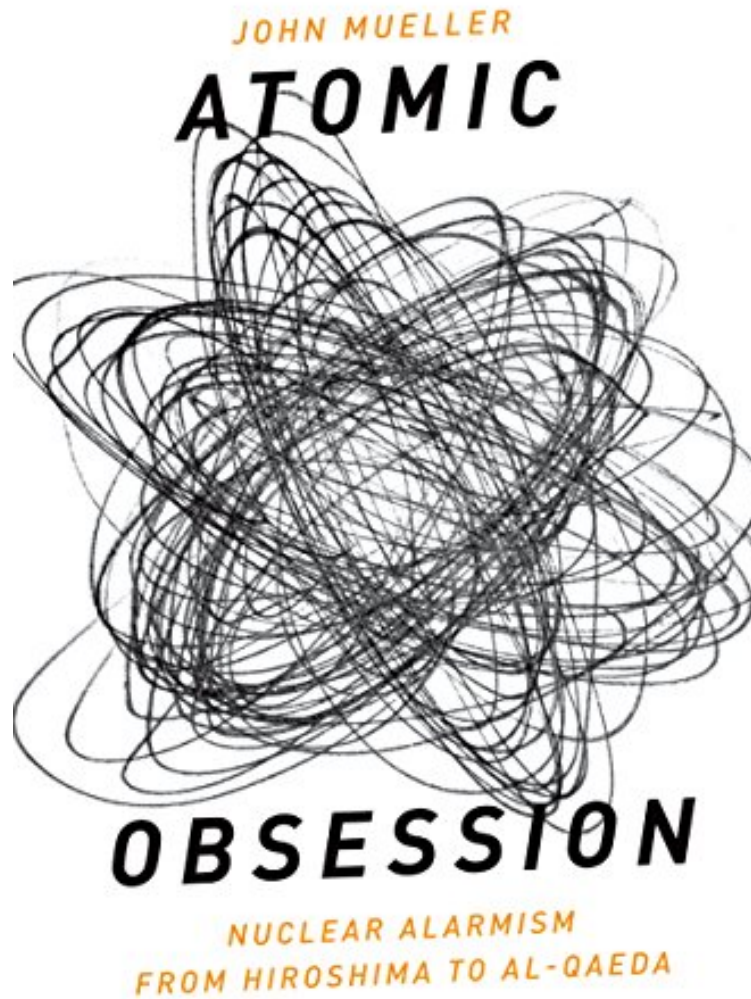


(Download) Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda

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Von John Mueller

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Von John Mueller : Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. An informative book on nuclear weaponsVon Dr. Bojan TunguzEvery once in a while a book arrives that challenges many of our most deeply-held assumptions, and makes us reconsider some aspects of our worldview. For the better part of

the last sixty five years one such assumption has been the imminent threat to the survival of the entire World posed by the nuclear weapons. With the end of the Cold War this threat seemed to be receding fast, only to be rekindled in the first decade of the 21st century by the rise of various rogue regimes around the world, and even more ominously, by the rise of non-state agents that aim to destroy as much of the modern Western civilization as possible. However, according to John Mueller much of that threat is way overblown (pardon the pun) and in "Atomic Obsession" he aims to refute most of our prejudices when it comes to nuclear weapons. This is a very well researched book as sixty pages of references at the end clearly testify. Mueller brings up many good arguments and for the most part he seems very convincing. I am particularly swayed by the quick -calculation arguments that, for instance, refute notions such as that of a "suitcase bomb" that can be used to bring devastation to a major US city. The probably impact of one such device would be far smaller than what had transpired on 9/11, with the cost in development and resources that far exceed anything that any terrorist group is likely to have. There are several well constructed arguments like that one, and for the most part I am willing to be swayed. However, there are some problems with the kind and range of sources that are consulted. It is hard to escape the impression that Mueller is rather selective in terms of sources that he cites. Most of the best-argued quotations are from the sources that support his claims. This could be because his claims are indeed the most reasonable and well-thought out, and most of the highest experts would agree with them. However, it is also obvious that the quotes from the sources that oppose his POV are more often than not very silly and preposterous, and it doesn't take a genius to refute them. In a sense, Mueller is oftentimes setting up a straw-man argument that does nothing to help his cause. The most off-putting aspect of this book are the persistent snide remarks that show up every few pages. It could be argued that they are attempts at humor in an otherwise very serious book, but I didn't find a single one of those remarks funny. In fact, these remarks are rather distracting and do a disservice to his arguments. Many times I would find myself essentially agreeing with one argument or another, until I reach one of those condescending remarks that implies that anyone who sees things differently is essentially an idiot. Were it not for this supercilious tone the book would be a very readable treatment of the subject. In what gotta be the most presumptuous line that I had ever read in any scholarly work, Mueller accuses Albert Einstein of "confidence bordering on intellectual arrogance" in latter's endorsement of one World Government. I am not a very big fan of that idea either, to say the least, but if anyone can be allowed to show intellectual arrogance that would be Albert Einstein. Such a dismissive, and yes intellectually arrogant, attitude on the part of Mueller is extremely off-putting. Many of his arguments would probably flow much better with well intentioned skeptics had he chosen to adopt a much more even-handed attitude in this book. As it is, the book as a whole can be described as overconfident and intellectually arrogant. It is not clear what the intended audience of the book is. On one hand this is a very well written scholarly work, and the academic audience seems to be its intended target. On the other hand there are many references to popular culture and the perception of the nuclear threat by the general public. It is quite clear that Mueller would like to sway the public opinion of what the real threat of nuclear weapons is, and in that vein a lot of his writing can be characterized as a polemic. Overall, this is a very well written and extremely informative book. Whether you are inclined to treat the threat of nuclear holocaust as the most pressing security issue or not, you will benefit from reading the "Atomic Obsession." However, this book should not be considered the definitive word on the subject and I for one am interested in reading other works with potentially opposing points of view.

