THE END OF STRATEGIC STABILITY? NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE CHALLENGE OF REGIONAL RIVALRIES

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THE END OF STRATEGIC STABILITY?

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE CHALLENGE OF REGIONAL RIVALRIES

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EDITORS
Book Examines

- How regional rivals understand strategic stability
- How these understandings of strategic stability affect arms-racing, posture, and doctrine
Why Strategic Stability Should Be Refined

- The way the US understands it is not the way others do.
- The post-Cold War environment is multidimensional and multipolar.
- Strategic Stability means different things in different contexts to different actors but it remains important.
Tailored Strategic Stability

• A framework rooted in basic tenets not solely focused on the nuclear dimension as the organizing principle
• Incorporates the idea that national strategies are motivated by different understandings of strategic stability and deterrence
• A set of conditions under which regional rivals have no incentive to pursue unilateral advantage by a devastating first strike and mutual fears give pause to demonstrate restraint
Findings Highlight Future Directions

• How non-state actors matter
• How transparency matters
• Distinguishing between global vs. regional concepts
Beyond a Complex Number Problem

- Asymmetries
- Interdependencies
- Subjective interpretations
- Diversity of practical meaning
Cross-cutting Conceptual Distinctions

- Nuclear as Absolute Weapon/Existential Threat
  - Incontestability of costs?
- National Core Values/Fears
  - Reciprocal fear of first nuclear use?
- Parity
  - Nuclear-centric assured destruction?
- Interdependence Across Multiple Domains/Relationships
  - Balance/attributes of state power?
Implications for U.S. Strategy

• Distinguish Russia/China vs. Regional Requirements
• Direct
  – Entanglement
  – Regional vs. strategic contradictions
• Indirect
  – Extended deterrence vs. moral hazard problems
  – Different escalation pathways/fulcrums
    • Europe- hybrid-/sub-/low-level conventional warfare
    • East Asia- large-scale conventional warfare
    • South Asia- non-state/sub-national attack
    • Middle East- large-scale conventional
From Inductive to Deductive Exploration

• Role of Transparency vs. Opacity?
• Role of Non-State Actors?
• Tradeoffs: National Deterrence Strategies vs. Regional Stability?
  – US: ED vs. deep-strike
  – PRC: A2AD vs. entanglement/regional security priorities
  – Russia: “Deliberate ambiguity” over nuclear threshold
  – India-Pak: Cold Start/CF-targeting? vs. tactical nukes/delegated launch/ISI-LeT

• Trade-offs: Global vs. Regional Levels?
  – US-Russia/PRC redlines, escalation scenarios, mutual interests, global vs. regional levels

• Future of Arms Control?
  – Reciprocal unilateral vs. coordination/CBM scenarios
  – Gap between local criteria for strategic stability and negative externalities of interacting deterrence strategies
Conclusion

• Strategic Stability Useful But Tailored Organizing Framework
  – Condition, not strategy
  – Bargaining > nuclear-centric tenets
• Asymmetries Both Material and Subjective
  – Contested regional conceptions/conditions
• US as Broker vs. Patron or Pivotal Player
  – Explicit security guarantees vs. indirect effects, moral hazard
  – Prominence/centrality to bolster credibility/trust & manipulate alignment/interdependent ties
• Strategic Implications
  – Managing divergent escalation pathways
  – Contending with trade-offs
  – Identifying equilibrium points
Discussion