

NOTE

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE: IS THE WAR-AND-PEACE PASTORAL INCONSISTENT?

The recent pastoral letter of the American bishops on War and Peace¹ has been criticized as inconsistent in its treatment of nuclear deterrence. Typical of such criticism is that of Eric Mack: the bishops hold that "even defensive warfare that is completely targeted against aggressors will be morally unacceptable if *too many* innocents (however many that may be) are killed. . . . This new restrictive principle . . . condemns *all* feasible strategies of forcible national defense." Nevertheless, the bishops "recognize that major reliable bilateral arms reductions are, at best, many years away and that some defensive strategy is needed for the interim. Their compromising is 'a strictly conditional moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence.' . . . Having adopted an unsoundly constrictive principle, the bishops' only defense against their own doctrine is to pretend that it does not exist."²

Charles Krauthammer accused the bishops of settling "for the unhappy compromise of not opposing deterrence itself, but simply what it takes to make deterrence work. . . . It is a sorry compromise, neither coherent nor convincing. It is not coherent, because it requires the bishops to support a policy—deterrence—which their entire argument is designed to undermine. And it is not convincing, because the kind of deterrence they approve is no deterrence at all."³

The inconsistency charge has been made again and again. According to Douglas Lackey, "there is a certain inconsistency between the bishops' ringing denunciation of most uses of nuclear weapons and their endorsement of nuclear deterrence."⁴ George Sher says that there is "no plausible way of rescuing the conditional acceptance thesis without relinquishing the view that it is always wrong to intend to do what it is wrong to do."⁵

¹ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983).

² Eric Mack, "The Moral Basis of National Defense," in Robert W. Poole, Jr., *Defending a Free Society* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1984) 28.

³ Charles Krauthammer, "On Nuclear Morality," in James P. Sterba, ed., *The Ethics of War and Nuclear Deterrence* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1985) 149.

⁴ Douglas P. Lackey, *Moral Principles and Nuclear Weapons* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allenheld, 1984) 210.

⁵ George Sher, "The U.S. Bishops' Position on Nuclear Deterrence: A Moral Assessment," in Douglas MacLean, *The Security Gamble: Deterrence Dilemma in the Nuclear Age* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allenheld, 1984) 78.

And Albert Wohlstetter claimed that “we only complete the absurdity and undermining of deterrence when we say that we have no intention to fight, that is, to use nuclear weapons if deterrence fails. Unfortunately, the principle of deterrence and the principle of ‘Use, Never’ mutually annihilate each other.”⁶

The apparent inconsistency is generated from the following four claims:

1) The bishops are highly skeptical that any actual use of nuclear weapons might be morally justified. The burden of proof rests upon a defender of nuclear weapons to provide evidence that such use will not violate principles of proportionality and/or discrimination.⁷ This is not an apodictic condemnation of nuclear weapons per se. Spokesman J. Bryan Hehir explains that the position of the bishops leaves “a centimeter of ambiguity regarding the general question of the use of nuclear weapons.”⁸ It is logically possible that a purely counterforce use might be justifiable. But the odds that an actual exchange of nuclear weapons would not violate moral constraints are negligible. In the words of the bishops, “it would be a perverted political policy or moral casuistry which tried to justify using a weapon which ‘indirectly’ or ‘unintentionally’ killed a million innocent people because they happened to live near a ‘militarily significant target.’”⁹

The consensus of political scholars involved in molding our nuclear deterrence strategy is that any wartime use of nuclear weapons will result in casualties vastly exceeding the limits of what the bishops consider possibly justifiable. In a significant recent paper a number of these scholars stated that “every serious analysis and every military exercise, for over 25 years, has demonstrated that even the most restrained battlefield use would be enormously destructive to civilian life and property. There is no way for anyone to have any confidence that such a nuclear action will not lead to further and more devastating exchanges.”¹⁰

⁶ Albert Wohlstetter, “Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists on the Bombing of Innocents,” *Commentary* 75 (1983) 33. See also Robert W. Tucker, “Morality and Deterrence,” *Ethics* 95 (1985) 476.

⁷ *The Challenge of Peace*, Summary v–vi, nos. 153, 159, 193.

⁸ J. Bryan Hehir, “Moral Issues in Deterrence Policy,” in MacLean, *Security Gamble* 60.

⁹ *The Challenge of Peace*, no. 193.

