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Reason and Morality in the Age of Nuclear Deterrence

Abstract: The argument in this paper is that although rationality and morality are distinguishable concepts, there is nevertheless a rational morality, a set of principles, namely, which it is rational of all to require of all. The argument of this paper is that such a morality would certainly issue in a general condemnation of aggressive war. (Whether this also makes it irrational for States to engage in such activities is another, and not entirely settled, matter.) Correlatively, it would issue in a strong right of defense. Would this right be sufficient to include resort to nuclear deterrence, if need be? It is argued that the answer must be in the affirmative - although the question of 'need' is by no means settled in current circumstances.

1. Background

There is a certain optimism implicit in the title of this paper - not by virtue of my using the notions of "reason" and of "morality" in the same breath with that of nuclear deterrence, but rather in the commonly used expression "nuclear deterrence" itself. The idea that nuclear weapons are here only to deter is definitely optimistic. Were some holders of nuclear weapons to have radically differing purposes - madmen intent on blowing us all to bits due to some inner hang-up, or nations bent on enslaving us all, that sort of thing - then we should have cause for even more alarm than has been manifest among sensitive people for the past several decades. If, however, these awesome weapons are indeed here only to deter aggression, then there is at least ground for hope. Or at least there is if we we can find a tolerably clear and not too ideologically loaded notion of "aggression".

Now, both of the sides in today's world do make this claim. If you ask either side why it has these weapons, it will say, "because we must prevent the other side from committing aggression". Neither will allow that its utilization of so much megatonnage is for any other purpose, purposes such as the aforementioned, say, or that of bringing the entire world within the embrace of its own political system or empire, or whatever. These are roundly disavowed. So far, so good.

Analyse & Kritik 10 (1988), S. 206–232

There is admittedly room to question the rationality of using nuclear weapons for purposes of conquest. The lesson of Chernobyl is itself sufficient to give pause to any nation imagining that it would have anything to gain by actually using such weapons. At best, it might have something to gain by threatening to use them on a recalcitrant victim. But the threat, upon closer inspection, would likely prove idle. This doubtful rationality of aggressive use of nuclear weapons doubtless contributes to the plausibility of my proposing to accept, for present purposes, the claims of each great power that deterrence and not aggression is indeed its object in manufacturing, stockpiling, and deploying these weapons.

Once accepted, however, we must address the question whether the policies of those great powers make very much sense. If A claims that she is undertaking a certain set of actions only to be 'deterring' B, while B in turn insists that he is only 'deterring' A in undertaking a similar set of actions, there is a prima facie logical problem: what, then, does each have to deter? If A supposed that B was perfectly serious about this, and A was herself perfectly serious about her own intentions, it would seem that we should expect A to cease engaging in the actions in question.

Clearly we have a problem of credibility here, at least. Apparently neither A nor B really does believe what each claims to believe. Of course the sheer existence of a sizable nuclear force complete with missiles to deliver them is rather threatening in itself; the perception that somebody else has such a thing is bound to be some cause for alarm. But nor is it plausible to suppose that either of today's great powers is quite sure of the opposite supposition: namely, that the other is just waiting to pounce the moment it has the chance. In various respects, their behavior does not reflect that assumption - though it sometimes comes closer than one would like. Meanwhile, it is of interest to ask what the major powers should be doing in the present circumstances, supposing that their professions of fundamentally peaceful interest are sincere.

Why is this of interest? After all, are not sovereign nations notoriously indifferent to 'moral' considerations? Are we not forced to recognize that States will do what they conceive to be in their interests, and that is that? Is it not, therefore, futile to engage in any sort of ethical consideration of such problems as this?

It does behoove us to be clear about the answers to these questions. I shall suggest that their air of challenge to inquiries such as this is not as impressive as may seem. Roughly, my reply is that yes, States will indeed - in some sense - do what they conceive to be in their interests, but also that we should not hastily add, "And that's that!". In fact, that is not that. To recognize such truth as there is in this ancient cliché is to begin the discussion, not to end it.

As a matter of fact, States sometimes have reacted quite specifically to what they conceive to be moral considerations, just as have individuals. The "what they conceive to be" qualification is important. It is independently rather plausible, it is widely claimed, and I will certainly assume, that at least some States, perhaps including the Superpowers of today, do genuinely differ to some degree in their moral views. The extent of this variation, however, is important. For the view I shall propose here is that so long as this variation is kept within certain very, very broad limits, we can identify a sort of 'super-morality' which all parties have good reason to accept, and therefore to which all may rationally appeal. Moreover, I believe that this is to a considerable degree recognized in the actual relations among States today - though in some cases the recognition is too nearly on the level of 'lip service'. But I don't think that the current Superpowers are as guilty as some others in this respect. Which again means, I believe, that there is hope.

2. Rationality

In asking for a characterization of 'rational morality' - a set of principles that is both recognizably rational and recognizably moral - many will suppose that we set ourselves an impossible task. Either, they say, we will come up with something that requires an idiosyncratic and question-begging view of rationality, or we will do the same with our proposals about morality, or both. That is the challenge. Nevertheless, I think it can be met, and that the characterization I shall offer involves no unacceptable 'fudging' with either notion. Nor is my characterization original, going back as it does in some respects to Hobbes and Hume, and leaning especially heavily on the recent work of David Gauthier (1986).

First, let us look at the notion of rationality, in its practical department. Here we are content with the standard current account in the social sciences (insofar as there is one): to be rational is to order one's actions in such a way as to maximize the realization on one's considered preferences, or in short, one's interests. We can characterize 'interests' here quite broadly. Indeed, it would be equally satisfactory here to use the term "values", so long as we understand by this those states of affairs to which the agent whose rationality is in question attaches value, rather than those states of affairs which really are valuable whatever the agent might think. There are, of course, many and serious questions for any agent to address in this latter regard (some provocative questions are raised about this matter in Bond 1983). Do some of one's preferences need adjustment, somehow? Have we given various areas of our lives enough attention? How do we balance the long run against the short run? But the characterization of reason here does not require that we resolve such problems. They can, instead, be viewed as personal problems for the agent. At any given time, we assume that our agent does have a set of

interests that afford a guide to action, and if that is lacking, then we simply have no way to appraise the actions of that agent in terms of their rationality or irrationality. If we wish to say that an agent who has absolutely no idea what to do because he has absolutely no idea what he wants is 'irrational', that is because we assume that there are possible conditions of that agent which he really does prefer, or would prefer if he knew what they were like. But an agent who has genuinely no idea what he wants would not appreciate the truth of any such claim, and if not, then while we may say, making an evaluation, that he is foolish, we can't really convict him usefully of irrationality. Nor, I hasten to add, is there any reason for theoretical concern about such a 'person'. He may safely be ignored.

