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## Nuclear Deterrence and Just War Theory

Abstract: The just war tradition stands as the moral and prudential alternative to both pacifism and realism. It forms the only reasonable ethical basis for the understanding of state initiated force. As applied to questions of nuclear deterrence, just war theory is incompatible with Mutual Assured Destruction and with the threat of MAD. Just war theory entails a move toward counterforce with discriminate targeting of military capabilities and away from city targeting. This is now becoming possible technically and is morally indicated. The counterforce option is realistic in that nuclear disarmament is an extremely remote possibility and alternate strategies such as bluff are not workable. A counterforce strategy would be both discriminate and proportional as well as being in accord with political realism.

### I.

The question of the morality of nuclear deterrence has been much debated in the United States over the past twenty years. Recently the discussion has intensified with the development of more accurate missiles such as cruise which are difficult to detect, and of the proposal to establish a defensive ABM shield around the United States.

This paper will survey the main points of the debate from the perspective of just war theory. This perspective is central to the debate partly because it captures a moral consensus in the West, and partly because the main provisions of just war theory are contained in international law. We will, therefore, begin with a summary of just war provisions and an analysis of supposed alternatives to it. From this general background we will then consider the various ways in which just war arguments apply to the question of nuclear deterrence.

The ethical basis of just war theory is the recognition that life is a basic human value, the taking of which requires justification. To destroy human life is to damage something which is self-evidently worth having for its own sake. Such destruction is permissible only when life and the rights which accompany it are under attack. Central to just war theory is the

idea that nothing justifies the actual use of force except aggression but even then force cannot be used against any target whatever nor in any quantity whatever. Thus the principles of just war theory are normally divided into two parts: 1) questions having to do with the just initiation of combats and 2) questions having to do with how combatants ought to behave once war is undertaken. These principles may be outlined in the following way.

### BELLUM JUSTUM

#### Jus ad Bellum

- I. Last resort.
- II. Declared by legitimate authority.
- III. Morally justifiable:
  - A. Defense against aggression.
  - B. Correction of an injustice that has gone uncorrected by legitimate authority.
  - C. Establishment of justice.
  - D. War must have the intention of bringing about peace.

#### Jus in Bello

- I. Proportionality: The quantity of force employed or threatened must always be morally proportionate to the threat.
- II. Discrimination: Force must never be applied in such a way as to make non-combatants and innocent persons the intentional objects of attack. The only appropriate targets in war are combatants. In war, non-combatant deaths may be accepted in proportionate numbers collateral to the pursuit of a legitimate military target, but non-combatants may never be themselves the target.

The doctrine of the just war intends to stand as the moral and prudential alternative to two unacceptable alternatives - pacifism and realism. The pacifist alternative is rejected primarily because it elevates a single value (life) to a position of paramountcy. Just War theory follows an essentially Aristotelian approach to ethics, arguing that there are many goods and that these goods are incommensurable. This means that while life is indeed a value, it is not reasonable to argue that all other values (liberty, friendship, etc.) always be sacrificed to preserve life. The pacifist's single minded commitment to preserving life at all costs radically downgrades other values. In addition to this it can also be argued that the pacifist does not provide any justification for his claim that saving life is paramount and that even if pacifism were adopted there is no guarantee that it would, in fact, have the ethically desirable consequences which its proponents advertise.

Non-violent resistance may be an appropriate tactic under some circumstances but under others it may involve negating the very values it seeks to preserve. Thus pacifism might have been appropriate against the British in India in 1946 or as part of the American civil rights movement of the 1960's but hardly against a Hitler or a Stalin. Indeed, for these tyrants the very non-violence of the pacifists would signal their inferiority.

Pacifism is essentially an 'other-worldly' doctrine which, despite some domestic successes, is irrelevant to the area of international relations. It is for this reason that many states are willing to exempt pacifists from military service. The pacifist objection to all war, regardless of the causes and conditions, is no real threat to the political policies of any state, unlike the possibility of selective objection built into just war theory.

The polar alternative to pacifism is realism, the view that state interest predominates and overrides moral considerations in calculations about the use of force. For realists, state interest is in no way constrained by moral considerations or any other 'inherent' principle. States may do whatever they conceive to be in their interests. In Hobbesian terms, international society is a "state of nature" or the "war of all against all". Thus in the absence of a universal sovereign, international law is always superseded by domestic law. For realists, just war theory is self-contradictory in admitting that states have interests but in denying them the means to defend those interests.

