

THE CARITAS IN VERITATE FOUNDATION WORKING PAPERS  
*“The City of God in the Palace of Nations”*

# *Nuclear Deterrence*

*An Ethical Perspective*



With a selection of recent texts from the Church's engagement  
regarding the question of nuclear deterrence

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## *Editorial*

### **A wasted opportunity**

**N**uclear weapons have silently faded from mainstream social debate. In the past 25 years, this unforeseen effect of the Soviet Union's demise has not helped solve the question of disarmament and non-proliferation. This comes as a surprise. Even though circumstances became seemingly so much more favorable for progress toward nuclear disarmament, no substantive advance toward this goal has been achieved over this period. On the contrary, states have not ceased upgrading their nuclear arsenals, and in light of today's multi-polar context for nuclear deterrence – no longer dominated overwhelmingly by two great powers – the security landscape seems increasingly more perilous. We still have a trove of nuclear weaponry capable of destroying human life on earth. While this window of opportunity was wasted, the world decidedly shifted to become multi-polar. Both Russia and the US are seeing their previous dominance over the rest of the world falter. Nowadays, no nuclear power dominates international relationships as was the case during the Cold War.

The Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT-1970) was intended to reduce the risk of nuclear war. The treaty had three goals: to limit the number of countries that would have access to nuclear weapons; to limit the growth of existing nuclear arsenals and to progress toward general nuclear disarmament; to preserve the right of peaceful use of the nuclear energy. At the root of the treaty's grand bargain, was the proposition that non-nuclear states would renounce any acquisition of nuclear weapons if the nuclear powers would agree to stop the nuclear arms race and actively engage in progressive disarmament. The Treaty did impose controls and restricted access to the technology leading to nuclear weapons upon non-nuclear states. But it left to future negotiations both the question of inspections of nuclear arsenals by third parties and the whole disarmament process of nuclear powers.

### **The failure of the NPT**

**T**he NPT has failed. Not only because of double standards regarding who could be allowed to have nuclear weapons, but also and mainly because the nuclear powers never seriously complied with their part of the bargain and have used the NPT as a form of covert control over the nuclear ambitions of the non-nuclear states. To agree on reciprocally binding rules but with no real intent to adhere to these rules oneself is not

a sound base for a Treaty. Little surprise then that successive NPT review conferences have been unable to reach agreements and to implement them in good faith! In this context, an initiative was launched in Oslo (2013) by like-minded states, among them the Holy See, to revise the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Two follow-up conferences took place in Mexico (Nayarit, February 2014) and Austria (Vienna, December 2014). The last one was attended by more than 140 countries and the question of the abolition of nuclear weapons came to the forefront. The Catholic Church resolutely engaged on this path with Pope Francis addressing the conference in his usual strong and clear language: “It is time for abolition.”

### **A new initiative**

**T**his Working Paper of Caritas in Veritate Foundation comes as a contribution to this renewed diplomatic effort to move beyond the nuclear age. For a while, deterrence was seen by the Church as a practical but non-permanent fixture that would allow time for the responsible parties to engage in disarmament. “A peace of sorts” but not true and long-lasting peace; a dangerous path because the equilibrium of deterrence by Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) would always be fragile and tend, by its own logic of suspicion and fear, to promote a race for dominance. However, deterrence was never applied by the nuclear powers as a temporary means for allowing time for nuclear disarmament. It is an essential feature of their security policy – a feature that they show little willingness to forgo. Therefore deterrence no longer functions as an instrument that allows for disarmament; rather it has become an obstacle toward achieving that goal.

### **Deterrence is not morally sustainable**

**T**he doctrine of nuclear deterrence holds that nuclear weapons are possessed, not for direct use on the battlefield, but solely as a means to dissuade, by threat of retaliation, a would-be enemy from mounting a first strike. But this doctrine is not morally sustainable, for several reasons: (a) These weapons have no military use that would not trigger wide civilian casualties. The hovering threat of accruing tremendous loss will never be proportionate to the perceived military advantage these weapons may give; (b) The deterrence threat created by these weapons is vulnerable to actors who don’t share the “rational fear” of annihilation and death; (c) These weapons maintain a dangerous frozen state of total war rather than peace since the omen of a nuclear holocaust is always on the horizon. For these and many other reasons the moral legitimacy of the possession of nuclear weapons is gone. This working paper makes the case that the only moral, realistic, prudential and wise path is the one that seeks an international ban on all nuclear weapons and calls for nuclear disarmament.

**SECTION ONE**

***NUCLEAR DETERRENCE***

# *THE MORALITY OF NUCLEAR DETERRENCE*

## *A REASSESSMENT*

A Caritas in Veritate Foundation Report by

GREGORY M. REICHBERG\*

*Peace Research Institute Oslo*

### **Introduction**

**T**his year marks seventy years since nuclear weapons were deployed against the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These weapons have not again been used in war despite their possession by up to nine countries.<sup>1</sup>

Does this period of non-use testify to the success of nuclear deterrence, thereby providing a strong incentive to maintain the nuclear status quo? Or, inversely, has it resulted from a tacit convention that will eventually be violated? Those who respond affirmatively to the first question typically argue for a strengthening of the deterrence regime. Those who respond affirmatively to the second question typically maintain that the goal of full nuclear disarmament is among the key imperatives of our age.

Over the last seventy years the Catholic Church has engaged herself in the difficult set of questions that can be raised about nuclear weapons. From the early days of the nuclear era, the Church has expressed its strong moral reservations about any possible use of these weapons. However, the question whether these weapons can justifiably be possessed for purposes of deterrence – *namely to prevent wrongful attack by instilling in the would-be aggressor a fear of massive reprisal* – has led to contrasting assessments. In 1982, hence during the Cold War, John Paul II sent a message to the UN Special Session on Disarmament in which the pontiff famously expressed how “deterrence based on balance” could be judged “morally acceptable,” insofar as it was a provisional measure “on the way toward a progressive disarmament.” Similar

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“From the early days of the nuclear era, the Church has expressed its strong moral reservations about any possible use of these weapons.

However, the question whether these weapons can justifiably be possessed for purposes of deterrence (...) has led to contrasting assessments”

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statements were subsequently issued by the Episcopal Conferences of various nations.<sup>2</sup> But with the end of the Cold War, assessments of deterrence by representatives of the Church have grown increasingly more negative. In *Nuclear Weapons: Time for Abolition*,<sup>3</sup> a document issued (8 December 2014) by the Holy See's diplomatic representation to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, we read that "the very possession of nuclear weapons, *even for purposes of deterrence*, is morally problematic."<sup>4</sup> This adverse judgment is later summed up in even stronger terms: "Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the *immorality of their possession*, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition."<sup>5</sup>

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**"Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition."**

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The Holy See's contribution to the Vienna conference takes care to explain that the divergence with previous Church teaching is more apparent than substantive, as it results from sensitivity to changed historical circumstances. We have seen above how the earlier acceptance of deterrence was made conditional upon progress toward disarmament. From this perspective, the system of deterrence, which during the Cold War was supported by a set of carefully negotiated mutual understandings between the United States and the Soviet Union, seemed a reasonable strategy toward achieving general nuclear disarmament, a goal that was enshrined in the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>6</sup> But nearly fifty years later, in light of the scant progress toward reaching this goal, and in view of the risks associated with nuclear proliferation, it is natural that the Church leadership should now articulate a considerably less sanguine view of deterrence. Indeed, the question can be asked whether confidence in the system of nuclear deterrence, both its alleged effectiveness and the stability it purportedly provides, now functions as an obstacle to general nuclear disarmament. Why give up a system that appears to have been successful, substituting it for an uncertain alternative – a world without nuclear weapons but where the knowledge how to make these weapons these weapons will never disappear?<sup>7</sup> – so the argument goes.

### ¶ Summary

**T**his paper is intended to be a contribution to discussions assessing the morality of nuclear deterrence. A topic hotly debated in the 1980s, but nowadays less so, the paper's principal conclusion is that *Time for Abolition* has a sound basis for its adverse moral judgment on nuclear deterrence. Drawing on recent work concerning the humanitarian consequences of nuclear use,<sup>8</sup> as well as earlier philosophical debate on the morality of nuclear threats, this paper aims to show that nuclear *deterrence* cannot be assessed independently of nuclear *use*. In so doing it aims to undercut the assumption, prevalent in much of the ethical literature in this field, that nuclear deterrence has a logic of its own, such that it can be judged positively, thus in a mat-

ter quite distinct from the standard condemnation of nuclear weapons use. To anchor this analysis in Catholic thought, we begin with a summary of the basic principles which in this tradition have long been understood to guide reflection on matters relating to armed force. We proceed afterwards to an ethical consideration of nuclear use (examined by reference to the humanitarian principles of discrimination and proportionality, as well as the rule prohibiting the causation of superfluous harm), as a prelude to the moral assessment of deterrence.

### Catholic moral reasoning about armed force

Moral reasoning as it is practiced in the Catholic Church has a set of distinctive characteristics which inform how it approaches the question of nuclear weapons.

First of all this reasoning proceeds from “natural law” (*lex naturalis*), a moral instruction accessible to all human beings that ultimately derives from God but which does not inherently depend on special religious revelation. Hence natural law may be contrasted to the “divine laws” that are meant to organize a society of believers according to the precepts found in a holy book. And unlike the laws enacted by human beings in civil society, the norms of natural law are thought to be rooted in a source antecedent to human deliberation and choice; hence they bind human conscience in a special way. Natural law regulates all areas of human life. Thus, insofar as we are beings who make use of technology, it too falls under the scope of natural law. Over the course of time, the Church has consequently affirmed that some uses of technology are potentially wrong.

#### ¶ *Natural Law*

Catholic theologians have long held that natural law includes a teaching on the right and wrong uses of armed force. Standardly termed “just war,” this teaching has two prongs. On the one hand, it provides guidance on what sort of situations can warrant employment of armed force. Some rationales are allowed, most notably organized defense against unjustified armed attack, and others are excluded, for instance territorial aggrandizement, or intimidation to implement a national policy. On the other hand, the teaching on just war also indicates what sort of actions may or may not be allowed on the battlefield. While it is understood that defensive action should be efficacious, it is nonetheless recognized that the range of what can be done is not unlimited; it particular it is emphasized that harm must not be brought directly upon persons – “innocents” – not actively involved in military campaigns. The first prong nowadays goes under the label of *jus ad bellum* (justice in going to war), while the second is known as *jus in bello* (justice in war). Although the explicit distinction

#### ¶ *Just War*

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“Catholic belief holds that humanity has a transcendent ordering to a spiritual “kingdom of God” where violence and relations of force have no place, this must nonetheless distinguished from the temporal, “worldly” condition of political society in which sanctions are often needed so as to maintain order and to keep grave wrongdoing in check.”

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### ¶ *The Common Good*

between these two spheres is fairly recent – for many centuries the second was treated in close continuity with the first – waiving well-established rules of *in bello* conduct by appeal to the superior justice of one’s cause has consistently met with firm disapproval. Characteristic of the Catholic tradition is the recognition that some norms should never be violated, whatever the circumstances. In this respect, the Catholic viewpoint rejects strategies that go under the name of “dirty hands” or “Machiavellianism.” Yet it is also understood that relations between states, and in particular conflicts involving the threat or use of armed force, cannot be evaluated by simple extrapolation from the rules applicable to interpersonal morality. In other words, when ethics applies to the interaction of separate polities a relevant set of adjustments need to be made. To suppose otherwise would be to fall into “moralism.”<sup>9</sup>

By the same token, although Catholic belief holds that humanity has a transcendent ordering to a spiritual “kingdom of God” where violence and relations of force have no place, this must nonetheless distinguished from the temporal, “worldly” condition of political society in which sanctions are often needed so as to maintain order and to keep grave wrongdoing in check. This is of a piece with the distinction enunciated by Jesus in Matt. 22:21 between the “things of Caesar” and the “things of God”.

**T**he referent for any use of armed force is what the Catholic tradition terms the “common good” (*bonum commune*). Promotion and preservation of the common good are the two primary tasks of political leadership. The *bonum commune*, as it is understood within this tradition, is not simply to be equated with the set of material interests that are possessed by a collectivity, as when we speak of the “national interest.” Union around goods of this sort can easily prescind from considerations of morality or run counter to them. Witness in our time the atrocities that have been committed for the preservation of one’s state, nation, ethnicity, or religion. On the Catholic understanding, morality is inherent to the common good: it is a collective flourishing in the goods proper to virtue. Consequently, defense of the homeland cannot be erected as a self-contained absolute. Precisely insofar as it is a *mediate* good which is defined by its further reference to the goods of virtue, national security cannot justify protective actions that would be inconsistent with the basic demands of morality. By the same token, the tradition has increasingly emphasized how the common good must be realized at a supra-national level. The “complete society” to which human beings aspire can be achieved only as the fruit of a collaboration that cuts across national boundaries and that embraces a global perspective on humanity. In their decision-making, political leaders within individual states have an obligation to maintain this global perspective constantly in view and to take steps that strengthen

it. Peace between nations can never have force, threats, coercion or fear as its primary foundation. For this reason, the Church has given its firm support to initiatives that build up international society, and which foster relations of justice and friendship between nations.

**E**thics is not a purely theoretical discipline. Its essential function is to inform concrete choices and the actions that flow from them. Hence, if it is to be an efficacious guide to good action, moral reasoning must proceed from a sound grasp of principles as well as an accurate understanding of the concrete circumstances in which actions will be carried out. The very same principles can be applied diversely should there be significant variations in the underlying circumstances surrounding a choice. Moreover, moral dispositions are relevant as well, since choices are always made by singular agents, who, whether in their individual or leadership capacity, are disposed to ends for the sake of which their actions are carried out. In the Catholic tradition this is summed up by its teaching on practical wisdom (called *phronesis* by Aristotle), a virtue that combines skillful deliberation about choices to be made, with an upright inclination toward the proper ends of action. When it is a question of political and military leadership over matters of armed force, technical competence is certainly necessary, but alone is insufficient. An appreciation of the moral exigencies of the common good, and the firm intention to adopt policies and select actions that further this good, is of paramount importance. In this connection it is significant that Thomas Aquinas, a leading Church theologian who exercised a formative influence on its teaching about matters of armed force, designated a special mode of practical wisdom (*prudentialia militaris*) – for deliberation in this domain.<sup>10</sup> To assert that military command is indeed a form of practical wisdom is for him equivalent to saying that morality is intrinsic to this practice. Given that service to the common good is the *raison d'être* of military leadership, technical skills of command must be subordinated to this higher end and regulated by it.

**I**t has long been recognized within the Catholic tradition that moral deliberation on matters of war and peace must proceed in synergy with developments in positive law, public international law in particular. This relationship involves a complex set of issues, but for our purposes it can be noted that Church's ethical teaching can interface with international law in three different ways: First, the Church can express its support for existing international legal norms (*lex lata*) as positively beneficial for the promotion of justice, peace, and restraint in war, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of these laws (e.g., the UN Charter, the Geneva Conventions, the ban on land mines and cluster munitions) and related initiatives (e.g. the UN, the ICC). Second, the Church, by its moral reflection, can prompt the formation of new legal

### § *Prudence*

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### § *Ethics and positive law*

norms where unfortunate gaps in the current international legislation are discerned (*lex feranda*). Third, cases can arise in which the Church allows for a gap between the demands of morality, on the one hand, and legal codification on the other, under the premise that outlawing some forms of wrongful behavior will have undesirable side-effects that can outweigh the good that might otherwise be achieved. “Not all good acts should be commanded by law, nor all bad acts prohibited,” as Thomas Aquinas memorably wrote.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the Church’s moral pronouncements about military matters are not necessarily intended to have determinate legal consequences.

¶ *Catholic social teaching*

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“When discussing nuclear weapons, the popes and other Church leaders have repeatedly pointed to the significant consequences these weapons have for the poor (...), and the natural environment (...)”

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Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the Church’s teaching on nuclear weapons is set within what has come to be called its “social teaching.” Originating out of Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (on the condition of labor), this teaching emphasizes how evangelical values should guide action within our political and social affairs. Hence, when discussing nuclear weapons, the popes and other Church leaders have repeatedly pointed to the significant consequences these weapons have for the poor (the enormous expenditures required to manufacture and maintain them could be better spent on the alleviation of poverty), and the natural environment (nuclear detonations, whether for tests, or in actual conflict, are apt to cause it enormous and long-term harm). Likewise, Catholic social teaching has increasingly stressed the importance of developing a culture of peace in which non-violent strategies for confronting wrongdoing are prioritized over recourse to arms. Such an approach ought to inform even relations between states. Seen in this light, the system of nuclear deterrence, built as it is around threats of violent retaliation, hinders the development of an authentic international community, which can only thrive in a context of mutual respect and amity. Moreover, the communicative dimensions of non-violence must be attended to as well; if individuals are expected to avoid violence in their inter-relations, the example should be set, whenever possible, by the public utterances of state officials and others who exercise leadership in the public domain.

### Nuclear Weapons Use

In order to assess the morality of possessing nuclear weapons for purposes of deterrence, we must first consider how to assess their actual use. Gaining a more accurate understanding of the consequences of nuclear weapon use – for human well-being and the natural environment – is central to current humanitarian initiatives in this field.<sup>12</sup>

From the time of their invention, it has been recognized that nuclear weapons have special characteristics which set them apart from all other weapons. They have, in the words of one well-placed historian, “implications and ramifications far beyond those which had ever accompanied the introduction of a new piece of military equipment.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Harry Truman, the first and only state leader to have authorized their use in war, acknowledged how this was a “weapon of last resort,” for in his words :

*“It is a terrible thing to order the use of something that is so terribly destructive beyond anything we have ever had.... You have got to understand that this isn’t a military weapon. It is used to wipe out women, children and unarmed people, and not for military use. So we have to treat this differently from rifles and cannons and ordinary things like that.”*<sup>14</sup>

Some years after Truman uttered these lines, new kinds of nuclear munitions were developed specifically for battlefield use against military targets. However, the perception that these weapons are *sui generis* has remained widespread ever since, and accounts in large measure for their non-use over the past seventy years. What’s more, Truman’s insight about the destructive potential of these weapons – in particular against civilian targets – still undergirds the theory of nuclear deterrence as it is applied today. States value their nuclear arsenals because of the fear these weapons arouse in would-be adversaries and their civilian populations. The wide-spread devastation that would result from the use of these weapons is precisely what makes them effective instruments of deterrence. In other words, it is by the threat of their use that nuclear weapons serve as instruments of deterrence.

In the ethical and legal literature on weaponry, questions of use are typically discussed by reference to the three *jus in bello* principles (which historically have originated out of the Catholic just war tradition) of discrimination, proportionality, and the prohibition on the causation of superfluous suffering.

Discrimination (also called “distinction”) specifies that only military personnel and infrastructure may be the direct targets of attack, while civilians are unequivocally excluded from such harm. For this reason, any weapon that does not allow for discrimination between types of targets – “inherently indiscriminate weapons” – would be immoral to use. On such grounds the poisoning of springs was considered illicit by the ancient Romans, as the use of biological weapons is today.

The second principle, proportionality, holds that the amount of force to be utilized in an armed attack may not exceed what it necessary to achieve the military end. It must be emphasized that proportionality considerations can never override the rule prohibiting direct attacks against civilians. By contrast, while it is recognized that harm

### § *Sui generis weapons*

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### § *Discrimination Proportionality, unnecessary suffering*

to civilians and their surroundings will sometimes result unintentionally (yet foreseeably) from attacks against military targets, this will be allowed only when the said side-effect harm remains within the limits set by the principle of proportionality. In other words, attacks that are expected (or should be expected) to have disproportionately high civilian casualty rates (or do widespread harm to civilian infrastructure or the natural environment) are morally and legally prohibited.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, as to the third principle, which received explicit articulation in the St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868, the employment of weapons (poisonous gas, for instance) that are of such nature as to cause superfluous or unnecessary suffering to their intended targets, namely military personnel, were expressly prohibited. By virtue of this moral/legal norm, commanders have an “obligation to consider, and chose, alternative means of warfare if the foreseen suffering is disproportionate to its military effectiveness.”<sup>16</sup>

Nuclear weapons<sup>17</sup> are *sui generis* both with respect to their immense explosive power, which is more than capable of levelling the largest of cities, eventually killing many if not most of the inhabitants. The radioactive effects of atomic weapons are special as well, since, in addition to causing the slow death of persons who are subjected to high concentrations, a host of long-lasting health disorders can result as well, some of which can impact on future generations in the form of birth defects. In the case of “strategic”<sup>18</sup> nuclear munitions – which have little battlefield utility but instead are designed to devastate large populous areas with little or no differentiation between military and non-military personnel – any possible use would be condemnable on moral, if not legal grounds.<sup>19</sup> The same reasoning would obviously not hold for nuclear weapons of low yield. Yet these, like their high yield counterparts, also raise a moral red flag by reason of the excessive suffering they would impose on human beings. The infliction of such harm could be condemned even when it is directed solely at military personnel, along the lines of what is now the case for the international law prohibition on the battlefield use of asphyxiating gas, expanding bullets, and similar weapons.

Because of these nefarious effects a world-wide taboo on the employment of these weapons (“the accumulating weight of tradition against nuclear use”<sup>20</sup>) has persisted by tacit agreement since they were last used in conflict on August 9, 1945. The taboo is all the more remarkable in that it gives testimony to a norm that has not been codified by international law and has been entirely self-enforced. To date, no international law expressly prohibits the battlefield use of nuclear weapons, although their testing and possession are regulated by international convention (the Nuclear Test Ban Treaties and the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty).

