physical characteristics. Only a tiny minority (six respondents) claimed negro identification as the result of political consciousness. Chapter 3 explores interviewees’ sense of group attachment and linked fate. A sizable share of respondents (32 of the 52 who answered the question) demonstrated a linked fate, with most of the responses addressing racial discrimination and social exclusion. An assessment of the responses clearly demonstrates the dramatic impact of discrimination and exclusion on the respondents’ lives. However, the evidence does not seem robust enough to sustain the claim of the existence of a shared “Afro-Brazilian” group identity, not to mention a linked-fate heuristic and group consciousness. Group consciousness and linked fate require the politicization of group identity, which is almost entirely absent in the responses. Results from Chapters 2 and 3—which suggest that respondents perceive their negritude (a Brazilian equivalent to blackness) as given and static, not a sociopolitical construction—could have important implications for scholarship on racial dynamics in Brazil: the use of negro, rather than being fostered by political consciousness, may be just another category adopted by dark-skinned individuals based on phenotype and ancestry, with the politicization of the term being a rather restricted phenomenon. However, little emphasis is given to such considerations.

In the remaining two chapters, the author deploys survey data to examine, respectively, the effects of linked fate on political attitudes and of perceived discrimination and skin color on support for affirmative action. Although those are important issues in ethnic and racial studies, especially considering the relative scarcity of works on such topics covering the Brazilian case, this exploration is the Achilles’ heel of the work. Analyses that could otherwise produce influential findings unfortunately often suffer from debatable modeling decisions. In this instance, we see a jump to regression results with no descriptive analysis, which could have facilitated an understanding of multivariate findings and avoided the misinterpretation of results. In Chapter 4, the author analyzes data from the 2005–6 survey and argues that linked fate is “a powerful predictor” (p. 193) of several indicators of political preferences. However, the author does not address the very meaning of what has been measured as linked fate (see the earlier discussion). Some results for other variables are “contradictory” (p. 193), but the absence of descriptive statistics makes it hard to evaluate such effects (or lack of them). Important variables such as skin color are coded in controversial ways (p. 180) and may raise a red flag concerning the results of regression models including those factors.

In the last chapter, which addresses support for affirmative action, the focus suddenly shifts from its original focus on Afro-Brazilians to “Afro-Latin Americans.” The author analyzes data from the 2012 AmericasBarometer for Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, and Nicaragua. This turn is hard to justify considering that Brazilian data account for the lion’s share of cases (80%) to the point that contributions to the analyses from other countries become secondary or unimportant (Bolivia, for instance, adds only five cases). The author notes that the 2012 AmericasBarometer frames affirmative action as a zero-sum policy and that such an understanding is not in line with black activists’ demands (p. 201), which could render it less than appropriate for testing support for affirmative action. Such an issue, however, is most probably the result of an unfortunate choice made by the author of the 2012 AmericasBarometer: the 2010 wave of the same survey uses a nonzero-sum wording (see S. R. Bailey et al., “Support for Race-Targeted Affirmative Action in Brazil,” Ethnicities, 18[6], 2018), making it perhaps more appropriate for the author’s argument. The analyses reported in Chapter 5 are sometimes flawed (see, for instance, the interpretation of odds ratios) and might lead to misleading inferences.

The Politics of Blackness achieves its aims in a partial manner. The book unfortunately has important flaws that negatively affect its potential contribution. It would have also benefited from closer proofreading to minimize typos and the potential misinterpretation of results. That said, it extensively documents important qualitative work on racial politics in Brazil, which is a significant contribution to the field.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS


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— Alexandre Debs, Yale University

Since the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump has shaken some core principles of U.S. foreign policy. These include calling NATO obsolete and indicating that he would accept U.S. allies South Korea or Japan going nuclear. What role do such alliances play in stemming nuclear proliferation? This is the question that Alexander Lanoszka tackles in his rich and thoughtful book Atomic Assurance.

The book argues that alliances are “less useful than often presumed” in preventing proliferation, that alliance coercion in particular has played “less of a role in nuclear proliferation than some accounts suggest,” and that it is more difficult to reverse a program than to prevent its initiation. Instead, Lanoszka contends that conventional
deployments are essential elements in reassuring allies and that economic and technological pressures are more effective means in stemming nuclear proliferation (p. 22).

