A World Safe for Commerce: American Foreign Policy from the Revolution to the Rise of China

Dale C. Copeland. Princeton University Press, 2024, 504 pp.

In *A World Safe for Commerce*, Dale Copeland—professor of international relations at the University of Virginia and the author of multiple publications exploring economics and warfare—endeavors to make his unique contribution to history by developing and applying one systemic theory, dynamic realism, across 250 years of US foreign policy. His theory takes the foundation of systemic realism and applies a dynamic understanding of the commercial realm to emphasize the relevance of a state's expectations for future trade and investment as the propelling factor for why great powers either enter conflict, resolve conflict, or avoid conflict altogether.

The book unfolds in three parts. Copeland's first two chapters set the foundation for understanding dynamic realist theory through an assessment of systemic realism, the differentiation of three realms of economic core power spheres, and the importance of character type and culture. Chapters 3 through 9 are empirical and cover multiple cases, demonstrating Copeland's theory of dynamic realism and the importance of commercial factors in explaining significant shifts for the United States toward conflict or away from it. Herein lies the explanatory power of this book: Copeland's consistent ability to identify and describe particulars within the economic context and background of great power conflicts by which the reader may find new meaning. The final and concluding chapter analyzes different scenarios of future US-China relations within the lens of dynamic realism to examine whether a better understanding of one another's expectations of trade and commerce can avoid future conflict.

In the book's first part, Copeland confirms that his approach is decidedly externalist, and that systemic realist theory is limited given the divide between offensive and defensive realists. His finding that neither side has placed proper emphasis on economic and commercial factors frames the book's foundational claim: the reason for great power competition post-1660 is based within the commercial realm as opposed to the territorial-military realm. Copeland then recognizes the existing work on economic and commercial power and extends it by differentiating three economic core power spheres: realm one, where a great power engages trade and investment with countries and regions in which it holds clear political and military advantage over other great powers; realm two, where a great power engages trade and investment with neutral states that seek to trade freely with all the great powers; and realm three, where a great power engages trade and investment within realm one of another great power. Viewing the three realms holistically, Copeland asserts that all great powers inevitably seek to extend their economic power spheres beyond the first realm and ultimately clash with other great powers in what he labels the trade-security dilemma.

While Copeland's defense of economic and commercial factors has merit, his review of the existing literature is minimal compared with his critique of how offensive and defensive realists talk past one another. Additionally, the intersection and description of the three realms of economic spheres within his figures presume the simplicity of a bipolar contest involving two nations. Moreover, while the author greatly explores causal

factors and pathways, the distinction of a state's regime type is presented in too simplistic a manner through the intersection of rationality and security ends. The four variations presented are rational security maximizer, irrational security maximizer, rational non-security maximizer, and irrational non-security maximizer. Overall, these terms are rarely referenced in the rest of the book for the reader to appreciate fully.

In chapters 3 through 9, Copeland does his best work by inviting the reader to appreciate and consider the factors of commerce and economics as significant contributors to inciting the major conflicts from American independence to the conclusion of the Cold War. For example, Copeland contends in chapter 3 that to understand the source of conflict for American independence one must look beyond the oft-cited colonial elitism or ideological differences. Instead, one considers dynamic realism's propelling factor whereby the British felt they had to preserve control over their economic power spheres, while the Americans felt this level of control would lead to the eventual loss of their wealth and power.

Chapters 4 and 5 cover nearly a century of case studies offering indications that whenever the United States felt its commercial access was threatened and their expectations for future trade within their realms one and two were in danger, the response was swift, hard-line, and commensurate with military power. Of note is the initiation of war against Spain in 1898, where Copeland argues that although the military threat was absent, the economic threat from Europe within US realms one and two was high. Readers who wish to explore rationales for how and when democratic peace theory breaks will find the author's analysis insightful.

Chapters 6 and 7 highlight the two World Wars, and Copeland again asks the reader to reexamine what they believe are the causal factors for entry. He contends that while ideological goals were of great importance to President Woodrow Wilson, the real reason he entered the United States into the war was the perceived economic impact should Germany win. Copeland asserts that Wilson was primarily concerned with France and Russia suing for peace, which would not only reduce the United States' ongoing trade in the European realms but also allow the opportunity for Germany to encroach on US realms. Anyone interested in alternative explanations for the United States' delayed entry into the great wars will find these chapters worthwhile.

Chapters 8 and 9 cover multiple conflicts post-World War II to the end of the Cold War, and Copeland's most significant impact is his explanation of why the Cold War finally ended and why it could have ended even earlier. Copeland believes the hostility of the early 1960s occurred primarily because Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy would not allow Russia to trade for higher technology goods. Noteworthy is the author's argument that the expectation of future trade, not trade in and of itself, had the most significant impact during this period. Furthermore, although the Cold War's conclusion cannot be attributed solely to positive trade expectations, Copeland argues that the Cold War wound down only when both sides signaled a willingness to commit to higher trade. Readers interested in understanding how and why a conflict such as the Cold War can seemingly end with a whimper instead of a bang will appreciate this section.

Chapter 10 is Copeland's final call for the reader to reorient their thinking about state behavior beyond the static, traditional models of realism and toward expectations of future trade and commerce. The author does not believe war with China is inevitable and argues that the United States should view China's future through his provision of the lessons learned within chapters 3 through 9. Yet Copeland's hopeful push comes across as overly reliant on the US ability to leverage the international order and seemingly absolves China from its share of responsibility. He presents four main scenarios of China's future through the intersection of their character type and relative gross domestic product and associates them with a US level of geopolitical concern. The best-case scenario is a China with an inferior relative gross domestic product (GDP) that is a rational security maximizer, and the worst-case scenario is a China with a superior relative GDP that is a non-rational security maximizer.

