1998-12

The abolition of nuclear weapons : implications for U.S. Security Interest

Weber, Timothy S.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California

THESIS

THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS

by

Timothy S. Weber

December 1998

Thesis Co-Advisors: David S. Yost
James J. Wirtz

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	December 1998	Master's Thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)
Weber, Timothy, S.

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5000

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), 6801 Telegraph Rd., Alexandria, VA 22310-3398.

10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT *(maximum 200 words)*

This thesis analyzes the arguments concerning the abolition of nuclear weapons, specifically the feasibility and desirability of nuclear disarmament. Past attempts at nuclear disarmament and relevant international treaties and legal opinions also are discussed. The nuclear disarmament movement has grown considerably since the end of the Cold War. As the idea of abolishing nuclear weapons gains influence, it may have an increasing impact upon national security policy. Abolitionists argue that nuclear disarmament is both desirable and feasible. This thesis concludes that nuclear disarmament is not feasible and that abolitionist arguments for the desirability of nuclear disarmament are flawed. States will continue to maintain nuclear arsenals for the foreseeable future. It would be unwise and dangerous for the United States to pursue a policy of nuclear disarmament in the near term.

14. SUBJECT TERMS
Abolition, Disarmament, Nuclear, Weapon, Feasibility, Desirability, Proliferation, Baruch Plan.

15. NUMBER OF PAGES
95

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UL

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS

Timothy S. Weber
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.S., University of Colorado, Boulder 1991

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 1998

Author: [redacted]

Timothy S. Weber

Approved by: [redacted]

David S. Yost, Thesis Co-Advisor

[redacted]

James J. Wirtz, Thesis Co-Advisor

[redacted]

Frank C. Petho, Chairman
Department of National Security
Affairs

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the arguments concerning the abolition of nuclear weapons, specifically the feasibility and desirability of nuclear disarmament. Past attempts at nuclear disarmament and relevant international treaties and legal opinions also are discussed. The nuclear disarmament movement has grown considerably since the end of the Cold War. As the idea of abolishing nuclear weapons gains influence, it may have an increasing impact upon national security policy. Abolitionists argue that nuclear disarmament is both desirable and feasible. This thesis concludes that nuclear disarmament is not feasible and that abolitionist arguments for the desirability of nuclear disarmament are flawed. States will continue to maintain nuclear arsenals for the foreseeable future. It would be unwise and dangerous for the United States to pursue a policy of nuclear disarmament in the near term.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The nuclear abolition movement has historical roots dating back to the Manhattan project, but it has been given new impetus with the end of the Cold War. As ideas to eliminate nuclear weapons gain influence, they may have a corresponding impact upon policy and, ultimately, U.S. national security. This thesis is divided into three sections. First, an overview of past abolition attempts is presented. Second, the arguments concerning the desirability of abolition are discussed. Third, the arguments for and against the feasibility of complete disarmament are analyzed. Advocates of a nuclear-weapons-free-world (NWFW) argue that it is both desirable and feasible to eliminate nuclear weapons. This thesis shows, however, that abolition is neither desirable nor feasible in the foreseeable future. Further, it suggests that near-term efforts to pursue abolition could endanger the security of the United States.

Chapter II analyzes the nuclear disarmament movement. The Baruch Plan, as presented by U.S. representative Bernard Baruch to the United Nations in 1946, was the first meaningful effort toward abolition. It eventually failed due to disagreements on verification and enforcement measures. These obstacles continue to hinder attempts at nuclear disarmament. Additionally, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ), and recent international legal opinions are analyzed. These are all often cited by abolitionists in their arguments for the declining legitimacy of nuclear weapons.

Chapter III analyzes the arguments about the desirability of nuclear disarmament. Abolitionists voice three core reasons why nuclear disarmament is desirable. First, they

argue that nuclear weapons have no military utility aside from the belief that they deter attack by nuclear weapons. Additionally, abolitionists argue that the deterrent value of nuclear weapons against other forms of WMD is suspect. Second, abolitionists assert that the indefinite deployment of nuclear weapons carries with it a high risk of accidental or unauthorized use. Third, they suggest that the possession of nuclear weapons by some states stimulates other nations to acquire them, thereby fostering proliferation and reducing the security of all.

Each element of this argument is flawed. Nuclear weapons can be used for many purposes beyond deterring the use of nuclear weapons by others. A short list of uses would include deterring other types of WMD (chemical and biological weapons), deterring conventional wars, gaining prestige, and exerting political leverage. In examining the risk of accidental or unauthorized use, abolitionists overlook the fact that severe reductions in nuclear arsenals might weaken or eliminate nuclear deterrence, creating greater incentives to conduct pre-emptive or preventive attacks. Additionally, a nuclear re-armament race resulting from a crisis in a NWFW would be an extremely dangerous situation with a high risk of purposeful or accidental use of nuclear weapons. In assessing the negative impact of nuclear arsenals upon proliferation, abolitionists examine only one element of the debate, discounting the role that specific nuclear arsenals have had in inhibiting proliferation. Perhaps the greatest flaw in the abolitionist arguments for a NWFW is the fact that as numbers approached zero the marginal utility of a single weapon would skyrocket. Significant proliferation pressures would result, likely reversing any progress toward disarmament that had been made to that point.

Chapter IV analyzes the arguments concerning the feasibility of eliminating nuclear weapons. The Stimson Center's four-phase plan is representative of most plans to eliminate nuclear weapons. Abolitionists contend that a verification regime could be developed that would deter a state from breaking out of a NWFW regime. "Breakout" is defined as a state hiding or developing nuclear weapons in violation of a NWFW regime. Abolitionists assert that the spread of norms against use, testing, and proliferation would help mitigate the danger of breakout. They contend that, if breakout occurred, the combined efforts of the rest of the world could deal with the offending state, forcing compliance with the regime.

Breakout is the main issue preventing a NWFW from being a feasible option. There would be great incentives for states to cheat in a NWFW. No regime could be developed that could verify compliance with a nuclear disarmament agreement. Further, enforcement measures against an acknowledged breakout state – whether they involved economic sanctions or military intervention – would likely be ineffective in forcing that state to roll back its nuclear capability.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons is a goal to which the United States (as a signatory of the NPT) aspires, in the context of general and complete disarmament. However, the realities of the current international order prevent such a goal from being realized in the foreseeable future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Anita, whose encouragement, love, and support enabled me to achieve this goal.

I would like to acknowledge the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) for providing funding for research. The funding enabled me to interview experts and tour various facilities, demonstrably improving my knowledge of nuclear policy and both sides of the nuclear disarmament debate.

I greatly appreciated the helpful advice, patience, and expertise of my advisors, Prof. David S. Yost and Prof. James J. Wirtz. They set the example among their peers. Their insightful comments measurably improved the quality of this thesis.

Finally, I must thank our two girls, Ni and Sunny. The long runs we had on old Fort Ord measurably improved my quality of life.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

This thesis explores whether it would be prudent for the United States to pursue the abolition of nuclear weapons. Efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament have been made by the United States since the development of the first nuclear weapons, but significant obstacles have prevented them from being successful. Many abolitionists believe that with the end of the Cold War, there exists an unprecedented opportunity to abolish nuclear weapons. Abolitionists assert that complete nuclear disarmament is both feasible and desirable and that steps toward a Nuclear Weapon Free World (NWFW) should be taken immediately. There are many flaws, however, in the abolitionist position. This thesis concludes that it would not be prudent for America to support efforts toward abolition because nuclear disarmament is neither feasible nor desirable in the near term.

Nuclear disarmament is a relevant topic to policy makers because the abolition movement may gain influence and prestige. With increasing influence, the idea of complete nuclear disarmament might shape national security policy. The topic also concerns officials responsible for intelligence, because significantly improved intelligence collection and analysis would be a required component of a NWFW verification regime.

B. METHODOLOGY

This thesis is based on an analysis of prominent writings for and against nuclear disarmament. Additionally, interviews were conducted with leading advocates and

opponents of nuclear-weapons abolition.[1] This thesis analyzes historical efforts towards abolition because problems preventing nuclear disarmament in the past remain relevant. The arguments for the feasibility and desirability of abolition are analyzed and shown to be flawed. Possible effects of a NWFW such as the increased value of nuclear weapons, its impact upon proliferation, and the likelihood of dangerous re-armament races are also explored to demonstrate how a NWFW may be less desirable than a stable configuration of nuclear states.

C. OUTLINE

The thesis is divided into three sections. First, an overview of past abolition attempts is presented. Second, the arguments concerning the desirability of abolition are discussed. Third, the arguments for and against the feasibility of complete disarmament are analyzed.

Chapter II describes the nuclear disarmament movement. The Baruch Plan, as presented by U.S. representative Bernard Baruch to the United Nations in 1946, was the first meaningful effort toward abolition. It eventually failed due to disagreements on verification and enforcement measures. These issues continue to prevent nuclear disarmament from being a feasible goal. Additionally, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones, and recent international rulings, which are all often cited by abolitionists, are analyzed.

Chapter III examines the arguments regarding the desirability of near-term nuclear disarmament. Abolitionists use three main reasons to assert the desirability of nuclear

[1] See Appendix A for a list of individuals interviewed.

disarmament: nuclear weapons lack utility; the risk of accidental or unauthorized use is unacceptably high; and the possession of nuclear weapons by some countries fosters proliferation.

Each element of the argument for the desirability of nuclear disarmament is flawed. Nuclear weapons can be used for many purposes other than deterring the use of nuclear weapons, including deterrence of chemical or biological or conventional aggression. Regarding the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, abolitionists overlook the fact that there are many practical measures short of disarmament, which could reduce the danger of inadvertent use. Additionally, a NWFW could result in re-armament races in which safety would be a low priority. Abolitionists argue only one facet of the proliferation debate, discounting the role of existing nuclear arsenals (above all, that of the United States) in inhibiting proliferation. Perhaps the greatest flaw in the abolitionist arguments for a NWFW is that they overlook the fact that the marginal utility of a single weapon would skyrocket as numbers approached zero. Significant proliferation pressures would result, likely reversing any progress toward nuclear disarmament that had been made to that point. In a sense, complete nuclear disarmament is like a mirage: the closer one gets to it, the farther away it will appear.

Chapter IV analyzes the arguments concerning the feasibility of eliminating nuclear weapons. The four-phase plan for abolition as proposed by the Stimson Center is representative of most plans to eliminate nuclear weapons.[2] Abolitionists contend that a verification regime could be developed that would deter a state from breaking out of a

---

[2] Michael Brown, *Phased Nuclear Disarmament and US Defense Policy, Occasional Paper No. 30*, (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 1996), accessed on 5 July 1998, available from http://www.stimson.org/zeronuke/index.html.

NWFW regime. "Breakout" is defined as a state hiding or developing nuclear weapons in violation of a NWFW regime. Abolitionists assert that the spread of norms against use, testing, and proliferation would help mitigate the danger of breakout. They contend that, if breakout occurred, the combined efforts of the rest of the world could deal with the offending state, forcing compliance with the regime.

Breakout is the main issue preventing a NWFW from being a feasible option. There would be great incentives for states to cheat in a NWFW. No regime could be developed that could verify compliance with a nuclear disarmament agreement. Further, enforcement measures against an acknowledged break-out state – whether they involved economic sanctions or military intervention – would likely be ineffective in forcing that state to roll back its nuclear capability.

II. PAST ATTEMPTS TO PROMOTE NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

According to abolitionists, Cold War hostilities limited nuclear disarmament efforts between 1945 and 1989. They assert that the movement has been given new impetus, however, with the end of the Cold War, which has engendered greater possibilities for cooperation and trust. The Baruch Plan of 1946 was the first formal attempt to reach a nuclear disarmament agreement. Many elements of the Baruch Plan are evident in current nuclear disarmament proposals. Abolitionists assert that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) legally obligates Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zones (NWFZ) and recent statements by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are cited by abolitionists as proof of the declining legitimacy of nuclear weapons.

An understanding of the history of the abolition movement is important because many of the issues that have prevented past plans (e.g. the Baruch Plan) from being instituted continue to make nuclear disarmament infeasible. This chapter shows that abolitionist arguments regarding the NPT, NWFWs, and the recent ICJ advisory opinion are flawed. For example, the obligation for nuclear disarmament in the NPT exists within the context of general and complete disarmament. Additionally, NWFZs and the ICJ advisory opinion do not prove that nuclear weapons are of declining legitimacy or that they are illegal. Despite dramatic changes in geopolitics since the end of the Cold War, significant factors preventing nuclear disarmament from being a desirable endeavor remain.

B. THE BARUCH PLAN

Attempts were made to eliminate nuclear weapons almost as soon as their existence became publicly known following the American detonation of two atomic bombs over Japan. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki took place after the United Nations (UN) Charter was signed in San Francisco in June 1945, but before the first meeting of the UN General Assembly in London in January 1946. Eight years later, John Foster Dulles, during his first year as Secretary of State, called the provisions of the UN Charter on the regulation of armaments obsolete before they entered into force.[3] The Charter was conceived without any consideration for atomic weapons and their revolutionary implications. After intensive cooperation by the United States, Britain, and Canada, and concurrence by the Soviet Union, the first session of the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to establish an Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). The Commission was charged to analyze the nuclear question and make specific proposals:

(a) For extending between all nations the exchange of basic scientific information for peaceful ends;
(b) For control of atomic energy to the extent necessary to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes;
(c) For the elimination from national armaments of atomic and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction;
(d) For effective safeguards by way of inspection and other means to protect complying states against the hazards of violations and evasions.[4]

The main reason for the creation of the AEC was to eliminate nuclear weapons and all other forms of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and to implement a plan for the

---

[3] John Foster Dulles statement of 26 August 1953 before the American Bar Association, quoted in Bernard Bechhoefer, *Postwar Negotiations for Arms Control* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1961), 28.

