

# H-Diplo | Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum

## Roundtable Review 15-35

Rebecca Davis Gibbons, *The Hegemon's Tool Kit: US Leadership and the Politics of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022.  
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## Introduction by Campbell Craig, Cardiff University

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The nuclear nonproliferation regime (NPR) is widely seen as the most powerful international organization in the world. Composed of many international agencies, think tanks, government departments, and academic institutes, and funded by major donor groups and the governments of many of the world's most powerful countries (above all, the US), its influence and sheer institutional heft is the envy of the internationalist scene.

Moreover, and in contrast to many other international organizations, the NPR gets things done. It has played an important role in persuading some states, which are capable of building a bomb, to decide against doing so; in monitoring the nuclear energy projects of others, to be sure they remain peaceful; and in the arduous process of inspecting and sanctioning “rogue” states that are suspected of pursuing a bomb surreptitiously—most notably Iraq around the turn of the century and, more recently, Iran.

Nevertheless, criticism of the NPR has become more and more prominent over the past few decades. Its role in the disastrous Iraq War was central, because it gave hawks in the US (and the UK) the opportunity to wage the war they wanted anyways under the mantle of international good. The continuing unwillingness of the established nuclear states to pay even lip service to Article VI of the original nonproliferation treaty, which committed them to pursue disarmament, invites charges of hypocrisy and duplicity from states, especially (though not only) those in the Global South, who see the NPR as nothing more than a scam to keep the world divided between nuclear “haves” and “have-nots.” And, more recently, a growing nuclear disarmament movement has identified the nonproliferation cause as one of its most important adversaries. By locking in the extant nuclear order and pretty much ignoring Article VI, the NPR serves as a powerful enemy, rather than an ally, to those who seek a world without nuclear weapons.

In her book, *The Hegemon's Tool Kit*, Rebecca Davis Gibbons makes a case for the defense. She takes as a given the assumption that keeping the number of nuclear states as low as possible is a clear moral good for the world, and that the NPR, for all its faults, is more responsible for keeping the number in the single digits, when it could be much higher, than any other factor. She argues that this has been possible primarily because the United States—the “hegemon” in the book's title—has taken the lead in cultivating the NPR's institutional power and backing it up with military force. She warns, therefore, that the decline of US hegemony could mean, among many other things, the corresponding collapse of the nonproliferation regime.

This roundtable consists of reviews by four leading scholars on nonproliferation and nuclear politics: S.M. Amadae,<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Miller,<sup>2</sup> Michal Onderco,<sup>3</sup> and Tom Sauer.<sup>4</sup> It concludes with a response from the author. In the rest of this introduction, I will provide an overview of each of the reviews and Gibbons's response to them.

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<sup>1</sup> See especially S.M. Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason: Game Theory and Neoliberal Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Miller is one of the leading young US scholars on nuclear politics. See Nicholas Miller, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of U.S. Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Onderco's recent book, based on an enormous amount of new primary documentation, on the game-changing 1995 review conference, is Michal Onderco, *Networked Nonproliferation: Making the NPT Permanent* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Sauer stands as one of Europe's most important scholars on nuclear war and disarmament. His most important recent work, in my opinion, is Tom Sauer, “When Is It Legitimate to Abandon the NPT? Withdrawal as a Political Tool to Move Nuclear Disarmament Forward” (co-authored with Joelien Pretorius), *Contemporary Security Policy* 43:1 (2022): 161-185.

Miller’s review is largely positive: he states that Gibbons makes “a compelling argument” that the US indeed remains at the centre of the NPR. He does suggest that she downplays the role of US coercion in the regime—as was seen especially during the 1995 nonproliferation treaty review conference, as another of our reviewers, Onderco, has shown.<sup>5</sup> He also questions her conclusion that the NPR ought to take article VI more seriously—that the nuclear haves should pursue disarmament. “It is not totally clear why we should expect this to change going forward,” Miller writes, in what is perhaps the understatement of the year.

Gibbons’s reply to this last point is important. She contends that the charge of hypocrisy made against the nuclear haves will, over the long run, weaken the NPR—especially if US power declines. Thus they should recommit themselves to fulfilling the demands of Article VI. One wonders what this argument entails. Is Gibbons proposing that these powers actually take the revolutionary steps necessary to irretrievably disarm, or simply that the rhetoric change for nonproliferation purposes?

Onderco also praises the book, calling it a “model on how to conduct historical case-study research.” He points out that other states have also played an important role in sustaining the NPR, though one must ask whether this was despite US hegemony or because of it. He also suggests that Gibbons ought to have dealt more with larger debates about contemporary nuclear politics, as do the next two reviewers.

In response, Gibbons repeats her argument that the NPR does not need the US *per se* as its institutional patron, it just needs a generic hegemon to run it. This is a consistent and important claim which runs throughout the book. But if we are entering into an era of multipolarity, then the problem emerges that there will be no hegemon at all for the foreseeable future, which, she argues, threatens the viability of the NPR. If that is as much of a danger to the world as she argues, it might be better for the US to retain its preponderance.

Amadae’s review is more critical. Building upon her own pioneering work on US strategic thought in the nuclear age, she suggests that the logic in *Hegemon’s Tool Kit* is more consistent with an aggressive American nuclear strategy than it would be with a defensive one which accepts the “fact,” as Robert Jervis put it, of Mutual Assured Destruction.<sup>6</sup> An NPR dominated by the US, Amadae contends, goes hand in hand with the larger American pursuit of primacy, a policy which requires the kind of nuclear war-fighting doctrine promoted by scholars such as Keir Lieber, Daryl Press, and Matthew Kroenig.<sup>7</sup>

Gibbons replies to this charge by arguing that the NPR can be consistent with any number of nuclear strategies, and that many advocates of the more defensive/MAD position also support a robust nonproliferation regime. This question also speaks to the larger question of US preponderance. An American policy of primacy requires an aggressive nuclear strategy: if the NPR depends upon the continuation of US hegemony, then this would seem to be the logical strategy to endorse.

Sauer also levies several criticisms of the book in his review. He points out that the increased number of nuclear states from five at the time of the signing of the NPT to nine today is not self-evidently a success: “If the standard is that each additional nuclear-armed state is problematic,” he argues, “then the regime has failed.” He agrees with Miller about the unclear role of disarmament in the book, and finds Gibbons’s argument “contradictory” on this issue: he notes that she initially argues that the NPR remained robust and

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<sup>5</sup> See Onderco, *Networked Nonproliferation*.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> See Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020); and Matthew Kroenig, *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

popular among the “have-nots” despite the nuclear powers’ indifference to Article VI, but later in the conclusion does advocate greater progress on disarmament, as we have seen.

In a lengthy rejoinder, Gibbons deals thoroughly with Sauer’s criticisms. She points out that many believed before the signing of the treaty that the number of nuclear states would exponentially increase, and that the NPR has been successful in dissuading some of these states from proliferating. This is obviously a tricky question, because the fact that people predicted something, as Sauer states, does not really prove anything. Nevertheless, I would guess that had the NPR never arisen, it is pretty likely, *ceteris paribus*, that we would have more nuclear weapons states today.

Gibbons returns to the difficult issue of Article VI at the conclusion of her response. She reiterates her argument that, in the past, “disarmament progress was not necessary to achieve US nonproliferation goals. But the book does not say the United States will be able to serve this role in perpetuity. In fact, the book argues that geopolitical trends could weaken the nonproliferation regime.” As US primacists insist, however, geopolitical trends are not inexorable.

### Contributors:

**Rebecca Davis Gibbons** is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Southern Maine. She previously served as a fellow and associate of the Project on Managing the Atom at the Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Before becoming an academic, Dr. Gibbons taught elementary school among the Bikini community on Kili Island in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and served as a national security policy analyst at SAIC providing support to Headquarters Air Force Strategic Stability and Countering WMD Division (AF/A10-S).

**Campbell Craig** is Professor of International Politics at Cardiff University. He is the author of several books and many articles on US foreign policy and nuclear politics. His piece on the nonproliferation regime (co-authored with Jan Ruzicka), “Who’s In, Who’s Out?” appeared in the 23 February 2012 issue of the *London Review of Books*.

**S.M. Amadae** holds the position of Adjunct Professor in Politics at the University of Helsinki and is currently the Programme Director for Global Politics and Communication. Amadae’s book, *Prisoners of Reason: Game Theory and Neoliberal Political Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) analyzes the historical development of the United States’ nuclear war fighting posture, and how its strategic logic was rationalized. Amadae also has addressed the existential risk posed by introducing machine learning into nuclear command and control systems (Shahar Avin and S.M. Amadae, “Autonomy and Machine Learning as Risk Factors at the Interface of Nuclear Weapons, Computers and People,” *The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk: Euro-Atlantic Perspectives*, ed. by Vincent Boulanin, Stockholm, SIPRI (2019), available online at <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/other-publications/impact-artificial-intelligence-strategic-stability-and-nuclear-risk-volume-i-euro-atlantic>).

**Nicholas L. Miller** is Associate Professor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College. He is the author of *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of U.S. Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2018), and is currently working on a book manuscript on how the United States seeks to manage new nuclear powers. He received his PhD in Political Science from MIT in 2014.

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**Tom Sauer** is Professor in International Politics at the Universiteit Antwerpen (Belgium). He specializes in international security, and more particularly in nuclear arms control, proliferation, and disarmament. He has written or (co-)edited nine books published by Palgrave, Routledge, I.B. Tauris, and Hurst & Co. Sauer has published in academic journals such as *International Security*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *Survival*, *International Relations*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Third World Quarterly*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *The Nonproliferation Review*, *Arms Control Today*, *European Security*, and *Global Policy*. He is a former BCSIA Fellow at Harvard University (US), and an active member of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. He received the 2019 Alumni Global Service Award of Rotary International.

## Review by S.M. Amadae, Politics, University of Helsinki

The regime built around the NPT is one that privileges the United States as an official nuclear weapon state (47).

Rebecca Davis Gibbons's *Hegemon's Toolkit: US Leadership and the Politics of Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime* represents a perspective on the United States' role in promoting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that embraces the United States' role in pursuing global military ascendance.<sup>1</sup> The author states that "[t]he term *hegemon* to refer to the United States in the nuclear age is purposively chosen and is defined as a state that uses its unparalleled material power to create order within an international system" (14/310). The book adds to a large literature on the causes and implications of proliferation and non-proliferation.<sup>2</sup> Gibbons presents two overarching arguments that impinge on both the role of a hegemon in international relations, and the evaluation of hegemonic stability theory. Gibbons treats NPT adherence (when and how states join the treaty) as the dependent variable, and US efforts to achieve NPT adherence as the independent variable. I largely agree with Gibbons's findings that the United States played an important role in promoting and securing a global nuclear nonproliferation regime, and that the US, in the role of hegemon, secured asymmetric advantage contrary to hegemonic stability theory.

