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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

South Asia's Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective, Rajesh Basrur. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, pp. 184, \$140 (hardcover).

Are we justified in limiting our interpretation of the cold war to just one conflict? Basrur's new book, *South Asia's Cold War, Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective*, offers an insightful analysis on the nature and history of cold wars between nuclear armed states. His cold war analogy and the need for a comparative approach in studying these wars offer a richer and more nuanced perspective of the true meaning of a cold war as opposed to viewing it solely through the prism of superpower rivalry. This distinction is an important one. The author claims that all cold wars, while having similar characteristics, may not be entirely alike and that it would be helpful to undertake a comparative approach in studying these wars. By doing so, the books overarching contribution and value to the overall discourse is to help the reader understand not just the similarities and differences among cold wars but also the wider implications of such a war amongst nuclear armed states. Despite the fact that a lot has been written on the cold war, the author has to be commended for his novel approach in conducting a comparative study of cold wars between pairs of nuclear weapons states.

Drawing on nuclear rivalries between four pairs of states (United States–Soviet Union, United States–China, Soviet Union–China, and United States–North Korea), the substantive argument of the book is that the broad patterns of cold war processes that can be discerned in a wide variety of cases, involving states that vary in terms of nuclear capabilities, level of development, type of government, etc., are driven primarily by historical, material and ideational factors and are characterized in the initial stages by high tension and the potential for war. While ideational factors such as distinctions of ideology and identity produce zero sum outcomes and therefore competition and confrontation, material factors such as the anarchic self-help system reinforce threat perceptions and make nuclear weapons an attractive option for the weaker state. Yet when war approaches the behaviour of all these states is marked by abundant caution and eventual co-operation because the mere presence of nuclear weapons and their destructive potential can cancel out or mitigate the propensity towards hostility caused by ideational and material factors. Nuclear weapons, thus, both instigate and undermine the conflictive nature of cold war states.

This argument is very succinctly applied in describing the cold war between India and Pakistan. In an extensive analysis of the India Pakistan rivalry, the author begins by identifying the factors driving the rivalry: ideational factors stemming from partition and Pakistan's struggle to define itself and on the other side the material factors such as the anarchic nature of the international system that shaped the distribution of power in South Asia and the respective policies of the two states as hegemon and challenger. The conclusion is that both India and Pakistan, despite

displaying patterns of cold war behaviour in terms of nuclearization and mutual hostility, have in conditions of interdependence pulled back from the brink and co-operated to end any potentially dangerous crisis. This behaviour is in line with the author's hypothesis which is that nuclear weapons and their destructive potential can cancel out or mitigate the propensity towards hostility caused by ideational and material factors. However, there is a caveat to this behaviour and that is despite the precautionary measures adopted by both countries with respect to nuclear weapons, elements of instability still remain.

In anticipating the cold war's end, the author treads cautiously. He is cautiously optimistic because while both India and Pakistan have shown the resolve to overcome their ideational differences, he is uncertain about the capacity of their leaders to translate this thought into practice. While identifying only the conditions and not the factors under which change may occur, the author considers the cold war in South Asia from a historical, material and ideational perspective of the other cold wars (Soviet–American, Sino–American, and Soviet–Chinese) that ended. Through a very succinct analysis of the system level factors, material incentives, individuals and ideas and state level factors, the prospects for India–Pakistan nuclear co-operation are evaluated. The conclusion drawn from this analysis is that although future prospects between the South Asian neighbours looks positive with a final endpoint, the pace of movement is likely to be gradual with the potential for periodic setbacks.

The final chapter wraps up the analysis by offering the reader a summary of the processes at work, in drawing lessons from all the cold wars and in considering the implications of this study not just for nuclear deterrence theory and the analysis of strategic politics in the contemporary and future worlds but also for international relations theory as a whole. As far as implications for scholarship and policy are concerned, the author seems pessimistic with respect to current theorizing. He argues that most nuclear deterrence theorizing is irrelevant to the security needs of states and that international relations theory itself requires considerable modification if it is to present an accurate understanding of the nuclear world. The author concludes on a cautionary note by warning of three possible cases of future cold war confrontation (United States–China, Iran–Israel, United States and India–China) likely to follow existing patterns of conflict.

South Asia's Cold War is a cogent and lucid analysis of the nature of cold wars and its applicability to different situations and is a book highly recommended for understanding this very important topic. The author has to be commended for a very descriptive and enlightening assessment of the nature of the Indo–Pak rivalry and its lessons for the future.