[4] Bechhoefer, 34.

peaceful dissemination of nuclear knowledge.

At the first meeting of the AEC in June 1946, Bernard Baruch, the U.S. representative, presented the U.S. proposal for an international atomic control system. This proposal became known as the Baruch Plan. The Baruch plan was a modification of a report prepared for the U.S. Government by a committee headed by then Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Consultants included David Lilienthal and Robert Oppenheimer.[5] An essential element of the Baruch Plan was its provision for complete international control of the entire process of producing atomic weapons, from mining of uranium to weaponization. This stipulation immediately raised the question of whether effective international control of atomic energy was possible. The drafters of the Acheson-Lilienthal Report and Baruch Plan believed it was. Both plans emphasized complete accountability of nuclear materials from mines to weapons.[6]

President Harry Truman stated, "Mr. Baruch's principal contribution to the atomic energy program was that he transformed the Acheson-Lilienthal Report from a working paper into a formal, systematic proposal and that he added a section that called for sanctions against any nation violating the rules."[7] Baruch insisted upon the removal of veto authority for the five permanent members of the Security Council in matters relating to violations against a disarmament regime.[8] Acheson was strongly against these

---

[5] For an in-depth discussion of the Baruch Plan, see Bechhoefer, 41-83. For a discussion on the process leading to the Acheson-Lilienthal Report, see Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), 151-5.

[6] Bechhoefer, 42.

[7] Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs,* Vol. 2, *Years of Trial and Hope* (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 10.

[8] Bechhoefer, 55.

modifications, believing that "the only practicable safeguard in case of violations would be clear notice and warning that they were occurring. This would give other parties to the treaty knowledge that it was being breached and an opportunity to take such action...for their own protection as might be possible. Provisions for paper police sanctions to be imposed by the same parties were only an illusion."[9] In short, Acheson did not believe that threats of sanctions or military action would have any affect on cheaters.

Because of objections by the Soviet Union, the Baruch plan was never implemented. The Soviets rejected any limitations on their veto authority within the UN Security Council. They also demanded that nuclear weapons be prohibited before the implementation of a materials and weapons control system. The United States demanded an effective control system before the elimination of its nuclear stockpile.[10] The United States did not consider this point negotiable. President Truman stated, "If we accepted the Russian position, we would be deprived of everything except their promise to agree to controls.... We should not under any circumstances throw away our gun until we are sure the rest of the world can't arm against us."[11]

Robert Jervis has pointed out that the Baruch Plan failed because it would have restricted Soviet autonomy. The Soviet Union was not seeking equality, but, rather, the ability to pursue its own policies in complete freedom and without any interference or

---

[9] Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), 155.

[10] Bechhoefer, 77.

[11] Truman, 11.

outside control.[12] The Soviets responded to the dangers posed by nuclear weapons by developing their own nuclear arsenal. Stalin was already engaged, by the end of World War II, in a crash program to develop atomic weapons and break the American monopoly.[13] It became evident that no Soviet regime would open itself to the kind of international control and verification that the Baruch Plan demanded.

Ultimately, the AEC made no progress in its goals of developing international control over nuclear weapons and materials and nuclear disarmament. The Soviet Union and the West could not agree on specific elements of the plans that each proposed. With the passage of a resolution by the General Assembly in 1952, the AEC was dissolved and transformed into the Disarmament Commission, which would attempt to deal with all aspects of arms reduction and elimination, both conventional and nuclear. The Cold War was fully underway, and any hopes for nuclear disarmament or international control quickly gave way to security concerns, which made disarmament endeavors politically infeasible.

The first, futile attempts to achieve nuclear disarmament demonstrated that key issues such as verification, enforcement, effective controls, and national security concerns needed to be solved before general and complete disarmament – including the abolition of nuclear weapons – would be possible. Acheson believed that no inspection regime would be sufficient to safeguard against cheating as long as national fissionable materials

---

[12] Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 256.

[13] For a detailed analysis of the development of the Soviet nuclear weapon program, see: David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

production was allowed to continue.[14] When the discussions on the Baruch proposals ended, it was clear that neither international ownership of nuclear materials nor a veto-free right of the majority of signatory states to punish a violator would gain acceptance.[15]

C. THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), signed in 1968 and indefinitely extended in 1995, is frequently cited by abolitionists as a legal commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons. In the treaty's preamble all signatories declare "their intention ... to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament, urging the cooperation of all States in the attainment of this objective."[16] Additionally, in article VI:

> Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes 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, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.[17]

Thus, a goal of the NPT is nuclear disarmament. The inclusion of Article VI in the treaty was demanded by the non-nuclear-weapon-states (NNWS). Reciprocity was the key issue. The NNWS did not desire a permanent two-class system of nuclear "haves" and "have-nots."

---

[14] Richard J. Barnet, "Inspection: Shadow and Substance," *Security in Disarmament*, ed. Richard J.. Barnet and Richard A. Falk (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 16.

[15] Ibid, 17.

[16] *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, an appendix in *Beyond 1995, The Future of the NPT Regime*, ed. Joseph F. Pilat and Robert E. Pendley (New York: Plenum Press, 1990), 177-8.

[17] Ibid, 180.

Abolitionists consider the two-class system hypocritical and, ultimately, impossible to maintain. For abolitionists, the NPT embodies a bargain. The majority of states would not acquire nuclear weapons, and the nuclear-weapon states (NWS) would negotiate and carry out plans for nuclear disarmament. In the view of some abolitionists, such as Frank Blackaby, the nuclear-weapon states have never attempted to meet their full obligation under the NPT.[18] Abolitionists contend that a growing number of NNWS will assert their right to develop nuclear weapons unless nuclear weapons are eliminated. Recent tests by India and Pakistan are cited by abolitionists as evidence that the two-class system cannot be maintained indefinitely and is already falling apart.[19]

Nuclear arms reduction efforts made since the end of the Cold War by the five NPT-recognized nuclear powers (which happen to be also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, known as the P-5) are lauded but considered inadequate by abolitionists.[20] Furthermore, abolitionists such as Cathleen Fisher and Barry Blechman of the Stimson Center assert that the health of the NPT is based on continued progress toward diminishing the numbers of nuclear weapons globally. They assert that as long as the United States continues to rely on the threat of nuclear use, its efforts to contain the spread of WMD will continue to appear self-serving, and thus eminently resistible by any

---

[18] Frank Blackaby, "Time for a Peasants' Revolt; Nuclear Non-proliferation," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 53, no. 6 (1997): 4.

[19] Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Santa Barbara, CA., electronic newsletter of 6/17/98, online database at http://www.wagingpeace.org.

[20] Canberra Commission, *The Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons* - Part 2, (Canberra: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, August 1996) accessed on 28 March 1998, available from http://www.dfat.gov.au/dfat/cc/cchome.html, 1.

country with a reason to do so.[21] Abolitionists maintain that steps toward nuclear disarmament must be taken now to maintain the legitimacy of the NPT. If the NPT becomes irrelevant, abolitionists assert, nuclear proliferation efforts could increase considerably.

NNWS, however, benefit from being signatories of the NPT, even if they consider the current system a double standard. As long as NNWS prefer a world in which they forego nuclear weapons in exchange for their regional adversaries doing the same, they will believe that the NPT serves their security interests.[22]

An aspect of the Article VI commitment that abolitionists frequently overlook is the coupling of nuclear disarmament commitments with general and complete disarmament.[23] While the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, cite nuclear disarmament as a long-term goal, it is not a near-term policy objective of any of the P-5 states.[24] The NWS argue that without multilateral efforts toward general and complete disarmament there is no obligation under the NPT for them to pursue a policy of nuclear disarmament in the near term.

---

[21] Cathleen Fisher and Barry Blechman, "Phase Out the Bomb," *Foreign Policy* (winter 1994-5): 86.

[22] Charles L. Glaser, "The Flawed Case for Nuclear Disarmament," *Survival* 40, no. 1 (spring 1998): 120.

[23] Michael Quinlan, *Thinking About Nuclear Weapons* (London: Royal United Services, Institute for Defense Studies, 1997), 42.

[24] For the Clinton Administration view on nuclear disarmament, see Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services, Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence, statement of Walter Slocombe, 12 February 1997. For the nuclear policy of the United Kingdom, see United Kingdom, Ministry of Defense, *Strategic Defense Review, Supporting Essay Five, Deterrence, Arms control, and Proliferation*, accessed on 3 August 1998, available from http://www.mod.uk/policy/sdr/essay05.html.

D. ADVISORY OPINION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

A recent advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of nuclear weapons has been cited by abolitionists in their arguments against the legitimacy of nuclear weapons.[25] Abolitionists do not view nuclear weapons, with their enormous and potentially indiscriminate destructive power, as legitimate weapons in war. In response to a request by the UN General Assembly for an advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, the ICJ stated unanimously in July 1996:

> The threat or use of nuclear weapons will generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law. However...the Court cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defense, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake.[26]

Discerning commentators have pointed out the lack of clarity or conclusiveness in this statement. The court stated that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be generally considered illegal. However, the use of nuclear weapons would likely arise only in exceptional and extreme circumstances. The qualification "generally" thus deprives the statement of practical force.

The Court also stated that there existed "an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."[27] This statement adds no new obligation to

---

[25] *Canberra Commission*, pt. 1, 13.

[26] ICJ decision cited in Christopher Greenwood, "The Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons and the Contribution of the International Court to International Humanitarian Law," *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 316 (1 January 1997): 69.

[27] *ICJ Advisory Opinion, Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 8 July 1996, General List No. 95, p. 36 quoted in the *Canberra Commission*, pt. I, 6.

NWS. It essentially reiterates the NPT Article VI commitment to nuclear disarmament, which is closely linked to a program of complete and general disarmament.

Several countries filed statements with the Court asserting that nuclear weapons were legal and that the question was not within the jurisdiction of the Court. Germany contended that the issue was a political question, not a legal one, and therefore not under the ICJ's jurisdiction.[28] Russia filed a statement with the ICJ contending that, by virtue of the principle of sovereignty, a "state may accomplish any acts, which are not prohibited under international law ... [and] international law contains no general prohibition of use of nuclear weapons *per se*."[29] Furthermore, Russia contends that nuclear weapons, when used appropriately in the protection of the vital interests of national security, are legal and legitimate means of self-defense. The opinion leaves open the possibility that the threat or use of nuclear weapons may be lawful "in an extreme circumstance of self-defense, in which the very survival of a state would be at stake." Although abolitionists contend that the ICJ ruling confirms the illegality of nuclear weapons, the ICJ advisory opinion avoids a direct judgment on that question.

E. NUCLEAR-WEAPONS-FREE ZONES

Various treaties have been ratified to establish regional nuclear-weapons-free zones (NWFZ). Abolitionists have cited these treaties in calling for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. NWFZ treaties demonstrate that international support, especially in a regional context, exists for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The treaties establishing

[28] Federal Republic of Germany, "Statement for the International Court of Justice," June 1995, 1.

[29] Russian Federation, "Written Statement to the ICJ," 16 June 1995, 5.

NWFZs include: the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco (Central and South America),[30] the 1986 Treaty of Rarotonga (South Pacific including Australia and New Zealand), the 1996 Treaty of Pelindaba (Africa), and the 1997 Treaty of Bangkok (Southeast Asia). Proponents of abolition consider the further pursuit, extension, and establishment of such zones significant contributions to the goal of a NWFW.[31]

While the established NWFZs support the abolitionist cause, they are not always implemented for the sole reason of eliminating nuclear weapons within a region. For example, in the eyes of some of its critics, the Treaty of Raratonga was instituted partly to aid in the effort to remove the French from their island possessions in the South Pacific. Support for the treaty increased significantly after the 1995 French decision to conduct a final nuclear test series in the South Pacific. Additionally, advocates for the proposed Central Asian NWFZ aim to bolster regional autonomy and prevent Russia from claiming the Central Asian republics as part of a greater Russia in the future.[32]

NWFZs have not been established in areas where nuclear proliferation risks are high, such as South Asia, the Middle East, or East Asia. Cooperative political attitudes have been essential to the creation of the zones. The zones themselves did not foster cooperative political circumstances capable of sustaining them, and they will probably survive only as long as relatively friendly political inter-state relations persist in the

---

[30] The Treaty of Tlatelolco was originally ratified in 1967. Brazil and Argentina ratified it in 1994, after both had decided to abandon extensive nuclear weapons programs. For a discussion of the Brazilian and Argentinean nuclear development programs, see Julio C. Carasales, "The Argentine-Brazilian Nuclear Rapprochement," *The Nonproliferation Review* (spring/summer 1995): 39-48.

[31] Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa, and Sweden, "Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World: The Need For a New Agenda," Joint Statement of 9 June 1998, 6.

[32] For an in-depth discussion on NWFZs and their implications, see Zachary S. Davis, "The Spread Of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones: Building A New Nuclear Bargain" *Arms Control Today* (February 1996).

regions in question or as long as local antagonists are unable or unwilling to acquire nuclear arms.

F. CURRENT CALLS FOR ABOLITION

Several organizations advocate the abolition of nuclear weapons. The more prominent organizations and proposals include: the Stimson Center Project, the Canberra Commission, the International Pugwash Movement, and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Additionally, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has proposed substantial reductions in the world's nuclear arsenals and examination of total elimination in its report.[33] However, the NAS cannot, strictly speaking, be considered an abolitionist organization; it advocates exploring the issue of reduction to zero but has stopped short of an outright endorsement of abolition. Several individuals have contributed to the various proposals put forward by many of the abolitionist organizations, resulting in much common ground among the various proposals for nuclear disarmament.[34]

Most abolitionists do not advocate the immediate elimination of nuclear weapons. The Stimson Center, for example, advocates a phased approach to eliminate nuclear

---

[33] The National Academy of Sciences, *The Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy*, accessed on 1 July 1998, available from http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/fun/1.html.