Just war theorists do indeed grant that states have their own interests but they will deny that moral restraints are incompatible with such interests. Rather the very notion of a "state interest" entails that if force is used it will be in pursuit of some policy which seeks the good of that state. To that extent, force will be restrained by the aims of the policy itself. Indeed, war as a social activity is itself a restraint on absolute force. This is surely part of the meaning of the Clausewitzian idea that war is a continuation of statecraft by other means. As a political program with any claim to be serving the interests of its constituents will not be usefully advanced by means which are likely to counter the policy, the use of force will be constrained by the shape of the policy and by the desired long term effects of any use of force. Moreover, war is itself a purposive social activity (unlike riot) which is rule governed internally and externally and thus is inherently a restrained use of force. The emergence historically of conventions governing the initiation and prosecution of war such as declarations of war, armistice, prisoner of war conventions, etc. attest to the recognition that war ought to be a restrained as possible and that the best way of doing this is to insist that war be justified and that it be fought by uniformed and armed combatants. In short, just war theory argues that while states may well be the final judges of their interests,

states cannot be said to have any interests which can be satisfied only by the resort to any means whatever. A 'policy' entails a political society, a moral community guided by reason and prudence. If war is an act and an instrument of policy, then it will be minimally restrained by those underlying principles. A realism which understands war simply in terms of available means is ultimately 'unrealistic'.

Bernard Brodie has succinctly put this point in a discussion of morality and state interest:

"While morality by its very nature must be finally justified entirely on its own terms, it is not amiss to remind ourselves that especially in this world of rapid and abundant communications, any of our policies abroad that are either conspicuously immoral to begin with or likely to lapse into behavior that can easily be so labelled, whether justly or not so justly, is likely to prove quite inexpedient and ultimately self-defeating." (Brodie 1983, 376)

The futility of detaching war from political aims is obvious. But once political aims become the guiding principle behind the use of force then we inevitably begin to think beyond the battle-field to the shape of things after the fighting, of what sort of world we want to live in as a result of our decision to go to war. We will also be brought, for prudential reasons, to reflect upon the way our conduct of hostilities will be perceived by other nations (including our enemies). And we will adopt a flexible response with respect to escalation as well as a willingness to maintain a degree of diplomatic contact. In other words, to adopt the viewpoint of political realism will be to find ourselves asking the kinds of questions raised by just war theory. Political realism, so understood, and just war theory are different sides of the same coin. I am not arguing that state interest and moral principle are identical. Rather, when rulers begin to think about statecraft in terms of their long range interests (with respect to war) they will inevitably articulate these interests using a set of questions like those which make just war theory.

If we reject pacifism and if political realism entails ultimate moral considerations, then we will be left with understanding questions of international violence from the perspective of just war theory. That is, we are required to justify the use of force as a defense of life and rights and to exercise force with discrimination and proportionality.

While the just war theory has its roots in the Christian tradition and in the peculiarly Christian problem of the alleged pacifism of its founder, it should be clear that the theory is a consequence of the international system and of morality as such. So while many just war theorists to operate out of a religious tradition, by no means all do. Two well known examples are Walzer (1977) and Phillips (1984). Walzer's is a conventional-

ist account derived from a theory of rights while my own interpretation of just war theory is based on a theory of basic human values. In addition, the essential features of just war theory have passed into the usages of international law and into the rules for warfare of the various civilized states. In conclusion, for those wishing to participate in the public debate on international violence, there really is no alternative to articulating these issues in terms of some version of just war theory.

## II.

It is now frequently claimed that nuclear weapons and the accompanying strategy of nuclear deterrence has rendered the just war theory obsolete. This is a grave charge but one which seems to me essentially incoherent. Nuclear weapons do represent a novel and terrifying development in the history of international violence, but as a form of state initiated armed force they demand the same kind of scrutiny and moral appraisal as any other kind of weapons system. In this section we will look at the moral issues surrounding deterrence from the just war perspective.

