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Introduction by **James McAllister**

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Introduction by James McAllister, Williams College

Heated debates about the merits of specific arms control agreements were a constant feature of the Cold War. Did the hawks or the doves offer a more compelling and intellectually consistent viewpoint in these debates? In his new book, which should be of great interest to both historians and international relations theorists, James Lebovic argues that neither side in these debates was consistently correct and that the terms of arms control agreements reached during the Cold War “were never as good as U.S. proponents claimed—or as bad as opponents feared” (1). The central purpose of Lebovic’s historical research, however, is not to argue about the merits and flaws of particular arms-control treaties but to examine the underlying ideas and assumptions shared by both sides in the debate. For all of their important policy differences, Lebovic argues, both hawks and doves demonstrated “flawed logics” in their approach to arms control throughout the Cold War. While both sides ostensibly focused their respective cases on the hard number and operational realities of nuclear weapons, the arguments made by both hawks and doves were based on crucial ideas and assumptions about aspects of the adversary’s intentions, strategies, and trustworthiness that were rarely subjected to proper scrutiny.

All of the reviewers agree that *Flawed Logics* is an impressive work of scholarship. Jeffrey Knopf notes that Lebovic demonstrates “an encyclopedic knowledge of past debates about arms control.” Aaron Hoffman argues that Lebovic’s work makes an important contribution to theoretical and empirical studies of the role of trust in international relations. T.V. Paul praises the book for being “jargon free” and demonstrating the importance of ideas in the study of arms control. However, given the ambitious scope of Lebovic’s project, it should not be surprising that some of the reviewers also raise questions about several elements of the book. A common theme of the reviews is that Lebovic’s analysis would have benefitted from a more explicit engagement with the theoretical work of other scholars engaged with issues of arms control. In addition, both Paul and Knopf suggest that *Flawed Logics* would have been a stronger book if the author had paid far more attention to the Soviet side of arms control. Finally, Knopf suggests that the author could have more explicitly addressed the question of whether arms control ultimately made a positive contribution to maintaining stability during the Cold War.

Debates over the past and future of arms control will surely continue, but there is little doubt that *Flawed Logics* moves the debate forward and will be an important work for other scholars interested in the subject. We thank Professor Lebovic and the reviewers for their contributions to this important roundtable.

Participants:

James H. Lebovic is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at The George Washington University. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Southern California. He has published widely on defense policy, deterrence strategy, military budgets and procurement, foreign aid, democracy and human rights, and international conflict. He is the author of five books including *Flawed Logics: Strategic*

Nuclear Arms Control from Truman to Obama (Johns Hopkins University, 2013), *The Limits of U.S. Military Capability: Lessons from Vietnam and Iraq* (Johns Hopkins University, 2010), and *Deterring International Terrorism and Rogue States: U.S. National Security Policy after 9/11* (Routledge, 2007).

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Jeffrey W. Knopf is a Professor in the Graduate School of International Policy and Management and the chair of the M.A. program in Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He is also a senior research associate with the Monterey Institute's James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. He is the editor of *Security Assurances and Nuclear Nonproliferation* (Stanford University Press, 2012). His most recent major journal article is "Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation: Examining the Linkage Argument," *International Security*, vol. 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012/13), 92-132.

T.V. Paul is James McGill Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science at McGill University, Montreal, Canada where he has been teaching since 1991. Paul specializes in International Relations, especially international security and South Asia. Paul is the author or editor of 15 books. He has also published over 55 journal articles and book chapters and has lectured at universities and research institutions internationally. His most recent books are: *The Warrior State: Pakistan in the Contemporary World* (Oxford University Press, 2014); and *Status in World Politics*, with William Wohlforth and Deborah Larson (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Review by Aaron M. Hoffman, Purdue University

Until recently, studies of trust in international relations largely agreed on two points. First, contrary to claims that there is little room for trust in the dog-eat-dog world of international politics,¹ governments can and do entrust their interests to one another. However, and this is the second point, trust in international affairs does not emerge as easily as it does between parent and child. Building trust between states requires work, concerted efforts by interested parties to convince each other that they are trustworthy.²

A new line of thinking (in the field of International Relations), articulated by Brian C. Rathbun in his recent (2012) book, *Trust in International Cooperation* (Cambridge University Press) conceptualizes the willingness to trust as a disposition that some people have.³ For these individuals, judgments about trustworthiness do not necessarily depend on knowledge of another's character, past behavior, or intentions. Instead, generalized trusters are instinctively optimistic that others mean no harm and intend to honor their promises.⁴

Although he does not make this link explicitly, I read James Lebovic's impressive new book, *Flawed Logics*, as being more in line with Rathbun's work on generalized trust than work, like Andrew Kydd's or my own, that suggests trust emerges from purposive action. Lebovic's thesis is that nuclear arms control agreements negotiated by Presidential administrations from Truman to Obama were influenced by the assumptions U.S. policy makers made about Russia's trustworthiness. These policy makers, however, failed to recognize just how much their own beliefs about Russian intentions influenced their assessments of the treaties they crafted. Instead, they fixated on the operational details of the agreements, based on the false belief that the combination of nuclear capabilities, negotiated limits, and verification mechanisms could provide the security the U.S. craved. In actuality, the repeated failure to subject their assumptions about Russian

¹ See, for example, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

² These points can be found in the following: Ken Booth, and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Aaron M. Hoffman, *Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), and Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

³ Brian C. Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation: International Security Institutions, Domestic Politics and American Multilateralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See the H-Diplo/ISSF roundtable on the book at <https://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-6-4.pdf>.