This characterization also poses problems when we attempt to assess the rationality of the actions of States rather than individuals. Of course in the first instance the actions we can appraise are the actions of the State's agents and leaders. Just what the relation is between such actions and those of the State itself is not an easy matter to formulate; but what we can say is that if we know how to appraise the former set of actions sufficiently, we shall have whatever we could want regarding the latter. For when agents of States act, they act in what they take to be that State's interests, and if our assessment of their States' interests differs from their assessment, we shall have a situation analogous to the one with the fool above. Either those actors will not have taken sufficient account of the situation and so will not maximize the interests of their State as <u>they</u> see it; or it will simply come down to a difference of view of what that State <u>should</u> be striving for, in which case the suggestion that their agents are failing to act 'rationality' is not plausible.

Notice that our characterization of rationality has nothing 'moral' about it, one way or the other. We do not, for instance, assume that there is a Categorial Imperative at the heart of practical reason, commanding the agent to act contrary to his interests. We do not assume that the rational agent attaches equal weight to the similar interests of other agents or other beings generally. Nor do we assume that the rational agent would be anxious to march in step with the World Spirit. If morality is to turn out to be rational, on this view of rationality, it will not be because we have begged the question by building some view of morality in from the start.

3. <u>Morality</u>

What about Morality, then? To start, we must not identify the concept of morality with, for instance, that of practical rationality itself, as characterized above. This would be both redundant and implausible. Nor, however, do we want to identify it with any particular <u>view</u> of morality. We want an analysis of morality that, hopefully, will enable us to appraise

proposed moralities, but not one that is simply itself a morality. The proposed characterization is as follows. Morality, we say, is that set of principles for the guidance of everyone's behavior which (a) is to be authoritative in the sense of overriding individual interests if need be, and (b) is to be universally, informally reinforced in the group whose morality is in question. Thus the definition contains a variable ranging over 'groups', which determine who is 'everyone' for the purpose at hand. However, there is an important limiting case, the case where the group is simply everyone there is. Whether there can be such a universal morality is an important and discussable question relative to this definition; it does not presuppose an affirmative answer, but does not preclude it either.

Notice also that the characterization uses the expression "is to be", rather than simply "is", in its two clauses. We must be fairly precise about the sense of this phrase. First, it enables us to make a distinction between 'de facto' and 'de jure' morality. The actual morality of a group, if it has one, is identified with that set of principles which is in fact universally or near-universally reinforced in that group, of that morality which members of the group do actually aspire to or avow even if practice lags behind preaching. However, we may also think that the morality of some group, or of all humankind, can be improved, even relative to its aspirations as distinct from its practice. In that case, "is to be" indicates that the theorist whose proposal it is believes that she or he has found reasons why the members of that group should reinforce a different set of principles from those it currently does or currently aspires to.

Thus the project for a 'rational morality' is to identify reasons of the latter kind. But this brings up an important issue. My characterization of morality has been in terms of principles to be 'reinforced'. The scope for considerations of rationality here, therefore, is on the rationality of enforcing a given set of principles (not necessarily by force of arms; most moral reinforcement is, of course, verbal or on the level of 'body-language'). But what about the rationality of actually doing what those principles call upon one to do?

This is undoubtedly a very important question, and perhaps especially so in the present context, that of nuclear deterrence. My answer to it is slightly complex, but not, I think, devious. (I first represented this view in print in Narveson 1985a.) First, recall that the definition speaks in terms of universal reinforcement, in two respects: on the one hand, everyone is to participate in the various activities of 'reinforcement' - praise and blame, ordering and commending, rewarding and punishing, and so on; but also, these principles are (to be) directed at everyone's conduct; and of course one of those whose conduct is in question, therefore, is the agent himself. This calls for a word of explanation.

My formula is not intended to incorporate, as a part of its meaning, any further requirement of 'universalizability' of various kinds familiar in the philosophical literature (see Narveson 1985b). E.g., it does not mean that these principles may make no distinctions among races, sexes, classes, or for that matter individual persons, as a matter of 'logic'. An eligible candidate to consider as a moral principle, for instance, might be "Everyone is to do whatever promotes the maximum satisfaction of Jan Narveson" (familiar other candidates: the 'World Spirit', or 'The Proletariat'). These possible moral principles are not ruled out on grounds of meaning - but, as we will shortly see, they are rejected on the basis of their content. All such formulations will indeed be irrational moralities, but not logically incoherent moralities. That they are not excluded on the basis of meaning is evident, however, when we consider that it is quite conceivable that a certain group should all reinforce on everyone the requirement that they maximize the interests of some one person or small, arbitrarily chosen group of persons, or for that matter that they pay certain kinds of attention to a certain clump of Sacred Trees. Not only is this conceivable, but it is difficult to resist the conclusion that a fair number of human groups do actually have principles of some such sort.

Nevertheless, the person proposing a certain view of morality, a certain set of principles for universal observance and reinforcement, has a serious problem on her hands if she is at all serious about her proposal. For the reinforcement called for in our definition is, as I put it, 'informal'. We are not here speaking of the kind of reinforcement provided by the police or the army or, for that matter, the Supreme Politburo of Community Elders. We are speaking of reinforcement by everyone, and this consists of voluntary actions performed by individuals acting according to their various lights. Among these lights is sure to be at least a considerable residual amount of sheer self-interest, for instance. Thus when our hypothetical moral reformer comes along, urging all to kowtow to Herself or to part one's hair exclusively on the left, or to lick the boots of those with white skin, or whatever, what is she to do about those recalcitrant individuals who happen not to give a hoot about Herself or who happen to like parting their hair in the centre, or who have no particular affection for white-skinned persons? If they see no reason from their point of view to go along with the proposal, then, if they are rational, they simply won't. And that will be that for the proposed principle! In a large community of tolerably rational agents, proposals of any such sort have a very short life-expectancy.

Rationality on our characterization is essentially individual. All individuals will have interests that are substantially influenced by their social milieus, of course; and some will have interests so strongly identified with other group members as to encourage some philosophers to think that this shows 'individualism' to be an untenable and bizarre doctrine. The theory of

rationality proposed makes no assumptions about this. The fact is, of course, that people differ greatly in their interests, not only from individual to individual within virtually all groups, but still more notably from one group to another. The fact that rationality is individual in our characterization enables us to accomodate all these sorts - which indeed is a main part of the point of the characterization. Now the point is that if we are to propose a morality for a very large group, especially one composed of very diverse sub-groups - such as the Group of All Humans - then the proposal will have no hope of adoption if it does not also appeal to everyone. Which means that it must have the well-known features: it can't be biased in favor of some sub-group, for then it will lose appeal to the members of that group; it can't be biased in favor of any particular individual, such as the proposer herself, because many will have no particular interest in the well-being of that person; and so on. In fact, what will be required is that the principle be such as to recognize common interests. What might those be? And indeed, can we reasonably suppose that there are any?

The subject of 'common interests' must be treated with caution. What we have in mind here are interests which a number of different persons have in common, a concept which must not be confused with that of interests in 'the common', or the community. Thus in a certain community, a very few might be much interested in that community as such, while the majority simply don't care much about it (this was Galbraith's complaint about contemporary America). On the other hand, it is hard to see how someone could have a very plausible notion of community interests who did not suppose that most of the people in the community in question had an interest in what he proposed. But it may still be true that most people are not interested in their communities, even when its interest is so constituted.