[34] For example, Steven Fetter has written extensively on verification of nuclear weapons elimination for the Stimson Center and the National Academy of Sciences. General Lee Butler has worked on committees in the Stimson Center and the Canberra Commission, and led the drive for the December 1996 *Statement on Nuclear Weapons by International Generals and Admirals.* Josef Rotblat is winner of the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in support of abolition and is a leading member of the Pugwash Movement and a contributor to the *Canberra Commission on the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons.*

weapons over several decades.[35] The Canberra Commission advocates the general process of defining agreed targets and guidelines, which would drive the disarmament process toward the ultimate objective of final elimination of nuclear weapons at the earliest possible time.[36] Abolitionists acknowledge that certain problems must be solved before total elimination of nuclear weapons can occur. However, they assert that steps can begin immediately that will start the world on the path toward the final goal of abolition.

Abolitionists assert that with the end of the Cold War, a new climate of cooperation has been created that can be used to promote international action to eliminate nuclear weapons. However, they assert that action must be taken quickly or the opportunity will be lost.[37] According to Jonathan Schell, "Gone is the murderous, implacable hostility between global rivals, gone the totalitarian empire; and gone the obstacles to inspection that have been considered the main brake on nuclear disarmament."[38] For abolitionists, the dissolution of the Cold War's East-West enmity has made agreement finally possible on the issues that have prevented the success of past nuclear disarmament efforts, including verification, international controls, and treaty enforcement.

---

[35] Michael Brown, *Phased Nuclear Disarmament and US Defense Policy: Occasional Paper No. 30* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1996), accessed on 4 June 98, available from http://www.stimson.org/zeronuke/index.html.

[36] Canberra Commission, pt. 2, 12.

[37] Ibid, pt. 1, 8.

[38] Jonathan Schell, *The Gift of Time, The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 10.

According to abolitionists, with the end of the Cold War the deployment of nuclear weapons is no longer justifiable in the context of the threat that exists to the P-5 states. Abolitionists such as Robert McNamara, Carl Kaysen, and George Rathjens, assert that the Cold War had two chief features. The first was continued confrontation on the border between the two Germanys that might have broken out into war. The second was ideologically driven rivalries throughout the developing world, which evolved at various times into serious confrontations between East and West.[39] They further contend that the enormous build-up in nuclear weapons after 1945 was primarily a product of the Cold War.[40] With the threat of war between East and West gone, abolitionists believe that there should be a radical reduction in the arsenals of the P-5 states until the ultimate goal of abolition is reached. For smaller nuclear states such as India, Pakistan, and Israel, abolitionists acknowledge that international action to resolve their security concerns may be necessary before disarmament in those countries can occur.[41]

Regardless of the optimism that abolitionists express about the prospects for international cooperation, the world is no closer now than it was during the Cold War to resolving such issues as verification regimes, systems for the control of atomic energy, and effective enforcement of a NWFW regime. The inability to create an effective verification regime is one of the most significant obstacles to an effective disarmament treaty. Enforcement against violations, as has been shown in Iraq by the UN Special

---

[39] Carl Kaysen, Robert McNamara, and George Rathjens, "Nuclear Weapons After the Cold War," *A Nuclear-Weapon Free World: Desirable? Feasible?* ed. Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, and Bhalchandra Udgaonkar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 33.

[40] Ibid, 35.

[41] Ibid, 41.

Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), remains extremely problematic. Globalization and the opening of borders have made the control of the transportation of fissile material and the limitation of the diffusion of nuclear technology nearly impossible. The end of the Cold War has not provided solutions for all the obstacles that have historically prevented disarmament, nuclear or otherwise, from being a feasible endeavor.

In fact, the world today is in many ways more dangerous and uncertain than it was during the Cold War. The spread of cruise and ballistic missiles and associated propulsion and guidance technologies[42] and the spread of WMD have greatly complicated the threat environment faced by the United States and its allies. Additionally, the relatively benign relations among industrialized nations that currently exist cannot be expected to last indefinitely. In sum, while the nature of the threat to the United States has dramatically changed since the end of the Cold War, significant danger remains, and shows no sign of abating.

G. CONCLUSION

The geopolitical environment after World War II was in many ways much simpler than it is today. The United States held a nuclear monopoly until August 1949 when the Soviets detonated their first bomb. A number of years passed before the Soviets possessed a significant atomic stockpile.[43] Even in the simpler climate that existed when

---

[42] For the most recent and authoritative analysis of the spread of ballistic missile technology see The Rumsfeld Commission, *The Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1998).

[43] Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), 63.

the United States held a nuclear monopoly, no agreement could be reached on proper conditions for international control of atomic energy. In today's climate of eight nuclear powers, and several states apparently attempting to develop nuclear weapons, any treaty to eliminate weapons will be much more difficult to conclude, to say nothing of the doubtful prospects for effective implementation of treaty provisions.[44]

The Baruch Plan, the NPT, and NWFZs all represent efforts to deal with the danger of nuclear weapons. The Baruch Plan failed because of mistrust between the superpowers and their unwillingness to give up the ultimate guarantor of their national security, nuclear weapons. These problems of mistrust between nations and associated security concerns remain. The NPT has been a politically prominent element of the non-proliferation regime. While Article VI obliges the NWS to eliminate nuclear weapons, it does so only in the context of complete and general disarmament. Such disarmament is not likely to occur in the foreseeable future. NWFZs have reflected the concerns of states in various regions regarding their desires to avoid the proliferation of nuclear weapons in their regions. NWFZs, however, exist only in regions that face a low threat of nuclear proliferation. Abolition efforts during the Cold War failed because of problems regarding the feasibility of establishing such a regime. Today, many of these problems still exist, and others have emerged. Consequently, the abolition of nuclear weapons remains infeasible.

[44] The five declared nuclear powers are the permanent members of the UN Security Council: The United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France. The three *de facto* nuclear powers are Israel, India, and Pakistan. North Korea, Iraq, and Iran are among the states that have made attempts to develop nuclear programs and that show continuing interest in the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE DESIRABILITY OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

Abolitionist organizations, such as the Canberra Commission, voice three core reasons why nuclear disarmament is desirable. First, they argue that nuclear weapons have no military utility aside from the belief that they deter attack by nuclear weapons. To support this proposition abolitionists assert that the operational use of nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear weapon state would be politically and morally indefensible. Additionally, abolitionists argue that the deterrent value of nuclear weapons against other forms of WMD is suspect. Second, abolitionists assert that the indefinite deployment of nuclear weapons carries with it a high risk of accidental or unauthorized use. Third, they suggest that the possession of nuclear weapons by some states, notably the P-5, stimulates other nations to acquire them, thereby fostering proliferation and reducing the security of all.[45] Abolitionists assert that even if the complete abolition of nuclear weapons is not achieved, there is a benefit in embracing the goal and taking steps toward its attainment. Having the goal encourages one to take and consider steps that might otherwise be rejected.

There are several faults to the arguments offered by abolitionists. First, nuclear weapons have utility beyond their role of deterring nuclear attack. Second, the risk of accidental, unauthorized, or intended use might be higher in a world with very few weapons or a NWFW in which one or more states might break out of the regime. Third, the effect of nuclear weapons arsenals upon proliferation is debatable. Nuclear weapons have helped to limit proliferation. For example, extended deterrence has played a

[45] Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 1.

significant role in stemming nuclear proliferation. Lastly, there can be little benefit expected in embracing a goal that is neither desirable nor feasible, especially when its pursuit could endanger the security of the United States. Rather, a program of verifiable arms control agreements rooted in the context of geopolitical realities is the wisest course of action available to the United States and other nuclear powers.

There are additional reasons why nuclear disarmament is not desirable in the current world environment. Breakout – defined as a state hiding or developing nuclear weapons in violation of a disarmament treaty – could threaten the national security of the United States and its allies and could not be adequately guarded against. The marginal utility of a single nuclear weapon would skyrocket if warhead numbers approached zero, thus creating significant pressures for breakout and dangerous nuclear re-armament races, with heightened incentives to conduct pre-emptive attacks. One of the main reasons why the abolitionists pursue nuclear disarmament is that they believe that a world with no nuclear weapons would be safer and more peaceful than a world with nuclear weapons. This chapter suggests, however, that a NWFW might be less stable and more dangerous than the present nuclear environment.

B. ARGUMENTS FOR THE DESIRABILITY OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

1. Lack of Military Utility

Abolitionists believe that nuclear weapons lack military utility. For abolitionists, deterring the use of an adversary's nuclear weapons is the only conceivable purpose to possess nuclear weapons. A general definition of deterrence is the possession of capabilities and the perceived will to make the threat of unacceptable retaliation credible

in the mind of the enemy.[46] Abolitionists assert that if the sole function of nuclear weapons is deterrence, then there would be no need or incentive to possess them in a nuclear-disarmed world.[47] Abolitionists argue that nuclear weapons have long been understood to be too destructive and non-discriminatory in nature to secure discrete objectives on the battlefield. Additionally, they argue that nuclear weapons use would be morally and politically indefensible, further limiting any military or political utility they may possess. Abolitionists assert that nuclear weapons have become increasingly regarded as weapons to be employed only in extreme situations. In such instances, abolitionists argue, the consequences for the initiator of a nuclear attack would be so grave as to obviate whatever military of political objective that prompted their use.[48]

Advocates of a NWFW dispute the argument that nuclear weapons have deterred conventional wars. For abolitionists, whether nuclear weapons were decisive or superfluous to the deterring of Warsaw Pact aggression against Western Europe has been a matter of contention for some time. Some abolitionists, such as General Lee Butler, assert that nuclear weapons "intensified and prolonged an already acute ideological animosity."[49] Abolitionists argue that the possession of nuclear weapons has not prevented conventional wars. Argentina, in its attempt to take the Falkland Islands, showed no fear of nuclear retaliation by Great Britain. Iraq showed no reluctance about

---

[46] Robert G. Joseph, "Nuclear Deterrence and Regional Proliferators," *The Washington Quarterly* (summer 1997): 22.

[47] Rotblat, 3.

[48] Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 5.

[49] General Lee Butler, "A Voice of Reason; Opinion About Nuclear Weapons," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (15 May 1998).

fighting a nuclear-powered coalition in the Gulf War. Abolitionists assert that nuclear weapons were deemed unsuitable for use even when the Cold War superpowers suffered humiliating military setbacks (Korea), and even defeat (Vietnam and Afghanistan).[50]

Abolitionists dispute the ability of nuclear weapons to deter the use of other WMD, such as CBW. They point out that the NWS have such overwhelming strength in military and civilian technology that a combination of defensive measures and advanced conventional forces can deter or powerfully retaliate against CBW threats. Further, abolitionists assert that the consequences of nuclear retaliation are so disproportionate and uncertain as to render such action implausible. They suggest that the most appropriate course for dealing with CBW threats is for the world community, especially the NWS, to press ahead with chemical and biological disarmament.[51]

Abolitionists assert that the use of nuclear weapons would be morally reprehensible. The moral outrage that would be unleashed worldwide by a nuclear attack would outweigh any benefit a NWS might obtain through using nuclear weapons. Abolitionists assert that the use of nuclear weapons to kill potentially hundreds of millions of human beings would be an unprecedented atrocity.[52] General Charles Horner, Allied Air Forces Commander in the Gulf War, has stated, "Nuclear weapons are such a gross instrument of power that they really have no utility. They... are best used to destroy cities, and kill women and children.... That's morally wrong, ... [and] it doesn't make

---

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Schell, 12.

sense."[53] In short, abolitionists assert the moral implications and associated repercussions of using nuclear weapons limit their utility to the extent that threats of nuclear attack would lack credibility. For deterrence to work, a state must have credibility and capability. Therefore, for abolitionists, the moral implications of nuclear-weapons use, and the enormity of their effects, make deterrence suspect.

Abolitionists further argue that deterrence assumes rationality in the decision-making process, and as a result it will not affect irrational leaders. For instance, if Hitler had nuclear weapons in World War II, abolitionists contend, he would have used them, even if the allies possessed nuclear weapons of their own. Thus, in a situation where nuclear deterrence would be most relied upon, against an expansionist despot, it would likely be ineffective.

Some abolitionists, such as Cathleen Fisher and Barry Blechman of the Stimson Center, argue that the character of international relations "is undergoing an irreversible transformation that will eventually invalidate rationales for WMD."[54] They suggest that technology diffusion and economic interdependence have created a world where a growing number of states share so many common interests that "the very idea of using military force in the settlement of disputes has been delegitimized."[55] In such a world, they believe, there is no need for nuclear weapons.

---

[53] General Charles Horner quoted in Schell, 38.

[54] Barry Blechman and Cathleen Fisher, "Phase Out the Bomb," *Foreign Policy* (winter 1994-1995): 80.

[55] Ibid.

During the Cold War, abolitionists assert, deterrence proved a highly risky and very expensive strategy for dealing with nuclear weapons in a world of nation-states with enduring, deep-seated animosities. Abolitionists argue that while deterrence may have introduced caution to superpower relationships during the Cold War, the argument for deterrence is largely circular. Its utility implies and flows from an assumption of the continued existence of nuclear weapons. Abolitionists assert that the need for nuclear deterrence would disappear in a nuclear-disarmed world.[56]

Some observers question whether nuclear deterrence, including extended deterrence,[57] was ever credible at all. According to John Mueller, the peace since World War II is more a result of the memory of the war, post-war contentment, and fear of escalation, than a product of caution induced by nuclear weapons. He cites the empirical evidence of the lack of war throughout the industrialized world since World War II, regardless of whether states possessed nuclear weapons.[58]

Extended deterrence remains a topic of significant debate. Skeptics question whether the United States would ever have signed its own death warrant in the defense of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Europe by honoring extended deterrence commitments. A nuclear attack by the United States on the Soviet Union because of Warsaw Pact aggression might have led to a Soviet nuclear attack upon the United States.

