

# NUCLEAR DETERRENCE THEORY – A THREAT TO INFLICT TERROR

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Nuclear deterrence theory is a deeply flawed attempt to justify the existence of the world's most destructive weapons. The words 'nuclear deterrence' and 'nuclear terror' have a common origin because deterrence relies on the threat of terror. The theory has brought humanity to the very brink of nuclear catastrophe. Legally, deterrence must be considered alongside the actual use of nuclear weapons, which the International Court of Justice in 1996 ruled is generally illegal. All countries that rely on the threat of nuclear terror, including Australia, bear culpability for the continued existence of these weapons. Deterrence is regularly cited as the reason the weapons must be retained by those nations that have them. It is time for Australia to renounce nuclear deterrence, to abide by the same standards we set for other nations, and to join global efforts for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

## I INTRODUCTION

Calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons are not new. Since 1945, countless individuals, organisations, leaders, conferences, declarations, and an overwhelming majority of nations have recognised that nuclear weapons far exceed the legitimate moral and legal limits of warfare, that they threaten humanity's very existence and that they must be abolished.

Why then do these worst of all weapons of mass destruction still exist? We have treaties to ban chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster bombs, but not the most terrifying of all

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weapons. How is it that a tiny handful of nation states have been able to hold the rest of the world to ransom with the threat of horrific suffering and massive destruction?

There is one doctrine that can shed some light on these questions. It is nuclear deterrence, the theory that states that nations with nuclear weapons will not be subject to attack, especially nuclear attack, because the prospect of a retaliatory nuclear strike is too terrible to contemplate. For US allies such as Australia, the theory is 'extended nuclear deterrence', which claims that even the superpower's allies will be protected by its weapons. Deterrence theory appears to offer an escape from thinking about the unthinkable, a nuclear war. If an event is deterred, it will not happen, so we do not have to worry about it. And if, as the theory goes, nuclear weapons can actually prevent wars, these terrifying devices take on a positive image. Weapons that incinerate whole cities suddenly have an aura of respectability. That is quite a public relations achievement for the nuclear weapons establishment. Therefore we need to be clear about what nuclear deterrence actually involves, and we need to question whether the theory works as promised.

## II THE NATURE OF NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

Nuclear deterrence is a threat - the threat that nuclear weapons may be used in certain situations. It is a threat to inflict suffering and destruction so horrific that, as the theory goes, no leader would risk it by attacking a nuclear-armed state. Deterrence threatens the incineration of cities and their inhabitants – children, women and men – indiscriminately.

If these weapons are used again, tens or hundreds of thousands of innocent people are likely to die instantly. They will be the lucky ones. Many more will die slowly, from the effects of intense heat, firestorms, gale force winds, collapsing buildings and multiple projectiles including flying glass. Underground shelters would

probably be death traps also as the firestorms consume all available oxygen. Burning debris would be spread over many kilometres, spreading the fires even further, the hazards being augmented by broken gas lines and fallen power cables. Dust and smoke would choke the city.

The victims – civilians and military alike – will suffer any combination of burns, multiple fractures, blast injuries, rupture of internal organs, chest trauma, head injuries, hemorrhage, and infections. Many will be trapped under building rubble. Some will be blinded from the initial flash. Any rescue effort will be greatly hampered by the destruction of transport and communications and electricity, and by the radioactive landscape.<sup>1</sup> Health services tend to be located centrally in cities and many, perhaps most, would be destroyed. Those that did survive the attack would be totally overwhelmed. There would be little water or even pain relief for most of the survivors, let alone meaningful medical assistance. Over ensuing days and weeks, radiation sickness would set in, taking a further toll. The radioactive legacy would persist for generations.

A nuclear war is unlikely to be limited to one bomb, so this devastation would probably be replicated across countries or regions or globally. A further impact of nuclear war that has received renewed attention in recent years is that of ‘nuclear winter’, caused by vast amounts of particulate matter from burning cities blocking sunlight, and reducing rainfall and agricultural production for up to a decade. In even a ‘limited’ nuclear war, up to a billion people could die from famine as a result.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There are many references on the health, environmental and other effects of a nuclear weapon explosion. See, eg, Swedish Physicians Against Nuclear Weapons, *Medicine – The effects of nuclear weapons on human health*, <<http://www.slmk.org/larom/wordpress/en/medicine/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Ira Helfand, *Nuclear Famine: A Billion People at Risk—Global Impacts of Limited Nuclear War on Agriculture, Food Supplies, and Human Nutrition* (2012), International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, <<http://ippnw.org/pdf/nuclear-famine-ippnw-0412.pdf>>.

