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## The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests, and World Order,

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### THE CONSEQUENCES OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Utgoff, Victor A., ed. *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests, and World Order*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000. 319pp. \$22.95

*The Coming Crisis* is a series of essays by noted scholars in the field of national security affairs examining the effects of continued nuclear weapons proliferation and the potential for regional nuclear crises. While one can argue that use of nuclear weapons by a rogue state today is more likely than it was during the Cold War, discussion of what the United States could and should do if deterrence fails has been noticeably absent in recent years. The authors revive this discussion and, in doing so, contribute significantly to the study of proliferation.

The first half of the book addresses the underlying pressures that cause states to consider acquiring and potentially employing nuclear weapons. It makes the case that there are many reasons why a state may develop nuclear weapons, reasons that may have only a peripheral relationship to security issues. A highlight of this section is Caroline F. Ziemke's essay on the strategic personality of Iran. She asserts that the behavior of a "rogue state" often has roots in national myth. These nations may not be as unpredictable and as roguish as we might surmise at first glance.

The second part of the book consists of five essays that examine how nuclear crises might develop between the United States and a regional nuclear power, and what the consequences might be. Stephen Peter Rosen and Stephen M. Walt each examine the impact of proliferation on alliances and coalitions, but they come to contradictory conclusions. Barry R. Posen conducts a hypothetical analysis of a Gulf War with a nuclear-armed Iraq. His conclusion is that, faced with such a crisis, the United States should not and probably would not hesitate to intervene to defend vital interests.

Two essays focus on what the United States might do following a first use by a regional aggressor. George H. Quester argues that a U.S. response in such a case would be driven more by American norms of law enforcement than by Cold War theory. Quester believes that criminals are punished for four distinct reasons: to disarm, to make an example, to impose revenge, and to reform. He states that once a regime with a modest nuclear capability has used nuclear weapons, it will be seen as "too dangerous to live

with . . . but not too dangerous to defeat.”

Similarly, Brad Roberts discusses regional nuclear war termination, arguing that the United States would have not only to address the immediate problems presented by the war but also to ensure that longer-term U.S. interests were served by “winning the peace” that follows. The United States has to avoid being perceived as a “nuclear bully” whose power must be counterbalanced, but neither can it come off as a “nuclear wimp,” unwilling to confront an aggressor. Instead, the course of action chosen must show the United States to be a responsible and just steward of the international good.

In the concluding chapter, Victor A. Utgoff contends that in response to a regional nuclear threat the United States would likely be far more resolute than others have suggested and would likely respond in kind to a first use of nuclear weapons by an aggressor. He concludes with a number of policy implications.

The fundamental premise of this book is that sooner or later the proliferation of nuclear weapons is going to lead to a confrontation between the United States and a nuclear-armed state. While there are many points of disagreement between the authors, all concur that such a confrontation will be a seminal event and will define not only the role of nuclear weapons but also that of the world’s only superpower in the post–Cold War era. All students of national security policy owe it to themselves to consider the policy implications of this premise. *The Coming Crisis* will be valuable to them.

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*Commander, U.S. Navy*



Lavoy, Peter, Scott Sagan, and James Wirtz, eds. *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2000. 270pp. \$45

The title says it all. This book is a compilation of empirical and analytical data on the strategic evolution of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) agents and weapons in the twenty-first century. A central theme of the book is how new regional players (states and nonstate actors) are likely to convert prevalent conventional military doctrine and training into nonconventional means of warfare. The book is very ambitious in its scope; it attempts—overall, successfully—to address systematically conceptual problems in the integration of such weapons into the military infrastructure, delivery systems, command and control procedures, and war plans. More importantly, the editors and the authors of the various case studies utilize a theoretical framework to explain and predict future trends of behaviors, intentions, and capabilities among very diverse players. Realism and neorealism, organizational theory, and culture are used to flesh out these unique differences in approach as well as in the implementation of NBC programs and doctrines.

Except for the conclusion and the chapter on terrorism, the chapters are case studies, focusing on Iraq, Iran, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. The authors are specialists who devote a great deal of effort to describing the relationship between strategy and policy, on one hand, and between national security and national military strategy, on the other. The result is a complex web of relationships, behavioral manifestations, and decision-making processes involving an amalgam