

Nukes

North Korea could inflict a million casualties on its southern neighbor and raze Seoul.

Iraq couldn't manage anything on this scale, so you could attack it.

North Korea could, so you couldn't.

The imponderables of the proliferation age were becoming ponderable. Once a nation has done the risky and naseous work of acquisition, it becomes unattackable.

A single untested nuclear weapon may be a liability. But five or six constitute a deterrent.

From this it crucially follows that we are going to war with Iraq because it doesn't have weapons of mass destruction.

Or not many.

Martin Amis, "The palace of the end" [2003]