¹⁰ McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerald Smith, “Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance,” *Foreign Affairs* 60 (1982) 757. Cf. also Spurgeon M. Keeny and Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky, “MAD versus NUTS: Can Doctrine or Weaponry Remedy the Mutual Hostage Relationship of the Superpowers?” *Foreign Affairs* 60 (1981–82) 287–304, and Tucker, “Morality and Deterrence” 465. For a clear survey of this literature as well as arguments that actual use of nuclear weapons will violate standards of both morality and prudence, see David Hollenbach, S.J., “Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War: The Shape of the Catholic Debate,” *TS* 43 (1982) 591–96.

2) The bishops accept the Wrongful Intention Principle, "which says that if an act is wrong, intending to perform it is also wrong."¹¹ The bishops invoked this principle when they stated that "no use of nuclear weapons which would violate the principles of discrimination or proportionality may be *intended* in a strategy of deterrence."¹²

3) The strategy of nuclear deterrence involves some sort of threat to use nuclear weapons. Caspar Weinberger explains the policy of deterrence as simply "to make the cost of nuclear war much higher than any possible benefit."¹³ A threat to use seems to involve a conditional intent to retaliate. If one threatens, and if one means what one is saying and/or doing, then one is committed to follow through with the threatened action if the threat is not heeded. Hence nuclear deterrence seems to include an intent to use nuclear weapons. At least this is the way nuclear deterrence is usually understood. Thus, William V. O'Brien says that "nuclear deterrence is based on the capability and will to inflict unacceptable damage on an aggressor. Without the credible will to carry out the deterrent threat, there is little potential deterrent effectiveness in weapons lying about like so much hardware."¹⁴ And Charles Krauthammer says that "deterrence is not inherent in the weapons. It results from a combination of possession and the will to use them. If one side renounces, for moral or other reasons, the intent of ever actually using nuclear weapons, deterrence ceases to exist."¹⁵

4) The bishops grant a strictly conditional moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence.¹⁶ Hehir's comment is that, "devoid of all modifiers, the judgment on deterrence is acceptance, not condemnation."¹⁷ Among the constraints placed upon a justifiable policy of nuclear deterrence are the following: (a) Direct targeting of civilian populations is forbidden.¹⁸ (b) Plans for nuclear war fighting, i.e., "repeated nuclear strikes and counter strikes, or 'prevailing' in nuclear war, are not acceptable."¹⁹ (c) "The quest for nuclear superiority must be rejected."²⁰ (d) "Nuclear deterrence should be used as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament."²¹

¹¹Gregory S. Kavka, "Nuclear Deterrence: Some Moral Perplexities," in MacLean, *Security Gamble* 125. See also Gregory S. Kavka, "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence," *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978) 289-92.

¹²*The Challenge of Peace*, Summary iii.

¹³Caspar Weinberger, *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 4, 1982, 27.

¹⁴William V. O'Brien, "Just-War Doctrine in a Nuclear Context," *TS* 44 (1983) 216.

¹⁵Krauthammer, "On Nuclear Morality" 149.

¹⁶*The Challenge of Peace*, Summary vi; see also nos. 173-92.

¹⁷Hehir, "Moral Issues in Deterrence Policy" 62.

¹⁸*The Challenge of Peace*, nos. 178-79.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, no. 187.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.* See nos. 173-76 and Summary vi.

The apparent inconsistency can be formalized in the following four propositions. The use of nuclear weapons as threatened under our present strategy of deterrence is not permissible ($\sim U$). If it is not permissible to use the weapons as threatened, then it is not permissible to intend to use them ($\sim U \rightarrow \sim I$). If it is permissible to maintain our present strategy of nuclear deterrence, it is permissible to intend to use these weapons ($D \rightarrow I$). It is permissible to maintain some form of our present strategy of deterrence (D). But the set ($\sim U, \sim U \rightarrow \sim I, D \rightarrow I, D$) is obviously inconsistent.

ESCAPE FROM INCONSISTENCY: THREAT WITHOUT INTENT

A quick response is that the bishops do *not* grant the moral permissibility of our present nuclear strategy. What they accept is rather a strictly conditioned sort of deterrence. Nevertheless, they cannot extricate themselves from the charge of inconsistency on this basis alone.