⁴ For another treatment of generalized trust see, Eric M. Uslaner (2002), *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

trustworthiness to serious scrutiny resulted in arms control agreements that dealt with the nuclear threat incompletely, inconsistently, and, at times, incoherently.

Lebovic defines trust as a belief that the other party will not act as it is capable (5). This definition is nonstandard, but it is simple and, for the most part, effective since a major concern during each of the arms control negotiations was whether the Russians would do all they could to exploit their agreements.⁵ Next, he shows, through in-depth analyses of the debates over arms control among American hawks and doves, precisely how beliefs about trust influenced the negotiating positions of successive administrations. In each of these episodes, questions about compliance were central. Since perfect compliance with the terms of any arms control agreement could never be guaranteed, policy makers constantly wrestled with the question of when the terms they negotiated offered sufficient protection against cheating. Arms control “hawks” typically demanded more assurances than “doves,” but in the end both groups had to accept ambiguities and loopholes in the treaties that could be exploited.

Although *Flawed Logics* is motivated by the theoretical insight that ideas about Russian trustworthiness were key components of the efforts to manage the Superpowers’ stockpiles of nuclear armaments, the primary contributions this book makes to the study of trust are empirical. The demonstration that forms of generalized trust influenced nuclear arms control agreements is Lebovic’s most obvious contribution. The costs of opportunism in these cases (i.e. the penalties U.S. policy makers believed the country faced if their beliefs about trustworthiness were misplaced) were unacceptably high. By contrast, the costs of opportunism in the cases Rathbun examined in his work on generalized trust (negotiations over formation of the League of Nations, United Nations, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization) did not place U.S. security interests in as much peril. Consequently, the arms control efforts are rightly seen by scholars as least likely cases for trust to influence the affairs of state; Lebovic’s analysis suggests that inclinations to trust operate even in these unlikely situations.

Flawed Logics also offers a glimpse of how suspicious individuals become trusting. During Ronald Reagan’s first term as President, U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union was dominated by hawks who viewed the Soviets as thoroughly committed to taking advantage of the good will of the United States by exploiting every loophole in previous arms control agreements. Even minor treaty violations were cause for concern. To paraphrase then Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, the Soviets would not violate their agreements unless they expected to realize significant benefits from those infringements (138). Less than five

⁵ In one or two instances the definition does not capture the essence of trust because U.S. policy makers did not fear the consequences of Soviet opportunism. See Aaron M. Hoffman, “A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* vol. 8, no. 3 (2002): 375-401 for a discussion of different approaches to the definition of trust.

years later, many of these same hawks dismissed similar treaty violations as unimportant because they did not produce “effective” Soviet advantages (171).⁶

This change in attitude resulted from the new Soviet leadership’s willingness to agree to reductions in their weapons stockpiles that would not be matched bomb for bomb by the U.S., and their willingness to allow intrusive inspections on Soviet territory. U.S. negotiators had, to no avail, pressed for these kinds of concessions in the past. Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev’s acceptance of these conditions, therefore, came as a surprise and convinced many in the Reagan administration that the Soviets were changing.⁷

Understanding how suspicious individuals become more trusting is a subject that scholarship on generalized trust has not tackled yet. My take on the transformation in thinking inside the Reagan administration is that officials changed their attitudes about the Soviets in response to a sacrifice (i.e. costly signal) Gorbachev made during the negotiations over the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty. The trouble is that the inclination to be more or less trusting is not supposed to be sensitive to information about potential partners.⁸ At least initially, generalized trust is blind. Lebovic’s work suggests that generalized distrust is also blind. When, how, and why people abandon their assumptions about the trustworthiness of others in favor of their knowledge of these people is a process that appears to take place, but about which we know little.

Future research on generalized trust will also have to explain why people who knew each other as well as U.S. and Russian officials did relied on assumptions about trustworthiness instead of making this judgment using the information they had about each other. U.S. and Russian leaders were not the anonymous individuals who meet in psychology laboratories to play Prisoner’s Dilemma games. They were people who dealt with one another over and over in the global arena. Lebovic recognizes this point, arguing that the triumph of assumptions over information was pathological: the U.S. would have done better had serious thought been given to its adversaries’ intentions. By comparison, Rathbun argues that cooperation rooted in generalized trust makes for effective foreign policy. The evidence presented in *Flawed Logics* suggests that leaders should be more attentive than the average generalized trustor to pitfalls associated with this advice.