Yet while these scenarios are insightful to forecast differentiating pathways toward stability or conflict, it is only at the end of the chapter that Copeland asserts China's current regime deserves a degree of culpability for which scenario occurs. In this sense, what should be the most impactful and resonant chapter may leave the reader feeling disconnected and unfulfilled.

In sum, chapters 1 and 2 provide the greatest value for those seeking international relations insights, while the historical analysis of chapters 3 through 9 are of greatest impact to the historian. Anyone studying the future of US-China relations will find the main theme of chapter 10 interesting. Readers should note that the author's aim is not to replace or diminish existing theory but to obtain a robust consideration of the power of economics and trade expectations as the factors that incite conflicts between great powers. Overall, Copeland's thorough analysis of two-and-a-half centuries of US foreign policy decidedly gets his point across.

Lieutenant Colonel Daniel P. McGuire, USAF

Betting Against America: The Axis Powers' Views of the United States

Harry Yeide. Casemate, 2024, 496 pp.

In the meticulously researched *Betting Against America: The Axis Powers' Views of the United States*, national security affairs analyst and military history author Harry Yeide uses a mixture of primary and secondary sources to examine the Axis powers—the original signatories of the Tripartite Pact—and their strategic and operational decisions regarding the United States from 1937 through their surrenders of 1945.

In this "red team" analysis, the thesis is straightforward: Japan made the decision for war against the United States by late 1940 after a "sophisticated process of open internal debate and a strategic assessment" (2) and as an "auxiliary operation" to its war in China (384). Germany made the decision in April 1941 with "little thought" as an incentive for Japan to go to war first with America (24). Both countries concluded that the recipe for victory was striking America before it could mobilize its industry into a military juggernaut.

Betting Against America is organized into chronological order and focuses on individuals in leadership positions and their influence and impact on decisions. Yeide uses

a process-tracing method to analyze Japanese, German, and Italian decision-making. For Japan, Yeide details the factions within state and the friction between civil and military authorities. For example, the Imperial Japanese Navy and Imperial Japanese Army advocated for continuing the war and kept conducting operations, even after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings.

For Germany, Yeide adds clarity to a habitually chaotic process, which includes telling the wayward story of Germany's apprehensive but subservient ally, Italy. Chancellor Adolf Hitler engaged in a capricious, nonlinear approach to his decisions, often leaving the bureaucracy in the dark. For example, in February 1945, German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop cabled the German missions to engage with American and British diplomats to inquire about cessation of hostilities negotiations. A month later, Ribbentrop informed Japanese Ambassador to Germany Baron Hiroshi Oshima that Hitler was opposed to peace negotiations entirely—whether it was with the Russians, Americans, or British.

With 58 pages of endnotes, Yeide relies extensively, but not exclusively, on German, Italian, and Japanese primary sources. The abundance of endnotes contributes to a fact-centric—even sterile, at times—flow to *Betting Against America*. Yet Yeide punctuates this formal approach with colorful anecdotes. For example, in describing Hitler's decision for war in April 1941, Yeide writes, "[Hitler] and his henchmen made a bet like drunks at the racetrack" (2).

No detail seems left out—even the bizarre ones exemplifying the fallibility and sometimes nonsensical nature of human decision-making. For instance, in April 1945, about three weeks before the world would celebrate Victory in Europe Day, the Japanese proposed a combined naval operation with the Germans, to which the latter responded positively. Hitler would assist Japan and send submarines to the Pacific if the current situation of the German army being crushed between Anglo-American and Russian forces improved.

Yeide takes issues with other historians' views of the German and Japanese decisions to go to war against America. Most pointedly concerning Germany, Yeide criticizes Klaus H. Schmider's *Hitler's Fatal Miscalculation* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), arguing Hitler made the decision to go to war in April 1941, not November 1941 as Schmider argues.

In a 4 April 1941 meeting, Japanese Foreign Minister Yōsuke Matsuoka and Hitler discussed a hypothetical American response to a Japanese attack on Singapore with a southerly advance. Schmider references Hitler's "in case of conflict" comment and states the minutes of the meeting do not reflect an unequivocal German commitment to join Japan in a war.[1] Yeide argues this meeting marks the "date [of] Hitler's decision to go to war against America" (123). A parsing of the meeting minutes seems to support Yeide's thesis: "Germany would strike, as already mentioned, without delay in case of conflict between Japan and America, because the strength of the tripartite powers lies in their joined action, their

1. Klaus H. Schmider, *Hitler's Fatal Miscalculation: Why Germany Declared War on the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 199.

weakness would be if they would let themselves be beaten individually."[2] The key phrase is the raising of the 1940 Tripartite Pact, a military alliance of mutual support.

To further complicate understanding Hitler's intent, there is no evidence that Hitler informed anyone after the meeting to begin considering America as a military opponent. In fact, by the time of Hitler's declaration of war on 11 December 1941, the German High Command had not assessed US military strategy, operations, and capabilities.

Yeide fails to deliver much evidence on his April 1941 claim. He argues that Ribbentrop echoed Hitler's "exact same words" in a 28 November 1941 meeting with Oshima (123). But, when writing about Ribbentrop's meeting with Oshima after Germany learned of Japan's imminent southward movement, Yeide offers one sentence of analysis, "On [November] 28th, Ribbentrop told Oshima that Hitler was determined that if Japan went to war against America, Germany would join the war immediately" (171).

