

# BOOKS

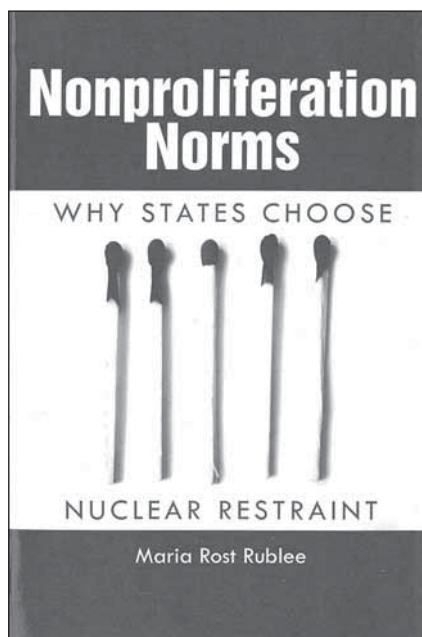
## NONPROLIFERATION NORMS: Why states choose nuclear re- straint

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*Published by:* University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA, 2009, 296pp, US\$64.95 (hb), US\$22.95 (pb).

More than 60 years after the detonation of the first nuclear device over the sands of New Mexico, there are still only nine states that have nuclear weapons. That leaves around 180 states that do not, including a substantial number that could have developed a nuclear arsenal but have not done so. Why is this? With all the focus on North Korea and Iran (and to a lesser extent Syria), Dr Rublee sets out in *Nonproliferation Norms* to analyse the behaviour of states that actually choose restraint and attempts to explain their policy choices. It is a fascinating project and the result is an extremely readable and illuminating account of the factors that contributed to a decision against developing a nuclear arsenal in a selected group of states, who had all earlier seriously considered such a programme (or had actually begun it). To some degree it may be thought that the details of the policy determinants in each case are specific to the state concerned and, thus, not applicable in a general way. On the other hand, the case studies provide a kind of 'item bank' of considerations that proved decisive in the particular cases and may thus be of value in resisting proliferation in other cases.

Notwithstanding the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan has several times in its post-war history considered the acquisition of a nuclear arsenal, beginning with its response to the Chinese nuclear test of 1964. More recently, the question has returned with the period-



ic nuclear crises on the Korean Peninsula. But, despite the fact that Japan has all it would need to make nuclear weapons, it has not done so. Rublee's explanation for this is multi-faceted. Many Japanese are seriously committed to the quasi-pacifist national constitution and, of course, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki experience continues to be a strong driver of anti-nuclear sentiment. Pushing in the same direction is a strong international norm, to which Japan, as a major player in international affairs, is very sensitive. At the level of unsentimental security assessment, the continuing extension of the United States nuclear umbrella is also a significant factor, although if this were to change it is arguable that realist considerations might trump the national anti-nuclear 'norm', notwithstanding Japan's unique experience.

The case of Egypt is very different. It does not have the same indigenous anti-nuclear drivers and there are reasons for believing that the Egyptian public would have supported nuclear weapons development. Indeed, recent surveys have shown that Egyptians support the nuclear programme of Iran. It is also the case that Egypt is confronted by a nuclear capable

adversary (Israel), against whom it has already lost four wars. So why, then, has Egypt not (to this point) seriously considered developing a nuclear arsenal? Rublee's answer seems to turn on a subtle calculation by the Egyptian leadership that Egypt's interests would be better served by a strong attachment to international institutions and the non-proliferation norm. In this way it could put moral pressure on Israel and secure financial support (particularly from the United States) to develop the national economy. This consideration intersects with another case that Rublee considers: that of Libya. Here, there was an on-going nuclear weapons programme on which vast amounts of money had already been spent, but the long-time Libyan leader, Muammar al-Qaddafi, nonetheless changed his view. Perhaps influenced by his son, he abruptly renounced his 'bad-boy' behaviours (support for terrorism, the nuclear weapons programme) in search of international co-operation in the development of the Libyan economy.

The other cases that Rublee discusses are Sweden and Germany, both of which seriously considered the need for nuclear weapons in the light of the threat posed by Soviet Russia in the early years of the Cold War. Both states also went on to develop substantial and sophisticated civilian nuclear capability but, at the same time as they did this, they developed a strong anti-nuclear weapon position, which enjoyed considerable public support. It is also worth noting that Germany (and before that, West Germany) was a member of the North Atlantic Alliance and, as such, came under the NATO nuclear umbrella; indeed, it had substantial nuclear weaponry stationed on its territory.

These few details from Rublee's comprehensive account underline the point made earlier about the plethora of variables: the character of the political regime; the security environment; regional history; state of technological development (and particularly nuclear technology) and the actual personalities of the leaders (Qaddafi makes the decision to begin a nuclear weapon programme and to end it). And when we extend our focus to states of present proliferation concern (North Korea, Iran, Syria) we see yet further variations. What factors might drive decisions for, or against, the acquisition of nuclear weapons (or persistence with an existing programme) in the case of highly-personalised leadership in an unreformed communist dictatorship with nothing to lose, or in an Islamic theocracy with uncertain lines of authority?

### Notes on reviewers

Dr Ron Smith is Director of International Relations and Security in the University of Waikato's Department of Political Science and Public Policy.

John Crawford is the Defence Historian at the New Zealand Defence Force HQ.