Gibbons counters arguments that NPT compliance has been derived from states' security interests, considerations of regime fairness, and domestic politics (chapter 1).<sup>3</sup> Her analysis rests on four levels of embeddedness within the US-led world order, from high, moderate, and weak, to antagonistic. She also identifies four types of motivation applied by the US to those it pushes to conform to the NPT: low- and high-cost diplomacy, positive inducements, and coercion. She analyses case-studies in Indonesia, Japan, Egypt, South Africa, and Cuba. She concludes that considerations of regime fairness, security interests, and domestic politics do not explain the concessions of Indonesia, Egypt, and South Africa to the indefinite extension of the NPT, without the US ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), in the 1990s. Instead, Gibbons argues that the US fractured the alliance of those states as members of the non-aligned movement (NAM) of states. The US achieved this end by persuading South Africa not to support Indonesia's call for the US to agree to the CTBT; not to be serious about arms control, disarmament and cooperation on nuclear free zones; and not to offer of security guarantees for non-nuclear states (179-180). She argues that this outcome, which was characteristically beneficial to the US, was a consequence of the United States' motivational diplomacy and deployment of favorable inducements and coercive threats. Gibbons concludes that "the nonnuclear weapons states received no legally binding commitments from the nuclear weapons states in exchange for securing indefinite extension of the [NPT] treaty" (180).

I engage with Gibbons's argument by posing questions about the relationship between the US nuclear security posture and its promotion of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. I argue that Gibbons's analysis is

<sup>1</sup> This review was completed with the research assistance and contributions of University of Helsinki post-graduate students Luiza Rahkmatullina and Jinyi Xiao.

<sup>2</sup> Two recent books include Alexander Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance: The Alliance Politics of Nonproliferation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), and John Baylis and Yoko Iwama, eds., *Joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty: Deterrence, Non-Proliferation, and the American Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> On security interests, see Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30:2 (1978): 167-214, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009958>, and also Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979); on regime fairness see Cecilia Albin, *Justice and Fairness in International Negotiation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); on domestic politics see Elizabeth N. Saunders, "The Domestic Politics of Nuclear Choices: A Review Essay," *International Security* 44:2 (2019): 146-184., [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00361](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00361).

consistent with the United States' adopted nuclear war-fighting (NWF) posture of escalation dominance and flexible response. The pairing by the US of its NWF posture and its critical support for NPT acts as a guarantor of its security and that of its allies. Security guarantees are not, however, necessarily issued to all of those nations encouraged or coerced to forgo their own nuclear weapons programs and even their nuclear energy programs. I argue that whereas the NWF posture inherently seeks asymmetric advantage, which is consistent with Gibbons's modified theory of hegemony, in fact persuading states either to renounce pursuing or to abolish existing nuclear weapons programs must be tied to strict guarantees of their security to actually secure stability.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the United States' approach to NPT, I discuss the approaches to nuclear nonproliferation pursued by the Russian Federation and China. Historical examples show that support for nonproliferation can be wedded to the aim of mutual security, which then extends nuclear-free zone guarantees to those nations who abide by the nonproliferation regime restrictions.

### The Assumptions in The Hegemon's Tool Kit

Gibbons argues that the US NPT regime makes the world a safer place because it encourages a rule-bound world led by US values and western security interests. The NPT is thus objectively good, normatively and instrumentally, even without the US and NATO pursuing arms control and policies of eventual disarmament, such as signing the treaty to ban nuclear weapons. However, these two points have been challenged. John Mueller estimates the cost of the 2003 Iraq war—which was ostensibly waged to prevent the regime of President Saddam Hussein from developing nuclear weapons—in terms of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives, thousands of American lives, and billions of US dollars.<sup>5</sup> Half a million children's deaths can be linked to the US economic sanctions that were meant to contain Hussein's regime. Mueller blames the West's sanctions on North Korea—which were put in place because of its effort to build a nuclear weapons program—for famine conditions in that country, and observes that achieving concessions and NPT compliance was pointless.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, theorists have argued that proliferation may lead to stability under some circumstances because states then have their own nuclear deterrence, which is believed to contribute to stability when nuclear stalemate prevails.<sup>7</sup> Gibbons does not make the case that the NPT regime is worth the cost, or that it actually leads to less chances of either nuclear or conventional war; these points are implicit in the book's larger arguments.

Gibbons also argues that US nuclear posture is given.<sup>8</sup> One can argue that nuclear strategy is socially constructed and politically selected, with the US officially adopting the NWF posture since 1981.<sup>9</sup> Gibbons

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g. Benoît Pelopidas, "Renunciation: Restraint and Rollback," in *Routledge Handbook of Nuclear Proliferation and Policy*, ed. Joseph F. Pilat and Nathan E. Busch (London: Routledge, 2015): 337-347, 340.

<sup>5</sup> John Mueller, "The Costs and Consequences of Efforts to Prevent Proliferation," paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, (2008), 1-20, available online: <https://politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/APSA08.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> These estimates of the costs of the Iraq war are from Mueller, "The Costs and Consequences of Efforts to Prevent Proliferation," 4, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, and William H. Riker, "An Assessment of the Merits of Selective Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 26:2 (1982): 283-306; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review* 84:3 (1990): 731-745.

<sup>8</sup> It is possible to consider alternative scenarios, see e.g. Benoît Pelopidas and Sanne Cornelia J. Verschuren, "Writing IR after COVID-19: Reassessing Political Possibilities, Good Faith, and Policy-Relevant Scholarship on Climate Change Mitigation and Nuclear Disarmament," *Global Studies Quarterly*, 3 (2023): 1-12.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); S.M. Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason: Game Theory and Neoliberal Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

does not discuss or explore whether holding an alternative posture, such as that of assured destruction, which is consistent with a No First Use (NFU) policy, may support an alternative approach to nonproliferation. The NWF posture openly pursues unilateral advantage while the position of (Mutual) Assured Destruction, which is consistent with the nuclear revolution and defensive realism, accepts a military stalemate regarding the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>10</sup> The NWF posture is consistent with offensive realism and the imposition of asymmetry in enforcing a non-proliferation regime on others: for nations less-embedded in, or even hostile to, US world order, security commitments are lacking.<sup>11</sup> Gibbons observes that “the superpowers realized they could be prevented from acting in areas of interest around the globe if smaller states could deter them” (18).<sup>12</sup> This statement is congruent with like observations that the US supported the NPT regime to protect its own security aims and global influence.<sup>13</sup>

Focusing on positive inducements to maintain the NPT, Alexander Lanoszka makes an alternative argument to that of Gibbons. He argues that winning states over to the NPT regime requires their integration into military alliances, with strong commitments to address their security concerns.<sup>14</sup> Upholding these commitments can be costly to the guarantor, because dependent states can pose unconstrained demands by taking onboard and imposing security risks. Lanoszka’s argument is only suggestive of the US adhering to an offensive realist versus defensive realist security posture. However, he acknowledges that if we conclude that the US pursues nonproliferation as a “goal unto itself,” then this is consistent with offensive realism. Lanoszka posits that “Nuclear proliferation undercuts hegemony because it negates American power projection capabilities.”<sup>15</sup>

Ukraine presents a pivotal case: in joining the NPT, it received security pledges from both the US and Russia. Gibbons notes that the Russian Federation played an important role in enforcing the NPT among the USSR’s former satellite states, which also included Kazakhstan and Belarus. Roman Wolczuk assesses the complexities of Ukraine’s assertion of sovereignty in the early 1990s, with both Russia and the United States pressuring the new nation to relinquish all nuclear weapons on its territory.<sup>16</sup> In January 1994, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine, and the United States signed the US-Russia-Ukraine Trilateral Statement agreeing to transfer Ukraine-based nuclear weapons to Russia for dismantling, and to guarantees of Ukraine’s security.<sup>17</sup> By 1994, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus all were signatories of the NPT.<sup>18</sup>

The Ukraine war in 2022 tests the assumption that states’ security concerns can be addressed by abiding by nonproliferation, and puts to the test an alliance’s security commitments. Gibbons does not discuss the

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason*; Robert Powell, “Nuclear Deterrence Theory, Nuclear Proliferation, and National Missile Defense,” *International Security* 27:4 (2003), 86-118, 93-94 fn 17, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137605>; Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance*, 154-155.

<sup>11</sup> Michael S. Gerson, “No First Use: The Next Step for U.S. Nuclear Policy,” *International Security*, 35:2 (2010), 7-47, 8.

<sup>12</sup> See also Matthew Kroenig, “Force or Friendship? Explaining Great Power Nonproliferation Policy,” *Security Studies*, 23 (2014): 1-32, 6.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., William Burr, “Nuclear Proliferation and Conceptions of National Interest: The US Case 1960-1967, in *Joining the NPT: Deterrence, Non-Proliferation and the American Alliance*.

<sup>14</sup> Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance*, 2018, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance*, 154-155.

<sup>16</sup> Roman Wolczuk, “The Evolution of Ukrainian Foreign and Security Policy, 1990-1994,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 12:3 (1999): 18-37; DOI: 10.1080/13518049908430402.

<sup>17</sup> “Trilateral Statement by the Presidents of the United States, Russia, Ukraine,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 20, *Ukraine in the World: Studies in the International Relations and Security Structure of a Newly Independent State* (1996), 313-316.

<sup>18</sup> “Timeline of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty,” Arms Control Association, 2022, available online: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/NPT-Timeline>.



Ukraine case, but it speaks to the role that nuclear deterrence and nuclear weapons play in the global security order. In a counterfactual scenario, researchers debate whether Ukraine's retention of nuclear weapons and control over them would have averted Russian invasion and its current military crisis.<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Knopf argues that nuclear weapons would not have given Ukraine an advantage for the reason that holding nuclear weapons does not necessarily provide a guarantee against attack.<sup>20</sup> Mariana Budjeryn provides a compelling analysis that the strategic deterrent advantage to Ukraine of Russian weapons did not constitute a basis for credible deterrence, and that keeping these weapons was not a feasible option.<sup>21</sup> The usefulness of nuclear weapons to achieve security goals or influence in other domains continues to be debated, with some theorists arguing that possession of nuclear weapons enhances a state's international influence.<sup>22</sup> Moving beyond that debate, we can also question the conclusion that, "Nations with nuclear weapons may be able to fight nonnuclear opponents without the fear that the opponent will invade the homeland or challenge the fundamental interests of the nuclear state. Unsurprisingly, the outcomes of these conflicts tend to favor the nuclear-armed state."<sup>23</sup>

## US Strategic Posture and Alternatives

The US is candid about its military doctrine and nuclear posture. From the US perspective, there is no alternative to its declared posture of escalation dominance through threatening the use of nuclear weapons in response to nuclear attacks, and against nonnuclear attacks, as for example the Trump administration did against cyberattacks.<sup>24</sup> Gibbons refers to as Keir Lieber and Matthew Kroenig as her "mentors" (5). Lieber and Kroenig articulate the logic underlying the rationale for the need to maintain credibility in threats to use, and the capability of using, nuclear weapons in tactical and strategic domains of conflict.<sup>25</sup> Gibbons's argument in *Hegemon's Toolkit* follows the work of Kroenig in arguing that nuclear superpowers strive to support the NPT within their spheres of influence to retain their "military freedom of action" and ability to project power.<sup>26</sup> The argument in the following quotation recalls that of US strategists who insisted on the

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<sup>19</sup> Andreas Umland, "The Ukraine Example: Nuclear Disarmament Doesn't Pay," *World Affairs* 178.4 (2016), 45-49.