⁶ It is unclear if Perle became more trusting. Some of his later statements suggest his concerns about Soviet cheating remained, even if his level of alarm declined. See Lebovic, *Flawed Logics*, 174-175.

⁷ Lebovic, *Flawed Logics*, 178.

⁸ Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 2012.

Some Flawed Logics are More Flawed than Others.

When I started graduate school in the mid-1980s, strategic nuclear arms control was widely regarded as one of the most important security issues confronting the policy community. Today, U.S.-Russian arms control receives little attention, and it is quite possible that the 2010 New START treaty will turn out to be the last arms control treaty between the two sides. In these circumstances, the publication of James Lebovic's *Flawed Logics* is a welcome event. Lebovic's detailed analysis of U.S. arms control policy from the beginning of the nuclear age through the Obama administration shows that arms control still merits serious scholarly consideration.

I agree with most of the arguments Lebovic makes in this book, so this review essay will not contain many direct criticisms of his analysis. However, I did at times find myself wishing Lebovic had broadened his focus, so I will suggest some ways in which the book might have profitably connected to other literatures or deepened aspects of its analysis. In addition, despite the fact that it assumes arms control deserves serious attention, I believe the book ultimately underestimates the contributions made by arms control. I will conclude by pointing out some ways that arms control likely contributed to helping ensure that we came through the Cold War without going over the brink to the use of nuclear weapons.

Flawed Logics is not a traditional work of Political Science. It does not present alternative theories or hypotheses to be tested against empirical evidence. The book is more appropriately described as an interpretive or critical history. Lebovic delves beneath the surface of U.S. policy debates in an effort to determine what ultimately drove competing positions in these debates. He then subjects both sides to a critical, indeed sometimes withering, assessment.

Lebovic begins by relating arms control debates to the security dilemma. Although he never cites Joseph Grieco,¹ his account of the security dilemma follows Grieco's argument that attempts at cooperation (such as arms control) can founder when one or both sides fear either that the other will gain a relative advantage or that the other might cheat. Drawing on Reagan-era phraseology, Lebovic calls these two concerns "peace through strength" and "trust but verify" (4-5).

The crux of the argument comes next. Lebovic argues that U.S. policymakers could never achieve an objective assessment of the necessary level of strength or verification that would determine whether various arms-control proposals would serve the U.S. national interest. Because they could not determine with confidence whether the nuclear force postures or verification provisions that would result from proposed treaties would protect

¹ Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 3 (summer 1988), 485-507.

U.S. national security, protagonists in arms control debates fell back on their beliefs. In short, for Lebovic, arms control was ultimately shaped less by material aspects of the military balance of power and more by “ideational” factors (5).

Lebovic suggests that beliefs about arms control were primarily determined by beliefs about Soviet (and later Russian) policy goals. In practice, however, his case study chapters attach roughly equal weight to beliefs about nuclear strategy and how a nuclear war might break out and be fought. Not surprisingly, those who held the most pessimistic readings of Soviet intentions and who believed that preparations to fight a protracted nuclear war would best protect U.S. security tended to be the most skeptical of arms control.

These observations are not new, but the next step in the analysis adds a more original wrinkle. Lebovic argues that both positions ultimately rested upon “flawed logics,” in two ways. First, both camps tended to accept assessments that were incomplete. In short, neither side ever adequately did its homework. U.S. officials, regardless of whether they advocated or opposed arms control, never did the work necessary to figure out if their assumptions about Soviet goals were correct, or if the nuclear force postures they advocated would actually be sufficient to protect national security given their theories of nuclear war and nuclear strategy. Second, both supporters and critics of arms control tended to advance logically contradictory arguments. Sometimes they would make contradictory arguments in the context of debates about a particular treaty. At other times, they would flip positions from one debate to the next, suggesting logical inconsistency across time.

These debates recurred, often involving the same arguments, across every presidential administration from Truman to Obama. How, then, did debates get resolved into policy? Here, Lebovic adds a role for domestic politics. The arms control positions ultimately adopted by the United States often reflected the vagaries of domestic and bureaucratic politics. In the end, however, Lebovic assigns domestic politics a secondary role. In his concluding chapter, Lebovic suggests that “domestic politics affected U.S. policies mainly on the margin” (244). For him, beliefs were the ultimate drivers of policy. Many of the empirical chapters thus end with a summary section that focuses on what he labels “the power of belief” (e.g. 51, 116).

