

***Detering America: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*** by Derek D. Smith. Cambridge University Press, 2006, 197 pp., \$24.95.

The George W. Bush administration sold the Iraq War primarily on the grounds that Saddam Hussein's acquisition of nuclear weapons would pose an unacceptable threat to the United States. The White House portrayed the Iraqi dictator as an undeterrable madman lusting to attack the United States and its allies. "Simply stated," declared Vice President Cheney during the run-up to the war, "there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us."

We now know, of course, that Saddam had no WMD, much less a functioning nuclear weapons program. But he clearly wanted nuclear weapons. Why? Why do countries like Iraq, North Korea, and Iran seek to acquire nuclear weapons? Because the likes of Saddam Hussein, Kim Jong-Il, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are suicidal maniacs? Or because they believe nuclear weapons will enhance their security? Indeed, might they seek nuclear weapons to *deter* attacks by the *United States*? And if this is the case—that rogue states seek nuclear weapons for defensive rather than offensive purposes—then what is the justification for preventive US military action against such states? To render rogue states defenseless against US aggression?

"Without a strong understanding of the varying motivations behind rogue state development of WMD," contends Derek Smith in *Detering America*, "a standardized response to proliferation runs the risk of not disarming the most dangerous states, or attempting to disarm those better left alone." Indeed, the "United States seems to be moving toward a strategic outlook wherein rogue state WMD possession alone is an unacceptable security threat." If so, then the United States has bought into "a recipe for perpetual conflict—an endless string of . . . Iraqi Freedoms."

Smith rightly argues that there are good reasons "to maintain a healthy skepticism toward deterrence." After all, he points out, deterrence is at root a psychological phenomenon requiring "a particular state of mind on the part of the opponent" and an opponent "may simply not understand, fully register, or believe a particular threat." The object of deterrence may have a much greater stake at hand and propensity to run risks, may trap itself into a commitment it cannot break without unacceptable loss of face, or may seek destruction for its own sake.

So far, presumption of rogue-state undeterrability—in contrast to the difficulties of deterring fanatical nonstate actors like al-Qaeda—commands little evidence. Nor does the proposition that rogue-state WMD possession alone can deter the United States. Smith examines the Iraqi and North Korean cases and finds that Iraq's possession (or presumed possession) of WMD did not deter the United States from attacking Iraqi forces in Kuwait in 1991 or from invading Iraq itself in 2003; whereas the United States, for a variety of reasons, most of them having nothing to do with Pyongyang's WMD, rejected war against North Korea during the nuclear proliferation crises of 1993–94 and 2003–06. Among those reasons

were uncertainty over Pyongyang's nuclear intentions, North Korea's capacity to wreak enormous conventional military destruction on South Korea, and (in the second crisis) America's preoccupation with the Iraq War. Pyongyang's acquisition of nuclear weapons was simply not worth a major war on the Korean Peninsula (with potentially very destructive global financial and economic consequences), especially in the absence of any evidence that North Korea was exempt from the grim logic of nuclear deterrence.

Smith believes that continued nuclear proliferation is inevitable but that the United States should seek to retard and contain it where possible. He believes preventive war is a very costly insurance policy that is as likely to provoke proliferation as it is to curb it, although he does not entirely rule out preventive force. His guidelines for exercising preventive force include an assessment of the risk tolerance and values of the target state, estimates of US interests in the region, an examination of the likelihood of success of a military attack, and a reckoning of the probability and potential consequences of target state retaliation. Absent publicly stated criteria for action, preventive force threatens to become self-defeating. As Smith notes,

The Bush Doctrine is a modern iteration of a historic line of thought justifying anticipatory action, but one that thus far lacks a foundation of articulated standards, however imprecise. Failure to provide any genuine restraints on offensive notion of self-defense will likely generate a backlash among targeted states. Fearful that their security depends on a favorable American assessment of their peaceful intentions, many states will probably prefer to embrace WMD for deterrent purposes, exacerbating the U.S. security dilemma.

Are there effective counterproliferation alternatives to preventive war? Smith examines export controls, missile defenses, and passive defenses and finds them all useful but inadequate. He proposes bolstering the existing counterproliferation regime through the establishment of a United Nations-sanctioned global quarantine against the transfer of WMD that would treat them "as international contraband, permitting search and seizure when there is reasonable suspicion of their presence." The quarantine system would require an integrated framework of initiatives—a strengthened International Maritime Organization, a broadened UN Security Council mandate against WMD proliferation, and the employment of the Proliferation Security Initiative as the enforcement mechanism—"supplying both the legal foundation to establish a global norm against WMD proliferation and the needed capabilities to carry out interdiction missions." Smith recognizes that his interdiction strategy relies heavily on intelligence capabilities and plain luck but believes that "a global quarantine offers a middle-ground approach with the best matching of ends and means. To avoid leaving interdiction to the United States alone, and to forestall more drastic disarmament measures, the world community should join together and draw a clear line in the sand, on the water, and in the air forbidding all forms of WMD transfer."

*Deterring America* is an insightful reassessment of deterrence in an age of rogue-state acquisition of WMD and offers imaginative proposals for more effective counterproliferation. It masterfully blends theory, history, and prescription into

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a persuasive case for new thinking about one of the most dangerous challenges of our time.

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