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Death by Moderation: The U.S. Military's Quest for Useable Weapons

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steam-driven fleet being built in American shipyards.

The result was a grudging British retreat from the New World. Then as now, historical, political, and cultural affinities lubricated the gears of Anglo-American diplomacy. If London and Washington found it hard to manage their relations, how much harder must the challenge be that lies before liberal America and autocratic China—how to sort out their differences without undue rancor. The type of regime matters. How Sino-American relations will unfold in the coming years is far from clear.

For me the most forward-looking and thus most interesting chapters are concentrated toward the book's end. Schmitt, for example, examines the prospects for multilateralism in Asia, a region long typified by a hub-and-spoke alliance system centered on the United States. Schmitt downplays the potential for an Asian NATO but maintains that the region is halfway to an Asian variant of the Helsinki Accords, which set the rules for the late Cold War. If this is so, Asian multilateralism could possibly enfold Beijing, fostering regional concord. AEI demographics expert Nicholas Eberstadt observes that the Chinese nation is graying and that Beijing's one-child policy is taking its toll on the most productive age groups. Taken together, the essays gathered here suggest that straight-line projections of China's rise are apt to mislead. This book is strongly recommended for newcomers to China studies, as well as to old hands who want a refresher on recent developments.

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Koplow, David A. *Death by Moderation: The U.S. Military's Quest for Useable Weapons*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010. 263pp. \$28.99

Death by Moderation is a focused, academic work that starts with the premise that conditions in today's world have shown the limitations of increasingly powerful weapons in achieving U.S. national goals. In response to that problem, the U.S. military is attempting to develop weapons that are less powerful and more accurate—and therefore more “useable,” in the author's words.

After several chapters that set the stage—issues involving revolutions in military affairs, deterrence, and the law of armed conflict—a series of chapters deal with particular types of usable weapons. The author has chosen five such weapons: precision-guided munitions, low-yield nuclear weapons, smart antipersonnel land mines, antisatellite weapons, and nonlethal weapons. There is also a discussion on cyber war, although not in a separate chapter. The book ends with the chapter “What to Do about Useability,” in which Koplow provides answers to his many questions.

The chapters begin with a scenario, either historical or hypothetical, as a framework for the following discussion. Given the constraints of space, Koplow does an excellent job of describing the technical details of the weapons under review. When applicable, he reviews their actual uses in combat. He places particular emphasis on whether or not more usable weapons will reduce what he calls “self-deterrence” and result in the increased likelihood of conflict

using such weapons. Each chapter is a self-contained unit that ends with a separate bibliography and a list of applicable treaties. This approach is particularly valuable for a reader who wants to review quickly only one of the subjects covered.

The author does a good job presenting both sides of the issues surrounding these weapons. He clearly views these issues from a legal, arms-control perspective, as opposed to that of someone who might have actually to employ the weapons in combat. This is hardly surprising, given the author's background. Koplow is a professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center and director of the Center for Applied Legal Studies. He has the added credentials of service in both the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the Department of Defense.

A quick look at chapter 6, on smart antipersonnel mines, illustrates the book's strengths (which are major) and its weaknesses (which are minor). The scenario is hypothetical and involves a country called "Kafiristan." In my view, such cases are less powerful than his historical ones, such as the use of precision-guided bombs against heavily defended bridges in North Vietnam. This chapter provides a useful primer on land-mine warfare, including important definitions explaining self-destructing, self-neutralizing, and self-deactivating mines. It also discusses the two current, but competing, treaties on the subject: the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which was signed by the United States, and the more restrictive 1997 Ottawa Treaty, which the United States did not sign.

Whether one agrees or not with Koplow's conclusions, *Death by Moderation* is a valuable addition to the literature because it forces the reader to think about a number of important issues that will be around for the predictable future.

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Thies, Wallace J. *Why NATO Endures*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009. 321pp. \$90

The study of alliances is central to our understanding of international relations. Wallace Thies, a reputable NATO scholar, argues that the "iron law of coalitions"—that alliances are formed to resist enemies and do not outlast them—must be rethought because of NATO's record-breaking performance over the past six decades. The title, *Why NATO Endures*, therefore understates the sweeping conclusion of this concise and readable essay.

Thies's rhetorical technique is to document how contemporaneous observers have characterized six tumultuous incidents in NATO's existence as life-threatening crises, then to evaluate with the clarity of hindsight the alliance's self-healing tendencies. In each case, NATO emerges as a stronger alliance with improved vitality.

The analysis draws from both historical sources and political-science research to contrast traditional alliances with NATO. Thies's principal points are both simple and profound. The European alliances of past centuries were cut from different cloth than was the North