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey W. Knopf, "Why the Ukraine War Does Not Mean More Countries Should Seek Nuclear Weapons," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, April 2022, <https://thebulletin.org/2022/04/why-the-ukraine-war-does-not-mean-more-countries-should-seek-nuclear-weapons/>.

<sup>21</sup> Mariana Budjeryn, "Was Ukraine's Nuclear Disarmament a Blunder?," *World Affairs* 179:2 (2016): 9-20, 12-15, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0043820016673777>; see also Maria Rost Rublee, "Fantasy Counterfactual: A Nuclear-Armed Ukraine," *Survival* 57:2 (2015): 145-156, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1026091>.

<sup>22</sup> Erik Gartzke and Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nonproliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53:2 (April 2009): 151-159.

<sup>23</sup> This quotation and the previous point are in Gartzke and Kroenig, "A Strategic Approach to Nonproliferation," 158.

<sup>24</sup> The January 2018 US Nuclear Posture Review is available at <https://nuke.fas.org/guide/usa/npr2018-draft.pdf>; for discussion see Anna Péczeli, "The Trump Administration's Nuclear Posture Review: Back to Great Power Competition," *Journal for Peace and Disarmament* 1:2 (2018): 238-255; on strategies of coercive escalation see Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2020), 104-110.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Kroenig, *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The Rise of US Nuclear Primacy," *Foreign Affairs* 85:2 (2006): 42.

<sup>26</sup> Kroenig, "Force or Friendship?" 1.

non-negotiability of having nuclear weapons on alert status, rejected a No First Use declaratory posture, and maintained what is now referred to as declaratory ambiguity:<sup>27</sup>

The risks of nuclear brinkmanship may be enormous, but so is the payoff from gaining a nuclear advantage over an opponent. Nuclear weapons are, after all, the ultimate trump card: if you can convince your enemy that you have a way to play the card and are actually prepared to go through with it, nothing is more powerful. And the best way to do that is to have palatable options for the limited and effective use of nuclear weapons. Americans should know: they perfected this approach against the Soviet Union during the Cold War.<sup>28</sup>

This US position, called full-spectrum dominance by the second Bush administration, is unabashed about its pursuit of asymmetric advantage.<sup>29</sup> Nuclear warfighting, under the name of countervailing strategy, became established doctrine under President Jimmy Carter in 1981.<sup>30</sup> Gibbons documents the leading role of the US in promoting the NPT, as well as its asymmetric leverage in pursuing its own nuclear weapons programs while maintaining other nations in a condition of lacking security guarantees (chapter 1). Thus *Hegemon's Toolkit* provides insight into the rationalization of US leaders of their country's nuclear security posture of escalation dominance and flexible response coupled with its insistence that other nations forgo potential benefits of nuclear deterrence, without necessarily offering the assurance of security to those countries or being a prime mover in nuclear arms control and disarmament.

NATO has maintained the nuclear posture of the US since 1949, with a clear first-use policy against conventional attacks and strategic and tactical nuclear weapons stationed throughout Europe.<sup>31</sup> This is despite the fact that the NATO alliance now “enjoys an even greater conventional superiority over any potential enemy or combination of enemies in Europe than the Warsaw Pact ever had over NATO.”<sup>32</sup> The United Kingdom has been a nuclear-weapons state since 1952, and has a policy of “minimal credible nuclear deterrence, assigned to the defence of NATO...[but] does not have a policy of ‘no first use.’”<sup>33</sup> France, which

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew Costlow, “Believe It or Not: U.S. Declaratory Policy and Calculated Ambiguity,” *War on the Rocks*, 9 August 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/08/believe-it-or-not-u-s-nuclear-declaratory-policy-and-calculated-ambiguity/>.

<sup>28</sup> Eldridge Colby, “If You Want Peace Prepare for War: A Strategy for the New Great Power Rivalry,” *Foreign Affairs* 97:6 (2018),:25-34, 29.

<sup>29</sup> Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (JP 1-02), 96 (PDF). 31 October 2009 [12 April 2001]. Archived from the original (PDF) on 10 March 2010.

<sup>30</sup> S.M. Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 102-125.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Mendelsohn, “NATO’s Nuclear Weapons: The Rationale for No-First-Use,” *Arms Control Association*, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999-07/features/natos-nuclear-weapons-rationale-first-use>; “In early 1994, the alliance—led by the United States and Germany—began to move toward expanding NATO membership to countries in Eastern and Southern Europe. The general debate over alliance expansion raised the issue of nuclear weapons deployment in the potential new member-states. Sharply criticized by Moscow, which considered itself the prime (if not the only) target of the alliance's nuclear forces, the freedom to deploy nuclear weapons in new NATO members was just as staunchly defended by NATO. In September 1995, NATO released its “Enlargement Study,” which stated explicitly that the “new members will be expected to support the concept of deterrence and the essential role nuclear weapons play in the Alliance’s strategy of war prevention as set forth in the Strategic Concept.” (4)

<sup>32</sup> Jack Mendelsohn, “NATO’s Nuclear Weapons,” 3; Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 44:1 (2020): 3-35, DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2020.1818070 .

<sup>33</sup> Claire Mills, *Nuclear Weapons at a Glance, United Kingdom*. House of Commons Library, 2021, 4 [<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9077/#:~:text=Nuclear%20policy,no%2Dfirst%20use>].

has been a nuclear-weapons state since 1960, does not have a No First Use posture, and its declaratory policy is to deploy nuclear weapons against attacks on its “vital interests.”<sup>34</sup>

The Russian Federation’s most recent declared nuclear doctrine is that it will only resort to nuclear weapons in the case of nuclear attack or an existential threat to the nation’s survival.<sup>35</sup> Kristin Ven Bruusgaard’s study of Russia’s evolving nuclear posture and conventional military strength provides evidence that concerns over Russia’s relative decline in conventional forces were associated with its increased emphasis on integrating nuclear forces into its strategic stance. She observes that, “[in] the early 2000s, Russian conventional capabilities were so inferior, compared to NATO’s military capabilities, that Russia deemed it necessary to threaten the early and limited use of nuclear weapons in the face of conventional threats.”<sup>36</sup> Russia was alarmed by NATO’s demonstrated capabilities and intervention in a sovereign country during the Kosovo conflict in which it intervened, even without a United Nations Security Council mandate, and against Russian protests.<sup>37</sup> Russia hence pursued conventional-force modernization coupled with integration of nuclear deterrence in order to offset the potential for conventional attacks. Russia demonstrated its second-strike retaliatory capability, signaled its willingness to use limited nuclear options as deterrence against conventional attacks, and changed its declaratory policy to a lower nuclear threshold in the early 2000s.

Ven Bruusgaard’s research shows that by 2010, Russia had enhanced its conventional capabilities, but continued to worry about conventional military capabilities of the US as manifested its sea- and air-launched cruise missiles. Whereas the NATO alliance may perceive its intentions as benign, from the Russian perspective, NATO’s military conventional capabilities and missile defense entailed a de facto compromising of Russian security.<sup>38</sup> By 2010, Russia raised its nuclear threshold. It relied more on conventional defense options, and put forward a declaratory policy that reserved nuclear use for an outright nuclear attack or existential threat on the Russian state.<sup>39</sup> Since 2014, Russia has continued to worry about a conflict with NATO, and has supported “a moratorium on nuclear-armed land-based intermediate-range missiles in Europe.”<sup>40</sup> It rejected a preemptory nuclear attack, and maintains its nuclear posture on the basis of tit-for-tat massive retaliation, or to counter an existential threat to the state.<sup>41</sup> Russia’s defensive posture can be gauged against the contention of leading US strategists that given the US nuclear force and targeting superiority, Russia may no longer have guaranteed second strike retaliatory capability.<sup>42</sup>

Gibbons, Lanoszka, and Kroenig all acknowledge Russia’s work to promote the NPT regime among the Soviet Union’s former satellite states, but identify different motivations. Gibbons notes that the Soviet Union, and subsequently Russia, played a role in securing the NPT regime regionally, but argues that they were free-riders on nonproliferation efforts made globally by the US. Lanoszka argues that the Russian policy is

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<sup>34</sup> “In other words, France could use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states party to the NPT in case France decided that they were in non-compliance with the NPT, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, and/or the Chemical Weapons Convention. What is unclear is whether the other condition would apply: a threat to France’s vital interests.” Gen. Bernard Norlain and Marc Finaud, “Why France Still Rejects No First Use,” No First Use Global, Jan. 13, 2022, <https://nofirstuse.global/2022/01/13/why-france-still-rejects-no-first-use/>

<sup>35</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 44:1 (2020):21.

<sup>36</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” 3-35, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” 17.

<sup>39</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” 21.

<sup>40</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” 24.

<sup>41</sup> Ven Bruusgaard, “Russian Nuclear Strategy and Conventional Inferiority,” 26.

<sup>42</sup> Lieber and Press, “The End of MAD?: The Nuclear Dimension of US Primacy,” *International Security*, 30:4 (2006), 7-44.

consistent with the need of NPT supporters to provide security guarantees to those whom it seeks to convince to adhere to nonproliferation. Kroenig's analysis differs in assuming that all superpowers alike will adopt the offensive realist stance by upholding the NPT regime to retain their military capability to project power and influence. He contrasts each superpower's unique sphere of military influence. He concludes that whereas China, France, the United Kingdom, and Russia's regions of influence have been and remain limited, the US is the one nation with a global military projective force.<sup>43</sup> Hence the US is the one state that is singularly committed to enforcing the NPT on all other nations.<sup>44</sup> Kroenig counters the argument referred to as political relationship theory, which holds that superpowers support proliferation among allied countries, and reject proliferation among non-allied states. A case in point is China, which explicitly supported indiscriminate and widespread proliferation in the 1960s in order to limit US force projection.<sup>45</sup>

However, the Chinese case demonstrates a logic of action that is at odds with a nuclear posture of escalation dominance and coercive nuclear escalation. The Chinese nuclear weapons posture is inconsistent with offensive realism and the use of nuclear weapons to project power to support national interests and coercive bargaining. China's 300 nuclear warheads are not on alert status, abide by an NFU stance, and are maintained to uphold a guaranteed second strike against nuclear attack. From the historical background of China's development of nuclear weapons and the declaration made after the successful first nuclear test, it can be seen that the 1967 government declaration explicitly stated that the People's Republic of China (PRC) conducted nuclear tests and developed nuclear weapons out of necessity due to the nuclear threat posed by nuclear-armed countries after World War Two.<sup>46</sup> China's possession of nuclear weapons serves defensive purposes, to protect the Chinese nation from nuclear threats.<sup>47</sup> This point is further confirmed by its neutral stance on the North Korean nuclear issue.<sup>48</sup> China's neutral position and its understanding of North Korea's security concerns leads its leaders to believe that a country actively develops nuclear weapons due to the impact on its own security, which aligns with the PRC's background in developing nuclear weapons.<sup>49</sup> China's North Korea stance contradicts Kroenig's argument that superpowers seek to deny proliferation among states in their domains of influence in order to maintain their force-projection capabilities.

China seeks to continuously expand the establishment of nuclear-free zones.<sup>50</sup> This can be seen through its signing of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.<sup>51</sup> China aims to form the largest possible nuclear-free zone in the Asia-Pacific region, specifically in its neighbouring regions. The PRC also aims to involve the main five nuclear-weapon states (United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China) in establishing nuclear-free zones in

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<sup>43</sup> Kroenig, "Force or Friendship?" 12.

