
2-2023

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Recommended Citation

Ali, Iftikhar (2023) "Book Review of "Nuclear Weapons Free Zones: A Comparative Perspective"," *International Journal of Nuclear Security*. Vol. 8: No. 1, Article 1.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/ijns088196>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/ijns/vol8/iss1/1>

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Book Review of *Nuclear Weapons Free Zones: A Comparative Perspective*

By Exequiel Lacovsky, Global Security Studies Series, Routledge, 2021, 220 pages, ISBN 9780367635596 (hardback) or 9781003119661 (e-book), \$190 (hardback) or \$52.95 (e-book).

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In 1957, when Adam Rapacki put forth the Rapacki Plan, the first nuclear weapon-free zone (NWFZ) proposal, the world had no idea this proposal would form one of international relations' most critical subjects. Since then, authors such as Michael Hamel-Green, Ingemar Lindahl, Oluyemi Adeniji, Tad Daley, and Sverre Lodgaard have made scholarly contributions to elucidate the emergence of NWFZs in different regions that cover over 100 countries. Prior to the end of the Cold War, Ramesh Thakur edited a book, *Nuclear Weapons Free Zones*, that discussed the four NWFZs established before the Central Asian NWFZ. Thakur also organized the different scholars' assessments of the existing obstacles to establishing four other prospective NWFZs in Northeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Southern Hemisphere.

Now, Exequiel Lacovsky has contributed an important book to this vast subject, urging us to disengage with nuclear weapons. In his book, *Nuclear Weapons Free Zones: A Comparative Perspective*, he explains the five existing NWFZs and the reasons for their emergence. Drawing from theories such as realism, the liberal triangle, and constructivism, Lacovsky hypothesizes that these NWFZs share four common characteristics, which he believes shed light on the Middle East's failure to establish an NWFZ.

Lacovsky's first hypothesis (H1) indicates that regional states value common security regarding nuclear matters, thus leading them to form NWFZs. His second hypothesis (H2) observes that regions with liberal conditions, such as democratic regimes, regional

institutions, and regional cooperation, are more likely to establish NWFZs. Lacovsky's third hypothesis (H3) states that areas where regional powers exercise leadership and take initiative in creating a security regime are more likely to achieve NWFZs. His fourth and final hypothesis (H4) suggests that NWFZs have a greater chance of developing in regions where states strengthen their nonproliferation commitments.

Latin America was the first NWFZ established and accepted in a populated area. Twenty-six Latin American states signed the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which was formally enacted in 1968. Lacovsky points out that the establishment of the Latin American NWFZ was "aimed at the USA and USSR," and that it was a "consequence of the Cuban Missile Crisis" (33). Lacovsky posits that his first hypothesis is "fully validated for both Tlatelolco and [the] ABACC [Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials]" (42).

Lacovsky's H2 considers three conditions for the emergence of an NWFZ: democracy, regional institutions, and regional cooperation. In the particular case of Latin America, Lacovsky states that democracy was not one of the critical factors in the establishment of the region's NWFZ. The case of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), which transitioned into democratic states, is the only minor exception. He argues instead that the emergence of the Treaty of Tlatelolco "cannot be detached from its place within Latin American regionalism" (45).

Lacovsky's H3 suggests that the emergence of NWFZs also results when a regional power initiates denuclearization. In the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil were the leading regional powers because they were the only countries that had successfully developed nuclear plants. Lacovsky considers H3 validated for the Latin American NWFZ. He argues that Tlatelolco "showed the importance of regional powers in achieving a governance scheme such as a NWFZ" (52).

H4 suggests that states wishing to establish an NWFZ ought to expand their nonproliferation commitments, behave accordingly with nonproliferation norms, and be rule makers in their own region. In this vein, Professor Michael Hamel-Green examined NWFZs in his United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research publication, *Regional Initiative on Nuclear- and WMD-Free Zones: Cooperative Approaches to Arms Control and Non-proliferation*. Here, he details that the establishment of NWFZ is a regional as well as a nonproliferation and security-building measure that includes binding provisions for regional denuclearization, mechanisms for compliance and verification, and negative security against the use of nuclear weapons. Lacovsky claims that "the Antarctic Treaty, the Tlatelolco, and the NPT [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons] proved the vital role played by Latin America in the incipient nonproliferation negotiations in those years" (56). All these points support H4 in the case of Tlatelolco.

