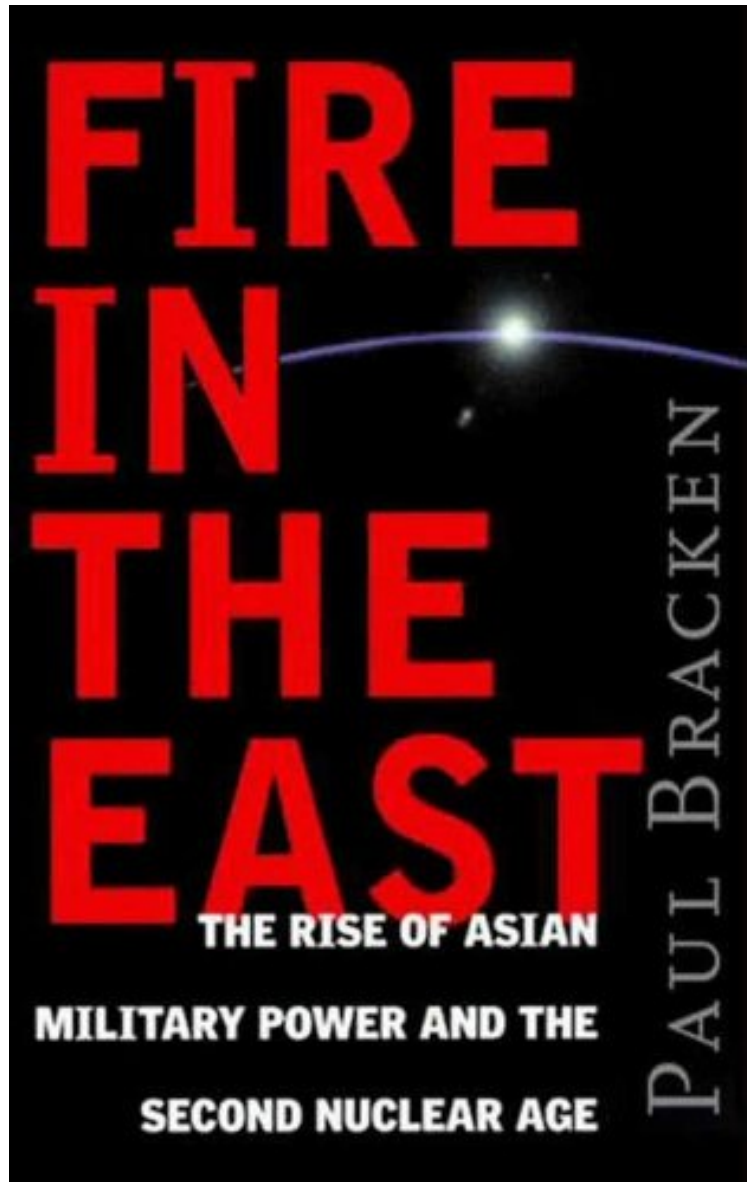


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Fire In the East: The Rise of Asian Military Power and the Second Nuclear Age

