

“In an all-out nuclear war, more destructive power than in all of World War II would be unleashed every second during the long afternoon it would take for all the missiles and bombs to fall. A World War II every second - more people killed in the first few hours than all the wars of history put together. The survivors, if any, would live in despair amid the poisoned ruins of a civilization that had committed suicide.”¹

This statement by President Carter is a bleak, yet ultimately realistic prophecy of the horrors that an all out nuclear war would inflict upon the human race.

Conflict is inherent in human nature. Whether one accepts as the reason for this violent flaw the Christian dogma of original sin and the fall from grace, or the simple biological drive to survive as a species, one cannot escape the fact that the history of human civilization is littered with records of war. Mankind has, throughout history, brought aggression against his neighbors, other communities and other nations. War is an intrinsically human activity; one whose evolution has shaped, strengthened and destroyed numerous civilizations. Clichéd though it may be, war has been the setting for many of humanity’s most impressive accomplishments, and its most barbaric acts.

As long as there has been conflict, man has invented and developed tools to aid in his own defense, and in the destruction of his enemy. This historic trend toward more powerful and efficient means of waging, and winning conflict, has engineered the chakram, the siege engine, the longbow, the machine gun, air power, and finally the atomic, and thermonuclear weapon.

¹ Nuclear Files <<http://www.Nuclearfiles.org/etmilitarypers/index.htm>> December 15, 2003

The simultaneous and often symbiotic growth of civilizations and the advancements in war also gave rise to the philosophical and ethical questions concerning the nature and justification of war. In response to these questions, two extreme viewpoints emerged with a host of moderating ideas between them, attempting to provide some answer to the dilemmas of ethics posed by the casualties that are unavoidable in war.

The first extreme view, pacifism, holds that all forms of violence, war and killing are unconditionally wrong, and to lay down one's own life is preferable to taking another.² The opposite view can be summarized best by General Sherman's "War is Hell" doctrine.³ This view states that once a war has commenced, leaders and soldiers should do anything and everything within their power to bring it to a swift conclusion. War should know no limits because those responsible for the commencement of the wrongful aggression deserve whatever punishment is necessary to obtain their surrender. Sherman's doctrine closely echoes the Clausewitzian idea of limitlessness in conflict. "... War is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the application of that force."⁴ Between pacifism and limitless war there exist a host of theories attempting to condemn or justify the violence that seems an unalterable trait of human civilization.

Within these middle ground views of war, there are many that seek justification not for war as a whole but for individual conflicts. These theories recognize the possibility of the necessity of some conflicts for various reasons. Within the framework of acknowledged necessity, these theories take into account the methods used to carry out a combatant's goals, and the weapons used within the conflict when judging the morality of

² Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, < <http://www.iep.utm.edu/p/pacifism.htm> > December 15, 2003.

³ Michael Waltzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*. (New York: Basic Books, 1997) Pg. 32

⁴ Carl Von Clausewitz. *On War*, tran. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) pg 77

war. If certain tenets of behavior and reason are met, then a war can be considered “just.” This has led however, to many arguments among scholars and philosophers concerning conduct, motivations for the aggression, and the weapons used in certain wars.

With the development of new weapons technology, from the longbow to the machine gun and air power, arguments have arisen as to the moral acceptability of the use of these weapons in combat. Often it was theorized that the destructiveness and efficiency of these new weapons rendered them amoral and unsuited for actual use in the current form of warfare. In almost every instance however, new weapons technology was developed, adopted and brought to bear on the field of battle. Each time weapons were developed that seemed to be so horrible as to be beyond realistic use, limits were explored, accepted, and war became consequently bloodier and more encompassing.

The nuclear weapon however, is the one type of weapon that despite its adaptation for use on the conventional battlefield has not been utilized in combat since its first deployment. Since the use of the first nuclear bombs against Japan at the end of WW - II, nuclear weapons have never again been used in combat between two nations. Nuclear weapons are more than just a bigger and better bomb. With the current stockpiles of nuclear weapons in the United States and the former Soviet Union, as well as the weapons maintained by France, China, Great Britain, India, Pakistan, and Israel, mankind literally has the firepower to destroy the world several times over. In the latter half of the 20th century, the trend of weapons development has finally created a type of weapon that truly can be described as limitless in its potential. For sheer efficiency of destruction, speed of delivery and amount of terror, no other type of weapon can compare to nuclear weapons.

With the history of past developments in arms technology, it is reasonable to question why this vast destructive potential has not been utilized on the battlefield since its first deployment at the end of WW - II. Certainly the terrible introduction of the first types of nuclear weapons proved their effectiveness, and since that time, the weapons have only become more efficient, powerful and numerous. To give an idea how numerous, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty was signed by the United States and Russia on May 24, 2002. This treaty proposes to *reduce* the number of strategic offensive nuclear weapons maintained by each country to a range of between 1,700 and 2,200 by December 31, 2012.⁵

The answer as to why nuclear weapons have not been used in conflict does not lie with a lack of numbers or inadequate capabilities then. Following the historic trends of other weapons' technologies before them, nuclear weapons have not only been improved but the technology has been adopted and developed by other nations as well.

How then have the nuclear states, as the inventors and possessors of these horrible weapons, managed to avoid using them? Certainly there is little historical precedent for doing so. The United States experienced first - hand the benefits of the use of nuclear weapons both in terms of cost/benefit analysis and in quick achievement of objectives. The ability to achieve political goals with no cost to American lives gives the use of nuclear weapons great appeal. The answer to this question lies in the development of a strategy that accompanied the development and maintenance of nuclear weapons by other nations, specifically, the Soviet Union. This strategy, or series of strategies, is known as nuclear deterrence, the strategic conceptualization of which is known as Mutually Assured Destruction or MAD.

⁵ Federation of American Scientists, <<http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/sort/sort.htm> > December 19,2003

Nuclear deterrence is often associated in popular culture with the Red Scare, Commies, bomb shelters, the mushroom cloud, WW - III and the Cold War. The decades comprising the Cold War (Which was essentially a giant international political game of chicken.) are responsible for the development of almost all the current strategies, ideas, and theories of nuclear deterrence. Although these associations with terror have faded from public consciousness, nuclear deterrence did not simply disappear with the end of the Cold War. The weapons stockpiles that the United States and Russia had built up certainly were still in existence, and the process of arms reduction has been extremely slow.

What is the reason for this fading of widespread public attention and fear of nuclear power beyond the popular myth of glowing fish in the Columbia River at the nuclear site at Hanford? The answer is the definitive success of the policy of nuclear deterrence. WW - III did not occur, the Commies didn't invade, no one really needed a bomb shelter, and the only nuclear holocausts were those imagined in a great many science fiction books and movies.

Deterrence, in and of itself, is not a new concept. It existed long before modern war strategy or nuclear weapons. In fact, the idea of using force to dissuade an adversary has probably been around since the first cavemen. One can almost hear the argument in a primitive mind: "his stick bigger than mine, better not hit him." What is considered conventional deterrence however has had, over the course of history of modern nation states, a long and dismal record of failure. The question that must be asked then is: how has a concept that doesn't particularly shine with past brilliance prevented the use of a weapon of such impressive power? More specifically, why has nuclear deterrence succeeded where other forms of deterrence have failed? The answer lies in the fact that

with the advent and subsequent improvement of the nuclear weapon humanity has finally found a weapon that truly brings the idea of “limitless”⁶ into the scope of war and therefore has altered the basic and fundamental equation relevant to the use of weapons in conflict. Due to the destructive physical realities of nuclear weapons, they cannot be confined to conventional military strategy. A nuclear weapon is not just a “bigger stick” and nuclear war is not, nor ever can be, “normal” warfare.