<sup>44</sup> Kroenig, "Force or Friendship?" 32.

<sup>45</sup> Kroenig, "Force or Friendship?" 13.

<sup>46</sup> Sun Xiangli, "The Development of Nuclear Weapons in China," in *Understanding Chinese Nuclear Thinking*, Li Bin and Tong Zhao, eds. (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016): 79-101, 81-82.

<sup>47</sup> Hui Zhang, "China's Perspective on a Nuclear-Free World," *The Washington Quarterly* 33:2 (2010): 139-155.

<sup>48</sup> "Wang Yi talks about the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue: The United States should face up to and address North Korea's reasonable concerns," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, 3 July 2021, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjzbzd/202107/t20210703\\_9137566.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjzbzd/202107/t20210703_9137566.shtml).

<sup>49</sup> Zhang, "China's Perspective on a Nuclear-Free World."

<sup>50</sup> Fan Jishe, "Nuclear Nonproliferation: China's Thinking and Practices," in *Understanding Chinese Nuclear Thinking*, 193-218.

<sup>51</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Weimin responded to reporters' questions on the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, 20 November 2011, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt\\_673021/dhdw\\_673027/201111/t20111120\\_5432385.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/dhdw_673027/201111/t20111120_5432385.shtml).

Southeast Asia and Central Asia.<sup>52</sup> Some countries in Southeast Asia are not only adjacent to China but also border the South China Sea, and the security and stability of Southeast Asia are directly related to China's national security and economic interests.<sup>53</sup> Preventing other major nuclear powers from deploying nuclear weapons in Southeast Asia safeguards the security and stability of China and even the Asia-Pacific region. Thus the Chinese nuclear security policy offers security by linking NPT adherence to positive security guarantees, which resonates with Lanoszka's thesis.

Thus, since at least the 1980s, having adopted a policy of flexible response and calculated ambiguity, the US and NATO have led the world in perpetually threatening the possibility of nuclear war.<sup>54</sup> The Russian and Chinese policies are arguably more restrained by focusing on the goal of guaranteed second-strike retaliation and deterrence of existential threats to state survival.

Standing back and looking at the role that nuclear deterrence, and the role of maintaining credible nuclear threats against nonnuclear attacks, reveals a security puzzle: why do those nations with nuclear weapons, and which have powerful conventional forces, or are in alliances with nations with such capabilities, require the threat of nuclear retaliation on a first-use basis, while the remaining nations have no such guarantees?

For the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, and by implication NATO, the most powerful conventional alliance, to insist that they need the threat of first use of nuclear weapons to deter potential adversaries raises the question why other, much weaker nations, confronted by hostile neighbors, do not need them as well. Moreover, a U.S. and NATO first-use policy against, in effect, conventional, chemical and biological weapons suggests that nuclear weapons have many useful military roles.<sup>55</sup>

Thus the US, and NATO by implication, threaten non-nuclear states with first nuclear use, and US has done so explicitly, as for example in 2001 against Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Syria.<sup>56</sup>

The 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty holds that “all member states except the five declared nuclear powers...agreed to not develop nuclear weapons in exchange for access to peaceful nuclear technology, and the promise of eventual disarmament” (12). In this bargain, non-nuclear weapons states agree to forgo the benefit of the security of wielding nuclear weapons enjoyed by nuclear weapons states, and “in exchange agree to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals.”<sup>57</sup> Thus it is puzzling that Gibbons remarks that “To the consternation of the United States, the majority of NPT members back a treaty that bans nuclear weapons for all states, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” (26). Supporting disarmament is part of the bargain struck in encouraging, or coercing, states to abide by the NPT. Gibbons does discuss in concluding pages of *Hegemon's Toolkit* the fact that the future success of the NPT may require that the nuclear states at a

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<sup>52</sup> “The Chinese delegation attended the 10th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 3 August 2022, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjbxw\\_673019/202208/t20220803\\_10732768.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjbxw_673019/202208/t20220803_10732768.shtml).

<sup>53</sup> Aileen SP Baviera, “China's Relations with Southeast Asia: Political-Security and Economic Interests,” Philippine APEC Study Center Network Discussion Paper 99-17 (1999): <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/faculty/tamvu/documents/Baviera.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Lieber and Press, “The End of MAD?”; Lieber and Press. “The New Era of Counterforce: Technological Change and the Future of Nuclear Deterrence,” *International Security* 41:4 (2017): 9-49.

<sup>55</sup> Jack Mendelsohn, “NATO's Nuclear Weapons.”

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Graham Jr, “Book Review: Avoiding the Tipping Point,” *Arms Control Today* 34:9 (2004): [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004\\_11/BookReview](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004_11/BookReview)

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Graham Jr, “Book Review: Avoiding the Tipping Point.”

minimum take some steps toward arms control. However, by looking at how states were willing to acquiesce to the NPT notwithstanding the fact the US did not ratify the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) that was negotiated in 1996, Gibbons does not address this pervasive asymmetry that challenges the United States' efforts to enforce NPT compliance through low and high cost diplomacy, positive inducements, and coercion (46).

## Conclusion

Gibbons successfully argues many of her claims. The US did promote the NPT regime while pursuing its own strategic advantage. It employed a number of tactics, including various diplomatic means, positive inducements and coercive tactics, in order to achieve this aim. As well, Gibbons sets out to overturn conventional hegemonic stability theory that holds that hegemons take on the expense of providing global public goods.<sup>58</sup> She counters by showing that in the case of the NPT, while the US paid the price in resources, it reaped the benefits of maintaining its war fighting nuclear posture while limiting the military capabilities of potential contenders. *Hegemon's Toolkit: US Leadership and the Politics of the Nonproliferation Regime* takes for granted the contributions of the US to a global security order, but does not consider that its NWF posture is a socially constructed choice. After reading this book, it is clear that seeking asymmetric force projection capabilities motivates both the nuclear posture of the US and its insistence on enforcing the NPT regime.

It is possible to endorse a nuclear posture of mutual security that defines a role for nuclear weapons that is restricted to nuclear deterrence against nuclear attacks and conventional attacks that pose existential threats to a nation's survival, but not as tools for coercive bargaining or preemptive strikes. Moreover, the US pursuit of asymmetric advantage through its nuclear warfighting posture and NPT regime currently lacks guarantees of arms control, or even nuclear abolition, and contributes to a global reality of increasing insecurity.<sup>59</sup> This latter point is exacerbated by the documented concern that military control over nuclear weapons does not eliminate the potential for either accidental and inadvertent nuclear detonations, or uncontrollable escalation.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression 1929–1939*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973); Stephen Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," *World Politics* 28:3 (1976): 317-347. doi:10.2307/2009974.

<sup>59</sup> On the strategies of flexible response and escalation dominance as components of nuclear warfighting see Aaron Miles, "Escalation Dominance in America's Oldest Nuclear Strategy," *War on the Rocks*, 12 Sept. 2018: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/09/escalation-dominance-in-americas-oldest-new-nuclear-strategy/>; on the risks of escalation dominance see Michael Fitzsimmons, "The False Allure of Escalation Dominance," *War on the Rocks*, 16 Nov. 2017: <https://warontherocks.com/2017/11/false-allure-escalation-dominance/>; on the linkage between the NPT regime and US military supremacy, see Shane J. Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> Scott Douglas Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton University Press, 1993); Richard Ned Lebow and Benoit Pelopidas, "Facing Nuclear War. Luck, Learning and the Cuban Missile Crisis," in Mlada Bukovansky, Edward Keene, Christian Reus-Smit, and Maja Spanu, eds., *Oxford Handbook of History and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 705-719.

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 Review by Nicholas L. Miller, Dartmouth College
 

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The nuclear nonproliferation regime is one of the most important international regimes in existence. Quantitative study after quantitative study has shown that its centerpiece, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), has helped limit the spread of nuclear weapons—even when we account for factors that make countries likely to join the treaty in the first place.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this, our understanding of how the regime actually works is quite limited. While there are excellent historical works tracing the origins of the regime and its various components,<sup>2</sup> and a voluminous amount of recent research on the effectiveness of various nonproliferation policies,<sup>3</sup> we know much less about how states are convinced to join the various components of the regime.<sup>4</sup>

In *The Hegemon's Tool Kit*, Rebecca Gibbons goes a long way toward filling this void. She argues that American leadership has been the central driving force behind the creation of the regime and its wide adherence. The way in which Washington goes about trying to secure this adherence, and the effectiveness of its efforts, depends on the target country's level of embeddedness within the broader US-led international order. Highly embedded states—those that share many interests and values with Washington—tend to adhere relatively quickly, requiring only low-cost diplomacy; moderately and weakly embedded states require more effort—for instance, material inducements or personal appeals from the White House; while antagonistic states face coercion, which often fails to secure adherence. In contrast to other works on nonproliferation policy,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, “Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51:1 (2007): 167-194; Matthew Fuhrmann, “Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements,” *International Security* 34:1 (2009): 7-41; Philipp Bleek and Eric Lorber, “Security Guarantees and Allied Nuclear Proliferation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58:3 (2014): 429-454; and Matthew Fuhrmann and Yonatan Lupu, “Do Arms Control Treaties Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty,” *International Studies Quarterly* 60:3 (2016): 530-539.

<sup>2</sup> For instance: Mohamed Shaker, *The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Origin and Implementation, 1959–1979* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1980); Susanna Schrafstetter and Stephen Robert Twigge, *Avoiding Armageddon: Europe, the United States, and the Struggle for Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1945-1970* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); Shane Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); William Burr, “A Scheme of ‘Control’: The United States and the Origins of the Nuclear Suppliers’ Group, 1974–1976,” *International History Review* 36:2 (2014): 252-276; Jonathan Hunt, *The Nuclear Club: How America and the World Policed the Atom from Hiroshima to Vietnam* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022); and Elisabeth Roehrich, *Inspectors for Peace: A History of the International Atomic Energy Agency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> See, *inter alia*, Bleek and Lorber, “Security Guarantees and Allied Nuclear Proliferation;” Gene Gerzhoy, “Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany’s Nuclear Ambitions,” *International Security* 39:4 (2015): 91-129; Sarah Kreps and Matthew Fuhrmann, “Attacking the Atom: Does Bombing Nuclear Facilities Affect Proliferation?” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34:2 (2011): 161-187; Nicholas Miller, “The Secret Success of Nonproliferation Sanctions,” *International Organization* 68:4 (2014): 913-944; Lisa Koch, “Frustration and Delay: The Secondary Effects of Supply-Side Proliferation Controls,” *Security Studies* 28:4 (2019): 773-806; Alexander Lanoszka, *Atomic Assurance: The Alliance Politics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); Alexandre Debs and Nuno Monteiro, *Nuclear Politics: The Strategic Causes of Proliferation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Rupal Mehta, *Delaying Doomsday: The Politics of Nuclear Reversal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> A few exceptions to this include Daniel Verdier, “Multilateralism, Bilateralism, and Exclusion in the Nuclear Proliferation Regime,” *International Organization* 62:3 (2008): 439-476; Andrew Coe and Jane Vaynman, “Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime,” *Journal of Politics* 77:4 (2015): 983-997; and Jeffrey Kaplow, *Signing Away the Bomb: The Surprising Success of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

Gibbons emphasizes that “coercion is rare” (3), with adherence primarily driven by US efforts at persuasion or positive inducements.