The bishops do not propose, as an alternative to our present policy, a strictly counterforce deterrence which would restrict the use of nuclear weapons in case of war. Critics have suggested this as what just-war principles would dictate. Mack raises this objection: "For the bishops, then, the acceptability of a given counterforce nuclear strategy should depend upon a careful analysis of the expected benefits of that strategy against its expected costs. . . . for this strategy . . . does not seem to involve expected evils disproportionate to the expected evils it would thwart. Unfortunately, the bishops do not carry out this analysis."²² But the bishops do not believe that actual use of nuclear weapons would remain within the limits of proportionality. They hold that "the problem is not simply one of producing highly accurate weapons that might minimize civilian casualties in any single explosion, but one of increasing the likelihood of escalation at a level where many, even 'discriminating,' weapons would cumulatively kill very large numbers of civilians."²³ The bishops also preclude this reading of their claim by rejecting any war-fighting strategy with nuclear weapons as well as emphasizing the temporary nature of the permissibility of the resort to deterrence. If there are acceptable uses of nuclear weapons, then why is deterrence acceptable only as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament?

A friendly critic might suggest that there are possible uses of nuclear weapons which would not violate moral constraints. For example, James P. Sterba proposes this as a resolution of the apparent inconsistency.

One aspect of the bishops' position that requires clarification is how they can

²² Mack, "Moral Basis of National Defense" 27-28. See also O'Brien, "Just-War Doctrine," and Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists."

²³ *The Challenge of Peace*, no. 183. See also nos. 145, 157-61, and esp. 193-94.

justify nuclear deterrence, which involves an intention to use nuclear weapons, when they also condemn the use of nuclear weapons. The answer seems to be that the bishops do not absolutely condemn all uses of nuclear weapons but that they allow that a case might be made for a limited counterforce retaliatory strike. Accordingly, the bishops can justify securing nuclear deterrence by threatening at least that form of nuclear retaliation.²⁴

Nevertheless, the bishops explicitly concede the *temporary* permissibility of a *sufficient* deterrent.²⁵ They do not demand that we limit our policy of deterrence to forms which would not violate moral standards of proportionality in case of use. Such a demand would undermine most of our entire deterrence strategy. Of course, they do condemn countervalue targeting. But they do not call for immediate retargeting of all nuclear weapons whose use would exceed the limits of proportionality. Such a demand would come close to a call for unilateral disarmament. What the bishops allow, in their conditional acceptance of deterrence, is a variant of our present strategy. So the bishops cannot evade the charge of inconsistency by claiming that the sort of nuclear deterrence to which they grant conditional approval is radically different from the actual strategy of the U.S.

If the bishops are to escape the charge of inconsistency, they have to deny that deterrence requires a conditional intent to use the weapons. This resolution of the dilemma of deterrence is not completely satisfactory. For this reason the bishops allow deterrence only as a temporary stage in a movement toward disarmament.

Any strategy of deterrence requires some sort of threat. However, some threats do not involve any sort of commitment to do the threatened act. What makes a threat effective is the belief of the threatened person that it might be executed. If one is a good actor and/or the threatened person is apprehensive, then a bluff might be an effective deterrent. Who of us has not made ominous threats to children or students the likes of which we would never execute?

Douglas Lackey provides the following description of a nuclear bluff:

Suppose that the United States says that it will counterattack if the Soviet Union attacks and gives every indication that it will counterattack (missile silos are constructed, submarines cruise the oceans, etc.); but, in fact, unknown to anyone except the highest officials in the government, all the American warheads are disarmed and simply cannot go off. In this case the United States does not threaten, but merely *seems* to threaten counterattack.²⁶

²⁴ Sterba, *Ethics of War* 11.

²⁵ *The Challenge of Peace*, no. 188.

²⁶ Douglas Lackey, "Ethics & Nuclear Deterrence," in James Rachels, ed., *Moral Problems* (3rd ed.; New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1979) 441.

But more than a bluff is needed for a rational policy of deterrence. One pragmatic problem is that the risk that the bluff might be exposed makes such a strategy more dangerous than unilateral disarmament.²⁷ Another is that such a large scale bluff does not seem feasible. How could thousands of persons administer and maintain our nuclear weapons without realizing that none are actually armed? Anthony Kenny observes:

If nuclear weapons could be maintained and operated by one man alone, then that man might possess them and keep to himself the fact that he intended never to use them. But nuclear weapons are not like a revolver that can be kept locked in a drawer. The maintenance of the deterrent demands that the enemy shall believe that the deterring power is both able and willing to use the deterrent. But no democratic power can convince its enemies that it is able and willing to use its deterrent unless it has military units willing to operate the deterrent if ordered and parliamentary sanction to order its operation if necessary.²⁸

A moral objection, suggested by S. I. Benn,²⁹ might be developed as follows. The bluff strategy works only if the bluff is kept secret. But to keep the bluff of nuclear deterrence secret, the administrators would have to act as if they are not bluffing. This will require them to foist upon others, viz., their colleagues and subordinates, policies which are morally reprehensible. In the unlikely event that such a bluff might be successful, it would corrupt all these involved in the policy, yet not privy to the bluff. Because of the democratic nature of our society, a successful bluff strategy would result in the moral corruption of a large number of citizens. A morally permissible policy of deterrence should not be based upon widespread deceit along with pressure to get one's associates and fellow citizens to consent to immoral acts.

