

## **Nuclear Deterrence and Changing the Framework of the Debate:**

### *Obtaining National Self Interests by Advancing Global Public Goods*

**Jonathan Granoff<sup>1</sup>**

Twenty-first century security challenges are numerous, complex, and, more often than not, interconnected. At their core, each of these most pressing challenges requires cooperation and collective action. Persistent military competition and violence, along with less-than-adequate international security infrastructure, undermine efforts to cooperatively address these challenges. While the world's economies and businesses have long adapted to globalization, the political and security structures, debates, and frameworks remain mired in the past.

New risks, such as those arising from sub-state actors and abuses of cyber-space are growing, while critically important matters that require new levels of cooperation, such as eliminating weapons of mass destruction, ending poverty and protecting the living systems upon which civilisation depends, are being neglected. Nuclear deterrence policies are incompatible with the cooperative security system that is needed to address very real pressing threats to us all.

It is foolish to say that a healthy global climate, oceans with a proper balance of acid and alkaline, or rainforests that give off adequate oxygen are primarily national security goods. Is a stable global economy best understood as a national good? How about a functioning communications network like the Internet? Is it not more accurate to describe these as global public goods? The elimination of nuclear weapons is a similar global public good, and reliance by some on nuclear deterrence is contrary to pursuing that good.

Advocacy for the elimination of nuclear weapons has not succeeded. One reason is that the debate is framed within a traditional 'national risk vs. benefit' analysis. The debate poses the question incorrectly. It presumes that nuclear weapons provide a unique benefit to the security of privileged states, whilst also having controllable risks. On the other hand, most arms-control advocates argue the risk is too great; that some having the weapons is a stimulant for proliferation, and that by accident, design, or madness a use will occur that will be catastrophic. This might be true but this approach to the debate has not succeeded.

Within this analytical frame, an argument difficult to overcome is that these weapons provide a beneficial deterrent against a potential, as yet unrealized, unforeseen, unknown and unknowable threat. This threat could be existential and thus eliminating the weapon becomes too risky. According to nuclear weapons advocates, we have a known risk, which is being managed, but the unknown risk could be far worse. They thus successfully advance the solution of improving the management system and making concerted efforts to stop proliferation.

The reality is that nuclear weapons are a present existential threat and do not provide national security. In fact, they constitute a pillar in a systemically dysfunctional international security order, which is not adequately addressing a set of global threats. Nuclear weapons are a critical logjam for progress beyond a large complex systemic problem: the lack of a sufficiently broad common security framework that integrates nuclear weapons elimination into the process of addressing all shared threats to human survival. So long as nuclear arms control practitioners insist on pursuing arms control and disarmament goals outside of a broader framework defined by cooperation and collective security, we will have a very hard time achieving success. We must place the elimination of nuclear weapons in the context of achieving the entire menu of existential global public goods.

Each of us knows that our individual life is precious and fragile. What is more our capacity for existential planetary destruction reminds us that our collective existence is fragile. The future of all people is interconnected as never before, as we face numerous issues, for which we must work together to succeed. To address *inter alia* ensuring bio-diversity and ending the destruction of thousands of species; reversing the depletion of fishing stocks; controlling ocean dumping; preventing ozone depletion; halting global warming; controlling and eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and preventing new ones from emerging; ending terrorism whether by States or non-State actors; fighting pandemic diseases; ending crushing poverty; providing clean drinking water; and addressing crises from States in chaos - we must remind ourselves that no nation or even a small group of nations can succeed alone.

Some solutions must be universal. Chlorofluorocarbon from a refrigerant in the U.S. or China can harm the ozone in Chile, New Zealand or anywhere. If one country allows oceanic dumping, others will follow. Viruses do not recognize religions, races or borders. New levels of human unity and cooperation are needed. Governance to address these challenges can be ad hoc no longer.

Nuclear deterrence arguments must be framed within this new and accurate context of holistic global security. I furthermore suggest placing the issue in the context of accepted moral imperatives and existential necessities as part of changing the framework of the debate.

