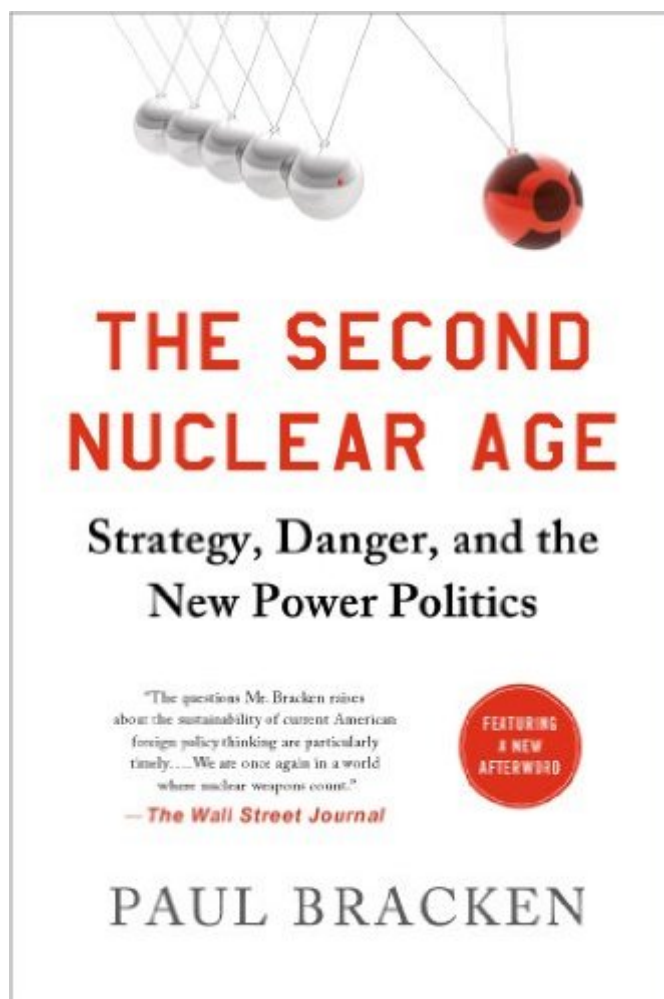


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# The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger, And The New Power Politics



## 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

Anyone who grew up in the 1950s and 60s remembers the school drill of "duck and cover", when students were expected to crouch underneath their desks as shelter from a nuclear explosion. It was, of course, a totally ineffectual maneuver intended to give the people a (false) sense of security

from the impending sneak attack by that archenemy of the West, the communist menace, the USSR. These simple bygone days, when the only two nuclear super powers were locked in a global game of brinkmanship, have now been replaced by a more complex and much more dangerous world. Assured mutual destruction and the fear of a devastating retaliation were last tested almost 50 years ago during the Cuban missile crisis. During the Cold War nuclear arsenals were built up by the USA and the USSR more for mutual deterrence than for actual use. The exclusive nuclear club has now added seven more members, some of whom are presently engaged in regional conflicts and others overtly or covertly support terrorist factions. Since the end of the Cold War, the nuclear threat no longer looms large in the collective psyche of the West. The threat of mutual destruction has made a nuclear arsenal less effective as a deterrent in the minds of military strategists. In his book "The Second Nuclear Age", Paul Bracken writes, "An older generation wants to make the nuclear nightmare go away by inoculating the young with protective ideas. Nuclear weapons are useless and we should get rid of them." The new strategy is to "Strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Get rid of ballistic missiles" and I suppose that we should all hold hands and sing "Kumbaya".

Paul Bracken is a professor at Yale. Before Yale, he used to work with Herman Kahn (Dr. Strangelove's character was partially based on Khan). The book is well written and raises critical questions about nuclear weapons. It is not pretentious or esoteric. I think he has some profound insights. The book is a warning. The new global nuclear system is out-running the current conventional thinking. There are eight acknowledged nuclear powers today: the US, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Israel has the bomb but does not publicly acknowledge it. Iran is developing a bomb. Brazil and Japan have the technical capability and economic resources to go nuclear if they so choose. Bracken may be right: it's impossible to eliminate nuclear weapons. The only solution is to 'manage' them. He is probably right that the next nuclear crisis will be highly dangerous. The multi-player games are inherently less stable than two-player games. However, there is no discussion in his book about what "nuclear weapons" mean. Today, there is a blurring between tactical nuclear weapons and non-nuclear systems with a capability for precise powerful strikes. Moreover, "tactical" nukes can be used for strategic missions. They can be put on small drones, etc. Bracken is not asking: "What are nuclear weapons"? I think it would be a good question. The EMP (electromagnetic pulse) nuclear weapon will be exploded in high altitude. It will no longer kill millions with radiation and destroy the cities. But the use of electromagnetic pulse will paralyze electronic equipment; knock down power-grids and

communication networks. It will spread panic. In a sense you no longer need nukes in the old capacity. The author tends to see the role of the United States through rose-colored glasses.

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