

2007

The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations

David A. Smith

Paul Kennedy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Smith, David A. and Kennedy, Paul (2007) "The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 60 : No. 2 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol60/iss2/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

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.



JAMES J. WIRTZ

Naval Postgraduate School

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

by a keen observation, one that is rarely mentioned in more critical examinations and that forces us to take fresh stock of such missions: "The most astonishing thing," he writes, "is that the UN Charter contains absolutely no mention of the word peacekeeping and offers no guidelines as to this form of collective action." This will be news to many.

The greatest effect of this worthwhile volume is the appreciation one gains for the great complexity of the United Nations and, more to the point, of the tasks it faces. Kennedy also shows the institution to be worthy of a bit more sympathy than many are currently inclined to give it.

DAVID A. SMITH
Baylor University



Gross, Michael L. *Bioethics and Armed Conflict: Moral Dilemmas of Medicine and War*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006. 384pp. \$26

Debate rages today in Congress and amid the public on the tolerable limits of coercive interrogation and torture associated with armed conflict, and the alleged complicity of military health care professionals in these purportedly nefarious activities. These allegations make this tome of ethical analysis a pertinent starting point for academics interested in contemporary issues affecting the practice of military medicine during war.

The author is neither a professional soldier nor physician but a former conscript in the Israel Defense Forces, and currently professor of applied and professional ethics in international relations at the University of Haifa. The book confronts multiple subjects of practical relevance, among them such

issues as what patient rights caregivers must respect; how best to distribute scarce material and health manpower resources; which among the wounded should receive priority within the triage process (and the related question of what military utility should be assigned to certain casualties); changed priorities of informed consent and confidentiality among soldiers; the dilemma of torture, ill treatment, and the role of physicians; the legitimacy of physician contribution to the development of chemical and biological weapons; physician civil disobedience and assistance in draft evasion; and the widely presumed but equally debatable status of medical neutrality, impartiality, and immunity during war.

Michael Gross argues that medical ethics in times of armed conflict are not identical to medical ethics in times of peace. Military necessity, reasons of state, and the war effort impinge upon moral decision making and often overwhelm the axioms that animate medical ethics during peacetime. He repeatedly emphasizes that during war the everyday principles of biomedical ethics must compete with equally relevant and conflicting principles anchored in military necessity and national security, where the welfare of the individual has far less importance than the welfare of the state and the political community. During armed conflict, military necessity trumps the right to life, self-determination, and patient welfare. Physicians care for sick and wounded soldiers for reasons different from those applicable to other patients: soldiers are treated to preserve manpower and to protect the vitality of a collective fighting force. In fact, the entire range of moral decision making changes under the exigencies of war. Collective interests overwhelm individual