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## The Second Nuclear Age,

George H. Quester

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protective declaratory policy. Current U.S. security assurances, including the “no first use” negative-security assurance of 1978 concerning the Non-Proliferation Treaty, serve its interests well.

Low numbers of nuclear weapons would affect the international security environment and American presidential policies. First, a limit of two hundred nuclear weapons almost certainly would necessitate targeting population centers rather than military facilities. Such a strategy violates international law. Second, the United States must understand the impact such a reduction would have on allies to whom it extends nuclear protection. These countries can and likely would develop nuclear weapons on their own; proliferation as a result of destroyed confidence in American nuclear deterrence is not in the nation’s best interest. Third, other powers may conclude that they can and should make the investment in nuclear weapons to match the United States. Today, they have little chance of succeeding.

The authors harp on the “hair trigger” readiness (alert) status of U.S. nuclear weapons without explanation that launch on warning is only one presidential option. The United States has already removed strategic bombers and dual-capable aircraft from alert, detargeted ballistic missiles, removed nuclear capability from carriers and surface ships, and improved technical means to ensure against unauthorized firing or use of nuclear weapons. Russia has taken similar measures to dealert selected forces. However, none of these measures are unequivocally verifiable. There are no magic wands for foolproof verification. Moreover, in a dealert world, a crisis could trigger the most precipitous, dangerous arms race to realert that the world has ever

seen—highly destabilizing and potentially disastrous.

Finally, the real issue is not just numbers of nuclear weapons, “no first use,” alert status, or verification but the preservation of the peace between international entities that might resort to warfare if the calculus did not involve nuclear weapons. From 1600 to 1945, wartime casualties of civilian and military personnel generally varied between 1 to 2 percent of the world’s population (2.6 percent in World War II). After 1945 the casualty percentage dropped significantly, and since about 1953 has consistently remained near 0.1 percent. Nuclear weapons have been a key aspect of the preservation of peace between superpowers for the last five decades. The United States must fully understand the impact on American leadership of any new arrangement before it trashes what has proven to benefit world democracy and freedom.

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Gray, Colin S., *The Second Nuclear Age*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999. 193pp. \$45

Readers of Colin Gray’s earlier works will not be disappointed by this new book, nor will his critics be surprised by his conclusions.

Gray argues that the end of the Cold War does not mean that nuclear weapons can be eliminated or forgotten. This book is indeed valuable for noting, and taking to task, the wide variety of academic trends and fashions that have drawn such optimistic conclusions since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. Gray ably points to the many ways in

which nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction will continue to cast a shadow over international relations, even if no single superpower confronts the United States as a possible enemy.

Gray certainly claims to be in step with rapidly changing events, while cautioning us against the missteps of others. Even while he asserts that the role of nuclear weapons will be substantially different in light of all that has happened in the years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Gray, by stressing a *second* nuclear age, emphasizes that such weapons will still be very important.

However, one suspects that most of the advice offered here, now that the Cold War is over, is not really so different from the advice the author was offering during the Cold War, advice that did not have much influence on policy. Gray states that anti-missile defense is necessary, not merely desirable. Yet was not his message earlier that such defenses were desirable, almost to the point of being necessary?

Gray says that deterrence is not always reliable—the same message he often advanced with regard to the Soviet Union. He notes that the American advantage in conventional weapons, in conjunction with the enthusiasm over a “revolution in military affairs,” may be transitory and illusory; however, during the Cold War he believed that the advantage in conventional warfare rested with Moscow.

Gray scoffs at the analyses that emphasize preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, suggesting instead that such proliferation may be inevitable—a condition rather than a problem. But in the old days of the Cold War, Gray was ready to argue that one should not make too much of the Soviet-American cooperation

in pushing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; such a joint interest was not nearly so important as the issues that divided Washington and Moscow—and they were dire.

In short, Colin Gray’s book may be right on many of the points it raises, but it is misleading to advertise it as heralding something so new as a “second” nuclear age.

As always, Gray displays a broad awareness of the contemporary literature, set against a deep familiarity with history. But notwithstanding Gray’s critical analysis of the foibles of those who prematurely think that any “nuclear age” has come to an end, his own prose at times comes across as wordy and convoluted, and his message has not changed.

In sum, the book might amount to what could have been said as well in one of the author’s journal articles.

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Bracken, Paul. *Fire in the East: The Rise of Asian Military Power and the Second Nuclear Age*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999. 186pp. \$25

The incorporation of Asia into the Western-dominated international system is critical for the United States. At present, the United States is reacting to events in Asia instead of shaping them. This is the fundamental message of *Fire in the East*, an important book by Paul Bracken of Yale University.

Asia, extending from Israel to North Korea, has become increasingly visible since the end of the (primarily Eurocentric) Cold War. Discussions of Asian strength, however, have been flawed. Japan has struggled economically for ten years, and