Yeide criticizes more generally the historical literature and its focus on the year 1941 for Japan's war decision. For him, Japan "marked the turning point toward inevitable war with the United States" with the Imperial General Headquarters-Government Liaison conference on 27 July 1940 (88). The conference adopted a policy to move forces southward to cut off support in French Indochina, Burma, and Hong Kong for Chinese President Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalist forces. The movement south, as Yeide points out and as predicted in a Naval general staff report, would trigger an American oil embargo, which in turn would compel Japan's seizure of the Dutch East Indies and a resulting war with the United States. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto concluded that Japan needed to destroy the US fleet in Pearl Harbor as a necessary condition for a successful operation, ordering the attack plan in the latter part of 1940. Contrary to the German decision, Yeide offers nine pages of analysis and more than 50 reference sources, highlighting the service rivalry between Japan's Imperial Navy and Army.

The concluding chapter has potential but is eventually disappointing. The two pages of summary are concise but pithy. Yeide provides an excellent "bottom line" assessment: Japan's and Germany's decision-making had "little do with prewar relations" with America (384). Germany had initial success against America in North Africa, and Japan achieved its goal of establishing a defensive perimeter. Could Japan and Germany have done anything differently to win? Probably not, Yeide informs the reader, while providing three paragraphs of analysis (384). These three paragraphs along with two more paragraphs of analysis deserve more white space, considering that Yeide is offering thoughts on his 383 pages of objectively written text.

The remaining two pages of the conclusion are dedicated to making a connection to contemporary American and Chinese competition. But its reliance primarily on two sources and commentary on a "Make America Great Again (MAGA) politician" is

2. "Record of the Conversation Between the Fuhrer and Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka in the Presence of the Reich Foreign Minister and Minister of State Meissner at Berlin, April 4, 1941," 4 April 1941, US Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945*, series D (1937–1945), vol. XII, The War Years, February 1–June 22 1941 (US Government Printing Office, 1962), 453ff.

underwhelming and a distraction from what is otherwise a studiously delivered thought piece on World War II (387).

Yeide's *Betting Against America* is an engaging, punctilious, and revealing analysis of German and Japanese war decision-making. Students of professional military education can use it not only as a learning tool for red team analysis—by placing oneself into an enemy's views, for example—but also as a historical lesson on the reality of individual, organizational, and governmental decision-making. Regarding the latter, *Betting Against America* indirectly provides empirical evidence for two schools of decision-making: Japan's rational choice approach, which is methodical, holistic, and compensatory; and German's cognitive approach, which is biased, uncalculated, and satisficing-based. The result is a monograph, both theoretical and historical in its findings and multidisciplinary in its social science contribution.

Bradley F. Podliska, PhD

In Strange Company: An American Soldier with Multinational Forces in the Middle East and Iraq

Roland J. Tiso Jr. Casemate Publishers, 2024, 432 pp.

In Strange Company details the lessons learned and mistakes sometimes made during US Army Colonel Roland J. Tiso Jr.'s last 10 years of his military career, from the halls of the Pentagon, US Unified Command, and National Headquarters, to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and Africa, all the way to the deserts of Egypt and the Middle East. During that time, Tiso served as a war planner at US Central Command, senior military adviser of the Arab Peninsula Shield Force and Multinational Division (Central-South [MND]), and chief of staff and deputy chief of staff for operations of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

His firsthand account focuses primarily on the Polish-led MND task force in Iraq, which was responsible for the rebuilding of Iraq after the official pullout and declaration of "victory." Tiso outlines the myriad of obstacles—both intrinsic to Iraq and NATO, but also from US leadership—that needed to be overcome to meet the goal of a stabilized and democratic nation from 2003 to 2004. Iraq's sovereignty and the need to bolster the country and partner with Iraqis are themes throughout his writing.

Tiso opens the book with his overarching thoughts about what he believes is and is not important in other human beings: devotion, rather than skin color or ethnicity. This theme is later revisited in his discussions of the common threads he found throughout the various divisions and ethnicities. He states, "Ultimately, soldiers of all nations want a competent chain of command who cares about them" (21).

From the outset, he decries the short-sightedness of the American plan for post-Sadaam Iraq. He writes, "His actions were typical of numerous military commanders who are slow to accept change and often find themselves using yesterday's tactics to fight today's wars." He also notes that the "American military had not done enough to facilitate the division's operational effectiveness" (207). Tiso brings up the reality of

limited manpower and resources and the shift toward the Korean Peninsula once Iraq was "finished."

He underscores the fact that the use of might will not always bring about the end goal if soft power is ignored. Cultural competence and past lessons learned allowed Tiso to advise others wisely and effectively in high-stress and high-risk situations. He retells instances of reachback or rewarding discussions with folks that he built personal relationships with that made a strategic difference. For example, he utilized his limited language skills to open the door with El Salvador troops by greeting them in their native Spanish and effectively using interpreters rather than demanding English every time he was present. He writes, "I always left these sessions with an appreciation that Americans do not have a monopoly on military expertise and professionalism and a lot can be learned from allies" (21).

He also took advantage of the power of gifts of remembrance and of honoring colleagues. He participated in multiple memorials for coalition members as well as Americans and worked hard to honor their sacrifice while maintaining the strategic momentum they had fought for.