Almost sixty years ago, on August 6, 1945, the US bomber *Enola Gay* dropped the first nuclear bomb on (or more accurately, above) Hiroshima.⁷ Almost seventy thousand people died as a direct result of the bomb’s explosion, radioactive winds and the ensuing fallout, and thousands more died within the next year due to the leftover radiation. Three days later, the second bomb nicknamed “Fat man” was dropped over the city of Nagasaki, killing upward of forty thousand people initially.⁸ While the firebombing of Tokyo had killed thousands more people, the sheer efficiency of the nuclear bomb is what made it so nightmarish. It took two bombs and two planes to kill almost two hundred thousand people, and this figure does not include the total effects of the radioactive fallout of the blast.

The physical realities of the destruction caused by nuclear weapons are frightening indeed. The destructive effects of nuclear weapons fall into four main categories: the initial blast, thermal radiation, the initial nuclear radiation and the fallout. The initial blast creates a shock wave of pressure equivalent to several thousand pounds per square inch (psi) and

⁶ Oliver O’Donovan. *Peace and Certainty: A Theological Essay on Deterrence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, (1989) Pg. 22

⁷ Grolier Interactive Website: WWII Commemoration <http://gi.grolier.com/wwii/wwii_atom.html> January 19, 2004

⁸ Nuclearfiles.org A project of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, <http://www.nuclearfiles.org> December 19, 2003

generates high winds which can turn objects into missiles. Thermal radiation, heat and light, at the center of the explosion create a massive fireball or mushroom cloud. The initial nuclear radiation consists mostly of gamma rays and neutrons which kill around 50% of the population. The fallout is composed of large numbers of particles, objects and debris, which are irradiated and spread with the force of the explosion.⁹

In the years since the end of WW - II, the destructive capability of these weapons has only gotten more impressive. Yields of atomic weapons have increased exponentially, delivery systems have been improved, and nuclear warheads can now adorn small missiles, light aircraft and artillery shells.¹⁰ Recent statistics on the nuclear arsenal of the United States alone reveal several thousand strategic warheads fitted to a large range of tactical bombs carrying yields of 300 tons to 500 kilotons: Mod 11 earth-penetrating tactical/strategic bombs, Mark 12 reentry vehicles, Minuteman-3 ICBMs , Mark 4 Trident SLBMs, and more variations on these.¹¹

It is because of this terrible efficiency and the inability of nuclear weapons to be used in conventional warfare strategy (which will be discussed in more detail later) that the deterrent threat works. The stakes of actually using nuclear weapons in war are so high as to make it insane to actually consider their use. Against the threat of a massive conventional or nuclear attack, deterrence promises a massive nuclear response. Nuclear deterrence is the ultimate threat of eye – for - an - eye - justice.

The purpose of the totality of this threat is to raise the theoretical cost of a massive conventional or nuclear attack so high that no sane leader would actually launch such a

⁹ Effects of a Nuclear Weapon on a Target, <http://www.nuclearfiles.org/kinuclearweapons/effectstarget.htm>
December 19, 2003

¹⁰ Grolier Interactive Website

¹¹ Federation of American Scientists <http://www.fas.org>

strike, knowing that though the adversary might be destroyed, the attacking state would be destroyed as well. Ensuring one's own destruction is not a rational goal of aggression between states, and so the horrible reality of the threat of nuclear deterrence creates a "balance of terror". This has led some theorists to label the weapons priceless, for the security advantages they give to nuclear weapons states, yet useless at the same time, since to actually use them in combat would be horrible beyond imagining and carries the risk of similar response.

The physical realities of nuclear weapons and the deterrent threat are the source of a great amount of thought and literature either applauding the genius of the policy that has been developed to keep us from destroying ourselves, trying desperately to justify their (the weapons) continued existence, or merely saying "nuclear weapons are bad." This last seems to be the 64 billion dollar question. Are nuclear weapons inherently evil? If the answer is yes, how can their continued existence and their use in the policy of nuclear deterrence be justified? Most of the debate concerning the morality of nuclear weapons seems to center around the ethical ramifications of the action of deploying the weapons themselves, without putting nuclear weapons and deterrence in the larger context of the international system of states.

This paper will address the questions surrounding the morality of nuclear deterrence. In order to examine the moral dilemmas posed by the threat of mass destruction that is the foundation of nuclear deterrence, this paper will consider not only what nuclear deterrence threatens, but what nuclear deterrence attempts to prevent; the international political environment in which states as individual actors exist; and how

nuclear states use nuclear deterrence within the current anarchical, international state-centric system to protect or further their own aims.

To begin, it must first be made clear that nuclear weapons are more than simply a bigger bomb. As discussed above, nuclear weapons differ from their “conventional” counterparts in several other key ways beyond, but directly related to, their destructive capabilities.

In his work *Nuclear Deterrence Theory*, Robert Powell argues that the nuclear revolution has fundamentally undercut the classic logic of war by altering the relation between force, or the threat of force, and state’s attempts to secure their own political ends.¹² Powell is joined by other strategic theorists when he points out the distinguishing factors of the relationship between the actual use and threatened use of force, and states’ attempts to further their interests before and after the nuclear revolution are the different ways that force can be used to bring coercive pressure to bear.¹³

Thomas Schelling, in his work *Arms and Influence* has a similar theory about the division between nuclear threat and conventional threat when he writes that with the development of nuclear weapons, “Victory is no longer a prerequisite for hurting the enemy. And it is no assurance against being terribly hurt.”¹⁴ Schelling acknowledges that the development of nuclear weapons makes a difference not just in the amount of damage they can cause, but also in the speed with which events can occur, and in the relation of victor to vanquished.

¹² Robert Powell. *Nuclear Deterrence Theory: The Search for Credibility*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) Pg. 7

¹³ Powell, pg 7

¹⁴ Thomas Schelling. *Arms and Influence*. (London: Yale University Press, 1966) pg 22

This assumption that the punitive and defensive capabilities of a state were combined in the same forces and directly related in strategy, was crucial in the relationship between the actual use and threatened use of force, and the state's aims that existed before the nuclear revolution.¹⁵ Before the advent of nuclear weapons, the ability of one state to punish another was enabled only after the defeated state's military forces were defeated. Once one state's forces were defeated, defense of the victor against any action by the vanquished state was assured.

The advent and development of atomic and then thermonuclear weapons separated a state's ability to punish from its ability to limit the punishment the state might have to suffer. With nuclear weapons, a state could render another state's conventional forces defenseless and still be vulnerable to retaliation by a nuclear strike from the defeated state. This is assuming, of course, the attacking state has not managed to neutralize any atomic defenses the other state possesses. While this is unlikely, President Ronald Reagan envisioned such a strategy in 1983, in the form of a space-based intercept system known as the Strategic Defense Initiative, or "Star Wars".¹⁶ Therefore one can see that once two states acquired secure second-strike capabilities, each state in effect had already rendered its adversary defenseless.¹⁷ This condition altered for the foreseeable future the relationship of force between nuclear weapons states, and arguably between major nuclear powers and non-nuclear weapons states.