### **The Need for Cooperative Security from an Ethical Standpoint**

Wise people have been instructing us for millennia to recognize our deeper human unity and have even encouraged seeing the human family as one. Now necessity alerts us: the galvanizing power of moral global leadership cannot be postponed in

deference to short-term parochial interests. Our collective challenges require principles that are uplifting, inspiring and affirmative of our highest potential. They must be based on universal values that weave peace and human security, rather than divisiveness and violent competition.

Nine countries directly, and about 30 indirectly - by virtue of their respective 'nuclear umbrellas' - claim that threatening to use nuclear weapons is a legitimate way for them to pursue security, but not a legitimate way for others to do so. This violent double standard undermines the political environment necessary to obtain cooperation to address integrated threats facing humanity. But those who play geopolitics believe that rules of morality and equity are not necessary in the affairs of States.

Niccolo Machiavelli stated it in, "The Prince": "Where the safety of the country depends upon resolutions to be taken, no consideration of justice or injustice, humanity or cruelty, nor of glory or shame, should be allowed to prevail."<sup>2</sup>

This policy of "emergency" can hardly make sense as a norm if we are to be ethical beings living in community. Such so-called 'realists' invariably assert that power in their own hands is necessary to ensure the security of their individual State. Overlooking the intricate interconnectedness of living systems, they exalt Social Darwinism. Strength is good, ultimate strength is better. In the quest for the ultimate weapon, an absurd result is obtained. The means to security and the pursuit of strength undermine the end of security. Such improved means to an unimproved end is most aptly articulated by nuclear weapons whereby the means of pursuing security undermines the end of security. This is not realistic. This is irresponsible.

Realists furthermore rely on a rigid worldview, in which the pursuit of the good and the pursuit of the real are divisible. Some even say only that which can be measured, predicted and controlled is relevant in policy discussion. What gives our lives

meaning, what makes us human, what exalts our lives, is not considered. They leave little room in the making of policy for conscience, love, or other immeasurable, formless, human treasures. Not the least of these treasures is caring for the welfare of others, precisely one of the aspects of human existence that provides meaning. It is our capacity for compassion.

Compassion is essential to our ethical nature and has universally guided every successful culture. It is upon the foundation of ethical principles that policies must become based. Without compassion, law cannot attain justice, and without justice, there is never peace. When kindness and compassion guide our policies, our rules become golden.

Putting these moral incites into practice, we will see the salient security challenges of today cannot be solved by military means - whether in Kashmir, India and Pakistan, the Middle East; Israel, Palestine or Iran, China and Taiwan, or the Korean peninsula for example. Hot spots such as Afghanistan or Iraq, can only be tended to by meeting real human needs - and those human needs must be approached using the wisest tools and ideas that humans have ever found to be true. We must stop experimenting with military models of security and begin using the methods that we use in our families and communities to good effect. Where can we find principles to use?

The principle of 'reciprocity' is the ethical and moral foundation of all the world's major religions (see side box). Multilateralism is the logical political outgrowth of this principle. An international order based

### *Is nuclear deterrence in accordance with the principles of religious faiths and philosophical traditions?*

**Buddhism:** "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." *Udana Varga, 5:18*; "A state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?" *Samyutta Nikaya v. 353*.

**Christianity:** "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them." *Matthew 7:12*.

**Confucianism:** "Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you." *Analects 15:23*;

"Tsi-kung asked, 'Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life?' Confucius replied, 'It is the word 'shu' – reciprocity. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.'" *Doctrine of the Mean 13.3*; "One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself." *Mencius Vü.A.4*.

**Hinduism:** "This is the sum of duty: do not unto others which would cause you pain if done to you." *Mahabharata 5:1517*.

**Islam:** "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." *Hadith*.

**Jainism:** "A man should journey treating all creatures as he himself would be treated." *Sutrakritanga 1.11.33*;

"Therefore, neither does he [a wise person] cause violence to others nor does he make others do so." *Acarangasutra 5.101-2*;

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self." *Lord Mahavira, 24th Tirthankara*.

**Judaism:** "...thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." *Leviticus 19:18*; "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That is the law; all the rest is commentary." *Talmud, Shabbat 31a*.