The empirical chapters in *Flawed Logics* apply the above framework to discussions of arms control policy in all U.S. presidential administrations since that of Harry S. Truman. In this way, Lebovic shows how many individual policy decisions fit common patterns. U.S. officials have sometimes asked for more than they could realistically hope to get, sometimes focused on things that were not essential, sometimes missed opportunities, and sometimes accepted agreements that carried significant risks. Lebovic notes, for example, that Dwight Eisenhower advanced proposals that he expected to give one-sided advantages to the United States, without seeming to realize that this same property would render the proposals unacceptable to the Soviet Union. Later, Lebovic argues persuasively, the U.S. insistence on perfect verifiability of any ban on nuclear testing led the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s to miss a chance to lock in a significant nuclear advantage by failing to agree to a ban that would include underground testing. Starting in the 1970s, the

United States focused obsessively on whether proposed agreements would establish equality or “essential equivalence” (92) in the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance. Lebovic does a nice job explaining how this obsession with numbers was often not linked in any rigorous way to an analysis of the forces actually needed to maintain effective deterrence. The same thing happened at the end of the Cold War, when even most conservatives welcomed the START I Treaty. Lebovic points out, however, that this treaty still did not remove the potential vulnerability of U.S. land-based forces to Soviet heavy ICBMs, even though this supposed “window of vulnerability” (as it was labeled at the time) had been a central concern of U.S. policymakers in the 1980s.

Lebovic does not give a bottom-line assessment of whether arms control was worthwhile. He offers an implied assessment, however, that links back to his argument about the impact of flawed logics. Sometimes, Lebovic argues, “U.S. policymakers accepted vulnerabilities” that jeopardized U.S. security; at other times, they “rejected terms that promised benefits, at limited cost and risk” (ix). Only rarely does Lebovic seem to judge that U.S. policymakers got it right; “Consequently, the terms of these treaties were never as good as U.S. proponents claimed – or as bad as opponents feared” (1). This suggests that the arms control exercise was either a wash – neither helping nor harming U.S. national security – or perhaps a modest but very limited positive.

In my opinion, Lebovic gets many of the basics right. Despite that, there are places where I wish Lebovic had said more. What seems to be a clear argument still contains important ambiguities. And the book does not do as much as it could have to offer a final balance sheet on the pros and cons of arms control.

One omission was probably unavoidable given the constraints on any individual scholar and research project. Lebovic suggests that disagreements about Soviet goals were the main source of contrasting positions on arms control. But the book contains no analysis of the Soviet side. Its focus is solely on U.S. policy debates. If the assessment of who ‘got it right’ ultimately depends on who assessed the Soviet side most accurately, it would have been helpful to include some evidence about what the Soviets actually thought.

On the theory side, the book’s account of the relationship between ideas and domestic politics could have been fleshed out more fully. As noted, Lebovic suggests that beliefs are primary. I agree with Lebovic that beliefs and domestic politics both matter, but I think that the balance is more equal and that the way the two factors interact is the truly critical question. If Lebovic is right that there were consistently two camps with respect to arms control, that the two camps were defined by their contrasting sets of beliefs, and that both sides held fast to their beliefs over time, then how do we account for changes in policy? The balance between the two sides in domestic debates must have shifted over time. If domestic politics shape which side prevails at a given point in time, or what compromises are necessary to build a majority, then one could argue that domestic politics are really the main driver of policy outcomes. However, rather than argue over which matters more, the crucial point is that both matter and they interact to shape policy positions. This suggests that we need a good model (or models) of how ideas and domestic politics interact. Lebovic does not attempt to sketch out such a model, and at times this weakens the analysis.

For example, Lebovic notes the protest movements that sometimes arose during the Cold War, such as the movements for a test ban or a nuclear freeze. He acknowledges that these protests had an impact, but suggests that U.S. administrations usually found it relatively easy to manage them (for example, 172). In my earlier research, however, I presented evidence that these movements had greater influence than Lebovic seems to suggest.² To the extent that he underestimates their impact, this is likely a function of his tendency to assign domestic politics a secondary role behind beliefs.

In a related vein, Lebovic does not adequately incorporate alliance dynamics into his framework. When he discusses the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) negotiations during the 1970s and 1980s, his empirical account fully recognizes the crucial role of U.S. relations with America's European NATO allies. The role of alliance politics is added, however, in an *ad hoc* way. Given that both the United States and the Soviet Union were part of larger alliance structures, it would have been better to have included alliance politics alongside beliefs and domestic politics in the starting framework for analyzing arms control policies.

The book could have been more fully fleshed out in one other, crucial area. Lebovic labels his approach "ideational," but I found myself left with several questions about this approach. Most fundamentally, what is the relationship between ideas and material factors? Lebovic often writes in a way that gives the impression that there might have been an objectively best answer to key questions about arms control policy. Lebovic repeatedly contends that officials did not do enough homework to determine whether their preferred arms control positions adequately addressed Soviet goals or motivations for cheating, or whether resulting force postures would be sufficient to maintain stable deterrence. This implies that, with enough research and analysis, these questions could have been answered. If so, perhaps there was an objectively 'right' answer. This, in turn, would suggest that the story is less one of incompatible sets of beliefs and more one of incomplete information and misperceptions. This would be a fairly thin version of an ideational approach.

The issue is not simply theoretical. It also affects how we judge policymakers. If there was a way to determine what would have been the single best arms-control policy, then we have a relatively strong basis for criticizing those officials who did not put in the effort to work through their analysis until they reached the 'right' conclusion. I strongly suspect, however, that this was not possible. There is probably no realistic way to determine that a particular position on arms control policy is objectively best.