Questions of the morality of deterrence cannot be considered in the abstract but must be seen in the context of the history of the idea. In particular, we must recall that the decision to produce nuclear weapons was based on a moral argument which ran directly counter to a key provision of just war theory: The principle of discrimination which is categorical within the theory. Discrimination is an application to war of the categorical prohibition against murder. While the death of innocent persons may be accepted incidentally to an attack upon a legitimate military target, innocent people may never be directly targeted. The principle of double-effect is employed here to articulate the moral difference between intending the death of an innocent person and accepting the death of an innocent person as a collateral effect of attempting to bring about a good. This distinction relies heavily upon the intention of the agent as double effect excuses agents from blame even though they may have foreknowledge of the death of innocent people. Just war theory argues that the distinction between murder and acceptable or collateral civilian damage is morally acceptable and reasonable. If we are never allowed to place innocent lives at risk for a good cause, then most social activities would be impossible. For example, the activities of police, fire, and rescue services presuppose foreknown 'accidents' where innocent people will be the victims of efforts by these services to save lives. But would anyone seriously suggest that such inadvertent deaths were equivalent to murder? The principle of discrimination, then, prohibits direct targeting of innocent people but permits a degree of incidental or collateral damage.

Complementing the principle of discrimination is the principle of proportionality. Proportionality specifies that even after reasonable efforts are made to practice discriminate targeting, if the means used are sufficiently crude to cause the death of non-combatants out of proportion to the threat to the attacker, such means are not permitted. It should be obvious that nuclear weapons directly challenge both discrimination and proportionality and this is the basis for the claim that as such weapons are a fact of life, just war theory is irrelevant.

It is pointless to discuss deterrence without understanding its evolutionary character, its history. The nuclear problem did not begin in 1945 but in 1940 with the decision first by the British and then by the Germans and the Americans, to abandon the traditional rules of bombardment and to attack the 'morale' of enemy civilians by targeting them directly. Such policies were, in the beginning, concealed by euphemisms such as 'de-housing', but by 1944 terrorism had become official policy. The Americans carried this to Japan from 1944 on with a series of massive incendiary raids on Japanese cities. By the time the atomic bomb was dropped, it could be seen as no more than a large version of what had been standard policy for the previous three years.

The 1940 decision of the various combatants to abandon restraint was based on a consequentialist mode of ethical thinking: The destruction of the evil regimes of Germany and Japan justified the intentional destruction of innocent people. It is impossible in the confines of this paper to refute ethical consequentialism but suffice to say, 1) consequentialism runs directly counter to the provisions of just war theory and 2) the real consequence of WW II saturation bombing is the nuclear confrontation. For if in a good cause we are permitted to murder some innocent people, why not all of them? Nuclear weapons provide the means of doing this. Thus nuclear weapons were not by any means 'inevitable', somehow a necessary consequence of onrushing technology. Nor are they evil in themselves as some arms control advocates seem to imply. Nuclear weapons of the multi megaton variety represent a human choice to employ terror and to shift away from both just war theory and international law. But what is shifted one way can perhaps be returned if we keep clearly before us the fact that nuclear weapons are human inventions and human deployments, not some supernatural evil falling from above.

It is not surprising that the nuclear era was ushered in on a wave of consequentialist arguments. In the postwar era cost constraints on conventional forces plus a naive faith in the threat of nuclear war to preserve the peace led first to the strategy of massive retaliation and then to Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). The idea here was that by threatening to respond massively to any nuclear attack, both sides would be deterred from starting nuclear war. This strategy presupposed that both sides

would leave themselves vulnerable to devastating attack from the other, thus assuring that MAD would work. Both the threat and the possibility of nuclear holocaust were accepted on consequentialist grounds: The goal of preserving peace (and, incidentally, saving money) justified the threat and the risk. By the 1960's it became clear that the threat to destroy the world was not a credible deterrent to anything short of an equivalent threat. An attack by the Soviet army or an attack by the soviets with one or two missiles could not be deterred by massive retaliation or, indeed, even a lesser countervalue strike. At this point the counterforce doctrine briefly took center stage. Attacks upon the enemy's war making capacity had always been an integral part of our deterrence posture, but now it moved to center stage as part of a strategy of 'flexible response'. Morally speaking, counterforce seemed to be an improvement over MAD in that it was directed at the military forces and support facilities of the Soviet Union. Soviet cities were no longer targeted as such. Indeed, the targeting strategy of counterforce is, in principle, a moral advance over MAD in that it seeks discrimination. However, it was generally conceded or concluded in the 1970's and early 1980's that despite this moral advantage, counterforce was no improvement because there were so many counterforce targets that such a strike would run afoul of the principle of proportionality. It was argued that to hit the 14,000 or so counterforce targets in the Soviet Union would duplicate the damage of a countervalue strike and so no moral capital could be made here.

