

A Strategy Aligned with the Realities of Cyberspace



IDA's Welch Award annually recognizes the best external publication by IDA researchers. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the award, named for retired U.S. Air Force General Larry D. Welch, who served as president of IDA from 1990 to 2003 and again from 2006 to 2009. This summary is the fourth in a series reflecting on the 10 winning publications since the award's inception in 2011. The 2018 Welch Award winner for best external publication was an *Orbis* article, "[Deterrence Is Not a Credible Strategy for Cyberspace.](#)"

Soon after *Orbis* published the 2017 article that would become IDA's 2018 Welch Award-winning publication, coauthors Michael P. Fischerkeller of IDA and Richard J. Harknett of the University of Cincinnati found themselves at the forefront of a public debate about the proper strategy for cyberspace. The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) had been advocating a strategy of deterrence for cyberspace in its planning and doctrine for several years, but Fischerkeller and Harknett argued that U.S. strategy in cyberspace should instead be crafted around the unique structural and operational characteristics of cyberspace.

By the end of 2018, a shift toward their proposed approach was taking hold as is evidenced in the 2018 DOD Cyber Strategy and U.S. Cyber Command's *Strategic Vision*.

According to Fischerkeller, the 2017 article "was essentially a launching pad" for additional IDA research into the issue that continues today. More than a dozen peer-reviewed essays,

journal articles, and book chapters on cyber strategy have resulted. Prominent among cyber strategy debates are the coauthors' articles and essays explaining concepts such as [persistent engagement and agreed competition](#), [tacit bargaining](#), [norms](#), [initiative persistence](#), and [cost imposition](#) in the context of cyberspace.



Academics, policymakers, and military observers alike seem to be listening. Fischerkeller and Harknett's body of work has become seminal literature on the topic of cybersecurity strategy for the U.S. and its allies. In fact, the theory that this body of concepts comprises will appear in a forthcoming (June 2022) book on cyber strategy (with Emily O. Goldman) being published by Oxford University Press.

Fischerkeller feels receiving an award in the name of Larry D. Welch was a special honor. "[General Welch](#) is one of the most widely respected strategic thinkers of his generation," he said. Fischerkeller is also grateful for the contributions of his peers at IDA, "many of whom generously offered comments on this award-winning publication and continue to provide thoughtful feedback on the many works that it has spawned."



Michael P. Fischerkeller (mfischer@ida.org) is a member of the research staff in the Information Technology and Systems Division of the Systems and Analyses Center. He has spent over 20 years supporting the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Combatant Commands, and Multinational Force commanders. Richard J. Harknett is Department Head of Political Science at the University of Cincinnati, a Fulbright Professor of Cyber Studies at Oxford University, and a 2016 Scholar-in-Residence for the U.S. Cyber Command and National Security Agency.