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**“A world-wide taboo on the employment of these weapons has persisted by tacit agreement since they were last used in conflict on August 9, 1945. The taboo is all the more remarkable in that it gives testimony to a norm that has not been codified by international law and has been entirely self-enforced.”**

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Despite this apparent taboo, states still continue to plan for the battlefield use of nuclear weapons. Indeed, many of the states possessing these weapons have acquired nuclear munitions for use against specific military targets (troop formations, fortified installations, and the like) with an eye towards prevailing in “limited” nuclear war.<sup>21</sup> Such a war, it is claimed, would not target civilians and their surroundings; hence this sort of weaponry and the associated use would not fall under the condemnation typically extended to the nuclear munitions that are designed to destroy whole cities. For this reason it is sometimes argued that nuclear weapons *as such* should not be deemed “inherently indiscriminate.” It would be misguided – so the argument goes – to proscribe the entire class of weapons whose destructive power is based on nuclear fission/fusion. Only weapons whose effects are indiscriminate (these typically are described as “high-yield”) would merit prohibition.

It must be said, however, that this defense of “tactical” nuclear weapons overlooks the long-lasting damage that is caused in human beings by exposure to high doses of radiation. Hence, even low-yield nuclear weapons arguably merit inclusion within the prohibitions that currently bear on the possession and use of chemical and biological agents.

Furthermore, if it were accepted that nuclear weapons, given their special effects, cause superfluous suffering, no just cause or military advantage could fully justify their use even against military personnel. Their use would be comparable to torture,<sup>22</sup> which is prohibited by international humanitarian law against prisoners of war, and which international human rights law and the Catholic Church have roundly condemned vis-à-vis any persons whatsoever, under all circumstances. Should one retort that a nuclear weapon could still justifiably be used in a setting where few or no human beings are present, say to cause a landslide in a mountain pass or to destroy an underground facility, one could argue in response that even such very limited use would likely cause widespread environmental damage (by releasing large quantities of contaminated particles into the air), in violation of the rule of proportionality. For these combined reasons, it seems “difficult to envision how the use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the principles and rules of international humanitarian law.”<sup>23</sup>

Finally, even if it is conceded that in some exceptional circumstances the detonation of a low-yield nuclear weapon might meet the requirements set by proportionality and discrimination,<sup>24</sup> two possible objections to such use would remain. On the one hand, it remains doubtful whether any single detonation of a nuclear weapon, on however small a scale, would not escalate into a broader exchange of nuclear warheads, quickly leading to a situation wherein the narrow limits of (hypothetically) allowable nuclear use would be breached.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, the

§ *“Tactical” nuclear weapons*

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very plausibility of “limited” nuclear war, undertaken solely with “tactical” nuclear weapons, has long been contested.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, even if a broad nuclear exchange would not inevitably result from every battlefield use of a nuclear munition, one still must reckon with the grave risks inherent in any violation of the longstanding nuclear taboo. Indeed, a key moral firewall would then be breached, immediately lowering the threshold against other less limited uses of the same weapon type. The alternative, promoting non-use and incorporating it into military doctrine is far preferable. In the words of Thomas C. Schelling:

*“We depend on nonproliferation efforts to restrain the production and deployment of weapons by more and more countries; we may depend even more on universally shared inhibitions on nuclear use. Preserving these inhibitions and extending them... to cultures and national interests that may not currently share these inhibitions will be a crucial part of our nuclear policy.”*<sup>27</sup>

### Nuclear Deterrence

In their public pronouncements, states typically emphasize that they have acquired nuclear weapons, not so much for their battlefield utility, but rather because their possession provides a secure method to deter armed aggression. This takes us into the normative assessment of nuclear deterrence.

The idea that nuclear weapons have been sought after so as to exercise influence, that this constitutes their principal utility, goes to the heart of why states have expended enormous amounts of money to include these weapons in their arsenals. From this perspective, the use to which these weapons are put has little to do with their detonation. Their use is verbal/expressive – the issuance of a threat – and the effect is psychological rather than physically destructive. A nuclear possessing state is able to issue threats of a potency not available to their non-nuclear counterparts. The fact that no destruction is directly caused by a nuclear threat makes such threats seem relatively benign – certainly when compared with actual detonation of such a weapon. And if a nuclear threat can stop a would-be aggressor without the least bloodshed, this would seem highly advantageous and even a morally good course of action. Much death and destruction would thereby be forestalled. For this reason, the possession of nuclear weapons has often been presented (paradoxically given their destructive potential) as a pathway to peace. In the words of Kenneth L. Waltz,

*“Nuclear weapons have been ... working for peace in the post-war world.”*

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**“The idea that nuclear weapons have been sought after so as to exercise influence, that this constitutes their principal utility, goes to the heart of why states have expended enormous amounts of money to include these weapons in their arsenals”.**

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*They make the cost of war seem frighteningly high and thus discourage states from starting any wars that might lead to the use of such weapons. Nuclear weapons have helped maintain peace between the great powers and have not led their few other possessors into military adventures.”<sup>28</sup>*

**D**eterrence as it is used in this context is a covering term for a variety of different ways in which a state’s influence can be leveraged through the possession of nuclear weapons. In this most general sense,

*“deterrence means preventing certain types of contingencies from arising. To achieve this objective, it becomes necessary to communicate in some way to a prospective antagonist what is likely to happen to him, should he create the situation in question. The expectation is that, confronted with this prospect, he will be deterred from taking the action that is regarded as inimical – at least so long as other less intolerable alternatives are open to him.”<sup>29</sup>*

Thus understood, to deter by possession of a weapon is to threaten use of that weapon in the event that a prohibited act is performed. A threat is a special kind of speech act whereby one person (P) tells another (Q) that she will intentionally bring about some harm x unless Q does (or refrains from doing) the action y. A deterrent threat as already noted, promises infliction of harm if the forbidden action is carried out. A compellant threat, by contrast, promises harm if the commanded act is not done.

Under the standard conception of deterrence that emerged during the Cold War, nuclear threats had a strictly deterrent character. Indeed, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the view quickly gained widespread currency that compellant nuclear threats were blackmail writ large, and were devoid of moral legitimacy.<sup>30</sup> By contrast, deterrent threats made by means of nuclear weapons were viewed largely in a positive light. The country possessing such a weapon communicated to its nuclear peers that should it become the target of a nuclear first strike or even invasion by conventional means, it might unleash a retaliatory nuclear attack in response. The whole point was to prevent a nuclear first strike (or invasion by conventional forces), and to render impotent any attempt at nuclear blackmail. This was considered a good thing insofar as it appeared to fulfill a fundamental duty of political leadership, namely to protect the citizenry from harm. It was with this in mind that the teaching magisterium of the Catholic Church has on various occasions expressed its support for the system of nuclear deterrence, albeit as a provisional measure on the way to collective disarmament.<sup>31</sup>

Since the point of the deterrent threat was to deter the other by instilling in him fear of a massive reprisal against what he valued most – namely his civilian population – during that period nuclear deterrent

### **¶ The definition of deterrence**

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**“To deter by possession of a weapon is to threaten use of that weapon in the event that a prohibited act is performed.”**

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**“In the late 1960s some theorists, for instance Herman Kahn, began to argue that a nuclear confrontation need not take the form of a “simple spasm exchange” in which each side would use up its nuclear forces as rapidly as possible.”**

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threats were typically made against urban population centers. This was termed “deterrence by punishment.” The harm to be inflicted would have no direct military function. It would not be defensive in the narrow sense of the term,<sup>32</sup> since the underlying supposition was that the adversary had already completed his nuclear attack (hence there would no longer be a question of repelling it<sup>33</sup>) and the second strike would come *ex post facto* as retaliation. In the words of US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, “assured destruction is the very essence of the whole deterrence concept.”<sup>34</sup>

In the late 1960s some theorists, for instance Herman Kahn, began to argue that a nuclear confrontation need not take the form of a “simple spasm exchange”<sup>35</sup> in which each side would use up its nuclear forces as rapidly as possible – resulting in the destruction of major cities and millions of deaths. Rather it was thought a nuclear first strike might be relatively limited in nature. The retaliation would be carefully calibrated to warn the aggressor against a renewal of its original attack; this second strike would have the character of what the international lawyers term “reprisal,” namely an *ex post facto* attack that imposes a penalty, not so much for the sake of pure retribution, but rather to warn against any renewal of the violation.<sup>36</sup> A nuclear ceasefire might thereby result well before much wholesale destruction had taken place. This notion of “intra-war deterrence” was further developed into the concept of “deterrence by denial” in which the adversary would be warned in advance, or at least would have the reasonable fear, that an offensive using even conventional force (say by the Soviet military against NATO positions in Europe), might be met by a nuclear response targeting that same offensive, thereby cancelling out any military gains that might otherwise be achieved. Hence there emerged an abundant literature on the deterrent value of “tactical” employments of nuclear weapons.

**¶ *A credible threat is crucial to deterrence***

**T**heorists of nuclear deterrence have emphasized how it is a joint product of *capability* and *credibility*. While obviously essential, simply having the weapons (capability) is never enough, as their possession will function as a deterrent only if the potential target, as well as allies who benefit from extended deterrence, believe that a violation – a nuclear first strike or conventional military aggression – will be met with a nuclear response. Nuclear threats will have this credibility only when the issuer is able to convey his intent to fulfil them should a violation occur. Deterrence is moreover about a certain kind of relationship, including a set of shared assumptions about what each side can expect from the other, what it values and most wishes to avoid, and so forth. In the Soviet-US relationship stability was eventually achieved, but with the growth of nuclear proliferation, the achievement of deterrent stability has become ever more challenging.<sup>37</sup>

Having provided this outline of nuclear deterrence in its different modes, how are we to assess its morality?

Since deterrence is about *threatening*, rather than *carrying out*, armed attack, the former must constitute the crux of our analysis. At the outset it can be noted how for purposes of ethical analysis there is not a pure and simple identity between the threat and the actual performance of the threatened action. In the sphere of state-to-state relations, threats of armed force are viewed with more leniency than actual employment of the corresponding force.<sup>38</sup> Thus, whereas preventive war has typically been condemned (by inter alia the Catholic theorists of just war<sup>39</sup>) preventive issuance of threats has been viewed under a somewhat more positive light. Indeed, nuclear deterrent threats are issued with the preventive aim in mind; it is precisely this aim, coupled with the absence of any actual destruction that has given them an aura of moral legitimacy.<sup>40</sup> Is this legitimacy deserved?

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**“Nuclear deterrent threats are issued with the preventive aim in mind; it is precisely this aim, coupled with the absence of any actual destruction that has given them an aura of moral legitimacy. Is this legitimacy deserved?”**

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### The alleged moral legitimacy of Nuclear Deterrence

Simplifying a complex philosophical literature,<sup>41</sup> we can say that strategies to demonstrate a moral foundation for nuclear deterrent threats are of two basic kinds:

One strategy [articulated with considerable sophistication by the philosopher Gregory S. Kavka]<sup>42</sup> is to establish a wide gulf between a threat, on the one side, and concrete implementation of the threat, on the other. Such an analysis would seek to explain why moral evaluation of the threat cannot simply track the evaluation of the corresponding act once carried out. Those who follow this approach openly concede that nuclear retaliation on an urban population center would be grossly immoral. Simultaneously, however, they affirm that to threaten such retaliation could be morally allowable and even good, precisely insofar as it is the most effective way to deter a first strike. Ruling out bluffs and deliberate indecisiveness (holding off the decision whether or not to retaliate until after an attack has already occurred<sup>43</sup>) as inefficacious to sustain the credibility needed for deterrence, advocates of this position emphasize the distinctiveness of :

*“Deterrent intentions that is, those conditional intentions whose existence is based on the agent’s desire to thereby deter others from actualizing the antecedent condition of the intention. Such intentions are ... by nature self-stultifying: if a deterrent intention fulfills the agent’s purpose, it ensures that the intended (and possibly) evil act is not performed, by preventing the circumstances of performance from arising. ... Normally, an agent will form the intention to do something because she either desires doing that thing as an end in itself, or as a means to other ends. ... But in the case of deterrent intentions, the ground of the desire to form*

*the intention is entirely distinct from any desire to carry it out. ... Thus, while the object of her deterrent intention might be an evil act, it does not follow that, in desiring to adopt that intention, she desires to do evil, either as an end or a means.”*<sup>44</sup>

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**“...this deterrent intention voluntarily assumes the risk of carrying out the immoral act (...). Even though this outcome is in no way desired...”**

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**§ Gauthier's consequentialism**

Against this approach the objection can be raised that the one forming this deterrent intention voluntarily assumes the risk of carrying out the immoral act<sup>45</sup> (in the worst-case scenario massive nuclear retaliation against urban centers). Even though this outcome is in no way desired (to the contrary, the conditional intention was formed precisely to avoid it), nonetheless to place oneself in a position where failure would in all likelihood entail this result is itself morally objectionable. Indeed, the very logic of deterrence entails that the more effective the deterrence, the more immoral its threats will be. Inversely, the more restrictive a deterrence policy becomes, the less effectively it will deter. Moreover, the credibility of these threats will depend on a demonstrated will, hence a readiness, to carry them out.<sup>46</sup>

**T**he philosopher David Gauthier has argued<sup>47</sup> that the person who forms a deterrent intention does so to secure certain benefits which outweigh the costs that would be nevertheless incurred in the event of a failure (namely having to carry out the deterrent threat). The appraisal of these costs is factored into the formation of the conditional intention. In his words

*“if it is rational to form this conditional, deterrent intention, then, should deterrence fail and the condition be realized, it is rational to act on it. The utility cost of acting on the deterrent intention enters, with appropriate probability weighting, into determining whether it is rational to form the intention.”*<sup>48</sup>

For Gauthier, to say that an action (in this case the mental act of forming an intention and expressing it as a threat) is rational, is equivalent to saying it is moral. His aim, in mounting the argument outlined above, was to provide an ethical justification for robust nuclear deterrence, namely deterrence that would be fully credible hence well suited to succeed. In so doing, he proceeded on the basis of a thoroughgoing consequentialism. For those, by contrast, who acknowledge that certain actions should never be performed, whatever the perceived benefits – in other words those who recognize a deontological core to ethics – Gauthier's argument can be turned around. Agreeing with him that the conditional, deterrent intention implies an acceptance of massive retaliation in the event the deterrent threat fails, we must opt for the opposing path, namely to reject the formation of such an intention in the first place. Gauthier's contribution is valuable because he provides a compelling moral argument why threat and action are not fully separable. Thus, if we condemn massive nuclear retaliation

as inherently immoral – under the principle that the innocent should never be directly targeted with lethal harm – the willingness to accept such a cost as the condition of forming the conditional intention of retaliation (even if solely to avoid it) must be condemned as well.

Gauthier himself seems to have become aware of this implication, as 10 years later he observed how “A rational agent cannot sincerely and wittingly issue an apocalyptic threat. Rational deterrence is limited in ways that I have previously failed to recognize.”<sup>49</sup>

Awareness that issuing a threat with “apocalyptic” consequences is wholly unsustainable on moral grounds, has led some ethicists to propose an alternative strategy toward justifying nuclear deterrence. Closely associated with Paul Ramsey, a Methodist theologian who taught at Princeton University, on this account nuclear weapons were considered on two levels: their *actual* use on the battlefield, and their *threatened* use within a strategy of deterrence. Regarding the first, Ramsey maintained that such use would be morally licit only when directed against the military forces of an invading enemy – but against civilian population centers it would be entirely ruled out. With respect to the second level, Ramsey paints a considerably more nuanced picture. While an enemy’s cities should never be directly threatened with nuclear retaliation, the prospect of massive *side-effect harm* to its civilian population, stemming from a direct nuclear attack upon its military forces, would nevertheless provide it with a powerful disincentive against ever initiating such an exchange in the first place.<sup>50</sup> Ramsey summed this up when he wrote that “A threat of something disproportionate is not always a disproportionate threat.”<sup>51</sup>

Like Kavka’s strategy, Ramsey’s approach acknowledges a gap between the moral assessment of a threat and the parallel assessment of the threat’s actualization. In particular, the proportionality criterion would apply differently in the two cases precisely because the immediate harm resulting from each would be different (fear on the one hand, death and bodily suffering on the other).<sup>52</sup> The gap is nonetheless narrower for Ramsey than for Kavka since the former recuses any deliberate targeting of civilian population centers (so called “counter-value” targeting). He recognizes however that restricting nuclear targeting to military objectives (so called “counter-force” targeting) may be insufficient to deter an enemy’s nuclear first strike (or invasion with conventional weaponry). Hence Ramsey proposes that the adversary’s fear can be heightened by letting him know that a nuclear attack intentionally directed solely at military targets will foreseeably result in widespread collateral damage to civilians. Applying the doctrine of double-effect, Ramsey maintains that so long as this collateral damage is in no way directly intended or threatened, it may be licit to make good use of the prospect of the said damages (i.e., the target state’s awareness they

¶ *Ramsey’s double effect  
conception of deterrence*

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“A threat of something disproportionate is not always a disproportionate threat.”

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would ensue), namely as a way to deter aggression.

“Double effect” is the heading under which the ethical quandaries surrounding side-effect harm have traditionally been discussed in Catholic philosophy. This term is shorthand for the two different kinds of effects that can emerge from our actions. On the one hand, there is the very state-of-affairs that our actions are meant to produce. This goal we will succeed at achieving more or less well, depending on our skill. On the other hand, there are the side-effects that result from this deliberate intervention in the world. The idea that we are answerable for these side-effects, yet in a manner *different than* the accountability which obtains vis-à-vis our intentional projects, has been dubbed the “doctrine of double effect.”<sup>53</sup>

Does Ramsey’s proposal succeed in providing a morally acceptable justification for nuclear deterrence? First of all, despite his disclaimers to the contrary, it must be admitted that whosoever threatens to carry out an action that is likely (or certain) to have damaging side-effects must, as already indicated above, be willing to accept this outcome should the threat fail. Under the scenario considered, these side-effect harms would not be directly intended by the one doing the threatening, yet he would still bear responsibility for bringing them about. As Thomas Aquinas and other Catholic theorists of double effect have maintained, a person who foresees (or should foresee) that a certain side-effect will arise from his action is not automatically to be exculpated of moral blame for producing that harm simply because it was not directly intended. Rather, the agent must apply the rule of proportionality: the good aimed at must outweigh the harmful side-effects that will inevitably follow. During the Cold War it was thus argued by Michael Quinlan<sup>54</sup> and others that the good of stopping a full-scale Soviet invasion of Western Europe could justify the use of tactical nuclear weapons – a use that would inevitably cause much side-effect harm to civilians. This sort of reasoning could be sustained (it must be acknowledged) under a Catholic reading of the principle of double effect.

However – and this is an important caveat – such double-effect reasoning could be made applicable to side-effect harms caused by nuclear weapons solely under condition that the *intended* effect of this military action – striking military targets – is indeed permissible. The second of the two prongs of the double-effect equation may be deemed morally permissible only when the first prong – the action deliberately carried out as a means to the presumably good end – is itself justifiable. If this would not be the case, it follows as a necessary consequence that double-effect reasoning will no longer be germane, and proportionality calculations to justify the allowance of related side-effect harms will be inoperative as well. In this connection, the arguments above

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“...it must be admitted that whosoever threatens to carry out an action that is likely (or certain) to have damaging side-effects must be willing to accept this outcome should the threat fail.”

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regarding the morality of nuclear use become especially salient. If it is true that the employment of nuclear weapons against military targets – especially the sustained employment of these weapons in a theater of war – cannot meet the baseline standards of discrimination, proportionality, and avoidance of cruel or superfluous harm to combatants, it follows that the resulting side-effect harm to non-combatants cannot be justified either.

Justifications of nuclear deterrence based on double-effect reasoning will necessarily fail whenever it can be shown that the direct (intended) effect of nuclear attack must itself be deemed immoral. This (as was explained above in the section on nuclear use) would almost certainly be the case for all but the most minimal (and implausible) employments of nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Indeed, Ramsey's argumentation depends on the threat of nuclear attacks against military targets of sufficiently wide scope that the side-effects can be expected to be significantly daunting. Michael Walzer, the preeminent just war theorist of our time, criticized this line of reasoning when he concluded that:

*“Nuclear war is and will remain morally unacceptable, and there is no case for its rehabilitation. Because it is unacceptable, we must seek out ways to prevent it, and because deterrence is a bad way, we must seek out others.”*<sup>55</sup>

In other words, if it is true that effective nuclear deterrence entails immorality (this has been our argument above) we should all the more urgently press for the abandonment of this strategy.<sup>56</sup>

The above assessment has focused on the special character of nuclear deterrent threats. It has been argued that such threats do not pass moral muster; they cannot be considered morally justifiable. In addition, numerous pragmatic arguments against the system of nuclear deterrence could be advanced as well. These include grave concerns about the dangers of nuclear proliferation (especially worrisome in the case of failed nuclear states or in the event that such weapons should fall into the hands of non-state actors), of nuclear accidents or miscalculations that could lead to the inception of nuclear war,<sup>57</sup> the enormous cost of these weapons (and their infrastructure) that could be put to better societal use. Moreover, a growing literature has cast doubt on the supposed effectiveness of nuclear deterrence in preventing large scale war. There is considerable plausibility to the claim that factors other than mutual possession of nuclear weapons accounts for the absence of major war between the superpowers (over the last seventy years).<sup>58</sup> In other words, should view with skepticism arguments that ground world-wide peace in the system of nuclear deterrence.

