Political Scientist Kenneth Waltz Says Spread of Nuclear Weapons is Nothing to Fear

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use them for deterrence,” says Waltz, who believes these weapons are the only effective form of preventing full-scale war the world has ever seen. Deterrence with conventional weapons has often failed; deterrence with nuclear weapons has always succeeded.

Rogue leaders especially are incentivized, says Waltz, by the fact that using weapons of mass destruction would result in nothing: the end of their regimes.

“We notice that all the rogue leaders have something in common—they’re survivors, they last for decades,” says Waltz. “And you can’t be a ruler unless you have a country to rule. They go up to a certain point and then they stop.”

This mode of thought is not new to Waltz, who published The Spread of Nuclear Weapons at the height of the Cold War, in 1981. In the monograph, he argued a dissenting view that the superpowers kept each other in check with the weapons they possessed. Many disagreed with his stance but Waltz has never backed down; he is used to controversy. As Robert Jervis, Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of Political Science, once said, “Almost everything he has written challenges the consensus that prevailed at the time.”

Waltz does admit that the “line” could someday be crossed if too much pressure is put on an individual ruler and notes that this consideration is often what determines the need for diplomacy even when there is a greater desire to exercise sanctions or force. He cites North Korea’s weapons buildup and its recent provocative language as a natural reaction to having hostile neighbors, being labeled part of an “axis of evil” and knowing there are nearly 40,000 American troops near its border. “If you corner a dictator, if you give him reason to believe all is lost, then he might as well just take one last roll of the dice,” says Waltz. “The one thing you don’t want to do to a ruler who commands weapons of mass destruction is to put him in a situation like that.”

Waltz is also the author of the seminal 1959 work, Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis, which has been used in innumerable political science courses across the country. He won the James Madison award in 1999, an honor bestowed on one individual every three years by the American Political Science Association for “distinguished scholarly contributions to political science.”

After retiring from teaching full-time at Berkeley in 1994, Waltz returned to become an adjunct at Columbia, the school where he earned his M.A. and Ph.D.

Global terrorism aside, Waltz does not believe any single country would be able to threaten America for many years to come. He notes that the U.S. spends the next 14 or 15 states combined on defense, budgeting approximately $400 billion each year to ensure its dominance. The goal, Waltz says, is to prevent the emergence of new competitors.

“Never since Rome has one country commanded the relevant world the way we do now,” Waltz says.

Columbia to Celebrate Month-long Humanities Festival Weaving Art and Intellectual Programs

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arts with intellectual programs designed to enhance the production.

“The Humanities Festival will enrich the production of Mid- night’s Children and immerse the campus and community in discus- sions on the creative process, pol- itics, history and culture of the era, as well as religious, racial and eth- nic diversity,” says President Lee Bollinger. “Through the work of one playwright/novelist, artists and distinguished scholars across the University will come together and engage the community and the city at large.”

More than 20 public dialogues, open roundtable rehearsals, read- ings and debates will be held throughout campus on topics ranging from performing arts and comparative literature to anthropology and cultural studies.

Festival highlights include: President Bollinger interviewing Salman Rushdie (Mar. 22); Rushdie, Simon Reade and mem- bers of the creative team who adapted the Midnight’s Children discussing the journey from novel to stage (Mar. 22), and teach-ins on the history and culture of India and Pakistan (Mar. 6, 11 and 13).

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