The theory is put to the test in a series of succinct and well-crafted case studies: interwar Britain and France; France from 1877 to 1913 (which is divided into two parts, 1877–98 and 1898–1913); and the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70) launched by Paraguay against the much stronger countries of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. In the cases of interwar Britain and France, and France between 1877 and 1898, domestic incoherence resulted in underbalancing against the threat posed by Germany. Conversely, in pre–World War I France, and Paraguay during the middle to late 1860s, domestic coherence resulted in optimal balancing against Germany, in the former case, and an aggressive war of expansion against the internally divided regional powers of Argentina and Brazil, in the latter case.

Schweller's theory is not only compelling but also impressive in scope. Not only does it explain "variation across space and time in state responses to threats" (p. 47), but it also explicates the conditions under which states will be most likely to engage in opportunistic aggression. Most broadly, it accounts for the relative decline in frequency of interstate aggression since the golden age of the European balance of power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, owing to the gradual replacement of highly coherent absolute monarchies with more pluralistic and inclusive polities. This insight segues into a fascinating discussion of the only major exceptions to this historical trend, the fascist powers of post–World War I Germany, Italy, and Japan. According to Schweller, these regimes were only able to achieve a level of internal coherence comparable to the great powers of early modern Europe by infusing their realpolitik with a virulent racist ideology.

Inevitably, like all other ambitious and important works, *Unanswered Threats* raises some critical questions and comments. First, Schweller's theory of underbalancing is cumbersome, comprising four independent variables, which are then incorporated into five causal schemes, some of which proceed to incorporate additional intervening variables drawn from the fields of sociology and motivational psychology. This raises the question of whether the author has sacrificed too much theoretical parsimony in the pursuit of excess explanatory leverage.

Second, Schweller does not provide clear coding rules for his theory's independent variables, which makes them difficult to operationalize in new cases. For example, with regard to the elite consensus/disagreement variable, how would one code the U.S. political elite on policy toward the USSR during the Cold War? For much of this period, a broad political consensus existed in favor of pursuing a grand strategy of containment toward the Soviet Union. However, bitter disagreements repeatedly emerged both within and between the two major political parties on the precise tactics that should be used in the pursuit of that strategy.

Third, the sole empirical evidence Schweller delivers of prudent and effective balancing is French policy vis-à-vis Germany in the years immediately preceding World War I. This case is somewhat troublesome, though, since France's military doctrine at the time was offensive and provocative in orientation, not defensive, and therefore likely contributed to the outbreak of war.

Finally, there appears to be a contradiction between Schweller's theory and some of his evidence. On the one hand, it posits that the more internally coherent the state, the more likely that state will be to respond effectively to threats and opportunities presented by the international system. On the other hand, however, the author introduces as empirical evidence the cases of Paraguay during the War of the Triple Alliance, and, in the book's concluding chapter, the twentieth-century fascist states. All of these cases consist of highly coherent autocratic states attempting to buck the international system by engaging in reckless overexpansionism. This evidence suggests that rather than being most apt to engage in prudent and self-preserving balancing behavior, the most coherent states have been inclined to pursue the opposite course of imprudent and self-destructive aggression. Conversely, those great powers that, over the long term, have been most adept at balancing power and least susceptible to overexpansion are the considerably less-coherent—but geopolitically blessed—liberal democracies of Britain (excepting the middle to late 1930s) and the United States.

In sum, *Unanswered Threats* represents a significant contribution to the burgeoning theoretical paradigm of neoclassical realism, whose works share in the belief that domestic political factors serve as critical intervening variables between the pressures and opportunities generated by the international system, and states' foreign policy responses to those pressures and opportunities. In it, Schweller identifies a critical gap in the explanatory power of structural realism, and proposes an intriguing theory incorporating various domestic political variables to fill that gap. However, his theory of underbalancing is problematic insofar as it sacrifices a considerable amount of theoretical rigor in the effort to account for variant state responses to rising threats, even as it continues to leave unanswered the pivotal question of which states will be most likely to engage in prudent and effective balancing behavior. Thus, the book is a formidable first cut on the salient topic of underbalancing, but will likely not be the final one.

Deterring America: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

By Derek D. Smith. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 197p. $75.00 cloth, $24.99 paper.

