



Part II

Global Problems that Need Global Solutions

Eliminating Nuclear Weapons

*Since Auschwitz we know what man is capable of.
And since Hiroshima we know what is at stake.*

—Victor Frankl

Hiroshima changed our world forever. The advent of “the bomb” was yet another horror to compound the devastation left behind by the war in Europe. As the revulsion over Hiroshima and Nagasaki spread, a desperate sense arose in many quarters that mankind was facing certain doom unless nuclear weapons technology was brought under the control of a world government.

“One world or none!” suddenly became the oft-repeated slogan of laymen, intellectuals, and even atomic scientists. Albert Einstein joined a chorus of prominent leaders and intellectuals who argued for the urgent necessity of a supranational government with greater powers than the newly formed United Nations. “Mankind’s desire for peace,” wrote Einstein in 1946, “can be realized only by the creation of a world government.”¹ Einstein’s words seem even more prophetic today, as human kind has failed so far to contain the spread of the bomb and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

A fatal turning point occurred in the latter half of 1946. In a unilateral gesture almost unthinkable today, the US made an offer at the United Nations to surrender its death weapon to

an international authority, detailed in what became known as the Baruch Plan. The plan had features of enforceable global law, and was widely supported by advocates of world government. The defeat of this initiative by December 1946 provides a key lesson for today's world democracy activists: The world federalist movement remained divided into bickering factions throughout 1946, unable to unite around this historic prop-osal. The Baruch Plan died an early death, and by 1947 a nuclear arms race had descended upon the world.

Since then, the prospect of nuclear war has hovered over the planet like a sword of Damocles. The convergence of the bomb with a "war system" based on the delusion of unlimited national sovereignty remains the gravest threat facing human-kind. The control and eventual abolition of nuclear weapons and WMDs will be the highest priority task of the coming democratic world government.

Controlling "nukes" will require peoples' power

Nuclear war is not an option in any scenario. Those who endured the years of President Ronald Reagan's build-up toward a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s will remember the scary descriptions of "nuclear winter." In the aftermath of a full nuclear exchange, the amount of debris blown into the atmosphere would block the rays of the sun for several years, creating a drastic lowering of the earth's temperature and triggering mass extinctions. Even without a nuclear winter, the amount of radiation released would kill most of the human population on earth and alter the world's environment forever.

Proving Einstein right, the United Nations has been impotent in the face of accelerating nuclear proliferation;

the veto power in the Security Council rendered the UN superfluous while the US and the Soviet Union stockpiled thousands of nuclear warheads and other WMDs, and as nuclear weapons soon spread to the UK, France, and China, and then Israel, India, and Pakistan.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, one might have hoped for a more significant reduction in nuclear stockpiles—some sort of peace dividend. But the US has neither disarmed fully nor closed its nuclear installations around the world. The insanity of the nuclear threat continues: The US and Russia still have enough nuclear firepower to threaten the existence of all people on earth. And the economies and political culture of America and Russia are still in recovery from decades of living on the brink of nuclear suicide.

Much as the visionary Baruch Plan got scuttled long ago, the US has squandered the historic opportunities created by the end of the Cold War and the introduction of a market economy in China. With the help of the other nuclear powers, it might have moved swiftly in the wake of the fall of communism to create a post-nuclear age based on enforceable global law. This would have been the ideal. Instead, it appears that the task of creating a world without nuclear weapons, not to mention the abolition of conventional war, must come from a progressive worldwide movement of people that will eventually lead to the creation of a federal world government. Sixty years after Hiroshima, our leaders have failed to rise to Einstein's call.

We must face the challenge of nuclear proliferation

Even after the reductions of the last decade or so, the US still has approximately 7,500 nuclear weapons. Of these,

2,000 to 2,500 remain on hair-trigger alert, ready to launch at a moment's notice. The US has a fleet of submarines bearing nuclear weapons ready to launch that are only fifteen minutes away from most targets. As if this were not enough, we also have 1,750 nuclear weapons on intercontinental planes that are ready to launch.²

Russia keeps between 2,000 and 2,500 nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert as well. It has approximately 9,000 nuclear weapons in its entire arsenal.

But we are far from the simpler days of a balance of terror between the US and Russia; the asymmetric spread of nuclear weapons to countries in a variety of regions of the world has greatly increased the chances of their use. Today China has approximately 400 nuclear weapons; France, 350; the United Kingdom, 185; Israel, 200; India 60, and Pakistan somewhere between 24 and 48. North Korea has a few nuclear weapons but it is unknown exactly how many.³ Iran also has a nuclear program that the West and the UN are attempting to control.