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## Conclusion

Our better understanding today that nuclear deterrence lacks a proper moral foundation, allied with our increased knowledge about the risks associated with nuclear weaponry and the devastating humanitarian consequences of their actual use, makes the search for a way out of the nuclear conundrum all the more urgent. The time is ripe for governments to make decisive steps in this direction. The major nuclear powers have aging arsenals. Pressure to invest heavily in new nuclear systems has been growing. Once such expenditures are made opposition to the renunciation of these weapons will be further cemented. And even should this renunciation eventually occur, the enormous capital that will have been invested in this weaponry would deprive the world of resources needed for the alleviation of poverty and other such worthy goals. Now is the time for decisive action in favor of nuclear abolition.

While recognizing – albeit in various degrees depending on the speakers and context – that nuclear deterrent threats have a dubious moral pedigree, the Church has always emphasized that renunciation of these weapons must result from a multi-lateral, consensual-process.<sup>59</sup> To proceed otherwise – say by unilateral disarmament – would be to invite nuclear blackmail, a position into which no state, mindful of its obligations, could place itself. Inversely, we must resist claims that the system of deterrence by nuclear weapons provides our world with the just peace to which the nations of the world rightly aspire. Honesty about the ethical compromises into which our nuclear ambitions have led us should make abandonment of these weapons a priority for our time.

The Catholic Church would be remiss in her role as moral teacher of humanity if she did not proclaim both her conviction that a world freed of nuclear weapons is an eminently desirable goal<sup>60</sup> and her hope that this goal can realistically be achieved.<sup>61</sup>

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## NOTES

1. United States, Russia, China, Britain, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel (the last-named has never publicly acknowledged its possession of a nuclear weapon).
2. See the selections in this *Working Paper*, pp. 47-97.
3. Reproduced below, pp. 87-97.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 87 (emphasis added).
5. *Ibid.* p. 92 (emphasis added).
6. Under Article VI, the parties to the Treaty commit themselves “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.”
7. See Thomas C. SCHELLING, “A world without nuclear weapons?” (*Daedalus* 138.4 [2009]: 124-129) for a much cited formulation of this view.
8. Particularly valuable is the recently published volume *Nuclear Weapons under International Law*, edited by Gro NYSTUEN, Stuart CASEY-MASLEN, and Annie GOLDEN BERSAGEL, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
9. For an account of how practical wisdom must avoid the extremes of “dirty hands” on the one hand, and moralism, on the other, see C. A. J. COADY, *Messy Moralism: The Challenge of Politics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008.
10. *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 50, a. 4; see Gregory M. REICHBERG, “Thomas Aquinas on Military Prudence,” *Journal of Military Ethics* 9.3, 2010: 262-275.
11. *Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 96, a. 3, ad 1.
12. See John BORRIE and Tim CAUGHLEY, eds., *Viewing Nuclear Weapons through a Humanitarian Lens* (New York and Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2103), and Tom SAUER and Joellen PRETORIUS, “Nuclear weapons and the humanitarian approach,” *Global Change, Peace & Security* 26.3 2014: 233-250.
13. Lawrence FREEDMAN, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, third edition, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, p. 15.
14. Cited, *ibid.*, p. 49.
15. According to rule 14 of the ICRC’s Code of *Customary International Law*, vol. I: Rules (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) “Launching an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss to civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct relation to the military advantage anticipated, is prohibited” (p. 46).
16. Simon O’CONNOR, “Nuclear Weapons and the Unnecessary Suffering Rule,” in Nystuen et al., *Nuclear Weapons under International Law*, pp. 128-147, at p. 144.
17. Unless a distinction is expressly made, in this report “nuclear weapons” is used as a covering term to designate weapons that employ both fission and fusion, hence it encompasses at once nuclear and thermonuclear weapons.
18. In what follows, the common reference to “strategic,” and “tactical” nuclear weapons, as well as to “limited” nuclear war are placed in scare quotes, in order to indicate how these concepts are problematic, as explained by Lawrence FREEDMAN, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, pp. 92-100, 110-11.
19. For a good discussion of the principles of discrimination and proportionality as applied to nuclear weapons, see Stuart CASEY-MASLEN, “Nuclear Weapons and Rules on Conduct of Hostilities,” in Gro NYSTUEN et al., *Nuclear Weapons under International Law*, pp. 91-127.

20. Thomas C. SCHELLING, “An Astonishing Sixty Years: The Legacy of Hiroshima,” *Afterword to Arms and Influence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 299.
21. The trend toward preparing for “limited” nuclear war appears to be accelerating among states possessing nuclear weapons. See Paul I. Bernstein, “The Emerging Nuclear Landscape,” in Jeffrey A. LARSEN and Kerry M. KARTCHNER, *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 101-128.
22. In this connection, see the suggestive comments by Nobuo HAYASHI, “Torture, Hostage-Taking, and the Fundamental Immorality of Nuclear Weapons,” in *The World Post*, April 24, 2015, at [www.huffingtonpost.com/nobuo-hayashi/torture-hostage-taking-an\\_b\\_7102054.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nobuo-hayashi/torture-hostage-taking-an_b_7102054.html) (accessed June 24, 2015).
23. International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva 26 November, 2011, Resolution 1 to the Council of Delegates, p. 5, §2 at <https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1130.pdf>.
24. Under such a supposition, Casey-Maslen concludes that it “remains unpersuasive to argue that all nuclear weapons are inherently indiscriminate or inherently disproportionate” (p. 125), although with the caveat that conformity with the requirements of proportionality and discrimination might arise “only in very specific and highly improbable scenarios in a traditional armed conflict between nuclear powers” (p. 126).
25. It was the risk of escalation that constituted the main reason why the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in their influential pastoral letter of 1983 (*The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and our Response*), questioned whether any use of a nuclear weapon, on however “limited” a scale, could be justified (see §157-161). The bishops concluded their reflection on nuclear use by expressing the “hope that leaders will resist the notion that nuclear conflict can be limited, contained, or won in any traditional sense” (§161).
26. See Lawrence FREEDMAN, chap. 8, “Limited Means,” in *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, pp. 101-113.
27. Thomas C. SCHELLING, *Afterword to Arms and Influence*, p. 299.
28. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*, Adelphi Paper 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), p. 4.
29. William Kaufmann cited by Richard ROSECRANCE, *Strategic Deterrence Reconsidered*, Adelphi Paper 116 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1975), pp. 2-3.
30. I set aside the problem of how to evaluate the morality of the United States’ use of nuclear weapons against Japan. This was set in a historical context in which the employment of compellent threats, expressed via the bombing of civilian population centers, had become a regular practice among the opposing belligerents.
31. The US Catholic Bishops, in their 1983 pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace* (§186 and 188) affirmed a “moral acceptance” of nuclear weapons, albeit one that is “strictly conditioned” by a set of restrictions, “no targeting of civilian population centers, no prolonged periods of repeated nuclear strikes, and that it be provisional, i.e. a step on the way toward progressive disarmament”. The French Bishops seemed more torn by competing, negative and positive assessments: “Faced with a choice between two evils, both of them all but unavoidable, capitulations or counter-threats, one chooses the lesser without pretending that one is choosing a moral good (emphasis added),” while in the next breath they lay out the conditions that will make nuclear deterrence “morally acceptable.” *Gagner la paix*, §30.

32. Kenneth WALTZ, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 4-5: “In contrast to dissuasion by defense, dissuasion by deterrence operates by frightening a state out of attacking, not because of the difficulty of launching an attack and carrying it home, but because the expected reaction of the attacked will result in one’s own severe punishment. ... Purely deterrent forces provide no defense. The message of a deterrent strategy is this: ‘Although we are defenseless, if you attack we will punish you to an extent that more than cancels your gains.’”
33. For this reason, the idea that extended deterrence functions as a nuclear “umbrella” is a misnomer, since it misleadingly suggests that countries under the umbrella “are protected by some kind of missile defense shield - rather than the threat of retaliation” (Scott D. SAGAN, “Shared responsibilities for nuclear disarmament,” *Daedalus* 138.4 [2009]: 157-168, at 162).
34. Robert S. MCNAMARA, *The Essence of Security* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 52.
35. Richard N. ROSECRANCE, *Strategic Deterrence Reconsidered*, p. 13.
36. For application of international law provisions on reprisals to the special case of nuclear weapons, see Stuart Casey-Maslen, “The use of nuclear weapons as a reprisal under international humanitarian law,” in NYSTUEN et al., *Nuclear Weapons under International Law*, pp. 171-190.
37. In this connection, Hedley BULL, “Future Conditions of Strategic Deterrence,” in *The Future of Nuclear Deterrence*, Part I, Adelphi Paper 160 [London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1975], pp. 13-23) astutely noted that “The theory [of nuclear deterrence] assumes... that both sides in a relationship of mutual deterrence share a conception of rational action. It is easy to conceive of situations of nuclear confrontation in the future in which states, divided not only politically and ideologically but also culturally, do not share a conception of rational action to the extent to which the super-powers have done in the past” (p. 21). For a more recent discussion of the risks associated with deterrence under conditions of multi-polarity, see Scott D. Sagan’s contribution to his debate with Kenneth L. WALTZ, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate* (New York: Norton, 2012).
38. See Nikolas STÜRCHLER, *The Threat of Force in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
39. Gregory M. REICHBERG, “Forcible Preventive Disarmament in Traditional Just War Theory,” in Mary Ann GLENDON, Russell HITTINGER, and Marcelo Sánchez SORONDO, *The Global Quest for Tranquillitas Ordinis: Pacem in Terris, Fifty Years Later* (Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2013), pp. 224-250.
40. Along these lines the French bishops’ conference wrote that “threat is not use. Does the immorality of use render the threat immoral? This is not evident” *Gagner la paix*, 1983, §29. Earlier they had noted that “The threat of force is not the use of force. It is the basis of deterrence, and this is often forgotten when the same moral qualification is attributed to the threat as to the use of force”, § 36.
41. For discussion of this literature, assessed within the framework of Catholic moral teaching, see John FINNIS, Joseph M. BOYLE, Jr., and Germain GRISEZ, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality, and Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
42. Gregory S. KAVKA, *Moral Paradoxes of Nuclear Deterrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-54.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
45. As the French Bishops put the point: “the danger of the logic of deterrence is

immediately evident. In order not to allow a possible aggressor to have illusions about the credibility of our defenses, we must show ourselves ready to use our weapons if deterrence should fail,” *Gagner la paix*, §27.

46. During the Cold War it was common to hedge on this readiness by cultivating a posture of deliberate ambiguity, especially vis-à-vis extended deterrence commitments. It was thought that the possibility of nuclear retaliation (and the attendant risk of escalation) would be sufficient to deter enemy attack. This posture was also thought beneficial insofar as it assuaged the conscience of the one issuing the threat, who told himself that he was not quite committed to a nuclear retaliation that would target whole cities. It was however objected that this ambiguity decreased the credibility of deterrence and for that very reason could prove destabilizing, provoking the very attack it was meant to prevent. The instability resulting from the maintenance of ambiguity will likely grow in the context of a multipolar world (see Keith B. PAYNE, *The Great American Gamble: Deterrence Theory and Practice from the Cold War to the Twenty-First Century* [Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2008], pp. 234-239). Hence this does not seem a suitable strategy to lessen the moral qualms that arise from nuclear deterrence.

47. David GAUTHIER, “Deterrence, Maximization, and Rationality,” *Ethics* 94.3 (1984): 474-495.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 486.

49. David GAUTHIER, “Assure and Threaten,” *Ethics* 104.4 (1994): 690-721, at 719.

50. “The Limits of Nuclear War,” in Paul RAMSEY, *The Just War: Force and Political Society* (New York: Scribner, 1968; reprint, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983). For a recent defense of Ramsey’s argumentation against objections raised by Michael WALZER (*Just and Unjust Wars* [New York: Basic Books, 1977], pp. 278-283), see F.M. KAMM, “Nuclear Deterrence and Reliance on Harm,” chap. 10 of *The Moral Target* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.228-249.

51. *The Just War*, p. 303.

52. For the contrast between proportionality applied to threats, on the one hand, and its application to the corresponding actions, on the other, see Nobuo Hayashi’s discussion (“Legality of nuclear weapons under Jus ad bellum,” in Nystuen et al., *Nuclear Weapons under International Law*, pp. 31-58, at pp. 42-46, and 55-57) of the “Brownlie formula” (which holds that where it would be unlawful to use force it would also be unlawful to threaten such force).

53. See Gregory M. REICHBERG and Henrik SYSE, “The Idea of Double Effect - in War and Business,” in Lene BOMANN-LARSEN and Oddny WIGGEN, eds. *Responsibility in World Business: Managing Harmful Side-Effects of Corporate Activity* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2004), pp. 17-38.

54. Michael QUINLAN, *Thinking about Nuclear Weapons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

55. Micheal WALZER, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 283.

56. For an opposing viewpoint, see David LONSDALE (“Nuclear Strategy and Catholicism: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Military Ethics* 11.3 [2012]: 186-207) who argues that the US Bishops’ 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, places such strict limitations on deterrent threats that these threats would lack credibility and hence any resulting nuclear strategy would be rendered inoperative. He maintains as a consequence that the Catholic Church should endorse a more robust policy of nuclear deterrence, including a limited use of nuclear weapons in battlefield settings. Lonsdale assumes that a nuclear war could be fought within moral parameters, a position that the US bishops in their 1983 pastoral letter, and subsequent statements of the magisterium (most recently

the Holy See's contribution to the December 2014 Vienna conference on disarmament) strongly contest.

57. For an extensive treatment of these risk factors, see Scott D. Sagan's contribution to the debate with Kenneth N. WALTZ, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: Norton, 2001).

58. See Ward WILSON, *Five Myths about Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

59. "So all must work to see an end of the arms race and a real beginning of disarmament; to see, moreover, that this disarmament proceeds not unilaterally but *pari passu* and by agreement, and is protected by adequate guarantees" (*Gaudium et Spes*, §82).

60. See Scott D. SAGAN, "Shared responsibilities for nuclear disarmament" (cited above) who provides a good summary of standard objections to nuclear disarmament and indications as to how they might be overcome; also valuable is the road map presented by Sverre LODGAARD in chap. 10 "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world" of his *Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 195-222).

61. This goal of general nuclear disarmament has the character of what the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain once referred to (in another context) as a "concrete historical ideal," namely a middle path between short-term political action, on the one hand, and utopian vision on the other. Jacques MARITAIN, "Integral Humanism", in *The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain*, vol. 11 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), pp. 232-233.

## **SECTION TWO**

### ***RECENT CHURCH TEXTS ON NUCLEAR DETERRENCE***

***1960 - 2015***

# INTRODUCTION TO TEXTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH REGARDING NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

BY MATHIAS NEBEL AND GIOVANNI GIUDETTI

The Catholic Church has always condemned the use of nuclear weapons and advocated for disarmament, but its opinion on the possession of these weapons for the sake of deterrence has changed over time. Roughly two periods can be distinguished in the texts and interventions of the Catholic Church since the beginning of the nuclear age. A first period may be seen as culminating with John-Paul II's address to the UN in 1982. It shows a progressive but strictly conditioned acceptance of nuclear deterrence by the Church. The address clearly states that nuclear deterrence is but a provisional measure. The moral ambiguity of deterrence was recognized by the pope, who nevertheless viewed it as a realistic way to further disarmament. The second period, from 1993 on, is marked by a progressive shift away from the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, now seen as a hindrance to disarmament. A new position thereby emerges which deems any possession of nuclear weapons to be morally illegitimate. Nowadays, the Holy See advocates for the abolition of nuclear weapons, driven by the official failure of nuclear disarmament processes, the global proliferation of nuclear weapons, and a growing concern for the disproportionate and unnecessary suffering that would be inflicted by any use of these weapons of mass destruction.

This introduction is restricted to the Catholic Church's texts dealing explicitly with the question of nuclear deterrence. It aims to show the pace and the reasoning that underpin the shift in positions between the two periods. However, we don't seek to correlate this shift with changes that have occurred on the world nuclear stage during the same period. Let it simply be noted that the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT-1970) and the Conference on Disarmament (CD-1979) paved the way to the conditional acceptance of nuclear deterrence in 1982. It has nonetheless become increasingly apparent that confidence in the supposed benefits of nuclear deterrence has become an obstacle on the way to nuclear disarmament.

## **The first period : From *Pacem in Terris* to John Paul II's Address to the United Nation General Assembly**

### *1. Pacem in Terris (1963) and Gaudium et Spes (1965)*

Pope John XXIII dedicates several paragraphs of *Pacem in Terris* (§109-113) to the then very explosive question of the armament race: “There is a common belief that under modern conditions peace cannot be assured except on the basis of an equal balance of armaments (...). And if one country is equipped with atomic weapons, others consider themselves justified in producing such weapons themselves, equal in destructive force.” (§110). This is a dangerous fallacy based on fear and instilling fear, says the Pope. Against it “Justice, right reason, and the recognition of man’s dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race. The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned.” (§112). Pope John XXIII thus sets the corner stones of the Catholic position: inanity of a peace based on an ever inflating equilibrium of destructive force; the necessity of a simultaneous and consensual disarmament process; the need to aim for a ban of all nuclear weapons.

But amid this very strong condemnation of nuclear weapons by *Pacem in Terris*, twice comes an incidental recognition of the deterrence capability brought by the equilibrium of terror: “Their object is not aggression... but to deter others from aggression” (§128; Cf. §111). Accordingly Pope John XXIII recognizes here that deterrence might actually work and that a difference in intentionality may arise between possession of nuclear weapons for deterrence and possession for use. But too much should not be made out of the quote. It touches the question only incidentally.

*Gaudium et Spes* (1965) upholds *Pacem in Terris* but openly addresses deterrence: “To be sure scientific weapons are not amassed solely for use in war. Since the defensive strength of any nation is considered to be dependent upon its capacity for immediate retaliation, this accumulation of arms, which increases each year, likewise serves, in a way heretofore unknown, as a deterrent to possible enemy attack. Many regard this procedure as the most effective way by which peace of a sort can be maintained between nations at the present time” (§81). The paradox is clearly stated but is intentionally not further discussed. However, the conviction *Gaudium et Spes* wants to convey that the “peace of a sort” provided by deterrence is not a true path to peace, as paragraph 82 clearly states. The destabilizing effects of the armaments race and the increasing arsenals bring the world to an ever closer possibility of nuclear war, hence the need for a true and balanced nuclear disarmament.

## 2. *The 1982 address of John Paul II at the United Nations*

Pope John Paul II took the Catholic conditional approval of deterrence to its apex in his famous address to the UN Second Special Session on Disarmament (1982): “In current conditions ‘deterrence’ based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself, but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable. Nonetheless, in order to ensure peace, it is indispensable not to be satisfied with this minimum which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion.”<sup>1</sup> But paragraph eight, much quoted as it is, needs to be read in the light of the previous ones (§2-3). They draft an opposition between two parties: the one seeing confrontation as inevitable and therefore trying to prevent, or at least delay it by way of containment and deterrence and the one that believes peace is possible and seeks a true and progressive disarmament. The logic of deterrence belongs to both parties, but is morally legitimate only if the second option is sought (peace and disarmament).

John Paul II believes however, that the logic of deterrence is twisted toward the first position. Its very logic leads to a continual increase of armaments, since out of the fear to be left at a disadvantage, each party not only tries to reach equilibrium, but seeks to ensure a certain margin of superiority. “Thus in practice the temptation is easy (...) to see the search for balance turned into a search for superiority of a type that sets off the arms race in an even more dangerous way.” (§3). This is not the road the Conference on Disarmament and the Pope have chosen to follow. If deterrence is to be morally acceptable it must be a temporary measure linked to an effective process of disarmament.

In other words – and gathering elements from the entire text – the Pope sets two conditions under which deterrence may be morally acceptable: (1) A renunciation of the arms race and any search for a clear technical and quantitative superiority by the nuclear powers (i.e. abiding to the existing equilibrium); (2) A commitment to a disarmament process, i.e. concrete measures that would implement a progressive disarmament while maintaining the balance of powers. The Pope also insists that both conditions are based on two important presuppositions, namely non-aggressive foreign policies and a commitment to dialogue. Nuclear disarmament depends indeed primarily on the commitment to international cooperation, without which, discussions and negotiations would remain empty and demagogic. Accordingly, to be legitimate deterrence has to be strictly tied to concrete measures of disarmament. Deterrence is but a mean to disarmament and to a long-lasting peace. It was never envisioned to be a permanent policy.

## 3. *The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)*

The most detailed Church’s document on nuclear deterrence is the 1983 USCCB pastoral letter “*The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and our Response*”<sup>2</sup>. Fully dedicated to addressing nuclear

war and peace, it analyzes at some length the question of deterrence (§162-199). While following and embracing John Paul II's address to the UN, it consistently elaborates a detailed position of the conditions needed for deterrence to be morally legitimate. The US bishops do so, however, voicing their "profound skepticism" about the moral legitimacy of any actual use of nuclear weapons (§193).

