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BOOK REVIEW

**ALVA MYRDAL: A PIONEER IN NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT. EDITED
BY PETER WALLENSTEEN AND ARMEND BEKAJ. SPRINGER: CHAM.
2022. PP. 277, 329. ₹3,747.00**

Reviewed by

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Alva Myrdal: A pioneer in Nuclear Disarmament is part of the book series “Pioneers in Arts, Humanities, Science, Engineering, Practice” by Springer. The series covered the discussion on the life and works of various prominent figures in fields such as social science, philosophy and diplomacy. While Alva Myrdal is an exceptional example in various diplomatic areas, her work in the field of nuclear disarmament is the focal point in this series. Alva Myrdal’s remarkable work regarding disarmament negotiation is recognized globally through the Nobel Peace Prize 1982 which she was awarded jointly with Alfonso García Robles for their work for “disarmament and nuclear and weapon-free zones”.¹

¹ The Nobel Peace Prize 1982. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2023. Mon. 13 Feb 2023. <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1982/summary/>>

Alva Myrdal as a Swedish diplomat was strongly engaged in the area of disarmament in the 1960s. During this time period, international security architecture was the grapple between nuclear proliferation and non-proliferation norms. At the beginning of the 1960s, a growing number of states were considering nuclear weapons acquisition. Hence, understanding Alva Myrdal's works in this period are crucial to anyone who wishes to understand better the importance of disarmament diplomacy and how to implement the vision.

All sixteen chapters in this book are divided into two parts. First, the series of articles regarding Alva Myrdal and her works. And second, the collection of some of her original writings along with her speeches as a diplomat and Nobel prize laureate. One of her most prominent books, *The Game of Disarmament: How the United States and Russia Run the Arms Race*², is discussed and reviewed throughout the first section which provides exceptional support for those who are looking to study it. Additionally, some of Alva Myrdal's personal notes are also presented in light of gripping her beliefs and commitment as a disarmament diplomat.

In order to learn about Alva Myrdal, one must understand the context of her works both on the nuclear arms race affairs along with the status and position of Sweden at the time. Sweden in the 1960s was considered one of the "threshold" states verging on the line of nuclear acquisition. However, the country manages to turn its ship around and become one of the most prominent forces fostering the Nuclear Non-Proliferation norm that we see today. Therefore, throughout this book, the reader will also expose to various historical nuclear disarmament

² Alva Reimer Myrdal, *The Game of Disarmament : How the United States and Russia Run the Arms Race* (1977)

facts both on the international level and in the case of Swedish politics. Alva Myrdal played a crucial role in the creation of the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) along with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) norms and efforts that we witness today.

Alva Myrdal's personal character and her stance in other relevant diplomatic areas are also spotlighted. As a female diplomat and politician, Alva Myrdal recognized the assumption made about her and her commitment to nuclear disarmament. In the *Alva Myrdal and Disarmament in a Man's World* chapter, Emma Rosengren highlighted Alva Myrdal's thoughts on the "female peace values" and how the nuclear disarmament efforts were being gendered. Additionally, her concerns regarding the developing countries along with her commitment to do her best to represent ALL the non-aligned states with different backgrounds were also discussed throughout the book.

Moreover, besides gaining value from reading the historical writing directly in Part two, the reader will also be introduced to one of the most notable values by Alva Myrdal - the practical (disarmament) diplomatic works. How should diplomat negotiate nuclear disarmament in order to create a real solution towards nuclear disarmament is well-presented throughout the book. Alva Myrdal highlighted the importance of connecting the theoretical argument to real-world practice. Enhancing the values of public education on military spending affairs, she was the force behind the formation of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure database and publication that contributed to various studies that exist today. Therefore, from this book, the reader can expect to learn a number of her arguments on real-world affairs which she built upon prominent theories regarding nuclear deterrence.

Nonetheless, while it is useful to learn about Alva Myrdal and her works in various aspects, it is unfortunate that each article and its subject of discussion is presented rather briefly. And although each of the contributors is undoubtedly an expert in their area of work, which serves to support the understanding and appreciation of Alva Myrdal, the lack of a correlation between articles resulted in the repeated introduction regarding her works and their historical contexts. How this might impact the readers depend on the reader's relevant background along with the purpose of reading. By all means, this book should be highly appreciated by those who, with or without the background, seek to learn about Alva Myrdal. However, it also has the potential of being even more beneficial to those who seek to learn more about nuclear proliferation and non-proliferation history, especially around the 1960s.

In conclusion, this book suits best those who seek to learn about Alva Myrdal as the pioneer in nuclear disarmament. Alva Myrdal's works as a disarmament diplomat in a time of growing concerns about nuclear proliferation, not only pushed forward the Swedish disarmament policy but also the global nuclear disarmament norms that continue to influence today's nuclear non-proliferation architecture. Therefore, learning about Alva Myrdal and her works could contribute significantly to professional and academic growth in the field of nuclear diplomatic works and policy. It is also worth noting that books dedicated to discussing Alva Myrdal's works in the area of nuclear disarmament are rather limited.