In response to this apparent dilemma, proposals for either a nuclear freeze or reduction of weapons to the level of a minimal deterrent were the only alternatives for many strategists. Both of these alternatives envisioned a continuation of a deterrence strategy, however, and this was seen by many as increasingly objectionable on moral grounds. The focus of the debate turned more and more on the morality of deterrence itself and this is currently where the matter stands. I now turn to an examination of these arguments.

The claim that our present deterrence strategy is immoral rises from the argument that if it is immoral to use nuclear weapons against innocent people, it is also wrong to threaten their use, either in a first strike or in retaliation for a first strike. In particular, this argument intends to demonstrate that our present deterrence posture is incompatible with the just war principles of discrimination and proportionality: If it is wrong to commit murder it is wrong threaten murder in the sense of seriously intending it. If deterrence is morally wrong then we ought to stop doing it, perhaps unilaterally. Again, the moral rejection of deterrence covers both countervalue and counterforce. To threaten massive retaliation or city strikes is to intend mass murder and to threaten a significant counterforce strike is to intend the disproportionate 'collateral' destruction of innocent life.

There are several replies which have been made to this challenge by defenders of deterrence in an effort to stay within the framework of the categorical prohibitions of just war theory.

### 1) Bluff

Under a strategy of bluff we would act as if we were fully committed to deterrence, but if we were actually attacked we would not retaliate on the grounds that as deterrence had failed, our response would be merely revenge. Nothing of moral or political significance would be achieved by our retaliation as our country would be destroyed in any event. Bluff may or may not be accompanied by a rejection of no first use. Bluff would represent a policy of intentional deception. Thus, we could retain nuclear weapons as a deterrence since the physical fact of their deployment would prevent the Soviets from attacking, while maintaining moral respectability. Under bluff strategies one 'threatens' while having no intention of following through. We would be able to circumvent the problem of immoral threats by simply not threatening, but only pretending to.

Now it is certainly possible to bluff in this way without moral stigma. There is nothing wrong with uttering threats of evil as long as we do not intend to carry them out. If in order to save the life of a kidnap victim, I threaten to kill the kidnapper's family, I have surely done no wrong as long as I do not intend to actually kill them. Or I may surely display an unloaded gun in order to deter would be criminals. The problem comes in applying these simple examples to the real world of deterrence. The central problem involves intention. The President might make a personal decision to bluff in this matter but how could we be certain that he meant it? Indeed, how could he be certain that he would not change his mind later on? This problem is compounded by the virtual impossibility of guaranteeing that his successors in office would continue the strategy of bluffing. Even if the national leader is bluffing, his subordinates down the chain of command certainly are not. They are trained to launch upon receiving appropriate orders and some of them possess independent launch capabilities in an emergency. If the President is dead or incapacitated, those further down the chain will have responsibility devolved upon them. It would be unrealistic to suppose that all these people might somehow be brought into the conspiracy to bluff the Soviets. The problem with bluff is that it can never be more than a private decision of this or that national leader when what is required for moral respectability is a national policy which is both bi-partisan and ongoing. This would, however, be incompatible with the high degree of secrecy necessary to make the strategy work.

### 2) Deterrence without immoral threats

Versions of this view have been put forward by various philosophers and theologians. Perhaps the most cogent example is James Sterba's How to



Achieve Nuclear Deterrence Without Threatening Nuclear Destruction (Sterba 1985). Sterba proposes that we merely possess a minimal nuclear arsenal (perhaps our submarine fleet) which could survive a Soviet first strike. We then announce to the world that (a) we have such a force and (b) that given standard theories of state interest, to threaten nuclear retaliation would definitely be in our interest, but (c) in fact we refuse to actually threaten retaliation because under present conditions such means cannot be morally justified. Thus, we retain a deterrent capacity while refusing to threaten with it.