As smaller countries have gained nuclear weapons technology, the world has become all the more dangerous. This threat of proliferation was foreshadowed during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, as Israel put the nuclear option on the table when its defeat looked possible. A chilling recent example is that of Pakistan and India, now both nuclear powers, who alarmed the world in May 2002 when they raised the possibility of a nuclear exchange because of an unresolved dispute over Kashmir. Also disturbing was the revelation early in 2005 that Pakistan had sacked its top nuclear scientist amid a probe into the secret sale of nuclear technology to Iran and Libya. This scientist, A.Q. Kahn, is known as the "father" of the Islamic world's atomic bomb.

Pakistan has yet to agree to a “no-first-use” policy—meaning it could respond to a conventional threat with a nuclear response. Pakistan is home to a large Muslim fundamentalist population and is currently governed by an unpopular military dictator who has survived several assassination attempts. Control of this country’s nuclear weapons could easily fall into the hands of fundamentalist Muslim leaders and their fanatical followers in the event of a coup or revolution.

Terrorist organizations including al Qaeda have made numerous documented attempts to buy nuclear weapons on the black market. We’ve noted that experts widely believe that the chances of a terrorist group acquiring and using nuclear weapons are high. Islamic terrorists would lack the restraint of a nation; they would not be deterred by the threat of retaliation because there would be no specific nation or locale against which to retaliate. In the final analysis, the only way this threat can be contained is through a worldwide ban on nuclear weapons and other WMDs, backed by the security and justice that only a system of enforceable world law can provide.

No nation has a “right” to possess nuclear weapons

Most people block out the frightening reality of living in a nuclear age; we all have a shared numbness to the facts about the potential of nuclear destruction. Because nuclear weapons were used only twice at the end of World War II, many people seem to assume that the bomb will never be used again.

To be fair, we must acknowledge that some progress has been made. As of 2005, the number of nukes is half what it was at the peak of the Cold War. The US and Russia have agreed to another round of weapons reductions that will cut their collective nuclear stockpile by two-thirds by 2010. The

states that once comprised the Soviet Union have chosen not to be nuclear powers and have transferred their nuclear weapons to Russia or destroyed them. South Africa had nuclear weapons before apartheid ended but fortunately chose to give them up under the leadership of Nelson Mandela.

But this progress may be too little too late. Neither the US nor any other country can stop continued nuclear proliferation if a state or a terrorist group is determined to join the nuclear club. Nuclear weapons the size of a suitcase can be delivered anywhere in the world, and many are thought to have disappeared from Russia. How can one defend against this sort of proliferation? The folly of building a supposed nuclear shield in space—the ongoing legacy of the so-called “Star Wars” space defense—represents a dangerous and tragic way of avoiding America’s true responsibilities to the planet. The war on terrorism may fatten the budgets of the military-industrial-intelligence complex in Washington, but it cannot guarantee that a nuke will never be smuggled into the US. The only hope for a “defense” against nuclear terror is the technique that has worked throughout history: social justice and equity obtained through law and democratic government.

In addition, one might well ask: What gives one nation the right to have nuclear weapons, but not some other nation? What nation or group possesses the right to decide who belongs to the nuclear club, and who does not? One of the largest obstacles to controlling nuclear proliferation is the hypocrisy at the heart of global nuclear policy. Those world powers that today are pressuring countries like Iran and North Korea to forsake the nuclear option are themselves clinging to the bomb as the centerpiece of their own security. This makes it rather strange for these countries to claim that it is morally

reprehensible for others to possess nuclear weapons, but still morally acceptable for themselves to rely on them!

Of course, our answer is that *no nation should have the right to possess nuclear weapons*; they are simply too dangerous and should be banned by world law. Getting nations to destroy their nuclear weapons will require a set of rules that apply equally to all countries and are enforced by a neutral world body. Under the current war system, each nation strives to protect itself and thus tries to acquire the most advanced weapons available. Therefore, it will require replacing the “protection” provided by those weapons with the protection of a global security system controlled by a democratic world government. Nuclear-overkill arsenals like those of the US and Russia can be reduced prior to global government, but stopping proliferation and completely eliminating nuclear weapons will require global government. Only the rule of law can put an end to this scourge.

There is no way to control what sovereign states do to provide for their own security amidst global anarchy; treaties and visionary pronouncements have never worked. Only the rule of law worldwide can bring reason to a world gone mad with militarism. As we have seen, global government can settle disputes between nations in a world court that operates according to a global constitution and that safeguards the rights of individuals and nations. Only this sort of process can make the need for nuclear weapons obsolete. It is clear that we need to move forward with creating a sovereign global democracy—and that we need to do so quickly.

*The next great advance in the evolution of civilization
cannot take place until war is abolished.*

—Douglas MacArthur