

Essay for volume on 'Non-nuclear Peace'
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Can the danger of nuclear war be eliminated by disarmament? The short answer to this question is 'yes': if all states and other actors disarm themselves of nuclear weapons completely and irretrievably, then a nuclear war cannot occur. The more interesting and important question is: is it possible that all states and all other actors will be able to disarm themselves completely and irretrievably? My answer to this question is 'no,' and the core reason for this is precisely the same one that animates our interest in pursuing nuclear peace – the uniquely destructive nature of nuclear weapons. Because total and irreversible nuclear disarmament is, in my judgment, impossible, the sources of a permanent nuclear peace will have to be found in radical political change at the global level rather than the eradication of the bomb itself.

1. Why total nuclear disarmament is impossible

Even the most idealistic advocates of nuclear abolition recognise that it is a formidable task. This can be seen most recently and evidently in the United Nations initiative to legally ban nuclear weapons, and the associated humanitarian rejection of nuclear possession, both of which have been undertaken not because anyone actually believes that a legal ban will quickly impel all nuclear states to disarm, but because it will serve to ostracise them. Advocates of the ban seek to shift political discourse so that disarmament becomes more thinkable and the possession of nuclear weapons more ridiculous over the long term, by establishing a moral environment in which the deployment of weaponry which can exterminate millions and possibly the human race is seen as unacceptable and outrageous. This move stipulates, correctly in my view, that a change in moral discourse can unleash important political change, while at the same time acknowledging that the proximate purpose of the ban is not to ban weapons at all but to alter our language and ethical conceptions.

The idea that a legal ban would lead by itself to genuine and complete disarmament without correspondent political change is not a serious one and I am unaware of anyone who thinks that could happen. In other words, I do not believe that anyone thinks that every existing nuclear state would disarm itself *only* because the United Nations had outlawed the bomb. Rather, the goal is a longer-term process, whereby nuclear weapons become increasingly, over time, stigmatised and obsolete: in this view, nations will gradually divest themselves of the bomb as the continuing possession of them becomes antiquated, morally primitive, and finally absurd.¹ The bombs will rust in their silos, as nations come to see how backward and obscene it is to hold onto them.

This vision of gradual disarmament, I contend, is based upon two necessary arguments. The first is one of *moral* obsolescence: that the deployment of nuclear weapons will, like the slave trade, evolve from a practice seen as acceptable and justifiable into one that is barbaric. This Kantian position, expressed most notably by John Mueller, represents a larger political view of human moral development that goes well beyond the nuclear question.² The second is one of *practical*

1 See Tom Sauer and Matthias Reveraert, 'The Potential Stigmatizing Effect of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,' *The Nonproliferation Review* online, at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10736700.2018.1548097> ; also see Nick Ritchie, 'Valuing and Devaluing Nuclear Weapons,' *Contemporary Security Policy* 34 (2013).

2 John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday* (Basic Books, 1989). For a larger expression of this argument, see Stephen Pinker, *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* (Viking, 2011)

obsolescence: that the bomb will fall into disuse, and perhaps become 'uninvented,' because nations and leaders will come to realise that it serves no useful function, and so allow the weapons themselves, and the scientific facilities dedicated to maintaining them, to deteriorate. This argument is much more specific to the nuclear question *per se* and addresses historical and strategic debates about the utility of nuclear weaponry.³

Though some disarmament advocates stress the former argument and others the latter, they are inextricably connected. The moral argument becomes far more powerful if it can be shown that nuclear weapons provide no practical goods; if they do serve some useful purpose then a moral claim can be made that it is better to keep them, as Kenneth Waltz, for example, has argued.⁴ Conversely, the practical argument logically depends upon the presumption that nuclear weapons are not just devoid of utility but also *should* rust away. Otherwise, why worry about whether some of them remain? Abstract moral imperatives are tied to practical contingency, as they always are in politics.

Therefore, the possibility of eventual disarmament hinges upon one fundamental question: will the future leaders and citizenries of all nuclear states, and other actors who may desire nuclear acquisition, accept the argument that nuclear weapons are *both* immoral to possess and practically useless?