Read as a whole, *Flawed Logics* seems to suggest the same conclusion. One reason for placing so much emphasis on beliefs is precisely because it was – and is – so hard to determine what policies are really best when dealing with nuclear weapons. I believe that

² Jeffrey W. Knopf, *Domestic Society and International Cooperation: The Impact of Protest on U.S. Arms Control Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Lebovic is ultimately arguing that U.S. officials did not do as much as they could and should have to test their assumptions. But this is different from saying, as Lebovic sometimes seems to imply, that doing so might have produced a consensus on which policies were best. If everyone had done more homework, they might sometimes have adjusted some of their policy positions. But serious disagreements would almost certainly have continued.

In order to make his position on this question clearer, it would have helped if Lebovic had said more about why beliefs are so important. I think Lebovic's analysis is closer to a psychological approach than to a social constructivist one, despite his decision to label his approach "ideational." The work of Alexander George provides one way of anchoring such an approach. George argued that beliefs and images are important in decision-making because many foreign policy issues are characterized by the twin problems of uncertainty and value tradeoffs.³ These problems loom large in nuclear policymaking. Not only did U.S. policymakers have uncertainty about Soviet goals, they also had to deal with enormous uncertainty about what conditions would be most likely to lead to nuclear war and how such a war might unfold once begun. I do not believe these uncertainties can ever be completely removed, leaving us with a single, objective answer about how nuclear war might begin. Hence, different beliefs about the most likely pathways to nuclear war will almost necessarily lead to different arms control preferences. In addition, this is a realm of serious value tradeoffs. A more robust nuclear posture might strengthen deterrence against deliberate aggression, but it runs the risk of provoking the other side and increases the dangers of inadvertent escalation. A strong commitment to nuclear arms reductions, on the other hand, runs the opposite risk of being interpreted as a signal of weakness.

Top officials had to deal with these uncertainties and value tradeoffs, moreover, while working on many other issues. And they had to negotiate deals that were also acceptable to the Russians, that could be ratified in the U.S. Senate, and that would not harm their own domestic political standing. All of this makes it hard to get things perfectly right. Lebovic's sharply critical, at times caustic tone suggests a certain lack of empathy with how policymakers have to do their jobs. Arms control policy, like most policymaking, necessarily involves a certain amount of 'muddling through.' It is still important to critique those policies that are seriously wrong. But it is equally important to give due credit when responsible officials get things at least partially right. Arms control policy never achieved the most ideal possible outcome, but the Limited Test Ban Treaty, the ABM Treaty, and the INF Treaty all represented real breakthroughs that affected the subsequent security environment. Although these treaties all reflected elements of "flawed logic," they also helped move U.S.-Soviet relations onto a less dangerous course, and Lebovic could have said more about the beliefs and logics that enabled such significant breakthroughs.

Fleshing out the ideational argument more fully would also have been a way to engage with other strands of literature. Other scholars have attempted to demonstrate how ideas influence nuclear policies, yet regrettably Lebovic does not cite or discuss any of this work.

³ Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 26ff.

Emanuel Adler, for example, has proposed that nuclear arms control resulted from the influence of a U.S.-based epistemic community.⁴ Lebovic's focus on high-ranking officials could have provided an opportunity, if he had pursued it, to test whether U.S. political leaders actually embraced the ideas of the arms control epistemic community. Another interesting question involves the structure of belief systems. Is there a hierarchy of beliefs in which individuals derive their preferences on particular policy issues from more general ideas in their belief system? Lebovic suggests that arms control preferences rested upon more fundamental beliefs about Soviet goals and the best way to deter nuclear war. But might these beliefs have been a function of even deeper elements of officials' worldviews? Zachary Zwald has recently argued that preferences regarding nuclear strategy derive from more general views about the sources of war, in particular whether nuclear war is more likely to result from deliberate aggression or from accident and misperception.⁵ Research on public opinion and foreign policy has similarly suggested that answers to specific opinion poll questions might be a product of more general, hierarchically structured belief systems held by members of the public.⁶ It would have been interesting to see Lebovic situate his analysis of arms control policy debates in relation to some of these other strands of research on the impact of beliefs. This does not detract from the very detailed and convincing interpretation of arms control debates contained in *Flawed Logics*, but it does reflect a missed opportunity to tease out some larger implications from such a well-executed study.

Finally, I believe that Lebovic leaves readers with a misleading impression of arms control's value. As the book progresses, it tends to be less critical of the pro-arms control than the anti-arms control side of the debate. But the book focuses so much on its critiques of both sides that *Flawed Logics* never gets around to presenting the affirmative case for what arms control accomplished. I do not want to overstate the value of arms control, which had real limitations, but I believe it made more important contributions than its critics recognize. Arms control advocates tended to focus too narrowly on how particular force postures would affect crisis stability. But arms control was not solely about numbers and the nuclear balance, and if he had pursued it Lebovic's focus on ideas and politics would have provided an opportunity to explore other ways in which arms control had an impact.