The use of even a single nuclear weapon, let alone more, would produce a scene of terror, pure and simple. The word ‘deterrence’ itself derives from the Latin ‘terrere’, to terrify, and is therefore linked with the word ‘terrorism’. In civil society, those planning such attacks would be labelled either psychopaths or terrorists and locked up out of harm’s way. On the global stage however, most of them have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Australia is now sitting opposite five of them at the UN’s top table, including the US whose weapons play a central role in our own military policies.

To the Australian government, it is therefore legitimate to ask the questions: Are there any limits to the extent of suffering we are prepared to inflict (or have inflicted in our name) on our fellow humans? If so, what are those limits? If the catastrophic harm that is described above is regarded as an acceptable component of our military policies, then what would an unacceptable scenario look like? The same questions are of course applicable to the other nations that rely on either their own nuclear weapons (Russia, US, China, France, UK, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea) or the US nuclear umbrella (no nation other than the US offers nuclear ‘protection’ to its allies). And how do we reconcile our readiness to use, or have used on our behalf, weapons that kill indiscriminately, by the tens or hundreds of thousands, with the rules of international humanitarian law? The Geneva Conventions, for example, prohibit weapons that cause disproportionate harm to civilians.

In its landmark 1996 decision on the general illegality of nuclear weapons, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) did not draw a distinction between the use of the weapons and the threat to use them. In its judgement, the words ‘threat or use’ appeared repeatedly.<sup>3</sup>

As the Mexican Ambassador to the Court reminded us at the time, ‘Torture is not a permissible response to torture. Nor is mass rape

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<sup>3</sup> *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (Advisory Opinion)*, [1996] ICJ Rep 226.

acceptable retaliation to mass rape'. Biological and chemical weapons are not allowed to be kept as a threat to our enemies. Why then are the most terrifying of all weapons, nuclear weapons, allowed to be kept?

Pre-eminent among the ICJ judges at the time for his in-depth analysis of deterrence theory was Judge Christopher Weeramantry, who remains a powerful advocate for nuclear weapons abolition. He reminds us that without a readiness to use the weapons, deterrence is useless:

The value of nuclear weapons as a deterrent or for self defense is sometimes urged as a positive factor, but this claim does not bear examination, for in either case it is meant for actual use and such actual use violates every known principle of humanitarian law. Deterrence is based on the supposition that the possession of the weapon will terrify one's opponents, but one cannot terrify one's opponents into the belief that one will use it if one has no real intention to use it. Deterrence is not a game of bluff but a stockpiling of weapons with a real intent to use them.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Francis Boyle,<sup>5</sup> in arguing against any legal justification for even the possession of nuclear weapons, goes further suggesting that nuclear deterrence is not only illegal but criminal:

There are a small number of governments in the world that continue to maintain their nuclear weapons systems despite the rules of international criminal law to the contrary. I would respond in a very simple way: Since when has a small gang of criminals – the leaders of the nuclear weapons states – been able to determine what is illegal or legal for the rest of the world by means of their own criminal behaviour? What right do nuclear weapons states have to argue that by means of their own criminal behaviour-nuclear deterrence/nuclear terrorism – they have made criminal acts legitimate?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Judge Weeramantry, *Arms Control Today*, July/August 2005, Arms Control Association, <[http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005\\_07-08/Weeramantry](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_07-08/Weeramantry)>.

<sup>5</sup> Professor of International Law at the University of Illinois, College of Law.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Boyle, 'The Criminality of Nuclear Deterrence Today: International Law as Anchoring Ground' (Speech delivered at the XVIIIth Conference 'Mut Zur Ethic': Direct Democracy, Feldkirch, Austria, 4 September 2010).

### III DOES NUCLEAR DETERRENCE WORK?

In addition to the ethical and legal questions surrounding nuclear deterrence, there is also a growing view that the deterrence theory is fundamentally flawed. Far from guaranteeing our security, it brings unparalleled risk. In 2010, the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs released its study *Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons: Examining the validity of nuclear deterrence*, which stated in its introduction 'We have examined the evidence for nuclear deterrence and found it to be paltry, if it exists at all'.<sup>7</sup> The study's key findings on the subject of *Deterrence, legitimacy and value* include the following:

- There is clear evidence that the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not end the Pacific War in 1945, rather it was the declaration of war by the Soviet Union on 8th August.
- Contrary to common belief, there is no evidence that nuclear weapons 'kept the peace' during the Cold War.
- Possessing nuclear weapons provides little leverage. Nuclear weapons have failed to give their possessors decisive military advantage in war.