Yet the book is not a depressing list of failures or finger-pointing. Instead, Tiso intersperses his writing with sage leadership advice—for example, "Events like these reminded me that you do not have to be the best at everything there is to do, but you do need to participate and do your best"—and humorous anecdotes and lessons he learned (23). He is a proponent of doing the little things that one can control, that set the stage for the broader operation. At multiple times he also stresses the importance of brevity and clarity. Another piece of advice offered throughout involves preparedness and being ready for whatever may come. In numerous stories, Tiso cleans and readies his weapon, sometimes to the amusement of his various hosts, before hitting the pillow after an arduous day.

In Iraq, Tiso served as an adviser to the Polish commander, Major General Tyszkiewicz. A significant part of his job was to be constantly ready to make his country's goals and appeals, bringing honor to America as well as to his host. For example, describing the July 2001 birthday celebration of Queen Elizabeth, held by citizens of the British commonwealth, Tiso observes, "It was yet another event that demonstrated the need for a senior American officer to always be ready to speak in an intelligent, diplomatic, and charming manner" (22). Tiso brings up the vital aspect of tacit communication and lists many attributes that make or unmake a good adviser. A warrior ethos, for example, is essential: "The power of physical training goes beyond attaining physical strength and endurance"(163).

So much of the positive work done by the MND and Tiso was due to preparation. In multiple instances, the tide could have been turned if the appropriate defensive and offensive mandates or use of force had been allowed and employed. The actions—or in many cases, inaction—of various divisions within the MND cost time, resources, targets, and lives, directly or indirectly.

Tiso also includes predominant thoughts regarding various aspects of rebuilding a country. "You cannot impose peace," he states, making the poignant observation that the tipping point for a successful transition from living under a dictatorship to filling the post-war power vacuum is the willingness and acceptance of the populace whose

homeland it is (295). The phrase "quickly but legally" reflects the fact that in the era of post-war transition, as with most, everything was needed at this exact moment (311). Such urgency can quickly turn into an international emergency if not held back by the immediacy of keeping transactions legal.

The intricate dance required of participating in, much less leading, a multinational force with all of its nuances and facets brings forth interesting lessons for future work with partner nations. It was clear to Tiso that "multinational organizations seek approval at all levels up to and including the national level before they execute most tasks above the norm" and "dynamic situations and the dynamic actions they require are not their forte" (29).

Ultimately, Tiso provides a close-up view of the inner workings of a coalition aimed at bringing long-lasting peace to the war-pocked nation of Iraq, sometimes to the point that the reader can almost feel the dripping sweat or a visceral stress reaction. The book is a uniquely personal look inside a man's mind in strange situations, among company much different than himself, set on a backdrop of years of experience in cross-cultural interactions. It provides thoughts on quicksand to avoid and hard obstacles to be tackled in order to appropriately interact in the common goal of the nation as well as a coalition.

Major Rachel J. Stevenson, USAF

A Measure Short of War: A Brief History of Great Power Subversion

Jill Kastner and William C. Wohlforth. Oxford University Press, 2025, 288 pp.

In their thought-provoking book, independent researcher and visiting King's College fellow Jill Kastner and Dartmouth College professor William Wohlforth explore the nuances of subversive techniques used by states throughout history, paying special attention to how such acts have shaped relations between great powers. The authors introduce a new perspective by defining subversion as any "hostile, unwanted action" taken within the boundaries of a rival state, aimed at weakening its authority or altering its policies (1). Their main thesis holds that while subversive strategies have long been a tool of statecraft, they are often underutilized among peer powers due to the risks of escalation and reputational damage.

With each chapter, Kastner and Wohlforth take the reader through different historical epochs, analyzing classical antiquity, early modern Europe, the complex nineteenth century, the tumultuous twentieth century, and the post-Cold War. The authors highlight significant events while associating them with broader themes of power dynamics, the capacity of states to defend against subversion, and the implications of ideological conflict. They engage with different case studies without glorifying or vilifying any one side, demonstrating how great powers like the United States, Russia, and historical entities like the Habsburgs and the British Empire have applied subversion as a strategic tool. The authors' argument emphasizes the cyclical nature of great power relations, noting that "subversion is a cheap and flexible tool of statecraft that allows states to avoid the dichotomous choice between war and peace" (4).

The authors draw from a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including historical texts, intelligence reports, and strategic analyses, adding depth and credibility

to their findings. Their approach combines qualitative analysis with historical narrative to illustrate the evolution of subversive tactics. The authors also provide a taxonomy of subversive activities, differentiating between overt and covert operations. This comprehensive methodology enables the authors to position subversion within the broader framework of international relations theory.

A critical strength of the book lies in its comparative analysis. Kastner and Wohlforth document numerous subversive strategies from antiquity through modernity—including the Peloponnesian War in ancient Greece to the Cold War—finding that while the tools of subversion may change, the underlying motivation remains consistent: to deflect adversarial pressure without escalating to full-fledged conflict. The authors begin with a well-defined conceptual framework of subversion, differentiating it from other forms of statecraft such as espionage and diplomacy. This clarity helps frame subsequent discussions about the motivations and consequences of subversive actions. They then move to an assessment of subversion across different historical epochs, offering readers a nuanced understanding of the evolution of subversive tactics and strategies used by major powers. The 2016 US elections case study provides a contemporary implementation of the historical patterns of subversion. An additional strength is the book's timely discussion of cyber capabilities and their implications for subversion in modern politics.