Deterrence is broadly defined in the document as meaning "dissuasion of a potential adversary from initiating an attack or conflict, (...) by the threat of unacceptable retaliatory damage" (§163). Furthermore deterrence must be credible to be stable; the threat must be real to effectively and steadily deter the adversary; it must be constant so as to allow no window of opportunity to attack without consequences. It requires maintaining an effective capability to strike back after an attack but without appearing to have first strike ability. The credibility of deterrence also demands that the adversary does indeed have knowledge of the retaliatory capability and of the nuclear weapons' policy of use.

An important distinction therefore must be made between declamatory policy and action policy. The first expresses "the public explanation of our strategic intentions and capabilities", while the second encompasses the "actual planning and targeting policies to be followed in a nuclear attack" (§164). A judgment on the moral legitimacy of deterrence must therefore not be limited to the declamatory policy, but should also take into consideration the contingencies of military strategy.

One specific issue was of particular concern to the US bishops: The kind of targets and strategic plans employed, namely the use of nuclear deterrence in declamatory and actual policy (§177).

Two principles are used to discuss the retaliatory strategies and the deterrence targets, namely discrimination (immunity of civilians) and proportionality (which requires any collateral damage of a strike not to exceed the advantage it may bring). In the summary of the letter, the US bishops make clear that "No use of nuclear weapons which would violate the principles of discrimination or proportionality may be intended in a strategy of deterrence." (Summary, Cf. §178; §179).

Consequently, the US bishops view any strategic targeting of cities or urban centres as illegitimate. The targeting of retaliatory strikes on military facilities that lay in or around cities is also deemed as illegitimate. As a matter of fact, direct or indirect massive civilian casualties of deterrent strikes violate the immunity of non-combatants and thus must be considered morally illegitimate (§180).

Interestingly, the much discussed distinction between intended targets and unintended victims (the double-effect doctrine) is said not to be applicable here. The intention to strike a military target can't be distinguished from the resulting causation of harm to civilians (collateral damage). For once nuclear strikes are launched their long-lasting consequences escape

military control and indiscriminately will affect both civilians and soldiers. “Even with attacks limited to ‘military’ targets, the number of deaths in a substantial exchange would be almost indistinguishable from what might occur if civilian centres had been deliberately and directly struck” (§180). Thus, massive incidental death of civilians can’t be said to be wholly unintentional. In any case, such casualties would violate the principle of proportionality and therefore could not be deemed as morally legitimate (§182). This is to be understood with regard to the strong doubts voiced by the bishops about so called “flexible response”. They think any retaliatory strike would not remain limited and would escalate into a full and indiscriminate use of nuclear weapons. The nature of the destruction brought on by these weapons and the limited control we have on their long-lasting consequences make it very difficult for each side to not resist the logic of escalation.

From targeting questions, the US bishops then move to discuss deterrence strategy. Three criteria must be met if a deterrence strategy is to be morally legitimate:

- First: “If nuclear deterrence exists only to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by others, then proposals to go beyond this to planning for prolonged periods of repeated nuclear strikes and counterstrike, or ‘prevailing’ in nuclear war, are not acceptable. (...) Rather, we must continually say ‘no’ to the idea of nuclear war.”
- Secondly, “if nuclear deterrence is our goal, ‘sufficiency’ to deter is an adequate strategy; the quest for nuclear superiority must be rejected.
- Thirdly, “nuclear deterrence should be used as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament.” (§188)

Deterrence – *not prevalence*; Sufficiency – *not superiority*; Progressive disarmament – *not status quo*. Together, these three conditions will ensure that deterrence functions to prevent nuclear war. In light of these criteria the US bishops make six specific policy recommendations:

- “Support for immediate, bilateral, verifiable agreements to halt the testing, production, and deployment of new nuclear weapons systems”.
- “Support for negotiated bilateral deep cuts in the arsenals of both superpowers, particularly those weapons systems which have destabilizing characteristics; (...)”
- “Support for early and successful conclusion of negotiations of a comprehensive test ban treaty.”
- “Removal by all parties of short-range nuclear weapons which multiply dangers disproportionate to their deterrent value.
- “Removal by all parties of nuclear weapons from areas where they are likely to be overrun in the early stages of war, thus forcing rapid and uncontrollable decisions on their use.”
- “Strengthening of command and control over nuclear weapons to prevent inadvertent and unauthorized use.” (§191).

A second document issued in 1993, briefly tackles the question of deter-

rence under the new circumstances brought by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The document, called “*The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*”<sup>3</sup>, assesses the changes that the end of the Cold War brought to the 1983 conditional acceptance of nuclear deterrence. Basically the text maintains that the criteria and conditions set in 1983 were still “a useful guide for evaluating the continued moral status of nuclear weapons in a post-Cold War world” (II.E.1). Yet the importance of a strategic shift is not overlooked. The collapse of the Soviet Union means that nuclear weapons, while remaining part of security policies, are not essential to them anymore, thus opening new opportunities for disarmament. Likewise the demise of the former Warsaw Pact is responsible for a shift in priority from global nuclear war toward the prevention of global nuclear proliferation.

More interesting however, is the document’s avowal of divided opinion among the US bishops regarding deterrence. While a majority still hold that “a conditional moral acceptance” to be legitimate, a minority maintain that the time has come to abandon this stance. Interestingly enough, some of the arguments that would come to the forefront later are mentioned here for the first time. For instance, “the apparent unwillingness of the nuclear powers side to accept the need to eliminate nuclear weapons” (II.E.1) is advanced to introduce the perspective of the non-nuclear countries (a perspective that was totally absent from the 1983 document). Hence the bishops ask: “What is the moral basis for asking other nations to forego nuclear weapons if we continue to judge our own deterrent to be morally necessary?” (II.E.1).

#### ***4. The German Conference of Catholic Bishops***

Similar to the Americans, the German Catholic Bishops Conference addressed the issue of nuclear deterrence in several pastoral letters. The first “*Gerechtigkeit schafft Frieden*” (1983), is an extensive document on war and peace that also discussed nuclear deterrence at some length<sup>4</sup>. Even more restrictive than the 1983 US Bishops’ document, it asserts from the beginning that nuclear deterrence is not a reliable instrument for preventing war.

But then, on a more practical stance, the text goes on to show some support for the Allied policy of a “flexible response” (the possibility to gradually increase retaliatory strikes), holding that nuclear weapons might be needed to halt an overwhelming conventional attack (p.51). “The intention of preventing war with all one’s strength must become credible by virtue of the choice of the whole range of arms” (p.52). But the “methods chosen to pursue one’s security policy should be measured in terms of the goal of preventing war.” (p.53). In a convergence with John Paul II’s 1982 address to the UN, deterrence is hinted to be eventually legitimate: if its goal is to allow time for disarma-

ment; if it is a provisional means, if it stays at the minimum sufficient level for deterrence and does not actually increase the possibility of war.

However, in the event that deterrence fails and a conflict begins, the German bishops consider these weapons “made to threaten and to prevent war” as useless for any military engagement unless the unthinkable occurs and nuclear escalation brings about the destruction of Europe (p.55). The use of weapons of mass destruction is held never to be legitimate. The whole tension between possession of arms for the sake of deterrence and the use of nuclear weapons comes back to the forefront. How can deterrence remain credible if their use is not absolutely certain in the event of a first strike? But how can we not acknowledge the validity of the bishops’ position that should a first strike hit Germany, retaliation would be of no use to the dead and other victims. For at the very moment they are used, these weapons, made to deter, prove that they have failed to do so, and their use is therefore now morally illegitimate.

A second document titled “*Gerechter Friede*” (2000)<sup>5</sup>, shows the German bishops taking some distance with their previous statement, rather than trying to explain why they supported deterrence. They argue “that the strategy of nuclear deterrence was ethically tolerable only as a temporary response bound to the obligation ‘to strive with their whole strength towards finding alternatives to the threat of mass destruction’ (JP II, 1982)”. They also remind us that their overall assessment of nuclear threats “has lost none of its validity since the major powers still have comprehensive arsenals of nuclear weapons at their disposal.” (§2).

## **The second period : Deterrence as a Hindrance to Peace and Disarmament**

### *1. The last decade of the XX Century*

**T**he publication of the *Catechism* of the Catholic Church in 1992, 30 years after Vatican II, recalls the enduring validity of the moral principles that apply to all armed conflicts: “The mere fact that a war has broken out does not mean that everything becomes licit between the warring parties”. The *Catechism* reiterates the condemnation of atomic biological and chemical war as a “crime against God and man himself” (GS 8). It also draws attention to the necessity of “rigorous consideration” when alleging self-defense: “the use of arms must not produce evils or disorders greater than the threat to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition” (§2309). The *Catechism* also refers to the possession of nuclear arsenals and the notion of deterrence, by adding “strong moral reservation” to it: “The accumulation of arms strikes many as a paradoxically suitable way of deterring potential adversaries from war. They see it as the most effective means of ensuring peace among nations. This method of deterrence gives

rise to strong moral reservations” (§2315). Finally, any use of weapons of mass destruction against cities is condemned as a crime against God and man himself (§2314).

The nineties are indeed characterized by a growing skepticism toward deterrence as it became evident that the nuclear states were not taking serious steps towards full nuclear disarmament.

Archbishop Renato Martino, who was the Holy See’s Permanent Observer at the United Nations in New York, made a statement in 1997 that demonstrated, in a sense, the symptomatic renewed stress that was being put on making a nuclear free peace the goal to be pursued:

“Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st Century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty requires an unequivocal commitment to their abolition. (...) This is a moral challenge, a legal challenge, and a political challenge. This multiple challenge has to start from the care for our humanity.”<sup>6</sup> Some years later, in 2001, Archbishop Martino made a little known but decisive statement at the UN saying that nuclear deterrence actually prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. “Among all the assumptions that the Cold War brought into the new era, the more dangerous is the belief that the strategy of nuclear deterrence is essential to national security. Adopting nuclear deterrence in the twenty-first century will not help, but hinder peace. Nuclear deterrence prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. It maintains unacceptable hegemony on the non-nuclear development of half of the poorest countries of the world. It is a fundamental obstacle to the achievement of a new era of global security”.<sup>7</sup> Deterrence here is not only rejected as a transitory solution toward nuclear disarmament, but it has become an element preventing real nuclear disarmament.

Another text symptomatic of the departure from the position of tolerance is the common declaration issued in 2000 by 75 US Catholic bishops and military representatives of the US Army. It states that the official US nuclear policy was actually sidetracking the ethical logic of nuclear deterrence. Both the bishops and the military – painfully aware that many US politicians still believe the possession of nuclear weapons to be vital to national security – declared: “We are convinced, however, that is not so. On the contrary, they make the world a more dangerous place. (...) Nuclear deterrence as a national policy must be condemned as morally repugnant because it is the excuse and justification for possession and further development of these horrific weapons.”<sup>8</sup>

## *2. The XXI century*

**I**n 2005, during the Conference of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons the Holy See issued its ‘new’ position, clarifying that earlier arguments concerning nuclear deterrence should be revised and were never considered to be a permanent fixture of its teaching on nuclear

weapons: “It is time to find solutions other than the ‘balance of terror’, it is time to review the whole strategy of nuclear deterrence. When the Holy See expressed its limited acceptance of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, this was done with the condition that deterrence was only a step on the way towards progressive nuclear disarmament. The Holy See has never approved nuclear deterrence as a permanent measure and it doesn’t even today, when it is clear that nuclear deterrence leads to the development of more and more sophisticated nuclear weapons, thus preventing a real nuclear disarmament. The Holy See stresses once again that the peace we seek in the 21st century cannot be achieved by relying on nuclear weapons”.<sup>9</sup>

The question was retaken by the Pope a year later. In his message for the World Day of Peace 2006, Benedict XVI asks countries to have the courage to change the course of history by renouncing the power of nuclear weapons: “(...) What about those governments that count on nuclear arms to ensure the security of their countries? Along with numerous persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baleful, but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war there wouldn’t be any victors, but only victims. The truth of peace requires that all – both governments which openly or secretly possess nuclear arms and those planning to acquire them – agree to change the course of history by taking clear and firm decisions and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament”.<sup>10</sup>

In 2009, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, urges all people to abandon the practice of nuclear dissuasion: “Nuclear weapons threaten life on the planet, the planet itself and therefore its developmental process. Nuclear weapons are, by their nature, not only harmful, but also misleading. Considering that nuclear deterrence belongs to the period of the Cold War and is no longer justifiable in our days, the Holy See urges states to review those military doctrines which rely on nuclear weapons as instruments of security and defense or even power, and which have shown to be among the main causes preventing disarmament and non-proliferation (...)”.<sup>11</sup>

At last, Pope Francis’ message to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (2014)<sup>12</sup>, settled the Church’s position as being grounded on two pillars: a) It is never morally legitimate to possess nuclear weapons; b) The Church advocates for the abolition of all nuclear weapons. The Holy Father highlighted the need for a new form of global ethos in order to reduce the nuclear threat and work toward concrete disarmament. Now more than ever, the technological, social, and political interdependence of the world demands an urgent ethic of solidarity, that encourages people to work together towards a safer world and a common future based on moral values and responsibility at a global level. “Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethic of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states. The youth of today and tomorrow deserve far

more. They deserve a peaceful world order based on the unity of the human family, grounded on respect, cooperation, solidarity and compassion. Now is the time to counter the logic of fear with the ethic of responsibility, and so foster a climate of trust and sincere dialogue. (...)”<sup>13</sup> The Pope further states that more attention should be paid to the “unnecessary suffering” caused by the possible or accidental use of these weapons. The laws of war and international humanitarian law have long prohibited the undue and unnecessary suffering inflicted on civilians. “Why should there be an exception for nuclear weapons?” says the Pope, pointing out the suffering undergone by the the “Hibakusha” (the people of Hiroshima).

As pointed out by Mgr. Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Observer at the United Nations in Geneva during the same conference, the new position of the Church seeks the total elimination of nuclear arsenals. A problem which concerns not only the possessor states, but also the other signatories to the NPT: “The humanitarian initiative is a new hope to take decisive steps towards a world without nuclear weapons. The collaboration between States, civil society, the ICRC, international organizations and the United Nations is a further guarantee of inclusion, cooperation, and solidarity. This is not an action that is imposed by the circumstances. It is a fundamental change that responds to the deep research of many peoples of the world, who would be the first victims of a nuclear event”.<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, it clearly emerges that for the past 20 years the Catholic Church’s opposition to nuclear weapons and its rejection of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence has become adamant. The possession of nuclear weapons, even if only for deterrence, is no longer deemed as morally legitimate. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence is contrary to the ethical principles and values that should be pursued by the international community.

**NOTES**

1. John PAUL II, *Message to the UN Second Special Session on Global Disarmament*, 11 June 1982.
2. UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and our Response*, Washington, 1983.
3. UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, Washington Dc, 1993.
4. GERMAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE, *Gerechtigkeit Schafft Frieden*, Bonn, 1983, pp.50-55.
5. GERMAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE, *A Just Peace*, Bonn, 2000.
6. H.E. Mgr. Renato MARTINO, *Nuclear Weapons Cannot be Justified and Deserve Condemnation*, 15 October 1997.
7. The actual document of the delegation could not be found, but is quoted by H.E. Mgr. Celestino Migliore as made by H.E. Mgr. Renato Martino, then head of the Holy See Delegation at the 2001 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) Conference.
8. *Joint Nuclear Reduction/Disarmament Statement Signed by Military Professionals and Religious Leaders*, Washington D.C., 2000.
9. H.E. Mgr. Celestino MIGLIORE, *Statement at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*, New York, 2005.
10. POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, January 1st 2006.
11. H. E., Mgr. Dominique MAMBERTI, *Address to the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly*, Septembre 26 2013.
12. POPE FRANCIS, *Message on the Occasion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons*, December 9 2014.
13. *ibidem*.
14. H.E. Mgr. Silvano M. TOMASI, *Intervention of the Holy See at the Conference of Vienna over Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons*, December 9 2014.

## *PACEM IN TERRIS*

### COUNCIL VATICAN II

*Vatican, 11 APRIL 1963, §111-116.*

Consequently people are living in the grip of constant fear. They are afraid that at any moment the impending storm may break upon them with horrific violence. And they have good reasons for their fear, for there is certainly no lack of such weapons. While it is difficult to believe that anyone would dare to assume responsibility for initiating the appalling slaughter and destruction that war would bring in its wake, there is no denying that the conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance. Moreover, even though the monstrous power of modern weapons does indeed act as a deterrent, there is reason to fear that the very testing of nuclear devices for war purposes can, if continued, lead to serious danger for various forms of life on earth.

#### *Need for Disarmament*

Hence justice, right reason,

and the recognition of man's dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race. The stock-piles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control. In the words of Pope Pius XII: "The calamity of a world war, with the economic and social ruin and the moral excesses and dissolution that accompany it, must not on any account be permitted to engulf the human race for a third time."<sup>59</sup>

Everyone, however, must realize that, unless this process of disarmament be thoroughgoing and complete, and reach men's very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race, or to reduce armaments, or — and this is the main thing — ultimately to abolish

them entirely. Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from men's minds. But this requires that the fundamental principles upon which peace is based in today's world be replaced by an altogether different one, namely, the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust. And We are confident that this can be achieved, for it is a thing which not only is dictated by common sense, but is in itself most desirable and most fruitful of good.

### *Three Motives*

Here, then, we have an objective dictated first of all by reason. There is general agreement — or at least

there should be — that relations between States, as between individuals, must be regulated not by armed force, but in accordance with the principles of right reason: the principles, that is, of truth, justice and vigorous and sincere co-operation.

Secondly, it is an objective which We maintain is more earnestly to be desired. For who is there who does not feel the craving to be rid of the threat of war, and to see peace preserved and made daily more secure?

And finally it is an objective which is rich with possibilities for good. Its advantages will be felt everywhere, by individuals, by families, by nations, by the whole human race. The warning of Pope Pius XII still rings in our ears: "Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war."<sup>60</sup>

## NOTES

59. Cf. PIUS XII, *Broadcast message*, Christmas 1941, AAS 34 (1942) 17, and Benedict XV's *Exhortation to the rulers of the belligerent powers*, August 1 1917, AAS 9 (1917) 418.

60. Cf. PIUS XII, *Broadcast message*, August 24 1939, AAS 31 (1939) 334.

## *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

### COUNCIL VATICAN II

*Vatican, 7 December 1965, §81.*

To be sure, scientific weapons are not amassed solely for use in war. Since the defensive strength of any nation is considered to be dependent upon its capacity for immediate retaliation, this accumulation of arms, which increases each year, likewise serves, in a way heretofore unknown, as deterrent to possible enemy attack. Many regard this procedure as the most effective way by which peace of a sort can be maintained between nations at the present time.

Whatever be the facts about this method of deterrence, men should be convinced that the arms race in which an already considerable number of countries are engaged is not a safe way to preserve a steady peace, nor is the so-called balance resulting from this race a sure and authentic peace. Rather than being eliminated thereby, the causes of war are in danger of being gradually aggravated. While extravagant sums are being spent for the furnishing of ever new weapons, an

adequate remedy cannot be provided for the multiple miseries afflicting the whole modern world. Disagreements between nations are not really and radically healed; on the contrary, they spread the infection to other parts of the earth. New approaches based on reformed attitudes must be taken to remove this trap and to emancipate the world from its crushing anxiety through the restoration of genuine peace.

Therefore, we say it again: the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree. It is much to be feared that if this race persists, it will eventually spawn all the lethal ruin whose path it is now making ready. Warned by the calamities which the human race has made possible, let us make use of the interlude granted us from above and for which we are thankful to become more conscious of our own responsibility and to find means for resolving our disputes in a manner more worthy of man.

Divine Providence urgently demands of us that we free ourselves from the age-old slavery of war. If we refuse to make this effort, we do not know where we will be led by the evil road we have set upon.

It is our clear duty, therefore, to strain every muscle in working for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all and endowed with the power to safeguard on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights.

But before this hoped for authority can be set up, the highest existing international centers must devote themselves vigorously to the pursuit of better means for obtaining common security. Since peace must be born of mutual trust between nations and not be imposed on them through a fear of the available weapons, everyone must labor to put an end at last to the arms race, and to make a true beginning of disarmament, not unilaterally indeed, but proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement, and backed up by true and workable safeguards.<sup>3</sup>

### NOTES

3. Cf. POPE JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in terris*: AAS 55 (1963), p. 287.

# *MESSAGE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS*

POPE JOHN PAUL II

*Vatican, 7 June 1982*

**I**n June 1978, my Predecessor Pope Paul VI sent a personal message to the First Special Session of the United Nations devoted to Disarmament, in which he expressed his hopes that such an effort of good will and political wisdom by the international community would bring the result that humanity was looking for. Four years later you are gathered here again to ask yourselves if those initiatives have been – at least partially – realized.

The answer to that question seems neither very reassuring nor very encouraging. If one compares the situation in the area of disarmament four years ago with that of today, there seems to be very little improvement. Some, in fact, think that there has been deterioration at least in the sense that hopes born of that period could now be labeled as simple illusions. Such a stance could very easily lend itself to discouragement and impel those who are re-

sponsible to seek elsewhere for the solution to these problems-general or particular-which continue to disturb the lives of people.