Perhaps the best voices to tell us how deterrence works (or does not) in practice are those from the Cold War. Mikhail Gorbachev, former President of the USSR, was one who came to realise that nuclear weapons abolition must be abolished. He wrote in October 2011:

Nuclear deterrence has always been a hard and brittle guarantor of peace...Nuclear deterrence becomes less reliable and more risky as the number of nuclear-armed states increases...Only a serious program of universal nuclear disarmament can provide the reassurance and credibility needed to build a global consensus that nuclear deterrence is a dead doctrine.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ken Berry, Patricia Lewis, Benoit Pelpidas, Nikolai Sokov and Ward Wilson, 'Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons: Examining the validity of nuclear deterrence' (Study for the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies and Monterey Institute of International Studies, 2010), <[http://cns.miis.edu/opapers/pdfs/delegitimizing\\_nuclear\\_weapons\\_may\\_2010.pdf](http://cns.miis.edu/opapers/pdfs/delegitimizing_nuclear_weapons_may_2010.pdf)>.

<sup>8</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, 'A Farewell to Nuclear Arms', *Project Syndicate*, 9 October 2011, <<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-farewell-to-nuclear-arms>>.

Half a century ago, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world frighteningly close to nuclear catastrophe. Since 1987, the surviving decision-makers on both sides of that crisis have met annually. Robert McNamara, who was US Secretary of Defense during the crisis, tells us that there were huge miscalculations on both sides and no-one involved had anticipated the events that unfolded. McNamara reports, 'We were a hair's breadth from absolute disaster'. In McNamara's film *The Fog of War* he says, 'Any military commander must admit when he looks back, if he is honest, that he has made mistakes...I have, we all have...But with nuclear weapons there is no place for mistakes. There is no learning time with nuclear weapons'.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was bad enough. Professor Paul Dibb, Emeritus Professor of Strategic Studies at the Australian National University (ANU), reports an episode that he says was even more dangerous. In a lecture in November 2011, he said that in November 1983, when tensions between the USSR and the West were high, especially following the shooting down of KAL 007 in September of that year, NATO launched a huge military exercise, Exercise Able Archer, across Western Europe, with simulated nuclear weapons attacks on the USSR. President Andropov believed that a decapitating strike by the US was about to happen, and Soviet planes were loaded with tactical weapons, ready to go with a minute's notice. Had the crisis not defused with the conclusion of Able Archer, Dibb says that the first Australia would have known of it would have been attacks on the military facilities at Pine Gap (NT), North-West Cape (WA) and Nurrungar (SA), possibly Sydney and another city too.<sup>9</sup>

Another voice with Cold War experience is that of (retired) Commander Robert Green, a former British Royal Navy commander with operational experience of nuclear weapons, who now argues

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Dibb, 'Why did we get the collapse of the USSR so wrong?' (Lecture delivered at Australian National University, 7 November 2011), <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?=DiT9G7ScBfc&lr=1&user=ANUchannel>>.

strongly for their abolition. 'A state practising nuclear deterrence is actually conducting a deliberate policy of nuclear terrorism', he says.<sup>10</sup> Green also makes another very important observation: 'My experience is that most believers in nuclear deterrence refuse to discuss the consequences of failure'. That is, what actually happens if the threat to use a nuclear weapon becomes a reality?

In summary, deterrence may work when everything goes according to plan, there are no surprises, each side in a stand-off knows exactly what the other is thinking, and leaders act rationally and in the best interests of their people. This is not the real world but a fantasy world. In the real world there is confusion (especially in a crisis), mistakes and errors of judgment are made, and there is ignorance of what the other side is thinking.

In addition, history indicates multiple instances of wars involving nuclear weapons states, where the possibility of the use of these weapons has failed to prevent warfare. They include the following:

- China entered the Korean war, against nuclear-armed US forces, in 1950;
- Egypt and Syria attacked nuclear-armed Israeli forces in the occupied Sinai and Golan Heights in 1973;
- Resistance to US forces in Vietnam was not deterred by their nuclear weapons;
- Resistance to occupying forces in Afghanistan, in 1979 and currently, was not deterred by the occupiers being nuclear armed;
- Argentina invaded the Falklands Islands in 1982 despite the British nuclear arsenal;
- Iraq attacked nuclear armed Israel with Scud missiles in 1991;
- India and Pakistan suffer a near constant state of tension, despite each nation being heavily nuclear armed.