Beyond its attempt to stabilize the nuclear balance, arms control did four things that helped reduce the danger of nuclear war. First, arms talks were a forum for communication. In

⁴ Emanuel Adler, "The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evolution of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control," *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 1, special issue on Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination (winter 1992), 101-145.

⁵ Zachary Zwald, "Imaginary Conflicts: Explaining Deterrence Policy Preference Formation," *Security Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4 (Oct. 2013), 640-671.

⁶ Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, "How Are Foreign Policy Attitudes Structured? A Hierarchical Model," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 81, no. 4 (Dec. 1987), 1099-1120; Benjamin I. Page with Marshall M. Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders but Don't Get* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

particular, they enabled the two sides to communicate their views about nuclear weapons and realize they shared an understanding of the importance of avoiding nuclear war. Second, arms treaties served a symbolic function.⁷ Agreeing to arms control was a way for both sides to signal that they accepted a need to place limits on the superpower competition. Third, arms control provided a vehicle for popular mobilization. From the beginning of the nuclear age, portions of world opinion feared the possibility of nuclear war. Activists could protest against the nuclear arms race or campaign for efforts to ‘ban the bomb,’ but it would always be hard to sustain momentum behind such abstract and generic goals that had little prospect of being achieved in the near term. In contrast, mobilizing around a specific arms control proposal or treaty was easier, because it gave a concrete focus and near-term objective for protest. In this way, the arms control enterprise helped the opponents of nuclear weapons organize and act as a counterweight to more hawkish forces in nuclear policy debates. Fourth, the experience of arms control created a mechanism for moving quickly to reduce nuclear arsenals once political conditions changed. When the Cold War wound down and the Soviet Union dissolved, the two sides found it easier to move to deep reductions because they did not have to invent arms control from scratch. Instead, they were able to build on the understandings and approaches that they had already worked out through prior rounds of arms control.

This is not meant to imply that one side got it entirely right or that the other side was fully wrong. Critics of arms control raised valid concerns, especially about the Soviet tendency to seek competitive advantage under the rubric of arms control. And some arguments made in support of arms control have not stood the test of time. I agree with Lebovic that both sides relied to some degree on flawed logic. But, while realizing that even today the issues in these debates have not been resolved and that reasonable people can disagree, it is important to offer one’s best possible judgment on whether arms control proved worthwhile. For the reasons listed above, if the United States and its allies had given up on arms control and decided not to engage in arms talks with the Soviet Union, I believe the subsequent course of events would have unfolded in a more dangerous way. Arms control, in ways that are intangible and hard to measure, reduced the likelihood of nuclear war. For this reason, the case against arms control was weaker than the case for it. While both sides displayed problematic logic, some flawed logics were more flawed than others.

Although there are places where I wish Lebovic had widened or deepened the scope of his analysis, this does not alter my judgment that *Flawed Logics* is an impressive piece of scholarship. Lebovic displays an encyclopedic knowledge of past debates about arms control in the United States. Moreover, in my opinion, Lebovic’s core conclusions are correct. Policy debates reflected different and incompatible beliefs. These beliefs, in turn, often rested upon poorly examined assumptions and contained logical contradictions. And this hampered the U.S. ability to ascertain if particular arms control policies would serve the national interest. In the future, it will be important to do better than this – if we can.

⁷ Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 173 and 220-225.

Review by T.V. Paul, McGill University

This book is an interesting exercise by a non-Constructivist scholar to apply ideas and show their importance in the strategic behavior of states, especially the arms control policies of the United States during the Cold War and beyond. James Lebovic proves that there is no science in arms control and that it is very much a practice shaped by the particular ideas and worldviews held by proponents and opponents of a given arms control agreement. The debate between the doves and hawks was not clear-cut or based on empirical facts, but rather was based on postures or propositions deriving from their established ideas as to what constitutes the threshold for strategic stability.

Lebovic finds several holes in the arguments leveled by both doves and hawks, as well as the divergent positions within these groups. More importantly, he discovers the anomaly that the U.S. had agreed to arms control treaties that were not all that beneficial in the end, while passing up some that would have been less costly. This anomaly cannot be explained other than through an analysis of variables at the domestic-politics and belief-system levels. Lebovic offers a discussion of the peculiar belief systems of each presidency, and uses the political positions of the teams that controlled the arms control agenda under the presidents to evaluate the claims they made on arms control and strategic stability. It still remains unexplained as to what then produced continuities in U.S. arms control policy? It seems that both doves and hawks shared several core assumptions on stability. Otherwise, why did no revolutionary ideas, especially those similar to what the nuclear abolitionists have proposed, ever reach the pinnacle of decision-makers' menu for discussion?

Thus a major unanswered question is why, despite the victory of doves or hawks, arms control in general during the Cold War did not produce any substantial breakthroughs. The number of weapons increased to over 50,000 warheads when the Cold War ended. In order to get a better picture of this we need to examine what the Soviets did. Therefore, it would have been useful to look at the ideas and assumptions that the Soviet elites held on arms control negotiations. Was it a mirror image of the U.S. position or something different coming from the Soviet ideological milieu as well as positions of the particular bureaucratic and scientific elite that led to their negotiating positions?

