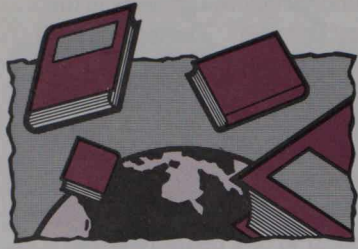


REVIEWS



Managing Nuclear Operations

Ashton B. Carter,
John D. Steinbruner, and
Charles A. Zracket, editors

Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987, 751 pgs. US \$18.95 paper

Nuclear Fallacy: Dispelling the Myth of Nuclear Strategy

Morton H. Halperin.

Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger/Harper and Row, 1987, 173 pgs. US \$19.95 cloth

■ *Managing Nuclear Operations*, edited by Harvard's Ashton Carter, John Steinbruner of the Brookings Institution, and Charles Zracket of the MITRE corporation, is a landmark study which builds on the important earlier work of Desmond Ball, Bruce Blair and Paul Bracken on nuclear command and control. Although the basic message of the book is similar to these earlier studies: there are serious deficiencies in the organizational, operational, and military command structures of the United States' nuclear forces and the risks of inadvertent or accidental war in a major crisis if those forces were placed on full alert is considerable; it contains a wealth of information and detail that is new. In part, the reason for this is that the book contains contributions by former Defense Department officials and policy planners who had first-hand experience with, and in some instances were directly responsible for, US nuclear operations.

Some of the most interesting and useful essays in the volume are by Paul Bracken on "War Termination" (a much-neglected issue), Russell E. Dougherty on "The Psychological Climate of Nuclear Command" (an insider's account of the pressures and constraints on decision-makers), a conceptually

useful chapter on the "Sources of Error and Uncertainty" by Ashton Carter (which builds on some of the important insights of sociologist Charles Perrow on the kinds of synergisms which magnify failure in complex organizations), and a well-researched piece on "Soviet Nuclear Operations" by MIT's Stephen Meyer. One notable omission in this otherwise exhaustive study is the lack of detailed consideration of nuclear operations at sea, including operations by US surface ships carrying sea-launched cruise missiles. There is a growing consensus in the strategic studies community that the risks of escalation at sea are probably greatest because these weapons are not subject to the same strict technical controls as land- or air-based forces.

It must also be said that this is a book which is written by and for the specialist. And it is a book which, given its length, is not digestible in one – or for that matter several – sittings. As primers go, Desmond Ball's *Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?* (Adelphi Paper No. 169 published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London in 1981), is still the best introduction to the subject.

Morton Halperin's *Nuclear Fallacy*, by contrast, is a lively and entirely approachable critique of US nuclear weapons policies. Halperin is a former Pentagon official who was one of the first civilians to glean some details about the SIOP (the single integrated operational plan which is prepared by the Pentagon in utmost secrecy and contains the list of targeting options an American president would have in the event of nuclear war). He subsequently worked for the National Security Council under Henry Kissinger.

Halperin believes that there are far too many nuclear weapons lying around and that it is time to put them, quite literally, back into the basement. Several years ago, this view was labelled by McGeorge Bundy as the "existential" or

"minimalist" view of deterrence wherein only a few hundred nuclear weapons are necessary to maintain a credible deterrent. Halperin believes that there is an increasingly dangerous tendency on the part of the military to view nuclear devices as ordinary weapons and that war-fighting doctrines and concepts of "escalation dominance," "escalation control," or "war termination" are worrying manifestations of this trend.

But Halperin carries the argument an intriguing step further. He argues that nuclear weapons have not helped in superpower crises and that every major confrontation between the superpowers since 1947 was resolved by negotiation and conventional military strength. Halperin also makes the case for an operational no-first-use policy which would eliminate nuclear weapons from Europe and from US forces (like ships and aircraft carriers) around the world. He also suggests that the United States create a special military command for its few remaining nuclear weapons that would be modelled much along the lines of the Soviet Strategic Rocket Force (an independent organization from the rest of the military). This would effectively take nuclear weapons out the hands of the armed services and establish independent lines of control to civilian authorities. In some respects, this would represent a return to the situation in the late 1940s when US nuclear weapons were kept under the lock and key of the Atomic Energy Commission and could only be released to the military on direct orders from the president.

Halperin believes that the current mix of nuclear and conventional forces is dangerous for crisis stability and increases the risks of nuclear escalation and accidents. There is certainly ample justification for this view in the above-mentioned Brookings study. As recent developments in the intermediate-range nuclear talks in Europe suggest, however, reductions or the elimination of certain

classes of nuclear weapons, must proceed in tandem with conventional forces arms control. Over the years, nuclear weapons have become a substitute for improvements in conventional forces and capabilities – an insurance policy intended to provide reassurance to the NATO allies. Although the policy has become somewhat threadbare in recent years, persisting doubts about the state of the "conventional balance" will have to be addressed either through conventional force improvements, or arms control, or some combination of the two. Alas, Halperin fails to give these issues the considered attention they deserve.

As the United States continues its naval build-up in the Persian Gulf, one wonders whether the task force is equipped with nuclear weapons. There is no way of knowing because these are tightly kept secrets. But Halperin is right to raise the kinds of questions he does about precisely this kind of military operation or policing exercise which is fraught with risks of military confrontation. There is little doubt that the provocative ideas in this short volume merit further study by policymakers and members of the interested public alike.

– Fen Osler Hampson

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Psychology and Deterrence

Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, 270 pgs. US \$28.50 cloth

■ This book contains a very sophisticated and comprehensive attack on deterrence which Jervis, Lebow and Stein argue is flawed as a theory of international relations and highly unpredictable and risky as an instrument of foreign policy. Although it has all the appeal of an abstract deductive theory which allows for elegant and parsimonious explanations, deterrence theory in its present