Mueller

Atomic Obsession

Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda

Ever since the first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, the prospect of nuclear annihilation has haunted the modern world. And since September 11, 2001, the view that nuclear terrorism is the most serious threat to the security of the United States or, for that matter, of the world has been virtually universal. But as John Mueller reveals in this eye-opening, compellingly argued, and very reassuring book, our obsession with nuclear weapons is unsupported by history, scientific fact, or logic. Examining the entire atomic era, Mueller boldly contends that nuclear weapons have had little impact on history. Although they have inspired overwrought policies and distorted spending priorities, things generally would have turned out much the same if they had never been invented. For the most part they have proved to be militarily useless, and a key reason so few countries have taken them up is that they are a spectacular waste of money and scientific talent. Equally important, Atomic Obsession reveals why current anxieties about terrorists obtaining nuclear weapons are essentially baseless: there are a host of practical and organizational difficulties that make their likelihood of success almost vanishingly small. Mueller, one of America's most distinguished yet provocative international relations scholars, goes even further, maintaining that our efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons have produced more suffering and violence than the bombs themselves, and that proliferation of the weapons, while not necessarily desirable, is unlikely to be a major danger or to accelerate. This controversial volume debunks the received wisdom endorsed both by America's military-industrial complex and by its opponents for more than half a century. Demolishing half-truths and false assumptions, this is an important argument that deserves a wide public hearing.

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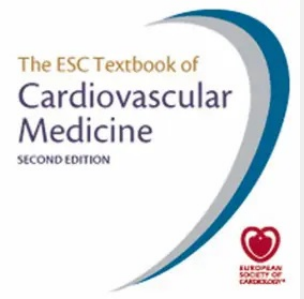

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