Since the book's focus is predominantly on South Asia, it would have been prudent to devote a separate chapter to the role of external powers and nuclear decision-making in South Asia. Were nuclear weapons the constraining factor in preventing a war between the two countries, even after the Mumbai terror attacks, or was there an induced constraint as a result of coercive diplomacy? Was it in the interests of the United States to prevent any conflict between these two powers given its own strategic interests in South Asia? Also, the author's claim very early in the book that while states with nuclear weapons have been growing those that have built them are

reluctant to give them up is tenuous at best. A survey of the proliferation literature would reveal that more states have given up nuclear weapons or the ability to manufacture them than those that have not. Even if they did not build the bomb, they were close to doing so or had the unrestrained capacity to do so. The decisions to reverse course were guided by a set of reasons that are best left for another debate.

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The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century, G. John Ikenberry, Thomas J. Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter and Tony Smith. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 157, \$24.95/£16.95 (hardcover).

Striking First: Preemption and Prevention in International Conflict, Michael W. Doyle. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 175, \$24.95/£16.95 (hardcover).

These two excellent books make an important contribution to our understanding of American foreign policy in the post-Bush era. According to the Bush Doctrine, the United States must be ready to wage preventive wars and to act ‘against . . . emerging threats before they are fully formed’. This doctrine was implicitly adopted by a number of liberal internationalists who supported the Iraq war and then were criticized (by other liberal internationalists) for misinterpreting the Wilsonian legacy. *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy* debates the Bush Doctrine’s ‘Wilsonianism’. As Ikenberry puts it, ‘Bush, at least to some extent, has wrapped himself in Wilsonian clothing and so . . . the liberal internationalist agenda is in trouble. By association, the crisis of Bush foreign policy has become a crisis of liberal internationalism’ (p. 4). The book examines how liberal internationalism can overcome this crisis with three outstanding contributions from Thomas Knock of Southern Methodist University, Tony Smith of Tufts University, and Anne-Marie Slaughter of Princeton University.

Whether the Bush administration’s foreign policy grew out of the Wilsonian tradition is important because – as Ikenberry notes – ‘we want to identify the causes of this debacle’ (p. 1). The authors disagree on the meaning of Wilsonianism, with Smith arguing that democracy promotion is at the core of the Wilsonian tradition and Knock and Slaughter emphasizing a rule-based international order and multilateralism as the essential elements of the Wilsonian vision. For Smith, the neoconservative architects of the Iraq war implemented Wilsonian ideas that liberal internationalists had developed during the Clinton administration in the 1990s. Smith questions that multilateralism ‘should be selected out as the chief, or defining element of Wilsonianism’ (p. 60) arguing that in the post-9/11 era a ‘Concert of Democracies’ ‘is likely to be a convenient cloak for American hegemony’ (p. 61).

Ikenberry has convincingly argued that the open and institutionalized nature of US hegemony since 1945 – reassuring the rest of the world of its benign intentions by accepting binding constraints on its global power – legitimized US hegemony

during the Cold War. Yet whether the same mechanisms of reassurance still operate in the post-9/11 world is doubtful. Slaughter argues that they do operate under different conditions; multilateral institutions can still 'save' liberal internationalism from the crisis provoked by the Bush administration's foreign policy. As Ikenberry puts it, 'the political question is about how liberal internationalism reconstitutes and asserts itself in the post-Bush era' (p. 5). Slaughter argues that the world does not need an America that seeks global hegemony, and takes issue with Smith's claim (p. 63) that liberal internationalists support American hegemonism: 'Liberal internationalists do believe in American leadership, but not in supremacy or hegemony' (p. 111). She adds that unlike the American isolationism of the 1920, or the global hegemonism of the Bush administration, 'Wilsonianism, properly adapted and updated, offers a far better guide to meeting these challenges in the twenty-first century' (p. 92).

Yet 'what is 'Wilsonianism?'' As Knock notes, 'the term is in danger of becoming what literary critics call a "free-floating signifier" – that is, one constantly deployed, yet stripped of any consistent meaning or historical context' (p. 30). How important is the democratization project to the identity of the Wilsonian tradition? Smith argues that the intellectual roots of the Bush administration's call to democratize the world lie in Wilsonianism, but Slaughter disagrees: 'Liberal internationalism today, true to its Wilsonian origins, differs from the Bush Doctrine on multiple dimensions' (p. 91). According to Slaughter, liberal internationalists favour multilateralism over the Bush administration's unilateralism. 'We support liberal democracy, but reject the possibility of *democratizing* peoples... And we reject US military primacy... ' (p. 91).