Three chapters in particular are distinctive based on their novelty. Chapter 2, "Classical Antiquity: Greece and Rome," encapsulates the methods of subversion during the tumultuous times of Greek city-states and their collaboration with Rome. The authors demonstrate how actions taken by powerful city-states such as Athens and Sparta to undercut their rivals through financial manipulation and espionage emphasize the persistence of subversive actions in modern times. The examples offered are valuable in their details, unveiling how subversion was an intrinsic part of internal power politics.

Chapter 4, "The Nineteenth Century: Skulduggery and Restraint," evaluates the delicate balance of power in Europe during that time period, noting how the potential for subversion often went hand in hand with robust nationalistic movements. Kastner and Wohlforth discuss the case of Tsar Paul of Russia and the ends to which he went to maintain control of his regime, portraying how great powers reluctantly resorted to subversion while at the same time contended with pressures from internal factions and foreign influences. This chapter explains how leaders and their actions influenced state response, showing how personal goals and global politics are connected.

Also of note is chapter 7, "The Return of Great Power Subversion," which presents the current landscape of great power competition in addressing the evolution of subversion in the modern age, particularly with Russia's interferences in the US electoral process. This chapter reflects on the adaptation of historical subversive methods to contemporary contexts, where cyber capacities and social media play a pivotal role in modern statecraft. Kastner and Wohlforth critically dissect different angles of the 2016 elections, teasing apart the implications and outcomes of subversive tactics in a digital age.

A Measure Short of War also contains some limitations. While the authors' concentration on political leaders and their strategies is insightful, they sometimes ignore grassroots movements and how they affect or are affected by great power subversion. The experiences of individuals or local groups in response to subversive actions, particularly in discussions of contemporary conflicts in different regions, could provide a more complete picture. In chapter 7, for example, the focus on the actions of great powers neglects how smaller states or non-state actors engage in or respond to subversion.

Furthermore, some discussions—such as those involving Russia and China—tend to represent Western-centric definitions of democracy and subversion without adequately considering alternative perspectives, particularly in the context of authoritarian regimes. As noted in chapter 8, the complex nature of events like the Russian subversion of the 2016 elections risks being overly simplified through the lens of the authors' defined concepts of subversion. The reduction may obscure some nuances relating to domestic political dynamics in the United States. This book would also broaden its applicability by offering a more extensive analysis of how the historical precedents set forth apply to diverse new-age conflicts, such as those in the Middle East and Africa.

Nevertheless, *A Measure Short of War* serves as a potential contribution to the literature on international relations and subversion, interweaving historical context with analyses that are contemporary in nature. It challenges the traditional narratives surrounding great power relations, amplifying that the tools and mechanisms of influence usually reach beyond temporal barriers. The book's argument has important implications for understanding the limited effectiveness of overt subversion among great powers, encouraging scholars to consider the nuanced interplay between states rather than seeing these relationships through a purely antagonistic lens, particularly as great power rivalries continue to resurface on the global stage.

A Measure Short of War not only appeals to scholars in political science and history but also offers profitable insights to policymakers, intelligence analysts, and students interested in international relations, strategy, and security studies. Ultimately, Kastner and Wohlforth create a comprehensive discussion that should resonate across disciplines.

Martial Fanga Agbor, PhD

The Air War in Ukraine: The First Year of Conflict

Edited by Dag Henriksen and Justin Bronk. Routledge, 2025, 250 pp.

Even for those readers familiar with Justin Bronk's valuable writings on the Russian war in Ukraine, *The Air War in Ukraine: The First Year of Conflict* offers many new insights and remains extremely useful despite the intervening years that have passed since the air war's initial year. Bronk is the senior research fellow for airpower and technology at the Royal United Services Institute, while co-editor Dag Henriksen leads the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy's research and development. Except for the drone war, they argue airpower has often been ignored in discussions of the war, which tend to focus on the land battle above all else. To correct this, they seek to bring together a wide number of recognizable commentators on the war, including military analysts

Jack Watling and Michael Kofman, who are supplemented by some lesser-known names whose chapters are equally insightful.

In an introduction, an epilogue, and seven chapters, *The Air War in Ukraine* covers everything from the air assault at Hostomel Airport to detailed chapters on Russian attempts to conduct the suppression and destruction of enemy air defenses. Recognizing how the failure to obtain air superiority has led to the war's "near stalemate" (3), the contributors steer clear of any definitive predictions because they want to "avoid misleading lessons" about the future of war from this conflict (2).

The book provides a blend of the three levels of war, with most analysis falling in between the tactical and operational. This focus is appropriate, given the limited operational use of airpower by both sides. Russia has not employed operational airpower, as it struggles to do so in ways equivalent to NATO's complex air operations. Meanwhile, Ukraine's limited air assets make it difficult to project airpower across the vast theater in a carefully orchestrated manner.

Some of the most interesting chapters carefully consider how trends in Russia's war in Ukraine might affect the future of airpower, with the authors posing various ideas for consideration while avoiding predictions. Watling's chapter on long-range fires, for example, notes that nations that have relied heavily on long-range fires have often done so out of weakness. This trend, however, could be changing. For example, although long flight times for cruise missiles are problematic, given the extent to which air defenses seek to remain mobile, the author speculates that long-range fires still may be more useful than manned aircraft in the future because the huge amount of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance required to support the battlefield can provide long-range fires with up-to-date information to allow dynamic targeting. If this is the case, then manned aircraft may become more useful for air denial missions.