The other point is that our common interests may be ones that don't outweigh our other interests. It may be that we could achieve something that we genuinely do want by uniting with our fellows in pursuit of a common interest; but what we thus achieve might also strike us, in balance, as not worth the trouble. Perhaps we could have a nice picnic together, but I would prefer even more to stay home and read a treatise on metaphysics. But if morality is to do what our definition requires, namely to provide plausible principles on the basis of which we can rationally override interests to the contrary, then they must be based on those common interests - if there are any - which outweigh any such contrary interests, in one way or another.

Now, one way in which they might do so is by simply being more important to us, individually considered, than the other interests with which they are inconsistent. I may much prefer the picnic to staying home, and so may you. If so, however, we would not need any moral

principles insisting, nagging, or bullying us into going on our picnic! Thus we cannot simply identify moral principles with principles bidding us to do what the common interest beckons us to do. In the face of some types of common interests, morality is superfluous.

Where, then, are such principles needed? Here we may look with profit at a particularly interesting and by now familiar, class of cases: those in which everyone's pursuing his own interest without regard to others will lead to our being worse off than we otherwise could be. The most important type is that exemplified by the Prisoner's Dilemma. This is the type of case where two or more parties are so related that their best outcomes, individually considered, are such that if both try to attain them, they end up worse off than they would in some other outcome that could be attained instead. Seeking the maximum, we end up worse off - not, indeed, with the minimum, but the next worst thing to it - when instead we could, by cooperating, have the next best thing. Yet in the absence of cooperation we will be strongly motivated to make the fatal move, for if we do not, we leave ourselves open to the worst outcome of all. In the classic story of 'The Prisoner's Dilemma', if prisoner A doesn't confess and Prisoner B does, A winds up with a long jail term and B with none at all; if both confess, both get shorter but still substantial jail terms; and if neither confesses, both end up with very short jail terms. No jail term at all would of course be best from the point of view of either individual, given their interests. But if both confess in the hope of achieving that best outcome, then both will endure a much longer sentence than they would if both remained silent.

An incidental virtue of this story is that the agents in it are criminals. The story shows that even they have a motive to cooperate which, from the perspective of the tiny 'group' comprising just the two of them, has the classic properties of morality; each is tempted to 'rat' on the other, and for good reason - less time in jail <u>is</u> better, in their view, than more; yet if both succumb to this temptation, they will pay a substantial price for their misdeeds. Of course, from the point of view of the larger society, it would be much better if both confessed: the criminals' temptation is the society's virtue. None of this should be taken to be convincing evidence for moral relativism, however. For it may also be that everyone, including the criminals themselves, would be best off if nobody, including the two protagonists, engaged in criminal activities. (Not only 'may' this be the case, but it is in our view a necessary condition of the larger society's moral and legal principles being rationally acceptable.)

In the case where A remains silent and B does not - B's best alternative - B gets off with no sentence at all. This fact about B, however, does not figure in A's motivation in the story. It would be quite a different story if in addition to his jail term, A suffers the outrage of being bested by a

rival. We can even imagine a pair such that A would rather go to jail himself, provided B goes there too, than to remain free. It is an important point that our theory of rationality does not pronounce on the inherent rationality of this sort of preference, even though most of us would be inclined to pronounce it a case of irrational jealousy. Nevertheless, various considerations underwrite this inclination of ours. For unless A actually prefers being in prison to being outside, he will also prefer B's being in prison and himself remaining outside. Jealousy, envy, spite, and the like are quite properly classified as vices: dispositions which there is general reason to discourage and suppress rather than encourage and stimulate. A society of jealous and spiteful people is certain to be a most uncomfortable one, and virtually certain to be a very unhappy one as well. In so saying, however, we are guided by common experience and familiarity with life, not by a priori insight into the Form of Virtue. It is not clear what it would mean to be 'guided by Pure Reason', but certainly we are not so guided in the search for plausible moral principles.

Even so, however, there are facts about people that so strongly underwrite certain particular principles that there is some excuse for regarding them as a priori. One such is the principle of promise-keeping, or more generally of doing one's part in arrangements voluntarily undertaken between oneself and other voluntarily acting persons. Obviously this principle does not have the status that Immanuel Kant apparently thought it did: viz., of being 'rigorous', that is, of its being impossible for anything to justify breaking the principle in question on any occasion. Only a quite trivialized version, such as "Do not break a promise when no other legitimate considerations outweigh keeping it", could survive all possible counter-examples. Nevertheless the keeping of promises and other agreements is literally a common interest. It has to be in the interest of the parties to the promise, for otherwise no obligating promise exists (there are always at least two, not just one: consider the situation where A says to B, "I promise you I will do X", to which B replies, "Oh, no, you won't - not on my account, anyway!" Here, of course, there is no valid obligation to do X). And if the doing of the promised action in the circumstances in which it is to be done is contrary to no third party's interest (here again, a notion of "legitimate" interests is essential, however), then humankind in general will rationally support the obligation to keep that promise, if support is needed. (Again, in a given case it might not be, e.g. because both parties are by this time simply not very interested in X's being done.)

It should be noted that the public's interest in your keeping the promise that you made at time t to person B, who accepted it fully, is not very great, directly. But everyone can be and virtually everyone often is a party to promises, arrangements, and in general to agreements of all sorts, and all such are liable to the frustration and pains of default on the

part of the other person. The general support of the community on behalf of this principle is relatively costless to all: words are (fairly) cheap, and we only rarely need to get directly involved in most cases of others' promises. To cultivate a general attitude of indifference to the promises of others is to invite defaulting on the part of those you want to rely on, and it is scarcely possible that this can be in your interest, whoever you are. And of course one can avoid all such obligations oneself simply by never making any agreements. If that is found intolerably inconvenient, then the point I'm arguing for is made.

For a group of voluntarily acting, rational agents, morality itself must be a kind of agreement, in the sense of a mutual understanding: namely, to perform those actions and refrainings from action the absence of which would make everyone worse off, so long as others do likewise. The proviso is essential, and distinguishes this conception or morality from 'categorical' ones, in which one is to stick to the indicated actions come what may. I don't hit you, provided that you don't hit me; but if you do, then I may employ "all the helps and advantages of war", as Hobbes puts it (Leviathan, ch. XIV, First Law of Nature). Morality in general, then, will be that set of principles the universal observance of which would be better for all, and general reinforcement of which is necessary because individual nonobservance, if one could succeed at it, would be advantageous.

4. Peace

This brings us to the most interesting principle for present purposes: the principle of keeping the peace, and/or such other principles as would support that one. Is peace a 'common interest'? This is a critically difficult question, for many reasons. Let me first sketch what I take to be a general argument in favor. I shall then focus on two of what seem too me to be the most important of these difficulties, though there are certainly more.