The Crisis of American Foreign Policy makes blatantly clear that both liberal internationalists and neoconservatives have appropriated Wilson's legacy. As a result, 'Wilsonianism' has become an oxymoron; it means different things to different scholars, according to their theoretical – often ideological – preferences. Smith's excellent chapter on 'Wilsonianism after Iraq' shows the serious obstacles faced by liberal internationalism in the post-Bush era to overcome the intellectual damage caused by the support for the Iraq war by a number of liberal internationalists. The reason – as Smith notes – is the absence of an alternative to the Bush Doctrine and the (unfortunate) 'agreement on the theoretical "givens" of the doctrine assented to by many Democratic intellectuals' (p. 75). Smith does a great job at describing the roots of the crisis of Wilsonianism; but is there a way out? Is the United States likely to repeat in Afghanistan the strategic mistakes that led to the disastrous Iraq war?

Can the traditional international law on the legitimate use of force be 'adapted' to today's global security environment? *Striking First: Preemption and Prevention in International Conflict* is an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of Wilsonianism by adapting it to the post-9/11 international environment. The book is based on three essays originally delivered by Michael Doyle as Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Princeton in November 2006. Doyle, now at Columbia University, is one of the fathers of democratic peace theory and a prominent liberal internationalist. International law allows states to use force in self-defence if an 'armed attack' occurs (Article 51, UN Charter) or if it is so imminent that it leaves 'no choice of

means' and 'no moment for deliberation' (*preemptive war*). However, international law does not allow for a *preventive war* in the absence of evidence of an impending attack and without the authorization of the UN Security Council. That makes the Bush Doctrine illegal under international law.

Doyle argues that the current standards of international law – prohibiting preventive wars – are too narrow and that the new insecurities created by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the danger of catastrophic terrorism require a broadening of international law to justify – under certain conditions, or standards – the use of force to prevent an attack by a terrorist organization such as Al Qaeda or a rogue state; 'Preventive responses that involve unilateral armed attack or multilateral enforcement measures may be necessary' (p. 20). Doyle claims that the Bush Doctrine of preventive war 'is inadequate for today's global security environment' (p. 6) and proposes a *new* Doctrine of Prevention based on four standards: the *lethality* and *likelihood* of the gathering threat, and the *legitimacy* (reasonableness and proportionality) and *legality* of the contemplated response.

The book contains an excellent introduction by Stephen Macedo, founding director of Princeton's Program in Law and Public Affairs, and enlightening comments by Harold Hongju Koh, Jeff McMahan and Richard Tuck. Tuck is sceptical about the prospects for constraining unilateral preventive wars in the absence of a global Leviathan, and McMahan largely agrees with Doyle's argument, focusing on the moral issues involved in the traditional theory of the just war.

Professor Koh makes the most trenchant critique of the Doyle thesis. He argues that legalizing preventive wars (Dick Cheney's 'one per cent doctrine') would lead to 'an inevitable slippery slope', by blurring the distinction between offense and defence (p. 102), and that it would make collective mind-sets prevail, where 'evidence quickly gives way to hunches, intuitions, or gut instincts, with tragic consequences should those hunches prove unfounded' (p. 108). Doyle takes as his model for prior legal authorization of preventive wars the legal standards governing multilateral control of humanitarian intervention, but as Koh rightly notes, the two situations are radically different: 'If we change the law to authorize a nation to respond, not just to a perceived threat, but to a premonition of a perceived threat, or to an inkling of a premonition that your adversary might perceive that you might perceive that he might perceive you as a threat, then, down that hall of mirrors, evidence and proof are quickly replaced by conjecture or assertion' (pp. 105–6). One of the major criticisms of the Bush Doctrine is that it would provoke international instability because it would give license to other states to undertake unilateral military options.

Tuck and McMahan agree with Doyle's view that self-defence can *morally* justify preventive war, and not only defensive and preemptive war. Tuck invokes Hobbes' and Grotius' two fundamental moral principles of universal applicability: 'one is that people are always entitled to defend themselves against attack, and the other is that they should never inflict unnecessary harm on others' (Macedo's introduction, p. xxi). Yet as Koh shows, the second moral principle trumps the first: democratic leaders may end up inflicting 'unnecessary harm on others' in order to defend their country against remotely potential attacks even if international law incorporates

Doyle's four standards for prior authorization of unilateral preventive war, because standards such as 'likelihood' and 'proportionality' 'are simply too subjective, flexible, and open to self-serving interpretation' (p. xx). Overall, 'Doyle's four Ls' are problematic and, as Koh argues, a far better approach would be to keep the current legal prohibition of preventive wars, except when authorized by the UN Security Council.