That is, in fact, how many see the current situation. Figures from various sources all point to a serious increase in military expenditures represented by a greater production of different kinds of weapons along with which, according to specialized institutes, there is a new rise in the sale of weapons. Recently the news media has given a great deal of attention to research and use on a wider scale of chemical weapons. Moreover new kinds of nuclear weapons have also come into existence. Before an assembly as competent as this one, there is no need to repeat the figures which your own organization has published on this subject. It is sufficient, as an indication, to refer to the study according to which the sum total of military expenditures on the planet corresponds

to a mean of \$100 per person per year, a figure which for many people who live on this earth is all they would have annually to survive. Faced with these facts, I willingly want to express my satisfaction that the United Nations Organization has proposed to confront the problem of disarmament once again, and I am grateful for the courtesy so graciously extended to me to address some words to you on this occasion.

While it is not a member of your organization, for some time the Holy See has had a Permanent Mission of Observer, a post which allows it to follow your daily activities. No one is unaware of how much my Predecessors valued your work. I myself, especially at the time of my visit to the headquarters of the United Nations, have had the opportunity of making my own their words of appreciation for your organization. Like them I understand the difficulties. And while I am ever hopeful that your efforts be crowned with even more important and better results, I recognize its precious and irreplaceable role in helping ensure a more tranquil and peaceful future for the world. This is the voice of one who has no interests nor political power, nor even less military force. It is a voice which is heard here again in this hall thanks to your courtesy. Here where practically all the nations, great and small, of the world come together, my words are meant to be the

echo of the moral conscience of humanity "in the pure sense" if you will grant me that expression. My words bear with them no special interests or concerns of a nature which could mar their witness value and make them less credible. A conscience illumined and guided by Christian faith, without doubt, but which is by that fact nonetheless profoundly human. It is therefore a conscience which is shared by all men and women of sincerity and good will. My voice is the echo of the concerns and aspirations, the hopes and the fears of millions of men and women who, from every walk of life, are looking toward this Assembly asking, as they hope, if there will come forth some reassuring light or if there will be a new and more worrisome disappointment. Without claiming a mandate from all these people, I believe I can make myself the faithful interpreter to you of the feelings which are theirs.

I neither wish nor am I able to enter into the technical and political aspects of the problem of disarmament as they stand before you today. However, I would like to call your attention to some ethical principles which are at the heart of every discussion and every decision that might be looked for in this field.

My point of departure is rooted in a statement unanimously agreed upon not only by your citizens but also by the governments that you lead or you represent: the world wants

peace; the world needs peace.

In our modern world to refuse peace means not only to provoke the sufferings and the loss that today more than ever-war, even a limited one, implies: it could also involve the total destruction of entire regions, not to mention the threat of possible or probable catastrophes in ever vaster and possibly even universal proportions. Those who are responsible for the life of peoples seem above all to be engaged in a frantic search for political means and technical solutions which would allow the results of eventual conflicts "to be contained". While having to recognize the limits of their efforts in this direction, they persist in believing that in the long run war is inevitable. Above all this is found in the specter of a possible military confrontation between the two major camps which divide the world today and continues to haunt the future of humanity. Certainly no power, and no statesman, would be of a mind to admit to planning war or to wanting to take such an initiative. Mutual distrust, however, makes us believe or fear that because others might nourish designs or desires of this type, each, especially among the great powers, seems to envisage no other possible solution than through necessity to prepare sufficiently strong defence to be able to respond to an eventual attack. Many even think that such preparations constitute the way-even, the only way to safe-

guard peace in some fashion or at least to impede to the utmost in an efficacious way the outbreak of wars, especially major conflicts which might lead to the ultimate holocaust of humanity and the destruction of the civilization that man has constructed so laboriously over the centuries. In this approach one can see the "philosophy of peace" which was proclaimed in the ancient Roman principle: *Si vis pacem, para bellum*. Put in modern terms, this "philosophy" has the label of "deterrence" and one can find it in various guises of the search for a "balance of forces" which sometimes has been called, and not without reason, the "balance of terror". As my Predecessor Paul VI put it: "The logic underlying the request for the balances of power impels each of the adversaries to seek to ensure a certain margin of superiority, for fear of being left at a disadvantage" (*Message to the United Nations General Assembly*, May 24, 1978: *The Teachings of Pope Paul VI*, vol. 11, 1978, p. 202). Thus in practice the temptation is easy – and the danger always present – to see the search for balance turned into a search for superiority of a type that sets off the arms race in an even more dangerous way. In reality this is the tendency which seems to continue to be prevalent today perhaps in an even more accentuated fashion than in the past. You have taken as your specific purpose in this Assembly to search how it could be possible to

reverse this trend. This purpose could seem to be in a sense “minimalist”, but it is of vital importance. For only a real renewal can raise the hope that humanity will commit itself on the road that leads to the goal that everyone so much desires, even if many still consider it a utopia: total disarmament, which is mutual and surrounded by such guarantees of effective controls that it gives to everyone confidence and necessary security. In addition this special session surely reflects another truth: like peace, the world wants disarmament; the world needs disarmament. Moreover, all the work which has gone on in the Committee for Disarmament, in the various commissions and sub-commissions and within governments, as well as the attention of the public, all give witness to the importance that is being placed today on the difficult question of disarmament.

**T**he actual convocation of this meeting indicates a judgment: the nations of the world are already overarmed and are overcommitted to policies that continue that trend. Implicit in this judgment is the conviction that this is wrong and that the nations so involved in these actions need to re-think their positions. However, the situation is a complex one where a number of values – some of the highest order come to play. It is one where there are divergent viewpoints that can be expressed. We must therefore face up to these problems with

realism and honesty. That is why, before all else, I pray to God that He might grant you the strength of spirit and good will that will be needed for you to complete your task and further the great cause of peace, which is the ultimate goal of all your efforts at this special session. That is why my every word is intended to be a word of encouragement and of hope: encouragement that you may not let your energies weaken at the complexities of the questions or at the failures of the past and unfortunately the present; hope because we know that only people who build in hope can have the vision necessary to progress patiently and tenaciously towards goals that are worthy of the best efforts and the common good of all. Perhaps no other question of our day touches so many aspects of the human condition as that of armaments and disarmament. There are questions on the scientific and technical level; there are social and economic questions. There are deep problems of a political nature that touch the relations between states and among peoples. Our world-wide arms systems impinge in great measure on cultural developments. But at the heart of them all there are present spiritual questions which concern the very identity of man and his choices for the future and for generations yet to come. Sharing my thoughts with you, I am conscious of all the technical, scientific, social, economic, political aspects, but especially of

the ethical, cultural and spiritual ones. Since the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the "atomic age", the attitude of the Holy See and the Catholic Church has been clear. The Church has continually sought to contribute to peace and to build a world that would not have recourse to war to solve disputes. It has encouraged the maintenance of an international climate of mutual trust and cooperation. It has supported those structures which would help ensure peace. It has called attention to the disastrous effects of war. With the growth of new and more lethal means of destruction, it has pointed to the dangers involved and, going beyond the immediate perils, it has indicated what values to develop in order to foster cooperation, mutual trust, fraternity and peace.

My Predecessor, Pius XII, as early as 1946, referred to "the might of new instruments of destruction" which "brought the problems of disarmament into the center of international discussions under completely new aspects" (*Address to the College of Cardinals*, December 24, 1946). Each successive Pope and the Second Vatican Council continued to express their convictions, introducing them into the changing and developing situation of armaments and arms control. If men would bend to the task with good will and with the goal of peace in their hearts and in their plans, then adequate meas-

ures could be found, appropriate structures erected to ensure the legitimate security of every people in mutual respect and peace; thus the need for these grand arsenals of fear and the threat of death would become superfluous.

**T**he teaching of the Catholic Church in this area has been clear and consistent. It has deplored the arms race, called nonetheless for mutual progressive and verifiable reduction of armaments as well as greater safeguards against possible misuse of these weapons. It has done so while urging that the independence, freedom and legitimate security of each and every nation be respected. I wish to reassure you that the constant concern and consistent efforts of the Catholic Church will not cease until there is a general verifiable disarmament, until the hearts of all are won over to those ethical choices which will guarantee a lasting peace. In turning to the current debate that concerns you, and to the subject at hand, we must recognize that no element in international affairs stands alone and isolated from the many-faceted interests of nations. However, it is one thing to recognize the interdependence of questions; it is another to exploit them in order to gain advantage in another. Armaments, nuclear weapons and disarmament are too important in themselves and for the world ever to be made part of a strategy which would exploit their intrinsic importance in fa-

vour of politics or other interests. Therefore, it is important and right that every serious proposal that would contribute to real disarmament and that would create a better climate be given the prudent and objective consideration it deserves. Even small steps can have a value which would go beyond their material or technical aspects. Whatever the area under consideration, we need today freshness of perspective and a capacity to listen respectfully and carefully to the honest suggestions of every responsible party in this matter.

In this context there is what I would call the phenomenon of rhetoric. In an area already tense and fraught with unavoidable dangers, there is no place for exaggerated speech or threatening stances. Indulgence in rhetoric, in inflamed and impassioned vocabulary, in veiled threat and scare tactics can only exacerbate a problem that needs sober and diligent examination.

**O**n the other hand, governments and their leaders cannot carry on the affairs of state independent of the wishes of their peoples. The history of civilization gives us stark examples of what happens when that is tried. Currently the fear and preoccupation of so many groups in various parts of the world reveal that people are more and more frightened about what would happen if irresponsible parties unleash some nuclear war. In fact, just about everywhere

peace movements have been developing. In several countries, these movements, which have become very popular, are being supported by an increasing sector of the citizenry from various social levels, different age groups and backgrounds, but especially by youth. The ideological bases of these movements are multiple. Their projects, proposals and policies vary greatly and can often lend themselves to political exploitation. However, all these differences of form and shape manifest a profound and sincere desire for peace.

May I also join myself to the spirit of your draft appeal to public opinion for the birth of a truly universal consciousness of the terrible risks of war. May that consciousness in its turn lead to a general spirit of peace. In current conditions "deterrence" based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable. Nonetheless in order to ensure peace, it is indispensable not to be satisfied with this minimum which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion. What then can be done? In the absence of a supranational authority of the type Pope John XXIII sought in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, one which one would have hoped to find in the United Nations Organization, the only realistic response to the threat of war still is negotiation. Here I would like to remind you

of an expression of Saint Augustine which I have already cited in another context: "Destroy war by the words of negotiations, but do not destroy men by the sword." Today once again, before you all, I reaffirm my confidence in the power of true negotiations to arrive at just and equitable solutions. Such negotiations demand patience and diligence and most notably lead to a reduction of armaments that is balanced, simultaneous and internationally controlled. To be even more precise: the development of armaments seems to lead to the increasing interdependence of kinds of armaments. In these conditions, how can one countenance a balanced reduction if negotiations do not include the whole gamut of arms? To that end the continuation of the study of the "Complete Program of Disarmament" that your organization has already undertaken, could facilitate the needed coordination of different forums and bring to their results greater truth, equity and efficacy. In fact, nuclear weapons are not the only means of war and destruction. The production and sale of conventional weapons throughout the world is a truly alarming and evidently growing phenomenon. No negotiations about armaments would be complete if they were to ignore the fact that 80 percent of the expenditures for weapons are devoted to conventional arms. Moreover, the traffic in these weapons seems to be developing

at an increasing rate and seems to be directed most of all toward developing countries. Every step taken to limit this production and traffic and to bring them under an ever more effective control will be an important contribution to the cause of peace. Recent events have sadly confirmed the destructive capacities of conventional weapons and the sad plight of nations tempted to use them to solve disputes. To focus, however, on the quantitative aspects of armaments, nuclear and conventional, is not enough. A very special attention must be paid to the qualitative improvement of these arms because of new and more advanced technologies. Here one confronts one of the essential elements in the arms race. To overlook this would be to fool ourselves and to deal dishonestly with those who desire peace. Research and technology must always be at the service of man. In our day, the use and misuse of science and technology for other purposes is a too well-known fact. In my address to UNESCO on June 2, 1980, I spoke extensively with men of culture and science on this subject. May I be allowed today at least to suggest that a significant percentage of the research that is currently being expended in the field of arms technology and science be directed towards life and the welfare of man. In his address to the United Nations Organization on October 4, 1965, Pope Paul VI stated a profound truth when he

said: "Peace, as you know, is not built up only by means of politics or the balance of forces and interests. It is constructed with the mind, with ideas, with works of peace". The products of the mind – ideas – the products of culture, and the creative forces of peoples are meant to be shared. Strategies of peace which remain on the scientific and technical level and which merely measure out balances and verify controls will never be sufficient for real peace unless bonds that link peoples to one another are forged and strengthened. Build up the links that unite people together. Build up the means that will enable peoples and nations to share their culture and values with one another. Put aside all the narrow interests that leave one nation at the mercy of another economically, socially or politically.

**I**n this same vein, the work of many qualified experts plumbing the relationship between disarmament and development is to be commended for study and action. The prospect of diverting material and resources from the development of arms to the development of peoples is not a new one. Nonetheless, it is a pressing and compelling one which the Catholic Church has for a long time endorsed. Any new dynamism in that direction coming from this Assembly would be met with the approbation and support of men and women of good will everywhere. The building of links among peoples means

the rediscovery and reassertion of all the values that reinforce peace and that join people together in harmony. This also means the renewal of what is best in the heart of man, the heart that seeks the good of the other in friendship and love. May I close with one last consideration. The production and the possession of armaments are a consequence of an ethical crisis that is disrupting society in all its political, social and economic dimensions. Peace, as I have already said several times, is the result of respect for ethical principles. True disarmament, that which will actually guarantee peace among peoples, will come about only with the resolution of this ethical crisis. To the extent that the efforts at arms reduction and then of total disarmament are not matched by parallel ethical renewal, they are doomed in advance to failure. The attempt must be made to put our world aright and to eliminate the spiritual confusion born from a narrow-minded search for interest or privilege or by the defense of ideological claims: this is a task of first priority if we wish to measure any progress in the struggle for disarmament.

Otherwise we are condemned to remain at face-saving activities. For the root cause of our insecurity can be found in this profound crisis of humanity. By means of creating consciences sensitive to the absurdity of war, we advance the value of creating the material and spiritual condi-

tions which will lessen the glaring inequalities and which will restore to everyone that minimum of space that is needed for the freedom of the spirit.

**T**he great disparity between the rich and the poor living together on this one planet is no longer supportable in a world of rapid universal communications, without giving birth to a justified resentment that can turn to violence. Moreover the spirit has basic and inalienable rights. For it is with justice that these rights are demanded in countries where the space is denied them to live in tranquillity according to their own convictions. I invite all those struggling for peace to commit themselves to the effort to eliminate the true causes of the insecurity of man of which the terrible arms race is only one effect. To reverse the current trend in the arms race involves, therefore, a parallel struggle on two fronts: on the one side, an immediate and urgent struggle by governments to reduce progressively and equally their armaments; on the other hand, a more patient but nonetheless necessary struggle at the level of the consciences of peoples to take their responsibility in regard to the ethical cause of the insecurity that breeds violence by coming to grips with the material and spiritual inequalities of our world. With no prejudice of any kind, let us unite all our intellectual and spiritual forces,

those of statesmen, of citizens, of religious leaders, to put an end to violence and hatred and to seek out the paths of peace. Peace is the supreme goal of the activity of the United Nations. It must become the goal of all men and women of good will. Unhappily still in our days, sad realities cast their shadows across the international horizon, causing the suffering of destruction, such that they could cause humanity to lose the hope of being able to master its own future in harmony and in the collaboration of peoples. Despite the suffering that invades my soul, I feel empowered, even obliged, solemnly to reaffirm before all the world what my Predecessors and I myself have repeated so often in the name of conscience, in the name of morality, in the name of humanity and in the name of God: Peace is not a utopia, nor an inaccessible ideal, nor an unrealizable dream.

War is not an inevitable calamity. Peace is possible. And because it is possible, peace is our duty: our grave duty, our supreme responsibility. Certainly peace is difficult; certainly it demands much good will, wisdom, and tenacity. But man can and he must make the force of reason prevail over the reasons of force.

That is why my last word is yet a word of encouragement and of exhortation. And since peace, entrusted to the responsibility of men and women, remains even then a gift of God, it

must also express itself in prayer to Him who holds the destinies of all peoples in His hands.

May I thank you for the activity you undertake to make the cause of disarmament go forward: disarming the engines of

death and disarming spirits. May God bless your efforts and may this Assembly remain in history a sign of reassurance and hope.

# ***THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE. GOD'S PROMISE AND OUR RESPONSE***

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

*Washington, 3 May 1983, §162-166, 177-199.*

## **Deterrence in Principle and Practice**

§162. The moral challenge posed by nuclear weapons is not exhausted by an analysis of their possible uses. Much of the political and moral debate of the nuclear age has concerned the strategy of deterrence. Deterrence is at the heart of the US–Soviet relationship, currently the most dangerous dimension of the nuclear arms race.

### ***1. The Concept and Development of Deterrence Policy***

§163. The concept of deterrence existed in military strategy long before the nuclear age, but it has taken on a new meaning and significance since 1945. Essentially, deterrence means «dissuasion of a potential adversary from initiating an attack or conflict, often by the threat of unacceptable retaliatory damage.<sup>71</sup> In the nuclear age, deterrence has become the centerpiece of both U.S. and Soviet policy. Both superpowers

have for many years now been able to promise a retaliatory response which can inflict «unacceptable damage.» A situation of stable deterrence depends on the ability of each side to deploy its retaliatory forces in ways that are not vulnerable to an attack (i.e., protected against a «first strike»); preserving stability requires a willingness by both sides to refrain from deploying weapons which appear to have a first strike capability.

§164. This general definition of deterrence does not explain either the elements of a deterrence strategy or the evolution of deterrence policy since 1945. A detailed description of either of these subjects would require an extensive essay, using materials which can be found in abundance in the technical literature on the subject of deterrence.<sup>72</sup> Particularly significant is the relationship between «declaratory policy» (the public explanation of our strategic intentions and capabilities) and «action policy» (the actual planning and targeting policies

to be followed in a nuclear attack).

§165. The evolution of deterrence strategy has passed through several stages of declaratory policy. Using the U.S. case as an example, there is a significant difference between «massive retaliation» and «flexible response,» and between , «mutual assured destruction» and «countervailing strategy.» It is also possible to distinguish between «counterforce» and «counter value» targeting policies; and to contrast a posture of «minimum deterrence» with «extended deterrence.» These terms are well known in the technical debate on nuclear policy; they are less well known and sometimes loosely used in the wider public debate. It is important to recognize that there has been substantial continuity in U.S. action policy in spite of real changes in declaratory policy.<sup>73</sup>

§166. The recognition of these different elements in the deterrent and the evolution of policy means that moral assessment of deterrence requires a series of distinct judgments. They include: an analysis of the factual character of the deterrent (e.g., what is involved in targeting doctrine); analysis of the historical development of the policy (e.g., whether changes have occurred which are significant for moral analysis of the policy); the relationship of deterrence policy and other aspects of US–Soviet affairs; and determination of the key moral questions involved in deterrence policy.  
(...)

§177. Relating Pope John Paul's general statements to the specific policies of the U.S. deterrent re-

quires both judgments of fact and an application of moral principles. In preparing this letter we have tried, through a number of sources, to determine as precisely as possible the factual character of U.S. deterrence strategy. Two questions have particularly concerned us: 1) the targeting doctrine and strategic plans for the use of the deterrent, particularly their impact on civilian casualties; and 2) the relationship of deterrence strategy and nuclear war-fighting capability to the likelihood that war will in fact be prevented.

### *Moral Principles and Policy Choices*

§178. Targeting doctrine raises significant moral questions because it is a significant determinant of what would occur if nuclear weapons were ever to be used. Although we acknowledge the need for deterrence, not all forms of deterrence are morally acceptable. There are moral limits to deterrence policy as well as to policy regarding use. Specifically, it is not morally acceptable to intend to kill the innocent as part of a strategy of deterring nuclear war. The question of whether U.S. policy involves an intention to strike civilian centers (directly targeting civilian populations) has been one of our factual concerns.

§179. This complex question has always produced a variety of responses, official and unofficial in character. The NCCB Committee has received a series of statements of clarification of policy from U.S. government officials.<sup>81</sup> Essentially these statements declare that it is not U.S. strategic policy to target the Soviet

civilian population as such or to use nuclear weapons deliberately for the purpose of destroying population centers. These statements respond, in principle at least, to one moral criterion for assessing deterrence policy: the immunity of non-combatants from direct attack either by conventional or nuclear weapons.

§180. These statements do not address or resolve another very troublesome moral problem, namely, that an attack on military targets or militarily significant industrial targets could involve «indirect» (i.e., unintended) but massive civilian casualties. We are advised, for example, that the United States strategic nuclear targeting plan (SIOP—Single Integrated Operational Plan) has identified 60 «military» targets within the city of Moscow alone, and that 40,000 «military» targets for nuclear weapons have been identified in the whole of the Soviet Union.<sup>82</sup> It is important to recognize that Soviet policy is subject to the same moral judgment; attacks on several «industrial targets» or politically significant targets in the United States could produce massive civilian casualties. The number of civilians who would necessarily be killed by such strikes is horrendous.<sup>83</sup> This problem is unavoidable because of the way modern military facilities and production centers are so thoroughly interspersed with civilian living and working areas. It is aggravated if one side deliberately positions military targets in the midst of a civilian population. In our consultations, administration officials readily admitted that, while

they hoped any nuclear exchange could be kept limited, they were prepared to retaliate in a massive way if necessary. They also agreed that once any substantial numbers of weapons were used, the civilian casualty levels would quickly become truly catastrophic, and that even with attacks limited to «military» targets, the number of deaths in a substantial exchange would be almost indistinguishable from what might occur if civilian centers had been deliberately and directly struck. These possibilities pose a different moral question and are to be judged by a different moral criterion: the principle of proportionality.