Beyond helping to fill in an important gap in the scholarly literature, *The Hegemon’s Toolkit* has a number of impressive qualities. It offers a compelling argument that appropriately centers the role of the United States in the nonproliferation regime. In contrast to work that portrays the United States and the Soviet Union as essentially equal partners in presiding over the regime,<sup>5</sup> Gibbons convincingly shows that Washington generally took the lead, particularly when it came to modifying or enhancing the regime. The book also does a service by devoting attention to episodes and countries that have not received much attention in the proliferation literature, for example analyzing Indonesian and Cuban behavior and carefully examining the successful American effort to permanently extend the NPT in 1995. Even in cases that have received sustained scholarly attention, such as Japan,<sup>6</sup> Gibbons offers fascinating new evidence on the decisionmaking process with respect to the NPT in Washington and Tokyo. Finally, compared to other scholarly work in this area, Gibbons is admirably forthright about when cases do not follow her theoretical expectations, which increases the overall credibility of the findings.

While the argument and findings are generally compelling, there are a few areas where I think the argument could be clearer or the evidence stronger. In terms of the argument, as noted above, Gibbons positions her work as showing that coercion is rare, in contrast to prior works on US nonproliferation policy. Yet when I read the empirical chapters, a lot of what I see looks like coercion, even against highly or moderately embedded states, and US policy was often perceived as such by its targets (see, for example, 82, 92, 95, 132, and 137). With Japan, for instance, the US and Canada implied that nuclear technology supplies would be imperiled if Tokyo did not ratify the NPT. With Indonesia, US “pressure” was key in decisionmaking (95), and threats were issued to Egypt and South Africa too. In some cases, coercion may have been implicit rather than explicit, but that is true of much of what goes on in international politics. Gibbons distinguishes “high-cost diplomacy” (22), such as personal appeals from US leaders, from coercion, but it is hard to imagine that target countries would not worry that such an appeal carried an implicit threat of downgrading relations if compliance were not forthcoming. In short, if we accept that implicit or latent coercion are still coercion, then coercion does not look as rare as Gibbons’s argument suggests.

I also thought the evidence could be stronger in chapter 2, where Gibbons seeks to show that “when US administrations view nonproliferation as less important than other strategic goals, the regime will be weakened” (69). This is certainly intuitive, but I was not fully convinced that the evidence demonstrates this. Gibbons convincingly shows, for instance, that both Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan were less committed to nonproliferation and weighed other geopolitical priorities more highly when compared to other presidents. Yet Gibbons does not provide definitive evidence of the *regime* weakening under their watch; instead, she offers evidence that Washington pursued laxer nonproliferation policies in certain cases. Proof that these US policies influenced the regime more broadly would make the argument less tautological. For instance, did Reagan’s turning a blind eye to Pakistan’s nuclear program affect how *other* countries interacted with the regime in a negative fashion? Similarly, when Nixon entered office, did the pace of NPT signature and ratification slow, and then accelerate again under the administrations of Gerald Ford or Jimmy Carter?

Finally, in terms of the policy implications, Gibbons suggests that it is important for the nuclear powers to take “more significant disarmament measures” (176) in order to sustain support for the regime, particularly

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, Coe and Vaynman, “Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime.”

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009); and Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).



since the United States appears to be declining in power, which means that its bilateral carrots and sticks will hold less sway. Yet her research shows that US disarmament efforts were not major factors in prior decisions about adhering to the nonproliferation regime (174). It is not totally clear why we should expect this to change going forward, even if US relative power is on the wane.

Despite these quibbles, *The Hegemon's Tool Kit* is an essential contribution to our understanding of the nuclear nonproliferation regime, with important lessons for scholars and policymakers alike.

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 Review by Michal Onderco, Erasmus University Rotterdam
 

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In recent years, a growing body of research linking the nonproliferation regime to the role of the United States as a hegemon in the international system has emerged. Scholars have examined the various forms of power employed by the United States to maintain control over the regime,<sup>1</sup> linking the US to pivotal moments in the history of the nonproliferation regime, such as the extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)<sup>2</sup> and the international response to Iran's nuclear program.<sup>3</sup> They have also found that the United States played a crucial role in assuring its allies and dissuading them from developing nuclear weapons,<sup>4</sup> and leading the process of labeling countries that resisted these measures as "rogue."<sup>5</sup> The United States also led the process of reintegrating the formerly "rogue" members after they abandoned their past behavior.<sup>6</sup> To use a metaphor, the United States' fingerprints are all over the nonproliferation regime. Up to this point, however, we knew very little about the mechanics of such efforts. This is where Rebecca Davis Gibbons's *The Hegemon's Tool Kit* fills an enormous gap.

This book is highly commendable for several reasons. Firstly, it is exceptionally well-written and makes for an enjoyable and accessible read for a wide audience. It will be without doubt included in course syllabi. However, there is more to the book than its impressive form.

I greatly admire the book's research design and the methodology applied in it. Gibbons develops an elegant theoretical model of how different levels of American engagement, coupled with various diplomatic carrots and sticks, relate to specific nonproliferation behaviors by both allies and adversaries. She then proceeds to test this model through four major case-studies, in each of them deploying a detailed conceptualization of dependent and independent variables. Establishing causality in social scientific research can be difficult, but Gibbons's research design is rigorous and presents a convincing argument. The four case-studies examine US efforts to establish and promote the nonproliferation regime; co-opt countries into it; extend the NPT; as well as expand the nonproliferation regime into new legal and institutional forms, such as the Additional Protocol or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. This is a significant accomplishment, as the book effectively retells the story of the emergence and functioning of the regime from the viewpoint of Washington over the last 50-plus years. The book combines a number of interviews with key officials with extensive archival research and a deep reading of the secondary literature. The book offers a model on how to conduct historical case-study research.

There are of course aspects which could be improved methodologically. For instance, the interviews should be deposited in a repository and thus made reusable for future generations of scholars. Similarly, a more detailed engagement with some historical materials would have strengthened the book. For example, its deals

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Nick Ritchie, "A Hegemonic Nuclear Order: Understanding the Ban Treaty and the Power Politics of Nuclear Weapons," *Contemporary Security Policy* 40:4 (2019): 409-434; Jan Ruzicka, "Behind the Veil of Good Intentions: Power Analysis of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *International Politics* 55:3 (2018): 369-385.

<sup>2</sup> Michal Onderco, *Networked Nonproliferation: Making the NPT Permanent* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Onderco, *Iran's Nuclear Program and the Global South: The Foreign Policy of India, Brazil, and South Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Francis J. Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition: US Grand Strategy, the Nuclear Revolution, and Nonproliferation," *International Security* 40:1 (2015): 9-46.

<sup>5</sup> Carmen Wunderlich, *Rogue States as Norm Entrepreneurs: Black Sheep or Sheep in Wolves' Clothing?* (Cham: Springer, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Robin Möser, "'The Major Prize': Apartheid South Africa's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1988-91," *The Nonproliferation Review* 26:5-6 (2019): 559-573.

predominantly with archival documents from the United States, and often lacks the perspective of the countries the US tried to persuade. This does not detract from the rigor of the book.

A discussion of the balance between the American side of the story and the role of other countries in the promotion of the NPT would have been of value. The United States is not the only actor in this story. To be fair, Gibbons never claims that the NPT's success is United States' alone. Here and there, she hints that having good allies helps. However, the role of these allies is somewhat hidden in the book. This has quite profound consequences. Consider the importance of the European countries, which often act through the European Union (EU). Without the EU's contribution, the US would have a hard time persuading many countries about the merit of joining the NPT and extending it indefinitely in 1995.<sup>7</sup> If the EU did not join the US in pressuring post-Soviet countries to give up nuclear weapons, the US would have a much harder time persuading countries—Ukraine for example—to go ahead.<sup>8</sup> The EU puts often its money and mouth<sup>9</sup> behind US interests in the nonproliferation regime today because the EU interests to a great degree overlap with those of the United States. And the EU is just the tip of the iceberg. Numerous Global South countries have shaped how the nuclear regime looks like today.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, while pointing out the relevance of the United States is crucial, it is also important to realize that the nuclear nonproliferation regime represents and reflects a broader consensus.

In addition to its scholarly contributions, *The Hegemon's Tool Box* also addresses two ongoing debates in the American and the broader discourse on the nonproliferation regime. The first debate concerns whether the regime needs the United States to survive. Gibbons clearly takes the side of those who argue that without continuous American leadership, the treaty would collapse. She makes this argument in the introduction of the book. This is not an outrageous claim to make, as scholars and policymakers have been debating “the crisis of the NPT” for years.<sup>11</sup> There are two major versions of the argument about the crisis of the NPT. The first one suggests that the treaty is in crisis because of the behavior of nuclear-weapons states (and hence also of the United States) when it comes to the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament.<sup>12</sup> The second version of the argument is that the treaty's demise has been greatly exaggerated but that the treaty might collapse if the United States abandons it.<sup>13</sup> Gibbons's argument clearly falls in the second camp, but her point is that the regime requires active US engagement (hence, more than mere membership) in order to function

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<sup>7</sup> Onderco, *Networked Nonproliferation: Making the NPT Permanent*, chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup> Mariana Budjeryn, *Inheriting the Bomb: The Collapse of the USSR and the Nuclear Disarmament of Ukraine* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Laura Considine, “The Importance of Narrative in Nuclear Policymaking: A Study of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” *EUNPDC Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Paper 72* (2021), <http://www.nonproliferation.eu/the-importance-of-narrative-in-nuclear-policymaking-a-study-of-the-nuclear-non-proliferation-treaty/>.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, the work of Carlo Patti, *Brazil in the Global Nuclear Order, 1945–2018* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021). See also the forthcoming chapter by Jonathan R. Hunt, “Neutral and Nonaligned Nations in the Making of the Postcolonial Nuclear Order,” in Pascal Lottaz and Yoko Iwama, eds., *Neutral Europe and the Creation of the Nonproliferation Regime* (London & New York: Routledge, 2024), 55-81.

<sup>11</sup> A recent paper refers to no fewer than 19 papers published in international peer-reviewed journals in recent years arguing that the NPT is in crisis and on the verge of collapse. See Michal Smetana and Joseph O'Mahoney, “NPT as an Antifragile System: How Contestation Improves the Nonproliferation Regime,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 43:1 (2022): 24-49.

<sup>12</sup> Joeliën Pretorius and Tom Sauer, “Ditch the NPT,” *Survival* 63:4 (2021): 103-24.

<sup>13</sup> Liviu Horowitz, “Beyond Pessimism: Why the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Will Not Collapse,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38:1-2 (2015): 126-158. There are also those who argue that the NPT is not in crisis without addressing possible consequences of the US withdrawal. See, for instance, Miriam Barnum and James Lo, “Is the NPT Unraveling? Evidence from Text Analysis of Review Conference Statements,” *Journal of Peace Research* 57:6 (2020): 740-751.

successfully. In doing so, she brings a new angle to this debate by suggesting that the regime (seemingly) needs a leader because it has always had one. Path dependency is a plausible explanation.