The key test for the 'Doyle Doctrine' is the fourth 'L': legality. Doyle argues that if any of the 'Big Five' uses the veto in the UN Security Council, 'some unilateral acts must be permitted' (p. 62), but this leaves the door open for the 'slippery slope' criticized by Koh. Even if the requirements of the other three 'Ls' are met, including proportionality and necessity, the difference between a one per cent imminence of an attack and a zero per cent imminence is difficult to determine. Slaughter wonders whether it is possible 'to legitimize the offensive use of force in any situation, however carefully hedged and limited and however well intentioned', without opening Pandora's Box (p. 104). Doyle does not offer a satisfactory answer to this question. As the Iraq war shows, the Doctrine of Preventive War lends itself to abuses and unjustified wars.

These two books show that despite the divisions provoked by the Iraq war, liberal internationalism is alive and well, and – properly adapted and updated – it can still offer a good guide for American foreign policy to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The middle ground advocated by Slaughter offers important signposts in that direction, including the need to reform the UN Security Council, to make it 'more effective and more legitimate' (p. 113). In the post-Bush era, the United States can only rebuild the post-1945 international order (the 'liberal bargain' advocated by Ikenberry in his many writings) by seriously accepting binding constraints on its foreign policy behaviour and abandoning the drive for global dominance and the hegemonic presumption, while listening to other voices in the planet.

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The Accidental Guerrilla; Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One, David Kilcullen. New York and London: Oxford University Press and C. Hurst Publishers, 2009, pp. 346, \$27.95/£20.00 (hardcover).

The first book from David Kilcullen, the Australian army officer and counterinsurgency expert, cannot be separated from the larger Kilcullen phenomenon. Since 2005 he has moved in high circles of American government and military commands, often beside the decision-makers who salvaged Iraq and are trying in Afghanistan. As part of the strategic revolution that swept Washington and American armed forces in 2005–2007, he helped rescue counterinsurgency from the strategic doghouse, making it the prevailing paradigm of war. For American officials he was the perfect inside–outsider, free to speak his mind. And he did it with insight and charm. A profile in *The New Yorker* in 2006 made him the first counterinsurgent celebrity.

The book is based on his observations and recommendations from Afghanistan and Iraq, his experiences in East Timor, and reflections on the possibility for worsening Islamic relations in Europe. The basic insight is the ease of making things worse and the extraordinary presence of mind required to actually make them better. In all these cases he sees the basic problem as the 'accidental guerrilla', created largely by amateurish counterinsurgency operations. By forcing the contested population to choose sides, and failing to defend them, poorly conceived counterinsurgency operations force the target of their attention into the hands of their enemies. It is the backlash against foreign invaders, Kilcullen argues, that creates most guerrillas. The basic theme of *Accidental Guerrilla* is: do not antagonize the locals. But this is easier said than done.

Much of the book is a plea for much greater awareness of what motivates contested populations. The approach is not anthropological – as the anthropologists constantly remind anyone who will listen – but it is anthropologically informed. This is the ethos of the sensitive warrior, to whom killing is not just regrettable, but counterproductive. To be sure, killing may be unavoidable, especially for immediate defence, but it has lost its offensive purpose. 'Killing or capturing terrorists is a strictly secondary activity, because it is ultimately defensive (keeping terrorists at bay) rather than decisive (presenting future terrorism' (p. 13). If the goal of counterinsurgency is the sympathy of a contested population, and our presence only antagonizes without achieving broader objectives, the implications seem unavoidable. But Kilcullen never allows his own logic to go that far.

One of the oddest parts of Kilcullen's writing is his consistent refusal to directly criticize the Bush Administration. His failure to systematically discuss the shortcomings of the Afghan and Iraq interventions or the Global War on Terror (GWoT) weakens the analysis and credibility of the book. Sometimes he sounds downright apologetic, excusing the Bush approach as 'very understandable' (p. 20). To be sure, his consistent but gentle criticism leaves little doubt where he stands, but his refusal to delve into matters of 'purely of historical interest' sounds suspiciously like pandering.