Let us ignore the serious problem that technology does not stand still and therefore any 'minimal' deterrent strategy can probably be circumvented. Even so, Sterba's view has problems similar to the bluff proposal. First, in what sense could it become national policy? Suppose the American president were to announce to the world that under no circumstances would the US ever use nuclear weapons. If the weapons continued to be deployed in a MAD configuration (as they must to achieve deterrence) why should the Soviets, or the American people, for that matter, believe him? How could this policy be made binding upon his successors? Legislation would be of no value, for on Sterba's plan the president must always have the option of changing his mind, otherwise the deployed weapons have no deterrent value. Sterba's argument does not succeed because his leader must threaten that any first strike might be met with retaliation against Soviet cities. But this is really a description of MAD as it is actually supposed to function. No one, in fact, knows for certain what the president would do in the event of an attack. But as long as weapons are aimed at the Soviet Union and at the United States, no one can afford to take a chance. It is the deployment of the weapons in a MAD configuration and their capacity to be launched by the president which achieves deterrence. Deterrence occurs not in virtue of what the national leader says, but because of what he is able to do, and therein lies the threat. Any nation in the position of having only a MAD deployment will be said by critics of deterrence to be threatening unwarranted destruction no matter what the public pronouncements of the national leader. One has only to ask Sterba if he would feel any less 'threatened' if the Soviet leadership announced that they were deploying MAD but had no intention of using it because of moral objections even though they would be justified under current doctrines of state interest? I suggest that no one would sleep any more soundly as a result of such a bizarre pronouncement.

In sum, efforts to retain offensive deterrence while avoiding the stigma of threatening evil are not fully convincing. This has led some to a rejection of deterrence altogether. Two of the most important arguments in this tradition come from the Christian Church. I will consider the position of the Roman Catholic and the Methodist churches in this matter (Bishops 1982; Bishops 1986).

### 3) Temporary acceptance of deterrence

The classic statement of this view is the U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops', The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and our Response. As adherents of just war theory the bishops predictably reject use of nuclear weapons against population centers as indiscriminate. They also have serious reservations about counterforce on the grounds of proportionality, and they endorse a policy of no first use. On the crucial question of deterrence, they condemn it as involving immoral threats but they reject unilateral disarmament. Their acceptance of deterrence is thus conditional upon serious and ultimately successful efforts to achieve multi-lateral disarmament. Unilateral disarmament is rejected because it might result in nuclear blackmail or the use of a limited nuclear strike. What the bishops do rule out is any enhancement of deterrence in the form of weapons which would render the other side's retaliatory force vulnerable. This conditional acceptance of deterrence also entails that the members of the nuclear club move immediately to ban the production of new weapons systems and take steps to reduce existing stocks. In sum, the bishops end up with a conditional acceptance of a minimal deterrence strategy coupled with arms control.

In In Defense of Creation, the Methodist Bishops take a much stronger line against deterrence, a strategy which they call "idolatrous".

"It is the idolatrous connection between the ideology of deterrence and the existence of the weapons themselves that must be broken. Deterrence must no longer receive the church's blessing, even as a temporary warrant for the maintenance of nuclear weapons." (Bishops 1986, 48)

But having said this, the Methodists, like their Roman Catholic counterparts, reject unilateral disarmament.

"We believe that neither the US nor any other nuclear power can extricate itself unilaterally from all nuclear perils. Indeed, total and immediate nuclear disarmament by the US might well tempt other countries to develop or expand their own arsenals, thereby increasing the risk of nuclear war." (Bishops 1986, 48-49)

Thus, the Methodists are, despite their ringing denunciation of deterrence, in essential agreement with the Catholics:

- 1) Conditional acceptance of minimal deterrence dependent upon serious advances in arms control.
- 2) Rejection of unilateral disarmament.

While this may appear a reasonable and attractive stance, there are grave problems with it, both from the perspective of just war theory and from the nature of deterrence itself. There are basically two problems:

1) On the questions of means, just war theory is categorical. Rejection of direct attacks upon innocent people is derived from biblical commands prohibiting murder. Therefore, a serious intent to use nuclear weapons in a countervalue strike can only be understood as a serious intention to commit murder. No kind of consequentialist bargaining is really possible within just war theory, for if a certain means is murderous, it simply must not be used. Yet both the Catholics and the Methodists appear to employ purely consequentialist arguments: Unilateral disarmament is calculated to have worse future consequences than the present evil of deterrence. Or, to put it differently, the bishops are willing (albeit 'temporarily') to seriously intend the destruction of a known good in order to bring about net beneficial consequences. But this is to 'do evil that good may come of it', something which is forbidden by both just war theory and the biblical tradition upon which condemnation of nuclear weapons is based.

2) By conditionally accepting deterrence, both the Catholics and the Methodists are committed to a workable deterrent. But as deterrence is not an objective property of the weapons themselves but rather a psychological matter of persuading one's opponent to do or to refrain from doing something, there can be no arbitrary point at which it is possible to know whether deterrence has been achieved. The bishops' demand for a minimal deterrent as a prelude to disarmament weakens deterrence itself and might well bring about that very war which they seek to avoid. So the dilemma here is that a strategy of minimal deterrence (or a nuclear freeze) prevents enhancement of deterrence and thereby undermines it, yet the bishops require a stable deterrence as a prelude to disarmament. I see no way around this contradiction.