Atomic Assurance begins with a presentation of its theoretical argument and of alternative theories, which point to the importance of U.S. nonproliferation efforts, security threats (the “adversary thesis”), the economic preferences of ruling coalitions (the “domestic politics thesis”), or the psychology of leaders and their national identity conception (what Lanoszka calls the “prestige thesis”) for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. The book then reviews U.S. nonproliferation policies since 1945 before delving into three deep case studies (West Germany, Japan, and South Korea) and five shorter case studies (Great Britain, France, Norway, Australia, and Taiwan). It concludes with a discussion of policy implications. The book stands out for its concise and enlightened perspective on the foreign policy priorities and fiscal constraints of various U.S. administrations, as well as for the richness of the archival evidence in its three main case studies.

Even though the empirical work is excellent, Lanoszka does not always provide definitive evidence to support the book’s theoretical argument. Consider his discussion of Japan. He argues that U.S. assurances did not limit Japan’s interest in nuclear weapons and that President Richard Nixon was reluctant to use coercive tools to prevent Japan’s nuclear proliferation, even though he was worried about its realization, thus illustrating the challenge of coercing a nuclear ally to remain non-nuclear (pp. 79–80, 86, 102). An alternative argument would posit that Japan was never really intent on acquiring nuclear weapons. It briefly considered the option but decided against it, content to rely on U.S. assurances. If anything, Nixon had actually prodded Tokyo to think of acquiring a bomb as a way to reassure Beijing of the benefits of the continuing presence of U.S. troops in Japan.

Consider as well the discussion of West Germany. The book ultimately concludes that “alliance politics did inhibit what West Germany could achieve in its nuclear policy, but this pressure was much more diffuse and cannot be measured in terms of concrete coercive actions undertaken by the United States” (p. 76). Yet the Soviet Union made clear threats of military action if West Germany did not endorse the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The United States rallied to the Soviet position and explained its change in policy in meetings with West German officials, who felt coerced to remain non-nuclear in response to superpower complicity.

Finally, consider the discussion of South Korea. The book argues that concerns over U.S. assurances triggered South Korea’s nuclear weapons program, which was largely ended by U.S. coercive measures in the mid-1970s. This interpretation accords with the conventional wisdom, but it struggles to explain why South Korea’s interest in nuclear weapons lingered in the early 1980s. Departing from the conventional wisdom, Lanoszka argues that the Ford administration applied both coercion and reassurance, that U.S. threats were vague, and that Washington was mostly effective through its nonmilitary influence (esp. pp. 110–11, 121–25). This complex argument does not clearly explain why South Korea remained interested in nuclear weapons after U.S. coercive measures were applied in the mid-1970s. Alternatively, one could assign a greater role to U.S. assurances in the full arc of South Korea’s nuclear history. Not only did South Korea’s interest in nuclear weapons begin with concerns over U.S. assurances but it was also eliminated by the renewed assurances offered by the Reagan administration in the early 1980s.

Taken together, these last two cases raise some important questions about the meaning and nature of threats. What does an ally need to say to articulate a threat? When is a threat too vague to be effective? How do we know whether economic dependence is more effective than a coercive threat in inducing behavioral change?

It would be useful if the book offered some clear criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of different measures, but it seems more interested in expressing its theoretical claims as qualifications of existing theories. This approach raises the following questions. How effective does the literature presume alliances to be in stemming proliferation? How much of a role does it attribute to alliance coercion in stemming proliferation? And how much weight should be given to alliance politics if the book is correct?

Although the “domestic politics thesis” and the “prestige thesis” are robust theories of proliferation, offered by Eitel Solingen and Jacques Hymans, respectively, the alternative argument—the “adversary thesis”—for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is amorphous and does not reflect the range of views on the role of security and alliances in stemming proliferation.

Traditional security arguments suggest that states seek nuclear weapons to confront an adversary, but they also allow for some variation in the willingness to acquire nuclear weapons. Strong states may want to build their own weapons, but weak states may prefer to meet their security needs through an alliance with a nuclear power (Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?” International Security 21[3], 1997, p. 57).

Similarly, arguments on the effects of alliances come in a variety of forms. The recent literature has highlighted a “dark side” of alliances, in which security patrons may coerce their protégés to remain non-nuclear. Yet it also offers some arguments on the relative effectiveness of coercive measures, instead of claiming that they are always effective. Ultimately, it would have been helpful if Lanoszka had engaged a more sophisticated version of existing arguments on the role of security and alliances throughout the
book’s case studies, while making sure that its theoretical claims are articulated as explanations of empirical patterns, rather than as amendments of existing arguments.