Robert Jervis and colleagues take a similar but more qualitative view of the alteration in the relation of force and threat, stating that, "in the nuclear era, the concept of deterrence by threat of retaliation is the foundation of the security policies of the

¹⁵ Powell, pg 11

¹⁶ FAS.org, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/space/c0sdi_1.htm>

¹⁷ Powell, pg 12

superpowers ... the advent of nuclear arsenals has qualitatively altered the ancient dynamic of threat and response in three ways. First, retaliation is more important in the present era because even the most powerful state cannot protect itself against devastation by a nuclear power that has sufficient weaponry and motivation. Second, the barbarity of all-out nuclear war undercuts the threat to use nuclear weapons and raises great uncertainty about non-nuclear threats as well when the nuclear powers are involved. Third, although the capacity for nuclear retaliation makes many threats less credible, it simultaneously increases the price both sides will pay if there is a major war.”¹⁸

In discussing the concept of coercive diplomacy, Thomas Schelling describes the power of nuclear deterrence and distinguishes it from simple aggression or “hurting” within the context of international relations. “Hurting, unlike self-defense, is not unconcerned with the interests of others. It is measured in the suffering it can cause and the victims’ motivation to avoid it.”¹⁹

For the purpose of coercive defense and deterrence, nuclear weapons are perfectly suited. Due to the alteration of the relationship between force and defense they have enabled, they have no realistic tactical advantage except for the purpose of what Schelling terms “vicious diplomacy.” Nuclear weapons’ unique combination of destructive force, radiation, and the possibility of fallout radiation spreading as much as 100 miles beyond a blast site²⁰ makes them unmatched in destructive force. It is this possibility of limitless destruction that creates the balance of terror upon which nuclear deterrence rests.

Here again is the paradox of pricelessness and uselessness created by the physical realities of nuclear weapons. The threat of nuclear destruction makes nuclear weapons

¹⁸ Robert Jervis, et al. *Perspectives on Deterrence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) pg 3

¹⁹ Thomas Schelling. *Arms and Influence*. (London: Yale University Press, 1966) pg 2

²⁰ Anthony Kenny. *The Logic of Deterrence*. (London: Firethorn Press, 1985) pg 2

priceless for their defensive and retaliatory capabilities and useless in their actual deployment for reasons of the same disproportionate destruction and the possible threat of reprisal.

The theory of nuclear deterrence is rife with paradox. While the morality of conventional deterrence is not often questioned, the heart of the ethical dilemma concerning nuclear deterrence lies in the physical realities of the weapons themselves and the threat of massive retaliation at the core of the deterrent posture.

The Judeo-Christian morality, which holds simply that “thou shalt not kill” makes it very easy to plead a case against both nuclear weapons and their use as a deterrent threat. Obviously it would be horrible for an actual nuclear exchange to occur on any scale, let alone the massive retaliation threatened by the punitive strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction, or MAD. Thus it would seem tempting upon first examination of nuclear deterrence to simply adhere to what Gregory Kavka calls the “wrong intention principle” (WIP): the concept that it is wrong to threaten what it would be wrong to do.²¹ Any judgment of the deterrent situation, however, cannot be so simplified.

Here then is the first moral paradox of the deterrent threat which directly conflicts with the wrong intention principle. This idea argues that though it would be wrong to carry out a certain action, in certain cases it might be acceptable to threaten this action, in order to deter and prevent the action from ever happening.²² Nuclear deterrence is a policy maintained to prevent not only a nuclear attack but large-scale conventional aggression as well.

²¹ Gregory S Kavka. *Moral Paradoxes of Nuclear Deterrence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pg 19

²² Kavka, Pg 20

The attempt to achieve rational judgment about the use and possession of nuclear weapons must begin with reflection on the nature and ethics of warfare itself. Although there are many theories and philosophies concerning and judging the morality of war, the set of ideas commonly known as the Just War principles are widely considered the most cogent when examining the morality of an individual war and a state's conduct within that conflict. The Just War principles were developed by philosophers trying to reconcile the Christian belief against violence, with the need of a state to defend itself and the need of people to fight in this defense. These philosophers include Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine and more recently, Paul Ramsey and Michael Waltzer. Thus the analysis of the morality of nuclear deterrence will begin with the ways in which nuclear weapons and the deterrent threat meet, or fail to meet, the principles of the Just War theory. Within this analysis of the deterrent threat, the proposed goals and the method of execution of the deterrence policy will also be considered.

Two categories comprise the Just War tradition. The first group contains the rules that govern the right to go to war and is known as the *jus ad bellum*. The second group is the rules that govern conduct within a specific war and are known as the *jus in bello*.²³

The first principle of the *jus ad bellum* is the tenet that war must be waged by a "right" authority, or according to Aquinas, a "public" authority. No single person had the right to declare war.²⁴ In medieval times, "right authority" meant that war was waged on

²³ James Turner Johnson. *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)pg xxii

²⁴ John Finnis. *Aquinas: Moral, Political and Legal Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pg 284

behalf of God. In today's definition however, right authority means the government of a state that has been recognized by international law.²⁵

Nuclear deterrence and theoretical nuclear exchange meet this criteria, since at this time in history all nuclear weapons actors are internationally recognized states with arguably stable governments. In the anarchical international state system, a stable, internationally recognized government is as "right" an authority as exists.

Next, to be considered "just" any war must be fought only as a last resort.²⁶

Nuclear weapon's destructive capabilities give rational actors great incentive to avoid using them except in situations of supreme and imminent threat. Since there is thankfully no historical example of a nuclear exchange, any theory of such an exchange can only hope these weapons would only be used after all conventional force options were exhausted.

President Harry S. Truman may have justified using the bomb as a last resort to stop a war he saw as limitless in its horrors,²⁷ or in an attempt to save thousands of Allied and Japanese soldiers who would have been sacrificed in an invasion of Japan. Moreover, the internal pressures insisted that dropping the bomb was justified due to the expense of its development and on the grounds that the bomb was an appropriate response to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Additionally, Truman had no precedent of the destruction of nuclear weapons. No president or political leader today could argue the same.

The next principle of the *jus ad bellum* considered is often referred to as the "just cause" principle.²⁸ Once again, time has altered this definition slightly. According to

²⁵ This theory's surface refusal to accept revolutionary wars fought on behalf of a just cause will not be discussed here since those wars are mostly fought within a state.

²⁶ Johnson, pg xxii

²⁷ Michael Waltzer. *Just and Unjust Wars*. (New York: Basic Books, 1997) pg 269

²⁸ Johnson, pg xxii

Aquinas, the only “just cause” possible for initiating a war (what modern political theory terms “aggression”) was redressing a wrong suffered, and depended on the guilt or wrong doing by another state which refused to rectify its actions.²⁹ Aquinas defined wrong - doing as the persecution or impeding of “true religious beliefs or practices.” Since Aquinas did not advocate the forceful conversion of peoples to a religion however,³⁰ his idea of a just cause seems to coincide with the modern idea of humanitarian intervention. Pure humanitarian intervention is arguably a concept that has no real examples, since states are reluctant to send their own soldiers to die for other people without the hope of some gain.³¹

Within the confines of just cause as humanitarian intervention, nuclear weapons are beyond useless. Their destructive capabilities and radioactive fallout make it impossible to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants and therefore very likely to kill the very people for whose benefit a state is intervening. Concurrently for this reason, using nuclear weapons as a coercive threat for the purpose of humanitarian intervention would be problematical since it increases the chances that an adversarial regime would call the nuclear state’s bluff. This is assuming of course, that it is a bluff and that any nuclear weapons state involved in humanitarian intervention would not want to destroy the population they are supposedly trying to protect.

Beyond the ideal of humanitarian intervention, current Just War and international political theory has altered the definition of “just cause” to be commonly one of self-defense. Nuclear weapons might certainly be used to fight a defensive war. If a nuclear state was being threatened with overwhelming odds from another state that had no basis for their aggression, and all other options had been exhausted, then it is possible to see, in the

²⁹ John Finnis. *Aquinas: Moral, Political and Legal Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pg 284

³⁰ Finnis, pg 285

³¹ Waltzer pg 102

case of what Waltzer terms “supreme emergency” that a state is entitled to use any means necessary to defend itself. In a deliberation about the use and legality of nuclear weapons, however, the International Court of Justice was divided over whether or not the use or threat of nuclear weapons in such an extreme circumstance “in which the very survival of the state would be at stake,” would be lawful.³²

Just cause is closely tied to the idea of “right intention.” “Right intention” is more difficult to analyze, since the intentions in all wars are often many and varied. Any aggression initiated without proof of threat cannot be justified. No war fought completely for reasons of territorial conquest or ideological oppression could be defended, whether or not the aggressor used nuclear weapons. Suffice it to say that use of nuclear weapons for purposes of terror or destruction without the reason of self-defense or supreme emergency could never be considered a “right intention.”