There may be reasons for the tone. The book is written for American audiences. When Kilcullen writes 'we' or 'us', no one will think he means the Australian Defence Force. There is a basic honesty here. He sees counterinsurgency as a matter for American leadership. One of the strangest aspects of the book is international organizations, allowed only a background role. Even in East Timor, his most important personal military experience, attention to UN aspects is noticeably downplayed. It certainly does not seem to be a strategic consideration helping the nature of the intervention or subsequent outcomes.

The Accidental Guerrilla is a colonel's book, typical of a literature extremely important in the evolution of American strategy since the disastrous invasion of Iraq. Like other soldier-scholars such as T.X. Hammes, Frank Hoffman, Peter Masoor and John Nagl, Kilcullen gains insight from the synergy of what he has read and seen. But there are weaknesses to this perspective. The colonels tend to know what they know. Largely self-taught, they have little idea what they don't know, the profound banality that distinguishes real scholarship. Kilcullen is best

on particular conflicts, his personal observation of what works what doesn't. Generalizing – strategizing, if you will – doesn't come as naturally.

Kilcullen and others do not say much that is completely new. As he is quick to acknowledge, much of counterinsurgency has not changed since it was first articulated in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His exuberant willingness to give credit where credit is due gives the book extraordinary charm. And maybe that's the point. His greatest personal accomplishment was winning broad acceptance for those ideas. The key to the book, similarly, is its attitude more than anything else. There is endless good advice here on the conduct of small wars – his particulars can be stunningly incisive – but precious little on the *big war* in the book's title. Similarly, while he won acceptance for counterinsurgency among sceptical soldiers, Kilcullen has not persuaded the US Army and Marine Corps, let alone the Air Force or Navy, to work on institutional transformation, redefining their basic missions for today's armed conflicts.

The other big shortcoming is lack of systematic attention to his academic home, anthropology. Very much a how-to book, there is nothing here on the enormous controversy his work helped provoke in anthropology. Winning public recognition at the same time the US Army introduced the Human Terrain System, applying anthropological insights to better conduct counterinsurgency, Kilcullen became the lightning rod for professional dissent among anthropologists. It has been an amazing show; nothing like it since Kissinger was attacked by former academic colleagues after joining the Nixon administration 40 years before. Kilcullen's failure to address the controversy – or to fully explain his views on the role of anthropology in contemporary warfare – is a pity.

Kilcullen's most general recommendations are disappointingly familiar. This may testify to the influence of his own previous work. It also reflects broad acceptance of the basic counterinsurgency idea. Calling his writing unoriginal misses the point; he persuaded American leaders when no one else could. Since Kilcullen's most original insights are much narrower, what is freshest also is most perishable. More optimistically, Kilcullen is sure to be a welcome commentator on these issues for many years to come.

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The Tradition of Non-use of Nuclear Weapons, T.V. Paul. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 336, \$75 (hardcover), \$29.95 (paperback).

The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945, Nina Tannenwald. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 472, \$85.00/£45.00 (hardcover), \$34.95/£20.99 (paperback).

In a typical explanation of the greatest non-event since 1945, Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi recently wrote, 'It is sheer dumb luck that since Nagasaki no

nuclear weapon has exploded in a major population centre by accident, miscalculation or design'.¹ Most would tend to agree. But two political scientists, authors of path breaking studies of nuclear non-use, are having none of it. If patterns have causes, non-use of nuclear weapons must have a more systematic explanation. T.V. Paul and Nina Tannenwald approach the subject in ways that are superficially quite similar, but their explanations and outlooks differ fundamentally.

Both Tannenwald, research professor at Brown University, and Paul, professor at McGill University, challenge the way we are accustomed to thinking of nuclear weapons. For the profession, this sudden appearance of contrasting studies on a long overlooked topic is a little embarrassing (what were we doing all those years?) but extraordinarily welcome. There is an obvious touch of Darwin–Wallace style competition at work here. One has to hope that the furrows they plowed will be just as carefully tilled by others.

Both studies are the products of long gestation, based on research that began independently in the early 1990s. Nina Tannenwald's book is trendier, arguing that social construction of a taboo is a sufficient explanation for non-use. In her interpretation, the intrinsic physical characteristics of atomic bombs matter less than our understanding of them. Even nuclear weapons are what we make of them. Paul is more eclectic and politically engaged, relying on a combination of realist parsimony and constructivist differentiation. In his hands, the link between physics and politics is enough to explain a tradition of non-use, but still not sufficient to fully explain its ups and downs.

