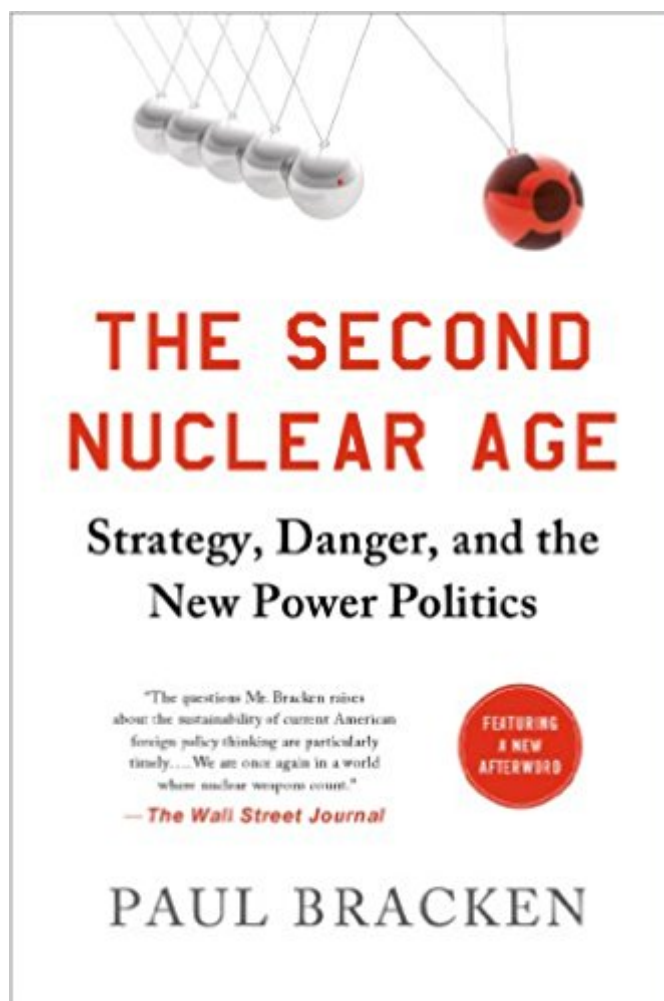


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# The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger, And The New Power Politics



## Synopsis

A leading international security strategist offers a compelling new way to "think about the unthinkable." The cold war ended more than two decades ago, and with its end came a reduction in the threat of nuclear weapons—a luxury that we can no longer indulge. It's not just the threat of Iran getting the bomb or North Korea doing something rash; the whole complexion of global power politics is changing because of the reemergence of nuclear weapons as a vital element of statecraft and power politics. In short, we have entered the second nuclear age. In this provocative and agenda-setting book, Paul Bracken of Yale University argues that we need to pay renewed attention to nuclear weapons and how their presence will transform the way crises develop and escalate. He draws on his years of experience analyzing defense strategy to make the case that the United States needs to start thinking seriously about these issues once again, especially as new countries acquire nuclear capabilities. He walks us through war-game scenarios that are all too realistic, to show how nuclear weapons are changing the calculus of power politics, and he offers an incisive tour of the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia to underscore how the United States must not allow itself to be unprepared for managing such crises. Frank in its tone and farsighted in its analysis, *The Second Nuclear Age* is the essential guide to the new rules of international politics.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Mr. Bracken’s view is a powerful one. . . . The questions [he] raises about the sustainability of current American foreign policy thinking are particularly timely. Nuclear strategy must come out of its

post-Cold War retirement. We are once again in a world where nuclear weapons count.â • â •Walter Russell Mead, *The Wall Street Journal*â œPenetrating. . . . Bracken is an example of why fresh and fearless thinking is required when considering the near-term future of geopolitics. . . . Everyone interested in nuclear proliferation in the Middle East should read [this book].â • â •Robert D. Kaplan, *Stratfor*, author of *The Revenge of Geography*â œThis is an important book, necessary reading for anyone looking to understand nuclear weapons and how they might be used, directly or indirectly, in future conflicts around the world. Paul Bracken is a rigorous critic, convincing and unsentimental in his discussion of the strategic and political context of the subject. This is no simplistic vision of Armageddon.â • â •George Friedman, author of *The Next 100 Years*, CEO of *Stratfor*â œPaul Bracken has written an alarming and compelling wake-up call. He argues that as new countries acquire nuclear capabilities, the cold war rules of the road no longer apply and we ignore the complexities of todayâ™s environment at our peril. He provides an instructive history of how we got here and is practical and provocative in recommending possible solutions. Read this book. We should not wait for the first nuclear crisis of this century to start thinking about what to do differently.â • â •Admiral Mike Mullen, USN (ret.), former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staffâ œRead this book. We should not wait for the first nuclear crisis of this century to start thinking about what to do differently.â • â •Admiral Mike Mullen, USN (ret.), former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staffâ œChallenging the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, Paul Bracken argues that we have already entered a second nuclear weapons age -- and that the United States needs to face that reality. His book is well worth reading.â • â •Graham Allison, director, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, and author of *Essence of Decision* and *Nuclear Terrorism*â œPut Paul Bracken in charge of our nuclear policy for the twenty-first century. *The Second Nuclear Age* is a superb analysis of why and how a continuation of our Cold War nuclear forces and doctrines will fail, and how we can make them safer and far more strategically useful.â • â •R. James Woolsey, Former Director of Central Intelligenceâ œIn this book--which could hardly be more timely--Paul Bracken dissects the dangerous and often neglected realities of 'the second nuclear age' and argues for bold, innovative, and often provocative ways to think about how to avert those dangers. Precisely because he challenges orthodox doctrines and practices and argues forcefully for his own strong views, he helps ensure that one of the most important, complex, and controversial issues of our time will get the hard-headed attention it deserves.â • â •Strobe Talbott, president of the Brookings Institution and former U.S. deputy secretary of state