Many leaders, scholars, and populations at large do not currently accept this. For them, nuclear weapons provide a public good which is both morally defensible and clearly useful: deterrence. Whilst there is a fringe of political and strategic thinking in some countries (most notably, the US) which sees other and more aggressive benefits coming from nuclear weapons,⁵ there is a widespread political consensus in the existing nuclear states (and some of their allies) that a secure nuclear arsenal dissuades other nuclear states from attacking them and their close allies, a condition that provides them with an easy security, makes for a general peace among the nuclear powers, and permits some of them to avoid spending massive sums on conventional forces.⁶ The historical record supports this belief. During the Cold War, the two superpowers never came to blows despite numerous crises, their antithetical ideologies, and the violent history of great-power conflict in the first half of the twentieth century, a fact that most historians attribute to the fear of nuclear war over everything else.⁷ Stalin merely reflected a widespread view at the end of the Second World War when he said that the major powers will recover for a few years, and then 'we'll have another go.' He was wrong, and the reason he was wrong is that later Cold War leaders like Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Khrushchev recognised that a nuclear war would be a catastrophe and found ways to avoid 'having another go.' Since the end of the Cold War, 'medium' nuclear powers like China have chosen to rely upon a modest nuclear arsenal for their security rather than wielding expensive and modern conventional forces, while small ones like North Korea are able to protect themselves from attack by infinitely larger enemies, namely the US, simply by possessing a few nuclear weapons. At the same time, states which have given up nuclear projects, like Libya, Iraq, and the Ukraine, have been attacked by nuclear powers, a fate that may also await Iran.

3 See Zia Mian, Harold Feiveson, Alexander Glaser, and Frank von Hippel, *Unmaking the Bomb: A Fissile Material Approach to Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation* (MIT Press, 2014).

4 Originally in Kenneth Waltz, 'The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Better,' *Adelphi Papers*, Number 171 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981); see also Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan* (Columbia University Press, 2003).

5 See Matthew Kroenig, *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

6 Susan Martin, 'The Continuing Value of Nuclear Weapons: A Structural Realist Analysis,' *Contemporary Security Policy* 34 (April 2013)

7 On this consensus among historians who disagree about almost everything else, see Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War* (Penguin, 2017); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (Penguin, 2006); and Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: the Politics of Insecurity* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

The basic reality of nuclear deterrence –it has made even the most powerful states too afraid of nuclear retaliation to launch a major war⁸ against other nuclear powers—is as close to a material fact as exists in the world of international politics, and the cause of anti-nuclear advocacy is not served by denying it.⁹ Not only do such claims fly in the face of mountains of historical evidence and simple logic; it also contradicts the moral reasoning of the anti-nuclear cause. This cause is justly driven by the unique dangers of a nuclear war: namely the slaughter of millions or hundreds of millions at the touch of a button, its catastrophic environmental effects, and the possible extermination of the human race. But it is precisely these consequences which have dissuaded states from running the risk of nuclear conflict, even in showdowns, too numerous to mention, in which they would almost certainly otherwise have gone to war. One cannot reasonably insist that the revolutionary dangers of nuclear war demand radical action but at the same time deny that these dangers have an important effect on political practice. It may make us feel superior to believe that 'we' care about preventing nuclear apocalypse whilst political leaders ignorantly court it, but the historical record reveals otherwise.¹⁰

But if it is only deterrence that is at play, then why is disarmament impossible? If nuclear states are only interested in providing for their security and avoiding a nuclear exchange, then why would they not be able to agree to disarm together, thus eliminating the possibility of nuclear war? This might make the world 'safe' for conventional war, as Waltz has pointed out, but it would eliminate the unique risks of nuclear conflict. States have agreed to ban weaponry before, such as poison gas; moreover, a few states, including South Africa and the Ukraine, have voluntarily given up their nuclear weapons, showing that they were willing to forego the benefits of deterrence. Is not the deterrence utility argument, even if one accepts it, insufficient to rule out total disarmament?

The problem here lies in the revolutionary nature of the weapons themselves. Unlike poison gas or land mines, only a few thermonuclear missiles can wreak apocalyptic damage upon any state, and effectively destroy small ones. Unlike armoured divisions or battle fleets, moreover, these missiles are small and easy to hide, and can be delivered to any target on the globe in minutes. On top of all of this, states with advanced scientific and technological capabilities and access to the right materials can assemble, or reassemble, such missiles quickly.