Both authors critique the most compelling alternative explanation for non-use: nuclear deterrence. Fear of retaliation is a powerful force, but is cannot explain the failure to use nuclear weapons on non-nuclear rivals. Deterrence did not protect the Soviet Union in the early Cold War, China before its 1964 test, or any other non-nuclear state or even nuclear states without a retaliatory capability. Time and again, nuclear options against states unable to respond in much of any way at all were dropped early on, especially China in Korea and North Vietnam.

Tannenwald's basic method is to test counter explanations. Unable to prove that an emerging taboo was the basis of American decision-making, she devotes most of the study to testing the rival explanations. When these are dismissed, the taboo is the only explanation left standing. The approach is clever and systematic, but not exactly the same thing as proving the taboo itself. The approach leaves an unsatisfying feeling, like a dinner of *hors d'ouvres*. You can live on it, but don't rely on it to surmount serious challenges.

The most engaging parts of the book draw on Tannenwald's extensive archive trawling. She has unearthed repeated examples of American leaders dismissing nuclear options with various cries of 'We just can't do that'. The long gestation of the study helped include many revelations from declassified documents. The historical research alone makes this an invaluable contribution to the literature on nuclear weapons and an exceptionally engaging read.

None of these revelations compare to President Truman's extraordinary and well-known transformation. The man who never expressed any doubts about bombing Japan was grasping for any excuse not to do it again by the late 1940. By the time

of Korea he found nuclear use unthinkable except for national self-defence, not inherently unthinkable, but harder and harder to imagine. In Korea, American leaders – civilian and military – were sharply divided, many deliberately trying to preserve all options and avoid creation of a taboo. But even the advocates of nuclear attack – in the US Senate, armed services and administration – were fighting against a growing consensus. When the Joint Chiefs hatched a scheme to use combined mustard attacks to drive Chinese troops into the open and let loose with nuclear bombs to finish them, Truman showed no interest. Eisenhower, on the other hand, seemed imperturbably comfortable with nuclear threats and efforts to conventionalize nuclear options. He continued to recommend nuclear options in retirement, into the Vietnam War (pp. 198–9). The nuclear attack he considered in Korea might have happened if not for the Chinese ceasefire. Other advocates, like John Foster Dulles, begrudgingly acknowledge the effect of global public opinion by 1957 and gave up on conventionalization. Those who refused to give up on nuclear options, like Senator Barry Goldwater, seemed increasingly bizarre to informed opinion. By the end of the Johnson Administration, even consideration of nuclear use against non-nuclear enemies was unthinkable (p. 233).

Sometimes Tannenwald relaxes her social science detachment, never more than when discussing Richard Nixon. She approvingly cites any malicious report, even the most dubious. Her caricature of Nixon, itching to blast nuclear weapons over North Vietnam, leaves MacArthur and Dulles looking like restrained personified. But even Nixon ‘was powerfully constrained . . . by the abhorrence and opposition of others’ (p. 237).

Tannenwald recognized that American resistance to any formal commitment to nuclear no-first-use reveals limits, but only ‘. . . the limits of institutionalization of the taboo’ (p. 242). Indeed, she seems to believe that by the mid 1960s, American leaders accepted a *de facto* no-first-use consensus, a position she sees as implicit in the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the NPT. The 1972 ABM Treaty, she maintains, was a *de facto* no-first-use agreement for strategic weapons. No-first-use assumptions, she maintains, became an important buttress for stable deterrence. By the late 1980s, any American nuclear first-use was inconceivable. In the 1990–1991 Gulf War, the only nuclear options under consideration were retaliatory. Making even retaliatory threats credible was becoming a problem.

Her exhaustive research leaves no doubt that norms, more than interests, explain much of American nuclear restraint since 1945. But elevating this into an outright taboo seems unpersuasive, more leap than conclusion. The failure of any other technological taboo – certainly not submarine warfare, the often ignored chemical weapons barrier, and much less the landmines which now cause most military casualties – leaves the very concept seeming wishful. The greatest weakness of the book is a lack of a theory of taboos. When do they develop and when not? Maybe it’s the lack of a clear theory that leads to the book’s conclusion, which argues that the taboo has won universal acceptance, including for Israel, India and Pakistan, and even terrorist use of a nuclear bomb would not necessarily cripple the taboo among states. More than anything else, Tannenwald worries about a new nuclear discourse among nuclear states, America especially, that might legitimate nuclear use. But these are

marginal fears. The book leaves little doubt that, except for fringe possibilities, the worst nuclear problem has been resolved. The next step to reducing nuclear dangers, Tannenwald maintains, is outright abolition.