How might a deterrent threat be honest and effective without involving a conditional intent to retaliate with such force that a nuclear attack against us would be irrational? The bishops hold that the set of morally permissible acts of nuclear retaliation is almost empty. Hence one might limit *intended* retaliation to this negligible set of permissible responses, e.g., a military base on the Arctic Ocean in Siberia. However, under the extreme pressure of a nuclear attack one might cast morality (and prudence) to the winds and retaliate in kind. The final decision is left to the President, Secretary of Defense, and/or various persons down the chain of command. No one could morally intend, under any circumstan-

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Anthony Kenny, "Counterforce and Countervalue," in Walter Stein, ed., *Nuclear Weapons and Christian Conscience* (London: Merlin, 1965) 164. See also O'Brien, "Just-War Doctrine" 214-16.

²⁹ S. I. Benn, "Deterrence or Appeasement? or, On Trying To Be Rational about Nuclear War," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 1 (1984) 14-15.

ces, to discharge a nuclear weapon which would violate standards of proportionality and/or discrimination. But under extreme duress with all systems ready to fire, it is not clear whether or not those involved in command and control will abide by moral principles (or even prudential ones).

It might be argued that this logical separation of deterrence from conditional intent will substantially weaken our deterrence strategy. This is the claim of O'Brien: "Deterrence is derived from the enemy's knowledge that weapons are deployed and ready, targeted on things the loss of which would be unacceptable. In brief, possession of nuclear weapons cannot be meaningfully separated from deployment. Ready deployment cannot be separated from a credible intention to use the weapons if the deterrent fails."³⁰

The response is that vague threats will continue to deter as well as they have done in the past. Present policy requires a decision for use by the President and Secretary of Defense, then possibly the Vice-President and down a chain of command if the top administrators are not accessible. The realization that the President might lack the "moral strength" to retaliate in kind depresses the military mind.³¹ Soviet leaders might suspect that the U.S. might not retaliate to a nuclear attack, but there is too much at stake for a gamble. The uncertainty of what would happen if nuclear weapons are used provides a strong deterrent. After all, the U.S. has an abundance of weapons with second-strike capacity, e.g., SLBMs. The fact that a final decision has not been made about use would not make it rational to call us to the test. This point was made clearly by John Langan:

Governments that are confronted by adversaries with nuclear weapons would be extremely foolish to presume that these weapons will not be used in morally wrong ways, regardless of what the declared intentions of the adversary government may be. They have to consider not merely the possibility of morally circumscribed uses . . . but also the possibility of morally proscribed uses of weapons, which could inflict intolerable and catastrophic losses. A government can and should be deterred by the possibility that its adversary may act immorally.³²

Soviet history provides no evidence that the Soviets are likely to take the risk of a first nuclear strike against a nation with strong second-strike capability. They have a record of invading weak nations close to

³⁰ O'Brien, "Just-War Doctrine" 216. See also Krauthammer, "On Nuclear Morality" 149, and Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists" 33.

³¹ Douglas Lackey, "Missiles & Morals," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11 (1982) 208.

³² John Langan, S.J., "The American Hierarchy and Nuclear Weapons," *TS* 43 (1982) 463.

their borders. They also have a record of instigating revolutions, civil wars, and insurgency. But a nuclear attack against a powerful nation is not the sort of action which could be reasonably expected of them, unless they were threatened and desperate. Hence one might argue that explicit threats and conditional expressions of the will to retaliate are counter-productive. Instead of strengthening our nuclear deterrent, they exacerbate the arms race, which in turn might lead to destabilization.³³

NUCLEAR THREATS: PROXIMATE OCCASIONS OF SIN

Even though threats are logically distinct from intents to retaliate, there remains a dangerous causal linkage between emphasis upon threats and actually responding in kind if tested.³⁴ The problem with utilizing threats instead of the proscribed intentions is that the threat of nuclear retaliation puts one into a proximate occasion of terribly immoral activity. A history of bold talk combined with fingertip control over sophisticated weapons makes it almost "natural" to act out the role played for decades.

