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Preface for Volume 3 No. 1

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Preface

This study of space deterrence was produced over the course of a year by the staff of the Eisenhower Center, benefiting from the comments of individuals from all sectors of the space community. We want especially to thank Col. Patrick Frakes for the material and intellectual support that made the study possible.

The political atmosphere of space policy is dynamic, and any study like ours must represent our best judgment at a moment in time. Were we to revise our judgments in light of events since this study took on final form, we might well put less emphasis on economic entanglement as a factor in deterring attacks on U.S. space assets. The economic crisis of 2008-2009 can be seen as a test of the depth of that entanglement. The economic distress has been widespread and has demonstrated the mutual dependence of large economies in a globalized world. But some countries have weathered the downturn much better than others. In particular, the Chinese economy seems to have bounced rapidly back in spite of a substantial fall off of demand from the United States, perhaps because of the cushion of two trillion dollars in reserves built up over the previous decade. This would indicate that damage to the international financial system created by interruptions of space services might well have greater impact on the United States than on some possible space competitors, and consequently that the deterrent effect of globalization on hostilities in space, instead impacting all space faring nations equally as our study implies, might be more keenly felt in the United States. The moral seems to be that prudent financial management – or its lack – will always affect national power, in space no less than elsewhere.

Readers will doubtless find other areas in which our judgments might be challenged, as some of the commentators we include in this follow certainly did. Our conviction was and remains that no discussion of a topic like space deterrence can begin until someone throws the gauntlet. That we have tried to do here, stating our conclusions as forcefully as we can in the hope that this approach will stimulate thinking by others and prove useful to policy makers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. G. Harrison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger G. Harrison, Ph.D.
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