For present purposes, peace is simply the absence of violence. There is some merit in Hobbes' suggestion that war consists not only, or even primarily, of violence as such, but more especially of a general disposition to violence. In the latter sense, we could speak of the 'cold war', for instance. However, the lengthy period known by that name has surely been very different from, and very much better than, what would have been the case had there been a 'hot' war during that time. 'Cold wars' are not strictly wars, uncomfortable though they may be. I propose, therefore, to confine the term to active wars. These are still dispositional in the important respect that there is not always fighting during a war; but what distinguishes it is that you simply can't depend on the absence of violence during such times. Here Locke's characterization applies: wars are

"not a passionate and hasty, but a sedate, settled design upon another man's life" (Second Treatise, § 16). The disposition to violence in war is so strong that any peaceful tendencies on the part of the combatants are likely to be taken by the enemy as occasions to attack. During the 'cold war', on the other hand, the absence of overt aggression by the other side is generally matched by a similar absence on one's own. In war, unprovoked violence is the rule; in peace, it is against the rule, and would be taken as occasion for reply in kind, i.e. for war in the narrower sense. What we call 'cold war' might better be described as 'cold peace': unpleasant, yes, but unlike war properly so called, survivable by all.

Why think that, as between any pair of parties, peace is better than war? There is not much point in our expressing preferences that don't reflect the interests of the parties concerned. We must ask, realistically, whether there is reason to think that peace is better than war from the point of view of <u>both</u> parties. In order to fit a principle of peace into our scheme, we need the following schedules of values by the parties concerned:

A's Ordering	B's ordering
1. Unopposed aggression by A	1. Unopposed aggression by B
2. Peace	2. Peace
3. War	3. War
4. Unopposed aggression by B	4. Unopposed aggression by A

Obviously it could be disputed whether unopposed (costlessly successful) aggression <u>is</u> better than peace in any case - a subject we will come to; but meanwhile, we are simply reading off the preferences of realistically possible parties, and it can hardly be doubted that there are parties with such preferences. Further, if they did not at least have the preference rankings indicated, it is difficult to see how wars would ever occur; unless the change was a reversal of alternatives (2) and (3), in which case it is difficult to see how they would ever cease. We must, of course, say more about this later. Meanwhile, it is clear that an <u>agreement</u> between A and B could not permit aggression as a means of pursuing one's interests. Their common interest is option (2) rather than (1), as well as, of course, (2) rather than (3). Moreover, any general agreement between two parties envisaging interchange between them must outlaw aggression. A necessary condition of my voluntarily doing anything for you is that you not render my activity involuntary, that you not forcibly intervene to prevent me from realizing the benefits of my purposeful activity.

But there is the question whether we will have any general agreement between A and B. Perhaps A can realize a higher level of satisfaction by continuing to act with respect to B as in the 'state of nature', where there are no rules, nothing being either prohibited or required. What poses this problem is that 'unopposed aggression' is not in general a live option. If A proposes to attack B, B normally has and ordinarily will take the option of

self-defense, thus unilaterally eliminating A's first option. But A may calculate that B cannot successfully defend himself. If so, A's list of preferences puts war with B ahead of peace with B. That is to say, the list for A goes as follows

1. Unopposed Agression by A
2. Successful Aggression by A
3. Peace
4. Unsuccessful Aggression by A (= Successful defense by B)
5. Unopposed Aggression by B

Even successful aggression has costs, which is why (1) ranks ahead of (2). But the costs may be worth the price as compared with not trying, which is why (2) is, in this case, ahead of (3).

Meanwhile, these are desired outcomes rather than actions: that A's aggression would be successful is not something determined entirely by A's actions. Whether A attempts an attack, on the other hand, may be entirely determined by A's actions, and for the present case we will assume that it is. A must, then, make a calculation of the probability of success if he attacks. This figure must be high enough so that the expected utility of attack, which is the utility of the outcome if successful times the probability of success, is greater than the expected utility of peace. Under these circumstances, A will not participate in a social contract and will in fact go to war. What we need, therefore, in order to show that peace is preferable to war, is to show that the benefits of successful aggression are always low enough, the costs of aggression great enough, or the probability of success low enough to keep the utility of aggression below the utility of peace. Obviously this would be impossible if no restrictions whatever were put on the kind of peace we have in mind. A thoroughly unjust peace would be worse than even a quite futile defensive war for many, perhaps most, and of course for many States. We need, therefore, some constraints on the sort of 'peace' we are considering.

And here, I think, is where the argument gets off the ground. For the objective now is to determine whether a peaceful option always exists which is preferable to war from the point of view of both parties. Obviously this would also be impossible to demonstrate in the abstract. We need to know what sort of defensive resources are <u>available</u> to the parties concerned. Thomas Hobbes argued that the 'state of nature' was a state of equality: "the weakest hath strength enough to kill the strongest". If we project the Social Contract far enough back so that no modern weapons are available, or perhaps no weapons at all, then Hobbes' claim is plausible, at least at the level of indivduals. But even in that condition it would not provide an adequate argument for peace among all possible groups of people: in numbers there is strength, given good organization, even if we confine the

groups to weaponless combat. In modern conditions, of course, the situation is wholly different. Tiny and technologically unadvanced states can be obliterated by large and technologically advanced ones.

At this point, we need to address ourselves seriously to the question of baselines: at what point does the 'Social Contract' begin? Consider a weaponless state of nature with the contract made among all individuals acting on their own, as in Hobbes' specification. It is plausible to suggest that such a contract would rule out the construction of weapons usable against humans altogether. Since that is impractical - after all, weapons against animals would be agreed by all to be legitimate, and most tools essential for many peaceful purposes are also usable as weapons if need be - this in effect must be a prohibition, not on the production, but only on the use of such weapons for aggressive purposes.

A similar argument can be mounted for any envisigeable condition of humankind: people in general cannot allow the use of any weapons for aggressive purposes. But as a corrolary, the development of any weapons which could only be used aggressively, if there are any such, would surely be prohibited. The way to conceptualize this is to think of people as uniting against any potential aggressors and giving them their choice between forswearing aggression forever or else fighting it out with this very large group now - with extremely dim prospects of success for the proposed aggressor. Every nonsuicidal rational being would sign this agreement, and the rest may be ignored, having been eliminated at the outset in the proposed battle - which would, let us remember, have been wholly legitimate since at that point there were, by hypothesis, no agreed rules (and, also by hypothesis, only agreements matter when it comes to rules).

In an imperfect world, two important things will happen that complicate the situation, giving rise to the necessity for reasonable principles allowing the deployment of weapons for defense. The first is that some will not adhere to agreements, however reasonable. The second is that there will be differences of view about fair or just agreements, especially those having to do with the allocation of land and other natural resources, and often of the distribution of socially created goods as well. Among States, none is likely, any longer, to be so brazen as to insist explicitly on its liberty simply to ignore basic moral requirements; but still, most of them are likely to infringe such requirements covertly or to do what others will interpret as such from time to time. But the belief that justice requires X entails the belief that X may properly be secured by force if necessary. It is not surprising, then, that States with disagreements carried on under the rubric of justice are potent sources of armed conflict and of preparation for same.