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Green, *Security without nuclear deterrence* (Astron Media and Disarmament and Security Centre, 2010) 40.



In other words, the overwhelming power of nuclear weapons has not translated to military advantage for the states that possess them.

It is worth examining the situation between India and Pakistan further. At times of crisis – and there have been many – nuclear war between them may be only a miscalculation away. As both countries pour scarce resources into their weapons programs, neither becomes more secure. Ramesh Thakur, Professor of International Relations in the ANU's Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, writes that 'Nuclearisation has bought India neither strategic gains nor defence on the cheap'. He argues strongly that India should support global nuclear disarmament.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, far from acting as a deterrent, the weapons might have actually had the opposite effect in South Asia. Michael Krepon, co-founder of the Stimson Centre in Washington, wrote in April 2011 that 'Nuclear weapons have played a significant part in these crises. They have emboldened Pakistani decision-makers to take crisis-generating risks'.<sup>12</sup>

The situation in the Middle East is also instructive about the unreliability of nuclear deterrence. Only one nation in the region, Israel, has nuclear weapons. According to deterrence theory, such a situation is highly unstable and should be rectified by a balance of terror which will restore stability. In other words, if deterrence is reliable, Israel's weapons should be balanced by the nuclear arming of its enemies such as Iran. Each will then exercise restraint because of the fear of nuclear retaliation. Perhaps faith in deterrence becomes a little shaky at this point.

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<sup>11</sup> Ramesh Thakur, 'Folly in India's nuclear ways', *Canberra Times*, 14 September 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Krepon, 'South Asia's many crises', *Dawn.com* (online), 19 April 2011, <<http://dawn.com/news/622290/south-asias-many-crises>>.

A final point about deterrence. If a nuclear attack on the US or its allies is prevented by nuclear deterrence, then who needs an expensive and extremely provocative missile defense program? It is surely superfluous if nuclear deterrence works as claimed.

#### IV AUSTRALIA – PART OF THE PROBLEM

Australian government policy on nuclear weapons has been summarised in recent Defence White Papers, although the attention given in these documents to the issue has been extraordinarily scant, as if the value of these weapons of mass destruction in our defence is self-evident and requires no further discussion. The 2013 paper stated:

3.41. Finally, as long as nuclear weapons exist, we rely on the nuclear forces of the United States to deter nuclear attack on Australia. Australia is confident in the continuing viability of extended nuclear deterrence under the Alliance, while strongly supporting ongoing efforts towards global nuclear disarmament.<sup>13</sup>

The 2009 Defence White Paper made a similarly cursory assessment:

4.59. It is the Government's judgement that stable nuclear deterrence will continue to be a feature of the international system for the foreseeable future, and in this context extended deterrence will continue to be viable. The challenge will be to deter rogue states of concern....

6.34. ...for so long as nuclear weapons exist, we are able to rely on the nuclear forces of the United States to deter nuclear attack on Australia. Australian defence policy under successive governments has acknowledged the value to Australia of the protection afforded by extended nuclear deterrence under the US alliance....<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Department of Defence (Cth), *Defence White Paper 2013*, 15 August 2013, 29, <[http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper2013/docs/WP\\_2013\\_web.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper2013/docs/WP_2013_web.pdf)>.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Defence (Cth), *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030 – Defence White Paper 2009*, 16 April 2009, 39,

Australia's willing and unquestioning support for nuclear deterrence strengthens the claim of US officials that their nation has a responsibility to its allies to maintain, strengthen and modernise its nuclear arsenal. President Obama's 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) again reinforced the need for US nuclear weapons to protect not only itself but also its allies. The Executive Summary of the NPR listed as one of the key objectives of US nuclear weapons policy that of 'reassuring US allies and partners'.<sup>15</sup>

However Australia's faith in nuclear weapons plays an even more sinister role. Both US and Australian officials have strongly hinted that without the US nuclear umbrella we could consider developing our own nuclear weapons. President Obama's NPR stated:

By maintaining a credible nuclear deterrent and reinforcing regional security architectures with missile defenses and other conventional military capabilities, we can reassure our non-nuclear allies and partners worldwide of our security commitments to them and confirm that they do not need nuclear weapons capabilities of their own.