Despite these criticisms, Atomic Assurance is a significant contribution to our understanding of the effect of alliances on nuclear proliferation. Now more than ever, this is a subject of prime academic and policy importance.

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“Culture” is a concept that few international relations (IR) scholars have embraced, but represents yet another example of their conceptual borrowing from a different discipline. It has been used primarily in IR by those who work in a broadly constructivist vein, exploring the way in which norms and identities shape behavior via the “logic of appropriateness” or are constitutive of interests. A subset of this literature focuses on “strategic cultures” or “military cultures” to examine the ways in which states generate and use (or not) force, interpret threats and challenges, and interact with friends and rivals.

Mary Kaldor has weighed into this debate with her latest book Global Security Cultures, based on a five-year European Research Council project. Her central claim is that four different and somewhat incompatible “security cultures”— geopolitics, new wars, liberal peace, and the War on Terror—can be identified in contemporary world politics. Roughly speaking, geopolitics is associated with traditional national security discourses and has a long historical trajectory related to the rise of the nation-state and the use of military force to defeat internal and external rivals, consolidate territory, or balance power globally.

The remaining three “cultures” are more recent. The “new wars” culture encompasses conflict dynamics as they have developed since World War II (about which Kaldor has written a previous book, placing emphasis on the material forces of globalization to explain their rise); it focuses on nonstate armed groups pursuing not power but political and material resources (p. 84) and the resulting large-scale civilian victimization. By contrast, the “liberal peace” security culture is a post–Cold War development associated with UN peacebuilding and related practices, including mediation, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and democracy promotion. The War on Terror is largely a post–9/11 development that incorporates geopolitical logic with a focus on surveillance and targeted attacks (via drones or special forces) against individuals and small groups rather than masses of fighters.

After a conceptual overview and a sketch of each of these four cultures in successive chapters, Kaldor examines how they interact in specific conflicts. She highlights some of the contradictory forces at work that frustrate the aims of each “culture,” from the difficult pursuit of military victory to the emergence of unstable “hybrid peace” formations.

Global Security Cultures has certainly tapped into the phenomenon of fragmentation of security policies and practices since the end of the Cold War, and the volume captures well the different communities of practice that have been engaged both conceptually and practically with the four distinct approaches to tackling security challenges. Kaldor also surveys well the evolution of the literature from strategic culture (and its different manifestations) to more recent work on security cultures, following the lead of Christopher Daase to incorporate elite beliefs and practices as well as broader social attitudes. And she adopts a fairly loose approach to “culture,” albeit claiming to “adopt an interpretative notion of culture… so as to understand and interpret their differing internal logics” (p. 25).

As an overview of four different and often clashing approaches to contemporary security challenges, the book is a useful contribution. Yet the value added of the concept of global security cultures remains somewhat unclear. If culture is to represent more than, say, what one has for breakfast or how one interacts with colleagues, then it has to be more than (as the volume notes) “the persistence of particular ways of doing ‘security’” (p. 12).

Rather, the “persistence” has to be explained in terms of the norms and beliefs that shape action and choices even in the face of dysfunctional or perverse outcomes, such as the commitment to offensive military action in World War I or to democracy promotion in the face of repeated failures. And if it is more than a descriptive label it has to provide explanatory leverage beyond a purely rationalist or materialist account.

Two issues can illustrate how tricky is the concept of security cultures. First, the four security cultures identified are not as self-contained or hermetically sealed as the volume sometimes implies. Combating and preventing violent extremism (as part of the War on Terror) has been internalized as part of many UN postconflict (or conflict prevention) operations and practices, in part in response to the interaction of the War on Terror with peacebuilding efforts in places such as Mali or the Horn of Africa. “Liberal peacebuilding” had likewise to confront the “new wars” of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which a myriad of formal and informal armed actors thwart and subvert the aims of constructing stable and legitimate central state institutions. Some of these complexities are captured in a chapter focusing on the Bosnian, Afghan, and Syrian conflicts, but the takeaway—that “the geo-politics and war on terror security cultures have overwhelmed the liberal peace” (p. 173)—is hardly surprising. The conclusion attempts to adapt the liberal peace to this reality, but it is too brief to detail a clear alternative conceptualization.