Obviously this creates the possibility that a rational 'super-morality' of the kind we seek is a simple impossibility, a will-o-the-wisp. We agree that justice can underwrite the use of force, and we disagree about what justice requires. Isn't that an end of the matter? Perhaps not. For we may find a common interest in adjudicating such disagreements without resorting to force, at least in many cases. The most plausible common value for this purpose is simply that of life itself. For Hobbes, and for many philosophers, life has been the 'bottom line', and for very good reason. After all, if one loses one's life, then that puts an end to one's ability to pursue one's goals and purposes in this world, whatever they may be. It is this last property of death that makes it so significant for our purposes and provides the most extensive support for the view that peace is better than war. Many may at least profess to put no value on their own lives, regarding them as mere pawns for some larger purpose. But if there are any games to be played here on earth, even mere pawns will be useful only while alive - even if their main value is achieved when they are sacrified. Even the Ayatollah Khomeini's human mine-detector troops have some positive marginal utility to him; it drops to zero only after a 'successful' detection!

At some point, relegation of life to the latter status is obviously going to be troublesome. But its main trouble will be due to the effect it has on the value attached by such agents to the lives of others. If one's own life has no value, it is understandable that one won't put much weight on the lives of others. Understandable, yes - but still, not forgivable and not tolerable. Certainly no rational defense is possible of a principle, proposed for public acceptance by voluntarily acting rational persons, which would make everyone out to be just so much cannonfodder in the hands of Allah, or the World Spirit, or whatever. We have no reason to tolerate any who not only have such beliefs, but use them as their sole basis for dealing with others. Such persons are indistinguishable from psychopaths, and we can deal with them only as enemies, to be caged or eliminated as soon as possible. All others afford the possibility of dealing with people on an acceptable basis. And this extends even to those parts of the subject-matter of justice that may be under dispute.

It does so especially because of the possibility of drawing boundaries. Those who have one set of beliefs about the just distribution of products or of natural resources cannot, of course, expect those beliefs to be recognized by all as the basis for dealing with them; but they can tolerably well realize them in quite large areas with identifiable boundaries. (Mostly, these areas are States, though it is important that they need not be.) Given boundaries, we can settle many disputes by simply agreeing to stay on our own side of them except by invitation. Indeed, the violation of this principle is precisely what 'aggression' refers to. Of course there will be disputes about precisely where the boundaries are, and on just what basis

to draw them. But if the need for boundaries is recognized, and if it is agreed to be more important than precisely where they are to be drawn, within some sort of reasonable limits, then we have a basis for peaceful coexistence and better: namely, of peaceful interchange. And so long as those on each side of the boundary have interests that can be forwarded by the acts of those on the other side, there will be mutually profitable interchange, which could come to be extensive - as it is already, for instance, even between nations on opposite sides of the 'Iron Curtain'.

One further factor enters the scene in the latter part of our century. In the past and continuing to the present, as noted above, small and technologically backward countries have been defenseless against large and technologically developed ones. But the advent of nuclear weapons changes that recipe in one crucial respect. For countries that are small need not be technologically backward and those which are not may avail themselves of weapons that would daunt even the most powerful nations, by any of the usual measures of power. It is becoming the case among nations as it always has been among unarmed men and women that, as Hobbes puts it, "the weakest hath strength enough to kill the strongest" (Leviathan, ch. XIII). When we add this to the equation, the case for the good of peace is essentially complete. If the cost of aggressive war against <u>anybody</u> becomes unendurable, then nothing can be gained by conquest and peace becomes the only rational option. Nor, as was suggested at the outset of this essay, do we even require that the nation attacked be armed in any way, if the attack is carried out with nuclear weapons. For the side effects of nuclear explosions in sufficient quantity to destroy any nation of more than trivial size are going to be visited upon the aggressor, and not only on everyone else. The situation at present, so far as we know, is not yet that the possession of significant arms by the nation attacked makes less difference than the expected side effects. But they make a considerable difference already, and it would be a rash person who would bank on no further horrors being turned up in future to render aggression unprofitable to all concerned. This in addition to the fact that wars conducted with conventional weapons are amply painful even to great powers, as both the United States (in Vietnam) and the Soviet Union (in Afghanistan) can testify.

But it would be rash as well as sad to rest one's case on this technical eventuality, likely though it is. It may be supplemented by two, not unrelated, lines of reflection. One such is in the tradition of Kant's celebrated essay on "Perpetual Peace", in which he argues that liberalism is a virtually sufficient, and probably also necessary, cause of peace among nations. Kant's idea has received powerful support in a recent article by Michael W. Doyle (1983), in which the author points out that while there have been wars in the past two hundred years between liberal States and nonliberal States, there have been, remarkably, no wars at all

between pairs of liberal States. A Kantian account of the underlying rationale of this seems apt. War between pairs of individuals who are at least very roughly equal in aggressive capability is certain to be unprofitable if undertaken in pursuit of gains identifiable apart from psychiatrically dubious 'values'.[2] This is true of the rich and the poor, at least as much and indeed probably more so than of parties also comparable in point of current wealth. The poor cannot expect to improve their situations, in any non-immediate way, by using violence against the rich, for two reasons which it is extremely important to understand. The first is obvious: the rich can command resources of defense far exceeding any requirements that aggression from the poor, if not aided by third parties, could impose. The poor can't conquer the rich because they can't afford it. Yet anyone who could afford it would no longer be poor, and would have nothing to gain by military conquest when the alternative is peaceful exchange.

The second reason is subtler but far more important: robbing the rich will do no good in any long run, because real wealth is not simply 'material'. The basis of wealth is knowledge, and if you kill off the rich, you gain only the fruits of their know-how but not the knowledge itself. Lacking that, however, the material gains of plunder will soon prove of no use. The secret of wealth is not any kind of politically rectifiable 'exploitation', as many Marxists seem still to think, against all the evidence. It is, instead, organizational and technical knowledge, which can be put to profitable use only in ways that also profit those who are 'exploited'. Enslavement is obsolete - though it is questionable whether it ever was efficient even when in vogue. Even in South Africa, the black laborers who are by western standards so underpaid are in fact far better off, materially, than their colleagues in technologically backward but black-governed countries farther north, let alone than slaves.

The fact that individuals dealing freely with each other will prosper more, both individually and collectively, than those attempting to deal with each other on the basis of force and violence, domination and slavery, is in itself immensely significant. But it will not lead to world peace unless individuals have a reasonable degree of control over their political destinies. States in which a comparative few retain effective political power have motives to continue the obsolescent and inhuman methods of organized violence. They require it to secure their positions of power, for one thing, and of course the foreign relations of such States are simply further means to the same ends. Any hope for peace between States at least one of which is 'organized' in that way is dependent on either the whims of those who control it, or on the balance of military power. The prosperity of their citizens being a matter of strictly secondary concern to their rules, or perhaps none at all, the incompetence of their political

procedures for achieving that prosperity is of little avail for the securing of peace.

