

INTRODUCTION

It was curious and sad that after his death, Albert Wohlstetter, a former professor of mine and a major force in American strategic planning for nearly a half century, was criticized for not having written a book. His apologia, albeit unspoken, was that he had more important things to do guiding U.S. and international policy, which he did effectively in so many ways, including framing the debate over what should be done about nuclear proliferation. His work, and that of his wife and chief collaborator, Roberta Wohlstetter, are best understood through the many policy and economic studies they wrote and the profound impact they had on U.S. and allied security and energy policies.³

Although I served 11 years in the Pentagon and as a staffer on Capitol Hill, I have no such excuse. The clearest proof of this is this slim volume, the sequel to *Best of Intentions: America's Campaign Against Strategic Weapons Proliferation*.⁴ That volume was largely historical and written in support of a graduate-level course I teach on nuclear energy policy. The thinking behind *Best of Intentions*

3. See Robert Zarate and Henry Sokolski, ed., *Nuclear Heuristics: Selected Writings of Albert and Roberta Wohlstetter*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009.

4. See Henry D. Sokolski, *Best of Intentions: America's Campaign against Strategic Weapons Proliferation*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001.

was straightforward: Determining where we are necessarily requires familiarity first with where we have been. I wrote that volume because, at the time, there was no critical history of nonproliferation available to dispatch my students in any practical direction.

As I continued to teach, though, I noticed another gap in the literature. The arguments policymakers and academics were making on how nuclear weapons reductions related to preventing further nuclear proliferation were, at best, uneven. Each of the basic views—arms control, hawkish, and academic—spotlighted some important aspect of the truth, but each was incomplete and surprisingly optimistic.

The view most arms control proponents propound is that any state that has nuclear weapons is obliged to make further nuclear weapons reductions under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The superpowers promised to make such reductions, they contend, to get nonweapons states to accept intrusive nuclear inspections and to abstain from acquiring nuclear arms. Most who hold this view also believe that nuclear weapons are only useful to deter others' use of these weapons, that this mission can be accomplished with relatively few nuclear weapons, and that, as such, we can make significant, additional strategic arms reductions at little or no cost to our national security. Pursuing such reductions and strengthening existing nuclear security measures also are desirable, they argue, because nuclear weapons and their related production infrastructures are vulnerable to unauthorized or accidental firings, terrorist seizure, sabotage, and possible use.

Almost all of those holding these views argue that states with advanced “peaceful” nuclear technology are obliged to share it with nonweapons states as a quid pro quo to get these states to uphold their NPT nonproliferation pledges. Thus, civilian nuclear sharing, nonproliferation, and strategic arms reductions are viewed as three

equally critical “pillars” of an NPT “bargain.”⁵

A second, more hawkish view rejects these positions, arguing that the link between nuclear reductions and proliferation is negative: Further significant nuclear weapons cuts could well encourage America’s adversaries to “sprint to nuclear parity.”⁶ Such efforts, in turn, could easily spook Washington’s allies who lack nuclear weapons (e.g., Turkey, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Japan) to hedge their security bets by acquiring their own. To avoid such proliferation, this group contends that keeping or increasing U.S. nuclear weapons capabilities (especially vis-à-vis China and Russia) is our best bet.

Finally, some academics are skeptical of both of these views. They identify themselves as “neorealists.” They are divided roughly into two camps—those who believe that nuclear deterrence works and those that do not. Their disagreement here is significant but not as great as what unifies their thinking—a shared disbelief in there being any major link between nuclear weapons reductions, nonproliferation, and international security.

Mainstream neorealists emphasize what they believe to be the auto-

5. See U.S. Department of State, U.S. Delegation to the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, “The Three Pillars,” pp. 4-6, available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/141503.pdf>; Paul Kerr, et. al., *The 2010 Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference: Key Issues and Implications*, RL41216, Washington DC: U.S. Congressional Research Service, May 3, 2010, pp. 1-15, available from <http://fas.org:8080/sgp/crs/nuke/R41216.pdf>; and Wikipedia, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, last modified October 6, 2014, available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_on_the_Non-Proliferation_of_Nuclear_Weapons#Treaty_.22pillars.22.

6. See National Security Implications of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty: Senate Hearing 107-806, Before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Armed Forces, 107th Cong. (July 25, 2002) (statement of Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense), available from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2002_hr/rumsfeld725.pdf.

maticity of nuclear deterrence. They contend that the further spread of nuclear weapons is far less harmful to the world's security than is commonly assumed and that, because nuclear weapons are so effective in deterring wars, their further proliferation could actually help keep the peace.

A second and more recent neorealist school, though, rejects faith in nuclear deterrence. It sees little military value in nuclear weapons but (for this reason) also concludes that their further spread is largely inconsequential. As for trying to prevent proliferation, this newer school of neorealism argues this can be far more dangerous and provocative—they spotlight the invasion of Iraq—than letting these weapons spread.⁷

Each of these views—arms control, hawkish, and academic—is intellectually attractive. Each is concise. All, however, are incomplete. None fully explore the regional insecurities that arise with threatened nuclear weapons breakouts or ramp-ups. Instead, they dwell on the security impacts of nuclear proliferation after states have actually broken out or ramped up. Nor do they have much to say about the significant overlaps between civilian and military nuclear activities or the risk that “peaceful” nuclear facilities or materials might be diverted to make bombs. Instead, they focus almost exclusively on nuclear weapons and their impact on international security (albeit in differing time frames).⁸ Finally, none adequate-

7. The best single work reflecting the views of the first camp is Kenneth N. Waltz's essay in Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995. The best work reflecting the views of the second camp is John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. As for the arguments made about the human costs of war against Iraq, there is no question that these were substantial. That the war was fought primarily as a nonproliferation campaign, however, is much more open to debate. See, e.g., Jamie McIntyre, “Pentagon Challenges *Vanity Fair* Report,” *CNN*, May 30, 2003, available from <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/05/30/wolfowitz.vanity.fair/>.

8. The first school—the official arms control view—is both incremental and rela-

ly considers the discontinuous view that fewer nuclear weapons in fewer hands is desirable but that rushing to achieve such reductions without first getting key nuclear states to reduce in a transparent, coordinated fashion could easily make matters worse.

This brief volume covers each of these points. First, it reviews the key popular views on nuclear proliferation. Second, it considers how much worse matters might get if states continue with relatively loose nuclear constraints on civilian and military nuclear activities. Finally, it suggests what might be done to avoid the worst.

tively immediate in its outlook, activities, goals, and approach. It generally views reaching any agreement, even an interim one, as being favorable to reaching no agreement. In contrast, hawkish supporters of nuclear weapons (as well as hard-headed security planners who might not be as enthusiastic about relying heavily on nuclear arms) generally focus on set goals and encourage actions for the mid-term—i.e., for the next 10 to 20 years. Finally, academic skeptics who challenge these other schools generally write as if their operational insights about nuclear weapons and deterrence immediately pertain and are permanent, i.e., immutable.