

ON ASSESSING THE RISK OF  
**NUCLEAR WAR**



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Edited by James Scouras

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The price we pay for maintaining nuclear weapons  
is the gamble that the highly improbable  
will not lead to the unthinkable.

Eben Harrell, *The Nuclear Risk: How Long Will Our Luck Hold?*



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# Preface

General perception of the risk of nuclear war has a strong influence on the broad directions of national policy. For example, arguments for both national missile defenses and deep reductions in nuclear forces depend in no small part on judgments that deterrence is unreliable. However, such judgments are usually based on intuition, rather than on a synthesis of insights from the most appropriate analytic methods that can be brought

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