§181. While any judgment of proportionality is always open to differing evaluations, there are actions which can be decisively judged to be disproportionate. A narrow adherence exclusively to the principle of noncombatant immunity as a criterion for policy is an inadequate moral posture for it ignores some evil and unacceptable consequences. Hence, we cannot be satisfied that the assertion of an intention not to strike civilians directly, or even the most honest effort to implement that intention, by itself constitutes a «moral policy» for the use of nuclear weapons.

§182. The location of industrial or militarily significant economic targets within heavily populated areas or in those areas affected by radioactive fallout could well involve such massive civilian casualties that, in our judgment, such a strike would be deemed morally disproportionate, even though

not intentionally indiscriminate.

§183. The problem is not simply one of producing highly accurate weapons that might minimize civilian casualties in any single explosion, but one of increasing the likelihood of escalation at a level where many, even «discriminating,» weapons would cumulatively kill very large numbers of civilians. Those civilian deaths would occur both immediately and from the long-term effects of social and economic devastation.

184. A second issue of concern to us is the relationship of deterrence doctrine to war-fighting strategies. We are aware of the argument that war-fighting capabilities enhance the credibility of the deterrent, particularly the strategy of extended deterrence. But the development of such capabilities raises other strategic and moral questions. The relationship of war-fighting capabilities and targeting doctrine exemplifies the difficult choices in this area of policy. Targeting civilian populations would violate the principle of discrimination – one of the central moral principles of a Christian ethic of war. But «counterforce targeting,» while preferable from the perspective of protecting civilians, is often joined with a declaratory policy which conveys the notion that nuclear war is subject to precise rational and moral limits. We have already expressed our severe doubts about such a concept. Furthermore, a purely counterforce strategy may seem to threaten the viability of other nations' retaliatory forces making deterrence unstable in a crisis and war more likely.

§185. While we welcome any effort to protect civilian populations, we do not want to legitimize or encourage moves which extend deterrence beyond the specific objective of preventing the use of nuclear weapons or other actions which could lead directly to a nuclear exchange.

§186. These considerations of concrete elements of nuclear deterrence policy, made in light of John Paul II's evaluation, but applying it through our own prudential judgments, lead us to a strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence. We cannot consider it adequate as a long-term basis for peace.

§187. This strictly conditioned judgment yields criteria for morally assessing the elements of deterrence strategy. Clearly, these criteria demonstrate that we cannot approve of every weapons system, strategic doctrine, or policy initiative advanced in the name of strengthening deterrence. On the contrary, these criteria require continual public scrutiny of what our government proposes to do with the deterrent.

§188. On the basis of these criteria we wish now to make some specific evaluations: 1) If nuclear deterrence exists only to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by others, then proposals to go beyond this to planning for prolonged periods of repeated nuclear strikes and counterstrike, or «prevailing» in nuclear war, are not acceptable. They encourage notions that nuclear war can be engaged in with tolerable human and moral consequences. Rather, we must continually say «no» to the idea of nuclear war. 2)

If nuclear deterrence is our goal, «sufficiency» to deter is an adequate strategy; the quest for nuclear superiority must be rejected. 3) Nuclear deterrence should be used as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament. Each proposed addition to our strategic system or change in strategic doctrine must be assessed precisely in light of whether it will render steps toward «progressive disarmament» more or less likely.

§189. Moreover, these criteria provide us with the means to make some judgments and recommendations about the recent direction of U.S. strategic policy. Progress toward a world freed of dependence on nuclear deterrence must be carefully carried out. But it must not be delayed. There is an urgent moral and political responsibility to use the «peace of a sort» we have as a framework to move toward authentic peace through nuclear arms control, reductions, and disarmament. Of primary importance in this process is the need to prevent the development and deployment of destabilizing weapons systems on either side; a second requirement is to insure that the more sophisticated command and control systems do not become mere hair triggers for automatic launch on warning; a third is the need to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the international system.

§190. In light of these general judgments we oppose some specific proposals in respect to our present deterrence posture: 1) The addition of weapons which are likely to be vulnerable to attack, yet also possess

a «prompt hard-target kill» capability that threatens to make the other side's retaliatory forces vulnerable. Such weapons may seem to be useful primarily in a first strike;<sup>84</sup> we resist such weapons for this reason and we oppose Soviet deployment of such weapons which generate fear of a first strike against U.S. forces. 2) The willingness to foster strategic planning which seeks a nuclear war-fighting capability that goes beyond the limited function of deterrence outlined in this letter. 3) Proposals which have the effect of lowering the nuclear threshold and blurring the difference between nuclear and conventional weapons.

§191. In support of the concept of «sufficiency» as an adequate deterrent, and in light of the present size and composition of both the U.S. and Soviet strategic arsenals, we recommended: 1) Support for immediate, bilateral, verifiable agreements to halt the testing, production, and deployment of new nuclear weapons systems.<sup>85</sup> 2) Support for negotiated bilateral deep cuts in the arsenals of both superpowers, particularly those weapons systems which have destabilizing characteristics; U.S. proposals like those for START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) and INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) negotiations in Geneva are said to be designed to achieve deep cuts;<sup>86</sup> our hope is that they will be pursued in a manner which will realize these goals. 3) Support for early and successful conclusion of negotiations of a comprehensive test ban treaty. 4) Removal by all parties of short-

range nuclear weapons which multiply dangers disproportionate to their deterrent value. 5) Removal by all parties of nuclear weapons from areas where they are likely to be overrun in the early stages of war, thus forcing rapid and uncontrollable decisions on their use. 6) Strengthening of command and control over nuclear weapons to prevent inadvertent and unauthorized use.

§192. These judgments are meant to exemplify how a lack of unequivocal condemnation of deterrence is meant only to be an attempt to acknowledge the role attributed to deterrence, but not to support its extension beyond the limited purpose discussed above. Some have urged us to condemn all aspects of nuclear deterrence. This urging has been based on a variety of reasons, but has emphasized particularly the high and terrible risks that either deliberate use or accidental detonation of nuclear weapons could quickly escalate to something utterly disproportionate to any acceptable moral purpose. That determination requires highly technical judgments about hypothetical events. Although reasons exist which move some to condemn reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence, we have not reached this conclusion for the reasons outlined in this letter.

§193. Nevertheless, there must be no misunderstanding of our profound skepticism about the moral acceptability or any use of nuclear weapons. It is obvious that the use of any weapons which violate the principle of discrimination merits unequivocal condemnation. We

are told that some weapons are designed for purely «counterforce» use against military forces and targets. The moral issue, however, is not resolved by the design of weapons or the planned intention for use; there are also consequences which must be assessed. It would be a perverted political policy or moral casuistry which tried to justify using a weapon which «indirectly» or «unintentionally» killed a million innocent people because they happened to live near a «militarily significant target.»

§194. Even the «indirect effects» of initiating nuclear war are sufficient to make it an unjustifiable moral risk in any form. It is not sufficient, for example, to contend that «our» side has plans for «limited» or «discriminate» use. Modern warfare is not readily contained by good intentions or technological designs. The psychological climate of the world is such that mention of the term «nuclear» generates uneasiness. Many contend that the use of one tactical nuclear weapon could produce panic, with completely unpredictable consequences. It is precisely this mix of political, psychological, and technological uncertainty which has moved us in this letter to reinforce with moral prohibitions and prescriptions the prevailing political barrier against resort to nuclear weapons. Our support for enhanced command and control facilities, for major reductions in strategic and tactical nuclear forces, and for a «no first use» policy (as set forth in this letter) is meant to be seen as a complement to our desire to draw a moral line against nuclear war.

§195. Any claim by any government that it is pursuing a morally acceptable policy of deterrence must be scrutinized with the greatest care. We are prepared and eager to participate in our country in the ongoing public debate on moral grounds.

§196. The need to rethink the deterrence policy of our nation, to make the revisions necessary to reduce the possibility of nuclear war, and to move toward a more stable system of national and international security will demand a substantial intellectual, political, and moral effort. It also will require, we believe, the willingness to open ourselves to the providential care, power and word of God, which call us to recognize our common humanity and the bonds of mutual responsibility which exist in the international community in spite of political differences and nuclear arsenals.

§197. Indeed, we do acknowledge that there are many strong voices within our own episcopal ranks and within the wider Catholic community in the United States which challenge the strategy of deterrence as an adequate response to the arms race today. They highlight the his-

torical evidence that deterrence has not, in fact, set in motion substantial processes of disarmament.

§198. Moreover, these voices rightly raise the concern that even the conditional acceptance of nuclear deterrence as laid out in a letter such as this might be inappropriately used by some to reinforce the policy of arms buildup. In its stead, they call us to raise a prophetic challenge to the community of faith – a challenge which goes beyond nuclear deterrence, toward more resolute steps to actual bilateral disarmament and peacemaking. We recognize the intellectual ground on which the argument is built and the religious sensibility which gives it its strong force.

§199. The dangers of the nuclear age and the enormous difficulties we face in moving toward a more adequate system of global security, stability and justice require steps beyond our present conceptions of security and defense policy. In the following section we propose a series of steps aimed at a more adequate policy for presenting peace in a nuclear world.

## NOTES

71. W. H. KINCADE and J. D. PORRO, *Negotiating Security: An Arms Control Reader* (Washington, D.C.: 1979).

72. Several surveys are available, for example cf.: J. H. KAHIN, *Security in the Nuclear Age: Developing U.S. Strategic Policy* (Washington, D.C.: 1975); M. MANDELBAUM, *The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons 1946-1976* (Cambridge, England: 1979); S. BRODIE, "Development of Nuclear Strategy," *International Security* 2 (1978):65-83.

73. The relationship of these two levels of policy is the burden of an article by D. BALL, "U.S. Strategic Forces: How Would They Be Used?" *International Security* 7 (1982/83):31-60.

81. Particularly helpful was the letter of January 15, 1983, of Mr. William Clark, national security adviser, to Cardinal Bernardin. Mr. Clark stated: "For moral, political and military reasons, the United States does not target the Soviet civilian population as such. There is no deliberately opaque meaning conveyed in the last two words. We do not threaten the existence of Soviet civilization by threatening Soviet cities. Rather, we hold at risk the war-making capability of the Soviet Union – its armed forces, and the industrial capacity to sustain war. It would be irresponsible for us to issue policy statements which might suggest to the Soviets that it would be to their advantage to establish privileged sanctuaries within heavily populated areas, thus inducing them to locate much of their war-fighting capability within those urban sanctuaries." A reaffirmation of the administration's policy is also found in Secretary Weinberger's Annual Response to the Congress (Caspar WEINBERGER, *Annual Report to the Congress*, February 1, 1983, p. 55): "The Reagan Administration's policy is that under no circumstances may such weapons be used deliberately for the purpose of destroying populations." Also the letter of Mr. Weinberger to Bishop O'Connor of February 9, 1983, has a similar statement.

82. S. ZUCKERMAN, *Nuclear Illusion and Reality* (New York: 1982); D. BALL, cited, p. 36; T. POWERS, "Choosing a Strategy for World War III", *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1982, pp. 82-110.

83. Cf. the comments in PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, *Statement on the Consequences of the Use of Nuclear Weapons*, cited.

84. Several experts in strategic theory would place both the MX missile and Pershing II missiles in this category.

85. In each of the successive drafts of this letter we have tried to state a central moral imperative: that the arms race should be stopped and disarmament begun. The implementation of this imperative is open to a wide variety of approaches. Hence we have chosen our own language in this Paragraph, not wanting either to be identified with one specific political initiative or to have our words used against specific political measures.

# *THE HARVEST OF JUSTICE IS SOWN IN PEACE*

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

*Washington, 17 November 1993, Introduction.*

## **Unfinished Business: Nuclear Disarmament and Proliferation:**

Our 1983 pastoral letter focused special attention on the morality of nuclear weapons at a time of widespread fear of nuclear war. Only ten years later, the threat of global nuclear war may seem more remote than at any time in the nuclear age, but we may be facing a different but still dangerous period in which the use of nuclear weapons remains a significant threat. We cannot address questions of war and peace today, therefore, without acknowledging that the nuclear question remains of vital political and moral significance.

The end of the Cold War has changed the nuclear question in three ways. First, nuclear weapons are still an integral component of U.S. security policies, but they are no longer at the center of these policies or of international relations. In 1983, a dominant concern was the ethics of nuclear weapons. Today,

this concern, while still critically important, must be considered in the context of a more fundamental question of the ethical foundations of political order: How do we achieve *Pacem in Terris*' vision of a just and stable political order, so that nations will no longer rely on nuclear weapons for their security? Second, we have new opportunities to take steps toward progressive nuclear disarmament. In 1983, the first task was to stop the growth of already bloated nuclear arsenals; today, the moral task is to proceed with deep cuts and ultimately to abolish these weapons entirely. Third, the threat of global nuclear war has been replaced by a threat of global nuclear proliferation. In addition to the declared nuclear powers, a number of other countries have or could very quickly deploy nuclear weapons, and still other nations, or even terrorist groups, might seek to obtain or develop nuclear weapons.

Just as the nuclear powers must prevent nuclear war, so also they, with

the rest of the international community, bear a heavy moral responsibility to stop the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

***a. The Moral Judgment on Deterrence.***

In 1983, we judged that nuclear deterrence may be morally acceptable as long as it is limited to deterring nuclear use by others; sufficiency, not nuclear superiority, is its goal; and it is used as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament.<sup>29</sup> Some believe that this judgment remains valid, since significant progress has been made in reducing nuclear weapons, including the most destabilizing ones, while at least some of those that remain are still necessary to deter existing nuclear threats. Others point to the end of the Soviet threat and the apparent unwillingness of the nuclear powers to accept the need to eliminate nuclear weapons as reasons for abandoning our strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence. They also cite the double standard inherent in nonproliferation efforts: What is the moral basis for asking other nations to forego nuclear weapons if we continue to judge our own deterrent to be morally necessary? We believe our judgment of 1983 that nuclear deterrence is morally acceptable only under certain strict conditions remains a useful guide for evaluating the continued moral status of nuclear weapons in a post-Cold War world. It is useful because it acknowledges the fundamental moral dilemmas still posed by nuclear weapons, and it reflects the progress

toward fulfilling the conditions we elaborated in 1983. At the same time, it highlights the new prospects and thus the added moral urgency of making even more dramatic progress in arms control and disarmament as the only basis for the continued moral legitimacy of deterrence.

***b. A Post-Cold War Agenda For Nuclear Disarmament.***

While significant progress has been made in recent years, we believe additional steps are needed if nuclear policies and priorities are to keep up with the dramatic changes in world politics and if our nation is to move away from relying on nuclear deterrence as a basis for its security. Present challenges include the following:

- *The Role of Nuclear Weapons:* We must continue to say No to the very idea of nuclear war. A minimal nuclear deterrent may be justified only to deter the use of nuclear weapons. The United States should commit itself never to use nuclear weapons first, should unequivocally reject proposals to use nuclear weapons to deter any non-nuclear threats, and should reinforce the fragile barrier against the use of these weapons. Indeed, we abhor any use of nuclear weapons.

- *Arms Control and Disarmament:* Nuclear deterrence may be justified only as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament. The end of the Cold War, according to the Holy See, “challenge[s] the world community to adopt a post-nuclear form of security. That security lies in the abolition of nuclear weapons

and the strengthening of international law.»<sup>30</sup> A first step toward this goal would be prompt ratification and implementation of the START I and START II treaties. Even once these treaties are fully implemented, there will still be more than 10,000 nuclear weapons in the world, containing explosive power hundreds of thousands times greater than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Therefore, much deeper cuts are both possible and necessary. The eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is more than a moral ideal; it should be a policy goal. The negotiation of a verifiable comprehensive test ban treaty would not only demonstrate our commitment to this goal, but also would improve our moral credibility in urging nonnuclear nations to forego the development of nuclear weapons. We, therefore, support a halt to nuclear testing as our nation pursues an effective global test ban and renewal of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Also, steps must be taken to reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism. We must reverse the spread of nuclear technologies and materials. We welcome, therefore, U.S. efforts to achieve a global ban on the production of fissionable materials for use in nuclear weapons. Finally, one should not underestimate the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency as a forum for the discussion of these issues and as a force encouraging nations to take the steps necessary in this area.

- *Cooperative Security and a Just International Order:* The nuclear powers may justify, and then only

temporarily, their nuclear deterrents only if they use their power and resources to lead in the construction of a more just and stable international order. An essential part of this international order must be a collective security framework that reverses the proliferation of nuclear weapons, guarantees the security of nonnuclear states and ultimately seeks to make nuclear weapons and war itself obsolete. The United States and other nations should also make the investments necessary to help ensure the development of stable, democratic governments in nations which have nuclear weapons or might seek to obtain them.

An active commitment by the United States to nuclear disarmament and the strengthening of collective security is the only moral basis for temporarily retaining our deterrent and our insistence that other nations forego these weapons. We advocate disarmament by example: careful but clear steps to reduce and end our dependence on weapons of mass destruction. In our five-year report on *The Challenge of Peace*, we said: «To contain the nuclear danger of our time is itself an awesome undertaking. To reshape the political fabric of an increasingly interdependent world is an even larger and more complicated challenge.»<sup>31</sup> Now, on this tenth anniversary, we must be engaged in the difficult task of envisioning a future rooted in peace, with new institutions for resolving differences between nations, new global structures of mediation and conflict-resolution and a world or-

der that has moved beyond nuclear weapons once and for all. We are committed to join in this struggle, to bring the Gospel message of justice and peace to this vital work.

### NOTES

29. *The Challenge of Peace*, nos. 186-188.

30. Archbishop Renato MARTINO, "Address to the United Nations Committee on Disarmament," *Origins* 23:21 (November 4, 1993), 382

31. UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, *A Report on The Challenge of Peace and Policy Developments 1983-1988* (Washington D.C.: USCC Office for Publishing and Promotion Services, 1988), no. 129.

# *A JUST PEACE*

## THE GERMAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

*Bonn, 27 September 2000*

### NUCLEAR DETERRENCE)

(2) Whilst we were in the process of drawing up *Out of Justice: Peace*, the social debate was focused primarily on the issue of nuclear deterrence. The East-West conflict had led to an amassing of weapons of mass destruction. In view of the permanent threat of military confrontation and all the attendant and unforeseeable consequences for Germany, Europe and the world, the primary aim of any morally acceptable peace policy had to be the prevention of war. The discussions on security policy were characterized by passionate concern, sometimes by polemical sharpness. They centered on the problem of whether the threat of using nuclear weapons and the corresponding military plans were ethically justifiable as elements of a policy intended to prevent war or not. Doctrinal answers from within the Catholic Church, which dealt with this difficult and

often burdensome issue, displayed a wide variety of nuances. They did, however, agree in their conviction that the strategy of nuclear deterrence was ethically tolerable only as a temporary response bound to the obligation "to strive with their whole strength towards finding alternatives to the threat of mass destruction" (JP 4.3.2). This assessment has lost none of its validity since the major powers still have comprehensive arsenals of nuclear weapons at their disposal. It has also become more difficult in some areas to effectively secure control of these stocks; the proliferation of military nuclear technology also continues. Nevertheless, despite the urgency of the issue, it has been superceded in public awareness by other issues. Indeed, the entire question has been placed in a new light by the progress of history.

# *MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE*

POPE BENEDICT XVI

*Vatican, 1 January 2006, §1-16*

**I**n this traditional Message for the World Day of Peace at the beginning of the New Year, I offer cordial greetings and good wishes to men and women everywhere, especially those who are suffering as a result of violence and armed conflicts. My greeting is one filled with hope for a more serene world, a world in which more and more individuals and communities are committed to the paths of justice and peace.

Before all else, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my Predecessors, the great Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, who were astute promoters of peace. Guided by the spirit of the Beatitudes, they discerned in the many historical events which marked their respective Pontificates the providential intervention of God, who never ceases to be concerned for the future of the human race. As tireless heralds of the Gospel, they constantly invited everyone to make God the starting-

point of their efforts on behalf of concord and peace throughout the world. This, my first Message for the World Day of Peace, is meant to follow in the path of their noble teaching; with it, I wish to reiterate the steadfast resolve of the Holy See to continue serving the cause of peace. The very name Benedict, which I chose on the day of my election to the Chair of Peter, is a sign of my personal commitment to peace. In taking this name, I wanted to evoke both the Patron Saint of Europe, who inspired a civilization of peace on the whole continent, and Pope Benedict XV, who condemned the First World War as a “useless slaughter”(1) and worked for a universal acknowledgment of the lofty demands of peace.

The theme chosen for this year’s reflection—In truth, peace — expresses the conviction that wherever and whenever men and women are enlightened by the splendour of truth, they naturally set out on the path of peace. The Pastoral Consti-

tution *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated forty years ago at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, stated that mankind will not succeed in “building a truly more human world for everyone, everywhere on earth, unless all people are renewed in spirit and converted to the truth of peace”.(2) But what do those words, “the truth of peace”, really mean? To respond adequately to this question, we must realize that peace cannot be reduced to the simple absence of armed conflict, but needs to be understood as “the fruit of an order which has been planted in human society by its divine Founder”, an order “which must be brought about by humanity in its thirst for ever more perfect justice”.(3) As the result of an order planned and willed by the love of God, peace has an intrinsic and invincible truth of its own, and corresponds “to an irrepressible yearning and hope dwelling within us”.

