

INTRODUCING

VOL. 2, ISS. 1 OF TNSR:

HANGING IN THE

BALANCE OF TERROR



William Inboden

Our editor-in-chief, William Inboden, introduces Vol. 2, Iss. 1 of TNSR.

Grand strategy is one of those concepts that almost everyone agrees is important, but almost no one agrees on what it is, how it is designed, how it is implemented, how it is observed, and how it is evaluated. While the past two decades have brought a renaissance in scholarship on grand strategy, it often seems as if many scholars are talking past each other in disputations over what the best grand strategy should be without first agreeing on a common language defining terms, levels of analysis, and primary actors. As Rebecca Friedman Lissner writes in her article in this issue, “despite its importance, the proliferation of academic and policy-analytical work on grand strategy has left the field disjointed, conceptually inconsistent, and difficult to navigate.”

The *Texas National Security Review* does not pretend to resolve these normative debates — indeed, those questions will be endlessly debated into the fullness of time. Yet with this issue, featuring several articles on grand strategy, we do hope to bring some clarity and common intellectual ground for how these debates can best be conducted. And befitting our multidisciplinary nature, the articles are written by both political scientists and historians. Paul C. Avey, Jonathan N. Markowitz, and Robert J. Reardon proffer a framework for defining and assessing four schools of thought on grand strategy, while Lissner distills three types of research agendas based on three different understandings of what grand strategy entails. In this same milieu, TNSR editorial board chairman Francis J. Gavin’s pathbreaking article on the misunderstood role of nuclear weapons in American grand strategy simultaneously punctures some myths, offers important new findings, and highlights several questions needing further research. Meanwhile, going from grand strategy down to strategy and tactics, John Maurer uses history to test and refine political science theory, and put scholarship in the service of policy relevance, with a fascinating historical case study of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972.

Our “Strategist” section also addresses questions of grand strategy, primarily in the realm of the emerging great power contest with Russia and China and the concomitant questions of what roles instruments, such as nuclear weapons, international institutions, and military exercises, will play. Scott Cuomo, in the vanguard of the Marine Corps’ next

generation of strategic thinkers, recommends some assertive new steps for the United States to counter China’s growing aggression in the Western Pacific. Elbridge Colby, most recently one of the lead architects of the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, explores how the United States can maintain America’s defense commitments to its allies through extended deterrence and a more creative balance of conventional and nuclear forces. Turning to the ideational and institutional dimensions of great power competition, Liza Tobin assesses what President Xi Jinping’s “community of common destiny” concept means for China’s ambitions in reshaping the international order. Finally, Ralph Clem offers some cautionary notes on the destabilizing effect that military exercises can have by increasing the risk of war, especially in the context of NATO and Russia.

This print issue marks TNSR’s arrival into its second year as a publication. We are mindful that in the saturated marketplace of academic and policy journals, any new entrant such as TNSR needs to justify its existence. Why should readers pay attention to yet another journal? Helped by this new edition, I hope the growing collection of original and insightful articles that have appeared in these pages is providing a persuasive answer to that question. In putting peer-reviewed scholarship alongside insightful policy commentary, in featuring distinguished academics as well as younger scholars who are emerging luminaries in the field, in crossing disciplinary boundaries, and especially in tackling compelling issues of statecraft and strategy, we believe that TNSR occupies unique and valuable territory. Thank you for being among our faithful readers and walking this new path with us. ■

William Inboden is editor-in-chief of the Texas National Security Review. He is also executive director and William Powers, Jr. Chair at the Clements Center for National Security, associate professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, and Distinguished Scholar at the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law, all at the University of Texas-Austin.