Matthew Evangelista, in his 1988 book, *Innovation and the Arms Race*, argues that the U.S. weapons acquisition decisions were made largely through the bottom-up process, that is the scientific-bureaucratic elite came up with a new weapons idea and then the political elite, especially the senators and congressmen from the constituencies, took up the development as part of their pork-barrel politics.¹ For the Soviets, on the other hand, it was top down, as the decisions were made by the top political elite, based on inputs from the scientific and bureaucratic worlds, but largely in reaction to American weapons developments. His work indicates the powerful presence of the military-industrial complex

¹ Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1988).

in both systems, each of which had their own characteristics. Lebovic does not deal with the sources of the arms race, without which we cannot explain why arms control in general failed to make a major dent during the Cold War era.

This book should have more carefully explored the alternate explanations for arms control. Did the military-industrial complex play any role? Did the material interests of the complex shape the ideas of the arms-controllers? Further, it is not clear why a strong leader could not override some of the positions of these so-called expert negotiators. This is especially clear in the Soviet system, where Premier Mikhail Gorbachev and his team appeared to have made a number of radical proposals, to the opposition of the arms controllers. What were the psychological roots of these ideas? The literature on perceptions and misperceptions and trust and mistrust would have been useful here.

Another area where the book could have devoted a bit more focus is when and how ideas change, as well as why sometimes a particular idea wins over others. Here it appears that more change occurred in terms of the Soviet elite's ideas than in those of their American counterparts. It is unclear why and how the Gorbachev team turned aside the ideas dearly held by many in the Russian elite and agreed to such deep cuts and force withdrawals from Eastern Europe. It is also important to see why the U.S. has been reluctant to make such deep cuts. It is very unlikely that the U.S. would have produced a Gorbachev or someone even willing to make fundamental changes to the nuclear weapons policies. President Ronald Reagan tried nuclear abolition at Reykjavik in 1986, but was shot down without even a debate by much-worried officials.

Finally, it would have helped to clarify why some presidents (like Barack Obama) arrive in office with many radical ideas, yet leave office without many accomplishments in the area. Today, the possibility of the nuclear arms race heating up is high given Russian incursions into Ukraine and Chinese competition with the U.S. in the Pacific. It is not clear that arms controllers have much to offer in these circumstances. The U.S. deployments of missile defenses in Europe and Asia will likely encourage the Russian and the Chinese to ratchet up their nuclear forces. The U.S. is unlikely to stay behind given the desire to maintain primacy in every domain the US has held in the past several decades. The larger question is how, if new rounds of systemic conflicts re-emerge, will that affect the doves and the hawks and the action-reaction process associated with much of the arms race.

Flawed Logics is indeed a strong book, and it has several insights for all those interested in arms control processes and its evolution, especially in the U.S. context. It is also jargon free and does not play with any of the particular 'isms' that are prevalent in international relations scholarship today. It shows that ideas matter, and structure and agency are related in different ways, although the former is given more importance. The book is well written and, as such, a pleasure to read.

Author's Response by James H. Lebovic, The George Washington University

I wish to thank the three reviewers – Aaron Hoffman, Jeffrey Knopf, and T.V. Paul – for participating in this roundtable, appreciating the strengths of my book, thoughtfully situating it within larger academic debates, and pressing me to evaluate the book's contribution to our understanding of the forces that facilitate, shape, and impede arms control. As the reviewers point out, progress in nuclear arms-control was influenced by a myriad of forces that any book on the subject must acknowledge as influencing policy outcomes. With that in mind, I sought to write a thematic and broadly informative book on the arms-control policies and negotiations of successive U.S. presidential administrations. Thus, the book explores the strategic and domestic political context in which the negotiations occurred, the bargaining positions of the United States and Russia, views of the provisions of various treaties in the U.S. ratification debate, and the relationship between each treaty and its predecessors. Yet all books are shaped by their vantage point and perspective, the demands of coherence, and the limits of space. So, all books inevitably focus on some aspects of a subject more than others, and some aspects by way of others.

Knopf and Paul are thus correct that I do not delve deeply into the origins of the arms race, the influence of the military-industrial complex, protest networks that pressured U.S. policymakers for change, or the intricacies of alliance politics. Nor do I give equal treatment to the thinking and behavior of the Soviet leadership so as to study the dynamics of perception and misperception. Many others (including the reviewers) have ably addressed these topics in print. But a focus on year-to-year changes induced by these factors would distract from a striking consistency over time in U.S. arms-control perspectives and policies that cannot be reconciled with realist notions of a security dilemma or attributed to domestic politics. For that reason, I focus on the nature, substance, and *failings* of the strongly held ideas that informed the great debates of the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. These failings explain why the strongly held assumptions of the protagonists survived virtually all tests against evidence. Contrary to Knopf's supposition, the resilience of these assumptions is not attributable, then, to high degrees of uncertainty that were rooted in deficient information.