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— James J. Wirtz, *Naval Postgraduate School*

By the early 1990s, scholars and policymakers alike began voicing reservations about the ability of deterrence

strategies to counter nuclear, chemical and biological arsenals as these weapons proliferated into the hands of state and nonstate actors. Some observers doubted if it was technically feasible to create credible deterrent commitments given the possibility that there might be no significant targets in the opposing camp to hold at risk, that potential opponents were irrational or suicidal, or that it might be impossible to identify the culprits who launched the attack itself (e.g., the origins of an epidemic might never be identified). Others doubted the strategic wisdom of relying on deterrence, given that the costs of policy failure were potentially catastrophic. And, as the September 11 terrorist attacks demonstrated, overwhelming military superiority cannot deter or defend against terrorist cells that are willing to sacrifice themselves to achieve their objectives. Because of the inherent limitations of deterrence, many suggested that preventive war and preemption were the best way to deal with rogue states and terrorist organizations that were acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

As Derek Smith demonstrates in this concise monograph, the theoretical and policy debate about proliferation, deterrence, preventive war, and preemption can now be assessed using recent counterproliferation efforts (the Israeli attack against Iraq's Osirq reactor, Gulf Wars I and II, the global war on terror and the ongoing North Korean proliferation crisis). Smith focuses on the interaction between the United States and Iraq and North Korea to offer conclusions about the effectiveness of deterrence, preventive war, and preemption in dealing with the proliferation of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. He does an outstanding job of describing the theoretical, moral, and legal concerns that animate debate about responses to the proliferation menace and the well-known pitfalls of embracing preventive war as the primary response to the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Smith makes fine use of the new literature on deterrence that has emerged since the end of the Cold War, a literature that is skeptical about the universal applicability of a single strategy to meet the variety of threats that populate the contemporary strategic landscape.

Smith's history offers a mixed assessment of the contemporary effectiveness of current strategies for dealing with WMD. The U.S. military failed to deter a WMD-armed Iraq from invading Kuwait, and a global international coalition was unsuccessful in its effort to compel Saddam Hussein to give up Kuwait without a fight, or to comply with the terms of the first Gulf War cease-fire by cooperating fully with the United Nations Special Commission. Iraq's possession of WMD and then suspected possession of WMD also failed to deter an international coalition from twice attacking Baghdad. Both of the Bush administrations and the Clinton administration were unwilling to tolerate an Iraq armed with WMD and undertook more than a decade of sustained military and diplomatic efforts to disarm Saddam Hussein. Smith also suggests that North Korea has been more successful in terms of deterring a preventive war, but that observation presupposes that various American administrations had reached the conclusion that they were unwilling to live in a world in which Pyongyang possessed a nuclear capability. It is hard to disagree with the author's conclusion, however, that U.S. compellent strategies have so far failed to gain North Korean's acceptance of its proper place in the nonproliferation regime.

Smith's analysis and policy prescriptions are primarily intended to address the dilemma created by international law, especially Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which takes a dim view of preventive war and preemption. If theorists and policymakers are sometimes attracted to preventive war, preemption, and aggressive counterproliferation (i.e., military attack) to eliminate nascent WMD arsenals, international law applies a break to these policies. Smith suggests that international law is often behind the times, especially when it comes to emerging technology and the social and strategic threats that follow in its wake, and that new international law and organizations need to be created to outlaw the possession and transportation of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. He suggests that a global "quarantine" against WMD, based upon existing laws of the sea and international maritime conventions, can help contain the threat in an effective, sustainable, and legal way. Once the threat that nonstate actors might acquire WMD is reduced, the international community can build a more ambitious regime to roll back the proliferation menace.

Deterring America offers an outstanding overview of recent counterproliferation efforts and contemporary thinking about the usefulness of deterrence in dealing with the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. Smith is correct to suggest that international law and various international regimes need to be strengthened immediately to reflect the fact that individuals and non-state actors have no right to possess, traffic in, or use chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and that governments everywhere have an obligation to stop this kind of activity with every means at their disposal. In a sense, George W. Bush's Proliferation Security Initiative is a positive first step in creating a more effective regime to police international trade and communication networks. But it also is important to remember that existing international law gives states the right to respond to attack and that the war against Al Qaeda is unaffected by many of the moral and legal dilemmas identified by the author. The ongoing fight against Al Qaeda and its minions is not a preventive war. Under these circumstances, preemption against terrorists is simply a good tactic, especially when the alternative is to risk costly attacks against civilian targets.