The second observation concerns a condition that no amount of political democracy, in the narrower sense of that term, could be proof against, but only liberalism in the more fundamental and deeper sense in which it includes a healthy appreciation of the rights of persons. This condition, namely, is that interpersonal relations not be controlled by ideological fanaticism of any kind: the currently most salient cases being examples of religious fanaticism, though Marxism, in too many instances, comes close enough to do as an example. For the fanatic, wordly wealth and even life itself is of strictly secondary importance as compared with the attainment of religious domination, that is, the state of affairs wherein everybody accepts the fanatic's particular religious views. What is important here is, of course, domination in general rather than religion in particular. In the favored Western cases, members of differing religious groups have managed to live in comparative peace, for the most part. This in in part because their religious views do not go very deep - otherwise it would be astonishing, for example, that when Americans move to different communities, they frequently join different churches simply because some other sect's church is more conveniently located, or for purely social reasons. And it is in part because of a perception that religious war is divisive and unprofitable - but then, this can be regarded as simply another indication that the religious motive is not very deep in such countries, for the kind of 'profit' lost by such wars must count more than the alleged spiritual benefits of the religion in question if such unprofitability is to matter. And finally, it is only 'for the most part'. For we still see the phenomenon of persons attempting to impose aspects of their religious belief at the ballot boxes (think of many churches' political stands on abortion, e.g.; and religious belief has motivated the bombing of many abortion and birth-control centres in America). Even in the most favored cases, that is to say, we have yet to find the liberal attitude that others genuinely have a <u>right</u> to their own religious practices, or more generally their own lives, fully and universally instantiated. If this were to happen universally, then, I believe, Kant's case would be completely substantiated; for persons fully accepting such attitudes, war is simply out of the question.

If peace, as founded on the liberal attitude toward our fellow man, did not go hand in hand with prosperity, we may be sure that the prospects of peace would be much dimmer. Happily, they do. And while religions may try to persuade their adherants that worldly wealth is of small account as compared with religious zeal, we may be reasonably confident that their case will never have much effect except among those so lacking in the former and so unlikely ever to enjoy it that they can hardly have an unbiased view of the case.

Is it rational to prefer worldly well-being to ideological fanaticism? Here we must make a distinction. Reason, on the view adopted here, does not dictate values. It tells us what do do, given our values, and it may be allowed a certain partiality in favor of the attitude of exposing one's values to the facts, as obtained by the methods of science; but it does not do what Plato claimed for it, viz., to tell us what The Good is. Nevertheless, in the first of those two offices, it tells us that peace is preferable to violence given a very wide range of values, thus to a large extent obviating the need to address the present question. And in the second, I think, it is likely to lead us to weigh those values realizable by co-operative technological attainment much more heavily than any supposed spiritual gains from the opposing set offered by the various fanaticisms. It will not have escaped the eye of most of us that the leaders of these fanatical sects invariable enjoy the material well-being of maharajahs rather than the primitive shepherds they urge their 'flocks' to emulate; and for the rest, we are unlikely to find the condition of the latter terribly attractive as compared, say, with the life available to a typical European production-line worker, not to mention a corporate executive, a University professor, or the occupants of any of countless other situations one finds in any secular liberal State.

What are we to conclude from these reflections? Not, of course, that it is always irrational for any State to engage in aggressive war. However, that is not what we were fishing for. The question is whether it is rational to accept a moral principle condemning aggressive war, between parties of whatever size and strength. And this, I believe, does issue from these reflections. When any state, of whatever size, engages in war nowadays, it does so under the cloak of morality, by insisting either that it is crossing the other country's borders at the invitation, or at least in the interests, of the people therein, or to right some previous wrong. That morality may sometimes be a cloak rather than a sincerely professed motive is true enough; but this is very different from the attitude, common prior to this century, that prospect of success and political gain in the particular case was all the 'justification' required. Morality and rationality may not coincide in the short run, but a longer view will bring about a much greater coincidence.

5. Nuclear Deterrence

The foregoing reflections present a case that is essentially for peace as a means, not as an end in itself. It is, of course, a means to a vast variety of ends, and thus comes rather close to the status it would have if it were genuinely an end in itself. Nevertheless, this case is such as to underwrite equally the right of defense when defense is needed. But the specific implication of that right is what comes into question when we

consider the special but unhappily prominent case of defense against nuclear aggression, or of nuclear defense against military aggression of other kinds. To address ourselves to the issues here, we must first make an important distinction between two senses of the word "defense" - a broader and a narrower one (see discussion in Narveson 1986). In the broader sense, "defense" refers to any military arrangements one undertakes in order to reduce the likelihood of the enemy's ending up the military victor in a conflict which he is (presumed to be) threatening to bring about. Deterrence is one kind of 'defense' in this broader sense of that term. However, there is a narrower sense of "defense" in which it refers only to a subset of such measures: namely, those measures which are meant to make it impossible, or at least very much more difficult, for the enemy to achieve substantial destruction of one's own forces or whatever it is that is under threat. Thus a sturdy wall is in this sense a defense against enemy arrows or, perhaps, 18th Century cannon, and a TOW missile is a defense against tanks. And so on. These devices render the enemy's offensive weapons ineffectual.

In this latter sense, we can distinguish between defense and deterrence. Deterrence, by contrast with defense, consists in taking measures which would make it irrational for the enemy to achieve those objectives. I can't stop your missiles from destroying my cities, but I can threaten to reply in kind, imposing losses on you which will make you think twice about imposing such losses on me.

It is quite clear that in this narrower sense of the term "defense", there is, for the present and the foreseeable future, no (effective) defense against nuclear attack. As things stand, if the Americans or the Russians should take it into their heads to destroy some large city somewhere on the globe next week, there isn't a thing anybody can do to prevent this destruction from coming about once the rockets are launched. All anybody can do is either to try to talk them out of it, in a spirit of negotiation or concession or perhaps ideological persuasion, or to threaten something sufficiently awful in reply to make it very costly to do this. Only the latter is deterrence; in the narrow sense of "defense", it is not defense. A plausible view is that only threatened retaliation at a similar level, viz. threatening to use nuclear weapons, would be sufficiently impressive to do this against any enemy who would contemplate such a thing. And it is widely, and plausibly, thought that this particular choice of means to this, as I insist, obviously legitimate end of defense, is especially problematic. That is the claim I am considering in this section.

What one would be threatening in a policy of nuclear deterrence is, obviously, immensely destructive. If it is ever justified to resort to such a measure, it is evident, one would need to be justified in thinking that it was necessary, as compared with any less potentially destructive measure.