Nevertheless, it might be permissible to remain in this grave occasion of sin for a while longer. This delay might be justifiable in terms of the principle of double effect. Continued deployment of nuclear weapons in a threatening manner is permissible, despite the grave risks, as long as the following conditions apply:

1) Continuation of the deterrent threat is not intrinsically evil. The U.S. is not violating the immunity principle by deliberately threatening innocent persons, and hence imposing deliberate harm upon them. The immunity principle is defined by Kavka as follows: "Persons have moral immunity, and it is impermissible to deliberately impose significant harms or risks on them, unless they are themselves morally responsible for creating relevant harms or dangers."³⁵ (No doubt, moral responsibility will need to be expanded to include material threats.) As a matter of fact, the U.S. strategy of assured destruction has been supplanted by Presidential Directive 59. In 1979 President Carter declared that instead of retaliating against Soviet cities, Americans would target missile sites, submarine depots, armament stores, command centers, etc.³⁶ In other words, our present deterrent threat is limited to counterforce strategy.³⁷

³³ See James P. Sterba, "How To Achieve Nuclear Deterrence without Threatening Nuclear Destruction," in Sterba, *The Ethics of War* 155-68.

³⁴ See Lackey, *Moral Principles* 176, and David A. Hoekema, "Intentions, Threats, and Nuclear Deterrence," *Bowling Green Studies in Applied Philosophy* 5 (1983) 119-21.

³⁵ Kavka, "Nuclear Deterrence" 130.

³⁶ Solly Zuckerman, *Nuclear Illusion and Reality*, reprinted in part in Sterba, *The Ethics of War* 87.

³⁷ See *The Challenge of Peace*, nos. 178-179.

The U.S. limits the deliberate imposition of threat to hostile forces already threatening us.

Continuation of this deterrent threat has two effects: (a) The good effect is that the U.S. deters nuclear attack and avoids significant hostility. This, of course, is the ultimate aim of our deterrence strategy. (b) The bad effect is that the U.S. takes a significant risk that due to accident, mistake, or weakness under pressure we might fire our nuclear weapons and cause terrible harm which could never be morally justified. Furthermore, our deterrence strategy may indirectly cause an accident, mistake, or irrational behavior on the part of our enemy.

2) Only the good effect is intended. To abandon any conditional intent to retaliate in kind might be a significant modification of present U.S. policy. At best, that policy is to put off the final decision until the ultimate test. I think that this modification is crucial for a logical, i.e., consistent, reconstruction of the bishops' position. It is implied by the statement that "nuclear deterrence exists only to prevent the *use* of nuclear weapons by others . . . we must continually say 'no' to the idea of nuclear war."³⁸ It accords with the claim that no use may be intended which would violate the principle of proportionality.³⁹ It also explains some of their specific recommendations. For example, the bishops oppose the deployment of the MX missile. Their explicit rationale is in terms of destabilization.⁴⁰ A further reason is that fixed based ICBMs are a clear target which might attract enemy fire. If there is an enemy attack, then we must use them immediately or lose them. There is practically no time for deliberation. Hence their deployment seems to constitute a conditional intent to use. The bishops also recommend that nuclear weapons be removed from areas where they are likely to be overrun in the early stages of war.⁴¹ Again, the rationale is that such placement seems to be a conditional intent to use. Quick battlefield decisions might have to be made about use or loss to the enemy.

3) The bad effects are not chosen as means to the good effects. The U.S. is not "holding innocent people hostage" in order to deter their leaders from behaving immorally. Our weapons are aimed only at military targets. If these targets could be hit without inflicting significant civilian casualties, this would be welcomed. Recent Soviet history indicates that threats directed at their military bases and military industry are more effective than threats against their cities anyway. Furthermore, no war-fighting strategy with nuclear weapons is permissible.⁴² It is not permissible to plan to retaliate in order to deter further attacks.

³⁸ Ibid., no. 188.

³⁹ Ibid., Summary iii.

⁴⁰ Ibid., no. 190.

⁴¹ Ibid., no. 191.

⁴² Ibid., no. 188.