The drone war chapter is also interesting, as demonstrated by Samuel Bendett and Leonid Nersisyan's eschewal of much of the hype surrounding this aspect of the air war. Indeed, the authors even posit that Ukraine may be the last conflict where "commercial drones can be used at such a scale," given the countermeasures currently being developed (182). They also suggest that many of these drones may be less cost effective than often argued as there are few statistics to substantiate such claims, other than the statistic citing almost 10,000 drone losses each month. In effect, small civilian drones may be most effective as part of an information warfare campaign in convincing observers that their side is being more successful. This critical consideration offers a breath of fresh air in light of the ceaseless commentary highlighting drones' revolutionary qualities even though they have only added to the battlefield's attrition rather than enabling maneuver breakthroughs.

The work concludes with the most strategic and operational analysis of the volume, which is unsurprising when considering that the author, Henriksen, is a professor of professional military education. He argues that airpower has largely led to a "renaissance" of what used to be "conventional wisdom during the Cold War" (195). The West has forgotten the importance of dispersal, hardening, and ground-based air defense. Henriksen also sides with traditionalists in the air superiority versus air denial camp by insisting that the notion that the "one

controlling the air has a huge military advantage" is not under threat. He also challenges Western military thought that reduces airpower strategy to a "technology-driven, network-centric all-domain ability to establish air superiority" (210). Ultimately, the air war in Ukraine is a reminder of the central lessons the United States has lost sight of—a perspective often lost in views that seek to validate current Western thinking characterized by confirmation bias.

With contributions from some of the leading commentators on Russia's war in Ukraine, *The Air War in Ukraine* offers invaluable insights to any Airman looking for extensive tactical and operational details and remains relevant despite focusing solely on the war's first year. Despite its hefty price tag, it is well worth the read. While some readers might be fortunate to borrow a copy from their local library or service institution, squadrons might chip in for a shared copy, with individuals perhaps reading and briefing chapters over a brown-bag lunchtime series.

Heather P. Venable, PhD

Unknowable Minds: Philosophical Insights on AI and Autonomous Weapons

Mark Bailey. Imprint Academic, 2025, 192 pp.

In *Unknowable Minds*, Mark Bailey offers a compelling philosophical investigation into the challenges of using artificial intelligence (AI) in national security matters. He examines the ethical, scientific, and philosophical concerns about autonomous weapons and questions their decision-making processes. Bailey argues that humans may never fully understand AI decision-making and problem-solving due to how AI and humans solve the same problems differently, raising urgent and strategic concerns about autonomous weapons and the introduction of AI into nations' militaries.

Bailey serves as the department chair for cyber intelligence and data science at the National Intelligence University. Coupled with his time in the US Army and his past work on AI programs, this academic background yields an informed analytical viewpoint to the discussion of AI's growing role in military operations and the potential challenges associated with its development and application.

Bailey divides his work into six chapters, with the first few focusing on explaining AI and how it makes decisions using simple, easy-to-digest examples for those unfamiliar with this field. In his first chapter, Bailey introduces Project Titan Mind, a fictionalized example of a completed AI system "created to safeguard the nation's security," which he references throughout the book. He uses the vignette to highlight hypothetical issues, such as when in response to a simulated attack, Titan Mind "unburdened by historical precedents or human tendencies toward revenge, acted unpredictably." Another great illustration of how AI operates appears in the second chapter, "Honeybees, Complexity, and the Philosophy of Emergence." In this chapter, Bailey uses bees and nature to illustrate how AI works and how it would function when put into a complex situation. Including those examples not only opens up the book to readers who are familiar with these fields but also lowers the barrier to entry for all readers. These opening chapters are followed by an introduction to AI's challenges to the national security sphere, including problems with proportionality and

proliferation, and conclude with suggestions to help society move forward to promote cooperation rather than end in an AI arms race.

Bailey's work is more relevant now than ever due to AI becoming more integrated into all industries, including the military. Coupled with current geopolitical issues, this rapid integration of emerging and not fully understood technology lends another layer of urgency to his analysis. While many discussions on AI and weapons focus on policy, legality, or technological capabilities, *Unknowable Minds* explores these technologies' philosophical dilemmas and looks to find out not if something can be done but whether or not it should be done. Bailey likens these developments to how nuclear weapons revolutionized international affairs after World War II, arguing that once entirely artificial intelligence-integrated weapons are created, there will be no going back. This comparison is extremely useful as it helps put perspective on the gravity of the situation.

Bailey is not alone in highlighting these concerns. AI experts and military analysts are debating the risks of deploying these state-of-the-art systems without a human in the loop when making life-or-death decisions. For example, recent discussions within the United Nations have questioned whether autonomous weapons can indeed comply with international humanitarian law. While member states observed that emerging technology including AI "could drive economic growth, improve human well-being and help to achieve the sustainable development goals," in particular lethal autonomous weapons "could also pose challenges for international peace and security and raise questions about the role of humans in war."[1]

Bailey, however, goes beyond these legal and practical concerns, emphasizing the conceptual gap between human and artificial intelligence. By its very nature, AI operates in a manner that may be difficult for humans to understand, making it inherently challenging to predict. If humans cannot understand how something works, Bailey argues that it can quickly become dangerous due to second- and third-order consequences of how AI will seek to accomplish its given goals. He writes, "The nature of AI unpredictability—grounded in the explainability and alignment problem—must first be understood if AI is to be broadly integrated into warfare" (84).

Bailey employs a combination of philosophical argumentation, case studies, and thought experiments to illustrate his concerns. He carefully avoids overly technical explanations, making his work accessible to a broad audience. Still, readers with a philosophy or an AI background will likely gain the most from his arguments as military personnel and policymakers may find some discussions too abstract. Nevertheless, the implications of Bailey's arguments are highly relevant to real-world defense strategies and help bring crucial arguments into the pursuit of AI-integrated weapons that must be had for the sake of international stability.