A serious weakness in Tannenwald's approach is the failure of the taboo to mature into outright no-first-use pledges. Of the nine nuclear weapons states, only China still maintains a formal NFU policy. This inconsistency with a taboo is better explained by Paul, who stresses reputational concerns, worries about how one is perceived by others, rather than the force of personal morality

T.V. Paul builds his argument on a combination of realist and constructivist arguments. The result is narrower but more compelling. While Tannenwald's assault on alternative explanations leaves the reader familiar with what doesn't work, Paul seems to have a much better sense of what he really knows. Above all, Paul doubts the reliability of the tradition of non-use. If Tannenwald sees a glass half full, Paul's is half empty. Instead of a robust moral taboo, he argues the non-use of nuclear weapons is a mere tradition of habit; weaker, fragile and withering. To Tannenwald, nuclear history is punctuated by a long series of incidents in which nuclear weapons use was considered, but never chosen. This uninterrupted series is a meaningful pattern, evidence that something is making nuclear use less and less likely. To Paul, each incident in which nuclear weapons were considered is proof of another pattern, proof of continuing and mounting risk.

Although his work on nuclear non-use dates back about as far as Tannenwald's, Paul can take advantage of the earlier appearance of her major work, above all to carefully examine her key concept of a taboo. A taboo, he notes, relies on the moral revulsion of individuals who do not have to think, because they cannot imagine doing it. A tradition does not reduce the element of choice. It relies above all, says Paul, on reputations, on 'What will others think?' Sometimes that is enough, but maybe not always. Others have questioned the idea of a nuclear taboo, most explicitly George Quester, as Paul notes.² He goes beyond this questioning to examine the structural and social forces behind what he sees as the much weaker tradition of non-use.

Paul builds on the impressive progress by scholars of deterrence, especially on the crucial concept of reputation. Unlike much of deterrent scholarship, which stresses reputation for credibility, though, Paul is more concerned with reputation in the form of esteem. Non-use, he argues, is a social norm based on calculation of interest. Like Joseph Nye's work on soft power, Paul sees states restrained by their need for acceptance or support. Time and again, his scholarship reveals decision-makers preoccupied not by the anguish of violating a moral taboo, but by fear of antagonizing various audiences, above all other states.

Instead of opening the whole package of nuclear history, Paul focuses mostly on nuclear threats against non-nuclear states. By eliminating confrontations between nuclear adversaries and their allies, he avoids the competing explanation of nuclear deterrence and extended deterrence. As a short cut, this has considerable logical advantages and the virtue of brevity, albeit at the cost of eliminating some of the most dramatic cases like the Cuban Missile Crisis and other instances of nuclear non-use. But all those are clouded by confusion with deterrence. Instead Paul, like

Tannenwald, focuses instead on the clearest test cases for a tradition of non-use, those between nuclear armed and a non-nuclear states.

Paul acknowledges from the start that non-use cannot be accounted through theoretical parsimony. It requires the troublesome compromises of methodological mixing. He shows how realist tendencies to stress power and security are modified by norm shapers, from Manhattan Project scientists to later nuclear activists and strategists, third world and non-aligned statesmen. Such audiences create reputation costs for nuclear use, costs which must be factored into nuclear decision-making and inhibit use of nuclear weapons. Integrating insights from methodological approaches greatly strengthens explanatory power, albeit by weakening the reproducibility and predictivity.

With the obvious exception of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Paul shows American decision-makers consistently preoccupied with reputational consequences of nuclear use. Whether such worries were decisive is harder to establish, but their ubiquitousness is undeniable. 'A close reading of the documents and statements', writes Paul, 'show that the reputation concerns were more prominent than tactical considerations' (p. 49).

When it comes to evaluating nuclear use, Paul uses a much more generous – one might think maximalist – standard for what constitutes nuclear use. Examples like the Nixon Administration's weak efforts at nuclear intimidation in 1969, 1971 and 1973 might not strike all readers as fair test cases. Paul acknowledges such doubts when he writes, 'Although these were bluffs in some instances . . . these were affronts to the tradition of non-use' (p. 72). They also were not very effective. One of the greatest curiosities Paul exposes is the extraordinary gap between the expectations of nuclear states for their compellant threats and their seemingly complete lack of credibility among non-nuclear recipients. Far from intimidating, such threats seem like water off a duck. But even incredible threats, Paul argues, undermine the tradition of non-use.