A Just War must also be fought with reasonable chance of success.³³ The adherence to this principle in a war where nuclear weapons were deployed would depend on many factors. A nuclear state in conflict with a non-nuclear state might simply be able to use the threat of nuclear weapons, or exercise a limited use of these weapons to bring about the end of a conflict, as in the case of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, should war escalate to an exchange of nuclear weapons between two similarly armed states, the problem becomes one of defining success. If success is defined as attaining the justifiable goals of the war,³⁴ and destroying one’s enemy completely is not a justifiable goal, then the damage inherently caused by a nuclear conflict is directly at odds with this

³² “Legality of the Use of a State of Nuclear Weapons in Armed Conflict” International Court of Justice, July 8, 1996, <<http://www.nuclearfiles.org/redocuments/1996/960708-icj-who1.html>>

³³ Johnson, pg xxii

³⁴ *The Church and the Bomb* Pg. 95

principle. No matter if one side could escape with comparatively less damage than their adversary, any escalation to such conflict should be seen as a failure. An outcome of conflict in which at the very least a major percentage of both the warring, and the surrounding countries' populations are destroyed, is not success.

The final principle in the *jus ad bellum* is the idea that a Just War must be fought with the goal of re-establishing peace.³⁵ Again, one must consider a situation of nuclear state vs. nuclear state, and nuclear state vs. non-nuclear state. In WW - II, the United States used the first nuclear weapons with great strategic effect to re-establish peace against a state that did not have nuclear weapons. However, in a conflict between two or more of the current nuclear states, the chance of escalation within the nuclear exchange is great enough to assume that the end result, while possibly peaceful, would be so terrible as to be beyond human comprehension. Bombing one's enemy back into the stone age does not constitute a valid re - establishment of peace.

Nuclear deterrence is not however, nuclear war. Indeed, the policy was created and is maintained to prevent nuclear or massive conventional war. In this purpose of preventing war between the major powers, nuclear deterrence has succeeded.

The remaining set of principles that comprise the Just War tradition are those which attempt to restrain the actual conduct of combat in war.³⁶ The *jus in bello* argues that violence by adversaries in a war must be proportional to the injuries suffered, and weapons in war must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Nuclear weapons fail to meet either of the demands of the *jus in bello*. Here, it is easy to make a case for the ethical impossibilities of the use of nuclear weapons in combat

³⁵ Johnson, pg xxii

³⁶ The Principles of Just War, Mt. Holyoke college, December 19, 3003
<<http://www.myholyokey.edu.acad/intrel/poll16/justwar.htm>>

In response to the demand that in a Just War the violence in war must be proportional to the injury suffered, nuclear war has no answer. Nuclear weapons were not made to be proportional. Their very design is for mass destruction and their purpose is one of totality. Even the very first nuclear weapons dropped over Japan were efficient beyond any weapon at the time. It took one plane and one bomb over Hiroshima to kill over 70,000 people directly and thousands more indirectly with the radioactive fallout.³⁷ Since that time, nuclear weapons have only increased in number and yield capability. Wiping out the entire population of a country is not a proportional response, yet this is the ultimate threat posed by the strategy of mutually assured destruction (MAD), and arguably the likely outcome of even a “flexible response” strategy. It is this precise threat of a disproportionate response to attack that is the foundation of nuclear deterrence.

To combat this argument that nuclear weapons can never satisfy the condition of proportionality, supporters of nuclear weapons and the deterrent threat have put forth the idea of a limited nuclear war. The key component of this theory is the assumption that nuclear weapons could be used against specific and remote military targets, thus altering the strategy of retaliation from one of counter-value (also known as city swapping) to one of counter-force. This kind of warfare was tempting to strategists because it not only seemed to grant moral credibility to the use of nuclear weapons, but also had the added benefit of making a nuclear war seem winnable.³⁸

This is a superficially satisfying theory. It certainly at first seems to solve the moral and strategic problems of keeping enormous numbers of nuclear weapons stockpiled. In practice however, it is hard to realistically imagine this kind of war. There would always

³⁷ Grolier Interactive Website, <http://gi.grolier.com/wwii/wwii_atom.html> November 23, 2003

³⁸ Michael Waltzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*. New York: Basic Books(1997) pg 275

be the temptation to escalate the war before an adversary did in order to achieve any and all strategic advantages possible. Any escalation of course, bears the high probability of increasing the magnitude of the conflict to the point of devastating destruction, the occurrence of which the theory of limited war proposes to avoid. Scholars are divided on this idea, with many believing any exchange would escalate to MAD while others, mainly proponents of the limited war theory, argue that rational states given the opportunity, would cease conflict at any point where damage became too costly. The question remains however, whether in the heat of a nuclear exchange, state leaders would truly retain this level of rationality. Also, the “collateral damage” in terms of civilian populations caused by even a limited use of nuclear weapons would violate both of the tenets of the Just War tradition.³⁹ Waltzer outlines two possibilities concerning the concept of limited nuclear warfare that he believes are the most likely outcomes in the actuality of a nuclear exchange. “Either nuclear weapons will be held at such low levels that they won’t be significantly different from or of greater military utility than conventional explosives, in which case there is no reason to use them at all, or their very use will obliterate the distinction between targets⁴⁰.”

Beyond that, there is the disturbing reality that counter value warfare, also known as city swapping,⁴¹ is simply more effective as a deterrent threat. The idea that an aggressor could destroy a state’s military and defensive installations, thus rendering it defenseless and unable to respond with a deterrent of its own, is more disturbing to strategists than the alternative of targeting civilian populations. Any attempt to limit the destruction possible in a nuclear exchange weakens the deterrent threat and therefore

³⁹ Waltzer, pg 276

⁴⁰ Waltzer, pg. 277

⁴¹ Waltzer, pg 274

increases the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons in actual conflict. Whether the strategy is MAD, or a “flexible response” it is the end result that truly deters. Although this is a fairly simplistic view of limited warfare, it serves well enough for the argument.

In conjunction with the idea of limited war and the avoidance of civilian casualties, we move to the final and arguably most important principle of the Just War tradition: that of the need for weapons and strategies to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants in war. Nuclear weapons’ failure to maintain this distinction, which is at the very heart of the Just War tradition, is perhaps the most damning evidence for the impossibility of justifying the large-scale use of nuclear weapons in warfare. Nuclear weapons irrevocably erase the line between these two categories, and violate the idea that non-combatants must never be directly attacked⁴². The effects of a nuclear strike, even in self-defense, or in retaliation for a nuclear or massive conventional strike by an aggressor, “amounts to the wholesale and foreseen killing and injuring of non-combatants which cannot be described as discriminate.”⁴³ Examined in this light, it is also impossible to justify the deterrent threat since, in effect, nuclear deterrence holds whole populations in silent hostage.⁴⁴

It is easy to see from the evidence cited within the context of the *jus in bello*, it is impossible to justify the actual use of nuclear weapons in warfare. This is supported by the Judeo-Christian morality that prohibits killing, especially of innocents, on such a massive scale. However, it can be argued using the principles of the *jus ad bellum*, that there exist certain situations, namely those of supreme emergency, where it would be permissible to

⁴² *The Church and the Bomb* Pg. 95

⁴³ *The Church and the Bomb* Pg. 96

⁴⁴ Waltzer, pg 280

threaten the use of nuclear weapons in order to prevent either conventional or nuclear aggression against one's state.