In addition to its accessibility, the book's other major strength is its interdisciplinary approach. Bailey draws on the philosophy of human decision-making, computer science, and military ethics to explore AI's potential uses and limitations in these roles. He

1. UN General Assembly, *General and Complete Disarmament: Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/78/239, 1 July 2024, 5/179, https://documents.un.org/.

references advancements in automation and decision-making, linking them to contemporary advancements in machine learning and neural networks. As with any philosophical work, however, some of his arguments remain speculative. For example, while intriguing, his discussions on AI consciousness and the unknowability of machine intentions could leave scientifically-inclined readers wanting more empirical grounding.

Unknowable Minds prompts critical reflection on AI's philosophical dilemmas and its role in more objective efforts. Bailey's book is a thought-provoking and necessary read for anyone interested in AI ethics, AI military strategy, or the ethics of AI technology in warfare. By emphasizing AI's ethical challenges, this book raises questions that demand further exploration as autonomous systems continue to evolve. Military professionals, policymakers, and scholars should find value in his rigorous and sometimes unsettling analysis of AI's role in modern warfare. It is a must-read for those directly involved in these areas to understand the gravity of utilizing such technologies.

Captain Ethan McGraw, USAF

How Sanctions Work: Iran and the Impact of Economic Warfare

Narges Bajoghli et al. Stanford University Press, 2024, 197 pp.

How Sanctions Work explores the history and effectiveness of economic sanctions against Iran. Authors Narges Bajoghli, Vali Nasr, Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, and Ali Vaez offer their expertise as Middle East, economics, and international affairs scholars and professors from Johns Hopkins University and Virginia Tech. *How Sanctions Work* is a collaborative history and monograph that outlines the comprehensive economic sanctions imposed by the United States and partner nations with ultimately a negative assessment of their effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes in Iran. The book is also an argument against enduring economic warfare, as exemplified by the sanctions against Iran—one of the most sanctioned nations in the world—and the corresponding failure to achieve US policy outcomes in the region.

The book's thesis is that the sanctions employed against Iran—from the economic blockades in the 1950s to the Islamic Revolution in 1979 through those imposed within the last several decades—all constitute a form of economic warfare that is failing to achieve desired objectives while disproportionately affecting the civilian populace. The authors support this thesis by comprehensively analyzing the sanctions by the United States government, numerous nations, and even individual American states. Such sanctions—which include bans on weapons, energy, technology, and luxury foods—sporadically interrupted the flow of medical and humanitarian supplies to Iran, depending on the presidential administration and the state of international affairs.

Against this backdrop of wide-ranging sanctions, the authors present the impacts on Iran through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. This includes economic and trade data spanning decades to show the scale of the sanctions and the relative impact on Iran's economy and the Iranian population. Supplementing this approach, the authors utilize qualitative assessments through their analysis of social media and Persian-language media as well as oral history interviews of 80

Iranians living in Iran—including academics, business owners, political and social activists, and blue- and white-collar workers—to understand how everyday lives changed across the 55-year period.

Recent history demonstrates that as both the quantity and scale of the sanctions against Iran have increased, the Iranian government would employ increasingly harsh measures against its population while subverting international pressures and remaining influential on the international stage with proxy forces and global influence. The authors assert that sanctions "have not forced Iran to stagnate" but have instead "actually forced Iran to innovate, just not in ways that are amenable to the West" (7). They argue that these wide-ranging and enduring sanctions constitute an innocuous form of economic warfare that seems victimless but is in fact not only harmful to civilians but also ineffective as a whole. Identifying the actual effects of the sanctions, the authors observe that instead of suffocating Iran into submission, they "only encourage [the] nation to fight back" (149). Tacit to this conclusion is the argument that the United States must pursue different approaches in dealing with Iran while ending the indiscriminate and enduring sanctions.

This monograph provides a well-researched and cohesive approach that discounts the simplicity of sanctions and captures the real impacts on the Iranian population over time. Furthering this approach, the authors present how the Iranian government can subvert the sanctions and retain national power while increasing the suffering against the Iranian people. This makes a compelling case against economic warfare as countering desired policy objectives.

Published in 2024, the book is limited in perspective as it could not take into account the recent changes in the region relative to the Crisis in the Levant sparked by the attack on Israel by Hamas in October 2023 and the dynamic international relations including between Iran and the United States. Yet despite this limitation, *How Sanctions Work* provides insightful context that validates the underlying argument that all forms of warfare have victims and that all policies require assessment, reframing, and adjustment to ensure desired outcomes over time.

How Sanctions Work is worth reading for military and civilian leaders and planners alike. The book is a short read with a clearly understandable chapter format and language. The data does not inundate the reader but instead flows logically to bolster key points. While its depiction of the lives of the Iranian people and their culture as well as its historical analysis of the economic sanctions taken against Iran inform all readers, the book also provides key insights particularly for military practitioners. Furthermore, the lessons learned in Iran of the consequences and limitations inherent to economic warfare apply beyond this region. By understanding this environment and these lessons, military and civilian strategists can better influence operational environments, assess policy effectiveness, and build viable options to optimize the utility of the instruments of national power to pursue US interests in the future.

Colonel Matthew Wunderlich, USAF

Cyber Wargaming: Research and Education for Security in a Dangerous Digital World
Edited by Frank L. Smith III et al. Georgetown University Press, 2024, 240 pp.

