. politics, but the recent surge in the number and the power of evangelicals is recasting the country's political scene—with dramatic implications for foreign policy. This should not be cause for panic: evangelicals are passionately devoted to justice and improving the world, and eager to reach out across sectarian lines.

Contents

- How to Keep the Bomb From Iran** *Scott D. Sagan* 45
The debate over how to deal with Iran's nuclear program is clouded by historical amnesia. Nuclear proliferation has been stopped before, and it can and should be stopped in this case as well. Unfortunately, with Tehran—as with some of its predecessors—the price for Washington will be relinquishing the threat of regime change by force.
- The Next War of the World** *Niall Ferguson* 61
The twentieth century was the bloodiest era in history. Despite the comfortable assumption that the twenty-first will be more peaceful, the same ingredients that made the last hundred years so destructive are present today. In particular, a conflict in the Middle East may well spark another global conflagration. The United States could prevent such an outcome—but it may not be willing to.
- Mexico's Disputed Election** *Luis Rubio and Jeffrey Davidow* 75
The July 2 Mexican election was about more than picking a president. It represented a choice between continuing the liberalization of recent years or returning to the past. Neither alternative, however, offers a solution to the country's problems. To address those, the next president must not only deepen reforms but also extend their benefits to the many Mexicans who have been left out of the process.
- France and Its Muslims** *Stéphanie Giry* 87
The recent panic over the rise of Islamic extremism in Europe has overlooked a key fact: the majority of European Muslims are trying hard to fit in, not opt out. This is especially clear in France, where the picture is much brighter than often acknowledged. Unfortunately, cynical politicians and the clumsy elite are now making matters much worse.
- Global NATO** *Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier* 105
The advent of a new global politics after the Cold War has led NATO to expand its geographic reach and the range of its operations. Now, NATO must extend its membership to any democratic state that can help it fulfill its new responsibilities. Only a truly global alliance can address the global challenges of the day.
- The Real Online Terrorist Threat** *Evan F. Kohlmann* 115
Fears of a "digital Pearl Harbor"—a cyberattack against critical infrastructure—have so preoccupied Western governments that they have neglected to recognize that terrorists actually use the Internet as a tool for organizing, recruiting, and fundraising. Their online activities offer a window onto their methods, ideas, and plans.
- The Rise of Intelligence** *David Kahn* 125
Modern militaries' obsession with intelligence gathering and evaluation would have bemused Caesar and Napoleon, since such behavior was rarely engaged in until recently. In the war on terrorism, intelligence is playing its greatest role yet, but even today, espionage and intelligence analysis will not be the decisive factors.

Contents

Reviews & Responses

- Questions of Fairness *Robert H. Wade* 136
In *Economic Justice in an Unfair World*, Ethan Kapstein sets out admirably to define a global system that would guarantee opportunity for all states. But on the key issue—free trade—he subverts his own efforts by clinging to simplistic neoliberal dogma.
- The Dream Palace of the Empire *L. Carl Brown* 144
The Foreigner's Gift is vintage Fouad Ajami: bold, crisp, wide-ranging, and discursive, it will surely both inform and provoke. But can the U.S. invasion of Iraq really be defended as a noble mission regardless of its cause—or its outcome?
- Nuclear Exchange
Peter C. W. Flory, Keith Payne, Pavel Podvig, Alexei Arbatov, Keir A. Lieber, and Daryl G. Press 149
Could the U.S. government really destroy all of an adversary's nuclear weapons in a nuclear first strike? Does Washington want that ability? And what—if anything—should be done about it?
- Recent Books on International Relations 158
Including L. Carl Brown on "The Israel Lobby"; Robert Legvold on Islam in Russia; and Lawrence Freedman on *Cobra II* and *Fiasco*.
- Letters to the Editor 182
Jean-David Levitte's response to Lawrence Freedman; Allen White on global corporations; and Tony Waters on William Easterly.
- Foreign Affairs* Bestsellers 184

The articles in Foreign Affairs do not represent any consensus of beliefs. We do not expect that readers will sympathize with all the sentiments they find here, for some of our writers will flatly disagree with others, but we hold that while keeping clear of mere vagaries, Foreign Affairs can do more to inform American public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent ideas than it can by identifying itself with one school. We do not accept responsibility for the views expressed in any article, signed or unsigned, that appears in these pages. What we do accept is the responsibility for giving them a chance to appear.

