

# Foreword

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century featured a strategic competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. That competition avoided World War III in part because during the 1950s, scholars like Henry Kissinger, Thomas Schelling, Herman Kahn, and Albert Wohlstetter analyzed the fundamental nature of nuclear deterrence. Decades of arms control negotiations reinforced these early notions of stability and created a mutual understanding that allowed U.S.-Soviet competition to proceed without armed conflict.

The first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be dominated by the relationship between the United States and China. That relationship is likely to contain elements of both cooperation and competition. Territorial disputes such as those over Taiwan and the South China Sea will be an important feature of this competition, but both are traditional disputes, and traditional solutions suggest themselves. A more difficult set of issues relates to U.S.-Chinese competition and cooperation in three domains in which real strategic harm can be inflicted in the current era: nuclear, space, and cyber.

Just as a clearer understanding of the fundamental principles of nuclear deterrence maintained adequate stability during the Cold War, a clearer understanding of the characteristics of these three domains can provide the underpinnings of strategic stability between the United States and China in the decades ahead. That is what this book is about.

David Gompert and Phillip Saunders assess the prospect of U.S.-Chinese competition in these domains and develop three related analytic findings upon which their recommendations are built. The first is that in each domain, the offense is dominant. The second is that each side will be highly vulnerable to a strike from the other side. And the third is that the retaliating side will still be able to do unacceptable damage to the initiating party. Therefore, the authors make an important recommendation: that the United States propose a comprehensive approach based on mutual restraint whereby it and China can mitigate their growing strategic vulnerabilities. Unlike the Cold War, this mutual restraint regime may not take the form of binding treaties. But patterns of understanding and restraint may be enough to maintain stability.

Earlier this year, then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates called upon China to begin a dialogue with the United States on nuclear, space, and cyber issues. A first discussion was held in May that focused primarily on cyber issues. This book can help to inform the ongoing dialogue. With a clearer understanding of mutual vulnerabilities in these domains, the authors hope that competition will give way to greater U.S.-Chinese cooperation.

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