Seen in this way, peace appears as a heavenly gift and a divine grace which demands at every level the exercise of the highest responsibility: that of conforming human history—in truth, justice, freedom and love—to the divine order. Whenever there is a loss of fidelity to the transcendent order, and a loss of respect for that “grammar” of dialogue which is the universal moral law written on human hearts, whenever the integral development of the person and the protection of his fundamental rights are hindered or denied, whenever countless people are forced to endure intolerable injustices and inequalities, how can

we hope that the good of peace will be realized? The essential elements which make up the truth of that good are missing. Saint Augustine described peace as *tranquillitas ordinis*, (6) the tranquility of order. By this, he meant a situation which ultimately enables the truth about man to be fully respected and realized.

Who and what, then, can prevent the coming of peace? Sacred Scripture, in its very first book, Genesis, points to the lie told at the very beginning of history by the animal with a forked tongue, whom the Evangelist John calls “the father of lies” (Jn 8:44). Lying is also one of the sins spoken of in the final chapter of the last book of the Bible, Revelation, which bars liars from the heavenly Jerusalem: “outside are... all who love falsehood” (22:15). Lying is linked to the tragedy of sin and its perverse consequences, which have had, and continue to have, devastating effects on the lives of individuals and nations. We need but think of the events of the past century, when aberrant ideological and political systems willfully twisted the truth and brought about the exploitation and murder of an appalling number of men and women, wiping out entire families and communities. After experiences like these, how can we fail to be seriously concerned about lies in our own time, lies which are the framework for menacing scenarios of death in many parts of the world.

Any authentic search for peace must begin with the realization

that the problem of truth and untruth is the concern of every man and woman; it is decisive for the peaceful future of our planet.

Peace is an irrepressible yearning present in the heart of each person, regardless of his or her particular cultural identity. Consequently, everyone should feel committed to service of this great good, and should strive to prevent any form of untruth from poisoning relationships. All people are members of one and the same family. An extreme exaltation of differences clashes with this fundamental truth. We need to regain awareness that we share a common destiny which is ultimately transcendent, so as to maximize our historical and cultural differences, not in opposition to, but in cooperation with, people belonging to other cultures. These simple truths are what make peace possible; they are easily understood whenever we listen to our own hearts with pure intentions. Peace thus comes to be seen in a new light: not as the mere absence of war, but as a harmonious coexistence of individual citizens within a society governed by justice, one in which the good is also achieved, to the extent possible, for each of them. The truth of peace calls upon everyone to cultivate productive and sincere relationships; it encourages them to seek out and to follow the paths of forgiveness and reconciliation, to be transparent in their dealings with others, and to be faithful to their word. In a particular way, the followers of Christ, recognizing the insidious presence of evil and the

need for that liberation brought by the divine Master, look to him with confidence, in the knowledge that “he committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips” (1 Pet 2:22; cf. Is 53:9). Jesus defined himself as the Truth in person, and, in addressing the seer of the Book of Revelation; he states his complete aversion to “everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (Rev 22:15). He has disclosed the full truth about humanity and about human history. The power of his grace makes it possible to live ‘in’ and ‘by’ truth, since he alone is completely true and faithful. Jesus is the truth which gives us peace.

The truth of peace must also let its beneficial light shine even amid the tragedy of war. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, pointed out that “not everything automatically becomes permissible between hostile parties once war has regrettably commenced”. As a means of limiting the devastating consequences of war as much as possible, especially for civilians, the international community has created an international humanitarian law. In a variety of situations and in different settings, the Holy See has expressed its support for this humanitarian law, and has called for it to be respected and promptly implemented, out of the conviction that the truth of peace exists even in the midst of war. International humanitarian law ought to be considered as one of the finest and most effective expressions of the intrinsic demands of the

truth of peace. Precisely for this reason, respect for that law must be considered binding on all peoples. Its value must be appreciated and its correct application ensured; it must also be brought up to date by precise norms applicable to the changing scenarios of today's armed conflicts and the use of ever newer and more sophisticated weapons.

**H**ere I wish to express gratitude to the international organizations and to all those who are daily engaged in the application of international humanitarian law. Nor can I fail to mention the many soldiers engaged in the delicate work of resolving conflicts and restoring the necessary conditions for peace. I wish to remind them of the words of the Second Vatican Council: "All those who enter the military in service to their country should look upon themselves as guardians of the security and freedom of their fellow-countrymen, and, in carrying out this duty properly; they too contribute to the establishment of peace". On this demanding front the Catholic Church's military ordinariates carry out their pastoral activity: I encourage both the military Ordinaries and military chaplains to be, in every situation and context, faithful heralds of the truth of peace.

Nowadays, the truth of peace continues to be dramatically compromised and rejected by terrorism, whose criminal threats and attacks leave the world in a state of fear and insecurity. My predecessors Paul VI and John Paul II frequently pointed out the awful responsibility borne

by terrorists, while at the same time condemning their senseless and deadly strategies. These are often the fruit of a tragic and disturbing nihilism which Pope John Paul II described in these words: "Those who kill by acts of terrorism actually despair of humanity, of life, of the future. In their view, everything is to be hated and destroyed". Not only nihilism, but also religious fanaticism, today often labeled fundamentalism, can inspire and encourage terrorist thinking and activity. From the beginning, John Paul II was aware of the explosive danger represented by fanatical fundamentalism, and he condemned it unsparingly, while warning against attempts to impose, rather than to propose for others freely to accept, one's own convictions about the truth. As he wrote: "To try to impose on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offence against the dignity of the human being, and ultimately an offence against God in whose image he is made".

**L**ooked at closely, nihilism and the fundamentalism of which we are speaking share an erroneous relationship to truth: the nihilist denies the very existence of truth, while the fundamentalist claims to be able to impose it by force. Despite their different origins and cultural backgrounds, both show a dangerous contempt for human beings and human life, and ultimately for God himself. Indeed, this shared tragic outcome results from a distortion of the full truth about God: nihilism denies God's existence and his provident pres-

ence in history, while fanatical fundamentalism disfigures his loving and merciful countenance, replacing him with idols made in its own image. In analyzing the causes of the contemporary phenomenon of terrorism, consideration should be given, not only to its political and social causes, but also to its deeper cultural, religious and ideological motivations.

In view of the risks which humanity is facing in our time, all Catholics in every part of the world have a duty to proclaim and embody ever more fully the "Gospel of Peace", and to show that acknowledgment of the full truth of God is the first, indispensable condition for consolidating the truth of peace. God is Love which saves, a loving Father who wants to see his children look upon one another as brothers and sisters, working responsibly to place their various talents at the service of the common good of the human family. God is the unfailing source of the hope which gives meaning to personal and community life. God, and God alone, brings to fulfilment every work of good and of peace. History has amply demonstrated that declaring war on God in order to eradicate him from human hearts only leads a fearful and impoverished humanity toward decisions which are ultimately futile. This realization must impel believers in Christ to become convincing witnesses of the God who is inseparably truth and love, placing themselves at the service of peace in broad cooperation with other Christians, the followers of other religions and

with all men women of good will.

Looking at the present world situation, we can note with satisfaction certain signs of hope in the work of building peace. I think, for example, of the decrease in the number of armed conflicts. Here we are speaking of a few, very tentative steps forward along the path of peace, yet ones which even now are able to hold out a future of greater serenity, particularly for the suffering people of Palestine, the land of Jesus, and for those living in some areas of Africa and Asia, who have waited for years for the positive conclusion of the ongoing processes of pacification and reconciliation. These are reassuring signs which need to be confirmed and consolidated by tireless cooperation and activity, above all on the part of the international community and its agencies charged with preventing conflicts and providing a peaceful solution to those in course.

All this must not, however, lead to a naive optimism. It must not be forgotten that, tragically, violent fratricidal conflicts and devastating wars still continue to sow tears and death in vast parts of the world. Situations exist where conflict, hidden like flame beneath ashes, can flare up anew and cause immense destruction. Those authorities who, rather than making every effort to promote peace, incite their citizens to hostility towards other nations, bear a heavy burden of responsibility: in regions particularly at risk, they jeopardize the delicate balance achieved at the cost of patient negotiations and thus help make the

future of humanity more uncertain and ominous. What can be said, too, about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims. The truth of peace requires that all — whether those governments which openly or secretly possess nuclear arms, or those planning to acquire them — agree to change their course by clear and firm decisions, and strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament. The resources which would be saved could then be employed in projects of development capable of benefiting all their people, especially the poor.

In this regard, one can only note with dismay the evidence of a continuing growth in military expenditure and the flourishing arms trade, while the political and juridical process established by the international community for promoting disarmament is bogged down in general indifference. How can there ever be a future of peace when investments are still made in the production of arms and in research aimed at developing new ones? It can only be hoped that the international community will find the wisdom and courage to take up once more, jointly and with renewed conviction, the process of disarmament, and thus concretely ensure the right to peace enjoyed by every individual and every people. By their commit-

ment to safeguarding the good of peace, the various agencies of the international community will regain the authority needed to make their initiatives credible and effective.

**T**he first to benefit from a decisive choice for disarmament will be the poor countries, which rightly demand, after having heard so many promises, the concrete implementation of their right to development. That right was solemnly reaffirmed in the recent General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, which this year celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of its foundation. The Catholic Church, while confirming her confidence in this international body, calls for the institutional and operative renewal which would enable it to respond to the changed needs of the present time, characterized by the vast phenomenon of globalization. The United Nations Organization must become a more efficient instrument for promoting the values of justice, solidarity and peace in the world. For her part, the Church, in fidelity to the mission she has received from her Founder, is committed to proclaiming everywhere “the Gospel of peace”. In the firm conviction that she offers an indispensable service to all those who strive to promote peace, she reminds everyone that, if peace is to be authentic and lasting, it must be built on the bedrock of the truth about God and the truth about man. This truth alone can create sensitivity to justice and openness to love and solidarity, while encouraging everyone to work for a truly free

and harmonious human family. The foundations of authentic peace rest on the truth about God and man.

**A**t the conclusion of this Message, I would like to address a particular word to all believers in Christ, inviting them once again to be attentive and generous disciples of the Lord. When we hear the Gospel, dear brothers and sisters, we learn to build peace on the truth of a daily life inspired by the commandment of love. Every community should undertake an extensive process of education and witness aimed at making everyone more aware of the need for a fuller appreciation of the truth of peace. At the same time I ask for an increase of prayers, since peace

is above all a gift of God, a gift to be implored incessantly. By God's help, our proclamation and witness to the truth of peace will be all the more convincing and illuminating. With confidence and filial abandonment let us lift up our eyes to Mary, Mother of the Prince of Peace. At the beginning of this New Year, let us ask her to help all God's People, wherever they may be, to work for peace and to be guided by the light of the truth that sets man free (cf. Jn 8:32). Through Mary's intercession, may all mankind grow in esteem for this fundamental good and strive to make it ever more present in our world, and, in this way, to offer a safer and more serene future to generations yet to come.

# *ADDRESS OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT*

H.E. ARCHBISHOP DOMINIQUE MAMBERTI

*NEW YORK, 26 SEPTEMBER 2013*

**T**he General Assembly resolution calling for today's High-Level meeting on Nuclear Disarmament expressed the common conviction that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is essential to remove the danger of nuclear war, a goal that must have our highest priority. The Holy See, which has long called for the banishment of these weapons of mass destruction, joins in this concerted effort to give vigorous expression to the cry of humanity to be freed from the specter of nuclear warfare.

Under the terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, states are enjoined to make "good faith" efforts to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons. Can we say there is "good faith" when modernization programs of the nuclear weapons states continue despite their affirmations of eventual nuclear disarmament? Concern over the proliferation of nuclear weapons into other countries ring hollow as long as the

nuclear weapons states hold on to their nuclear weapons. If today's special meeting is to have any historic significance, it must result in a meaningful commitment by the nuclear weapons states to divest themselves of their nuclear weapons.

Five years ago, the Secretary-General offered a Five-Point Plan for Nuclear Disarmament. It is past time for this plan to be given the serious attention it deserves. The centre-piece is the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention or a framework of instruments leading directly to a global ban on nuclear weapons. This is a clear-cut goal, fully understandable and supportable by all those who truly want the world to move beyond the dark doctrines of mutual assured destruction.

It is now imperative for us to address in a systematic and coherent manner the legal, political and technical requisites for a world free from nuclear arms. For this reason, we should begin as soon as possible preparatory work on the Conven-

tion or a framework agreement for a phased and verifiable elimination of nuclear arms. The chief obstacle to starting this work is continued adherence to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. With the end of the Cold War, the time for the acceptance of this doctrine is long passed. The Holy See does not countenance the continuation of nuclear deterrence; since it is evident it is driving the development of ever newer nuclear arms, thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament. For many years, the world has been told that a number of steps will lead eventually to nuclear disarmament. Such argumentation is belied by the extraordinary nature of today's meeting, which surely would not have been called if the steps were working. They are not. It is the military doctrine of nuclear deterrence, politically supported by the nuclear weapons states, that must be addressed in order to break the chain of dependence on deterrence. Starting work on a global approach to providing security without relying on nuclear deterrence is urgent. We cannot justify the continuation

of a permanent nuclear deterrence policy, given the loss of human, financial and material resources in time of scarcity of funds for health, education and social services around the world and in the face of current threats to human security, such as poverty, climate change, terrorism and transnational crimes. All this should make us consider the ethical dimension and the moral legitimacy of the production, processing, development, accumulation, use and threat of use of nuclear arms. We must emphasize anew that military doctrines based on nuclear arms, as instruments of security and defence of an élite group, in a show of power and supremacy, retard and jeopardize the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is time to counter the logic of fear with the ethic of responsibility, fostering a climate of trust and sincere dialogue, capable of promoting a culture of peace, founded on the primacy of law and the common good, through a coherent and responsible cooperation between all members of the international community.

# *MESSAGE TO THE VIENNA CONFERENCE ON THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS*

POPE FRANCIS

*Vatican, 7 December 2014*

Nuclear weapons are a global problem, affecting all nations, and impacting future generations and the planet that is our home. A global ethic is needed if we are to reduce the nuclear threat and work towards nuclear disarmament. Now, more than ever, technological, social and political interdependence urgently calls for an ethic of solidarity (cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38), which encourages peoples to work together for a more secure world, and a future that is increasingly rooted in moral values and responsibility on a global scale.

The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are predictable and planetary. While the focus is often placed on nuclear weapons' potential for mass-killing, more attention must be given to the "unnecessary suffering" brought on by their use. Military codes and international law, among others, have long banned peoples from inflicting unnecessary suffering. If such

suffering is banned in the waging of conventional war, then it should all the more be banned in nuclear conflict. There are those among us who are victims of these weapons; they warn us not to commit the same irreparable mistakes which have devastated populations and creation. I extend warm greetings to the Hibakusha, as well as other victims of nuclear weapons testing who are present at this meeting. I encourage them all to be prophetic voices, calling the human family to a deeper appreciation of beauty, love, cooperation and fraternity, while reminding the world of the risks of nuclear weapons which have the potential to destroy us and civilization.

Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states. The youth of today and tomorrow deserve far more. They deserve a peaceful world order based on the unity of the human family, grounded on respect, cooperation, solidarity and com-

passion. Now is the time to counter the logic of fear with the ethic of responsibility, and so foster a climate of trust and sincere dialogue.

Spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations. To prioritize such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty. When these resources are squandered, the poor and the weak living on the margins of society pay the price.

The desire for peace, security and stability is one of the deepest longings of the human heart. It is rooted in the Creator who makes all people members of the one human family. This desire can never be satisfied by military means alone, much less the possession of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Peace cannot “be reduced solely to maintaining a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 78). Peace must be built on justice, socio-economic development, freedom, respect for fundamental human rights, the participation of all in public affairs and the building of trust between peoples. Pope Paul VI stated this succinctly in his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*: “Development is the new name for peace” (76). It is incumbent on us to adopt concrete actions which promote peace and security, while remaining always aware of the limitation of short-sighted approaches to problems of national and international security. We must be pro-

foundly committed to strengthening mutual trust, for only through such trust can true and lasting peace among nations be established (cf. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 113).

In the context of this Conference, I wish to encourage sincere and open dialogue between parties internal to each nuclear state, between various nuclear states, and between nuclear states and non-nuclear states. This dialogue must be inclusive, involving international organizations, religious communities and civil society, and oriented towards the common good and not the protection of vested interests. “A world without nuclear weapons” is a goal shared by all nations and echoed by world leaders, as well as the aspiration of millions of men and women. The future and the survival of the human family hinges on moving beyond this ideal and ensuring that it becomes a reality.

I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home. The security of our own future depends on guaranteeing the peaceful security of others, for if peace, security and stability are not established globally, they will not be enjoyed at all. Individually and collectively, we are responsible for the present and future well-being of our brothers and sisters. It is my great hope that this responsibility will inform our efforts in favour of nuclear disarmament, for a world without nuclear weapons is truly possible.

# ***STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE AT THE VIENNA CONFERENCE ON THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS***

H.E. ARCHBISHOP SILVANO M. TOMASI

*Vienna, 9 December 2014*

**N**uclear weapons are a global problem. They affect not just nuclear-armed states, but other non-nuclear signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, non-signatories, unacknowledged possessing states and allies under “the nuclear umbrella.” They impact future generations and the entire planet that is our home. The reduction of the nuclear threat and disarmament require a global ethic. Now more than ever the facts of technological and political interdependence cry out for an ethic of solidarity in which we work with one another for a less dangerous, morally responsible global future. The response that the international community gives will affect future generations and our planet.

We all know the risks of nuclear weapons, not least that of the instability they cause. Is it reasonable to think that the balance of terror is the best basis for the political, economic and cultural stability of our world? The status quo is un-

sustainable and undesirable. If it is unthinkable to imagine a world where nuclear weapons are available to all, it is reasonable to imagine a world where nobody has them. Moreover, this is our reading of the letter and the spirit of the NPT.

Some positive steps have been made towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons (NPT, CTBT, START, NEW START, etc.). The Holy See, however, still thinks that these steps are limited, insufficient, and frozen in space and time. The institutions that are supposed to find solutions and new instruments are deadlocked. The actual international context, including the relationship between nuclear weapons States themselves, does not lead to optimism.

The world faces enormous challenges (environmental problems, migration flows, military conflicts, extreme poverty, regular economic crises, etc.). Only cooperation and solidarity among nations is able to confront them. To continue invest-

ing in expensive weapon systems is paradoxical. In particular, to continue investing in the production and the modernization of nuclear weapons is not logical. Billions are wasted each year to develop and maintain stocks that will supposedly never be used. Can one justify such a high cost only for reasons of status?

The term national security often comes up in discussions on nuclear weapons. It seems that this concept is used in a partial and biased manner. All States have the right to national security. Why is it that the security of some can only be met with a particular type of weapon whereas other States must ensure their security without it? On the other hand, reducing the security of States, in practice, to its military dimension is artificial and simplistic. Socio-economic development, political participation, respect for fundamental human rights, strengthening the rule of law, cooperation and solidarity at the regional and international level, etc. are essential to the national security of States. Is it not urgent to revisit in a transparent manner, how States, especially nuclear weapons states, define their national security?

We are now witnessing a renewed awareness after two decades lost to the cause of nuclear disarmament. During the last decade of the Cold War, Churches, NGOs, academia, think tanks, and popular movements were committed to a world without nuclear weapons. The goal, the intentions and arguments remain valid even if the international context has changed.

The “humanitarian initiative” is

a new hope to make decisive steps towards a world without nuclear weapons. The partnership between States, civil society, the ICRC, International Organizations, and the UN is an additional guarantee of inclusion, cooperation and solidarity. This is not an action of circumstance. This is a fundamental shift that meets a strong quest of a large number of the world’s populations which would be the first victims of a nuclear incident.

The Holy See, ever since the emergence of the nuclear era, advocates for the abolition of these weapons which are seemingly without any military logic. Since the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII (1963), the Holy See continues to question the ethical basis to the so-called doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Ethical and humanitarian consequences of the possession and use of nuclear weapons are catastrophic and beyond the rational and reasonable.

This Delegation is aware that the goal of a world without nuclear weapons is not easy to achieve. For this, all energies and commitments are necessary. They are even more necessary in this time of international tensions. The role of churches and religious communities, civil society, academic institutions is vital to not let hope die, to not let cynicism and realpolitik take over. An ethics based on the threat and mutual assured destruction is not worthy for future generations. Only an ethic rooted in solidarity and peaceful coexistence is a great project for the future of humanity.

# *NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: TIME FOR ABOLITION*

## CONTRIBUTION PAPER OF THE HOLY SEE FOR THE VIENNA CONFERENCE

*Vienna, 8 December 2014*

**N**uclear weapons are a global problem. They affect not just nuclear-armed states, but other non-nuclear signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, non-signatories, unacknowledged possessing states and allies under ‘the nuclear umbrella’. They also impact future generations and the planet that is our home. The reduction of the nuclear threat and disarmament requires a global ethic. Now more than ever the facts of technological and political interdependence cry out for an ethic of solidarity in which we work with one another for a less dangerous, morally responsible global future.