The second and related policy-relevant message in this book is a plea to the American policy elite to not abandon the nonproliferation regime and to continue investing in it. At times when different factions of the US foreign policy establishment are considering ideas of radical realignment of US foreign policy, this is not an insignificant concept. Gibbons' book presents a simple but powerful proposition: that if the US believes that the spread of nuclear weapons is a bad idea (which seems to be an overwhelming consensus, with a few exceptions, such as the late Kenneth Waltz<sup>14</sup>), then investing in an international regime to that effect is a wise decision. Gibbons provides ample historical evidence that the cost of maintaining such a regime is not only manageable, but also relatively low.

In writing this review in 2023, it is tempting to connect the book to the two major challenges facing US leadership in the nonproliferation order. The first one is the Russian war in Ukraine. The "orderliness" of the nonproliferation order in recent decades has also depended on the idea that nuclear weapons are a last resort and their use is only possible in the most extreme circumstances.<sup>15</sup> Russia has shattered this image by making numerous, repeated, thinly veiled or unveiled nuclear threats. The response of the US and its allies to such threats has been to reject them as unacceptable. But can the regime survive when one of its leading members<sup>16</sup> threatens another upstanding member with catastrophic violence for the sake of territorial gain? It is probably too early to say, but we will be fortunate if the answer is affirmative.

The second challenge is the growing normative rejection of nuclear weapons, as reflected by the growing membership in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This growing normative rejection has the potential to directly threaten America's alliances, which rely on nuclear deterrence. The moral case against nuclear weapons is simple and, *prima facie*, compelling (though this does not necessarily mean it is correct). When the NATO secretary general states that "the nuclear rhetoric is...reckless,"<sup>17</sup> it becomes more difficult to make case for an alliance backed by the nuclear deterrent. The humanitarian normative case against nuclear weapons, in which the US currently stands on the "evil" side of the barricades, threatens America's leadership. But thus far, we have not seen any viable alternative to such leadership. The member states of the TPNW have been unable to condemn Russia's nuclear threats, creating questions as to whether they are willing to put their money where their mouth is.<sup>18</sup>

All of these debates make for somewhat alarming news for the world. One positive effect is that this book will be read, discussed, disagreed with, and possibly even updated with new chapters in future editions. *The Hegemon's Tool Kit* deserves all of that attention.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better* (London: Adelphi Papers; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981); Waltz. "Why Iran Should Get a Bomb." *Foreign Affairs* 91:4 (2012): 2-5.

<sup>15</sup> This reading is of course idealized. Nuclear weapons cause a tremendous amount of violence in their development, testing and carry an enormous potential for violence. Thanks to their enormous destructive potential, they are also "used" even if they exist "merely" in the background.

<sup>16</sup> William C. Potter and Sarah Bidgood, eds., *Once and Future Partners: The US, Russia, and Nuclear Non-proliferation*, Adelphi Paper (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Courtney Weaver, "Nato's Jens Stoltenberg Warns Russia of 'Severe Consequences' if It uses nuclear weapons," *Financial Times*, 2 October 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/36ca9f0b-d287-47ac-8944-36171dbd9a10>.

<sup>18</sup> Jamie Kwong, "How Disagreements over Russia's Nuclear Threats Could Derail the NPT Review Conference," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 2022, accessed 8 September, 2022, <https://thebulletin.org/2022/07/how-disagreements-over-russias-nuclear-threats-could-derail-the-npt-review-conference/#post-heading>.

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 Review by Tom Sauer, Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium
 

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Historians with an interest in the nuclear non-proliferation regime should definitely read *The Hegemon's Toolkit*. As the title implies, Rebecca Gibbons's objective is to show that US leadership was needed for the creation and maintenance of the global nuclear regime. She rejects alternative explanations of security-related arguments (fear of horizontal proliferation and extended nuclear deterrence);<sup>1</sup> domestic politics and in particular economic-related arguments (which are better known as the Solingen model);<sup>2</sup> and norms.<sup>3</sup> The author argues that the main explanation for the success of the regime was and remains the role of the US as the benign hegemon—the ideal father of the family—that keeps an eye on the other members of international political society, and intervenes (diplomatically) whenever and wherever needed. She also describes *how* the US does this by making use of low-cost diplomacy, high-cost diplomacy, positive inducements, and coercion (17-22).

Gibbons looks at three periods: the creation and entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s; the battle for the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, twenty-five years after its entry into force; and the promotion of the Additional Protocol (AP) to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system in the second half of the 1990s. She does so by looking into detail to a few specific countries: Japan, Indonesia, and Egypt (for the three periods), to which Cuba is added for the first period, and South Africa for the 1995 episode, which makes up for eleven cases in total. While it is clear why South Africa and Cuba are absent in respectively the first and second period, their absence in the third case is striking as both *have* signed up for the AP. The reader is left with the question of whether these states adhered to the AP for other reasons than pressure by the US. Case selection was done on the basis of the extent that the countries were embedded within the overall US-led global ordering project: with Japan being very much embedded and Cuba at the other extreme. The author logically concludes that the more embedded the state is, the easier it is for the US to convince them to join the US-led non-proliferation order.

The book's treatment of current and future nuclear proliferation is questionable in terms of how the regime is assessed in terms of effectiveness and for the explanation behind the book's main research question. First, the author's basic assumption is that the NPT and the global nuclear nonproliferation regime as a whole are “a success” (1). In this regard, it is common to compare the current number of nuclear-armed states with the expectation of the Kennedy administration that the number of nuclear-armed states could have grown to 15 or 20 in 1975, which is Gibbons's starting point as well. A more critical (scientific) approach would be more effective. President John F. Kennedy's expectations could have been exaggerated for domestic political reasons. And even if the Kennedy administration in fact feared so many new nuclear-armed states, why should these expectations now still be the standard? Instead of looking to expectations, behaviorists should limit themselves to facts. In this case, one can note that there were five (or six) nuclear-armed states before the NPT, and that since then—despite the existence of the NPT—four (to five) more states went nuclear. If

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Miller, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of US Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020); Andrew Coe and Jane Vaynman, “Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime,” *Journal of Politics*, 77:4 (2015): 983-997.

<sup>2</sup> Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Saunders, “The Domestic Politics of Nuclear Choices: A Review Essay,” *International Security* 44:2 (2019): 146-184.

<sup>3</sup> Maria Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

the standard is that each additional nuclear-armed state is problematic, then the regime has failed. That stands in contrast to the starting-point of the book.

Second, one can question Gibbons's main thesis that US leadership kept the nuclear nonproliferation regime going and that it continues to do so. At the end of the book Gibbons hints at an alternative for the future: "US relative decline, the diffusion of power around the globe, and the weakening of US alliance relationships mean the regime faces a difficult future" (176). The book therefore may be good at describing the management of the nonproliferation regime by the US in the past. However, given that the world is changing dramatically, the book's thesis is less relevant today, and for the future.

The author's main thesis is that the US did most of the heavy lifting with respect to convincing reluctant states to adhere to the rules of the regime in the past, and successfully so. One wonders whether this conclusion corresponds to the description of the case-studies. Seven of the eleven cases show indeed that the US was able to influence these non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS). One case—the ratification of the NPT by Cuba in 2002—is, however, open to criticism. According to Gibbons, the main reason why Cuba announced in September 2002 to ratify the NPT was the combination of a threatening speech four months earlier by President George W. Bush's appointee Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs John Bolton on the so-called possession of biological weapons by Cuba and the indirect US threat of attacking countries with weapons of mass destruction such as Iraq. There is, however, no clear evidence for this argument. The source<sup>4</sup> that Gibbons refers to provides also another explanation that is not mentioned in the book, namely the fact that Cuba had energy problems at that time and had decided to explore the possibilities of nuclear energy. In addition, Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado explains that an American scientific commission that went to Cuba in October 2002 did not find a biological weapons program.<sup>5</sup> If the conclusions of this commission are correct, the Cuban government knew that the Bush administration had no basis for launching an attack against the country and probably did not feel that it was under pressure to change its nuclear policy. This may not be a very convincing argument, as the US did attack Iraq in 2003 on the basis of flawed evidence; that said, that attack had not yet taken place when the Cuban government changed its mind on the NPT. More fundamentally, as Gibbons notes, three of the case-studies clearly show that the US did not succeed in convincing those states (Indonesia and Egypt in 1995, and Egypt again with respect to the AP). At a minimum, US hegemonic power was not ubiquitous. One wonders in how many other cases (that are not dealt with in the book) the hegemon failed.

From a broader perspective, there are three reasons why the overall thesis of the book should be nuanced. First, while Gibbons suggests that nonproliferation policy was a priority for most US administrations, the evidence suggests otherwise. Nonproliferation is just one—rather limited—objective of US foreign policy. The size of the nonproliferation desk in the State Department is relatively small. The budget available for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (that included the nonproliferation desk) in 1998, for instance, was \$35 million.<sup>6</sup> More importantly, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, an interagency department, was eliminated by the Clinton administration in 1999, as Gibbons mentions. The fact that nonproliferation was not regarded as a priority can also be anecdotally distilled from declarations of US experts. For instance, on 10 February 1992, Stephen Walt, who in his scholarship does not adopt the "the more, the better" approach of Kenneth Waltz, wrote a letter to then-member of Congress Les Aspin, who the year after would become

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<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado, "Cuba and the Nonproliferation Regime: A Small State Response To Global Instability" *Nonproliferation Review* 10:3 (2003): 24-33.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin-Alvarado, "Cuba and the Nonproliferation Regime," 29.

<sup>6</sup> Compare that to the \$400 million for the Cooperation and Threat Initiative, the \$400 million of the On-Site Inspection Agency, let alone the \$7.5 billion for the Strategic Nuclear Forces. See Stephen Schwartz, *Atomic Audit: The Costs and Consequences of U. S. Nuclear Weapons Since 1940* (Washington DC: Brookings institute, 1998).

the first secretary of defense in the Clinton administration. Walt wrote, “this means that the US will have to learn to live with more nuclear weapon states in the future. Fortunately, I don’t think we will find this too uncomfortable or dangerous.”<sup>7</sup>

This attitude, whether realist or cynical, may have been the standard position of the US bureaucracy throughout the Cold War as well. To outside observers, the bureaucracy of course had to appear as if it did everything it could do to stop proliferation. Reality may have been different. The question is whether Gibbons’s analysis is critical enough of US policy. Gibbons acknowledges that the Nixon (and to lesser extent the Ford) administration was “an anomaly” (44) as it was less interested in making nonproliferation a priority. One could also say the same of the Trump administration, as well as that of George W Bush. It may be that the Kennedy and Obama administrations were anomalies. In short, the argument that nonproliferation was a high priority in US foreign policy, as the author posits, is not proven here.

