

open up the prospect of bringing the public good of international monetary stability back to the world economy for the first time in 100 years.

Yes, indeed. And the sooner the better.

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The Partnership: Five Cold Warriors and the Quest to Ban the Bomb

Philip Taubman

New York: Harper, 2012, 496 pp.

Can four former Cold War policymakers and a prominent physicist of the era change the world through sheer force of personality? Former *New York Times* columnist Philip Taubman certainly thinks so, and in his new book he attempts to be the first to tell their story. *The Partnership* is the chronicle of how George Shultz, Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger, William Perry, and Sidney Drell decided to take up the cause of nuclear abolition.

Unfortunately, *The Partnership* is a weak argument for nuclear abolition, and its analysis of how to achieve disarmament obscures far more than it illuminates. To start, terrorism is cited as the main justification to abolish these weapons. Taubman rehashes frightening stories of poor security at civilian nuclear facilities in various corners of the world and conveys how criminal or terrorist organizations might acquire enriched uranium. These are legitimate concerns but wholly separate from whether the world's nuclear arsenals should be abolished. Such stories deal with civilian nuclear facilities, not nuclear arsenals maintained for military purposes.

This confusion appears early on when Taubman raises the specter of the catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Japan to highlight the dangers radiation can pose to civilian populations. While what happened in Japan was obviously tragic, the existence of nuclear weapons is a separate matter entirely. Taubman also fails to engage any scholars who question whether terrorists could easily construct and deliver a functional nuclear weapon and whether terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda are determined to acquire

nuclear weapons. For example, Michael Levi of the Council Foreign Relations provides a balanced account of the daunting challenges a terrorist group would face constructing or acquiring a nuclear weapon, and research by Anne Stenersen of the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment demonstrates serious disagreements among al Qaeda leaders about the wisdom of undertaking such a monumental effort.

Moving beyond nuclear terrorism, far too much of Taubman's analysis is focused on the United States and Russia. Obviously the former superpower rivals will be at the center of any discussion about disarmament, but it does not follow that any example set by Washington or Moscow would be heeded in Beijing, Pyongyang, Islamabad, New Delhi, or elsewhere. Local factors were the impetus for nuclear weapons programs in India, Israel, and Pakistan, and other states will forgo nuclear weapons now or dismantle existing arsenals in the future for similarly local reasons. Taubman's focus also ignores where U.S. policy may heighten desires for nuclear weapons, such as in Iran where fears of regime change contribute to desires for a nuclear deterrent. He does make a laudable effort to address issues such as "reconstitution"—that is, the ability for states to restart nuclear weapons programs after disarmament has been achieved. Analysts view that possibility as a major obstacle to abolition both in Washington and Moscow. But such concerns are premature given Taubman's failure to show why states should feel compelled to disarm or take reasonable steps toward doing so.

The Partnership is not about analysis; it is about the former policymakers at the forefront of the story and the physicist supporting their endeavor. It is an argument from authority writ large. Taubman is clearly intrigued by his subjects and impressed by their efforts. Shultz and Kissinger are the most well known of the group, and the chapters covering their roles in government during the Cold War are recognizable to anyone with a passing familiarity with the era. The author is most impressed with Shultz and often uses "Shultz and his partners" to describe the group as a whole. For his part, Kissinger brings the group its "star power." Far more interesting though are William Perry's role in debunking the "missile gap" in the early 1960s, and Sidney Drell's role in developing America's "stockpile stewardship" program, which allows the United States to forgo development of new nuclear warheads, as

well as his friendship with Soviet scientist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov. Sam Nunn's rise to political prominence is rather uninteresting, but the former senator's wonkish devotion to defense policy is admirable. Moreover, the Cooperative Threat Reduction program he helped engineer after the collapse of the Soviet Union was, at the time, a sensible initiative aimed at securing nuclear material.

Commonsense solutions though are missing from *The Partnership*. Doing "something big" seems to be more important than doing something feasible, or simply something necessary—a fact openly acknowledged among the group. Nunn asserts that global threat reduction efforts are beginning to atrophy and "something big" is necessary to drag them back into the public consciousness. Kissinger is skeptical of the effort to abolish nuclear weapons, but he is willing to sign on to "something big" to highlight the dangers of further nuclear proliferation. Taubman never seems to consider asking whether doing "something big" might actually be counterproductive or if smaller, focused efforts might be more valuable at securing loose nuclear materials, preventing proliferation, and reducing the nuclear arsenals of the United States, Russia, China, and others.

But the point of *The Partnership* is not to ask those questions. Such concerns pale in comparison to the inspiration and political cover the former cold warriors gave to President Obama's April 2009 announcement that he would seek "the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." Practical matters such as overcoming Israel's policy of nuclear "opacity" or Pakistan's desire to counter India's conventional superiority take a back seat when the president of the United States declares his intention to do "something big."

Sometimes doing something big can overshadow the numerous smaller tasks necessary to accomplish a worthy goal. Determining the size and composition of the world's nuclear arsenals, the dangers of loose nuclear material, and the strategic challenges of further nuclear proliferation are issues in need of attention. A debate, ongoing for decades now, will continue to attempt to get at the heart of those issues. It will be unfortunate if *The Partnership* becomes a larger part of that discussion.

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