### **I. Breaches of Trust**

Our existing disarmament treaties are more than just legal obligations. They are also moral commitments based on trust between states and their representatives, and they are rooted in the trust that citizens

place in their governments. Under the NPT, the duty of the nuclear powers and all other parties under what has been described as ‘a grand bargain’ between nuclear and nonnuclear states is to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures to disarm. In the case of nuclear weapons, moreover, beyond the details of any agreement, there are moral stakes for the whole of humanity including future generations. The purpose of this paper is to encourage discussion of the factors that underpin the moral case for nuclear disarmament, and, in particular, to scrutinize the counterargument for the belief that nuclear deterrence is a stable basis for peace. The strategic nuclear situation has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. Rather than providing security, as the defenders of nuclear deterrence contend, reliance on a strategy of nuclear deterrence has created a less secure world. In a

multi-polar world, the concept of nuclear deterrence works less as a stabilizing force and more as an incentive for countries to break out of the non-proliferation regime and develop nuclear arsenals of their own.

Contrary to the frequent assertions of nuclear strategists, the history of the nuclear age has shown that nuclear deterrence has failed to prevent unanticipated events that might have led to nuclear war between possessing states. These include: nuclear accidents, malfunctions, mishaps, false alarms and close calls. Even the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, previously characterized in popular literature as a success for diplomatic brinkmanship, involved events that all too easily could have launched a nuclear war independent of the intentions of national decision-makers.

## **II. A Changed Strategic Environment**

Today because of the changing strategic environment, the structure of nuclear deterrence is less stable and more worrisome than at the height of the Cold War. The contemporary global environment includes the dangerous proliferation of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear states, as well as a growing risk of nuclear terrorism and nuclear weapons use. Possessing states believe preventing proliferation to some countries is necessary, while they have for years ignored the unacknowledged growth of nuclear arsenals

in others. This double standard undermines the universality on which the NPT was constructed. Under the weight of these developments, the architecture of nuclear deterrence has begun to crumble. The expansion and fears of expansion of the nuclear club bring new, unpredictable forces to bear on the bi-lateral strategic balance that has constituted nuclear deterrence. The superpowers no longer seem to share an acute risk of mutual nuclear war. Instead, the proximate threat of nuclear war mainly comes now from regional powers.

Furthermore, the merchandizing and export of nuclear material and expertise for civilian nuclear energy purposes has also increased the risk that terrorist groups will acquire nuclear weapons. In addition, instability threatens nuclear-armed states with the capture of nuclear weapons and related materials by insurgents with aspirations for global violence. The spread of global terrorism through weak and failed states, together with sustained insurgencies in nuclear-armed states, further complicates efforts for arms control and disarmament.

In addition, the process of disarmament by the major nuclear powers has slowed. The most recent arms reduction treaty between the superpowers (2010) fell far short of expectations; it left the world far from the goal of nuclear disarmament. Many more missiles remain on both sides than what even at the height of the

Cold War was thought to be the minimum needed for stable deterrence. In addition, certain nuclear weapon possessors have taken actions or articulated policies which continue to make nuclear war-fighting an option for the future even where there is no nuclear provocation.

While the superpowers now deploy fewer weapons on alert, their numbers are still worryingly large. In addition many more thousands are stored in readiness for deployment. There are big gaps in accounting for fissile material over many decades, and the pace of re-processing materials for peaceful purposes has slowed. Missiles and other vehicles for weapons transport have yet to be reduced. Controls on delivery systems are lacking.

For sixty years nuclear deterrence has been thought to provide only "a peace of a sort". Nuclear deterrence is believed to have prevented nuclear war between the superpowers, but it has also deprived the world of genuine peace and kept it under sustained risk of nuclear catastrophe. Since the end of the Cold War more than twenty years ago the end of the nuclear stand-off has failed to provide a peace dividend that would help to improve the situation of the world's poor. Indeed, enormous amounts of money are still being spent on 'modernizing' the nuclear arsenals of the very states that are ostensibly reducing their nuclear weapons numbers. Finally, it must be admitted that the very possession of nuclear

weapons, even for purposes of deterrence, is morally problematic. While a consensus continues to grow that any possible use of such weapons is radically inconsistent with the demands of human dignity, in the past the Church has nonetheless expressed a provisional acceptance of their possession for reasons of deterrence, under the condition that this be "a step on the way toward progressive disarmament." This condition has not been fulfilled — far from it. In the absence of further progress toward complete disarmament, and without concrete steps toward a more secure and a more genuine peace, the nuclear weapon establishment has lost much of its legitimacy.

### III. The Problem of Intention

It is now time to question the distinction between possession and use which has long been a governing assumption of much ethical discourse on nuclear deterrence. Use of nuclear weapons is absolutely prohibited, but their possession is judged acceptable on condition that the weapons are held solely for deterrent purposes, that is, to dissuade adversaries from employing them.

The language of intention obscures the fact that nuclear armories, as instruments of military strategy, inherently bear active disposition for use. Nuclear weaponry does not simply lie dormant until the conditional intention is converted into an actual one at the moment when a nuclear attack

is launched by one's adversary. The machinery of nuclear deterrence does not work that way. It involves a whole set of acts that are pre-disposed to use: strategic designs, targeting plans, training drills, readiness checks, alerts, screening for conscientious objectors among operators, and so on. The political and military officials of nuclear possessing states assume the responsibility to use these weapons if deterrence fails. But since what is intended is mass destruction—with extensive and lasting collateral damage, inhumane suffering, and the risk of escalation—the system of nuclear deterrence can no longer be deemed a policy that stands firmly on moral ground.

#### **IV. Toward a Non-nuclear Peace**

The time has come for new thinking on how to challenge complacency surrounding the belief in nuclear deterrence. Changed circumstances bring new responsibilities for decision-makers. The apparent benefits that nuclear deterrence once provided have been compromised, and proliferation results in grave new dangers. The time has come to embrace the abolition of nuclear weapons as an essential foundation of collective security. Realists argue that nuclear deterrence as a security framework must be abandoned slowly and with calculation, if at all. But, is it realistic to allow the current unstable nuclear environment to persist with minor, incremental and essentially bilateral changes?

Shall we continue to ignore the conditions that lead to nuclear instability, as systems of international control remain unable to restore stability? Is it realistic, moreover, to deny that the disparity between nuclear and non-nuclear states is one of the major factors resulting in destabilization of the Non Proliferation Regime? Can we count on strategic 'realism' to build us a secure peace? We would be foolish to imagine so.

A genuine peace cannot grow out of an instrumental prudence that establishes a precarious ethics focused narrowly on the technical instruments of war. What is needed is a constructive ethic rooted in a deeper vision of peace, an ethic in which means and ends coincide more closely, where the positive components of peace inform and limit the use of force. World leaders must be reminded that the commitment to disarm embedded in the NPT and other international documents is more than a legal-political detail, it is a moral commitment on which the future of the world depends. *Pacta sunt servanda* (Treaties must be observed) is a first principle of the international system because it is the foundation on which trust can be built.

#### **V. Solidarity and a Global Ethic of Abolition**

Responsibility for the abolition of nuclear weapons is an essential component of the global common good. Abolition is one of those

tasks that exceed the capacity of any single nation or any set of nations to resolve on their own. Reduction and disarmament of nuclear arsenals requires a global ethic to guide global cooperation. On this issue in particular, now more than ever, the logic of technological interdependence cries out for an ethic of solidarity in which we work with one another for a less dangerous, morally responsible global future. It diminishes our humanity when the development of harmful technologies so often controls the imaginations and moral judgments of the brightest among us. To dwell in a humane society, we must govern our technologies with conscious attention to our global responsibilities.

In search of the political will to eradicate nuclear weapons, and out of concern for the world our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will inherit, the human family will have to become united in order to overcome powerful institutionalized interests that are invested in nuclear armaments. Only in solidarity will we recognize our common humanity, grow in awareness of the threats we face in common, and discover the paths beyond the impasse in which the world now finds itself.

The process of nuclear disarmament promised by the Non-Proliferation Treaty and repeatedly endorsed by religious and civic leaders is far from realization. At a time when political will among

world leaders for the abolition of nuclear weapons is lacking, solidarity across nations could break through the blockages of diplomacy-as-usual to open a way to the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction. In the 1980s people round the world voiced their 'No' to nuclear war-fighting. In this decade, the time has come for people of all nations to say, in solidarity, once and for all "a 'No' to nuclear weapons."

Fifty years ago Pope John XXIII proposed that "nuclear weapons should be banned" and "all should come to agree on fitting program of disarmament." Since that time the Holy See has repeatedly called for the abolition of nuclear weapons. At the General Assembly last September, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti endorsed the Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon's *Five Point Plan for Nuclear Disarmament* and called for a worldwide conference to draw up a convention on abolition. "The Holy See", he explained, in another talk, "shares the thoughts and sentiments of most men and women of good will who aspire to the elimination of nuclear weapons." Chief among these are the former American statesmen who have become advocates of abolition. Their conversion from proponents of nuclear deterrence to advocates of nuclear abolition is a sign of the times that solidarity in this cause is possible between secular and religious leaders as well as between possessing and non-possessing states. Now is the time

to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition.

## **VI. Other Ethical Issues Pressing for Disarmament**

With solidarity as a basis for a global ethic of abolition, let us examine some of the particular factors that put in question the moral legitimacy of the architecture of the “peace of a sort” supposedly provided by deterrence between the major nuclear powers. We propose looking at four specific concerns: (1) the costs of the nuclear stalemate to the global common good, (2) the unstable security inherent in the current nuclear environment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, (3) the built-in injustice in the NPT regime, and (4) the price to the poor and vulnerable of current nuclear policies.

### ***1. Threats to the Global Common Good***

Last year’s international conference in Oslo highlighted the egregious humanitarian consequences that inevitably result from any use of nuclear weapons. These consequences amount to basic offenses against humanity and the global common good. So, too, would such use bring about widespread harm to other life forms and even eco-systems. In addition, maintenance of the world’s nuclear weapons establishment results in

misallocation of human talent, institutional capacities and funding resources. Promotion of the global common good will require re-setting those allocations, re-ordering priorities toward peaceful human development.

Though it may be said, by way of a narrow casuistry, that possession of nuclear weapons is not per se evil, it does come very close to being so, because the only way such weapons work, even as a deterrent, is to threaten death to masses of human beings. And even should nuclear weapons be employed for narrowly restricted military goals, – so called ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons – civilians would nonetheless be killed as ‘collateral damage’. Contaminants would be dispersed far into the future, resulting in harm to the environment for decades, even centuries, to come.

While most attention is given to the mass-killing power of nuclear weapons, scientists and international lawyers are now giving attention to the ‘unnecessary suffering’ inflicted by the use of nuclear weapons. It has been observed that survivors of a nuclear conflict will envy the dead. The infliction of unnecessary suffering has long been banned by military codes and international law. What is true in conventional war is all the more true of nuclear conflict. To the immediate and long-term effects of radiation sickness must be added the suffering due to starvation, the disruption and contamination of water supplies, the spread of disease across a newly

vulnerable population, and the inability of ecosystems to restore themselves to sustainable levels after nuclear detonations. The continuing radioactive disaster at the civilian nuclear energy plant at Chernobyl and Fukushima should be a stark reminder to us that technical fixes are non-trivial and certainly not feasible in the far worse situation of a nuclear weapon detonation in conflict. Not only human lives but the land and water and marine resources would be damaged for the foreseeable future.

## ***2. Illusions of Security***

Proponents of nuclear weapons and opponents of abolition have often presented nuclear deterrence as a major pillar of international peace. Some historians, however, offer a different perspective. Despite the common assertion that the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved lives and brought the Japanese to sue for peace, records of the deliberation of the Japanese government, revisionist historians argue, show that it was not the dropping of the atomic bombs but the entrance of Soviet Union into the war that led to the collapse of Japanese resistance and its surrender to the U.S. Even before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese Empire had already suffered more death and destruction in 'conventional' fire-bombing of Japanese cities without surrendering than from the dropping of the two nuclear bombs.

Nuclear arsenals, moreover, have

proved no obstacle to conventional war in the nuclear era. They did not intimidate smaller powers from going to war or fighting against nuclear adversaries in different regions at different times. Indeed, nuclear weapons have themselves been a *casus belli* as in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Likewise cyber or conventional attacks have been conducted because of real or alleged nuclear weapons programs. In the lead up to the Cuban Missile Crisis, moreover, both sides had engaged in provocative acts that led them to the brink. In 2003, false assessments of weapons of mass destruction development became a pretext for a war of choice against Iraq that unleashed a cascade of problems we too antiseptically call 'instability' that continues to roll through that country and across the region.

The possession of nuclear weapons, moreover, seems to have posed little deterrent to attacks on nuclear powers from smaller, non-nuclear powers and non-state actors. It has not prevented conventional war between nuclear-armed states, and it has not dissuaded terrorists from attacking the nuclear powers. All the nuclear weapons states have endured terrorist attacks, often repeated ones.

Thus, the argument that nuclear deterrence preserves the peace is specious. The "peace of a sort" provided by nuclear deterrence is a misnomer and tends to cloud our collective vision. Prolongation of the current nuclear pol-

yarchy has set the stage for wars and for ongoing tensions. It is an expensive system that can't protect from prolonged low-level wars, inter-state wars or terrorist attacks. Accordingly, the misleading assumption that nuclear deterrence prevents war should no longer inspire reluctance to accepting international abolition of nuclear arsenals. If it ever was true, today it has become a dodge from meeting responsibilities to this generation and the next.

### ***3. Inequality among NPT Signatories***

The non-proliferation regime is rooted in inequality. In the grand bargain at the treaty's foundation the non-possessing powers granted a monopoly on nuclear weapons to the possessing powers in return for a 'transformative' good faith pledge by the nuclear weapons states to reduce and disarm their existing nuclear arsenals. What was intended to be a temporary state of affairs appears to have become a permanent reality, establishing a class structure in the international system between possessing and non-possessing states.

While other factors also underlie national status, the inequality between non-nuclear and nuclear states matters enormously because it appears to establish a unique kind of security which makes a nuclear-armed country immune to external pressures and so more able to impose its will on the world. For that reason, the nuclear

disparity becomes an incentive for non-nuclear-armed states to break out of the NPT agreement in pursuit of major power status. Thus, the asymmetry of the relationship between nuclear and non-nuclear states affects the stability, the durability and the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime.

In the absence of effective practical disarmament, efforts to enforce non-proliferation give rise to suspicions that the NPT is an instrument of an irremediably unequal world order. With the Cold War now a quarter century behind us, nonnuclear states increasingly perceive the regime as managing the system to serve the interests of those with nuclear weapons. Without solid progress toward disarmament as pledged under the NPT, questions continue to grow over the legitimacy of the system. Non-possession begins to appear inconsistent with the sovereign equality of nations and the inherent right of states to security and self-defence. Nuclear capability is still regarded in certain countries as a prerequisite of diplomatic influence and great power status, building incentives for proliferation and thus undermining global security.

Furthermore, at the same time as the nuclear powers enforce, with the assistance of the IAEA, strict non-proliferation measures on potential break-out states, there is no international monitoring and enforcement mechanism to implement the disarmament provisions of the NPT. There are no

agreed-upon means to insure that the promise of transformation to a nuclear-arms-free world moves ahead. In the absence of a functioning Conference on Disarmament, those decisions are left to bilateral negotiation and unilateral policymaking, yielding slow and sometimes near meaningless shifts in the nuclear balance. Under the 2010 NPT Action Plan, the nuclear-weapon States have committed to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, in a way that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security. So far, the only accountability has been via non-governmental organizations monitoring the implementation of the 2010 NPT Action Plan. However, the nuclear weapons States are required to report their disarmament undertakings to the NPT Review Conference Preparatory Committee in 2014, and the 2015 Review Conference will take stock and consider the next steps for the full implementation of article VI.

Re-establishing the stability, legitimacy and universality of the NPT regime demands the establishment of norms and mechanisms for supervision of nuclear disarmament on the part of all nuclear weapons states. If there is little or no progress toward disarmament by the nuclear states, it is inevitable that the NPT will be regarded as an unjust perpetua-

tion of the status quo. Only insofar as the nuclear-armed states move 10 toward disarmament will the rest of the world regard the non-proliferation regime as just.

#### *4. Neglect of the Poor and the Vulnerable*

For decades the cost of the nuclear polyarchy to the world's poor has been evident. Fifty years ago, the Second Vatican Council declared, "The [nuclear] arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an incredible degree." Today, the production, maintenance and deployment of nuclear weapons continue to siphon off resources that otherwise might have been made available for the amelioration of poverty and socio-economic development for the poor. The prolongation of the nuclear establishment continues to perpetuate patterns of impoverishment both domestically and internationally.

In most societies, duties to the poor and vulnerable are primary moral obligations. In 2005 the international community in adopting the Responsibility to Protect agreed that it is the responsibility of government to protect its populations from basic deprivation, and it has allowed the international community to intervene when governments fail to do so. Humanitarian agencies and world religions likewise see support of the poor and promotion of development as essential to the global common good. But, after

establishing the reduction of extreme poverty as one of the Millennium Goals in 2000, the United Nations' goal of the reduction of the numbers of people living in absolute poverty by one half by the year 2015 is far from realization. Contributions by developed nations to this important developmental contribution to peace have fallen short. Further delay in meeting those goals could be satisfied by matching savings from cuts in spending for nuclear weapons to expenditures in support for poverty reduction.

The re-allocation of funding from arms to development is essential to social justice. For social justice consists in the justice of our institutional arrangements. The disparity of resources between situations dedicated to human development and those dedicated to nuclear armament is a fundamental injustice in the global political order. Re-allocation of resources from wasteful and dangerous weapons programs to the constructive and peaceful purposes of global human development would undo shameful imbalances in public funding and institutional capacities.

Peace does not consist in the mere "absence of war", but rather in enjoyment of a full set of rights and goods that foster the complete development of the whole person in community. The Millennium Development goals provide a handy summary of the material goods a peaceful life would include: the eradication of extreme

poverty and hunger, universal primary education, the empowerment of women, reduced childhood mortality, maternal health, combatting HIV/AIDs and other diseases, environmental sustainability, and a global partnership in development.

The philosopher William James sought a "moral equivalent of war", a fulsome commitment of personal energies to a cause that would substitute for war as a great human undertaking. Writing at the time of the First Gulf War, Saint John Paul II called for "a concerted worldwide effort to promote development" as an endeavour of peace. He wrote, "Another name for peace is development. Just as there is a responsibility for avoiding war", he wrote, "so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development." Through their own work, he argued, the poor should be trusted to make their own contributions to economic prosperity. But to do so, they "need to be provided with realistic opportunities." Re-allocation of resources from nuclear armaments to development programs is an eminently appropriate way to make those opportunities possible by further contributions to attaining the newly updated Millennium Development Goals. In one move, there would be a double contribution to peace: reducing the danger of nuclear war and satisfaction of the collective responsibility for promoting development.

### ***5. Reason, Rationality and Peace***

As U. S. president John F. Kennedy began his work toward a nuclear test ban, he asserted in a June 1963 speech at American University that peace through nuclear disarmament is “the necessary, rational end of rational men.” The rationality that gives rise to peace is not the technical reasoning of weapons scientists and arms control specialists. It consists rather in the broad moral reasoning that arises from examined living and is sourced by our historic wisdom traditions. At its best, it posits a morality of ends as the basic architecture of politics. Technical reason—the morality of means—should be its servant, not its governor. It is moral reason that tells us nuclear abolition is possible. It is moral reason that tells us how to utilize technocratic reason in the work of disarmament. It is moral reason that recognizes deterrence as an obstacle to peace, and leads us to seek alternative paths to a peaceful world.

Moral reasoning is not a simple rational calculation. It is reason-

ing informed by virtue, that is, “right reason”; it is reason shaped by the examined experience of moral lives, what the ancients called ‘wisdom’. Autonomous technical reason, unguided by a deeper moral vision and tempered by the virtues of the good human life, can result in catastrophe, as the misuse of the Just War Tradition in support of unjust wars over the centuries demonstrates. Moral reason is a beacon to a fully human life. It is only reason, in this larger sense, the logic of ends, which can lead us to a nuclear-free world.

In short, to achieve nuclear abolition, we need to resist succumbing to the limits set by political realism. While recognizing how these concepts can provide a prudent curb on unwarranted exuberance, we must ultimately reject them as the defining outlook for our common political future. The fear that drives the reluctance to disarm must be replaced by a spirit of solidarity that binds humanity to achieve the global common good of which peace is the fullest expression.

Over the last two years there has been an increased focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. This, in turn, has led to renewed calls for a ban on nuclear weapons. Throughout such discussions, the question of deterrence, the main stated reason why states possess nuclear weapons, has remained largely in the background.

By way of contrast, and to fill a notable lacuna in the contemporary literature, this working paper seeks to reassess the question of nuclear deterrence in light of the recent humanitarian discourse on nuclear weapons use. Seeking to undercut the assumption (prevalent in much of the ethical literature in this field) that nuclear deterrence can be judged independently of nuclear weapons use, this working paper aims to show why this separation cannot be sustained.

In line with recent Catholic Church teaching, the paper concludes that the system of nuclear deterrence lacks a proper moral foundation. Finding a way out of the grave risks associated with nuclear weapons remains a top priority of our time. Nuclear disarmament is not an option. It is a moral duty.

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