

Beyond Deterrence

by

Jonathan Granoff

President

The Global Security Institute



International Conference

on

TOWARDS A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

New Delhi, India

June 9-10, 2008

Beyond Deterrence

Mr. Prime Minister, Ambassador Duarte, Commodore Singh, Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman, and in the most powerful words of the great sage Swami Vivekananda at the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, "My Dear Brothers and Sisters," please accept my heartfelt gratitude for the privilege of addressing you this morning.

It might appear that we have come from great distances to be here, but as never before the world is one neighborhood and we are all living very close to one another. It is interesting how a suburban American like myself has come to appreciate this truth. Near my home, I buy my gas from a Russian concession. The bank for my country, acknowledging the reality of current debt and currency resources, is your neighbor China. When my phone or computer needs service I consult a technical expert in Bangalore or Mumbai. Our lives are so deeply interconnected and our destinies one.

What an honor to be in a nation which can serve the world as an example of how great diversity can lead to cultural enrichment, democratic participation, and grow united in common purposes.

For those who appreciate the mystery of the life of civilization, India represents more than a great nation. Its name resonates in the heart as a cultural spiritual treasury for all humanity. The Indus valley civilization reminds us of Valmiki, Tulsidas, Mahavir, Buddha, Khwaja Muinuddeen Chisti, Nizammuddeen, Guru Nanak, Asoka, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, Ramana Maharshi, Rama Krishna, Mirabai, Mahatma Gandhi, and so many other luminaries, and, in this gathering today, the political leadership of Rajiv Gandhi. Every name reminds us of leadership in the practice of our core humanity. And this remembrance raises our vision to a place where nuclear weapons should have no acceptable position.

To use nuclear weapons against a nuclear weapons state is suicidal and against a non nuclear weapons state genocidal and patently unacceptably immoral. They have no possible use against terrorists.

During the Cold War nuclear deterrence theory reached its apex as a framework paradoxically designed to ensure non use. However, the paradox of nuclear deterrence is that for it to work the threat of use must be perceived as real. Dancing on the edge of catastrophe must become accepted as a daily reality. For this dangerous dance to be sustained one must find a partner that knows and can be relied up to follow its steps. To fail is fatal.

The USSR and the US did not dance cheek to cheek and yet we should remember that only good luck or God's grace has allowed us to be alive here today, all too closely having avoided the *danse macabre*.

Even under the best of circumstances mistakes can be made. Deterrence is too dangerous. General Lee Butler was US Commander of Strategic Nuclear Forces, with the day to day responsibility for operations, discipline, training, of tens of thousands of crew members, the systems that they operated and the warheads those systems were designed to deliver. He said that after he studied deeply into the history of the incidents and the accidents of the nuclear age as they had been recorded by the US and USSR ... "it is more chilling than anything you can imagine" He recounted, "Missiles that blew up in their silos and ejected their nuclear warheads outside of the confines of the silo. B52 aircraft that collided with tankers and scattered nuclear weapons across the coast and into the offshore seas of Spain. A B52 bomber with nuclear weapons aboard that crashed in North Carolina, and on investigation it was discovered that on one of those weapons, 6 of the 7 safety devices that prevent a nuclear explosion had failed as a result of the crash. There are dozens of such incidents. Nuclear missile-laden submarines that experienced catastrophic accidents and now lie at the bottom of

the ocean.” The Cuban Missile Crisis gave the world 13 days to reach safety. How much time is enough to rectify human or mechanical error?

The margin of error with close neighbors is negligible and any error unforgiving. What would happen if a playful computer hacker crossed a line where good humor became Armageddon? Would the motive matter?

India has a deep existential interest in eliminating nuclear weapons rapidly. Moreover, amongst the nuclear weapons states it alone has consistently and correctly set forth coherent arguments for abolition. India has highlighted that nuclear apartheid is practically and morally unacceptable and unsustainable. Gaining the status of the privileged does not change the correctness of the analysis, but it helps provide India with the credibility to lead in a movement for a nuclear weapon free world. Sometimes it takes another piece of wood to take out a splinter.

Will India be alone in this effort? When the likes of George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn pen op-eds in the *Wall Street Journal* emphasizing that nuclear deterrence is inadequate to obtain security and efforts at nonproliferation cannot succeed without a clear commitment and path to obtain nuclear weapons abolition, none can any longer assert that abolition is either impractical or anti American. It took sixty years for such “realists” to reach this conclusion. We thought that US nuclear superiority would bring security but the arms race with the Soviet Union proved us wrong. The nuclear weapons states thought they could preach abstinence to South Asia while sitting on bar stools, India and Pakistan proved them wrong. If we all persist in the illusion that incoherence will bring stability we do not know who will prove us wrong next. And certainly Iraq has demonstrated that the approach to contain nuclear threats through counter proliferation is hardly an answer.

I am pleased to share that I am part of a working group that arose under the leadership of President Gorbachev and George Schultz at a conference at Harvard University's Belfer Center to craft recommendations for the next presidents of Russia and the United States to move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. It should be clear that many more oarsmen will be coming on board to join such good efforts in the near future.

The choice is between attempting to maintain the status quo of a two tiered security system which will result in ongoing creeping proliferation, clearly a route to hell fire, or global legally verifiable and enforceable elimination. This would be the fulfillment of India's moral vision for a better world and a gift to humanity in the name of all that is good as well as that of a good and great man, Rajiv Gandhi.

A nuclear free world is a world where the principle of equity is honored. Equity breeds stability and inequity instability.

But there is even a deeper reason, a universal reason, aptly described in the ancient epic, the Ramayana. In his dissenting opinion in the International Court of Justice's famous Advisory Opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, Judge Weeramantry summarized this wondrous story in relevant part. During the war between Rama and Ravana—rulers respectively in India and Sri Lanka—"a weapon of war become available to Rama's half-brother, Lakshmana, which could 'destroy the entire race of the enemy, including those who could not bear arms.' Rama advised Lakshmana that the weapon could not be used in war 'because such devastation *en masse* was forbidden by the ancient laws of war, even though Ravana was fighting an unjust war with an unrighteous motive'." Such prohibitions were ancient several thousand years ago. This was truth then and it remains true now. Why should we find the use of the plague so abhorrent as a weapon and accept the threatening devastation of nuclear devices? It is the

indiscriminant and devastating effects of weapons of mass destruction which presents an unacceptable threat.

India cannot eliminate unacceptable threats to its security by force. Pakistan will never disarm without India's disarming and India will certainly not disarm without a similar gesture from China. Will China do so without Russia and Russia without the US? Thus we come back to the original logic of India -- let us follow a clear direct route to nuclear disarmament that is non-discriminatory, comprehensive and universal.

How can this be best done now? It is time for stepping up the process. I thus suggest that India convene at the earliest possible time a Nuclear Weapons Convention Preparatory Conference to examine the conditions to obtain a nuclear weapons convention and forge a path to its achievement.

India is uniquely positioned to advance this route. It has the political arguments, the national interest, the cultural and moral calling, and historical moment. The world needs the compass point of leadership. Where can this be found? Is it presumptuous for an American to call upon India to seize such a flag for us all? If nuclear weapons teach us anything good, it is a truth known for millennium by the wise everywhere, humanity is one family. A catastrophe for any nation with these devices is a catastrophe for all. And of course, the leadership of one will be of service and benefit to us all. The ancient culture and wisdom of India identifies it as that leader today.