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**Book Review of The Politics of Weapons  
Inspections: Assessing WMD Monitoring and  
Verification Regimes by Nathan E. Busch and  
Joseph F. Pilat**

Wirtz, James J.

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Wirtz, James J. "The Politics of Weapons Inspections: Assessing WMD Monitoring and Verification Regimes by Nathan E. Busch and Joseph F. Pilat. Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2017. 400 pp. Paper, \$29.95." *Political Science Quarterly* 133.2 (2018): 356-358.

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Another distinctive congressional tendency has been to impede or thwart executive ambitions in international affairs: “In a signature role, Congress has often resisted or foot-dragged on White House aims for expansions, invasions, intrusions, annexations, and commitments abroad” (p. 48).

In responding to the Great Depression and constructing a welfare state, the executive branch took the lead role, but Mayhew flags some key congressional influences. While the executive branch’s fiscal response to the Great Depression “contributed almost nothing to the recovery” (p. 58), the veterans’ bonuses of the 1930s—“entirely a congressional thrust” (p. 59)—were the most important countercyclical spending before World War II. In expanding the welfare state, the presidency tends to specialize in “big-bang” additions, such as Social Security, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act (p. 62). Congress, by contrast, has preferred to take incremental steps, such as the gradual expansion of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program.

After summarizing the patterns in tabular form (pp. 96–97), Mayhew concludes with two fascinating reflections on Congress’s role. First, he contends that Congress has vitally contributed to the United States’ “rock solid” system legitimacy (p. 6). Congress has never been popular, but it has excelled at (1) forging compromises on difficult issues, most prominently and often tragically on race and region; (2) accommodating asymmetries of intensity and building large bipartisan majorities; and (3) stalling government action until a broader resolution is possible. Second, he suggests that a powerful Congress, with its tendency toward continual “tinkering with small regard for administratability” (p. 108), may be key to understanding the United States’ relatively limited investment in state bureaucracy.

Taken together, Mayhew concludes that the U.S. national government has not underperformed its peers; instead, its performance has been and remains generic or typical, rather than exceptional (p. 98).

This book crystallizes a powerful perspective on American governing institutions, one that should be widely assigned in courses. It can be read in a few hours, but it is richer in insight and ideas for future research than most books many times its length.

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**The Politics of Weapons Inspections: Assessing WMD Monitoring and Verification Regimes** by Nathan E. Busch and Joseph F. Pilat. Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2017. 400 pp. Paper, \$29.95.

Regardless of whether it occurs in a cooperative or a coercive setting, verifying that a state has actually abandoned a chemical, biological, or nuclear arsenal is

politically vexing and technically challenging. Verifying compliance is ultimately a political judgment; questions will always remain about the nature and number of weapons produced and destroyed and the latent capabilities that remain. Existing methodologies and technologies used to monitor disarmament are limited in their scope and accuracy. They can also introduce externalities. Transparency concerning the verification technologies employed can facilitate cheating by identifying successful denial and deception strategies, while verification data can reveal design, operational, and manufacturing details of weapons systems, information that itself can facilitate proliferation. Despite the fact that many disarmament advocates treat verification regimes as a lesser-included problem in the general quest to roll-back the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), there are no easy solutions to this auditing nightmare.

In this well-researched and balanced assessment of the recent history and contemporary challenges related to monitoring WMD disarmament, Nathan E. Busch and Joseph F. Pilat document the achievements and shortcomings of efforts to monitor WMD elimination and how these techniques might be applied to nuclear disarmament in general and the hard cases (Syria, Iran, North Korea) in particular.

Their narrative presents some surprising results. For instance, South Africa's decision to abandon its nuclear arsenal, which is depicted as a success story by disarmament advocates, is problematic in their view. Although the South Africans apparently eliminated their WMD capability, they not only failed to document the destruction of their arsenal with an eye toward auditability, but also they destroyed much of the documentation related to the program along with the weapons themselves. In terms of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, decades of verification efforts that continued even after his elimination left not only a host of unanswered questions but also the occasional cache of rusting chemical weapons. In Busch and Pilat's view, Iraq's WMD programs were in a sort of "stand-by" mode when the United States invaded, and it is uncertain whether hazardous materials or weapons remain somewhere in the country.

Even more disconcerting is a compliance paradox identified by Busch and Pilat: when a state readily and openly engages in disarmament, verification can become lackadaisical. Cooperation, albeit real or feigned, lowers both the political motivation and justification for stringency. Despite initial optimism concerning Libya, for example, remnants of its chemical arsenal were uncovered after Muammar el-Qaddafi was swept away by an insurrection.

*The Politics of Weapons Inspection* suggests that complete disarmament verification might prove to be a mirage that will ultimately be beyond the reach of even the best-laid plans and most advanced technologies. The source of this

conundrum is found in the weapons programs themselves, which were never created with disarmament in mind. For the most part, the documentation needed to account for what was produced, tested, stored, and discarded does not exist and even advanced states tend to lose track of materials over time. Even when governments decide to eliminate weapons and facilities, it is not surprising that weapons, materials or associated systems might be uncovered in some long-forgotten bunker or building. Busch and Pilat interpret these discoveries as evidence of deliberate efforts to deceive, but they could conceivably reflect a general lack of situational awareness of the governments involved. Complete and verifiable disarmament might demand a level of accountability that exceeds organizational and governmental capabilities. Although no records exist of the presence or use of chemical munitions on the firing ranges of Fort Ord, California, kits to test for the presence of chemical weapons were found buried on the grounds. Can anyone guarantee that something else was not buried, long forgotten, nearby?

JAMES J. WIRTZ

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**Nuclear Politics: The Strategic Causes of Proliferation** by Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016. 648 pp. Paper, \$34.99.

One of the central puzzles of nuclear politics is that only 10 countries have built nuclear weapons, despite the fact that many others have the technological capacity to do so. What accounts for the surprisingly slow pace of nuclear proliferation since 1945? Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro provide a novel explanation in their new book, which is essential reading for anyone interested in international security, peace, and conflict.

Debs and Monteiro develop a theory of nuclear proliferation that focuses on a country's strategic environment. To understand the proliferation process, they argue, we must consider the security threats that a country faces, the possibility that adversaries might launch preventive military attacks, and the presence of military alliances. Their theory generates two pathways to nuclear weapons acquisition: (1) serious security threats combined with conventional superiority vis-à-vis the proliferator's adversaries or (2) security threats paired with an alliance that the protégé sees as unreliable.

Previous work highlights the role of insecurity as a driver of proliferation, but most recent scholarship focuses on domestic politics, leader psychology, economic liberalization, foreign nuclear assistance, and international norms. Scholars turned away from security-based theories after the Cold War ended, partly because they seemed inadequate for explaining trends in nuclear