Here Kavka's paradox resurfaces. It might be permissible to threaten an impermissible action, knowing full well that the action is amoral, if the intent of the threat was to prevent the action.⁴⁵ This leads directly back to the validity of the most pressing question concerning nuclear deterrence itself: is it morally permissible to threaten what it is not morally permissible to do? Especially since the credibility of the deterrent threat rests on the perceived intent of a state to carry it out.

War, the most disturbing of human inventions, is neither philosophically, politically nor realistically simple. Few conventional wars ever truly adhere to all the principles of the Just War theory. Horrible as the condition of war may be, for survival throughout history states have often found themselves in a position where self-defense in the form of aggression is the only way to ensure their political sovereignty and territorial integrity. Thus, any analysis of the ethics of nuclear deterrence must take into consideration not only the moral justifications or condemnations of nuclear war, but the condition in which states exist in the international system, and how this conditions affect a state's security.

Here, the analysis of nuclear deterrence moves from the purely ethical to the realistic. Nothing is either purely good or evil, and nuclear weapons and the deterrent threat are no different.

In the search to explain conflict between states, philosophers have often turned to what seems to be an inherent flaw in human nature. Be it explained by the Christian

⁴⁵ Gregory S. Kavka. *Moral Paradoxes of Nuclear Deterrence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pg 19

doctrine of original sin, or through the scientific theories of biological competition, it is true that the history of mankind's existence is fraught with conflict.

Further explanations proposed include ideological differences between states or competition over resources. Current international relations theory developed by Kenneth Waltz has brought forth a broader reason for the conflict between states. Waltz is the leader of a modern school of thinking called "Neo-Realism." Neo-Realism differs from classical realism in its structural, rather than behavioral, approach to examining international politics. While classical realists like Machiavelli viewed conflict as the result of human nature, Waltz argues that conflict between states is better explained by the structure of the international system. To this end, Waltz identifies what he terms three "images" or causes of war between states. Waltz's three images are invaluable in defining international relations in such a way as to make the analysis of the role of nuclear deterrence within the international state centric system more complete. The first two images of Waltz's theory are the "efficient" or immediate causes of war, and consist of human nature and the nature of states.

Waltz's first image of international conflict and human behavior pays tribute to much older theories about the relationship between man's nature and the nature of the state. Classical Realism presents the idea that human beings are flawed and that the inherent imperfections of man are the basis of conflict between men and states. Waltz disagrees that this is a sufficient explanation for the complexity of international relations. "The importance of human nature as a factor in causal analysis of social events is reduced by the fact that the same nature however defined, has to explain an infinite variety of social

events.”⁴⁶ “While human nature no doubt plays a role in bringing about war, it cannot by itself explain both war and peace, except by the simple statement that man’s nature is such that sometimes he fights and sometimes he does not.”⁴⁷

Since human nature itself has not undergone any kind of radical change in countless millennia, it is insufficient to explain the changes in either domestic or international society. Also, if human nature is fixed, and only human nature determines the state of peace and security in the world, then there is little hope of eventual peace between all nations.

Waltz then goes on to examine the internal structure of states and its bearing on international conflict in his second image. In this image, Waltz explains that war between nations actually has the benefit of often increasing a state’s internal security and, for this reason, states in a condition of internal struggle might make a move of aggression against another state to create a common enemy. “The state plagued by internal strife may then, instead of waiting for the accidental attack, seek the war that will bring internal peace.”⁴⁸ This is an old idea, dating back to the earliest human conflicts. It relies on the basic human distinction between “in” and “out” groups: us versus them. The obvious question that follows then, is why do states that already possess internal security go to war? The answer, almost always, is to protect or promote external security. While it is true that internal struggles or political, economic, and ideological clashes between opposing states can be used to explain the causes of specific wars, Waltz is again dissatisfied with what he sees as the deficiencies of using this level of analysis in explaining the permissive causes of all

⁴⁶ Kenneth Waltz. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 7th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) pg 27

⁴⁷ Waltz pg 29

⁴⁸ Waltz, pg 81

conflict between states in general. This is mainly because this level of analysis leads to the conclusion that for peace to be widespread, removing the defects in the structures of states is all that is needed.⁴⁹ The difficulty of course, is how to enable this sweeping change in states' systems, and whether such a change is even a realistic possibility. Since it has already been established that human nature is permanently flawed, it is impossible to expect states, which after all are merely groups of people, to achieve the perfection lacking in their populations.

Waltz then moves on to his third image, that of international anarchy. To the question of what allows war, Waltz's answer relies heavily on Jean Jacques Rousseau, who theorized that war occurs because there is nothing to prevent it.⁵⁰ In the third image, Waltz argues that the lack of any authority greater than the individual state with the power to enforce international laws, creates a condition of anarchy in the international system. This condition of anarchy leaves states alone to provide for their own external security. It is this constant struggle for security within the international system then, that inevitably leads to conflict between states. Waltz argues, "In anarchy there is no automatic harmony... A state will use force to attain its goals if it ... values those goals more than it values the pleasures of peace... Because any state may at any time use force all states must constantly be ready either to counter force with force, or to pay the cost of weakness. The requirements of state action are, in this view, imposed by the circumstances in which all states exist."⁵¹ Here then, is the explanation, not only of specific wars, but also of the permissive cause of conflict between states within the international system

⁴⁹ Kenneth Waltz. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 7th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) pg 83

⁵⁰ Waltz, pg 152

⁵¹ Waltz, pg 160

. Because security in an anarchical system is relative, one state increasing its security weakens the security of another state. This desire to achieve a balance of power is often the impetus behind arms races which in themselves, threaten the security of the international system

As with all political theory, nothing is black and white: international relations are made more complex by alliances, coalitions and neutral states. While Waltz's third image attempts to explain war as a whole, it does not negate the necessity of studying the first and second images to explain relations between states. Thus, the simple model of security seeking states, where each move by one state toward greater security automatically decreases the security of all others portrayed above, is not necessarily accurate. An increase in the armed forces of the United States does not automatically mean Great Britain or Western Europe suddenly feel threatened and therefore obliged to increase their own arms. In fact the very opposite was true throughout the Cold War, with the United States providing "umbrella" nuclear protection of Western Europe. With a nuclear armed Soviet Union sitting on Europe's doorstep, the promise of American nuclear protection, feasible or not, must have seemed a relief, both from the threat of nuclear attack, as well as from conventional invasion.

In contrast to this is the situation of mutually exclusive security that spawned the great arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. The result of which was massive nuclear stockpiles, containing the massive destructive ability to destroy both countries many times over.

Despite treaties and coalitions such as NATO, the EEU or the United Nations, in the final analysis the international system is still one without any kind of central

governmental body with the power to enforce ethical, rational, or coherent behavior between states. Indeed, the international system and the UN can be compared to the early United States under the inadequate Articles of Confederation. Excessive weakness under the Articles of Confederation nearly led to America's destruction, as does the current lack of coherent international order raise the possibilities of international disorder and collapse.

Ultimately, states are left alone to enforce the two most important aspects of statehood: political sovereignty and territorial integrity. Simultaneously however, it is this common desire for survival that creates conflict within the international system.

In examining the condition of states within the framework of Waltz's three images, it is easy to begin to see similarities between the situation of states within the international system, and individual men in what John Locke or Thomas Hobbes would term a "state of nature". Waltz himself makes that very same comparison writing, "States in the world are like humans in the state of nature. They are neither perfectly good, nor controlled by law."⁵²

Since independent states exist without any kind of higher authority or government, agreed upon or tyrannical in nature, there exists a natural analogy between the situation of states in the anarchical international system and individuals in the state of nature. It is therefore useful to examine states' actions and motivations within a context of comparison to individuals existing without the similar restraint of government.

