Preface and Acknowledgments

This project emerged when two sources of inspiration came together. A course I teach provided the first spark. For several years, I have taught a graduate seminar that covers deterrence and other strategies whose aim is to influence other actors in international politics. The course includes a module on the topic of reassurance. Reassurance is a strategy in which one state tries to convince another state that it harbors no aggressive intentions toward it; the goal of reassurance is to reduce the chances of an unintended conflict between two states with an adversarial relationship. In past years, whenever it came time to update my syllabus, I could usually find relevant recent publications on all the other strategies covered by the course. In contrast, I found little new research that added to our understanding of strategies of assurance or reassurance, and I came to see my existing assigned readings as increasingly dated. In the back of my mind, I began thinking I should develop a research project to advance both theory and empirical research in this subject area.

Fortunately, this vague impulse soon encountered a second key spark. Dr. Michael O. Wheeler, then director of the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Advanced Systems and Concepts Office (DTRA-ASCO), gave a talk at the Naval Postgraduate School in which he identified security assurances as a critical topic in need of further research. Dr. Wheeler had in mind the use of security assurances as a tool for discouraging states from seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. As part of the efforts that have been made to prevent proliferation, existing nuclear-armed states have offered both "negative" assurances that they will not use their nuclear weapons to threaten non-nuclear states and "positive" commitments to assist states that are so threatened.

This is a different context than that addressed by the academic literature on reassurance. Yet it struck me that the two topics had important elements in common, suggested by the fact that both employed the root term "assurance." Both strategies share a core idea about how to influence others: both reassurance and security assurances seek to do so by alleviating some source of insecurity on the part of the recipient. By making the recipient feel less threatened, all versions of assurance aim to moderate its behavior in some way. In the realm of nuclear nonproliferation, security assurances have been intended to reduce recipients' concerns about being threatened by nuclear weapons, thereby making them feel less need to acquire a nuclear arsenal of their own. I decided that a study of the impact of security assurances could make a double contribution. First, it would help us ascertain whether assurances have been effective in slowing the spread of nuclear weapons and identify ways to make them more effective. Second, it could contribute to our understanding more generally of assurance as a type of influence strategy and bring renewed attention to the value of assurance as one option in the policy toolkit.

I approached Dr. Wheeler with my idea, and with his encouragement developed it into a research proposal to DTRA-ASCO. The proposal received funding, and this book is the result. The research agenda was one that would be beyond the capacity of any one individual, at least in any reasonable length of time, so it was clear from the outset that this project would have to be a team effort. I am very pleased and honored that the other authors included in this volume accepted my invitation to be part of the project.

The project began with an authors' workshop at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in August 2009. I provided an initial theory paper ahead of time to help guide the other paper writers in their research. Most important, the introductory paper included a preliminary list of hypotheses about factors that might affect whether assurances are effective, and I asked the authors of several country case studies to assess these hypotheses in their papers. At the workshop, all the paper writers received feedback from each other as well as assigned discussants. Based on feedback from the workshop plus subsequent comments from me and two external reviewers, all of the papers have gone through several rounds of revision to produce the chapters published here.

For any collective endeavor such as this, the editor and authors depend upon invaluable assistance from many people and organizations. To start with, I thank DTRA-ASCO for providing the funding that made this research pos-

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