**Native American:** "Respect for all life is the foundation." *The Great Law of Peace*.

**Sikhism:** "I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all." *Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299*. "As thou hast deemed thyself, so deem others."

**Taoism:** "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss." *Tai Shang Kan Ying Pien, 213-218*.

**Yoruba Wisdom (Nigeria):** "One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts."

**Zoroastrianism:** "That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatsoever is not good for its own self." *Dadistan-I-Dinik, 94:5*.

#### **Philosopher's statements:**

**Plato:** "May I do to others as I would that they should do unto me." *Greece, 4th Century BCE*.

**Socrates:** "Do not do to others that which would anger you if others did it to you." *Greece, 5th Century BCE*.

**Seneca:** "Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your superiors." *Epistle 47:11 Rome, 1st Century CE*.

on cooperation, equity and the rule of law is its needed expression.

Where the rule of reciprocity is violated, instability follows. The failure of the nuclear weapon-States to abide by their pledge to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons contained in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) constitutes the single greatest stimulus to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. For some to say nuclear weapons are good for them but not for others is simply not sustainable.

Deterrence, which includes the threat to use nuclear weapons on innocent people, can never be ethically legitimate, and this taint is not cleansed by the righteousness of the few possessing the weapon. Imagine the affront to equity and logic if someone proposed that the Biological Weapons Convention should be amended to say that no country can use polio or smallpox as a weapon, but that nine countries can use the plague to maintain international peace and stability through a deterrence model. The incoherence of this proposition is patently offensive. So is the current posture of nuclear weapons. There is a moral and practical imperative for their abolition.

Equity and good qualities in policy bring benefits and bad qualities exacerbate problems. For example, the reparations demanded of Germany post World War I led to the chaos that birthed Nazism. The generosity of the Marshall Plan led to trading relationships, stability and well-deserved national pride. Moral coherence leads to success and stability. The Millennium Development Goals represent a ‘Global Marshall Plan’s’ beginning. History shows us what really works.

The fact is ethical values work on every level. To conclude this section I would like to propose two new rules for today’s nation States:

First, the “Rule of Nations”:

**‘Treat other nations as you wish your nation to be treated’.**

Second, the “Rule of the Powerful”:

**‘As one does so shall others do’.**

Nuclear deterrence policies that rely on the threat to commit that which is inherently immoral is, according to these rules and all ethical and common sense, utterly unacceptable and impractical.

### **Concordance of Ethical Imperative and Practical Urgency**

Nuclear deterrence rests upon demonstrating willingness to use these catastrophic weapons, thereby creating an unacceptably dangerous situation. The extent of this danger is not sufficiently appreciated by the public or political leaders. Moreover the diplomats and military people who do understand it, seem to be irrationally silent. It is our duty to change this.

General Lee Butler, was the U.S. Commander of Strategic Nuclear Forces, with day-to-day responsibility for discipline, training of tens of thousands of crew members, nuclear systems operations, and the warheads those systems were designed to deliver. Drawing on his first hand experience Butler contends:

*“Despite all the evidence, we have yet to fully grasp the monstrous effect of these weapons, that the consequences of their use defy reason, transcending time and space, poisoning the Earth and deforming its inhabitants.”<sup>3</sup>*

According to Butler nuclear weapons are “inherently dangerous, hugely expensive and militarily inefficient.”<sup>4</sup> He went on to state:

*“Accepting nuclear weapons as the ultimate arbiter of conflict condemns the world to live under a dark cloud of perpetual anxiety. Worse, it codifies mankind’s most murderous instincts as an acceptable resort when other options for resolving conflict fail.”*

*I have spent years studying nuclear weapons effects [...] have investigated a distressing array of accidents and incidents involving strategic weapons and forces [...] I came away from that experience deeply troubled by what I see as the burden of building and maintaining nuclear arsenals [...] the grotesquely destructive war plans, the daily operational risks, and the constant prospect of a crisis that would hold the fate of entire societies at risk.”*<sup>5</sup>