This concept of seeing states as individual actors within the anarchical international system is commonly referred to now as the "domestic analogy." Most recently developed by Hedley Bull, the idea itself is not new. Locke, when writing on the state of nature and

⁵² Kenneth Waltz. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 7th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) pg 163

its effect on man, noted that, “All princes and rulers of independent governments all through the world are in a state of nature ...” whether these independent communities “are, or are not, in league with others.”⁵³

This domestic analogy, along with Waltz’s third image, gives the best model of international relations within which to consider the moral (not the strategic) ramifications of nuclear deterrence. This analogy takes on greater relevance since nuclear deterrence theory, as developed in the 1950’s and 1960’s, rested upon a set of behavioral assumptions about states the most important of which was the idea that states could be treated as unitary or individual rational actors.⁵⁴ As developed, nuclear deterrence theory held that states actions are a function of opportunity and any defense against aggression must therefore raise the costs of the aggression to an unacceptable level. For this reason, the massive destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons were developed and maintained.⁵⁵ This concept of viewing the participants in a nuclear deterrent situation as individual actors reinforces the role of nuclear deterrence in any analogy between states in the international system and individuals in the state of nature.

If states can be thought of as individuals within an anarchical system that is similar to a Lockean or Hobbesian state of nature, than one can also apply some of the methods of thinking applied to such individuals to explain, predict and even defend the behaviors and motivations of states. Carrying the domestic analogy further; if states can be thought of as individuals, then they are allowed the same rights within the international system as do individuals within the state of nature. Since the strategy of nuclear deterrence was based

⁵³ John Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1976) pg 294 sect. 14

⁵⁴ Robert Jervis, et al. *Perspectives on Deterrence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) pg 5

⁵⁵ Jervis, pg 6

on the idea of states as individual, rational actors,⁵⁶ then there exists the possibility of applying certain ethical guides meant for individuals in the defense of the deterrent situation. Three such ethical guides, egoism, Kantian and utilitarianism, will be considered and applied to the deterrent situation

One can most logically begin an examination of individual ethics by focusing on the concept of egoism. Egoism holds that the best decision in an ethical dilemma is one that brings the greatest benefit for the decision maker.⁵⁷ This idea bears strong resemblance to Machiavelli's writing, *The Prince*, "Therefore, a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith, when by doing so it would be against his interest."⁵⁸ Though Machiavelli was writing concerning the behavior of sovereigns and their relations to their people, this theme of watching out for ones' self is at the core of the international political theories of Realism and Neo-realism. Both theories, though differing in approach to the explanation of states' actions, propose that in the interest of political survival, the best decision a state can make is that which benefits itself.

The flaw in this ethical theory when applied to the actions of states is the same flaw that occurs when it is applied to individual human behavior, and leads to similar criticism within the fields of ethical, and political theory. Acting on decisions that would produce the best result for the actor often come at an unacceptable cost to other participants within the system. In international relations, acting solely in the interest of one state without considering the consequences for other states has often led to war. This condition does not negate nuclear deterrence. States must continue to act in their own self-interest, since to

⁵⁶ Robert Jervis, et al. *Perspectives on Deterrence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) pg 6

⁵⁷ Peter Singer. ed. *A Companion to Ethics*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.,) 1991 pg 197

⁵⁸ Ronald, E. Santoni and John Somerville ed. *Social and Political Philosophy*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1963) pg 123

cease to do so, would be to violate the first purpose of a state. Rather nuclear deterrence has had a very effective and positive restraining effect on state's behavior.

Examining nuclear deterrence within the egoism theory sheds light on the restraining role of the deterrent strategy. Deterrence is a passive policy in which the enemy's actions determine the outcome. It involves setting the stage, and waiting.⁵⁹ For security reasons, it can easily be shown to be in, for example, the United States' best interests to continue the deterrent threat. However, since it is also in other nuclear states' best interests to do the same, the situation of mutual deterrence creates (or has created, as one can see from history) a modifying effect on both parties. Since it is clearly in both states best interest not to endure a nuclear attack, both states modify their behavior within the deterrent situation in such a way as to not force the other state into a position where it would feel that it would be worth reprisal to strike first.

From the often-termed selfish theory of egoism, the application of individual ethics moves to the theories of Kant. Kantian ethics are sometimes difficult to define. One of the defining characteristics of Kant's thinking is his attribution of the need for ethical behavior not to God, but to reason.⁶⁰ The most famous precept of Kantian ethics is known as the categorical imperative, "Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time, will that it be a universal law."⁶¹ [sic] Essentially, this is a modification of the Golden Rule: act as you would wish everyone else to act in a similar situation.

Kant's basis of reason for ethical behavior provides one platform for the defense of nuclear deterrence since, while not always straightforward, deterrence is based on assumptions of reason and rationality in the actors. Without an assumption of a certain

⁵⁹ Thomas Schelling. *Arms and Influence*. (London: Yale University Press, 1966) pg 71

⁶⁰ Peter Singer. ed. *A Companion to Ethics*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.,) 1991 pg 177

⁶¹ Singer, pg 177

level of reason, the balance of power inherent in the deterrent situation becomes a condition of irrational fear that raises the possibility of the failure of deterrence. In the same way it is morally acceptable to destroy a rabid dog, an irrational actor with nuclear weapons would constitute a threat of sufficient magnitude to justify aggression against it.

The foundation of Kantian ethics, the concept of universality, proves to be a difficulty when applied to nuclear deterrence and specifically nuclear weapons. Although nuclear deterrence has a proven history of success between both friendly and adversarial powers, the spread of nuclear weapons technology to a greater number of states raises the risk of accident or of an irrational actor obtaining possession of these weapons. Universal adherence to nuclear deterrence could, as some argue, increase political stability by raising universally the cost of aggression, or it could have a terrible destabilizing effect on the international political system

Waltz pinpoints the most important problem concerning the spread of nuclear weapons states beyond the current actors. “Whether or not nuclear weapons increase or decrease the chances of war depends on whether nuclear weapons permit and encourage states to deploy forces in ways that make the active use of force more or less likely and in ways that promise to be more or less destructive. If nuclear weapons make offense more effective, then they are bad for the world - the more so the more widely diffused nuclear weapons become. If defense and deterrence are made easier and more reliable by the spread of nuclear weapons, we may expect the opposite result.”⁶² In short, Kantian ethics are an insufficient framework within which to judge the deterrent situation.

The final theory used in examination of nuclear deterrence is Utilitarianism.

⁶² Kenneth Waltz. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*. Adelphi Papers, 171. International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981 pg 4

Utilitarianism holds that any ethical decision in a dilemma is essentially one whose consequences achieve the greatest good for the greatest number.⁶³ This ideal closely resembles President Franklin D. Roosevelt's vision of a peaceful, post WW - II world in which a small number of superpowers acted in cooperation for the benefit of all states.

Applying Utilitarianism when analyzing the actions of states also presents certain difficulties. Unfortunately for Roosevelt's Wilsonian vision of peace, the Cold War occurred creating an ultimately stable, but highly adversarial bi-polar political system, rather than universal cooperation. In this aspect, nuclear deterrence failed to adhere to the principle of utilitarianism, and instead became an agent of individual state security.

History will never know the outcome of the Cold War had the actors not been nuclear states but it can be seen that without the threat of massive retaliation, it is highly likely that the Cold War would not have been cold at all, but instead would have become the conventional WW - III that people feared. Indeed, although the situation during the Cold War was highly adversarial, and a time of popular fear, nuclear weapons served to create a highly stable international situation. Clearly this was a stability of terror, however, that does not negate the success of the deterrent policy.