### III.

It should be obvious from our survey that just war theory is simply not compatible with countervalue nuclear configurations, whether massive retaliation or minimal deterrent. The fact of MAD cannot in any reasonable way be squared with morality. The bishops seem to think that this entails getting rid of nuclear weapons. But such a goal is really quite unrealistic - nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented.

I suggest that what is entailed by morality and reality is a concerted and consistent move away from countervalue in any of its forms and toward an ever more precise and less destructive counterforce strategy. The goal is not to abolish MAD but to make it irrelevant by moving beyond it, not to the never-never land of arms control, but to counterforce. Now the crucial fact is that the move to counterforce is in fact what is actually happening in deterrence strategy, and has been happening for some time. The growth in the number of nuclear launchers and warheads in this

decade, a matter of alarm for the bishops and many others, is actually the extremely hopeful indication of a gradual shift away from the targeting of cities. The targets are now the missile bases, submarine installations, communications centers, and other aspects of the opponent's war making capacity. The proposed SDI (Star Wars) is a logical extension of this development: Weapons killing weapons and not people. Our current deterrence posture is as follows: The United States seeks to deter the vast Soviet conventional armies by targeting their war making capacity with very precise weapons. The Soviets in turn are forced to deter our missiles and we, in response, must protect these missiles by both offensive and defensive measures. All of these measures, on both sides, are counterforce.

As we have seen in our survey, counterforce is routinely rejected because of disproportionate casualties which are supposed to accompany it. However, once again, the actual development of contemporary deterrence strategy confounds these fears. Both sides are fully aware that city destruction directly aimed at or 'collaterally' produced would nullify all political goals including strategy itself. This is why there is a consistent move away from weapons which are likely to produce civilian casualties in any significant numbers. Edward Luttwak puts this point clearly:

"Because of the goals now pursued, intercontinental nuclear weapons, contrary to widespread belief, are steadily becoming less destructive in gross explosive power. The goal of each side is to make the forces more accurate and more controllable so that they can destroy small and well protected targets, and no more. During the 1960's, the United States was still producing weapons of 5 and 9 megatons, while the Soviet Union was producing 20 megaton warheads; nowadays, most new American warheads have yields of less than half a megaton, while most Soviet warheads are below one megaton. As new weapons replace old, the total destructive power of the two intercontinental arsenals is steadily declining. (A 'freeze', incidentally, would put an end to that process.)" (Luttwak 1985, 123)

This is an extremely clear and accurate description of the state of current nuclear strategy. Based on these developments toward highly accurate, low yield counterforce, I suggest that we might project a future when miniaturized conventional explosives may replace nuclear warheads, thus eliminating the threat of radiation damage to civilian populations. If that happens, we will have returned war to a trial of strength between combatants. Of course, city destruction will always remain a possibility. Cities are likely to remain undefended and therefore extremely vulnerable. But such vulnerability is made morally and strategically irrelevant by the shift to counterforce. As I indicated earlier, MAD is not so much repudiated as simply abandoned.

In conclusion, the development of nuclear strategy as outlined above is entailed by just war theory as a moral imperative to use force only against

the war making capacity of the opponent and to use it in measures of maximum discrimination and proportion. Second, the shift to highly accurate low yield counterforce conforms to the claims of just war theory to articulate the prudential interests of modern states. For, moral questions aside, it simply cannot be in the interests of any state to adopt a strategy which threatens the end of strategy or a policy which if enacted would negate policy itself. Faced with this absurdity, states have found a way between the balance of terror, on the one hand, and the fantasies of universal nuclear disarmament, on the other.

There are those who will argue that counterforce as described will make war between the superpowers more likely because it precisely does not threaten total destruction. This is certainly a possibility, but it is one which should be preferable morally and prudentially to MAD. Counterforce will, however, carry significant deterrent weight of its own. If the Soviets know that we are able to destroy their war making capacity in a second strike, they are no more likely to undertake war in this case than under MAD. But if they do, the results will be far less catastrophic. The practical imperative here is that we persevere in the move toward counterforce while avoiding the blandishments of 'arms control' proposals which would place us in a morally untenable position of threatening innocent people and in the grave practical predicament of having no effective deterrent against overwhelming Soviet conventional forces.

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