I argue that U.S. policymakers divided ideologically – as hawks and doves – in their assumptions about Russian goals. As Hoffman and Knopf note, these diverging assumptions spoke to larger differences in world views and to differing degrees of trust in the Soviet Union (by which I mean that it would not act as it was capable, either by cheating on agreements or by attacking the United States to capitalize on some favorable force balance). I also assert, however, that both hawks and doves ignored these same assumptions in developing their arguments. They concentrated, instead, on operational matters that were meaningful only because of those assumptions. The result was a perverse paradox. Debates, controversies, and policies were driven by assumptions that remained oddly removed from scrutiny as policymakers focused their attention on balances and imbalances, gaps and windows, and loopholes for cheating that were of little actual consequence for deterring or conducting a nuclear war.

To be sure, domestic politics affected policy outcomes, as I discuss in the book. Nuclear doctrines changed with administrations, and U.S. political leaders, Democrats and Republicans alike, played politics with U.S. security. Just as John F. Kennedy capitalized on claims that the Eisenhower administration had allowed the Soviets to open a ‘missile gap,’ Ronald Reagan sought political benefits in charges that his predecessors had allowed the Soviets to open a ‘window of vulnerability.’ Still, it is easy to get caught up in the dramas of domestic and international politics – the charges and countercharges, personality clashes, and intrigue – and lose sight of the consistencies in positions and policies across administrations that rested on a persisting illogic (inconsistency and incompleteness) in thinking about nuclear weapons and arms control. In my view, the resulting illogic had the following (consistent) effects. First, it prevented a narrowing of the political divide. I do not suppose (despite Knopf’s assertion) that U.S. thinking or policy would have improved had hawks and doves come to some agreement; I do believe, however, that the ungrounded focus on metrics and constructs meant that hawks and doves deferred to their preferred measures, giving them almost symbolic status, to preclude any basis for agreement. Second, the illogic fueled an implicit consensus that a large, destructive, and robust U.S. nuclear arsenal safeguarded U.S. national security. Policymakers debated the wisdom of structuring U.S. nuclear forces around the concepts of Assured Destruction, Essential Equivalence, and so forth, but, in the end, they accepted very similar standards for sizing and configuring the U.S. arsenal. Even the Reagan administration ultimately decided that it could live within the strictures of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) II Treaty. Third, the illogic limited the U.S. options for bargaining in arms control. In both the Cold War and post-Cold War periods, arms-control treaties between the United States and Russia largely ratified deployment decisions that were made *unilaterally* by the parties.

Naturally, any discussion of great debates would seem fitting to end with a discussion of who was right and wrong. I understand Knopf’s desire that I adjudicate the hawk-dove debate in the book. I conclude the book, in fact, by noting that the accumulating documentary evidence little supports the hawkish view of an unrelenting Soviet menace that would employ its nuclear forces to achieve expansionist objectives. Differences in Soviet and U.S. force deployments that hawkish U.S. officials took to indicate Soviet malevolence, spoke instead to differences in U.S.-Soviet military cultures and histories, not to cavalier Soviet attitudes toward using nuclear weaponry. But correctness is not the final arbiter in the book, nor should it be. Should dovish advocates of Assured Destruction feel entirely vindicated for having argued that the U.S. arsenal would deter a Soviet attack when they also held the U.S. arsenal to standards of strength and robustness that had no basis in Soviet values and thinking; relied on arbitrary capability metrics; and took policy positions (the use of nuclear weapons to respond flexibly to a Soviet attack on Western Europe) that contradicted positions on others (touting nuclear weapons principally as instruments of deterrence)?

I recognize that a conclusion that one might draw from all of this is that ideas were never central: U.S. policymakers changed course when material realities fundamentally changed. Indeed, the illogic of arms control admittedly permitted some flexibility in U.S. thinking about the requisites of defense in the last years of the Cold War, and those to follow,

allowing many hawks to embrace the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) I Treaty. Both treaties are problematic when assessed using long-standing hawkish criteria. U.S. “vulnerabilities” that bothered hawks before the ratification of post-Cold War-era arms control treaties bothered them less thereafter, though the START I Treaty did little to address them. Yet it took a Mikhail Gorbachev, and the dramatic shift in Soviet arms-control positions that he brought, to convince U.S. policymakers that the Soviet Union, as they had long known it, had changed. Even then, some hawks did not change their views, others were soft converts to the cause, and most continued to believe that U.S. security depended on maintaining a nuclear arsenal of a size and capability that U.S. policymakers of the fifties would envy. In the final analysis, material conditions cannot explain why the United States is more or less secure with the U.S. levels of armament under the New START Treaty in the Obama administration than under the SALT I Treaty in the Nixon administration, when the U.S. and Russian arsenals were greater in size by many orders of magnitude.

The illogic in thinking about the acquisition, deployment, and possible use of nuclear weapons has considerable implications. A key question is not just whether we have too many nuclear weapons. It is whether we can recognize how a large and robust U.S. arsenal – and an uncritical belief in its deterrent capacity – might make the United States less, not more, secure.

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