In this context then, it can be argued that nuclear deterrence actually served the utilitarian ideal by successfully preventing a nuclear holocaust between the two superpowers that would have decimated not only the United States and the Soviet Union, but also a huge percentage of the surrounding states.

While there can be no argument that a world without the existence of nuclear weapons would be preferable to the current balance of power politics, there is also no

⁶³ Hugh LaFollette. ed. *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory.*(Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000) pg 165

denying that this world balance is not likely to exist for a long time. The international system is not an ideal. States, in order to ensure survival in a system of competing interests, must be pragmatic and realistic or risk the other states taking advantage of them. Nuclear deterrence is a policy that so far has been both successful and, with the exception of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which took place before the development of the nuclear deterrent threat, bloodless.

Ultimately it is difficult to apply ethical guides intended for individuals to the actions and behavior of states. While states may be individuals in the sense of the international system, they are also comprised of individuals, and both these traits must be taken into account in any theory of international relations. Also, the interconnectedness of the international system exposes weaknesses in using the ethical models described above which are meant for individuals whose security is not constantly at stake.

Further examination of the morality of nuclear deterrence in the context of the international system returns to the analogy of states existing as individuals in a state of nature. In doing so, this paper will make the case that a state's rights in defending political sovereignty and territorial integrity are comparable to an individual's rights to defense of life and liberty within the state of nature. Further, just as men in the state of nature have the right and duty to punish aggressors on behalf of society⁶⁴ nuclear states have a duty to maintain the deterrent threat for the purpose of creating a stabilizing force otherwise lacking in the anarchical international system.

The liberal Western democratic tradition embraces an inherently optimistic view of man and man's abilities. There exists however, a competing, pessimistic view of men.

⁶⁴ John Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1976) pg 290

When choosing a description of the state of nature that best fits the condition of states in the international system, the similar but competing views of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke can be considered. While both Hobbes and Locke theorized the condition of man in the state of nature, their visions of this state differ due to their opposing views of human nature without the restraint of governmental authority.

Locke saw the state of nature as one where all men were equals, both in rights and power, and were therefore free to order their actions as they so chose.⁶⁵ Locke also gives man in the state of nature the Right of Self Preservation and, to that end, every man is charged with the duty of punishing offenders for the preservation of all mankind. “And thus it is, that every man in the state of nature, has a power to kill a murderer both to deter others from doing the like injury ... by the example of the punishment that attends it from every body, and also to secure men from the attempts of a criminal ...”⁶⁶

Hobbes holds little faith in his fellow man however, and describes the state of nature as one where human life without regulation of an “over awing” authority, is “nasty brutish and short.”⁶⁷ For Hobbes, the state of nature was equated with the state of war; a condition of every man in competition with every other man.⁶⁸ Additionally, Hobbes argued there existed an absence of law and justice within the state of nature. Hobbes saw no justice without the power of government to enforce it.

Both philosophers also saw states, or “rulers and princes” as individuals within a society of their peers and existing, due to their position in an anarchical system, within a state of nature similar to that of individual man without government. Hobbes described

⁶⁵ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1976) pg 292

⁶⁶ Locke. pg 292

⁶⁷ Thomas Hobbes. *The Leviathan*, last ed. (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 1796) pg 65

⁶⁸ Hobbes, pg 65

the state as an individual, albeit one whose “body” is composed of individual men. “For by art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State ... Which is but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural for whose protection and defense it was intended.”⁶⁹ Locke viewed the state in terms of its rulers, foreshadowing the modern domestic analogy of attributing rational individual behavior to states.

Hobbes’ application of his vision of the state of nature of man to the situation experienced by kings and rulers is again colored by his view of human nature. In describing the condition of states, he wrote, “Yet in all times kings and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators ... which is the posture of war.”⁷⁰

This state of continual competition, or war, described by Hobbes is the foundation of later Realist and Neo-Realist international relations theory and is the same condition which Waltz describes in his three images. The difference, of course, is that Waltz based his “state of war” on the structural realities of the international system rather than any particular view of human nature.

Beyond both philosophers’ views concerning the state of nature and a state’s situation within the international system, the purpose of the state as theorized by Hobbes and Locke must be considered.

Locke viewed both the purpose and the state of government as one contained within the parameters of his social contract theory. Men agreed to give up their “perfect freedom” in the state of nature for the purpose of preserving their “Lives, Liberties, and Estates,”

⁶⁹ Thomas Hobbes. *The Leviathan*, last ed. (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 1796) pg 139

⁷⁰ Hobbes, pg 65

which Locke termed “property.”⁷¹ To that end, he argued, princes or states, acting on behalf of their people had power, or “prerogative.” In Locke’s view, a prince who was “good,” who acted in the people’s best interests, could not have too much prerogative. Whereas with a weak prince who used that prerogative for his own pleasure the people had a right and duty to limit that power or remove the prince⁷².

The strategy of nuclear deterrence, as implemented and maintained by a stable, rational government solely for the defense of a state’s political sovereignty and territorial integrity, functions as an extension of this prerogative on behalf of the citizens of the state. So long as the deterrent threat is maintained only for deterrence and defense, nuclear states have a duty to continue this policy not just for their own security, but for the stability of the international system.

In defending nuclear deterrence as a stabilizing force in the international system, Hobbes’ views on the purpose of government must be considered. While Hobbes was also a social contract theorist, his stated reasons for the necessity of government once again differ from Locke due to his more pessimistic views. Rather than see the condition of government as one of protection, Hobbes necessitated government as a force of restraint. Without a civil society, he argued, there was no power to “strengthen the covenant of peace against the temptations of avarice, ambition ...”⁷³ Since the state of nature is equivalent to a state of war in Hobbes’ theory, there is no incentive for individual man to give up his right to secure himself against his fellows, unless he is assured that others will do the same. He writes in *Leviathan*, “For the laws of nature, as justice, equity...without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions ... And

⁷¹ John Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1976) pg 368

⁷² Locke. pg 395

⁷³ Thomas Hobbes, *e Leviathan*, last ed. (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 1796) pg 67

covenants, without the sword, are but words and of no strength to secure man at all.”⁷⁴

For Hobbes the purpose of government is fear since no other force can persuade man to cooperate with his fellow man. Government was to be that which man feared enough to cease his natural state of war with other men. In short, government was meant to restrain the natural ambitions of man in order to provide a civilizing force upon him.

Waltz echoes Hobbes’ questionably more realistic views when he argues that the state is necessary as the restraint men need to act morally. “The civil state appears as a necessary constraint. A number of men acting upon empirical “and therefore merely contingent” knowledge must have a judge among them, and a judge who can enforce his decisions, if violence is to be avoided. After the state is established, men have some chance of behaving morally.”⁷⁵

As previously discussed there is no government in the international state system, and so states continue to act as individuals in a state of war. Thus, the only method of restraint available to states is the use, or threatened use, of force. The only threat of force that has actually succeeded as a deterrent in its attempt to restrain the actions of adversarial states is nuclear deterrence. Nuclear deterrence has provided the civilizing force of fear lacking in the absence of an international authority. Though nuclear deterrence is not an ideal solution to international anarchy, the lack of conflict between the major powers and nuclear states during the last half of the 20th century is proof of its effectiveness in maintaining a condition of restraint between states.

Thus, mutually assured destruction (MAD), as a means of enforcing security is a valid and realistic solution to the inherent uncertainty of international relations. States

⁷⁴ Hobbes, pg 87

⁷⁵ Kenneth Waltz. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 7th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) pg 167

exist to provide a manner of protection from the aggression of other members of the international community to their citizens. If a man in the state of nature has the right, as Locke suggests, to take any measure in defense of their liberty, then a state, in its purpose of protecting those it governs, carries this same right in its duty to its citizens. For a select number of states, nuclear deterrence has become not just a key for individual defense, but a stabilizing force within the international arena.

