From the Editor

It is my pleasure and honor to become the new Editor of the US Army War College Quarterly, *Parameters*. I have had the privilege of serving in a military career of more than twenty years, and am a graduate of the US Military Academy, the US Army Command and General Staff College, and the US Army War College. I hold a doctorate in modern history from Princeton University and recently completed a Visiting Research Fellowship at Oxford University. My publishing history includes four books and numerous articles on contemporary strategic thinking, strategic theory, and military history. My aim is to provide topical forums for debating strategic issues of regional functional significance to landpower, and to offer critical commentary and reviews of the latest scholarship relevant to the discipline of strategic and defense studies. We will actively encourage debate and endeavor to bring the views of scholars and practitioners together.

Readers will see our use of forums expand in future issues. Our topics will include: "Women in Battle," "US Strategy in Afghanistan: Successes and Failures," "Landpower and Contemporary Military Interventions," and "US Strategic Choices Regarding Iran." The Quarterly will offer its readers alternative views on contemporary strategic topics, even if those views are not always diametrically opposed. We will have more commentaries and review essays. We will continue to foster debate and encourage discussion. Toward those ends, we welcome your comments, positive or otherwise, as do our authors. Our "Commentary and Reply" section will expand, and we will soon offer ways for readers to engage us online. Our readers will also note that we are evolving toward a more reader-friendly and researcher-friendly format. The point of these changes is to make the journal more versatile for those who use it. We welcome your comments on that as well. What will not change, of course, is the Quarterly's insistence on high standards of scholarship. We believe that is the best way to keep faith with our readers and do justice to the issues that concern them.

The Winter-Spring 2013 issue of the Quarterly features three forums focusing on contemporary strategic concerns. The first of these, "Drones and US Strategy: Costs and Benefits," offers some scholarly grounding for a topic that has recently exploded in the media. Articles in the *New York Times*, *TIME*, *US News & World Report*, *The New York Review of Books*, and elsewhere, have treated drones not only as if they were new, but as if their use by the United States has destroyed a de facto tactical balance. To put it in classical terms, David's sling, or *kel-ah*, could once offset Goliath's greater physical strength; but now Goliath, too, has a sling, and it appears to have a much longer reach and to be more accurate than David's. Media attention has thus focused more on Goliath's sling than on David's *kel-ah*. The fact is drones are not new: US military and paramilitary forces have used them for more than a decade, as have many of America's allies and partners. A variety of drones are available off the shelf, and terrorist groups and violent nonstate actors are already acquiring and using them. In reality, the employment of drones and other remotely controlled aerial vehicles has outpaced the efforts of defense scholars and legal advisers to develop parameters for their use—a point made by Alan W. Dowd's article: "Drone Wars: Risks and Warnings."

As further evidence of this gap, W. Andrew Terrill's essay, "Drones over Yemen: Weighing Military Benefits and Political Costs," highlights

the military contributions drones recently made in Yemen. He also considers their political downsides, one of which is their potential to add to anti-Americanism. It is important to ask whether the image of the United States as a global power is enhanced or harmed by the use of instruments designed to perform remote surveillance and targeting, while keeping US personnel out of harm's way. That topic is tackled by Greg Kennedy, "Drones: Legitimacy and Anti-Americanism," who reminds us that new weapons usually challenge the martial status quo in some way, and consequently must weather questions of legitimacy. Such questions may have delayed the fielding of new weapons, but rarely prevented it. They may at some point temper the use of drones, but they will not halt it.

Closing out the forum is Jacqueline L. Hazelton's article, "Drones: What Are They Good For?" which takes on first-order questions concerning the use of remotely controlled aerial vehicles. She classifies drones as a form of air power, though with greater flexibility in terms of loiter time, precision strike, and surveillance. She also reminds us that much of what we think we know regarding the efficacy of drone strikes rests on incomplete information. As more evidence becomes available, we may well have to revise our assumptions about what drones can actually accomplish as instruments of policy.

The second forum, "US Strategy and Nuclear Weapons," takes up a familiar but no less important debate regarding the utility of nuclear weapons. Since the end of the Cold War, the deterrent value of nuclear weapons has been disputed, and they have drifted increasingly into what defense analysts call the "trade-space." By incrementally reducing the nuclear inventory (minus the costs of doing so), analysts can free some defense dollars for use elsewhere. However, it has proved difficult to achieve consensus on what the optimum level of our inventory should be. This forum features two essays representing opposing poles in that debate. On one side is Ward Wilson's article, "Rethinking the Utility of Nuclear Weapons." On the other side is an essay by Bradley A. Thayer and Thomas M. Skypek, "Reaffirming the Utility of Nuclear Weapons." Wilson argues that many of the popular assumptions about the deterrent value of nuclear weapons rests on outmoded historical interpretations, particularly concerning the surrender of Japan in 1945 and the Cuban missile crisis of 1961. These cases, as he correctly points out, have been under revision for some time. Of course, we ought to learn from the past—our own as much as others'—and history is our primary vehicle for doing that. However, learning from the past means revising our knowledge as new historical evidence comes to light or new interpretations are advanced and successfully defended. History has never been synonymous with the past: it is, instead, our active interpretation of the past. History, in other words, is an open rather than a closed system. That means the lessons we draw from the past depend on changing variables. Thayer and Skypek maintain that the present alone provides sufficient evidence for the strategic value of nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, it is worth asking whether their views may also be influenced by history. Even if a world without nuclear weapons is "an unpleasant dream," as the authors contend, we would do well to consider the extent to which some long-held facts of nuclear deterrence might rely on leaps of faith.

The third forum, "Grand Strategy in Theory and Practice," considers the problems inherent in implementing strategy. Strategy is not difficult in theory: we identify our interests and match ends, ways, and means to advance those interests. Putting strategy into practice is, of course, another matter. The practice of strategy is difficult not only because of the influence of Clausewitzian friction, but also because it requires prioritizing one's interests, which can make for difficult choices. Samir Tata's article, "Recalibrating American Grand Strategy: Softening US Policies toward Iran in order to Contain China," illustrates the problem quite clearly. If the United States were to pursue a policy of containment toward China, one of the ways it could do so is to leverage Chinese economic dependence on Iran. That, however, would require softening some US policies regarding Iran, which would in turn mean reprioritizing US interests in the region. Given that, many of the author's recommendations will be a tough sell, though the resultant dialogue itself would have merit. Richard D. Hooker's essay, "'The Strange Voyage': A Short Précis on Strategy," summarizes the many factors that make the implementation of strategy difficult. Yet, we might well ask whether the fundamental difficulty has less to do with the prevalence of strategic friction, as it does with the tendency, all too common among great powers, to try to preserve or advance too many interests.

This issue of the Quarterly also features a Special Commentary by Lieutenant Colonel David Fivecoat on "American Landpower and Modern US Generalship." Fivecoat argues that, contrary to popular claims, the US Army since 9/11 has maintained an unspoken but rigid form of accountability, actually holding its combat division commanders to a higher standard than their peers. The journal closes out with informative book reviews in the following categories: Recent Works on Afghanistan, New Scholarship on the Fall of South Vietnam, New Perspectives on World War I, Insights from Political Science, and The Human Face of War.—AJE