The third chapter discusses the Treaty of Rarotonga, which established the South Pacific NWFZ (SPNWFZ). This treaty was signed on a symbolic day: August 6, 1985, the 40th anniversary of the US nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. Again, Lacovsky tests all four of his hypotheses. He claims that the South Pacific going nuclear was a

less likely idea in the 1980s. Of all the South Pacific states, only Australia could acquire nuclear weapons, and it had already signed the NPT. The true actors that triggered the SPNWFZ into existence were actually countries outside the region, namely the United Kingdom, the United States, and France, all of which had started dumping nuclear waste and carrying out reckless nuclear testing in the South Pacific. The South Pacific states recognized the perils of extraregional nuclear weapons to their territory, and thus they determined that increasing their own nuclear power would not ultimately make them more secure. This common security concern of the states is viewed as a critical reason for the emergence of the Rarotonga. The case of Rarotonga is unique in that it fully corroborates all of Lacovsky's hypotheses.

In the fourth chapter of his book, Lacovsky discusses the Southeast Asia NWFZ (SEANWFZ). Lacovsky, like previously, declares H1 true and backs it up well. Similarly, H2 also shows favorable results. As for H3, Lacovsky defines Indonesia as the regional leader mentioned in the hypothesis. He says that Indonesia displayed the most efforts for establishing the SEANWFZ. He thoroughly expounds upon Indonesia and its role in the SEANWFZ. In light of H4, Lacovsky also details the nonproliferation norms exerted by Southeast Asian states and their contribution to the development of SEANWFZ. Then, he ends the chapter with some thoughtful conclusions.

Lacovsky next discusses the African NWFZ (ANWFZ), established through the Pelindaba Treaty. In the same vein, *The Treaty of Pelindaba on the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone* by Oluyemi Adenini provides more detailed accounts about the evolution, negotiation, and implementation of an NWFZ in Africa. Similarly, in his application of the hypotheses, Lacovsky reasserts that African security was more suited to "a nonproliferation security regime rather than by the establishment of nuclear weapons programs by African states" (118). What is different, however, is that Lacovsky is perplexed by the African states refraining from promoting an NWFZ until the enactment of UN General Assembly Resolution 45/56A, and he wonders why the nations "agreed to renew the old initiative of an NWFZ in Africa" (118). Lacovsky comes to the same conclusions as he did with his analysis of the Treaty of Tlatelolco: democracy part of H2 is irrelevant to establishing the ANWFZ. As for H3, Lacovsky singles out Nigeria, Egypt, and South Africa as the countries that might have exercised the role of regional powers. Lacovsky states that it is still "difficult to assess which nation is the ultimate regional leader" (124). Furthermore, he elucidates the role of each country in the making of the ANWFZ and thus declares H3 corroborated as well. Lacovsky also considers H4 to be fully validated.

Lacovsky finishes his discussion of NWFZs with an analysis of the Central Asian NWFZ (CANWFZ). It is the smallest and most recent NWFZ, with only five participating countries, all of which joined in 2009. In this case, too, H1 is fully corroborated. Again, Lacovsky proves that democracy "has not been relevant at all as a factor that influenced the creation of the Central Asian NWFZ" (141). Moving to H2, Lacovsky states that many regional frameworks did exist in Central Asia, but they soon broke apart, and the Central Asian nations remain uncooperative. Lacovsky states that the Central Asian republics, rather than improving relations with each other, "privileged economic ties with

extraregional actors” (145). Lacovsky concludes that regional economic interdependence is “somewhat validated” (145) in the case of CANWFZ. H3, however, is validated because of the regional leadership by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Lacovsky also claims this case corroborates his H4.

Having finished his examination of the already existing NWFZs, Lacovsky moves on to the backbone of his book: the ongoing case of the Middle East. This chapter is the culmination of the book because it provides a full analysis of the data collected in prior chapters. He classifies the Middle East as “a diverse region” that is “sometimes difficult to define where it begins and where it ends” (155). Keeping these difficulties in mind, Lacovsky examines whether an NWFZ can be established in the region, applying his hypotheses to this case and comparing it with other cases already discussed. Because the Middle Eastern nations lack security regimes and have failed to promote regional security arrangements, despite nuclear states being highly involved, H1 does not hold up in the Middle East, and neither do H2 nor H3. Lacovsky dismisses H4 as well in this case because the states (excluding Egypt) break their nonproliferation commitments. He points to the wars fought by the states as examples of the states’ unfaithfulness to nonproliferation. Lacovsky compares and draws conclusions from prior chapters, contributing to literature on NWFZs as an example of a security regime. Furthermore, he discusses implications for the region and whether it can develop an NWFZ and, if so, what measures should be taken to make it possible. If not, he asks what the obstacles are that the Middle East needs to overcome to get to a starting point for NWFZ development. Lacovsky beautifully and skillfully ends the book here.

The book is a great contribution to literature on NWFZs and on security regimes in general. The text displays Lacovsky’s thorough, high-quality research, as he quotes many of his peers. All the points have been neatly organized to prevent the reader from getting confused despite the complexity of these cases. It is an excellent choice for any reader who craves awareness about NWFZs, the Middle East situation, and security regimes.