Paul Bracken

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book of 0 people found the following review helpful. SUPERB BOOK By FARIS SHAMSUDDINI like the book because it is very insightful. The writer has the ability to predict the future especially in Asia ..16 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Paul Bracken has given us a fascinating new look at Asia. By A Customer DON'T be misled by the title of the book. It is not 'merely' about how the spread of weapons of mass destruction into nearly a dozen Asian countries and the decline of the West and the United States are inexorably changing the strategic landscape of the vast landmass between Mediterranean on the west and the Pacific on the east. Paul Bracken, the author, has succeeded in analysing the fundamental changes in Asian military balance and their consequences in a broader historical context of half a millennium. For example, in discussing India's nuclear tests in May 1998, Bracken reminds his readers of what had happened that month five hundred years ago: Vasco da Gama reached India in May 1498. While da Gama's visit heralded India's subjugation by the European colonial powers, last year's nuclear tests proclaimed India's determination 'never' to lose its independence. But the same sentiment, legitimate though it is, is driving a dozen Asian countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological weapons) and ballistic missiles. With the ability of many countries to hit hitherto far away countries, the Asian geography has shrunk to such an extent where traditional grouping of countries into regions (South Asia, East Asia, etc) hardly makes sense. Thus, the 'death of distance' means that the traditional way of looking at peace and stability, too, is no longer valid. In order to be able to hit the continental US, the Soviet Union had to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba, which led to a crisis in 1962. What it failed to do in Cuba, the Soviet Union succeeded in doing through the development of long-range missiles. Overnight the two super powers became next door neighbours to each other. In 1998, by firing missiles across Japan, North Korea "turned the Japanese archipelago from a zone of sanctuary into a target zone..." Moreover, "the ballistic missile has empowered pawns to check the dominant powers; countries that were once pawns now have the reach of knights and bishops". The new power and status of the Asian pawns are almost coinciding with the emergence of Asia-Pacific as the new power house of world economy. Hopefully, the present South East Asian financial crisis is just an aberration or an interlude. Bracken draws several pertinent analogies to explain how all the new developments in Asia fall into a historical pattern. When Europe fought the Thirty Years War in the 17th century, rest of the world remained unaffected. But the Industrial Revolution made Europe rich, powerful militarily and to acquire colonies. Thus, its later wars became everybody's wars. His conclusion is that Asia, too, is "going through a comparable transformation". Throughout, the author proceeds with a bold assumption that the conditions that had led to Asia's decline and colonial subjugation have changed for the better. There is something 'disruptive' about Asian resurgence. Bracken terms the weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles as disruptive technologies because "they nullify Western advantages in conventional weapons" in Asia. They are equalisers in that, military asymmetry will not matter much: A country with crude disruptive technological capability can stand up to a leader in them. Moreover, a poor country can also acquire biological and chemical weapons, if not nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles to deliver them. This development has introduced a fundamental change in the strategic environment of Asia. For a long time, the predominant military power in Asia has not been Asian. The US indeed is the big power in Asia even at the moment, but the disruptive technologies made its predominance irrelevant. And Washington can no longer 'manage' Asian affairs the way it likes. Such a situation developed despite the US efforts to contain the spread of these technologies through the so-called non-proliferation strategy. Though it seemed to work for a while -- mostly in tarding the spread, not the spread 'per se' -- it ultimately failed. Bracken attributes this failure to the American attempt to "sustain permanently an asymmetric advantage" favouring the US. The fundamental difference between the arms control efforts between the two super powers on the one hand and in Asia on the other, is that while in the former case maintaining stability was the focus, in the latter it was maintaining the status quo. It may be recalled that one of the early arms control efforts -- the Washington Naval Treaty -- was aimed at limiting the Japanese naval strength so that the US and Britain could maintain their lead. It ultimately failed then; a similar strategy will fail in future. 'Nationalism' makes the second nuclear age distinct from the first one. It provides the impetus in countries from Israel to North Korea -- the area what the author somewhat crudely calls 'the arc of terror'. The crux is this: Several countries possessing disruptive technologies and driven by 'nationalism' as well as 'national security' considerations will undoubtedly make Asia a more unstable world. Moreover, for the West which long ago enjoyed and suffered 'nationalism', the Asian penchant for a dead and gone sentiment looks incomprehensible. Therefore, for Asia and the West, the emerging order presents many challenges and the failure to effectively meet them will be catastrophic. The author lists out the merits of several strategies for the West including the 'World Government'. Mostly, he himself is not convinced of their efficacy. His conclusion? "An age of Western control is ending, and the challenge is not how to shape what is happening but how to adapt to it". Bracken has written a fascinating book. In just about 180 pages, he manages admirably an illuminating analysis of too complex a subject. A less competent author would have needed double the space, with lengthy citations and distracting footnotes to substantiate his assumptions. The two-page bibliography will disappoint those keen on carrying out further research--a trivial shortcoming compared to the merits of the book. D. Shyam Babu, Assistan Editor, The Observer of Business Politics newspaper, New Delhi, India