Australia's reliance on our ally's weapons had been stated even more firmly in a closed session of the Bipartisan Congressional Commission on US Strategic Posture in February 2009, when our then Ambassador in Washington, Dennis Richardson stated:

...Australia recognises the importance of mutual deterrence as the foundation of nuclear stability between nuclear weapon states....

...Extended deterrence is a key element of Australia's national security. Confidence that a nuclear attack on US allies would be met with a response-in-kind has assured very close US allies, like Australia, that they do not need to develop their own nuclear weapons....

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<[http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper2009/docs/defence\\_white\\_paper\\_2009.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper2009/docs/defence_white_paper_2009.pdf)>.

<sup>15</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report of the United States*, April 2010, <<http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20nuclear%20posture%20review%20report.pdf>>.

...In order to maintain confidence in extended deterrence the US will also need to make clear that it would respond in kind to nations that employ nuclear weapons against friends and allies of the US, even where there is no existential threat to the US itself.

...We acknowledge the extensive cuts [to nuclear arsenals] already made by the US. We appreciate that, in considering further cuts, the US will be guided by the need to maintain effective deterrence, commitments to its allies and by the overall strategic environment, including non-proliferation challenges...

...Australia's most enduring contribution to the US nuclear force posture has been through our partnerships in the Joint Defence Facility Nurrungar and the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap. This contribution includes vital support to ballistic missile early warning information as part of the US Defense Support Program....<sup>16</sup>

In one fell swoop, Richardson:

- reinforced the myth that a nuclear balance of terror between nations is 'stable' (perhaps forgetting the Cuban Missile Crisis and others);
- reinforced Australia's reliance on US nuclear weapons;
- hinted that without our ally's nuclear umbrella, Australia might develop nuclear weapons;
- urged the US to make more explicit its willingness to use nuclear weapons in our defence; and
- reaffirmed that facilities on Australia's soil give support to US nuclear weapons policies.

While publicly advocating strongly for non-proliferation, and joining in the chorus of voices calling for tough measures against countries such as Iran, behind closed doors Australia encourages an ongoing US commitment to its nuclear arsenal so that Australia does not become nuclear armed. Our nuclear weapons policy is thus riddled with hypocrisy and inconsistencies.

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<sup>16</sup> Document obtained under FOI by ICAN, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, in 2011 pertaining to Australia's Submission to the US Nuclear Posture Review of 2009, United States Department of Defense.

One of the problems with Australia's stream of mixed messages is that it grossly undermines any credibility we could otherwise have as a disarmament advocate. It is absurd to suppose that we can at the same time preach nuclear abstinence to other nations, some of which may be significantly more threatened or vulnerable than we are, while holding fast to these same weapons of mass destruction in our own policies. Our policy is also anti-democratic. The Australian people have never been asked by government whether we want nuclear war to be threatened on our behalf, but polls globally, including in Australia, indicate that a vast majority of people want these weapons abolished. In 1998, Australians were asked in a Roy Morgan poll, 'Australia should help negotiate a global treaty to ban and destroy all nuclear weapons: Do you agree or disagree?' 'Ninety-two percent agreed, 7 percent disagreed and 1 percent were undecided'.<sup>17</sup> In the 2009 poll of The Lowy Institute, 75 percent of Australians 'somewhat' or 'strongly' agreed that 'global nuclear disarmament should be a top priority for the Australian government'; a majority (55 percent) said they strongly agreed.<sup>18</sup> In 1998, a poll of over 19,000 people in 21 countries (including all countries with nuclear weapons except North Korea) found that in 20 of the countries, a large majority favoured an international agreement for eliminating all nuclear weapons (in Pakistan, only 46 percent favoured such an agreement).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Poll commissioned by Australian Peace Committee (SA Branch) and the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition, *People Worldwide Want Nuclear Abolition!*, 11-12 November 1998, <[http://www.abolition2000.org/a2000-files/poll\\_worldwide.pdf](http://www.abolition2000.org/a2000-files/poll_worldwide.pdf)>.

<sup>18</sup> Fergus Hanson, *The Lowy Institute Poll 2009 – Australia and the World: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, <[http://lowyinstitute.org/files/pubfiles/Lowy\\_Poll\\_09.pdf](http://lowyinstitute.org/files/pubfiles/Lowy_Poll_09.pdf)>.

<sup>19</sup> Poll conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative research project involving research centres from around the world and managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. WorldPublicOpinion.org, *Publics around the World Favor International Agreement to Eliminate All Nuclear Weapons*, 9 December 2008, <[http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/international\\_security\\_bt/577.php?nid=&id=&pnt=577](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/international_security_bt/577.php?nid=&id=&pnt=577)>.