Second, the book would have been improved had it addressed the extent to which the US has done enough to prevent states from acquiring nuclear weapons or, worse, why the US has indirectly supported nuclear weapons programs of other states.<sup>8</sup> Obviously, there is no evidence that the US actively helped states to acquire nuclear weapons, certainly not after the conclusion of the NPT. That said, there are examples of where the US has helped other states at least in an indirect way to acquire nuclear weapons, such as the UK and India, and there are clear cases where the US was aware of a secret nuclear weapons program in other states without having intervened in a meaningful (coercive) way to prevent that state from acquire nuclear weapons, such as Israel and Pakistan. The *Atoms for Peace* program that was initiated under the Eisenhower administration is a good starting point. Gibbons notes that the Soviet leaders were at that time afraid that the program could lead to weapons proliferation, and adds, “rightly so it turned out” (38).

It is generally known that there are linkages between the US nuclear weapons program and the one in the UK. British (and Canadian) scientists were involved in the Manhattan Project. The US McMahon Act (1946) halted further collaboration with foreign scientists, but the damage was done. Also, Gibbons notes that the Act “helped spur the United Kingdom’s independent nuclear weapon program” (37). In 1968, the US also helped the British with the Polaris sea-launched ballistic missile program. Similarly, the US has supported India, at least in an indirect way. Gibbons explains: “*In a failure of imagination*, US and Canadian leaders had not anticipated that poorer states like India could develop nuclear weapons when they provided New Delhi—and many others—with nuclear technology and material” (7, my emphasis). Whether this was “a failure of imagination” is doubtful. The US could have known that know-how in the civilian nuclear sphere could be used for a military program. Also, the US-India deal by the George W. Bush administration was criticized by nonproliferation experts for going against at least the spirit—if not the letter—of the NPT.<sup>9</sup> As for Israel, Gibbons states that “the United States was not aware of the extent of the program in the 1960s” (28). Avner Cohen’s argument in *Israel and the Bomb* (1998)<sup>10</sup> is more nuanced. In an interview with the Atomic Heritage Foundation, Cohen describes the non-written deal between Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and US President Nixon in 1969 as follows: Israel promised not to test and to continue say that it would not be the

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<sup>7</sup> House Armed Services Committee, *Shaping Nuclear Policy for the 1990s: A Compendium of Views* (Report of the Defense Policy Panel of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 102d Congress, 2d session, 17 December 1992), 608.

<sup>8</sup> Benoît Péloupas even argues that the US has been the biggest nuclear proliferator. See Benoît Péloupas, *Repenser Les Choix Nucléaires : La Séduction de l’Impossible* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2021), 72-80.

<sup>9</sup> Sharon Squassoni, “The US-Indian Deal and its Impact,” *Arms Control Today*, July 2010, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010-07/us-indian-deal-its-impact>.

<sup>10</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

first to introduce nuclear weapons in the region. “In return, the United States would look the other way, and would no longer press Israel to sign the NPT.”<sup>11</sup>

Regarding Pakistan, Gibbons argues that pressure on Pakistan halted once the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979. According to Ruud Lubbers, the Dutch minister of economic affairs in the 1970s and prime minister thereafter, however, the CIA had already asked the Netherlands in the mid-1970s not to extradite Abdur Qadeer Khan, an employee of Uranium Enrichment Company (URENCO) in the Netherlands who had stolen secret information about uranium enrichment and more in particular gas centrifuges<sup>12</sup>. Khan later became known as the father of the Pakistani atomic bomb. He also opened a kind of Walmart for states (like North Korea, Iran, and Libya) that had nuclear aspirations.<sup>13</sup> South Africa successfully pursued a clandestine nuclear weapons program despite pressure from the US (57). Gibbons also concedes that the Reagan administration turned “a blind eye to many of the nuclear-related procurements made by the Iraqis” (60) since Iraq was involved in a war with Iran at the same time. By carrying out counterproliferation wars like the one against Iraq in 2003, the US indirectly stimulated North Korea to test and deploy nuclear weapons, according to Gibbons (67). All in all, the US was unable, and sometimes even unwilling, to prevent seven out of the nine other successful nuclear weapons programs (including South Africa). Even taking into account the fact that the US was successful in preventing proliferation in most of the cases that are mentioned in the book and, in addition, in those that are not dwelled upon like South Korea and Taiwan (and maybe others), it is not clear that these examples point to “US leadership.”

Third, if the US is the main driver behind the NPT, then it is also responsible for the deal that stipulates that the non-nuclear weapon states promised never to acquire nuclear weapons on the condition that the nuclear-armed states would get rid of their nuclear weapons in turn (under Article VI of the NPT). Most NNWS are known to be currently unhappy with the speed of nuclear disarmament, given that more than 50 years after the entry into force of the NPT there are still 12,000 nuclear weapons in existence.<sup>14</sup> That frustration, which Gibbons discusses, translates itself in regular failed NPT Review Conferences as well in the negotiation and conclusion (in 2017) and entry into force (in 2021) of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Here, the argument is seemingly contradictory. On the one hand, Gibbons argues “that although many states express concern over the lack of fairness in the regime, the United States and its allies have often been able to overcome these concerns and persuade states to adhere to the nuclear nonproliferation regime in cases in which the nuclear-armed states have done little to make the regime appear more fair or just” (31-32). This seems to suggest that the NPT will hold firm, should the US and its allies retain their persuasive abilities, despite the frustrations on behalf of the NNWS. The consequence of this logic, although she does not say so explicitly, may be that the nuclear-armed states will never eliminate their nuclear arsenals and that we have to live with nuclear weapons, just like the recommendation of the Harvard group in the 1980s.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, at the end of the book Gibbons notes that that perception about the NPT could start to change in the future: “It may be the case that over time, as disarmament progress is deemed too slow or nonexistent, the

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<sup>11</sup> Cohen, interviewed by Alexandra Levy for *Voices of the Manhattan Project*, The Atomic Heritage Foundation, 30 May 2018, <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/voices/oral-histories/avner-cohens-interview/>.

<sup>12</sup> Argos, “Waarom Washington de Pakistaanse atoombom niet tegenhield (Why Washington did not Prevent the Pakistani Atomic Bomb),” HUMAN—VPRO (podcast), 25 March 2005, <https://www.vpro.nl/argos/media/luister/argos-radio/onderwerpen/2022/Waarom-Washington-de-Pakistaanse-atoombom-niet-tegenhield.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the A.Q. Khan Network* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Kmentt, *The Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons: How It Was Achieved and Why It Matters* (London: Routledge, 2021) esp. Part 1.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Carnesale, Paul Doty, Samuel Huntington, Joseph Nye, and Scott Sagan, *Living with Nuclear Weapons* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).



regime will be affected by this perceived unfairness. In other words, the NPT and the broader regime may appear less fair over time” (173). Other scholars already now argue that the many failed NPT Review Conferences and the creation of the TPNW indicate that the current regime has already been affected by this perceived unfairness, which may indeed have further substantial negative consequences for the NPT in the future.<sup>16</sup> In sum, whether the US hegemon can continue to uphold the NPT is far from clear.

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<sup>16</sup> Joelen Pretorius and Tom Sauer, “Is it Time to Ditch the NPT?” *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 6 September 2019 (online): <https://thebulletin.org/2019/09/is-it-time-to-ditch-the-npt/>; Pretorius and Sauer, “Ditch the NPT,” *Survival* 63:4 (2021): 103-124; Pretorius and Sauer, “When Is It Legitimate to Abandon the NPT? Withdrawal as a Political Tool to Move Nuclear Disarmament Forward,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 43:1 (2022): 161-185.

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Response by Rebecca Davis Gibbons, University of Southern Maine

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I deeply appreciate S.M. Amadae, Nicholas Miller, Michal Onderco, and Tom Sauer for taking the time to thoughtfully engage with my book. Thank you to Campbell Craig for his efforts in organizing this roundtable and writing the introduction.

As the scholars in this roundtable address several disparate points in their reviews, I will respond to each in turn. I begin with the review of Nicholas Miller, whose work on nuclear nonproliferation has inspired my own research. I see *The Hegemon's Tool Kit* as expanding on many of the themes in his important book, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of US Nonproliferation Policy*.<sup>1</sup> I appreciate his judgement that my book fills a gap in the literature in helping us better understand how the nuclear nonproliferation regime works in practice.

In his feedback, Miller notes that although the book claims that coercion is rare in nuclear nonproliferation diplomacy, he sees several instances of US coercion within the empirical evidence. I take Miller's point that even diplomatic requests from high-level US officials are likely read as coercive attempts by their target. When I developed the categories of tools that I highlight in my book, I distinguished the efforts that I saw in the archival documents from coercion in the forms of threats or use of sanctions and force. But, as Miller indicates, these less-public examples do have a coercive effect as well. Were I to re-conceptualize these tools, I might distinguish between public and private coercion. It is probably more accurate to theorize that many of the tools are indeed coercive, but that Washington limits the use of public coercion to low-embedded states or antagonistic states. Coercive behavior against more embedded states occurs in private, and would likely not require public threats such as sanctions.

Next, Miller wonders if it is in fact true that US presidents' lax promotion of nuclear nonproliferation led to the weakening of the regime. This is a good question. The two US administrations that I cite for their weaker nuclear nonproliferation regime efforts are those of Richard Nixon, and to a much lesser extent, Ronald Reagan. First, I would argue that had Nixon supported US ratification of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) during President Lyndon Johnson's lame duck period, it might have helped spur other countries, including Japan, to pursue quicker ratification. The evidence also suggests Japan may have joined the NPT sooner had there been a higher level of direct interest from Nixon and Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. At the time, Japan's position on the NPT was perceived as influential to other states, so a more timely ratification by Tokyo could have contributed to other states considering NPT ratification sooner. The Nixon administration also had a close relationship with Indonesia; though we cannot not know for sure, it is at least plausible that a strong request from Nixon may have led Jakarta to ratify before 1979. Thus, if we argue that the NPT is weaker when fewer states are members (and fewer states have International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] safeguards in force), then it seems logical that the regime was weaker because of Nixon's lack of interest.

Reagan supported the nuclear nonproliferation regime to a much greater extent than Nixon. His administration continued President Jimmy Carter's efforts to promote the universalization of the NPT. My primary argument about Reagan's weakness in this area involves the context of the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, particularly during Moscow's conflict in Afghanistan. In prioritizing the Soviet threat,

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas L. Miller, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of US Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

Reagan put concerns over Pakistani proliferation on the backburner. The administration also put less emphasis on Iraqi proliferation during the Iran–Iraq war.

Finally, I will address Miller’s third point, related to my disarmament-related policy recommendation. Within the empirical evidence I collected for the book, I find little evidence that promises by the NPT’s five nuclear weapons states (NWS) to disarm led to greater adherence to the regime. Why, then, would I include a policy recommendation that the NWS take disarmament more seriously now? I made this recommendation because I find it hard to imagine that the nuclear nonproliferation regime can continue to change and adapt without the NWS making more material progress toward their Article VI commitment to disarmament. Perhaps these states were less inclined to push for disarmament during the Cold War. But throughout the post-Cold War period, calls for disarmament have only increased, culminating in the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017. In other words, I do not necessarily see my finding about the lack of connection between disarmament and adherence to the NPT as static; the historical evidence may not reflect what will happen in the future. There are, of course, many reasons for all states to support the NPT. But with increasing frustration over disarmament, it seems less likely that the membership will be able to come together and cooperate to address challenges to the regime and to create adaptations to the regime when needed. I also would argue that, with changing power dynamics, the United States will likely have less ability to counter this frustration as it has in the past.