Paul Bracken is the author of *Fire in the East* and *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces*. He

is a professor of management and political science at Yale University, and was previously a member of the senior staff of the Hudson Institute under Herman Kahn and a consultant to the Rand Corporation. He serves on several Department of Defense advisory boards and works with global multinational corporations on strategy and technology issues. He lives in Connecticut.

Little has changed in the literature on nuclear strategy and nuclear warfare in the past 20 years. Philip Bobbitt's work "The Shield of Achilles" is one notable exception. But Bracken does an amazing job here describing the multiple reasons why we had all better begin thinking about the unthinkable once again. More than that though, it occurred to me that the most insightful, creative thinkers about the future may well be nuclear strategists. In other fields, experts can make wild prognostications just to make headlines or a name for themselves. But in nuclear strategy, you had better be damned well sure you understand how the world might evolve because if you get it wrong, billions of people will die and civilization may come to an end. This book is very crisp, hard-hitting, and fast-paced. Entire academic departments are sometimes eviscerated in three sentences. And the author knows what he is talking about. He's sat through the war games, lived in think tanks, seen the whole Cold War through to its end. We should all take pause that someone with this biography is now sounding the klaxon and asking everyone to wake up and pay attention.

The author has the ability to transform complex concepts into something others can readily understand and has many penetrating, well-informed insights. Game Theory applied to Pakistani and Indian nuclear war options? That could easily have degenerated into page after page of unreadable technical gibberish. Instead it was fascinating - as was much covered in the book. Perhaps the most insightful part of the book was on the role Nationalism in strategy. Many countries are highly nationalistic - almost all are more so than the United States. At baseline many Americans have a poor understanding of how strategists in other countries view their adversaries (and their friends). This becomes somewhat more important when they have nuclear weapons. Generals always prepare for the last war. So do politicians and bureaucracies. If history is any guide, I would wager that our next conflict will not involve terrorists and counterinsurgency. Perhaps it has been unwise to let our nuclear force atrophy - and to the author's point - to stop thinking about strategy in any meaningful way.

Speaking as a former practitioner (321SMS/4ACCS/351SMW - 1825H/G1825/G1835/1835) I found this book absorbing and frightening. Absorbing because the author (a colleague of Khan and

Kissinger at the think tanks) blithely gives numbers and facts that were Very Secret Indeed and mostly well outside my need to know; frightening because he describes the lamentably bad condition of US nuclear forces today. Which is not surprising, given the way anything like policy about their use has apparently given way to loudly singing, "La, la, la, NPT, la, la, la, START!" whenever the subject comes up. No wonder we're continuously blindsided, deer-in-the-headlights, by Iran, Pakistan, and even North Korea.

This is a scary book! The author has a lot of experience in this field and gives the reader an inside view of how war games are played and the insights obtained. It gives the reader a keen viewpoint of the current use and consequences for chemical weapons in Syria. The new strategies that arise as one adds players to a two player game are quite interesting. I recommend it highly--you will have a better appreciation of what we face now and in the future.

This is a good overview of how nuclear weapons play a role in a multipolar international system. The scenarios presented are plausible, and the courses of action are good starting points for discussion. While non-state actors are largely ignored, this book provides a thoughtful primer for modern nuclear strategy.

Bracken broaches a topic people don't want to think about; The possibility of nuclear war today and makes very compelling arguments. An absolutely must read for political analysts.

Simply put: a must-read. Eloquenty written, always sharp and to the point, and informed by years of wargaming. The real deal. Plus the ultimate kicker: revelations on "Proud Prophet" 1983 wargame.

Interesting assessment of the problems involved with the spreading of nuclear weapons and the art of diplomacy.

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