THE EDITORS

Nuclear Exchange

Does Washington Really Have (or Want) Nuclear Primacy?

Just the Facts

PETER C. W. FLORY

The essay by Keir Lieber and Daryl Press ("The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy," March/April 2006) contains so many errors, on a topic of such gravity, that a Department of Defense response is required to correct the record.

Lieber and Press assert that current U.S. nuclear policy looks "like a coordinated set of programs to enhance the United States' nuclear first-strike capabilities," an erroneous inference that has already prompted harsh reactions in Russia and other countries. Lieber and Press allege that the U.S. Air Force is "significantly improving its remaining ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] by installing the MX's high-yield warheads and advanced reentry vehicles on Minuteman ICBMs, and it has upgraded the Minuteman's guidance systems to match the MX's accuracy."

In fact, the MK-21 reentry vehicles and warheads from retired Peacekeeper missiles

(formerly known as "MX") are being installed on Minuteman III missiles to take advantage of the MK-21's improved safety characteristics. There is no increase in yield, and the MK-21 reentry vehicles do not increase the accuracy of Minuteman III missiles. Nor will the guidance replacement program under way for Minuteman III missiles—which involves upgrading guidance components to extend the missiles' lives—result in those ICBMs' reaching a level of accuracy equal to that of the Peacekeeper.

The authors go on to question why crews of the B-2 stealth bomber train in low-altitude flight "unless their mission is to penetrate a highly sophisticated air defense network such as Russia's or, perhaps in the future, China's." It is no secret that the combination of stealth technology and low-altitude flight increases the survivability of an aircraft in a hostile environment. But these attributes are valuable across the full spectrum of warfare (B-2s have been employed in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq).

Publicly available facts contradict Lieber and Press' thesis that the United States is pursuing a first-strike strategy. President George W. Bush set the nation on a path to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons in a May 2001 speech at the National Defense University, stating, "I am committed to achieving a credible deterrent with the lowest possible number of nuclear weapons consistent with our national security needs, including our obligations to our allies. My goal is to move quickly to reduce nuclear forces."

The Department of Defense acted promptly to implement the president's directive. The result was the December 2001 Nuclear Posture Review, which declared that by 2012 the United States will have decreased the number of nuclear warheads deployed on its operational forces by two-thirds (we are already halfway to this goal). Additionally, by 2012 the United States will have cut its total stockpile of nuclear warheads nearly in half. Already, we have removed from strategic service four ballistic missile submarines, and, perhaps most relevant to the discussion at hand, we have voluntarily retired the Peacekeeper missiles, our most accurate and powerful ICBMs. Ironically, during the Cold War, some criticized these land-based missiles, which are capable of being equipped with ten MIRVs (multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles), as representing the ultimate first-strike weapon.

Further, in the recently released Quadrennial Defense Review, the Department of Defense announced plans to modify about ten percent of its submarine-launched Trident II missiles so that they will carry nonnuclear warheads and to retire ten percent of the remaining land-based Minuteman III ICBMs.

These are hardly the moves of an administration seeking, in Lieber and Press' words, "to enhance the United States' nuclear first-strike capabilities."

This administration has continued the policy of previous administrations in that it does not rely on the ability to conduct a nuclear first strike to ensure the survival of the United States. The Department of Defense's force posture of dispersed ICBMs and survivable ballistic missile submarines is designed to make clear to any adversary that might contemplate a first strike against the United States that in the aftermath of such an attack the U.S. military would retain the ability to respond with such devastating force that an aggressor could not stand to gain. This is not a first-strike posture.

PETER C. W. FLORY is *Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy*.