All of this means that, in our current condition of interstate anarchy, a political process of disarmament will, at some point, reach an impasse. I believe that it is possible that some nuclear states could decide to disarm over the long-term future, particularly if the international order becomes calmer than it is now. But it is impossible, under anarchy, that *all* states will disarm. When the list of states gets down to three, or two, a new problem emerges.¹¹ Without the ability to be sure that another state has totally disarmed, *and* to prevent it from re-arming, one of these last nuclear powers will face the possibility that, if it disarms completely and irretrievably, it will leave itself, and the rest of the world, at the mercy of another which has not actually disarmed—or another state which had previously disarmed but possesses the means to rearm. A state which

8 Defined as a comprehensive war seeking the territorial conquest of a nation-state or, at least, the overthrow of its regime. Such wars have been all too common throughout history, of course, and still are routinely waged against non-nuclear states. A major war has never, not once, been launched against a state in possession of a nuclear arsenal.

9 For an example of this ahistoricism, see John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession* (Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter four. Mueller allows that nuclear fear did play a role in avoiding war during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which rather gives the game away.

10 During the Cold War crisis period of 1958-62, for example, the American presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy and the Soviet premier Khrushchev all became obsessed about averting a nuclear war. Indeed, the fact that they could be held responsible for a war that ended humankind made them *more* concerned about avoiding it than strategists and military officials whose fingers were not on the button.

11 On this point, see Waltz in Scott Sagan and Kenneth Waltz, 'Is Nuclear Zero the Best Option?' *The National Interest* 109 (September/October 2010).

possesses a monopoly over modern thermonuclear weaponry, with every other state both disarmed and incapable of rearming, would be in a position to dominate the world. It might not actively seek such domination, but in any conflict with a rival all sides would know that in the event of war one side could be struck by megatonne nuclear bombs and the other could not. The United States did not actively seek world domination during its four-year atomic monopoly after World War Two, but the Soviet Union was forced to back down repeatedly in the early Cold War, and this was when the US only possessed fission bombs which were delivered on aeroplanes. It is not difficult to imagine how the Cold War would have proceeded had the USSR never acquired a bomb, which was why so many spies worked to transfer secrets to Moscow during World War Two, and why Stalin subordinated everything to his atomic project afterwards.¹²

In the late stages of a disarmament process, therefore, the remaining nuclear powers, no matter how idealistic or committed to nuclear peace they may claim to be, will not accept this possibility. At best, they will maintain a secret arsenal, and the capabilities to rebuild a larger one. More likely, because everyone will recognise this problem in advance, I do not believe that, if the number gets down to two or three, the remaining nuclear powers will even bother to take steps toward total disarmament. Cheating is far too easy and the stakes of misplaced trust are far too devastating to even pretend that it is possible.¹³

Indeed: in this hypothetical endgame, with only a few nuclear states remaining, what would Western disarmament advocates, even the most radical ones, actually support? Let us say that the two last nuclear states are the US under President Bernie Sanders and an autocratic Russia led by a neo-Stalinist with *revanchiste* designs in Europe. Would these advocates be comfortable with the US disarming, with no chance of rearmament, when Russia could easily cheat and emerge with a nuclear monopoly? I would ask the most determined disarmers to think about this scenario honestly and ask themselves what they would really prefer. If they are still unsure, replace Russia with Nazi Germany. It is precisely this danger which has led other activists to support the halfway measure of virtual or recessed arsenals, a proposal which has the merit of contending with the possibility of cheating but the defect of not providing a solution to the problem.¹⁴

The unique dangers of nuclear conflict present us with a cruel irony. On one hand, they provide an overwhelming incentive to achieve total disarmament: it is the spectre of an omnicidal nuclear war that drives the disarmament cause. On the other hand, these *very same dangers* make total disarmament impossible, because this spectre makes deterrence so effective and so will cause states, in the endgame we have hypothesised, to refuse to place themselves at the mercy of a rival who can wreak nuclear war without fear of reprisal. Because nuclear weapons are relatively small, easy to hide, and can be built or rebuilt by many advanced states in a short period of time, there is no way, in an anarchical world, to be sure that every state on the planet has disarmed completely and irreversibly. And because only a few of them can effectively destroy any country, there is no way, given present and foreseeable technologies,¹⁵ for any disarmed state to defend itself from or deter an attack by a nation that has surreptitiously kept them. These two material realities will halt a process

12 See Campbell Craig and Sergey Radchenko, *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War* (Yale University Press, 2008).