---

[56] Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 6.

[57] Extended deterrence is defined as protection gained by allies of the United States through the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The United States has pledged to use nuclear weapons in the defense of certain allies if warranted. For an in-depth analysis of extended deterrence, see Stephen Cimbala, *Extended Deterrence; the United States and NATO Europe* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1987).

[58] John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security* (fall 1988).

Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and an outspoken abolitionist, doubts whether the United States, in the defense of NATO, would have risked nuclear attack: "I said to the President, I don't care what happens, if the Soviet Warsaw Pact is, in fact, overrunning West Germany, don't launch nuclear weapons."[59]

The Canberra Commission has misrepresented statements by Henry Kissinger to support its arguments regarding the uselessness of nuclear weapons or, more specifically, the credibility of extended deterrence. According to the Canberra Commission, Kissinger stated in 1979 that he believed the United States would never initiate a nuclear strike against the Soviet Union to protect its allies, no matter what the provocation: "Our European allies should not keep asking us to multiply strategic assurances that we cannot possibly mean or, if we do mean, we should not execute because if we execute we risk the destruction of civilization."[60] The Commission neglects to mention that Kissinger was advocating the development of more limited nuclear options, in order to re-establish the credibility of extended deterrence.[61] That notwithstanding, it must be recognized that doubts about extended deterrence have long existed and are sometimes voiced by those who support a strong U.S. nuclear deterrent.

Blechman and Fisher suggest that the character of international relations is undergoing an irreversible transformation and that the idea of using military force in the

---

[59] Robert McNamara quoted in Schell, 50.

[60] Henry Kissinger, "NATO Defense and the Soviet Threat," *Survival* (November/December 1979): 266 cited in Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 10.

[61] For Kissinger's proposals regarding NATO nuclear policy see, Henry Kissinger, "The Future of NATO," *The Washington Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (autumn, 1979).

settlement of disputes has been delegitimized. Abolitionists assume that there is a general trend towards international cooperation and interdependence and that this trend will continue, fostering the benign political environment that would be necessary for nuclear disarmament to occur. It is not certain, however, that greater cooperation will occur in international politics. History suggests that cycles of cooperation and conflict have taken place, and that – even during periods characterized by high levels of cooperation among a majority of states – evidence of continuing rivalries has been present.

During the five years before the beginning of World War I, Norman Angell's best-selling book, *The Great Illusion*, made claims eerily similar to those espoused by certain abolitionists about the obsolescence of war. Angell asserted that the commercial activities of the world were leading directly away from war. He wrote, "As this tendency is common to all nations...it necessarily means...that the world as a whole is drifting away from the tendency to warfare."[62] He further asserted, "Few of us realize to what extent economic pressure...has replaced physical force in human affairs."[63] Angell's optimistic assertions were made at the beginning of the bloodiest century in history.

Abolitionists assert that the only plausible utility remaining for nuclear weapons is that of deterring the use of nuclear weapons, and even that form of deterrence is suspect. For abolitionists, norms against use that have developed over the last several decades, combined with the indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons and the moral outrage that

---

[62] Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 212-213. This book was first published in November 1909 and was promptly translated and published in several languages.

[63] Ibid, 269.

would be unleashed upon a state using nuclear weapons limit the credibility of nuclear deterrent threats. Abolitionists assert that nuclear weapons have not prevented conventional wars, and nuclear weapons are not effective at deterring the use of CBW.

2. Risk of Accidental or Unauthorized Use

Abolitionists believe that the indefinite deployment of nuclear weapons creates a high risk that they will be detonated through accidental or unauthorized use. The Canberra Commission has written, "The proposition that nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used – accidentally or by decision – defies credibility.... The only complete defense is the elimination of nuclear weapons and assurance that they will never be produced again."[64] For abolitionists, the world has radically changed since the Cold War, yet the basic structure of nuclear plans remains alarmingly similar to Cold-War doctrine. Additionally, many mishaps and accidents involving nuclear weapons occurred during the Cold War. Abolitionists contend that mishaps will continue to occur, and it is possible that one may end in catastrophe. Abolitionists also are concerned about the current situation in Russia. With the deterioration of the Russian military and internal security infrastructure, they argue that the risk of accidental or unauthorized use in Russia is higher than ever.

Abolitionists claim that the basic structure of plans for using nuclear weapons appears largely unchanged from the situation during the Cold War. According to abolitionists, both Russia and the United States continue to emphasize early and large

[64] Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 4.

counter-force strikes. Both also remain capable, despite reductions in numbers and alert levels, of rapidly bringing their nuclear forces to full readiness.[65] Consequently, abolitionists believe, the dangers of initiation of nuclear war by accident, through false warning of attack or technical failure, remain unacceptably high.

Abolitionists assert that the deterioration of the military and internal security infrastructure in Russia increases the risk of accidental or unauthorized use.[66] Additionally amid the rubble of its once mighty conventional military structure, Russia is relying increasingly on nuclear weapons to maintain its security and position in the world. John Steinbrunner, senior fellow in foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution, has noted that Russia has lost segments of the Soviet-era early warning network, and Russia's strategic forces are not able to withstand pre-emptive or preventive attack. He further states that Russia will increase the alert rates of its nuclear forces in response to NATO expansion and conventional force operations. This cannot be done without accepting safety standards lower than a less reactive force could achieve.[67] For abolitionists, the problems in the Russian nuclear system could lead to disaster through accidental detonation of a nuclear weapon, making a NWFW all the more pressing and urgent.

The continued practice of maintaining nuclear weapons systems on high states of alert increases the danger of accidental detonation, according to abolitionists. The avoidance of a major catastrophe over five decades is a credit to those that managed and

---

[65] National Academy of Sciences, 2.

[66] Ibid.

[67] John Steinbrunner, "Russia Faces an Unsafe Reliance on Nukes," *Los Angeles Times* (3 March 1997).

maintained the weapon systems, but accidents did occur. Advocates of a NWFW assert that between 1945 and 1980, approximately 100 accidents were reported, which damaged nuclear weapons and risked unintended detonation.[68] Abolitionists assert that it is likely that there were at least as many serious, unreported accidents, especially in the totalitarian communist regimes that maintained nuclear weapons. Further, abolitionists argue that it should not be presumed that an accidental detonation could be differentiated from an actual attack. An accident might appear to be a nuclear attack upon a missile field. Abolitionists question whether "retaliation" would then occur, possibly igniting a nuclear war.

There are alternatives to outright abolition that stop short of complete elimination of nuclear arsenals. Individuals such as Bruce Blair have advocated universal de-alerting of nuclear weapons. He asserts that this would make safety the primary consideration in nuclear policy, which would more appropriately reflect the geopolitical environment than current nuclear alert postures.[69] Many abolitionists would support universal de-alerting. However, they would consider it only a step toward complete disarmament; it could not be accepted as a substitute. For abolitionists, de-alerted nuclear arsenals still generate the risk that nuclear weapons will one day be used.

---

[68] Schell, 12.

[69] Bruce Blair, *Global Zero Alert for Nuclear Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), 10.

3. The Proliferation Effect of Nuclear Arsenals

Abolitionists assert that the possession of nuclear weapons by some states stimulates nuclear proliferation by others, reducing the security of all.[70] Abolitionists believe that current double standard of the NPT is untenable. Additionally, they assert that a NWFW would delegitimize the possession of nuclear weapons, thereby eliminating prestige as a factor pushing states to proliferate. In a NWFW, nuclear deterrence would be eliminated as a justification to proliferate. In short, the elimination of all nuclear weapons would greatly reduce the incentives for NNWS to develop their own nuclear weapons, according to abolitionists.

Abolitionists assert that no legal or moral argument can justify possession of nuclear weapons by some states while denying nuclear weapons to others. Furthermore, they assert that the existence of the nuclear weapons industry will facilitate the technology transfer that will fuel proliferation.[71] Fisher and Blechman assert that unless the NWS take meaningful efforts to fulfill their obligations under Article VI of the NPT, the treaty may lose any influence to limit proliferation. They argue that, while the East-West competition offered some justification for the "dual-standard" inherent in the NPT, with the end of the Cold War the costs of the two-tier system increasingly outweigh its benefits.[72] For abolitionists, as long as the United States continues to rely on the threat of nuclear use, its efforts to contain the spread of WMD will continue to appear self-serving

---

[70] Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 1.

[71] Jack Steinberger, Essam Galal, and Mikhail Milstein, "A Nuclear Weapon Free World: Is It Desirable? Is It Necessary?" *A Nuclear-Weapon Free World: Desirable? Feasible?* ed. Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, and Bhalchandra Udgaonkar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 59.

[72] Blechman and Fisher, 86.

and insincere, and thus easily resisted by any country desiring to do so. For abolitionists, the health of the NPT is based on continued progress in diminishing the size of nuclear weapons. Without such progress, abolitionists argue, proliferation pressures could significantly increase.

The perceived need for a deterrent nuclear force has caused some states to acquire nuclear weapons, according to abolitionists. For example, once China obtained nuclear weapons, India felt the need to develop nuclear weapons to maintain its national security. Once India was known to have nuclear weapons, Pakistan's nuclear ambitions were heightened.[73] Abolitionists argue that this vicious proliferation circle can be eliminated with a NWFW, where there would be no need to deter against nuclear attack.

Abolitionists argue that the maintenance of nuclear weapons by a few, powerful states – notably the P-5 – fosters a nuclear culture and sends the message that nuclear weapons confer prestige and respect upon the nations that own them. Prestige has been a factor in the decision by many states to develop nuclear weapons. Britain's decision to acquire its own nuclear weapons stemmed from the desire to continue to "eat at the top table" by participating in alliance, particularly nuclear, decision-making as an equal.[74] Additionally, the French have long viewed nuclear weapons as a symbol of independence, particularly from the United States. Abolitionists assert that, if nothing else, nuclear weapons cast a state in a different light in the international community. Many third world despots clamor for the respect they believe nuclear weapons would bestow upon them. Muammar Qaddafi has said, "We should be like the Chinese – poor and riding donkeys,

---

[73] Kaysen, MacNamara, and Rathjens, 37.

[74] Harold Macmillan, quoted in Kaysen, McNamara, and Rathjens, 36.

but respected and possessing an atom bomb."[75] In short, prestige is a factor that has contributed to the decision of many states to proliferate, or attempt to proliferate. It is not certain that it could be eliminated, even in a disarmed world.

The delegitimization of nuclear weapons would further aid in the enforcement of a NWFW, according to abolitionists. Gen. Charles Horner argues, "We have to create an environment in which not having nuclear weapons puts you in a position of strength, not weakness.... It should become a commonly held belief that it is dysfunctional for any one nation to have them, so that you release the force of moral outrage, in addition to self-interest" to enforce a NWFW regime.[76] Thus, abolitionists argue that the delegitimization of nuclear weapons that would occur in a NWFW would embolden the international community to take action against anyone attempting break out of the regime.

Abolitionists are alarmed by the proliferation of nuclear fissile material. The Canberra Commission has written that loose accounting and control have been a major factor in "the development of an already significant illegal trade in fissile material, particularly from sites in the former Soviet Union."[77] For abolitionists, this trade will only make it easier for terrorist or sub-state groups to obtain enough material for a nuclear device. Abolitionists assert that the extremely tight controls upon fissile material, which would characterize a NWFW regime, would deal with this growing problem.

---

[75] Muammar Qadaffi in 1987, quoted in Robert A. Manning, "The Nuclear Age: The Next Chapter," *Foreign Policy* (Dec 22, 1997): 70.

[76] General Charles Horner, Allied Air Forces Commander in the Gulf War, quoted in Schell, 39.

[77] Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 6.

C. FLAWS IN THE ARGUMENTS FOR THE DESIRABILITY OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

An essential element in the abolitionist argument is that nuclear weapons have no role outside of deterring the use of nuclear weapons. This assertion is incorrect. Nuclear weapons have been used for a variety of purposes besides deterring the use of nuclear weapons. A NWFW likely would not be sustainable if there were compelling uses for nuclear weapons outside of this role. The assertion that a NWFW would be safer than a world with nuclear weapons overlooks the potential instabilities and dangers that could present themselves in a disarmed world, such as the danger of re-armament races under crisis conditions. The assertion that proliferation is fostered by the possession of nuclear weapons by some states also overlooks the huge incentives for nuclear proliferation that would exist in a world with few, or no, nuclear weapons. Additionally, it ignores the role that nuclear weapons have played in limiting proliferation.

1. The Utility of Nuclear Weapons

Abolitionists believe that there is no role for nuclear weapons other than nuclear deterrence. It is unlikely that NWS would agree to disarm if they still perceived significant utility from nuclear weapons outside that of deterring the use of nuclear weapons. The argument that this form of deterrence is the sole reason for nuclear weapons is logically impeccable, given its assumptions. If deterrence were the only function of nuclear weapons, there would be no need to possess them in a NWFW. The problem with the argument is that its premise is false: nuclear weapons have been used for a variety of purposes beyond deterrence. A short list of uses for nuclear weapons

would include deterring the employment of other types of WMD (chemical and biological weapons), deterring conventional wars, gaining prestige, exerting political leverage, destroying deeply buried targets, and promoting non-proliferation through extended deterrence.