A Matter of Record

KEITH PAYNE

Lieber and Press claim that for 50 years the Pentagon has "structured the U.S. nuclear arsenal according to the goal of deterring a nuclear attack on the United States and, if necessary, winning a nuclear war by launching a preemptive strike that would destroy an enemy's nuclear forces." That is a gross mischaracterization of U.S. policy, as numerous declassified documents and authoritative public statements by government officials attest.

Throughout the 1960s, for example, Defense Secretaries Robert McNamara and Clark Clifford, as recorded in draft presidential memoranda, explicitly rejected

a “credible first-strike capability.” They instead identified the capacity to guarantee “assured destruction” of the Soviet Union as the fundamental measure of whether U.S. nuclear forces were sufficient and used that metric as the basis for rejecting the policy direction and force structure Lieber and Press assert that they sought.

The Department of Defense’s declassified *History of the Strategic Arms Competition, 1945–1972* concludes:

[U.S.] thinking about strategic defensive operations quickly narrowed to thinking primarily about means of safeguarding the deterrent forces in case of an enemy first-strike. ... *Though the United States and the Soviet Union both came to conceive of strategic forces as having the function of war prevention, their views concerning these forces continued to be different, the U.S. emphasizing manifestation of capability for inflicting unacceptable damage on an adversary’s homeland, and the Soviets emphasizing manifestation of capability for fighting a war.* (italics in the original)

Many other declassified policy statements by senior officials across the decades support this conclusion and refute Lieber and Press’ thesis. For example, the Nixon administration’s 1974 top-secret (now declassified) National Security Decision Memorandum 242, the Strategic Air Command’s top-secret (now declassified) December 1979 memo “Current US Strategic Targeting Doctrine,” and President Jimmy Carter’s top-secret (now partially declassified) Presidential Directive 59 all used classic deterrence language and rejected a first-strike policy. Defense Secretary Harold Brown concurred with this position, writing in the *Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1980* that “in the interests of

stability, we avoid the capability of eliminating the other side’s deterrent, insofar as we might be able to do so. In short, we must be quite willing—as we have been for some time—to accept the principle of mutual deterrence, and design our defense posture in light of that principle.”

Indeed, beginning in the mid-1960s, the United States virtually abandoned substantial defensive capabilities that would have been essential to any “war-winning” policy, including a national civil defense program and active defenses to protect against a large-scale strategic-bomber and missile attack. There is no indication that Washington plans to begin funding such measures. The White House’s 2002 unclassified National Security Presidential Directive 23 presents missile defense only in terms of defending against limited missile threats from rogue states, and the United States’ current limited deployment of a missile defense system fully reflects this orientation. In addition, the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review, as described publicly by then Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, not only rejected a first-strike policy but also explicitly excluded Russia as an immediate threat in determining the appropriate size for the operationally deployed nuclear force. Accordingly, the Bush administration has committed to reducing the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads by almost two-thirds and has just completed retiring, without replacement, the Peacekeeper ICBMs.

Lieber and Press’ Cold War-style modeling can reveal nothing meaningful absent an accurate discussion of the policy context, which they do not provide. They cherry-pick and misstate information about U.S. force developments—such as their

false claim about the Minuteman guidance upgrade—to fit the policy they have so miscast, while ignoring or dismissing U.S. force reductions and glaring deficiencies that do not fit their characterization. Their message plays well to the most regressive and militaristic Russian audiences. As former Russian Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar has observed, empowering that particular audience at this time represents a real concern in Russia. Lieber and Press plead that they are just the messengers. But their message is a gross distortion of U.S. policy, and that distortion is destabilizing U.S.-Russian relations.

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Open to Question

PAVEL PODVIG

In arguing that the United States has achieved nuclear primacy and thereby made mutual assured destruction obsolete, Lieber and Press rely on some questionable assumptions about the status of Russia's strategic forces.

