

Joseph F. Pilat, Nathan E. Busch. *Routledge Handbook of Nuclear Proliferation and Policy*. New York: Routledge, 2015. xxiv + 521 pp. \$245.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-415-87039-9.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

In the *Routledge Handbook of Nuclear Proliferation and Policy*, Joseph F. Pilat and Nathan E. Busch set out to provide a “clear-eyed examination of the range of [proliferation] threats, challenges, and opportunities facing the international community” as a first step toward “an integrated, multi-tiered response” (p. 5). They have certainly succeeded.

The volume is impressive in terms of its comprehensiveness. It consists of thirty-five chapters, which the editors divide into three core sections. The first section contains a thoughtful chapter on the Obama administration’s assessments and policies, and a series of chapters on country- and region-specific nonproliferation challenges. The second section, which accounts for roughly half of the book, contains nineteen chapters about tools with which the international community could potentially address the (perceived) threats outlined in the first section. This section is further divided into subsections titled “The Nonproliferation Regime,” “Deterrence, Counterproliferation, and the Use of Force,” and “Arms Reduction and Disarmament.” The final section focuses on challenges stemming from the production of nuclear energy, including both political and technical challenges as well as challenges from aspiring countries and non-state actors.

One can safely write of almost any similarly expansive volume, this one containing contributions by forty-two authors (seven of the chapters are coauthored), that the chapters are “generally good though of uneven quality.” Reviews of edited books frequently seem to write themselves. When I agreed to review this book, I imagined that my review would consist of such unremarkable and anodyne insights. Surely, I thought, the significant disparity in experience among the contributors, from relatively junior analysts to leading authorities within their fields, would lead to chapters of greatly uneven quality. Instead, I encountered chapter after chapter of consistently high value.

The volume is tightly and expertly edited, with a wide range of contributors. Insights are not limited to any one discipline or to views from a particular country or region. Rather, authors range from lawyers to engineers and hail from the United States, Europe, Asia (East Asia and South Asia), and the Middle East. This is altogether appropriate, since understanding proliferation and how to respond to it is inherently an interdisciplinary endeavor. As one might expect from the emphasis on policy in the book’s title, contributions are largely from think tank analysts and from current and former practitioners.

Individuals who in recent years have achieved a level of prominence for their historical

and theoretical scholarship on the bomb are, by contrast, largely absent from the list of contributors to this volume. It has been frequently said in recent years that a “renaissance” in the study of nuclear politics and history is taking place within the academy.[1] One sees a handful of references to research by a few of these cutting-edge scholars in this volume, such as Jacques Hymans, Francis Gavin, and Malfrid Braut-Hegghammer, but citations of others are absent.[2] This is striking since many of these scholars express desire to “bridge the gap” between academia and the policy world. For whatever reason, little evidence of this “renaissance” seems to have found its way into this policy-oriented handbook.

This volume belongs in every university library. Fortunately, the paperback edition is inexpensive enough that individual practitioners and scholars should also be able to afford a copy. University faculty who teach about nuclear weapons in advanced undergraduate or master’s level courses will find this handbook useful in a variety of ways. High-quality edited volumes are, as one colleague of mine put it, “pure gold” for teachers who wish to add a reading on a given topic without overburdening their students. I assigned Laura Rockwell’s chapter, “The IAEA and International Safeguards,” to master’s students in my interdisciplinary elective, *The Politics of Nuclear Weapons*. Though a few of my students complained that the chapter was too dense, I am unaware of a better, equally concise overview of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its history. Teachers (and many students) will appreciate the concision with which the contributors get to the heart of complex issues. Course developers will benefit from reviewing the volume to identify gaps in their syllabi and in search of insights to incorporate in their lectures.

I highly recommend it.

Notes

[1]. See, for instance, Jonathan Hunt, “CISAC at Forefront of a Nuclear Renaissance,” Center for

International Security and Cooperation, October 27, 2014, <http://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/news/cisac-fellows-forefront-nuclear-renaissance> (accessed June 14, 2017).

[2]. Such scholars include Matthew Fuhrman, Todd Sechser, Vipin Narang, Matthew Kroenig, Nicholas Miller, and many others.

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