

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

The end of a calendar year offers a time to reflect on what the preceding 12 months held and what we, in turn, face in the next. While 2023 saw historic gains in technology, particularly artificial intelligence, it also left us with significant global uncertainty. The list is long, but it includes a simmering war between Israel and Hamas that threatens to come to a rolling boil, spilling over into the broader Middle East—a conflict further aggravated by Iranian proxies that are not only targeting global shipping, but as of this writing, have also taken the lives of three American service members and injured dozens more.

Predictably, our twenty-first-century collective attention span has tragically shifted away from Russia's war in Ukraine. Nuclear weapons policy, including modernization, arms control, and deterrence, overshadows our defense policy considerations with the continued suspension of New START and the realities of a multipolar world. A civil war rages in Sudan, while some African nations are realigning their allegiances away from the West. And in a crime against humanity on a national scale that began in 2021, an evil Taliban government continues to repress the Afghan people—most especially women and girls—and worse.

Yet despite these and other challenges, there are signs of hope for a better year. At home the economy is improving, and unemployment is low. Open conflict has not erupted either in space or with China. Abroad, Taiwan recently elected a pro-democracy government, and key Arab states are working with the United States and other Western governments to help Israel and Hamas achieve a desperately needed ceasefire, one that will bring home Israelis brutally abducted by Hamas and begin to alleviate the suffering of millions in Gaza. Looking to the stars, commercial space companies continue to make gains in efforts to utilize space for peaceful global economic and scientific progress.

Persistent geopolitical uncertainty—the sum of these challenges, tragedies, opportunities, and setbacks—is arrayed against a broader backdrop of ongoing climate change; technology-based challenges and opportunities for individuals, society, nations, and culture; growing populism; and an increasing need for global attention to extraterrestrial matters across the economic, informational, and political spectrums, in which national military considerations play an important role.

Into this somewhat impossible melee, we introduce some food for thought on particular events and ideas national security practitioners will contend with in 2024. Our

Special Feature by Brent Talbot considers the implications of the Begin Doctrine with regard to Israeli foreign policy and its options for an increasingly aggressive Iran. Namely, what factors may come into play in an Israeli calculation to strike Iran's nuclear facilities?

Our lead forum, **Nuclear Deterrence**, begins with an article by Lieutenant General David Miller, Kate Boehlefeld, and Jim Forsyth. They present ten propositions to guide leaders, strategists, and planners as they establish and execute policy in the name of deterring nuclear war. In the second article in the forum, Adam Lowther and Steve Cimbala examine New START, currently on hold, to highlight challenges, including whether to include China, and the ability of that treaty to provide surety in deterrence and to promote arms race stability.

In **Perspectives on Strategic Competition** Arjun Subramaniam explores the Indian Air Force's posture as it relates to China in the context of continued low-level conflict along the Line of Actual Control. The Indian Air Force deficits call for an increased focus on modernization and a reduction in aircraft shortages. In the second article in the forum, Wendy Whitman Cobb details the current state of commercial competition in space. She argues the heightened focus on economic security and the growing power of international commercial space companies may lead to a commercial space security dilemma focused on the companies driving innovation in space.

In **Conflict and the Mind**, our final forum, Brent Lawniczak analyzes our strategic pivot away from counterinsurgency back to great power competition through the framework of moral injury to a nation. He argues the United States seeks to reduce collective anxiety and reinforce state identity—reactions to moral injury—by seeking a concrete object of fear, namely China, which distorts the creation and execution of US foreign policy. In the closing article of the issue, Samuel Zilincik examines the emotion regulation literature to propose that kinetic and information operations influence emotions through different regulatory mechanisms. This has serious implications for effects-based operations, especially when integrating information and kinetic operations for synergic effect.

Happy New Year from Team *Æther*, and thank you for your continued support of the journal. Æ

~The Editor

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