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But for Dr Rublee the major influence on policy formation is not any of these essentially realist concerns but rather it is consequence of a persistent international advocacy of a clear non-proliferation norm. Indeed, the first two chapters of the book (50 pages) are concerned with a detailed description of how such norms are constructed and transmitted. In part, her account is essentially descriptive. There is an international norm against nuclear-weapon proliferation and it is enshrined in international institutions, including the protocols of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is also reflected in the policies adopted by indigenous activist groups and political elites and, as her case studies show, it is a factor in national decision-making. Rublee gives considerable detail about how the process of norm transmission works, how the tactics of 'diplomatic influence' ('back-patting' or 'shaming') give rise to conformity and identification, which, in turn, produce 'internalisation' and 'persuasion'. Of course, there is another word to describe all this and that is 'manipulation' and there is another way to view Rublee's constructivist analysis and that is to see it as essentially *prescriptive*. On this reading, the sub-title of *Non-proliferation Norms* is 'Why states should choose nuclear restraint'.

Late on in the book, Rublee observes: 'As in the four preceding case studies, the Germans learned and came to internalise that security is best achieved without, rather than with, nuclear weapons.' To this reviewer it is a conclusion that is not warranted by the data. Germany's decision is consistent with an assessment that, embedded in NATO, it does not need nuclear weapons and it can benefit from the good opinion of other states and avoid local criticism from anti-nuclear groups by repudiating any intentions in this regard, *without prejudicing its security interests*. The fact that there are a significant number of states that could have gone nuclear but did not may well show that there is a powerful international norm towards non-proliferation, but it does not show that global security would be enhanced by nuclear disarmament, or even that states that have renounced nuclear weapons believe that to be the case.

*Nonproliferation Norms* is a well-written account of national policy formation in the matter of nuclear-weapon acquisition and it contains valuable insights into what has proved decisive in decisions for nuclear restraint. It may well be very useful in continuing efforts to 'hold the line' in the matter of proliferation in the years

ahead, but it should not be seen as a vehicle for the naïve anti-nuclearism of *Global Zero* and the 'Prague speech'.

RON SMITH

### MR AMBASSADOR: Memoirs of Sir Carl Berendsen

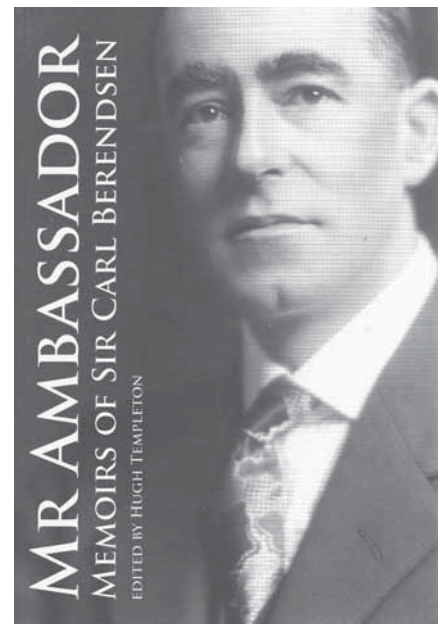
Editor: Hugh Templeton

Published by: Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2009, 366pp, \$40.

Hugh Templeton has done a great service to all those interested in New Zealand's place in world affairs by producing this edition of Sir Carl Berendsen's previously unpublished memoirs. The memoirs were written, it appears from internal evidence, in the mid-1950s shortly after his retirement. Templeton has skilfully condensed Berendsen's expansive reminiscences that are divided into a lengthy narrative and a collection of essays on major personalities he had known into a concise and highly readable text. The main parts of the book are an insightful and amusing recollection of Berendsen by Tom Larkin, the memoirs, a list of characters and two useful appendices. The appendices consist of a collection of notable speeches and statements by Berendsen and a reprint of Professor Ann Trotter's important article 'Personality and Foreign Policy: Sir Carl Berendsen in Washington'. The inclusion of some of Berendsen's typically well-crafted and forthright speeches nicely complements the memoirs. The book includes many useful editorial notes that elucidate a wide range of points mentioned in the text.

The first section of the memoirs deals with Berendsen's early life and career in the public service and contains much interesting information about the way in which the New Zealand public service operated in the first quarter of the 20th century. Included in this section are some typically barbed assessments of senior public servants and politicians. Ward's 1928–30 Cabinet is, for instance, described as containing 'a few sensible and experienced Ministers, but for the most part they were the queerest set of dullards and incompetents I have ever come across in comparable positions'.

The second part of the memoirs deals with the period between 1926 and 1943, during much of which Berendsen was a virtual one-man foreign ministry. One of the highlights of this book is the often unexpected insights it gives into a wide range of people Berendsen encountered in the course of his career. We learn, for instance,



that William Jordan, New Zealand's high commissioner in London during the first Labour government, could be very good company, but that he was 'a mixture of the good, the silly and the unpleasant'. Berendsen's account of a visit to Geneva with Jordan to attend a meeting of the League of Nations is typically revealing. He first outlines Jordan's reluctance to follow instructions from his government, and then concludes by noting that, unlike Savage and Fraser, Jordan

went out of his way to scout the possibility of war. 'There'll be no war,' Jordan screamed in his high falsetto, and with the utmost contempt for those who prudently held the opposite view. 'All this talk of war is just moonshine.'

The final section of the memoirs deals with Berendsen's diplomatic career. Between 1943 and 1952 he served first as New Zealand's high commissioner in Canberra and then as New Zealand's minister (later ambassador) in Washington. His views on politicians and public life in Australia and United States are, as might be expected, candid. Berendsen, for example, comments that

I could never have imagined the language used at times in the Commonwealth Parliament. Bad tempered and ill intentioned, the two parties warred without restraint. No holds were barred, no words were too crude. Australian Parliaments were not, as in Wellington, dull.

Berendsen's memoirs have been for many years an important source for historians. They are not, however, wholly reliable. Berendsen, for instance, skates over his military service and presents a simplistic

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