13 See Waltz, 'Is Nuclear Zero the Best Option?'

14 See Thomas Schelling, 'A World Without Nuclear Weapons?' *Daedalus* 138 (September 2009).

15 The development of a revolutionary means of nuclear defence could solve this second problem: the advent of a perfect 'Star Wars' system could make retaliation useless and put an end to the deterrence logic discussed here, thus undermining my argument and now allowing any state deploying such a system to consider disarmament, as Reagan suggested in the 1980s. I am sceptical as to whether such a system could ever be built, particularly as even a minor lapse could mean the nuclear destruction of several cities, and also because it could probably be overcome by the much cheaper process of building more weapons. What is more, the kind of state that could build and deploy a 'perfect' nuclear defence system might not be the kind of state that would irreversibly disarm – as Gorbachev suggested in the 1980s.

of disarmament before it gets to zero. The ban treaty and other moves to stigmatise nuclear weapons may succeed at isolating nuclear states and could tempt some of them to consider ridding themselves of their existing arsenals. But it cannot achieve an abolition of nuclear weapons by itself.

2. Why the quest for disarmament actually damages the cause of a durable non-nuclear peace

Advocates of nuclear abolition might concede that total and irreversible disarmament is unlikely or impossible for the reasons developed above, but that the multilateral campaign on its behalf can produce real benefits. By formally designating states who possess nuclear weaponry as immoral outlaws, and raising global awareness of the ongoing dangers of nuclear war and the fact that only a handful of nations are responsible for these dangers, the campaign could succeed in shifting discourse away from the tacit acceptance of nuclear deterrence and force those states who persist in keeping their weapons to pay real political and economic costs.

These are important objectives and I support them. However, their achievement does not outweigh two important costs that an attempt to achieve nuclear peace solely by means of disarmament would incur.

The Nonproliferation Game

A central strategy of the ban initiative and larger abolitionist projects is to focus on the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT) and the massive institutional regime it has spawned over the past five decades.¹⁶ As disarmament advocates stress, the major nuclear powers have used this institution, which Jan Ruzicka and I have called the 'nonproliferation complex,' to deny smaller states the bomb whilst persistently ignoring Article VI of the treaty, which calls upon existing nuclear states to disarm. They argue that a major component of the attempt to stigmatise the nuclear powers must be to zero in on this hypocrisy, and indeed to make future support for the NPT conditional upon tangible disarmament measures undertaken by the nuclear 'haves.' This move would put serious political pressure on the existing nuclear powers, who have an interest in keeping weaker states disarmed for purposes of coercion (as the example of North Korea reveals), though disarmament advocates are reluctant to acknowledge this particular objective, as it is based upon the implicit assumption that deterrence works.¹⁷

The problem with relying upon the nonproliferation regime and the deployment of Article VI to advance the cause of disarmament lies in the very nature of the contemporary politics of nonproliferation. What has happened over the past few decades, and in particular since the end of the Cold War, is that the major supporters of the regime – the nuclear states of the West, and mainstream nonproliferation institutions associated with and funded by them – have used the ideal of nuclear abolition as a carrot to obtain the support of anti-nuclear activists and states for their real objective, which is to use the institution to deny smaller states the bomb. Perhaps the most vivid example of this process at work was President Obama's famous 2009 speech in Prague calling for a world free of nuclear weapons, for which he almost immediately received the Nobel Peace Prize. This move tied the cause of nuclear abolition to a state which possesses the world's most advanced nuclear arsenal; what is more, not long after this speech Obama approved of a multi-billion dollar upgrade of the US nuclear arsenal. It was very interesting to see that this latter decision attracted

16 See Sauer and Mayer 2018

17 See Jan Ruzicka, 'The Next Great Hope: the Humanitarian Approach to Nuclear Weapons,' *Journal of International Political Theory* (2018), online at <https://journals-sagepub-com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1177/1755088218785922>

the attention or criticism of very few nonproliferation institutions or experts.¹⁸

Because a world free of nuclear weapons is a noble goal that is easy for idealists to support but obviously difficult to achieve, the nonproliferation complex has been able to use it as a means of deflecting criticism of the nuclear states and especially their 50-year defiance of Article VI.¹⁹ Abolition is employed as the dream that everyone supports and seeks one day to achieve, whilst recognising that it is too difficult to happen right away. This allows the nuclear states to continue on with business as usual, dangling a carrot of disarmament in front of anti-nuclear forces which can never quite be grasped.²⁰ An anti-nuclear discourse that focuses exclusively upon disarmament, in other words, benefits the nuclear haves, because it costs them nothing to voice support for the goal in abstract terms, as did President Obama, in order to retain support for a regime that locks in the existing nuclear order.