Abolitionists assert that one of the reasons that nuclear weapons have no military utility is that their use would be morally reprehensible. The moral outrage unleashed by a nuclear attack would make such use counterproductive. Abolitionists assert that the use of nuclear weapons to kill potentially hundreds of millions of human beings would be an unprecedented atrocity. However, many factors must be considered in determining whether any specific use of force (including any type of WMD) is morally and politically defensible. The use of nuclear weapons to prevent aggression, or to retaliate against it, is defensible both politically and morally on a prima facie basis. Robert Jervis has noted that "arguments about morality are difficult to separate from arguments about empirical questions."[78] It is possible that general war between the superpowers was avoided in the Cold War because of each side's nuclear weapons. Additionally, Israelis may believe that the threat posed by their nuclear weapons has prevented attacks that might have threatened their existence. One cannot label nuclear weapons, *per se*, as immoral. As with any weapon, the ways in which the weapon would be used – not the weapon itself – would enable one to classify the morality of that use.

The Gulf War was a case in which nuclear weapons possibly deterred the use of chemical and biological weapons. Despite Saddam Hussein's well-documented use of

[78] Jervis, 124.

chemical weapons against Iran and Iraqi Kurds during the Iran-Iraq War, he never used such weapons against the United States or Israel during the Gulf War. During Operation Desert Shield, the United States signaled to Iraq that WMD use would be met with overwhelming retaliation. On January 9, 1991, Secretary of State Baker made a purposefully blunt point to Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in Geneva. Secretary Baker said, "If the conflict involves your use of chemical or biological weapons against our forces, the American people will demand vengeance. We have the means to extract it."[79] After the war, Iraqi officials declared that Saddam Hussein was deterred from using WMD because U.S. warnings were interpreted as threats of nuclear retaliation.[80]

Several senior U.S. officials have stated and written that the United States would never actually have employed nuclear weapons.[81] This would tend to bolster abolitionist claims that nuclear weapons have no utility in countering other WMD. Yet, what was important for deterrence was what Saddam Hussein believed. Without the American or Israeli nuclear arsenal, he would not have had a reason to fear a nuclear attack in retaliation for CBW use. Additionally, while Defense Secretary Richard Cheney has stated that nuclear weapons use was never seriously considered, he also noted that had CBW been used against coalition forces, a nuclear response might have been considered.[82]

---

[79] James A. Baker III, *Politics of Diplomacy* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 359, cited in Keith Payne, *Post-Cold War Requirements for U.S. Nuclear Deterrence Policy* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, March 1998), 14.

[80] Payne, *Post-Cold War Requirements for U.S. Nuclear Deterrence Policy,* 14.

[81] Robert G. Joseph, "Nuclear Deterrence and Regional Proliferators," *The Washington Quarterly* (summer 1997), 170.

[82] Ibid.

The Cold War demonstrated that nuclear weapons are effective at least in instilling caution among nuclear powers, limiting conflicts that could have progressed to full-scale conventional, or even nuclear, war. Some believe that the fear of non-nuclear total war would still have been sufficient to prevent a Third World War (although similar arguments were made after 1918, reinforced by the prospect of poisoned gas being used against cities). What is quite implausible is to extract nuclear weapons from contemporary European, Asian and Middle Eastern history and to assert that everything else would have been the same.[83] The fear of nuclear war probably made at least some contribution to the historically remarkable absence of war between major powers during an awkward and abrasive half-century.[84]

Although the abolitionist movement is an international movement, its primary arguments seem to be peculiarly American-centric. Countries such as Russia, China, France, and Israel continue to maintain their arsenals for reasons different from America's primary rationale of deterrence. Americans may no longer see any value in maintaining nuclear forces to make up for conventional disadvantages because the conventional balance has shifted in their direction. However, Russia relies upon its nuclear weapons more than ever because of the disastrous state of its conventional military forces. Russians are reeling from profound internal upheaval, and are conscious of wide instability along their borders. Consequently, Russia has been reshaping defense

[83] Lawrence Freedman, "From Marginalisation to Elimination?" *Survival* 39, no. 1 (spring 1997): 187.

[84] Quinlan, 60.

doctrine in ways that tend to put more emphasis on nuclear weapons.[85] For example, statements by the Russian Defense Ministry indicate that in 1993 Russia backed away from the 1982 Soviet no-first-use pledge. Furthermore, Russia's nuclear arsenal constitutes the one unmistakable claim Russia now has to Great Power status. It is unrealistic to expect that any Russian leader would be interested in abandoning the security and political importance that nuclear-weapon status confers.[86]

Israel is not a declared nuclear power, but it possesses possibly hundreds of nuclear weapons. Israel derives many benefits from its nuclear arsenal. David Ben-Gurion seems to have urged the development of a nuclear arsenal as part of the state's efforts to acquire a qualitative edge over its quantitatively superior Arab adversaries.[87] Nuclear weapons provide Israel with deterrence against conventional attack and against other forms of WMD. Nuclear weapons represent the ultimate security guarantee for the Israeli state. Israel will almost certainly not abandon this guarantee, regardless of whether other states elect to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

France has made a huge investment of political capital, scientific effort, and financial resources in building a nuclear capability. The French are proud of their nuclear weapons, as demonstrated in the controversial episode of the final nuclear test series in the South Pacific.[88] Prestige seems one of the main benefits that France receives from its nuclear weapons. It is possible that in a NWFW, nuclear weapons would be

---

[85] Ibid, 62.

[86] Ibid, 63.

[87] Shai Feldman, "Nuclear Weapons in Israel's Security Policy," *Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 95.

[88] Quinlan, 63.

delegitimized to the extent that any prestige in owning them would cease to exist. Still, France is a modern, Western, industrial country that believes its nuclear arsenal conveys a degree of prestige and influence it would not otherwise possess. It is unlikely to support any efforts toward near-term comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

Russia, France, and Israel use their nuclear arsenals for a variety of purposes. In a NWFW, incentives would remain that might encourage a country to violate the regime and build its own arsenal. A monopolist nuclear power or a state locked in total war with a non-nuclear rival might find many uses for nuclear weapons.[89] States use nuclear weapons for more than just nuclear deterrence. It is unlikely that they will give up their nuclear arsenals for the nebulous benefits of a NWFW.

2. The Safety of Nuclear Arsenals

Abolitionists are concerned about accidental or unauthorized use of a nuclear device. They also believe that nuclear weapons eventually will be used. Abolitionists overlook the fact, however, that measures short of disarmament could greatly reduce the risk of a nuclear accident. The danger of nuclear accidents or unauthorized use in a NWFW could be worse than today. Additionally, abolitionists overlook the heightened possibility of purposeful use at very low numbers of nuclear weapons, because fear of severe retaliation would no longer instill caution among decision-makers.

Abolitionists overlook that fact that many of the problems they address have attracted considerable attention. The problem is not ignorance of the risks of nuclear

[89] Freedman, "From Marginalisation to Elimination?" 188.

accident, but of how best to reduce them.[90] The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, for example, is an attempt to help Russia keep its arsenal secure. In the United States, policies such as the Stockpile Stewardship Program and the removal of all nuclear weapons from surface ships, attack submarines, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. Marines have greatly reduced the risk of nuclear accidents.[91] Furthermore, the alert rates of some U.S. and Russian nuclear forces have been reduced since the Cold War.

It is possible that disarmament could increase the probability of accidental and unauthorized use. If disarmament broke down and a rearmament race ensued, states would not likely give priority to the inclusion of safety mechanisms in their new nuclear weapons or to recreating an effective command and control system. Consequently, the arsenals of rearming states could be more susceptible to unintentional use than today's nuclear forces.

Abolitionists overlook the heightened possibility of purposeful use in a NWFW regime. Janne E. Nolan notes in one of the background papers prepared for the Canberra Commission, "A realistic strategy for nuclear elimination must contend with the perception that the potential for global and regional military instability could be highest during a period of transition to very small numbers of nuclear weapons."[92] Additionally, the danger posed by re-armament races in a crisis environment could be much greater

---

[90] Ibid, 186.

[91] Slocombe, "Is There a Role for Nuclear Deterrence?" *NATO Review* (November/December 1997): 25.

[92] Janne E. Nolan, "Global and Regional Security in the Transitional Period," *Report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons: Background Papers* (Canberra: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, August 1996), 190-195, cited in Freedman, "Nuclear Weapons: From Marginalisation to Elimination?" 189.

than any current risk of deliberate use.[93] If relations sour following disarmament, then states could attempt to rearm. Nuclear war could be more likely during an unstable rearmament phase, which might lack the restraining effect of deterrence, than in a mature nuclear world. Consequently, disarmament could increase the probability of deliberate nuclear war.

Many factors could cause a nuclear re-armament race to be extremely dangerous. The race may show that the disarmament regime was poorly designed, allowing one state to gain a nuclear monopoly. The nuclear state might then use its nuclear advantage to compel the end of a conventional war, to destroy the adversary's military advantage, or to destroy the adversary's nuclear-rearmament capability. Alternatively, the rearmament race might produce uncertainty about the status of nuclear capabilities. A state, mistakenly believing that it had a monopoly, might use nuclear weapons only to learn that its adversary had also been able to rebuild its WMD quickly. Once rearmament begins, the best scenario is that all countries will be deterred from using nuclear weapons by the redeployment of nuclear weapons or the promise of forthcoming deployments by others, thus returning safely to a nuclear world.[94]

On balance, the safety benefits of moving toward radically lowered levels of nuclear weapons – or hypothetically, zero nuclear weapons – must be weighed against the security benefits that we continue to derive from nuclear deterrence.[95] This is especially

---

[93] Glaser, 113.

[94] Ibid, 115.

[95] Congress, Senate, Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence, 12 Feb, 1997, statement by Walter B. Slocombe, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, 7.

true when one considers the potentially unsafe practices that could result from breakout and subsequent rearmament races. While abolitionists argue that people are incapable of avoiding accidental or unauthorized detonation with the indefinite deployment of nuclear weapons, they believe that people can accomplish the equally challenging task of eliminating all nuclear weapons and verifying and ensuring compliance with a NWFW regime.

3. The Roles of Nuclear Weapons in Inhibiting Proliferation

Abolitionists state that the possession of nuclear arsenals by some states stimulates proliferation by others, reducing the security of all. A more compelling case would be that proliferant states acquire nuclear weapons not because others have them but primarily for other reasons – to counter regional adversaries, to further regional ambitions, and to enhance their status among their neighbors.[96] Additionally, nuclear weapons have other affects that tend to inhibit proliferation. Extended deterrence has strongly inhibited many Asian and European allies of the United States, who possess the technological capability to acquire nuclear weapons, from building their own nuclear arsenals. In a NWFW, enormous proliferation pressure could develop. The marginal utility of a single weapon would skyrocket in a NWFW, providing significant incentive for states to develop their own nuclear arsenals.

The assertion that nuclear arsenals of some states beget proliferation by others is a generalization that does not adequately account for all the incentives leading a state to

[96] Walter Slocombe, "Is There Still a Role for Nuclear Deterrence?" 25.

proliferate. Brent Scowcroft notes that, "Aspiring nuclear nations seek nuclear weapons because of their own pressing security concerns, not because of concern over nuclear balance of power."[97] Pakistan is a case in point. The loss of East Pakistan after the 1971 Bangladesh war combined with the belief that Pakistani military capabilities were overpowered by the Indian military led President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to order the Pakistani scientific community to begin developing nuclear arms. Bhutto believed a Pakistani nuclear weapon capability would increase Pakistan's security. India's 1974 test did not cause, but rather increased Pakistan's nuclear resolve.[98]

Extended deterrence has limited the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Many allies of the United States that currently benefit from U.S. extended deterrence could have developed their own nuclear arsenals. Countries such as South Korea, Japan, Germany, and Turkey have had significant security concerns that could have prompted them to develop nuclear weapons. Many countries currently under the U.S. nuclear umbrella still perceive a strong threat to their national security. Until those threats disappear, reasons to possess or seek access to nuclear weapons will remain. Removal of the U.S. nuclear guarantees could potentially push these states to develop their own nuclear capability. Thus, significant improvements in the international security environment would be required before a NWFW could be considered feasible.

---

[97] Andrew Goodpaster and Brent Scowcroft, "The Feasibility of Eliminating Nuclear Weapons," *Transforming Nuclear Deterrence*, ed. Hans Binnendijk and James Goodby (Washington, D.C.: National University Press, 1997), 3-4.

[98] Devin Hagerty, "The Power of Suggestion: Opaque Proliferation, Existential Deterrence, and the South Asian Nuclear Arms Competition," *The Proliferation Puzzle: Why Nuclear Weapons Spread (and What Results)*, ed. Zachary Davis and Benjamin Frankel (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 263.

Another factor affecting proliferation in a NWFW is that the marginal utility of a single weapon could skyrocket if warhead numbers approached zero. As James Schlesinger, U.S. Secretary of Defense under President Nixon, noted, "The smaller [the number] of nuclear weapons the greater is the premium for having just a few."[99] In today's environment, a state faces the daunting challenge of mobilizing substantial financial and technical resources to support a clandestine nuclear program. The handful of weapons that might result from such a venture would be dwarfed by thousands of superior U.S. nuclear weapons and thousands more held by other NWS. In a NWFW, however, a mere handful of crude weapons would be perceived as an arsenal bestowing Great Power status.[100]

If a country with the capability to develop nuclear weapons found itself in a war in which its very existence was threatened, it would be compelled to consider developing nuclear weapons. The result could be dangerous re-armament races under crisis conditions. Unless anarchy no longer characterized international relations, there would be incentives for states to re-arm in a NWFW. Until such changes occurred, making war no longer possible, it is doubtful that an abolitionist regime could be sustainable.

Abolitionists assert that if a nation were to break out of a NWFW regime, it could face the combined military and economic retribution of the world. According to Gen. Charles Horner, "ten nuclear weapons are not going to destroy the United States, Russia,

---

[99] PBS's *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer* (1996), quoted in Schell, 33.