I appreciate Michal Onderco’s kind words in his review and the time he has taken to consider my work. I have benefited greatly from his research on the 1995 extension of the NPT, especially his book, *Networked Nonproliferation: Making the NPT Permanent*.<sup>2</sup> I wholeheartedly agree with his comments about the value of a repository of interviews (something he has been able to do for the good of our field through his oral history work with the Woodrow Wilson Center). Despite my best efforts, I found it difficult to find officials and former officials who were willing to be identified and quoted directly on the record. This is a challenge of qualitative research, and yet in this case, I found the trade-off between transparency and evidence to be worth it.

I fully agree with Onderco’s argument that the United States is not the only player in this story. Though I point out that other actors were important, especially allies like the many states within the European Union, I could have made this case more strongly. Onderco is correct that European countries were especially important to the indefinite NPT extension in 1995. Moreover, I appreciate the point that the “nuclear nonproliferation regime represents and reflects a broader consensus.” Indeed. Though the United States possesses a greater strategic interest in preventing horizontal nuclear proliferation than many other states, the majority of states in the international system benefit from the regime and support it. Even as some nuclear-armed states have claimed the TPNW will weaken the nuclear nonproliferation regime, it is notable that TPNW parties routinely argue that the new treaty is complementary to the NPT.<sup>3</sup>

On Onderco’s point about current debates, I would argue that the nuclear nonproliferation regime does not need the United States per se, but it needs a powerful backer that can bring other states to the table to increase membership, forge adaptations when necessary, and enforce the regime’s rules. To date, Washington

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<sup>2</sup> Michal Onderco, *Networked Nonproliferation: Making the NPT Permanent* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2023)

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Rebecca Davis Gibbons and Stephen Herzog, “The First TPNW Meeting and the Future of the Nuclear Ban Treaty,” *Arms Control Today*, September 2022, [https://www.armscontrol.org/edition/september-2022\\_](https://www.armscontrol.org/edition/september-2022_)

has been the great power that has been most willing to play this role. Increasing multipolarity challenges these efforts, as Stephen Herzog and I argue in a recent article.<sup>4</sup>

In her review, S.M. Amadae writes that she largely agrees with the findings of the book. Her intervention focuses on US nuclear force posture, writing that the book’s “analysis is consistent with the United States’ adopted nuclear warfighting (NWF) posture of escalation dominance and flexible response.” I found this to be a thought-provoking idea. I would argue, however, that a superpower promoting the NPT for strategic reasons could find a variety of nuclear force postures consistent with their interests. For instance, there are those in the United States, including former policy makers, who argue in favor of a no-first-use (NFU) or sole purpose declaratory policy for the United States and support a strong nuclear nonproliferation regime. These are hardly mutually exclusive. There is no clear reason why promoting nonproliferation would by default equate to a drive for nuclear superiority, nor do all scholars agree that the United States maintains a nuclear war fighting posture.

Amadae writes, “Gibbons argues that the US NPT regime makes the world a safer place because it encourages a rule-bound world led by US values and western security interests.” I disagree with this characterization of the book’s argument and also do not believe that the United States has ownership over the regime. The book does not claim that every US-promoted rule makes the world safer or that the world is safer because the nuclear nonproliferation regime is consistent with Western security interests. Instead, I argue that the world is better with fewer nuclear-armed states, and that the NPT has contributed to dampening interest in proliferation. Moreover, there is broad consensus among the majority of the world’s states about the value of the NPT, and several non-Western and non-aligned states were active in drafting the treaty and securing its extension.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Tom Sauer’s review requires several clarifications. Sauer writes that the book’s “objective is to show that US leadership was needed for the creation and maintenance of the global nuclear regime.” That point is not quite right, as this book is a work of social science. My aim was to better understand variation in adherence to elements of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. With this topic in mind, I conducted empirical research, reading hundreds of archival documents and secondary sources and interviewing scores of current and former government officials. Based on the evidence, I concluded that the United States has been the most important single actor in creating, promoting, and adapting the regime. Nowhere in the book is the United States referred to a “benign hegemon” or “the ideal father of the family,” which are Sauer’s terms.

Sauer dismisses the John F. Kennedy quotation in my introduction—“Personally I am haunted by the feeling that by 1970, unless we are successful, there may be 10 nuclear powers instead of four, and by 1975, 15 or 20” (1)—by arguing that I cannot claim the nuclear nonproliferation regime is effective just because the proliferation fears of the 35th president did not come to pass. However, I did not make this claim. Kennedy’s expectation is simply an illustrative example representing the many leaders and analysts in the early nuclear age who expected that most technologically capable states would eventually develop nuclear weapons. It frames my argument, which is based upon a great deal of empirical research that is outlined in the references section. The first footnote in Miller’s review lists several examples of peer-reviewed scholarship finding that the NPT has decreased proliferation pressures.<sup>6</sup> I would add to this list the recent book by Jeffrey Kaplow,

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<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Davis Gibbons and Stephen Herzog, “Durable Institution under Fire? The NPT Confronts Emerging Multipolarity,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 43:1, (2022): 50-79.

<sup>5</sup> See for example, Pascal Lottaz and Yoko Iwama, eds., *Neutral Europe and the Creation of the Nonproliferation Regime: 1958–1968* (London, UK: Routledge 2023), as well as Onderco, *Networked Nonproliferation*.

<sup>6</sup> Miller cites Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, “Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51:1 (2007): 167-194; Matthew Fuhrmann, “Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear

*Signing Away the Bomb: The Surprising Success of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime*, in which he demonstrates through different methodologies how the regime has reduced nuclear proliferation.<sup>7</sup>

Sauer's publications question the effectiveness of the NPT and advocate for states to exit the NPT in order to stop providing legitimacy for the nuclear-armed states' weapons.<sup>8</sup> This argument is, however, missing the "critical (scientific) attitude" in overlooking that the utility of the NPT has been established firmly in the existing scholarly literature. From the pragmatic perspective, the action that Sauer advocates in a coauthored article—that a large group of states in good standing with IAEA safeguards who are members of the TPNW or a nuclear-weapon-free-zone walk away from the NPT to stigmatize the nuclear-armed states<sup>9</sup>—will not have the effect of pushing disarmament forward. Moreover, despite frustration over disarmament progress, the NPT remains in states' interests. The NPT and its safeguards provide confidence that other states are not proliferating, and the treaty provides for the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, which has important uses for all states in the areas of agriculture, medicine, and energy. The world that Sauer's publications advocate is one with less nuclear transparency, more nuclear suspicions, and likely less civilian nuclear trade.

There is little in the scholarship to support Sauer's definition of the NPT's "failure" (i.e., there are now four more nuclear weapons states than when the NPT was negotiated in the 1960s). I would argue that a better starting point is that over 30 states pursued nuclear weapons in some capacity and there are 9 nuclear weapon states today.<sup>10</sup>

I am sympathetic to frustrations over the NPT. Many states who joined thought the possession of nuclear weapons would be temporary, and yet, over fifty years later, the five declared nuclear-armed states continue to rely on nuclear weapons, and have plans to do so well into the future. Nonetheless, I disagree that states exiting the NPT will improve the situation and that the "risk of proliferation in our estimation is limited."<sup>11</sup>

Later Sauer writes that "the book therefore may be good at describing the management of the nonproliferation regime by the US in the past. However, given that the world is changing dramatically, the book's thesis is less relevant today, and for the future." I agree. In fact, I make this point explicitly in the conclusion (169). Changing power dynamics are potentially detrimental to the regime. Yet, understanding the past, as many scholars try to do, is a valuable exercise and provides insights for future policy making. Shall we no longer theorize about past historical instances that may not apply to the future? There is much value in studying history and understanding the process of regime-building.

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Cooperation Agreements," *International Security* 34:1 (2009): 7-41; Philipp Bleek and Eric Lorber, "Security Guarantees and Allied Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58:3 (2014): 429-454; and Matthew Fuhrmann and Yonatan Lupu, "Do Arms Control Treaties Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty," *International Studies Quarterly* 60:3 (2016): 530-539.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey M. Kaplow, *Signing Away the Bomb: The Surprising Success of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Joellen Pretorius and Tom Sauer, "Ditch the NPT," *Survival* 63:4 (2021): 103-124; Joellen Pretorius and Tom Sauer, "When Is It Legitimate to Abandon the NPT? Withdrawal as a Political Tool to Move Nuclear Disarmament Forward," *Contemporary Security Policy* 43:1 (2022): 161-185.

<sup>9</sup> Pretorius and Sauer, "Ditch the NPT," 177-178.

<sup>10</sup> Philipp C. Bleek, "When Did (and Didn't) States Proliferate? Chronicling the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," Discussion Paper (Cambridge, MA: Project on Managing the Atom, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Monterey, CA, June 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Pretorius and Sauer, "When Is It Legitimate to Abandon the NPT?" 180.

Sauer's review is also critical of the book's case-study on Cuba, with Sauer arguing that "there is no clear evidence" that fear of US coercion affected Cuba's decision to join several nonproliferation agreements in the fall of 2002. It is extremely rare for a state to openly admit to making policy due to capitulation to external pressure, especially when that pressure comes from a longstanding adversary. It is highly unlikely that researchers will unearth a document in the Cuban national archives in which leaders record that they were joining several nuclear nonproliferation agreements at once in the fall of 2002 after resisting this move for over three decades because they were worried their adversary to the north may be willing to take military action. Sauer cites the fact that, at the time, a US commission did not find biological weapons in Cuba as a reason for why my explanation does not hold, when at the same time inspectors also failed to find weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq. That failure to find evidence did not stop the US invasion. It is difficult to believe that a similar lack of evidence would have prevented the Bush administration from coercing Havana.

In 2002, at the same time the US government was accusing Iraq of maintaining clandestine WMD programs and thus planning for an invasion, the US government accused Cuba (another adversary) of having a secret bioweapons program. In the same year, Cuba joined several nonproliferation agreements and waived its right to avoid inspectors through a "small quantities protocol" because, according to one former IAEA official, Cuba wanted to maximize transparency. Cuba subsequently conducted civil defense drills in the following months, as the US was preparing to invade Iraq in March 2003. Sauer's statement that I omit the case of Cuba's conclusion of the Additional Protocol, when Cuba concluded that agreement at the same time as the NPT, is incorrect. This episode is included in the NPT chapter on page 108.

Moreover, I would note that social-science theories are often probabilistic. The book does not argue that in every case the United States was able to persuade states to join nuclear nonproliferation agreements. But in many cases, Washington was able to persuade states to join, and was the key actor in adapting and expanding the regime. One can disagree with the NPT and many instances of US foreign policy; this is entirely fair. But in social science, we must follow the data, even if we do not like the conclusions.

I sympathize with concerns over the lack of fulfillment of the NPT's Article VI commitment to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament by the NPT's five nuclear weapons states. Seeking a way to make progress on Article VI was a motivating factor among the more than 100 states that negotiated the TPNW in 2017. The book does not dispute that. What *The Hegemon's Tool Kit* does find, however, is that in previous cases, disarmament progress was not necessary to achieve US nonproliferation goals. But the book does not say the United States will be able to serve this role in perpetuity. In fact, the book argues that geopolitical trends could weaken the nonproliferation regime.