The Marginalisation of a More Effective Solution

A second, related problem with focusing exclusively upon disarmament is that it runs the risk of privileging an idealist solution that demands little sacrifice from its supporters (in the liberal West) in favour of a more hard-headed solution that would demand radical and convulsive political change. As authors like E. H. Carr have argued, idealistic policies that attract the attention and support of liberal polities to a solution that will not work can often do more harm than doing nothing, as they crowd out more difficult and controversial proposals which promise a more enduring solution to the problem.²¹

The disarmament project, as it currently stands, is a classic example of liberal idealism. By this I mean that it focuses upon the power of ideals to solve the problem of nuclear war rather than advocating radical change, and that it therefore does not call for measures that could threaten the extant liberal international order. Its identification of the *bomb* as the problem that must be gotten rid of, rather than the political condition in which bombs can be used, makes it relatively easy for liberal idealists to support the project: for who, apart from a few extreme academics and military officials, can really be *for* the bomb? Being against the existence of nuclear weapons is essentially a moral, not a political position, like being against torture or climate change – it does not necessarily demand the adoption of a radical political stand, if by that we mean, in the international sphere, a fundamental challenge to existing modes of power. It is possible, and indeed often specifically argued, to imagine a world without nuclear weapons which otherwise resembles our existing world: everything is the same except that a class of genocidal weaponry is gone.²²

I have already noted that this ideal plays into the hands of the 'nonproliferation complex,' which uses the dream of global zero to help perpetuate a regime that actually locks in a permanent nuclear order. The other problem, however, is that it communicates to the liberal Western elite that the spectre of nuclear war can be ended without any danger to its own position or risk of political convulsion. The humanitarian and ban initiatives threaten no one apart from the states that possess nuclear weapons, and this threat comprises only the demand that they divest themselves of their

18 See Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, 'The Nonproliferation Complex,' *Ethics and International Affairs* 27 (September 2013).

19 On this point, see Nick Ritchie, 'A Hegemonic Nuclear Order: Understanding the Ban Treaty and the Power Politics of Nuclear Weapons,' *Contemporary Security Policy* (2019), advance online at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13523260.2019.1571852>

20 See Alexander Kmentt, 'How Divergent Views on Disarmament Threaten the NPT,' *Arms Control Today*, at https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2013_12/How-Divergent-Views-on-Nuclear-Disarmament-Threaten-the-NPT

21 Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-39* (Macmillan, 1946).

22 See the original humanitarian initiative, which makes no mention of political change whatsoever:

http://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/

Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Abruestung/HINW14/HINW14vienna_Pledge_Document.pdf

arsenals, not that they must undergo political or economic change.

If abolition can work – if complete and irreversible disarmament can occur, and in the reasonably near-term future, not 200 years from now – then it is a perfect solution to the problem of nuclear war, because we rid ourselves of the nuclear spectre without having to face the prospect of radical and dangerous political transformation. If it cannot work, however, then there is a real risk that disarmament may nevertheless remain as the dominant solution to the nuclear problem precisely *because* it does not pose any serious threats to the liberal elite that would support it.

There are a number of liberal international projects – on nonproliferation, climate change, economic development and aid in the third world, to name a few – which have become institutionalised over the past several decades: rather than taking the serious political steps necessary to solve the problems forthrightly, a series of well-funded international institutions emerge which purport to deal with them as long as they do not threaten the interests of the liberal states that support and fund these projects. Vast institutional regimes are the result, whose many thousands of well-paid officials in the West have an interest in not antagonising the states that provide the money, and indeed in not really solving the problem they are working on, which would mean that they have worked themselves out of a job.²³

In my view, the new disarmament initiatives run this risk. Because the idea of abolition does not threaten the powerful states as long as it never actually happens, disarmament could become institutionalised as have these other projects – it would become the only mainstream solution to the nuclear problem, gamed indefinitely by the world's most powerful states and the institutions that work for them. That would be a mortal blow to the cause of nuclear peace.