4) The good effects are commensurate with the bad effects. This presupposes that the bad effects are not so horrible as to make calculation morally repugnant.⁴³ This condition of the double-effect strategy is the most problematic in regard to our policy of nuclear deterrence. We are making decisions about deterrence under extreme uncertainty. We simply do not know what would happen if a nuclear weapon were fired against us. We do not know what the chances are that our policy of deterrence might lead to the firing of a nuclear weapon. Given the potential for disaster, the fundamental moral imperative is to use the peace of a sort which we enjoy to work desperately to extricate ourselves from our nuclear-deterrence predicament.⁴⁴ This seems justifiable only because the risks associated with unilateral disarmament are likewise significant. The freedom of entire peoples, especially small nations that depend upon us for protection, would be jeopardized if we conceded nuclear dominance to the Soviets.⁴⁵ We are justified in temporarily remaining in this occasion of terrible sin only because there is no alternative without dire consequences upon our human and spiritual values.

THE CHALLENGE: AUTONOMY WITHOUT THREATS

The bishops have taken a morally consistent and prudent stand on the puzzling dilemma of nuclear deterrence. On the one hand, they reject nuclear deterrence as a permanent military policy. Even if deterrence were limited to small, precisely targeted weapons, the dangers associated with accident, mistake, irrational use, and escalation in case of use are excessive. On the other hand, temporary use of deterrence is necessary for defense. In the words of the bishops, "The moral duty today is to prevent nuclear war from ever occurring *and* to protect and preserve those key values of justice, freedom, and independence which are necessary for personal dignity and national integrity."⁴⁶

The demand for immediate unilateral disarmament would destabilize our balance of terror and lead to pragmatic surrender.⁴⁷ If the Soviets

⁴³ The claim that dangers associated with our nuclear deterrence strategy are so extreme that it is a moral outrage which needs to be stopped immediately is defended by George F. Kennan, "A Christian's View of the Arms Race," *Theology Today* 39 (1982) 162-70, and Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York, N.Y.: Avon, 1982). Alternatively, it is argued that the small risk of nuclear holocaust is more or less balanced by the larger risk of a lesser, yet significant disaster, viz., Soviet domination. Hence continuation of deterrence seems rational to avoid disastrous consequences. See Gregory Kavka, "Deterrence, Utility, and Rational Choice," *Theory and Decision* 12 (1980) 41-60.

⁴⁴ *The Challenge of Peace*, no. 170.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 174.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 175.

⁴⁷ See Mack, "Moral Basis of National Defense" 23-25.

were to achieve clear first-strike capacity, they would, no doubt, ask for "co-operation" in the form of tribute. Resistance would be met by force, including perhaps the use of small nuclear weapons as well as invasion and occupation. The long-term prospects of unilateral disarmament would probably be comparable to Eastern European satellization. According to Germain Grisez, "if we were to dismantle our strategic deterrent, I do not doubt that the U.S.S.R. would reduce us and other Western nations to puppet states. The U.S.S.R. surely also would take the steps necessary, even including wars of terrible destruction, to dominate both present and potential competition, such as China."⁴⁸ We are not sure that unilateral disarmament will lead to such horrible consequences. But odds are that the Soviets would exploit a position of unrivaled superiority.

Consider the following model of our deterrence dilemma.⁴⁹ Due to *foolish* behavior in the past, you are gun barrel to gun barrel against a dreaded enemy in a small room filled with children. The enemy cannot be trusted to keep his word. If you lower your gun, it is practically certain that you will lose your life, and children close to you will also be shot. If you attempt to maintain the threat indefinitely, sooner or later you or your antagonist will break; and so much the worse for everyone in the room. It is not enough to pledge that you will fire only at the enemy; the others are too close. The moral and prudential imperative is to come up with a plan whereby you both disarm simultaneously. There is no reasonable alternative.

The bishops have made a sensible proposal to deal with our nuclear dilemma, viz., reduce our deterrent threat to a bare minimum and bargain desperately to eliminate nuclear weapons. Their proposal can be consistently reconstructed to accord with traditional natural-law and just-war principles. Their recommendation will not guarantee the avoidance of nuclear war. That will require a good deal of luck—and perhaps the intervention of a benevolent God.

University of San Diego

JAMES W. MCGRAY

⁴⁸ Germain Grisez, "The Moral Implications of a Nuclear Deterrent," *The Center Journal* 2 (1982) 16. Grisez does not think that such consequences are relevant to the justification of nuclear deterrence.

⁴⁹ The model is adapted from an example used by Kavka, "Nuclear Deterrence" 123–24.