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Preventive Attack and Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Comparative Analysis

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Secretary of Defense was focused on building up Army and Air Force strength in Western Europe, while naval forces languished because they were seen as of lesser utility. Hayward set out to challenge this strategic vision by commissioning and then championing a naval force-planning study called “Sea Plan 2000.” The essence of this plan was the assertion that any assault across the inner-German border would result in a global war. Naval forces provided strike capabilities that could be marshaled anywhere, while protecting the sea-lanes. The redoubtable head of the Soviet navy, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, had enunciated a strategy of protecting his ballistic missile submarines in their northern bastions. Sea Plan 2000 advocated naval-based offensive strikes against the Kola Peninsula and against Soviet attack and missile submarines worldwide.

When President Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, John Lehman became secretary of the Navy and aggressively supported such an offensive maritime strategy. The U.S. Navy budget increased, and the Soviets worried. Their self-confidence was dented, as they later freely admitted. No one could predict what would occur in an actual war, but according to Kagan, “Hayward’s realization that the Navy’s greatest weakness was its strategic thinking made possible a transformation of the Navy’s capabilities with few new technologies. As a result, the Navy regained a considerable degree of balance against a waning Soviet threat.”

Conversely, Kagan cites the efforts of former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld to “transform” the services as flawed in both concept and process. He criticizes the recent focus on information

technologies, with the attendant assumption that fewer forces will be needed as a consequence. Further, he questions whether the process of transformation is really advanced by grafting an “Office of Force Transformation” (since abolished) onto the Department of Defense, arguing that the services were in fact taking full advantage of information technologies for a decade before a “revolution in military affairs” was decreed.

On balance, Kagan gives the services good marks for their stewardship over the past twenty-five years as the nation’s guardians. The current war in Iraq, however, worries him, because the military did not adapt swiftly enough. He is too good a scholar to make sweeping assertions about American martial superiority. Instead, he argues that the process of adapting in order to win is the nation’s greatest strength.

Finding the Target will make an excellent textbook for those whose operational jobs have not left sufficient time to keep abreast of the changing strategic perspective in the services.

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Goldstein, Lyle J. *Preventive Attack and Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Comparative Analysis*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2006. 268pp. \$50

Do nuclear weapons represent a source of stability in world politics, or does the acquisition of these weapons create incentives for established nuclear states or longtime rivals to destroy nascent nuclear weapons programs before they actually coalesce into significant strategic

forces? The answer to both key questions, according to Lyle Goldstein, is yes. The acquisition of nuclear weapons creates the incentive to prevent war, exacerbate existing rivalries, and produce crises, but over time even asymmetric nuclear balances tend to moderate enduring rivalries and calm more acute conflicts.

Goldstein's primary purpose is to address the contemporary debate between "proliferation optimists" and "proliferation pessimists." Proliferation optimists suggest that nuclear weapons will have a moderating effect on international relations. Because nuclear arsenals provide mechanisms for states to protect their fundamental security concerns while increasing the potential costs of war, leaders tend to be moderate when dealing with not only their own nuclear weapons but their opponents' arsenals as well. Optimists also believe that governments everywhere tend to be good stewards of their nuclear capabilities, generally treating them as political instruments, not as an enhancement to their war-fighting capabilities. Proliferation pessimists, however, argue that a situation of mutual assured destruction (MAD), not nuclear weapons per se, is what induced caution between competing capitals during the Cold War. In the absence of MAD, they believe, states face mounting pressure to launch preventive war to destroy nascent nuclear weapons programs. New nuclear states, according to the pessimists, lack the resources, technical expertise, and stable governments that are needed to construct survivable nuclear arsenals, especially those that remain under negative control and in times of extreme stress.

Goldstein addresses this debate with a survey of the most significant international confrontations involving nuclear and nonnuclear states, exploring the incentives, perceptions, and judgments of nuclear-armed leaders as they contemplate the prospects and pitfalls of launching preventive war to disarm emerging nuclear powers. His comparative case studies span the entire nuclear age: from the U.S. reaction to the emergence of a Soviet nuclear weapons program, American and Soviet responses to the Chinese nuclear program, and the Israeli strike against Iraq's Osiraq reactor, to both U.S. counterproliferation wars against Iraq. His case studies reveal that although the leaders in dominant states often contemplate preventive war, a host of issues conspires to prevent them from launching strikes to destroy emerging nuclear forces and infrastructures.

Goldstein's finding that preventive counterproliferation strikes are rare is offset by several observations that are not at all reassuring. Counterproliferation attacks have been contemplated from the start of the nuclear age, but actual attacks are a relatively recent phenomenon. Goldstein's analysis suggests that the revolutions in conventional precision guidance and global reconnaissance capabilities have tipped the balance in favor of preventive war, although risks still remain. U.S. officers and officials, for instance, were deeply concerned about the prospect that Saddam Hussein might retaliate with chemical or biological weapons when it became clear that the regime in Baghdad itself was the target of coalition operations in 2003; nevertheless, members of the administration were ultimately undeterred by what they considered to be a credible threat. Goldstein concludes

with an even more disturbing observation: that world politics might be entering a period of pronounced instability as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and associated delivery systems accelerates. More opportunities will soon present themselves to stop ambitious nascent nuclear states in their tracks.

Goldstein's narrative is compelling, theoretically informed, well written, and well organized. His comparative study sheds light on the proliferation optimism/pessimism debate, even though his conclusions are unlikely to satisfy either camp. Skeptics might point out that his case studies are a bit cursory and lack documentary evidence drawn from the various capitals in question. To its credit, however, Goldstein's work is relatively comprehensive and provides a global perspective on how preventive war dynamics play out among Western and non-Western antagonists. It also provides a chronological perspective on how the phenomenon of preventive war might, in fact, be changing. His work thus constitutes a significant and enduring contribution to the literature on nuclear proliferation, deterrence, and preventive war.



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Kennedy, Paul. *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*. New York: Random House, 2006. 384pp. \$26.95

An institution as central to the contemporary world's political and geostrategic landscape as the United Nations is constantly in need of thoughtful, scholarly attention. Paul Kennedy delivers just

this with *The Parliament of Man*. Kennedy, the author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* and *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, approves of the idea of the UN but is not blind to its failings. He believes that "since this is the only world organization that we possess, we need to make it work in the best way possible, in order to help humankind navigate our present turbulent century." Consequently, while the book is mostly historical, a consistent tone of apology runs along with the narrative. It is a story, Kennedy writes, of "evolution, metamorphosis, and experiment, of failure and success," but a story that is ultimately justified.

A solid introductory chapter traces the deepest roots of the UN back to post-Napoleonic Europe, but Kennedy very naturally spends most of his time examining events in the wake of World War I. Here Kennedy rehearses the prehistory of the UN from the advent of its predecessor, the League of Nations, through that organization's failures and the consequent outbreak of World War II. While this chapter contains little in the way of new information or startling revelations, it is well written, succinct, and peppered with insights.

What follows are several thematic chapters on such topics as the working of the Security Council, the execution of peacekeeping missions, the idea of human rights, UN economic policies, and so on. Here one comes to appreciate the true breadth of the United Nations. Kennedy's examination of the Security Council is especially timely, given the growing pressures for its expansion and restructuring. Kennedy's account of the UN's track record in peacekeeping operations (arguably its highest-profile role in much of the world) is prefaced