In the present world situation, the question of necessity is obviously of paramount importance, and as I have argued elsewhere (Narveson 1985c), Western reasoning about this is subject to major criticisms, in principle and in practice. (My earlier doubts about this are, in my judgment, strongly reinforced by Mr. Gorbachev's initiative in Iceland in November 1986, an initiative flatly rejected by President Reagan.) But the question of necessity in the present world situation is not the one that we are investigating here. I am instead raising a question of fundamental principle: whether deterrence is a morally legitimate option to consider in any circumstances. We will, then, assume, purely for the sake of the investigation, that nuclear deterrence is one's only hope - that circumstances are such that no other stance would effectively deter or defend against the presumed aggression.

Why would nuclear deterrence be thought to be especially problematic in principle? Certainly it is, of course, especially dangerous. But that would seem a difference in degree from other weapons. The question is, matters of degree aside, what problems of principle are raised here? Perhaps the following two features of nuclear weapons are those most plausibly regarded as representing something special and different. First: at least so long as we are dealing with the large, 'strategic' type of nuclear weapon, it is impossible to confine the effects to combatants. Indeed, nuclear war in its purest form essentially eliminates the category of 'combatants' in the usual sense of the term. Second, an all-out nuclear war, we now have good reason to think, poses a real threat of extermination to the human race.

Whether we should regard these as two independent considerations, or rather as a matter of the second being an extreme case of the first depends on the weight one attaches to the extermination threat. When an individual is killed, after all, that individual is 'exterminated'. When the human race is killed off, there is an evident difference in degree; but is there something further? True, the race will disappear, but that is only something morally different if races count more than individuals. And this is a thesis I see no reason to accept on the face of it. It is also true that future generations will not occur if the race is exterminated. But that matters more only if they count more than present ones - a thesis that I also see no reason to accept, on the face of it. Moreover, if the concern is with possible, as distinct from actual, individuals, then there is every reason to think that 'they' count less, if anything (see, for instance, my 1978).

Nevertheless, philosophical writers on nuclear deterrence in the past few years have been much exercised about the first feature, whatever view one takes on the second. Yet this feature is by no means unique to nuclear weapons. On the one hand, no weapon, including nuclear weapons, is inherently incapable of ever having its effects confined to combatants. So far as direct effects are concerned, it depends, plainly, on where those

combatants are and where everybody else is. All one can say is that with very large bombs, the likelihood of hitting the wrong people as well as the 'right' ones is very high in typical cases. The same is true in many circumstances with smaller weapons: the firebombing of Dresden in World War II affected far more than the trivial number of combatants in that unfortunate city, and any number of civilians have been trapped in small-arms crossfire ever since such crossfire has been a feature of battle. Thus if we try to put our finger on the differences people are worried about here, we again find that they are matters of degree.

The main worry about this matter has been in the context of intentionality. It is one thing, many suppose, that noncombatants might accidentally be killed by a given use of a weapon, but quite another when one can foresee with certainty that they will be. Or it is suggested that nuclear deterrence involves intentional and even deliberate killing of noncombatants, so that it isn't just a matter of foreseeability. And it can hardly be denied that there is a point of some kind here. If some large city is targeted for nuclear destruction as a deterrent to nuclear attack, then there is a sense in which one's killing of its inhabitants, if the missile is actually fired, is intentional.

The question is, however, whether this matters. That is to say, we have to ask whether there is a morally sufficient reason, in the facts just cited, for refraining from nuclear deterrence. And it may surely be questioned whether there is. At any rate, I shall try to make a case for the legitimacy of nuclear deterrence and then see whether it stands up against the proposed objection.

Now to begin with, we must accept that any use of force is subject to a requirement of necessity: if the prisoner is coming along quietly, I am not justified in applying the lash; if the opposing battalion sends up a white flag, further shooting is out of order. And if there is no real threat to counter with one's deterrent strategy, or if it can be effectively countered in some less potentially violent way, then of course that strategy is unjustified. In short we must, as usual, separate out the two issues: (a) whether there is any alternative to the kind of threat involved in nuclear deterrence, and (b) whether the use of deterrence is justified even if there is no effective alternative. Of course there is the further issue whether deterrence is effective anyway. This last question has been extensively explored in the literature, and I have nothing to add to this. I shall simply assume, as seems fairly evident to common sense in any case, that it is effective; if it is not, then there is nothing to be said for it anyway and the question is closed.

Regarding issue (a), it is obvious that there will be major problems, in many cases, in assessing a threat. In the Second World War, the

Americans worked assiduously on the atomic bomb on the reasonable assumption that it was a race with Hitler's scientists, a race on the outcome of which a great deal depended. In fact, as we know, Hitler's military forces were subdued before the American bomb was operational. Japan's were not, however, and historians ever since have been debating whether American use of the bomb on two Japanese cities in the final days of the war was justified on the basis offered: namely, that a great many more lives, both American and Japanese, would have been lost had the bomb not in fact been employed. Was this necessary? Or would the Japanese have surrendered without a major invasion anyway? The question of fact is unlikely ever to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction, to be sure; but it is not easy to reject the terms on which it is discussed. No one argues that even if absolutely no lives were saved by use of the Hiroshima bomb, its use would nevertheless have been justified - as a splendid show, for example, or as satisfying scientific curiosity, or as sheer punishment. The claim that many more lives will be lost if the bomb is not used is a relevant claim under the circumstances, is it not?

"Necessity" is a relational notion here: necessary for what? In the case of one individual against another, the issue is at least simpler: A is justified in using lethal force against B if B would otherwise mount a fatal threat to A. But States cannot speak so straightforwardly of 'life and death'. If State A defeats State B in war, it does not follow that everyone in B is dead, or any particular fraction of B's people, or even any particular proportion of them as compared to the proportion of A's dead. A could have lost many more soldiers and had its economy quite devastated, B being better off by every measure, and yet A be the victor. So if A justifies a particular military measure against B on the ground of necessity, we need to consider just what such necessity consists in. Which goals or other aspects of a State are such that it would be legitimate to risk a nuclear war to achieve or defend them?

Difficult questions, indeed. But one answer suggests itself above all others: States will fight, risking even annihilation, to preserve their independence, their freedom of action. Never mind that the citizens of those same States might be sorely oppressed by their government; what that government will always insist on, at virtually any cost, is its independence, its existence as a separate State which makes its own decisions. This is what corresponds, at the level of organized collective entities, to the desire for self-preservation at the individual level. And insofar as the analogy is applicable, it is an intelligible and rationally acceptable motive. The question is, how far is the analogy applicable?

There are evident reasons for denying the analogy. States are plainly not individuals but are instead artificial bodies whose members are individuals. Individuals can exist without States, but not vice versa; in at least that

sense, individuals are logically prior to States. The motive of self-preservation makes eminently good sense for individuals; but when one thinks of it, it makes much less immediate sense in the case of States. For a State could be destroyed completely, utterly disappear, without a single individual in it being destroyed or even significantly discomfited - except, perhaps, its officials. It is even possible that those individuals should have lost nothing they previously had in the process. When we say, as we did above, that States will risk even annihilation to preserve their independence, we must therefore address ourselves to the only relevant question about this: do we care? The particular State to which we are attached must carry with it something of value for us if it is to be worth our support. The independence of that State, in particular, must entail something of importance to us if we are to be asked to risk our lives for it. We must suppose that on balance we would be worse off without it, given the likely alternative, than we would be with it.