[100] Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services, Committee on Governmental Affairs (12 February 1997), Statement of Richard Perle, 5.

or China. It's going to provoke a very serious response from those nations if they are nuclear-free. Their outrage would be such that nobody would dare whip back the curtain."[101] However, why should the United States undermine its national security by disarming and allowing itself to be threatened by a nuclear adversary? Considering the herculean effort that was required to build the coalition against Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War, economically or militarily dismantling a country is not as easy as Horner implies. In a NWFW, it would not be easy, or necessarily wise, for the United States to sacrifice potentially hundreds of thousands of soldiers in a war fought for non-proliferation. Such sacrifice seems especially unlikely when one considers that the most effective response to such a problem could be the reconstitution of a nuclear arsenal. Some abolitionists concede this point. Blechman and Fisher have written, "If American citizens have been reluctant to support interventions in relatively benign military environments like Haiti, how much more reluctant will they be when U.S. forces face a real threat of attack by nuclear weapons?"[102] Relying on an international effort to disarm a breakout nation in a NWFW is a dangerous premise on which to base the desirability or feasibility of disarmament.

Disarmament is self-defeating because it would lead ultimately to proliferation. Even supposing disarmament could be achieved, it would not likely survive a severe crisis or a major war. A crisis would be the true test of disarmament, because nuclear war

[101] Gen Charles Horner quoted in Schell, 40.

[102] Blechman and Fisher, 6.

is unlikely to occur during peacetime. As political conditions deteriorate, disarmament would probably collapse into a rearmament race.[103]

4. The Infeasibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Despite significant uncertainty about whether the course they recommend will prove feasible, abolitionists urge us to undertake a serious commitment to eliminating nuclear weapons. Richard Perle has said, "I should have thought that embarking on a policy the feasibility of which cannot be shown is a most doubtful and risky way to shape our future security."[104] Assuming disarmament could be attained, verification of an abolition agreement could never be rigorous enough to guarantee against breakout. Although nuclear weapons may be destroyed, the knowledge of how to build them will remain.

The United States has no incentive to place itself in grave peril by disarming in a world where other countries could retain a few weapons, or quickly reconstitute a nuclear force. Perle has stated that "every state able to do so would cheat. But we – perhaps alone – would not.... The actual, real world result would be the unilateral nuclear disarmament of the United States."[105] Unilateral disarmament would undermine national security to a greater degree than any present risk of accidental, unauthorized, or purposeful use of nuclear weapons.

---

[103] Glaser, 115.

[104] Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services, Committee on Governmental Affairs (12 Feb, 1997), statement of Richard Perle, 2.

[105] Ibid, 4.

Abolitionists concede that "the elimination of nuclear weapons will not be possible without the development of adequate verification."[106] They assert that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is a process that will likely take place over the course of twenty to thirty years, and will generate much controversy. Abolitionists maintain, however, that an effective verification regime is possible. Until fissile material can be detected with a high degree of certainty at great distances and through thick protective barriers, however, no adequate verification regime is possible.

D. CONCLUSION

The abolitionists advance three main reasons to support the desirability of nuclear disarmament: nuclear weapons lack utility; the risk of accidental or unauthorized use is unacceptably high; and the possession of nuclear weapons by some countries fosters proliferation. Each element of this argument is flawed. Nuclear weapons can be used for many purposes, including deterrence of chemical, biological, or conventional aggression. As long as NWS perceive benefits from nuclear weapons outside of nuclear deterrence, a NWFW is not attainable. In examining the risk of accidental or unauthorized use, abolitionists overlook the fact that severe reductions in nuclear arsenals might minimize or eliminate nuclear deterrence, creating greater incentives to conduct pre-emptive or preventive attacks. Additionally, a nuclear re-armament race resulting from a crisis in a NWFW would be an extremely dangerous situation with a high risk of purposeful or accidental use of nuclear weapons. In assessing the negative impact of nuclear arsenals upon proliferation, abolitionists examine only one element of the debate, discounting

[106] Canberra Commission, pt. 1, 16.

those factors of nuclear arsenals that inhibit proliferation. Perhaps the greatest flaw in the abolitionist arguments for a NWFW is they overlook the fact that as numbers approached zero the marginal utility of a single weapon would skyrocket. Significant proliferation pressure would result, likely reversing any progress toward disarmament that had been made to that point.

IV: THE FEASIBILITY OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The European waste-paper basket is the place to which all treaties eventually find their way, and a thing which can any day be placed in a waste-paper basket is a poor thing on which to hang our national safety.[107]

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the main arguments for the feasibility of eliminating nuclear weapons. Specifically, the Stimson Center's plan for phased nuclear disarmament is examined. For nuclear disarmament to be successful, a reliable verification regime with unprecedented authority would be necessary. Equally important, however, would be the level of transparency and trust that would permeate the international environment. Many problems make nuclear disarmament infeasible in the near term. The Baruch Plan failed because of the inability of the Soviet Union and the United States to agree on verification and enforcement measures. These issues remain among the chief reasons why nuclear disarmament is not possible in the near future.

Each group advocating abolition has its own distinctive attributes, conclusions, and recommendations. However, the broad themes in nuclear disarmament proposals and associated verification regimes are similar. The phased approach proposed by Michael Brown of the Stimson Center is the case in point analyzed in this chapter.[108] It is representative of other proposals, and it asserts that it does not mandate a radical

---

[107] Major Stewart Murray, *Future Peace of the Anglo-Saxons* (London: Watts and Co.), cited in Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 41.

[108] Michael Brown, *Phased Nuclear Disarmament and US Defense Policy, Occasional Paper No. 30* (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 1996), accessed on 5 July 1998, available from http://www.stimson.org/zeronuke/index.html.

transformation of the world political environment. For Brown, complete nuclear disarmament should be achieved in four distinct phases. Each phase has a goal for total number of nuclear weapons in any one country: 2,000 in Phase I, several hundred in Phase II, dozens in Phase III, and complete elimination by the end of Phase IV.

The Canberra Commission does not define a precise timeframe for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It recognizes the importance of establishing the necessary confidence in the verification regime that would be required to take the final step to complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Canberra Commission advocates a general process of defining agreed targets and guidelines, which would lead to the ultimate objective of final elimination of nuclear weapons, at the earliest possible time.[109] The Canberra Commission Report is broadly in agreement with the Stimson Center's plan for phased reduction and advocates measures such as control of fissile materials, ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and no-first-use pledges.

The National Academy of Sciences also has proposed a plan for phased nuclear reductions. However, this proposal aims only to draw down arsenals to a few hundred weapons per country and then to assess the possibilities for further reductions and possible prohibition of nuclear weapons.[110] A limit of a few hundred weapons corresponds to Phase II of Brown's plan.

---

[109] Canberra Commission, pt. 2, 12.

[110] National Academy of Sciences, 7.

B. THE ABOLITIONIST PLAN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

1. Phase I

Abolitionists assert that Phase I would be comparatively easy to bring about and would require minimal changes to current U.S. defense policy. Fundamental changes to the nuclear triad, for example, would not be required.[111] In Phase I, which abolitionists assert could begin immediately, strategic nuclear weapons in the United States and Russia would be reduced via the third Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START III) to 2,000 in each country. Bans would be initiated on nuclear testing and the production of fissile material. No-first-use policies would be declared. Abolitionists argue that the United States would still possess overwhelming nuclear forces capable of providing roughly the same level of deterrence that current forces provide. Additionally, they argue that conventional forces would not be significantly affected by such reductions.

A problem with Phase I is that it does not adequately address Russia's current situation. Phase I assumes the completion of START III reductions when it is not certain START II will ever be approved by the Russian Duma. Russia's increasing reliance upon nuclear weapons would be a major obstacle that any disarmament plan would have to overcome. Additionally, it is possible that a NWS in the future, facing problems similar to those of Russia today, would not desire to adhere to a nuclear disarmament agreement. Forcibly denuclearizing an established nuclear power is an issue that is not addressed by abolitionists. This is likely because there could be no nuclear disarmament without full compliance and cooperation by all NWS.

---

[111] Brown, 2.

2. Phase II

In Phase II, abolitionists propose to reduce nuclear weapons to no more than several hundred weapons in any NWS. Implementation of this phase would be much more challenging than Phase I, because it would involve at least five nuclear powers.[112] Brown does not address whether non-declared nuclear powers such as Israel or the states that have recently demonstrated that they are NWS (e.g., India and Pakistan) would be involved in the negotiations for Phase II implementation. It is highly unlikely, however, that the NWS would be willing to draw down to hundreds of weapons while states like India, Pakistan, and Israel would be unaffected by Phase II agreements.

Brown contends that Phase II reduction would not pose significant or serious problems for extended deterrence: "Threats to U.S. allies would probably be few, allied conventional forces would presumably continue to be robust, and the U.S. nuclear arsenal would still be in place as a backstop against aggression by a nuclear power."[113] Again, Russia is overlooked as a potential threat to U.S. allies in Europe – to say nothing of China as a possible menace to U.S. allies in Asia.

Phase II would involve major changes in U.S. nuclear doctrine. The nuclear triad probably would have to be jettisoned, and the current policy of extended deterrence would require significant revision to maintain credibility. Current U.S. force levels in Europe, for

[112] Ibid, 20.

[113] Ibid, 22.

example, range from 480 to 700 gravity bombs.[114] Severe reductions, or elimination, of nuclear weapons in Europe would be required for the United States to reduce its total arsenal to the Phase II ceiling of several hundred weapons. Historically, U.S. allies have valued highly the physical presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe. Without actual weapons on the ground, U.S. pledges to use nuclear weapons to defend Europe might lack credibility.[115]

With only a few hundred weapons in the arsenal, there would be a significant redistribution of assets and a corresponding change in strategy. Basing their analysis on a distorted picture of U.S. strategic nuclear policy, abolitionists maintain that what they describe as a historic emphasis on pre-emption, launch-on-warning, and prompt retaliation would have to be replaced by a commitment to riding out attacks and to delayed responses.[116] Abolitionists reason, however, that "one does not need 'assured destruction' capabilities...unless one is dealing with a totalitarian power bent on aggression and conquest."[117] Ultimately, abolitionists contend, a capability to conduct a

---

[114] David S. Yost, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Prospects and Priorities*, Future Roles Series Paper #7 (Livermore, CA: Sandia National Laboratories Defense Programs, 1996), 3. For the estimate of 700 weapons Yost cites: Alan Riding, "NATO Will Cut Atom Weapons for Aircraft Use," New York Times, 18 October 1991, A1. For the estimate of 480 he cites Robert S. Norris and William M. Arkin, "U.S. Nuclear Weapon Locations, 1995," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (November/December 1995): 74-75.

[115] Ibid, 2.

[116] Brown, 18. Brown seems here to mischaracterize U.S. nuclear policy, which does not rely on concepts such as pre-emption and launch-on-warning.

[117] Ibid, 19.

retaliatory strike consisting of a few dozen weapons would be sufficient to deter potential aggressors from "international adventurism."[118]

Achieving agreement on Phase II limits and on procedures to reach such limits would be difficult. Concurrent with Phase II reductions would be attempts to shape the political environment so that further reductions, as envisioned by abolitionists under Phase III, would be possible. Without a very cooperative and benign environment, fear could exist that one country would retain numbers of weapons beyond the limits of the phased reduction. Thus, arriving at such low levels would be much more challenging than abolitionists acknowledge.

A central requirement for the success of Phase II implementation would be an adequate verification regime. Among other issues, verifying the accuracy of declared stocks of warheads and fissile materials – and ensuring that no warheads or fissile materials had been concealed – would be crucial and difficult aspects of disarmament.[119] Verification thus assumes significant and increasing importance from Phase II onward. Verification problems are addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Canberra Commission, Annex A, 2.

3. Phase III

A primary requirement for initiation of Phase III would be "relatively benign political relations among the major powers."[120] Phase III reductions call for no more than several dozen weapons in any state. All known or suspected nuclear states would have to be involved in Phase III negotiations. The non-proliferation regime would have to be strong and dependable by then. Questions remaining about the number of nuclear weapons and the amount of weapons-grade fissile material produced worldwide would have to be resolved. Michael Brown of the Stimson Center claims that any changes required of U.S. defense policy in Phase III would already have been dealt with in Phase II. Nonproliferation and verification regimes would be essential to successful reductions in Phase III.

Despite the Stimson Center's requirement for a plan that would be effective in both benign political environments as well as contentious or adversarial environments, Phase III is explicitly dependent upon "relatively benign political relations among the superpowers." With allowances for no more than several dozen weapons per nation, it is difficult to imagine a nation allowing an adversary, or an ally of an adversary, unhindered access to its most valuable and sensitive defense sites. For example, it is unlikely that India would allow Pakistan or China unrestricted access to its reactor facilities, weapons storage areas, and research laboratories. The South Asian situation is hardly unique in being greatly complicated by domestic politics, security concerns, and prestige factors. It

---

[120] Brown, 23.

should be expected that such factors would assert themselves and interfere with the establishment of a NWFW regime.

4. Phase IV

Abolitionists acknowledge that complete nuclear disarmament would have to involve extraordinarily stringent non-proliferation and verification regimes and safeguards. This would require infringements upon state sovereignty that many states would find objectionable.[121] It would also require a fundamental shift in U.S. defense policy. The United States would have to abandon its commitments to protect allies with extended deterrence. Nuclear deterrence would cease to be an element of defense strategy for any nuclear power.

In addition to the shift in defense policy required away from the U.S. triad in Phase II, the most challenging phases of nuclear disarmament would lie in Phases III and IV. Built into the program for phased reductions would be implicit requirements for states to surrender aspects of sovereignty to provide for effective verification.