On May 11, 1998, India began testing nuclear weapons. The world will never be the same. The Indian test of five

atomic bombs, and the Pakistani tests that answered a few weeks later, marked the end of the arms control system that has kept the world from nuclear war for half a century. As Paul Bracken, professor of management and political science at Yale University, explains in this landmark study, they signal the reemergence of something the world hasn't seen since the sixteenth century--modern technologically adept military powers on the mainland of Asia. In *Fire in the East*, Professor Bracken reveals several alarming trends and secrets, such as how close Israel actually came to a germ warfare attack during the Gulf War, why "globalization" will spur the development of weapons of mass destruction, how American interests are endangered by Asian nationalism, and how to navigate what he names the second nuclear age. *Fire in the East* is a provocative account of how the Western monopoly on modern arms is coming to an end, and how it will forever transform America's role on the stage of international politics.

Yale political science professor Paul Bracken suggests that the second nuclear age offers many more risks than the first one, the main problem being not that the United States is getting weaker, but that Asia is growing stronger. China looks increasingly aggressive, India and Pakistan have gone nuclear, and more countries--such as Iran, Syria, and North Korea--are waiting in the wings. "Proliferation of modern weaponry is driven not by anything that happens in Washington, but by the national strategies set in Beijing, Delhi, and Tehran," writes Bracken. This has disturbing implications: "Since the War of 1812, only one country in modern history has ever been able to mount a convincing threat to the territory of the United States--the Soviet Union. Now there will be many," he says. Going far beyond the stale debate over engagement versus containment, Bracken argues that the West--especially the United States--must prepare all-new national security strategies to meet the emerging realities of the 21st century: "The long era in which Asia was penetrated by outside powers is coming to a close. An age of Western control is ending, and the challenge is not how to shape what is happening but how to adapt to it." *Fire in the East* is an outstanding book written by a wise man for a nonspecialist audience, but one so provocative and important that the experts can't ignore it. --John J. Miller
From Publishers Weekly
"A multipolar balance of terror stretches over a six-thousand-mile arc, comprising some of the most unstable countries on earth." Such ominous phrases abound in this alarming vision of the post-Cold War geopolitical landscape. Yale political scientist Bracken (*Command and Control of Nuclear Forces*) takes the 1998 nuclear tests by India and Pakistan as his cue to make an argument that the nuclear genie is out of the bottle. Increased cash reserves brought about by the global economy enable governments to buy nuclear technology; therefore, in the 21st century, Asian nations will be able to achieve a measure of military parity with the West not seen for half a millennium. Parts of the book get rather technical, as Bracken addresses military strategy and takes interesting digressions into Asian military history. However, whether he's writing about the oil-rich but politically unstable Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union or more traditional Asian powers such as China and India, Bracken always returns to his theme that the days when the West was the dominant military power in Asia (a period that stretches from the beginning of European colonialism to today's American military hegemony) are numbered. While very clear and persuasive in making his case that the availability of nuclear weapons will change the Asian geopolitical landscape and the relationship between the West and Asia, Bracken is less clear about what the West should do to manage this inevitable shift. He does clearly outline the options (arms control, balance-of-power diplomacy among them), and his book stands as a sobering reminder that economic globalization is as likely to give rise to geopolitical tension as it is to peace and prosperity. (June) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
Bracken (political science, Yale) argues convincingly in this book-length essay that when Pakistan and India engaged in their 1998 series of nuclear tests, the power balance of the world radically changed. The Eurocentric model of the last 400 years has given way to one in which Asian countries with border problems or grandiose ideas and access to new generations of small nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons can attempt to upset the power balance in Asia, with disastrous consequences. At a time when our morning papers report on Iraq and anthrax, China and purloined American nuclear secrets, and North Korea and a ballistic missile program, this is thought-provoking reading. For general-interest and foreign-policy collections, this essay merits careful perusal along with the front pages of the news. AMel D. Lane, Sacramento, CA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.