In Paul's analysis, it is American consideration of nuclear options since 1989, especially the preemptive nuclear options in which President George W. Bush's strategists dabbled, which has done most to undermine the no-first-use tradition. Any refusal to completely rule out nuclear use, in these pages, constitutes legitimization of nuclear use. The mere discussion of possible nuclear use in 1999, 2001 and 2003 is *prima facie* evidence that there is no taboo.

America stands out in these pages, the state most willing to talk about nuclear use and make nuclear threats, even if relatively incredible. No other state he maintains – except Israel in 1973 and possibly the United Kingdom during the Falklands War – came anywhere close. But in reality, all nuclear states are shifting away from no first-use. The Russian *National Security Concept* of 2000 is the most explicit, reacting to conventional corrosion and NATO expansion. Reputational concerns that previously dominated in Moscow have yielded to security priorities. France made similar retreats from no-first-use under President Chirac in 2003 and 2006.

Indeed, it seems like every nuclear power has an exception or two, circumstances in which first-use is conceivable. Everyone seems to dilute their first-use commitment as reputational priorities yield to growing security concerns, increasingly the less

predictable problems of proliferation and terrorism. The exception to this rule so far is China, but Paul's argument leaves little doubt that China's policy is unsustainable. Indeed, Chinese spokesmen already have raised the possibility that their no-first-use does not apply to Taiwanese independence.

Paul cannot resolve the tensions states face between reputation and security. The two seem to be alternatives, even rivals. Reputation is for warm weather, while security concerns dominate when the going gets tough. The more one worries about security, the less important reputation becomes. No-first-use policies, it would seem, are a luxury for those without serious security headaches.

Sometimes Paul's insistence that any consideration of nuclear use is a form of nuclear use seems exaggerated. He has a point, no doubt, but considerations of nuclear use may be implicit in their existence, not a fair measure of their importance. Not every shoulder shrug is equally important. Nor does strengthening the non-use tradition require denying all relevance of nuclear weapons. Making the case against any nuclear use – in the sense even of deterrent threats – Paul maintains that nuclear deterrence has no role in counterterrorism (pp. 190–1). But this is a position challenged by a growing body of deterrence studies.³

Hardest to fit are the nearly 200 non-nuclear weapons states. For all the ambivalence of America and other nuclear weapons states, non-nuclear weapons states seem to have no doubts whatsoever about their ineffectiveness. Starting with Stalin and Mao, they always maintain that nuclear threats are irrelevant in their thinking. Yet slowly, more approach a tipping point and develop nuclear options. What of the doctrines and attitudes of new nuclear powers? North Korea and Iran are mentioned, but mostly as possible targets, although both have made typically ambiguous threats themselves. The greatest shortcoming might be India and Pakistan. To be sure, this is a topic the author has explored extensively before. But as the only nuclear armed states to engage in direct warfare, and the principle actors in a half-dozen nuclear crises, they deserve more attention than they get here. Except for the dangers of A.Q. Khan's nonchalance, Paul is not worried about South Asia nearly as much as he fears American willingness to expand its nuclear options. While the priority makes sense, the optimism about South Asia begs explaining.

One often-overlooked point that deserves much more attention is readily visible when comparing these two books. Even in scholarly monographs, design matters. Cambridge University Press, ever commercial, does Tannenwald no favours, packaging her book in a generic cover of the kind increasingly popular with penny-pinching publishers. Stanford, on the other hand, allowed Paul a piece of graphic delight, easily the best cover design of any international relations monograph in memory.

For all the differences between Paul and Tannenwald, their divergent findings about nuclear non-use sometimes add up the same. Whether non-use is the result of a weakening tradition or an increasingly robust taboo, the obvious choices are the same; self-deterrence is the key to non-use and formal no-first-use pledges are the most meaningful way to implement that. Maybe these two scholars differ on the problems of getting there, but they seem to share a destination. If Tannenwald

has it right, getting there should not be so arduous. Leadership may be enough. But if Paul is right about the hurdles to be overcome, more attention to enhancing deterrence and unilateral declarations may be no less vital.

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NOTES

1. Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, 'A Plan to Eliminate the World's Nuclear Weapons', *Financial Times*, 18 December 2009, p. 15.
2. George Quester, *Nuclear First Strike: Consequences of a Broken Taboo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).
3. Jeffrey W. Knopf, 'The Fourth Wave in Deterrence Research', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (April 2010), pp. 1–33.