

Introducing TNSR's Second Issue: The Guesswork of Statecraft

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The academic study of strategy and statecraft dwells awkwardly in the space between art and science. For decades, if not centuries, analysts have tried to develop general principles about the important activities that surround war and diplomacy, with the hope that we might better anticipate the future and avoid repeating the disasters of the past. As the excellent articles in our second issue of the *Texas National Security Review* reveal, this is an extraordinarily daunting task. Global policy is made in the face of radical uncertainty about the future, while confronting a multitude of often inscrutable actors who are driven by complex, deeply intertwined, and often indecipherable factors.

As the world's leading scholar on the subject, Lawrence Freedman reminds us that the very meaning of the term strategy has changed over time. The role of politics and emerging technologies — crucial topics we now take for granted — were virtually absent from strategic conversations during the 18th and 19th century in Great Britain. Hal Brands reveals this challenge through the lens of more recent history, reconstructing the development and role of the George H.W. Bush administration's controversial *Defense Policy Guidance*. Facing a world transformed by the end of the Cold War and the decline of the Soviet Union, U.S. strategists and statesmen balanced the euphoria surrounding emerging American unipolarity with fear and worry about a global order in flux. The legacy of this document remains deeply contested, but thanks to Brands' scholarship, is now far better understood.

Few questions vex contemporary international relations more than nuclear proliferation, and in particular, the nuclear weapons program of North Korea. Nicholas Miller and Vipin Narang confess that, despite an extraordinary renaissance in nuclear studies in recent years, our best theories did a less than stellar job of predicting the speed and breadth of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Their article is an admirable exercise in humility and stock-taking, all too rare amongst academics, but crucial if we are to do better.

Of course, even when researchers and analysts do get hard questions right, they often don't get the credit they deserve. Marc Trachtenberg's revealing study demonstrates that the conventional wisdom

that the scholarly and intelligence worlds did not recognize the deep, long-term structural flaws in the Soviet economy, is flat out wrong. In fact, it was an exemplary case of the experts getting it right — a history policymakers and the public largely missed.

As always, the *Texas National Security Review* is proud to pair original scholarship in international affairs with the thoughts of policymakers. Rep. Mike Gallagher advocates for the renewed importance of seapower as a critical tool of American strategy and statecraft, while Michael Singh recounts the George W. administration's efforts to confront Iran's nuclear program in the context of an ever-shifting global order. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's speech laying out United States interests and policies in Latin America is also presented here.

We hope you enjoy and learn from these articles. We also urge you to consider writing for us. While the first two editions have included familiar, more established names, we are eager to hear new voices and fresh scholarly perspectives on the enduring questions of war, peace, strategy, and statecraft. ■

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