It is fascinating that immense numbers of people in today's world would probably think it obvious that the independence of their particular State is worth such a risk, at least if we can be guided by their actions; for it is surely true that those people would in fact take such risks for that cause. Perhaps they are thoroughly deluded in being thus willing. But being willing, we must perforce assume that they really value their States' independence, and ask where we go from there.

Perhaps the number of those so willing is very much less than implied above. That would be important, but the point made has two sides to it, the second of which was not brought out above and is surely much more important than the first. The first side is positive attachment to one's own State, in its current constitution; the second, however, is aversion to the constitution and politics of the State to which one would be subordinate in the event of dealing with, say, nuclear threats by capitulation. And whatever may be said regarding the former, the existence of hundreds of millions of persons of the latter opinion is of great importance in this connection. One place where the 'action' is on this issue, certainly, is right here. Perhaps it would be rational, as an able colleague of mine has half-seriously suggested, for every nuclear State to divest itself of its arms and turn them over to the Soviet Union! Certainly many nations could do a lot worse than to be in the situation of contemporary Finland, if that is the likely outcome.

But this is a digression. Our question is what rights people have, given their values, and my claim is that they have a very strong right of self-defense. What we must ask in particular is whether membership in a State threatened by some other State would give one the right to engage in defensive actions which put at risk the lives of persons other than those from whom one is defending oneself. (The 'actions' one engages in by

virtue of membership in a State consist mainly in paying taxes - which one has no choice about anyway. That support to the relevant level is almost entirely passive is a matter of importance, but can't be pursued here.)

Again, part of the reply is evident enough: such risk could at most be justified by necessity. If there are other ways of defending oneself that don't put innocents at risk, then one is certainly obliged to use those instead. But our assumption here is that there are no such ways in the case of nuclear weapons. Supposing this to be true, the situation is this: A, the aggressor, threatens B with nuclear annihilation unless B does x, something which, we will suppose, B has a perfect right not to do. B has in the circumstances no way of defending himself against A except deterrence (or, if you like: no way of defending himself at all, but does have the option instead of resorting to deterrence). Deterrence will put many innocent third parties at risk. May B use deterrence in these circumstances? To say that he may not is to say, so far as I can see, that aggressors are free to commit their aggressions so long as they can mount nuclear threats in support of them. Why isn't this rule by bullies?

The questionable part, of course, is about the claim that this is the only alternative. This is, to be sure, in need of clarification. Plainly one can only mean that there are no other acceptable alternatives, for alternatives of some kind there assuredly are. For example, one can give in to the threat in question. Or one can say No but take no defensive measures. This presumably might result not only in one's own destruction, but also that of many of the very people the threat to whom formed the objection to nuclear deterrence in the first place. Or one could try going guerilla, all of the citizens ready to put up resistance at the level of streets and alleys; or mass nonviolent resistance. Why not these, then?

Further, I am well aware that there has been much discussion of late on the question whether deterrence makes any rational sense: i.e. whether the maintenance of a large supply of nuclear weapons with delivery devices in order to threaten another nation with retaliation should it use its similar force for aggressive purposes would constitute a credible threat to a rational State. For purposes of this inquiry, it is simply an operating assumption that it does. Does anyone suppose for one moment that either the Russians or the Americans have real any doubt of this in practice? Not on my reading of the evidence, at any rate.

But it doesn't matter. For we must remember that what we are considering is the proposal that one is required to select one of these alternatives rather than that of nuclear deterrence. Obviously if one doesn't think deterrence will work anyway, then one's policies are subject to one kind of rational criticism. But those who employ them for this purpose obviously reject that criticism. So we have the question what kind of moral criticisms

they are eligible for, if any, given their strategic beliefs. To say that one is morally required to reject deterrence is to say that one can be (morally) required to go to an inordinate amount of trouble, risk of life, and loss of independence in order to avoid risk of life to innocent parties as a response to admittedly wrongful threats. But why so? The assumption is that party B, the victim of A's nuclear threats, is likewise innocent. B is not more eligible for picking on, morally speaking, than C, D, or whoever. If A has the right to impose these horrors and inconveniences on B, why not equally to do so on C, D, and so on?

Perhaps we should turn the question around a little, and ask what the responsibility of those innocent third parties is. If all agree that A has no right to do these things to B, and A goes ahead and does them, B's response - namely, to go ahead and use deterrence on A, with resultant side risks to the others, in preference to some other response that is far riskier and more inconvenient for B - can also be regarded as a challenge to all those others to find some more satisfactory way to reply to A, or to take measures to undermine A's ability to mount that threat in the first place. If they do not do any of those things, why are they in a position to insist that B must play the 'fall guy'?

It's an old story, really. Defense at some fundamental level must be collective. We are, as they say, all in this together. That we are so is, in the above story, to be laid to the responsibility of party A. What I deny is that it would be proper to lay it all on B, the initial victim. But that is what we do seem to be saying if we insist that B's response must be self-denying, indeed self-exterminative. Not to mention that there is the usual problem for the others if that is what they insist on: which of them will be next, and where is it going to end?

It is pointless to reply that if we choose deterrence, then we can also ask the question "where is it going to end?" - with assurance that it will end in universal destruction. But for one thing, this is by no means assured. If all parties act fairly rationally, then it will end, not in universal destruction but in a universal agreement to dispense with nuclear arms. And for another, it should not be thought just obvious that if the choice is between universal succumbing to someone's totalitarianism and universal destruction, that the former is clearly preferable. Of course there will be many who do prefer that. But the choice is not in their hands! The point rather is that those who insist that the victim, B, has no right to self-defense in the case where the only defense is deterrence must explain this denial in terms that are acceptable to B. Lacking that, there simply is no alternative to leaving the initiative with B, in our present case. And it is wholly understandable that B should choose the only option that has any real promise of securing his continued independence.

None of this should be construed as providing support for the current practices and policies of any particular government. If the foregoing considerations are tolerably near the truth, then it is the continued existence of the nuclear arms race that is puzzling, and the explanations for that persistence must be sought elsewhere than in strategic rationality, let alone morality.

But it would be difficult to deny that peace should be sought more urgently and more energetically than it is. It was, for example, a lamentable chapter in the recent history of humanity that so apparently hopeful an offer of nuclear peace as that of Premier Gorbachev at Reykjavik should have been rejected by President Reagan for so absurd a reason as that offered: 'Star Wars', to enable us to protect ourselves from the very threat that would be eliminated had the offer been accepted and seriously acted on. That lasting peace between nation-States is not something we can expect soon is evidenced in a most melancholy way by such events.

Notes

1 Leviathan, ch. XIII: "... So the nature of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurcance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE."

2 I take this to be the gist of the argument in Section II, First Definitive Article for Perpetual Peace: "if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared ... nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war." (Peace, 12-13)

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