Kurzbeschreibung Following 9/11, Americans were swept up in a near hysteria-level fear of terrorists, especially of Islamic extremists working domestically. The government and media reports stoked fears that people living in the US have the desire and means to wreak extreme havoc and destruction. Early reports estimated slightly more than 300 al Qaeda operatives living in the United States. It wasn't long before this number became 2,000 or 5,000 domestic terrorists. As these estimates snowballed, so did spending on federal counterterrorism organizations and measures, spending which now totals over a trillion dollars. The federal government launched more covert operations in the name of fighting terrorist adversaries than they did in the entirety of the forty-five year Cold War. For each apprehension of a credible terrorist suspect, the US government created or re-organized two counterterrorism organizations. The scale of these efforts has been enormous, yet somehow they have not been proven to make Americans feel safe from what they perceive to be a massive terrorist threat. But how well-founded is this fear? Is the threat of terrorism in the United States as vast as it seems and are counterterrorism efforts effective and appropriately-scaled? It has not, statistically speaking, been efficient or successful. Only one alarm in 10,000 has proven to be a legitimate threat—the rest are what the authors refer to as "ghosts." These ghosts are enormous drains on resources and contribute to a countrywide paranoia that has resulted in widespread support and minimal critical questioning of massive expenditures and infringements on civil liberties, including invasions of privacy and questionably legal imprisonments. In *Chasing Ghosts*, John Mueller and Mark Stewart argue that the "ghost chase" occupying American fears, law enforcement, and federal spending persists because the public believes that there exists in the US a dire and significant threat of terrorism. The authors seek to analyze to what degree this is a true and to what degree the threat

posed by terrorists in the US defends the extraordinary costs currently put towards their investigation. The chance that an American will be killed by a terrorist domestically in any given year is about one in four million (under present conditions). Yet despite this statistically low risk and the extraordinary amount of resources put towards combatting threats, Americans do not profess to feel any safer from terrorists. Until the true threat of domestic terrorism is analyzed and understood, the country cannot begin to confront whether our pursuit of ghosts is worth the cost.

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"John Mueller's argument will almost certainly change your interpretation of some significant events of the past half-century, and likely of some expected in the next. It did with mine." --Thomas C. Schelling, 2005 Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics and author of *Arms and Influence*

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"How much should we worry about nuclear terrorism? How far should we go to stop Iran (or North Korea) from acquiring nuclear weapons? In this fascinating and provocative book, John Mueller addresses such questions. Policymakers, scholars, students--indeed all Americans who are concerned about threats and the allocation of scarce resources--must read this volume, ponder its conclusions, and debate what now needs to be done." --Melvyn P. Leffler, Professor of History, University of Virginia, and author of *For the Soul of Mankind..*

"the book will certainly make you think. Added bonus: It's immensely fun to read." -- Stephen M. Walt, ForeignPolicy.com

"Mueller's achievement deserves admiration even by those inclined to resist his central thesis. The book is meticulously researched and punctuated with a dry wit that seems the perfect riposte to the pomposity of security experts who have so far tyrannized debate. Although by no means the last word on nuclear weapons, Mueller deserves praise for having the guts to shout that the atomic emperor has no clothes... the book should nevertheless be packaged up and sent to Presidents Barack Obama and Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister Gordon Brown with a simple message: 'Please calm down.'" --Arms Control Today

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