To make their case that the Russian strategic nuclear arsenal "has sharply deteriorated," Lieber and Press quote statistics showing that Russia today has "39 percent fewer long-range bombers, 58 percent fewer ICBMs, and 80 percent fewer SSBNS [ballistic-missile-launching submarines] than the Soviet Union fielded during its last days." These numbers are generally correct, but a similarly one-sided

examination of U.S. forces would have painted a similarly dire portrait; after all, the U.S. nuclear arsenal today has 66 percent fewer strategic bombers, 50 percent fewer ICBMs, and more than 50 percent fewer ballistic missile submarines than it possessed during the Cold War.

Lieber and Press claim that Russia's strategic bombers "rarely conduct training exercises," implying that Russia's military is neglecting strategic aviation. Yet Russia's strategic air forces participated in four major exercises in 2005 alone. Similarly, Lieber and Press refer to a number of failures during launches of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) in 2004 to illustrate the decline of the Russian navy. But they do not mention the much larger number of successful launches or the Bulava SLBM development program, which has been quite successful so far.

It may be true, as Lieber and Press write, that "over 80 percent of Russia's silo-based ICBMs have exceeded their original service lives," but regular and successful tests of ICBMs that have been kept in silos for 25 years or longer suggest that this has not affected the missiles' reliability. Russia is decommissioning its ICBMs not because they are unreliable but because it does not need them. Lieber and Press claim that the development of the next-generation Russian ICBM, the Topol-M, has been "stymied by failed tests." But of 15 flight tests conducted to date, only one has failed—a remarkable achievement for any missile-development program. It is true that the production rate of new Topol-Ms is low, but that may be because Russia has decided to concentrate on producing the mobile version of the missile, which it will begin deploying this year.

Lieber and Press are right to state that Russia may end up having as few as 150 land-based missiles by the end of the decade. But about half of those ICBMs would probably be road-mobile Topols and Topol-Ms, which, if operated properly, would have a good chance of surviving a first strike. Lieber and Press dismiss Russia's mobile missiles by saying that they "rarely patrol." In reality, very little is known about Russia's mobile-missile patrol rates, and although it is quite plausible that they are low, it is a stretch to assume that they are zero.

Lieber and Press describe Russia's early warning system as "a mess." In fact, although the system is past its prime, it has lost surprisingly little of its effectiveness. It may seem counter-intuitive, but Russia would gain very little were its early warning system to be deployed to the fullest extent. Adding the capability to detect SLBM launches would not dramatically increase the time available to the Russian leadership for assessing attacks. The much-discussed "gaping hole" in the radar coverage east of Russia also should be put in context. Missiles launched from the Pacific could not cover the entire range of Russian targets that would need to be destroyed in a first strike. The scenario that Lieber and Press postulate, in which "Russian leaders probably would not know of the attack until the warheads detonated" because of flaws in their early warning system, is simply impossible.

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Cutting a Deal

ALEXEI ARBATOV

Lieber and Press are not out to scare anyone. Their article works within the limits imposed both by the information available to them (and accurate data about Russian nuclear forces are not available in sufficient detail) and by their models (which are quite simple compared to those used by Russia's general staff and the U.S. Department of Defense). Based on their findings, they sounded the alarm.

Those who read Lieber and Press' article attentively—and not in our Russian, sometimes paranoid way—will see the argument clearly: The strategic balance between the United States and Russia is becoming less stable, and the objective, technical possibility of a first strike by the United States is increasing. At a time of crisis, this instability could lead to an accidental nuclear war. For instance, if Russia feared a U.S. first strike, Moscow might make rash moves (such as putting its forces on alert) that would provoke a U.S. attack. Lieber and Press are rightly concerned about that risk.

Lieber and Press show that the major reason for the upset in the strategic balance is not that the United States is seeking to acquire the ability to deliver a disarming first strike. It is true that the United States is upgrading its strategic arsenal, but the steps it is taking today are nothing compared to those it took in the arms race during the Cold War. Rather, the primary reason for the shift is that Russia's capabilities are declining because Moscow has not paid enough attention to its nuclear forces over the past 15 years.

