Editor's Note

This issue begins with the first segment of a two-part article by Andreas Lutsch analyzing the problems that arose in the early 1960s for the credibility of U.S. commitments to deter Soviet attacks against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). U.S. defense guarantees to NATO during the Cold War rested in large part on the U.S. nuclear arsenal, but the salient role of nuclear deterrence created problems of credibility. After the Soviet Union gained the ability in the mid-1950s to carry out nuclear attacks of its own against the U.S. homeland, U.S. policymakers were aware that if they used nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union to defend Western Europe, they might risk Soviet retaliatory strikes against the United States. Some NATO leaders worried that the vulnerability of U.S. cities to nuclear attack might make U.S. officials unwilling to come to Europe's defense. A proposed remedy that emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s was to have the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) deploy medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) armed with nuclear warheads that would be under joint U.S. and FRG control. Although U.S. policymakers tried to reassure their West German counterparts that the sharing of nuclear weapons command-and-control was unnecessary and undesirable, leaders in the FRG viewed the MRBM proposal as a way of bolstering the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence. The MRBM debate was influenced by numerous factors, but in West Germany and other European NATO countries most officials saw the problem of nuclear weapons control as less important than the need to dispel doubts regarding the credibility of U.S. defense commitments to NATO.

The next article, by Elmar Hellendoorn, explores the controversy that arose in the early 1960s over U.S.–West European cooperation in developing gaseous diffusion and ultracentrifuge technology for the enrichment of uranium. Much to the irritation of Dutch and West German officials, the U.S. government wanted to maintain secrecy around the ultracentrifuge, in part because of concerns about nuclear nonproliferation, in part because of national security issues connected with the 1961 Berlin crisis and the decisions NATO was pursuing on the modernization of nuclear forces to deter Soviet aggression, and in part because of economic considerations and a desire to maintain U.S. dominance of enriched uranium production. The Dutch government's perspective on the matter was driven mainly by commercial and technical considerations, whereas U.S. policymakers claimed to be concerned mostly about the strategic and nonproliferation dimensions. Hellendoorn's analysis also indicates that the distribution of power within NATO was at stake. Ultimately, U.S. officials and their Dutch, FRG, and British counterparts were able to devise a compromise on the matter, but the episode revealed the potential for intra-alliance friction over sensitive issues connected with nuclear weapons and related technologies.

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The next article, by Sebastian Gehrig, discusses how the Cold War–era bifurcation of Germany into a Communist-ruled Eastern state (the German Democratic Republic, or GDR) and a democratic Western state (the FRG) spurred them to undertake rival efforts at foreign cultural diplomacy as they sought to maximize their diplomatic recognition around the world. The FRG and GDR sponsored exchange programs for scholars, musicians, artists, language teachers, and students in various regions, including Northeast Asia, where the division of the Korean peninsula between the Communist North and non-Communist South and the separation in 1949 of the Communist-ruled mainland of China from the exiled Nationalist government on Taiwan facilitated attempts by the rival German states to bolster their competing claims to be the "real" representative of German culture. Although ideological conflicts in Northeast Asia inevitably affected the FRG's and GDR's exchange programs, most visitors from Asia tried to pursue their own interests by avoiding a decisive "tilt" toward one German state or the other. For both German governments, therefore, cultural diplomacy became a crucial instrument of their broader foreign policies.

The issue then includes a pair of articles marking the fiftieth anniversary of the two landmark accords that were signed in Moscow in May 1972 by U.S. and Soviet leaders after three years of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). The two documents—the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms—were arguably the high point of the U.S.-Soviet détente in the first half of the 1970s. SALT I established a pattern for U.S.-Soviet relations in subsequent years, with nuclear arms control often eclipsing all other issues.

The significance of the SALT I accords is explored in two articles by distinguished experts on national security and the role of nuclear weapons in the Cold War. The first article, by Marc Trachtenberg, provides a detailed look at the policies and goals of the two most important officials on the U.S. side—President Richard M. Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger (who later also served as U.S. secretary of state). Trachtenberg assesses the strategic, political, and bureaucratic dimensions of the Nixon administration's approach to SALT, explaining what Nixon and Kissinger were hoping to achieve at the time. Although Trachtenberg takes account of domestic political and foreign policy considerations, he is especially interested in determining whether U.S. policymakers regarded SALT as a way of enhancing strategic stability and reducing the potential for nuclear war. Kissinger and Nixon repeatedly argued that SALT could bolster strategic stability, but Trachtenberg finds that the underlying reality of U.S. policy was very different. U.S. military planners, like their Soviet counterparts, sought to gain capabilities for a large-scale preemptive nuclear strike that would limit damage to the homeland. Nuclear arms control and the deployment of nuclear weapons, far from contributing to détente and strategic stability, mostly had the opposite effect.

The other article on SALT I, by the late Robert Jervis (who completed final revisions on the article a few months before his death in December 2021), is an interpretive essay based on recently declassified archival materials and new research on U.S.

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policy regarding strategic nuclear armaments. He shows how official and scholarly interpretations of SALT I changed over the years, driven in part by altered political circumstances. For example, Kissinger in his memoirs and elsewhere sought to portray his goals differently from the way he enunciated them when in office. The multiple and varying interpretations of SALT I over the years shed interesting light on the best way of understanding key developments during the Cold War. Some scholars and former officials argue that policies should be judged solely on the basis of what was known at the time, whereas others contend that evaluations of policies must take full account of information that emerges later on, including about the long-term consequences of steps that were taken. Jervis navigates between these positions, showing how U.S. declaratory policy about nuclear weapons and arms control often diverged from policies on deployment and employment.

The issue ends with twelve book reviews.

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