In analyzing the prospects for phased disarmament, abolitionist organizations such as the Stimson Center acknowledge that one must consider both benign scenarios in which political relations among the great powers are good and less benign scenarios in which relations among the great powers are contentious or adversarial.[122] Abolitionists contend that even in an antagonistic climate, reduction to zero nuclear weapons would be

---

[121] Ibid, 27.

[122] Ibid, 4.

possible. However, abolitionists do not adequately address what actions would have to be taken if confidence-building measures failed. The mechanism of safeguards is reasonable so long as it is respected. The problem is that it can be abrogated unilaterally.[123]

Abolitionists argue that a significant benefit of the phased approach is that as progress is being made incrementally, political confidence in the disarmament process will increase, and technical barriers facing the regime can be resolved. For abolitionists, phased disarmament begins the nuclear states along the path to eliminating nuclear weapons, and it does so in a graduated and reasonable manner. Abolitionists assert that problems could be resolved as they would be encountered, but in a world where dramatic reductions would have already taken place. For abolitionists, any movement toward zero is better than the status quo. They argue that it is better to begin now, even with uncertainties regarding the ultimate feasibility of a NWFW, than to remain fixed in a world with thousands of nuclear weapons.[124]

C. VERIFICATION OF A NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT REGIME

Abolitionists such as Steven Fetter contend that while "no verification regime could provide absolute assurance [against cheating], verification could be good enough to reduce remaining uncertainties to a level that might be tolerable in a more transparent and

---

[123] H. Gruem, "Safeguards and Tamuz: Setting the Record Straight," *IAEA Bulletin* 23, no. 4 (1981): 10-14, quoted in Avner Cohen, "The Lessons of Osirak and the American Counterproliferation Debate," *International Perspectives on Counterproliferation*, ed. Mitchell Reiss and Herald Mueller (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1995), 86.

[124] The National Academy of Sciences, 8.

trusting international environment."[125] Abolitionists contend that verification would work in tandem with political confidence-building measures and transparency to safeguard against cheating, or breakout, in a NWFW regime. They assert that societal verification, or citizen reporting, would further inhibit breakout. Present throughout the various phases of reduction to zero nuclear weapons are increasingly stringent requirements for effective verification measures. For nuclear force reductions to occur, adequate verification is essential. Unless countries have confidence that all other nations would adhere to the terms of a NWFW regime, they are unlikely to submit to a disarmament agreement. A primary requirement for any feasible NWFW regime would be adequate measures to detect cheating.

Abolitionists acknowledge that no verification regime would be sufficient to prevent breakout. For example, while it is agreed that safeguards are an extremely important measure in any non-proliferation regime, many, such as Richard Kokoski, question how effective they can be, especially in uncovering clandestine nuclear weapon activity.[126] The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has acknowledged that there are currently no technical tools to detect clandestine weapons activities at undeclared facilities.[127] Conducting clandestine nuclear activities at undeclared facilities would likely be a primary means through which a country would attempt breakout. If

---

[125] Steven Fetter, *Verifying Nuclear Disarmament* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1996), accessed on 5 July 1998, available from http://www.stimson.org, 1.

[126] Richard Kokoski, *Technology and the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 193.

[127] C. Paul Robinson and Kathleen C. Bailey, "To Zero or Not to Zero: A US Perspective on Nuclear Disarmament," *Security Dialogue* 28, no. 2 (1997): 156.

such facilities posed significant problems, then confidence in any verification regime would be limited.

Abolitionists assert that societal verification would be a useful tool in detecting cheating and inhibiting breakout. Societal verification would be defined as citizens notifying appropriate international authorities of suspected breaches of a NWFW treaty.[128] Rewards could be granted to individuals providing information to authorities. Additionally, a NWFW treaty would include articles to protect citizens who report violations from receiving retribution by their home country.

A problem with reliance upon societal verification is that it would likely be least effective in places where it would be most required, totalitarian states. The level of secrecy attainable in totalitarian states would limit the ability of citizens to learn of an unauthorized nuclear program. Abolitionists would then rely upon actual workers in a covert nuclear program. The effective enforcement of a NWFW regime, however, could not rely upon such workers to signal to an international organization the violations by their country. The workers would not only be sacrificing their careers, but also possibly their lives and the lives of their families. Additionally, the workers in such an important and sensitive program likely would not believe that they were doing anything wrong. Indeed, they might be convinced that they were supporting their country's security.

---

[128] Joseph Rotblat, "Societal Verification," *A Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World*, ed. Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, Bhalchandra Udgaonkar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 105.

Abolitionists acknowledge that technological measures alone would not be adequate to safeguard treaties aiming at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.[129] However, they vary significantly in the degree of reliance they place on technology. Steven Fetter hedges considerably regarding the ability of a verification regime to adequately prevent breakout:

> Although the possibility of rapid breakout will be ever present in modern industrial society, verification could provide the steady reassurance that would be necessary to dissipate residual fears of cheating. Verification will never be so effective that it can substitute for good relations between nations, but it can play an essential role in consolidating the trust that is necessary to support the ongoing process of reducing nuclear arsenals, perhaps all the way down to zero.[130]

This statement poses significant problems for the abolition argument. It is difficult to imagine that states would readily eliminate their nuclear arsenals while believing that "the possibility of rapid breakout will be ever present." As with most proposals for verification, Fetter's statement has the implicit requirement for "good relations between nations" or at least some mechanism of transparency, despite claims to the contrary. Unless relations between NWS are similar in nature to those between the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, no regime is likely to provide the degree of confidence required to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Certain abolitionists, such as Josef Rotblat, believe that technology is currently available that will provide adequate verification: "Even at the present state of the art, technical verification is sufficiently developed to protect treaties aiming at reducing

---

[129] Rotblat, 104.

[130] Fetter, 1.

nuclear arms down to very low levels, of the order of a few percent of the present arsenals."[131] The problem with this argument is that a small percentage of current nuclear arsenals potentially represents a huge number of nuclear weapons. Graham Allison and his colleagues at Harvard University describe the magnitude of the Russian nuclear accounting problem:

> Consider the implications of a four percent error margin in Russian inventory accuracy: since Russia possesses on the order of 100,000 critical masses worth of fissile material, some 4,000 weapons' worth of fissile material would be floating unaccounted for in the margins of Russia's inventory accuracy. Even if Russia's material control and accounting system were 99 percent accurate (a level of inventory accuracy almost never achieved even by Western corporations), this would leave 1,000 weapons' worth of fissile material unaccounted for.[132]

Thus, sufficiently accounting for and verifying all of Russia's fissile material, even in the unlikely event that the Russians totally cooperated, would be nearly impossible. If it were possible that Russia had "misplaced" the fissile material required for 1,000 nuclear weapons, it is unlikely that any NWS would willingly disarm.

Accounting for fissile material is not the only challenge that Russia could pose for a NWFW regime. The United States does not know how many nuclear weapons or warheads the Soviet Union/Russia has built, nor the size of Russia's current stockpile. If Russia were to cheat and declare a lesser amount of nuclear weapons than it actually possesses, there would be no way to detect or prove the discrepancy.[133] There are no

---

[131] Rotblat, 104.

[132] Graham T. Allison, Owen R. Cote, Jr., Richard A. Falkenrath, and Steven E. Miller, *Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy: Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 38.

[133] Robinson and Bailey, 154.

national technical means to locate hidden nuclear weapons. Even with unrestricted inspections, it would be impossible to find all hidden nuclear materials. There would be no way to pinpoint where to look, and materials could be secretly transferred with little to no probability of detection. David Kay, team leader on several inspections for the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM), has stated that "we should not underestimate the difficulty that exists in reaching judgements of non-compliance with arms control obligations."[134] The continuing problem of verifying the elimination of Iraq's WMD programs – a defeated country inspected under conditions of unprecedented intrusiveness – indicates the great difficulty inherent in attempts to verify the compliance of an unwilling country in a NWFW regime.

The high degree of error possible in estimating Russian warhead inventories was highlighted in 1993, when Viktor Mikhailov, the Director of Russia's Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom), stated that the Russian arsenal had peaked at 45,000 warheads in the mid-1980s – 12,000 more than generally believed.[135] If Russia cheated, it would be doubtful that violations of a NWFW regime could be detected in a reasonable amount of time.

For abolitionists such as Gen. Andrew Goodpaster and Gen. Lee Butler, a major reason for the phased approach is that it would provide time to develop remedies for the gaps that currently exist in technical verification capabilities: "Because phased

---

[134] David Kay, "Detecting Cheating on Non-Proliferation Regimes: Lessons From the Iraqi Experience," unpublished paper, Science Applications International Corporation, 23 February 1998, 12.

[135] William J. Broad, "Russian Says Soviet Atom Arsenal Was Larger Than West Estimated," *New York Times* (26 September 1993): 1, quoted in Robinson and Bailey, 154.

withdrawal and destruction of nuclear weapons from all countries' arsenals would take many years...to accomplish, time will be available – for work on technical problems...."[136] This reasoning assumes that technology will favor only the NWFW regime, and not potential cheaters.

It must be presumed that cheaters would have the initiative. No countermeasures to their advanced concealment methods could be devised until or unless these methods were discovered. Furthermore, the use of underground and hidden facilities might never be countered by detection measures. The Russian underground facility at Yamantau mountain, the purpose of which Moscow has refused to clarify, is an example of such a facility.[137]

D. REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Abolitionists assert that strong cooperation among nations will compensate for deficiencies in verification capabilities by fostering trust through transparency and confidence-building measures. Abolitionists further argue that regional collaboration could help smooth the path to ultimate disarmament by binding smaller countries together in pursuit of a common goal.[138]

---

[136] General Andrew Goodpaster and General Lee Butler, *Joint Statement on Reduction of Nuclear Weapons Arsenals: Declining Utility, Continuing Risks* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1996), accessed on 4 June 1998, available from http://www.stimson.org/generals/j-state.html, 5.

[137] Michael R. Gordon, "Despite Cold War's End, Russia Keeps Building a Secret Complex," *New York Times* (16 April 1996): 1, quoted in Robinson and Bailey, 150.

[138] Shalheveth Freier, "International Security in a NWFW," *A Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World*, ed. Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, Bhalchandra Udgaonkar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 151.

International cooperation of the kind envisioned by abolitionists is not a very strong foundation upon which to base nuclear disarmament. It is true that war between countries such as Germany and France is unthinkable today, despite the centuries of animosity and war that ended in 1945. However, Israel and its neighbors are possibly generations away from such good relations. Another example of a bitter rivalry is the current relationship between India and Pakistan, but in this case, it is a rivalry between two nuclear-weapon states that tested nuclear warhead designs in May 1998.[139] These nuclear tests have further deepened the antagonism and mistrust between the two countries and have created further barriers to nuclear disarmament.

Analysts such as Samuel Huntington see a future in which not only will unprecedented cooperation be less likely, but in which civilizations will clash with each other along cultural fault lines. "These fault lines will be the battle lines of the future."[140] Thus, it is a rather large assumption that the progress in international cooperation over the next several years will be sufficient to compensate for the technical insufficiencies of a NWFW verification regime.

Additionally, dependence upon multinational cooperation creates a dilemma for a NWFW. Sharing information with many states about the enforcement of a NWFW could, in itself, reveal information to a potential cheater. Abolitionists call for increased reliance upon the UN Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency

---

[139] "The Subcontinent Goes Nuclear," *New York Times* (29 May 1998), accessed on 20 Nov 98, available from http://www.nytimes.com.

[140] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (summer 1993): 22.

(IAEA) for enforcement and verification of a NWFW regime. Many of the personnel working in these organizations would undoubtedly come from the former nuclear-weapon states. They would be privy to critical information regarding verification and enforcement of the NWFW regime. Armed with this information, potential cheaters could more easily and successfully break out of the regime.

Iraq is an example that demonstrates the negative side of increased cooperation and sharing of information. David Kay has pointed out that any shared intelligence necessarily provides clues for countermeasures. When, during the Iran-Iraq War, the United States shared strategic intelligence information with Baghdad, the Iraqis were able to analyze the data and ascertain how it was obtained to devise ways of denying information in the future. The Iraqis were thus able to successfully defeat national technical means (i.e., signal and satellite intelligence).[141] Thus, increased cooperation and information sharing at the level envisioned by abolitionists could be counter-productive to the goal of preventing breakout.

E. ENFORCEMENT OF A NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT REGIME

Abolitionists assert that there would be very little incentive for states to seek nuclear weapons in a nuclear-disarmed world.[142] Consequently, enforcement of a

---

[141] David Kay, "Iraqi Inspections: Lessons Learned," *Eye on Supply*, Center for Nonproliferation Studies (winter 1993), accessed on 5 April 1998, available from http://cns.miis.edu/iraq/kay.html, 5.

[142] Andrew Mack, "Nuclear 'Breakout': Risks and Possible Responses," *Canberra Commission Background Papers* (Canberra, Australia: Canberra Commission, 1996), 19-20. It should be remembered that the world was "nuclear disarmed" – or, more precisely, "nuclear unarmed" – in the 1930s and early 1940s, but the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan all perceived incentives to seek nuclear weapons.

NWFW regime is given little attention in the abolitionist literature. Some advocates of nuclear disarmament, such as Richard Garwin, have advocated the possession of a small number of nuclear weapons by an international agency during the transition period to complete abolition.[143] This would eliminate the possibility of a state acquiring a nuclear-weapons monopoly, thereby reducing incentives for breakout. Other ways to deal with a cheater would involve diplomacy, economic sanctions, and military force.