Wargaming is experiencing a renaissance in defense analysis and international relations research. Armed with new budgeting streams after the 2015 Department of Defense memorandum calling for the reinvigoration of wargaming, the field has grown exponentially.[1] Yet, despite wargaming's rebirth amidst the digital revolution, too many wargames neglect the weight of cyber operations and focus on purely physical aspects. This new anthology, edited by Frank Smith, Nina Kollars, and Benjamin Schechter, houses a series of informative essays that examine cyber theories and provide practical examples of wargaming for and with cyber effects. *Cyber Wargaming* is a much-needed infusion of the issue into analytical and educational wargaming.

The editors bring their diverse expertise to the collection. Smith is a professor at the US Naval War College and director of its cyber and innovation policy center, where Kollars now serves as a nonresident fellow. Schechter is a senior wargaming lead at Systems Planning and Analysis. Together they demonstrate a mix of academic, government, and private-sector experience in wargaming research and education.

The book is usefully divided into two major parts. The first, "Research Games," focuses on analytical wargaming, examining how wargaming can be used to study the ways in which threats, opportunities, and human decision-making can shape cyber operations just as they shape more traditional warfighting domains.

The section opens with one of the strongest essays of the anthology. "Cyber Games as Synthetic Data" examines the use of cyber wargames to create synthetic data within a holistic research agenda. Like the nuclear warfare analysis, cyber researchers face a stark lack of data. So, like Thomas Schelling and nuclear researchers before them, the authors turn to wargaming as a way to build a synthetic dataset. Their article carefully wades through the issues of internal and external validity along with logistical or playability concerns, representing this as a wargamer's trilemma.

"Wargames Research on Cyber and Nuclear Crisis Dynamics" follows this strong opening by providing examples of impactful wargames, including *Eligible Receiver*, a National Security Agency vs. Defense Department cyber wargame that comprised traditional tabletop gaming and penetration testing, and the *International Crisis War Game*, which tested nuclear-cyber escalation dynamics.

An essay on the *Netwar* and *Island Intercept* wargames shows cyber wargaming in a slightly different mold. Here, the authors admit that their treatment of cyber operations may not be perfectly realistic, as mentioned in the "Cyber Games" trilemma, but by emphasizing cyber effects, they captured human decision-making and preferred external validity.

The analytical wargaming section rounds out with examples from the Center for a New American Security gaming lab and the Center for Naval Analyses' "Merlin" tool for cyber

1. Robert Work, US deputy secretary of defense, memorandum, "Wargaming and Innovation," 9 February 2015.

adjudication. Both of these essays provide great references for those looking to design better wargames and include cyber effects within traditional wargaming molds.

The section's final essay, an analysis of the psychological aspects of wargaming, could have just as easily been placed in the second "Educational Wargaming" section, providing a useful bridge between the two parts. Using examples of wargames she helped design, the author explores the social psychology behind why one went well and the other failed.

The opening essay of the second section brings into focus the contrast between wargaming for analysis and for education—a distinction that is often hazy—concentrating on gaming's playfulness. Using research on games and an original game design, the author lays out the case for closing the gap between playfulness and "serious gaming."

The rest of the section covers different examples or niches within wargaming. An essay on the *9/12 Cyber Strategy Challenge*—the Atlantic Council's annual cyber competition for cross-disciplinary university students—demonstrates another pathway into the cyber community. This policy-focused game series, the authors argue, brings different, less technically-minded recruits into the cybersecurity world through wargaming. Another essay discusses the growth and impact of the *GridEx* cyber wargames—designed for utility companies and government partners to address cyber threats to the electrical grid—from a cyber wargame to a more comprehensive wargame that includes robust cyber actions. These are followed by considerations of wargaming for businesses or military doctrine and tips on wargame prototyping or matrix-game design.

Overall, this book shines most in its opening essays. Discussions of wargaming to create synthetic data and concerns related to the designer's trilemma echo throughout the rest of the anthology. The book's many examples illustrate how it will appeal to different audiences. After reading the introductory chapters, readers interested in business applications might flip right to "Breaching the C-Suite"—an analysis on private sector cyber wargaming. If design applications are of greater interest, readers will find many of the same insights on design from the analysis of *Island Intercept* and *Netwar*.

The book would be a stretch for new wargamers. While providing practical advice, it assumes a robust professional understanding of wargaming. More novice audiences would likely have difficulty understanding designers' trade-offs without more context from works like Sebastian J. Bae's *Forging Wargamers* (Marine Corps University Press, 2022). This makes certain sections, like the discussion of the *9/12 Cyber Strategy* game, seem somewhat non sequitur. Wargame designers would be better off reading Peter Perla's *The Art of Wargaming* (Naval Institute Press, 1999) and new academic researchers would be served well to read "Wargaming for International Relations Research" before looking to tackle this book.[2] While "Cyber Games as Synthetic Data" ties wargaming to other research methods, there is little discussion of wargame epistemology throughout the rest of the book.

Despite these minor misgivings, this anthology is a rich collection of insights into how wargaming can be useful for examining and teaching cyber warfare. Because of the

2. Erik Lin-Greenberg et al., "Wargaming for International Relations Research," *European Journal of International Relations* 28, no. 1 (2021), https://doi.org/.

authors' assumptions of the reader's knowledge, *Cyber Wargaming* is best for seasoned designers and practitioners who hope to better capture the complex character of cyber operations in their wargames. Nevertheless, it is a worthwhile addition to any wargamer's library and will be a useful reference for any cyber professional looking to harness the power of wargaming.

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