How many unlikely events happen every day? Think of the meltdown at Fukushima, or the unlikely and rapid end of the Cold War. The consequences of the unexpected assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo that led so quickly to World War I must be placed in context and serve as a warning. Historian, Eric Hobsbawm, reminds us:

*“The international atmosphere seemed calm. No persons had been assassinated at frequent intervals for decades. In principle, nobody even minded a great power leaning heavily on a small troublesome neighbor. Since then some five thousand books have been written to explain the apparently inexplicable: how, within a little more than five weeks of Sarajevo, Europe found itself at war.”*<sup>6</sup>

Today how can any scenario surprise us? Thousands of weapons remain positioned in launch-on-warning mode, whilst known terrorists itch to take down the current social order directly, or by precipitating a large conflict. Add to this the ongoing and increasing practices of cyber interference, religious fanaticism, sophisticated criminal organisations, civil wars, wars between developing countries and dangerous insecurities in the Middle East, and we cannot be surprised if any, some, or all of these events will conspire to produce a bloody, broad and protracted war. But with nuclear weapons in the mix, there may not be any books written after such an “unexpected” mishap.

It is an arrogant illusion to think that these weapons will never be used due to accident, mechanical

failure, or foolish human folly. Even under the best of circumstances mistakes can be made. After delving deeply into the history of incidents and accidents recorded by the U.S. and the USSR throughout the nuclear age General Butler surmises, “...it is more chilling than anything you can imagine.”<sup>7</sup> He recounts:

*“Missiles that blew up in their silos and ejected their nuclear warheads outside of the confines of the silo. B52 aircraft that collided with tankers and scattered nuclear weapons across the coast and into the offshore seas of Spain. A B52 bomber with nuclear weapons aboard that crashed in North Carolina, and on investigation it was discovered that on one of those weapons, 6 of the 7 safety devices that prevent a nuclear explosion had failed as a result of the crash. There are dozens of such incidents. Nuclear missile-laden submarines that experienced catastrophic accidents and now lie at the bottom of the ocean.”*<sup>8</sup>

The Cuban Missile Crisis gave the world 13 days to reach safety. How much time is enough to rectify human or mechanical error? How much time is there in a crisis between India and Pakistan, a computer hacker creating an illusion of attack, or a terrorist posing as a State actor? What threat to our security is possibly greater than the threat posed by these weapons themselves?

## Conclusion

Basing the security of our civilization on deterrence-based deployments capable of ending civilization in an afternoon, and simply hoping this security structure will never fail in preventing the unthinkable, is an unacceptable and logically unsustainable risk. It is also arrogant. As clearly espoused by Senator Alan Cranston, this means of pursuing security, is in truth “...unworthy of civilization.”

<sup>1</sup> **JONATHAN GRANOFF** is an author, attorney, and international peace activist. He is the current President of the Global Security Institute, a nonprofit organization committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons. He also serves as the Co-Chair of the American Bar Association’s Committee on Arms

---

Control and National Security, and as the Vice President of the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, and Security at the UN. He holds positions on numerous governing and advisory boards including the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, the Lawyers Alliance for World Security, the Jane Goodall Institute, the Bipartisan Security Group, and the Middle Powers Initiative.

<sup>2</sup> Detmold, Christian E. *The Historical, Political, and Diplomatic Writings of Niccolò Machiavelli*, tr. from the Italian, Boston, J. R. Osgood and company: 1882. Vol. 2, Chapter XLI at Title.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, George. "Remarks to the National Press Club." December 4, 1996.

<http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/News/Butlpress.txt>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Empire: 1975-1914*, New York: Vintage Books, 1989, p. 323 as found in Lichterman, Andrew, *Political Will, In* Acheson, Ray (ed.) *Assuring Destruction Forever: Nuclear Weapon Modernization Around the World*. Reaching Critical Will: p. 133.

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/modernization/assuring-destruction-forever.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Butler, George. "Remarks to the Canadian Network Against Nuclear Weapons." March 11, 1999.

[http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/1999/03/11\\_butler\\_canadian.htm](http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/1999/03/11_butler_canadian.htm).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.