



Mehran Kamrava, ed. *The Nuclear Question in the Middle East*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. xi + 297 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-932780-5.

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Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East

In 2006 and 2007, a series of Middle Eastern states unexpectedly announced renewed interest in developing nuclear power plants to generate electricity for water desalination and other needs. The announcement occurred in the context of Iran's continuing standoff with the international community over its nuclear program—a standoff that continues to this day. The situation led to many dire predictions of a nuclear cascade in the region with fears expressed over potential new clandestine nuclear programs occurring under the cover of these new and allegedly peaceful programs. Five years later, little has changed since the splashy announcements. Iran continues to defy the international community and abide by its obligations as a Non-Proliferation Treaty signatory; the United States and its Gulf partners have set about building an integrated missile defense system to shoot down Iran's missiles; and several states (the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia) have started work on nuclear programs under the auspices of agreements with Western suppliers.

One thing, however, has notably changed since 2006 and 2007—the emergence of changed domestic political dynamics throughout the region as a result of the Arab Spring. What do these changed dynamics mean for nuclear proliferation? This is the question addressed in Mehran Kamrava's edited volume, *The Nuclear Question in the Middle East*. Assembling some of the academy's foremost scholars on nuclear proliferation, the book takes a renewed look at the region's nuclear dy-

namics that takes into account the changed domestic politics since 2011. What results is an updated and in-depth analysis by the top experts in the field that marries prevailing proliferation theories with fine-grained empirical analysis.

Scholars and analysts have devoted considerable attention to the general question of what causes states to build or not build nuclear weapons. The arguments can be boiled down into two distinct schools of thought: variations of realist international theory that emphasize factors external to the state which argues that states build these weapons to protect themselves and to increase their power as a way to favorably influence the behaviors of friends and enemies; and a series of arguments that emphasize factors internal to the state that draw on several different theories. Some researchers point to the explanatory power of constructivist theories that emphasize the role of identity, domestic politics, and cultural and normative factors that shape how states view proliferation issues. Others point to the critical role that individual leaders and/or bureaucratic politics can play in the decisions on nuclear proliferation. Two of the best recent works that cover these various schools are edited volumes by William Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanov, *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century: The Role of Theory* (2010), and *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century: A Comparative Perspective* (2010).

A strength of *The Nuclear Question in the Middle East* is the degree to which the authors build on variations

of these theories to examine their particular issue. Etel Solingen and Maria Post Rublee both focus primarily on internal factors in addressing proliferation consideration in their respective chapters. Solingen draws on the analytical framework in her critically acclaimed book *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (2007) to examine the nuclear issue in Iran and Egypt. She argues that a blend of domestic political factors and leadership perceptions of the regional environment drive political decision making in each of these cases. Rublee, author of another seminal work in the field, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (2009), interestingly emphasizes the role of individual actors to deconstruct the dynamics of nuclear decision making in Egypt and Libya.

The volume devotes three chapters to the development of peaceful nuclear energy programs in the Persian Gulf. Giacomo Luciani, Thomas Lippman, and Mari Luomi all take on different aspects of these programs in interesting and comprehensive ways. Luciani argues that the development of nuclear energy programs in the Gulf makes perfect sense given the pace and growing diversity of economic development and that economic—not military considerations—are driving the interest of the Gulf Cooperation Council states in nuclear energy. Saudi expert Lippman similarly contends that economic considerations, including the need for desalinated water, are driving the kingdom down the path toward development of nuclear energy. Lippman presents evidence suggesting that the al-Saud will almost certainly neither build nor acquire a nuclear weapon in response to Iran achieving some sort of nuclear capability. He persuasively argues that the disincentives to Saudi Arabia—the U.S. relationship and the need and desire of the regime for global integration—mitigate against Saudi Arabia developing nuclear weapons. His argument usefully avoids the hyperbole and hysteria surrounding Saudi Arabia as a nuclear proliferation candidate. Luomi focuses on the nuclear power program in the United Arab Emirates and concludes that the prestige factor figured prominently in the decision by the Al Nahyans (the rulers of the United Arab Emirates) to proceed with a nuclear power program. Together, the three essays present a comprehensive treatment of nuclear issues in the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

The remaining four chapters take on programs in individual countries (Israel, Turkey, and Iran) as well as an analysis of the prospects for a regional nuclear free weapons zone by Gawdat Bahgat. Mustafa Kibaroglu's

piece on Turkey chronicles the difficulties faced by Ankara in pursuing a nuclear program due to lingering suspicions in supplier states over its ultimate motivations. Avner Cohen, author of the authoritative *Israel and the Bomb* (1999), tackles the responses to the origins and evolution of Israel's doctrine of nuclear opacity in his chapter—a doctrine that has become all but irrelevant in the modern era. Kayhan Barzegar concludes in his essay on the Iran nuclear program that all of the explanatory models on nuclear proliferation are relevant. The Iranian program has been deeply affected by the country's history in the Iran-Iraq War, the evolving regional environment, threat perceptions of the ruling elite that have been tied to the Islamic revolution, domestic politics, national economics, and issues of national identity. Barzegar persuasively argues that all of these factors have at various points played important roles in the country's nuclear program.

If there is a central conclusion to this excellent collection of essays it is that both internal and external factors play important roles in helping to explain why states do or do not pursue nuclear programs. One size does not fit all and each case must be seen as unique and different. This is a central problem in the field of proliferation studies, however, in which scholars often are determined to assert the strength of one explanatory theoretical framework over another. This volume demonstrates the folly of such a claim.

The book does not necessarily provide a definitive answer to the impact of the Arab Spring on nuclear issues in the Middle East. Indeed, these changes may take a generation or more to unfold, and the principal political actors involved may take different views over time of the role or lack thereof of nuclear programs in their particular states. Consideration of nuclear issues are likely to be of secondary importance while the struggle for political power and authority unfolds across the region over the decades ahead. That does not take away anything from the breadth and depth of the essays in this volume, which speak directly to the proliferation issues that will remain at the forefront of regional security for the foreseeable futures. The collection is strongly grounded both theoretically and empirically and provides students and scholars alike with a comprehensive set of essays to analyze the diverse sets of nuclear issues across the region. The volume almost certainly represents an important and enduring contribution to our understanding of these complex issues.

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