There is a further issue for Australia, and that is whether our acceptance of extended nuclear deterrence upholds both the spirit and the letter of the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty, which prohibits the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons within the Treaty zone. Australia is the only party to a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) anywhere that relies on extended nuclear deterrence. The obligations of member states of NWFZs were referred to in the East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop on the establishment of a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, held in Tokyo in November, 2011. While there was no unanimity on the subject, some argued that a NWFZ is not compatible in any way with the reliance of any of its member states on a nuclear extended deterrent.<sup>20</sup> In the words of one participant, one cannot have one's cake and eat it too.

## V CAN AUSTRALIA BE PART OF THE SOLUTION?

There is much that can be, and needs to be, done, especially by countries such as Australia, to greatly reduce the nuclear threat. First and foremost, we must renounce the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, including for our own 'protection'. Secondly, we could join global efforts for a Nuclear Weapons Convention to ban the development, testing, production, stockpiling, use and threat of use of these weapons.

On Australia Day 2012, over 700 recipients of an Order of Australia – including former prime ministers, governors-general, ministers, premiers, high court justices and chiefs of the armed

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<sup>20</sup> Binoy Kampmark, Peter Hayes and Richard Tanter, 'Nuclear and Conventional Extended Deterrence in a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone' (Summary Report East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop on the establishment of a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, co-hosted by the Nautilus Institute, Mansfield Foundation, Asia-Pacific Leadership Network and Nautilus Australia – RMIT Global Studies, 11 November 2011).

forces – appealed to the Australian Government to adopt a nuclear-weapons-free defence posture and to join other nations in working to achieve a comprehensive, verifiable treaty to abolish nuclear weapons. Their statement noted that:

There is a growing consensus among world leaders on the urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons. The increasing risks of nuclear weapons proliferation and use in our region and beyond mean there has never been a more important time for Australian initiative and leadership in global efforts to free the world from nuclear weapons.<sup>21</sup>

The Australian parliament could build on the excellent work of its Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, which in 2009 examined the international treaties involving Australia which relate to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The Committee's bipartisan recommendations laid the groundwork, and the imperative, for far stronger action from our parliament on these issues. Prominent among its recommendations was that 'the Australian Government make clear in international fora its support for the adoption of a Nuclear Weapons Convention'. This has not happened, despite the fact that such a Convention, which has already been drafted, has the support of over 140 UN member states and a strong majority of Australians including many influential voices, as noted above.

A declaration that Australia no longer wants to be defended by weapons of mass destruction would have a powerful effect. It would serve as a signal to other states also to consider how the threat of nuclear destruction reflects their values as a nation and the standards they set for others. There would be a further consequence. Australia's rejection of nuclear deterrence could strengthen the hand of all those in the US who genuinely want to see a nuclear weapons free world. With the odds stacked mightily against them in many ways, moderate voices within the US require all possible leverage

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<sup>21</sup> International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, *Order of Australia Appeal*, 14 January 2012, <<http://www.icanw.org/campaign-news/australia/order-of-australia-appeal/>>.

with which to hasten the progress promised in President Obama's speech at Prague on 5 April 2009, where he proclaimed:

Just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st. And as a nuclear power – as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon – the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavour alone, but we can lead it.

As a 'nuclear umbrella' state Australia also has a responsibility to act. The threat to inflict nuclear terror is legally and morally unacceptable, and diametrically opposed to the standards we set for others.

Perhaps the last word on deterrence should go to Alfred Nobel, who held hope that his new invention, dynamite, would help usher in an era of peace. In 1892, he said to his friend Baroness Bertha von Suttner, a founder of the European anti-war movement, 'Perhaps my factories will put an end to war even sooner than your congresses. On the day when two army corps may mutually annihilate each other in a second, probably all civilized nations will recoil with horror and disband their troops'.<sup>22</sup> Nobel was wrong. However while the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one of unprecedented destruction, the 21<sup>st</sup> century could well be terminal for life as we know it if we continue to rely on the noble but deeply flawed theory of deterrence.

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<sup>22</sup> Sven Tagil, *Alfred Nobel's thoughts about war and peace*, 20 November 1998, <[http://www.nobelprize.org/alfred\\_nobel/biographical/articles/tagil/](http://www.nobelprize.org/alfred_nobel/biographical/articles/tagil/)>.