Garwin sees the maintenance of a small international nuclear arsenal as a viable alternative to a disarmed world.[144] The United Nations would control this force, and it would be used only in response to a nuclear attack by a breakout state. Andrew Mack of the Canberra Commission accepts this as a plausible alternative to a NWFW, but only if it would be a temporary step on the way to complete nuclear disarmament. Mack asserts that there would be little incentive to break out of a NWFW. For Mack, the issue of breakout is important and needs to be addressed, but the gravity of the problem should not be exaggerated.[145]

Abolitionists would rely upon diplomatic pressure from regime-respecting nations to inhibit cheating in a NWFW. Diplomacy could be used – abolitionists say – to persuade accused states to demonstrate their innocence, or to convince cheaters to

---

[143] Richard Garwin, "Nuclear Weapons for the United Nations?" *A Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World*, ed. Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, Bhalchandra Udgaonkar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 169-180. For Garwin, a primary justification for an international force would be the elimination of the double standard that allows certain states to possess nuclear weapons and prevents others from developing them.

[144] Ibid, 170.

[145] Mack, 20.

surrender nuclear materials.[146] Should diplomatic efforts fail, abolitionists assert, economic sanctions or military action could effectively return a state to compliance with a NWFW regime. Abolitionists argue that the UN Security Council would have little difficulty enacting an almost total and effective isolation of the violator, on the lines of what was done against Saddam Hussein's Iraq after the Gulf War.[147]

Abolitionists such as Andrew Mack see no utility in nuclear weapons today, and therefore overlook the risk that states might perceive utility in nuclear weapons in a nuclear-disarmed world. In fact, compelling reasons exist for states to possess nuclear weapons. Many of these rationales – security concerns chief among them – would still exist in a NWFW.

Abolitionists overstate the likelihood of states acting effectively in unison to force a cheater to comply with a NWFW regime. The problems that UNSCOM has experienced furnish a recent example of the difficulties in ensuring compliance with disarmament regimes. Iraq is a defeated country and a pariah state with few real allies, and it has been subjected to the most intrusive inspection regime ever instituted. However, Iraq maintains a formidable biological and chemical weapons capability as well as significant elements of its nuclear program. Despite Iraq's continued violations of UN Security Council resolutions, countries such as Russia, China, and France are growing more vocal in their calls to remove economic sanctions against Iraq. These calls are

---

[146] James Leonard, Martin Kaplan, and Benjamin Sanders, "Verification and Enforcement in a NWFW," *A Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World*, ed. Joseph Rotblat, Jack Steinberger, Bhalchandra Udgaonkar (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 138.

[147] Ibid.

occurring at a time when UNSCOM is encountering the greatest levels of obstruction by Iraq since the end of the Gulf War.

According to Geoffrey Kemp, a member of President Reagan's National Security Council staff, "the big lesson from the February [1998 Iraqi] crisis was [that] you cannot use massive force, and it's going to take massive force to be effective on a technical violation. There's just no support for it in the region."[148] Thus, even in an example involving the violation of UN Security Council resolutions, including continued development of WMD, force appears not to be a readily available option, owing to political reluctance to commit massive conventional force to preserve arms control regimes. Would citizens of democratic countries willingly send their soldiers to fight against a nuclear-armed country for the cause of disarmament? Victory could not be considered certain. The most effective, and least risky, reaction to breakout might be the reconstitution or development of a nuclear arsenal by those states threatened by the breakout nation.

The efficacy of economic sanctions is an issue of significant debate. One influential study concludes from an analysis of more than 100 cases that economic sanctions have worked to some extent about a third of the time.[149] Sanctions alone are unlikely to achieve results if the aims are large or time is short. For example, sanctions failed to compel Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait in 1991, although they were

---

[148] PBS's *Newshour with Jim Lehrer* (14 August 1998), accessed on 28 Oct 98, available from http:\\www.pbs.org.

[149] Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Jeffery J. Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliot, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered, History and Current Policy*, 2d ed. (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990), cited in Richard Haas, "Sanctioning Madness," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997): 76. This relatively positive assessment is disputed by critics on the grounds that the authors were overly generous in judging what constitutes success.

comprehensive and benefited from almost universal international participation for nearly six months.[150]

Other notable cases where sanctions have failed include Iran and Pakistan. Iran remains defiant in its support of terrorism and its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Pakistan's recent detonations of several nuclear devices occurred despite U.S. sanctions.[151] In sum, economic sanctions are at best blunt instruments that may take many years to accomplish their goals. They do not appear to be well suited to persuading a breakout state, which likely would be unconcerned with world opinion, to comply with a disarmament regime. Breakout could be the result of an immediate crisis. The long-term pain of economic sanctions would have little impact upon the decisions of a state in such circumstances.

Enforcement was one of the main areas of disagreement preventing acceptance of the Baruch Plan. Abolitionists assert that the capabilities to enforce a NWFW exist, including economic, political, and military action. However, political and economic efforts would not have a significant immediate impact. Additionally, the consensus required for multilateral military action, as demonstrated by the Gulf War and its aftermath, is difficult to build and even more challenging to maintain.

F. CONCLUSION

Despite their assertions to the contrary, abolitionists overlook political constraints in assessing the feasibility of nuclear disarmament. Politics is an overriding factor in

---

[150] Haas, 75.

[151] Ibid, 76.

determining the feasibility of nuclear weapons abolition. Unrestricted inspection authority would be a minimum requirement for an effective verification regime. Until the functional equivalent of a world government is brought into being, it is unlikely that this authority would ever be granted.

Technological means are not currently available that could verify compliance with a NWFW regime. Economic, political, or military enforcement would be ineffective in rolling back the nuclear capability of a determined cheater. Until verification and enforcement obstacles are overcome, nuclear disarmament is not possible.

V: CONCLUSION

In many ways, the debate over abolishing nuclear weapons is a classical political debate. Abolitionists, like Kantians, see a world that is making progress toward ever more cooperative and interdependent international structures. They believe that a new era of international cooperation is on the horizon that ultimately will produce collective security and the subsequent abolition of all weapons of mass destruction. Opponents of abolition, like Machiavellians and Grotians, see the world as a collection of nation-states, with international politics regulated largely by power relations and with security concerns acting as a critical motivation in a state's behavior. Opponents of abolition reason that some states could elect, for a variety of reasons, to break out of a NWFW regime. Further, they judge that no state, if losing a war or facing a similarly grave crisis, would risk its own survival simply to maintain a NWFW regime.[152]

As Professor Lawrence Freedman has pointed out, the Canberra Commission Report is a work of advocacy rather than of policy analysis.[153] As such, it ignores sound arguments against nuclear disarmament. A NWFW is not feasible in the current geopolitical circumstances. No verification measures could prevent breakout. If cheating were to occur, marshalling the international support needed to roll back the nuclear capability of a breakout state would be extraordinarily difficult. Iraq is a case in point. It is a defeated country known to possess large quantities of prohibited chemical and

---

[152] These terms – Kantians, Machiavellians, and Grotians – correspond to the three main Western traditions of thinking about international relations identified by Martin Wight, a British historian. For a discussion of Wight's categories, see David S. Yost, "Political Philosophy and the Theory of International Relations," *International Affairs* 70 (April 1994).

[153] Lawrence Freedman, "Nuclear Weapons: From Marginalisation to Elimination?" *Survival* 39, no.1 (spring 1997): 187.

biological weapons and a nuclear weapons infrastructure. Yet, UNSCOM, with unprecedented authority and highly intrusive verification means, has been unable to force Iraqi compliance with UN Security Council resolutions aimed at eliminating Iraq's WMD capability.

The abolitionist arguments for the desirability of nuclear disarmament have many flaws. Nuclear weapons have security roles beyond nuclear deterrence. The likelihood of accidental or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons could be much greater in a nuclear re-armament race, in which safety might not be a primary concern for a rapidly rearming state. Additionally, the safety and security of nuclear weapons can be increased through methods short of nuclear disarmament, which could in some circumstances have effects counter to those forecast by abolitionists. Indeed, abolitionists overlook the many ways that nuclear arsenals have inhibited proliferation. Additionally, the marginal utility of a single weapon in an emerging NWFW would soar as numbers of nuclear weapons decreased to zero. This would create enormous proliferation pressures and undo – in a potentially destabilizing and dangerous manner – any progress that had been achieved toward nuclear disarmament.

The final judges regarding the desirability of maintaining nuclear arsenals are nation-states. As long as one NWS believes its nuclear arsenal is necessary for its national security, a NWFW is not achievable. States such as Israel and Russia, for example, would require a radical reshaping of the geopolitical environment before they would willingly surrender their last nuclear weapons.

Abolitionists do not fully consider political constraints in their arguments. They are singularly concerned with the goal of nuclear disarmament. They have the logical

order of their goals reversed; the political environment necessary for nuclear disarmament must exist before the abolition of nuclear weapons can ever occur. The massive reduction in United States and Soviet/Russian nuclear forces did not precede, let alone bring about, the end of the Cold War. Instead, these reductions were facilitated by and symbolized the improvement of political relations between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[154] A benign political environment capable of sustaining a NWFW must exist before any plan to abolish nuclear weapons can be implemented.

In his memoirs Salvador de Madariaga, a distinguished figure in the League of Nations disarmament effort between the world wars, wrote:

> The trouble with disarmament was (it still is) that the problem of war is tackled upside down and at the wrong end. Upside down first; for nations do not arm willingly. Indeed, they are sometimes only too willing to disarm, as the British did to their sorrow in the Baldwin days. Nations don't distrust each other because they are armed; they are armed because they distrust each other. And therefore to want disarmament before a minimum of common agreement of fundamentals is as absurd as to want people to go undressed in winter. Let the weather be warm, and people will discard their clothes readily and without committees to tell them how they are to undress.[155]

Nuclear disarmament, if it ever were to occur, would be a result of favorable political conditions. It could not cause the political conditions that it requires for its success.

Future nuclear weapons policy need not be built around cynicism or inflexibility. A diverse program of nuclear change has already been tackled since the end of the Cold

---

[154] Payne, 22.

[155] Salvador de Madariaga, *Morning Without Noon* (London: Saxon House, 1974), 48-49, quoted in Quinlan, 67.

War, and it can be pursued further to yield a nuclear world of lower salience, smaller numbers, and even less real risk than now.[156] Making a commitment to near-term nuclear disarmament, however, will not necessarily aid such efforts. In fact, it could be counter-productive. Making nuclear disarmament the central goal, at any cost, could distract from political and technical efforts – or provide a pretext for inaction or delay – when political realities indicate that near-term nuclear disarmament would be neither feasible nor necessarily desirable. The interests of United States would be much better served by pursuing policies that are sensible and achievable in the world as it is, not as we all might wish it to be.

[156] Quinlan, 68.

APPENDIX A: INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED BY THE AUTHOR

Blair, Bruce: Brookings Institution, 8/12/98.

Butler, General Lee: Omaha, NE, 9/10/98.

Chafetz, Glenn: U.S. Department of State, 8/11/98.

Dellermann, Frank: Director, Strategy, Forces, and Operations, OSD, 8/4/98.

Dodge, Simon: Analyst for Nuclear Non-proliferation, Department of State, 8/6/98.

Dunn, Louis: Executive Vice-President, SAIC, 8/6/98.

Fisher, Cathleen: Senior Associate, Henry L. Stimson Center, 8/11/98.

Galascione, John: Analyst, Counterproliferation Center, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 8/5/98.

Green, Norman: Analyst, Non-Proliferation Center, CIA, 8/7/98.

Robert Joseph: National Defense University, 8/7/98.

Lavoy, Peter: Special Assistant for Counterproliferation Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), 8/4/98.

Payne, Keith: National Institute for Public Policy, 8/11/98.

Scheinman, Laurence: Monterey Institute of International Studies, 8/10/98.

Skrobola, Tom: Navy International Programs Office, 8/7/98.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center.....2
   8725 John J. Kingman Rd., Ste 0944
   Ft. Belvoir, VA 22060-6218

2. Dudley Knox Library.....2
   Naval Postgraduate School
   411 Dyer Rd.
   Monterey, CA 93943-5101

3. Ms. Catherine Montie.....2
   Defense Threat Reduction Agency
   6801 Telegraph Rd.
   Alexandria, VA 22310-3398

4. General Lee Butler.....1
   11122 William Plaza
   Omaha, Nebraska 68144

5. Dr. Keith Payne.....1
   National Institute for Public Policy
   3031 Javier Road, Suite 300
   Fairfax, VA 22031

6. Dr. Bruce Blair.....1
   The Brookings Institution
   1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
   Washington, D.C. 20036

7. Mr. Thomas Skrobola.....1
   Navy International Program Office
   Ste 701E Crystal Gateway North
   1111 Jefferson Davis Highway
   Arlington, VA 22201-1111

8. Dr. Michael Altfeld.....1
   Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (N514)
   Pentagon Room 4D562
   The Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20350

9. MAJ John C. Buckley, II.....1
   CINC's Staff Group (J004)
   901 SAC Blvd., Ste 2A
   Offutt AFB, NE 68113-6000

10. Dr. David S. Yost, Code NS/YO.....1
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5101

11. Dr. James J. Wirtz, Code NS/WZ.....1
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5101

12. Dr. Peter Lavoy, Code NS/NA.....1
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5101

13. Frank C. Petho, ...1
Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5101

14. Glenn Chafetz, Ph.D.....1
Bureau of Multilateral Affairs
Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
320 21st Street, NW
Washington DC 20451

15. Dr. Paul S. Brown.....1
National Security Directorate
P.O. Box 808, L-20
Livermore, CA 94551

16. Timothy Weber.....1
c/o Easwar and Susan Bhoothalingom
2109 Poppywood Dr.
Henderson, NV 89012

17. Pamela Keitz.....1
250 Franklin Turnpike, 204S
Mahwah, NJ 07430-1852

18. Shirley Metcalf.....1
571 Wagtail Dr.
Tracy, CA 95376