It is therefore obvious that deterrence functions well because it works on several levels. Nuclear deterrence deters conflict between states because its terrible threat is sufficient to restrain the inherent selfishness of human behavior. It has served to make ideological differences between states a secondary concern to security, at least between major nuclear powers. The morally disturbing, but pragmatically proven strategy of nuclear deterrence has provided stability within an inherently unstable anarchical international system.

Even the Cold War, a period deterrence critics point to as being an example of the dangers of nuclear deterrence, was in fact, an extremely stable period of international relations.⁷⁶ This is true even though the same period must be regarded as one of popular fear of nuclear war. Restrained by the threat of nuclear retaliation, neutral states as well as the United States and the Soviet Union, were unwilling to act in ways that might increase the chance of universal annihilation. Certainly by comparison to the first half of the 20th century, the last nearly six decades have been peaceful. As Waltz emphasizes in his argument, the spread of nuclear weapons may actually be beneficial to the stability of the

⁷⁶ Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 7th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) pgs 2 & 3

political system. Nuclear weapons have created over five decades of peace between the great powers.

As Hobbes theorized, fear has proven to be the civilization of man. Similarly, fear of universal destruction has forced states to be more rational when compared to similar arms races before the advent of nuclear technology. Although it would be a narrow view to say that nuclear deterrence is solely responsible for the state of relative peace between major powers, the fundamental change in conflict that has occurred since the end of WW - II, points to the benefits of nuclear deterrence as a stabilizing force within the prevailing anarchy of international relations. “Nuclear weapons increase the ability of states to fend for themselves when the integrity of their legitimate boundaries is at stake.”⁷⁷

Until human nature changes fundamentally, the nature of states and the anarchy of the international system is also unlikely to undergo a rapid radical alteration. This is not to suggest that states will forever be at each other’s throats in a condition of war as Hobbes described. There is however, no denying states exist in a condition of inherent uncertainty where there is no incentive to relinquish the right of self-defense. If nuclear deterrence is the method by which a select group of states not only provides for their own security but enhances the stability of the international system, then it should be embraced.

This does not imply that a large-scale dissemination of nuclear weapons to states that currently do not possess them is desirable. Indeed, to do so raises the chances of creating another great arms race, or enabling an irrational or non-state actor to obtain nuclear weapons. The result of such a situation would be catastrophic.

⁷⁷ Kenneth Waltz. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*. (Adelphi Papers, 171. International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981) pg 26

Simply because deterrence is a practical solution to the problem of the security dilemma created by international anarchy does not mean that it is an elegant one. The effectiveness of nuclear deterrence still rests on the fear of the participants, and assumes rationality in all actors. Rationality can be assumed by most states, but what about non-state actors? The United States has recently experienced terrorism on its own soil. The thought of a radical and dedicated terrorist organization having access to nuclear weapons is terrifying, yet hopefully remote. As discussed previously, developing and maintaining a sufficient nuclear arsenal with which to make a credible deterrent or coercive threat is a feat that so far no non-governmental group has achieved.

In the end, nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence will continue to remain a paradox. Current nuclear weapons' states must continue to support the weapons' existence to prevent their use. Dominant nuclear powers must plan a deterrent strategy in the hope and with the intent that such a strategy will never be carried out. One must recognize the additional paradox that that same strategy rests upon the acknowledged willingness to carry out the deterrent in defense of national security.

Ultimately states, and their citizens, exist in a condition of uncertainty within the international community. The future is unpredictable. In an ideal world, states would work toward creating an international community based on mutually agreed upon benefits, goals and peace. Nationalism and religious extremism would fade and civilization might finally realize its greatest potential in peace and cooperation.

Until that time however, the blueprints for the United Federation of Planet's Starfleet Headquarters⁷⁸ can probably be put on hold. Unity and cooperation in increasingly large political communities tends to evolve much in the same way organisms and

⁷⁸ Popular Television series created by Gene Roddenberry with a hopeful outlook for humanity's future.

ecosystems evolve in their natural environment. Most change is slow and creeping, taking Ages to complete an evolutionary cycle, periods of time far beyond a single human's lifetime. Some changes, like mutations, explode radically into being. Evolution in the direction of international unity however, has come very, very slowly. This is due to the overwhelming complexity and number of variables within and among relationships that exist between the individual nation states.

A major role of nuclear deterrence within the anarchical system is not only to provide a restraining threat, but also to change the variable of the force relationship between countries. There is not, nor can there be, any questioning the defensive or retaliatory capabilities of a state that possesses nuclear weapons.

With the advent and development of nuclear weapons, the international community has seen at least a partial fulfillment of Roosevelt's vision for a post - war world. The existing dominant superpowers, a "small group of powerful states," have certainly come to be and there is no doubt that they have at times tried to act in the best interest of all. Just as there are no ideal situations or systems however, history has witnessed that this small, powerful group has sometimes failed to act for the benefit of any but themselves. The Cold War was such a failure of cooperation. Though the bi-polar world created by the adversarial relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union did provide political stability, it was not the mutual cooperation Roosevelt had envisioned.

The post WW - II nuclear era has seen the spread (slowly and often fitfully, but the spread nonetheless) of liberal democratic states, and the absence of armed conflict between these states. The world has seen war change in nature from all-encompassing, population-

massing total wars, of not just arms but economies and a return to professional, specialized forces.

While nuclear weapons are not the sole reason for these changes in the realities of international relations, nuclear weapons have provided the backdrop for the social, political and economic changes that have resulted from the end of World War II, and the cataclysmic of defeat of fascism and Japanese military nationalism.

Despite the rise of liberal democracies, the fall of the Soviet Union as a superpower, and the current trends of peace between western states, the international system is still inherently unstable. Tension and conflict is, and will remain for some time, the hallmark of the international state system. Conflicting interests still continue to mar relationships between middle - eastern and western states, and the possibility of a nuclear North Korea and other rogue states operating outside the framework of a cooperative international system, raises the distinct probability of a destabilizing force within the international system sometime soon. Rogue states with a history of violent and irresponsible actions that possess nuclear weapons also pose a threat to the stability created and maintained by the realist politics of mutually assured destruction.

Working toward disarmament is a noble goal that should be pursued, but not at the cost of a realistic assessment of international security.

At its foundation, nuclear deterrence is a realistic solution to the continuing and frightening problem inherent in the anarchical international system. Nuclear weapons are ultimate weapons designed and maintained to defend against an ultimate attack, and while nations who possess these weapons must never forget their destructive capabilities nor the responsibilities that the possession of these weapons carry, there is no denying the right of

the current nuclear states to continue the deterrent threat so long as it is in the interest of maintaining the stability of the international system.

One must look beyond the destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons when attempting to judge the morality of their continued existence. Nuclear deterrence has proven to be more than a coercive threat. Deterrence strategy has emerged as a successful means to ensure a state's security, as well as becoming a stabilizing rather than a destabilizing force in the international arena for some fifty years.

Few things in life are black and white, and fewer still in international politics embrace any kind of moral clarity. The pursuit of noble and ethical ideals must continue to be a trait of successful nation states. However, this quest, this hallmark of just and rational governance, must not be taken as an abandonment of, or a substitute for, rational and pragmatic policies.

Nuclear deterrence is not an ideal situation, but it is an undeniably a successful one. This fact must be kept in mind when analyzing the morality of nuclear deterrence and its role and consequences in the modern nation state system. It is ultimately an imperfect world, and while nuclear deterrence may be an imperfect policy, it is a successful and therefore ultimately just solution to the state of war inherent in the anarchical international state system.

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