Thus the abolitionist cause hinges on the question of whether it can work. **Can the total and irretrievable disarmament of all present (and putative) nuclear states happen in the foreseeable future, and without transformative political change that would threaten the interests of the world's most powerful nations?** If the answer to this question is 'no,' then an exclusive focus upon disarmament harms the anti-nuclear cause, by rallying support for a project that cannot work and/or sidelining more radical proposals that powerful states would actively oppose but could really solve the nuclear problem. The response that whilst disarmament might not work at the moment but could change discourse sometime in the future is not good enough, for the institutional reasons just outlined. Its advocates have to demonstrate now that it can achieve the goals it demands, which means persuasively refuting the arguments I (and many others) have put forward above.

3. The World State Alternative

I have argued that both the greatest reason for, and the greatest obstacle to, nuclear disarmament lies in the the unique capabilities of the weapons themselves. Abolition is necessary because these weapons can exterminate humanity and perhaps all life on the planet; it is impossible, in our existing international order, because these weapons are easy to hide and strategically decisive. Because there is no international authority capable of assuring the entire world that every state has disarmed and cannot rearm, a process of disarmament will not proceed to zero. States will not accept a situation where only one of them might possess a secret arsenal and find itself in a position to benefit from its cheating by dominating the world. As everyone will be acutely aware of that possibility, I believe that this process would stall well before zero – we will never get even close in our anarchical world.

²³ For a study of how this works with nonproliferation, see Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, *US Unipolar Preponderance and Nuclear Nonproliferation* (Cornell University Press, forthcoming)

The solution to our nuclear dilemma, then, cannot be found by concerning ourselves with the weapons themselves. The problem is not their existence *per se* but the fact that there is no authority capable of preventing states from maintaining or rebuilding their arsenals. In other words, the problem is anarchy.

As Albert Einstein, Hans Morgenthau, and more recently Alexander Wendt and myself have argued, the only means of solving the nuclear problem effectively and permanently is to create such an authority – a regime with the requisite power to verify that all states have completely and irreversibly disarmed, and, crucially, to prevent them from re-arming. As advocates of nuclear order in the days immediately following Hiroshima and Nagasaki quickly discovered, such an authority must possess the power to control the arms of every state in the world, even the most powerful ones, which means that – in classic Weberian terms – the authority must be a world government. Anything less would not do, because as long as one state is beyond the reach of this authority, at least some other states will refuse to disarm.²⁴

The creation of an authentic world government with this kind of power is itself, of course, an obviously utopian goal. It would require a radical and convulsive transformation of our international order and perhaps invite, as Waltz has put it, a 'global civil war.' It also, unlike the abolition project, raises the possibility of a tyrannical world state from which there could be no terrestrial escape. I and the few other advocates of a world government are well aware of these objections.

The question is not whether a world government raises these grave problems, because it does. Rather, the question is whether anything else could put an end to the possibility of an omnicidal nuclear war. If, as I have argued here and at length in many other writings, every other solution to the problem cannot work, then those who regard the permanent prevention of a nuclear war as the most important political task of our, or any, age must either accept that such a government is necessary or come up with a new alternative. Many have attempted the latter; no one has yet succeeded.

A world government, if carefully constructed, would not only put an end to the nuclear dilemma; it could also deal with other global problems, such as climate change and acute economic inequality, that are impossible to solve as well in our anarchical order. But perhaps most important for the purposes of this volume, a world government provides our only hope for a lasting 'non-nuclear peace.' Such a government might retain nuclear weapons for a time, or it might not. But it would not really matter, as long as it possessed the ability to prevent 'sub-states' from ever getting their hands on them, because such a government would not need nuclear weapons for the purposes of domestic law and order, just as a modern nation-state such as Great Britain does not need tanks and battleships to keep the peace at home. Nuclear disarmament in an anarchical world, even if it worked, which it cannot, would nevertheless leave open the possibility of conventional war among disarmed states. Under an effective world government, there might be violence and discord. But, by definition, there could not be war.

24 I make this case at greater length in 'Solving the Nuclear Dilemma: Is a World State Necessary?' *Journal of International Political Theory* (2018), online first at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1755088218795981?journalCode=iptb>