Flory, Payne, Podvig, Arbatov, Lieber, and Press

Today, Russia has about 3,500 warheads based on heavy bombers and sea- and land-based missiles. Most of these were built in Soviet times, and their service lives are running out. Accordingly, these increasingly unreliable weapons will soon be removed from service. At that point, Russia's modern nuclear arsenal will only include three or four new ballistic missile submarines and around 100 Topol-M missiles, both mobile and silo-based. These forces will still be enough to serve as a minimal deterrent, but it will rely heavily on a hair-trigger alert, which is very dangerous in the age of nuclear weapons proliferation and catastrophic terrorism.

A secondary cause is that both sides have abandoned their once-successful approach to arms control talks. For more than 30 years, the nuclear balance was maintained through negotiations. Washington pressured Moscow, Moscow pressured Washington, and so a great deal of arms limitation and reduction was achieved. Today, no such negotiations are under way. Some might say that this is because the United States is not interested in resuming talks. But Washington is interested in cooperating with Moscow on a whole number of issues—North Korea, Iran, and much else.

During the Cold War, the United States applied the so-called linkage policy very successfully, tying progress on issues important to Russia to progress on issues important to the United States. Moscow can now play the American game. The strategy is simple: the Russian government could, for example, offer to work with the Americans on Iran in exchange for Washington's signing a new strategic arms reduction treaty that would significantly cut U.S. nuclear forces. (Russia's own force level will fall dramatically with or without

a treaty.) Then, 15 years from now, both Russia and the United States would probably have 1,200 or, perhaps, 1,000 nuclear warheads mounted on survivable delivery systems. That would make life calmer for both the Russians and the Americans, who would no longer fear that Moscow might press the button in a critical situation.

But both sides must take steps to build a better relationship and eventually abandon mutual deterrence through de-alerting their nuclear forces and building joint early warning and antimissile systems. Now that Russia and the United States are no longer enemies, they must work to ensure that their security is no longer held hostage to their ability to destroy tens of millions of each other's citizens. To ignore the issue and hope it will somehow go away on its own is wrong.

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Lieber and Press Reply

In our original article, we argued that the United States is on the cusp of nuclear primacy and that the nature of improvements to the U.S. strategic arsenal suggests that Washington has intentionally sought that capability.

Peter Flory disagrees and asserts that cuts to the U.S. arsenal are evidence that our argument is misguided. But although the U.S. arsenal is smaller today than it was 15 years ago, the United States has upgraded its remaining weapons to make them much deadlier.

Consider recent changes to the U.S. submarine force. Flory points out that the Pentagon has reduced the size of the ballistic missile submarine fleet. But he fails to mention that the United States has more than quadrupled the yield of hundreds of SLBM warheads and dramatically improved the accuracy of all of the missiles.

The result of these upgrades is stunning. During the last years of the Cold War, a U.S. SLBM warhead had roughly a 12 percent chance of destroying a hardened Russian ICBM silo. Of the two types of U.S. submarine-launched warheads currently deployed, one has about a 90 percent likelihood of destroying such a silo and the other has a 98 percent chance. Despite such progress, the United States continues to improve the lethality of its SLBMs. These steps are unnecessary for deterrence and strongly suggest a desire for nuclear primacy. Only such a goal would justify additional upgrades to U.S. counterforce capabilities.

While Flory trumpets reductions to the U.S. ICBM force, including the retirement of the powerful Peacekeeper missiles, he dismisses the importance of improvements to the remaining ICBMs. Yet modernization has made those missiles vastly more effective. At the end of the Cold War, a warhead from a Minuteman III had less than a 57 percent chance of destroying a hardened Russian silo. After the upgrades currently under way are completed, a Minuteman III warhead will have greater than an 81 percent chance of destroying such a silo.

Flory says that our essay contains several factual errors. For example, he asserts that upgrading the Minuteman III ICBMs has not increased the missiles' yield. But we never made that claim. (Moreover, the truth about the ICBM improvements is more complicated than Flory suggests.

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