



THE GRAND ILLUSION OF DISARMAMENT

*The remarks below were delivered at a symposium on “The Grand Illusion of Disarmament” hosted by the National Institute for Public Policy on April 25, 2023. The symposium explored the arguments of both church-based and secular nuclear disarmament advocates in the context of the current international environment. It keyed off of Keith Payne’s most recent book, entitled, *Chasing a Grand Illusion: Replacing Deterrence with Disarmament*, published by National Institute Press and his *Information Series* article, *Nuclear Disarmament: The Contemporary “Great Illusion?”*.*

David J. Trachtenberg

David J. Trachtenberg is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy and served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2017-2019.

Despite what I would call tectonic shifts in the global political and strategic landscape in recent years, the arguments over how best to preserve the nuclear peace today and in the future remain relatively frozen between two competing schools of thought. On the one hand, there are those who believe nuclear deterrence has worked well and represents the only practical approach to avoiding major conflict in an anarchic international system where nations must rely on their own power for protection. On the other hand, those who favor nuclear disarmament believe the winds of war are blowing stronger and that the global elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to ensure that they are never used. This view is strongly held by both religious and secular advocates of disarmament. And this tension between the deterrence and disarmament camps is the subject of Keith’s new book, entitled *Chasing a Grand Illusion: Replacing Deterrence with Disarmament*, and it is the focus of our discussion today. Keith’s latest *Information Series* article is a condensed examination of the arguments in his book.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine provides a contemporary example in support of the arguments of deterrence proponents. Certainly, there are those in Ukraine today who question the wisdom of agreeing to surrender Kyiv’s nuclear deterrent in the 1990s in exchange for Russian promises of security. Even former President Bill Clinton expressed regret over convincing Ukraine to eliminate its nuclear weapons capabilities, saying, “I feel a personal stake because I got them [Ukraine] to agree to give up their nuclear weapons. And none of them believe that Russia would have pulled this stunt if Ukraine still had their weapons.... They were afraid to give them up because they thought that’s the only thing that protected them from an expansionist Russia.”¹

Indeed, the lack of trust among nations and the absence of a global entity that has the power to impose and enforce rules of behavior equally on all states, suggests that each country must look out for its own interests and defend itself in an international system that

¹ Miriam O’Callaghan, “Clinton regrets persuading Ukraine to give up nuclear weapons,” *RTE*, April 4, 2023, available at <https://www.rte.ie/news/primetime/2023/0404/1374162-clinton-ukraine/>.



has been described as a “self-help” system.² Israel, for example, has argued it has the right to strike Iran should Tehran acquire nuclear weapons. As Benjamin Netanyahu recently stated, “Are we forbidden from defending ourselves? We are obviously permitted to do this.”³ Such comments reflect what has been described as a realist view of international relations, in contrast to the idealist assumptions of disarmament advocates.

Of course, there are those who believe that the existing rules-based international order demonstrates the value of international cooperation and a common adherence to moral norms and ethical standards of behavior, and that these traits—rather than the individual accumulation of power—are necessary to guarantee security. However, as a recent commentary in *The Wall Street Journal* noted, the “rules-based international order” is difficult to defend “in the face of a ruthless opponent.”⁴

Nevertheless, some disarmament supporters believe that despite current events, in which the danger of nuclear conflict is viewed as an increasing prospect, or perhaps because of them, disarmament is the only “realistic” solution. In a recent article on the 60th anniversary of St. John XXIII's encyclical “Pacem in Terris” (“Peace on Earth”), Pope Francis reiterated St. John’s call for “integral disarmament,” saying that “true peace can only be built in mutual trust.” He added, “to some ears these words may sound utopian, especially at this time. But it is not utopian, it is healthy realism.”⁵

Yet, as Keith argues:

Barring the fundamental transformation of humankind, and thus international relations, there appears to be little or no basis for trusting foes or a prospective global authority as necessary for disarmament. That trust seems absent in the past and shows no signs of emerging. It is in light of this harsh reality that leaderships now reliant on nuclear deterrence would have to judge various church-based and secular proposals for disarmament to be prudent. It seems unlikely that many ever would do so.⁶

² See, for example, Colin S. Gray, “Foreword,” in Keith Payne, *Shadows on the Wall: Deterrence and Disarmament* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2020), pp. xi-xii.

³ Dan Williams, “Netanyahu rebuffs IAEA chief's remarks against possible attack on Iran,” *Reuters*, March 5, 2023, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/netanyahu-rebuffs-iaea-chiefs-remarks-against-possible-attack-iran-2023-03-05/>.

⁴ Walter Russell Mead, “How Obama Killed Nuclear Nonproliferation,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 11, 2023, available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-obama-killed-nuclear-nonproliferation-npt-soviet-union-ukraine-deterrence-bill-clinton-russia-invasion-rules-based-order-49959cc8>.

⁵ Cindy Wooden, “On 60th anniversary of 'Pacem in Terris,' pope calls for disarmament,” *National Catholic Reporter*, April 10, 2023, available at <https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/vatican-news/60th-anniversary-pacem-terris-pope-calls-disarmament>.

⁶ Keith B. Payne, *Chasing a Grand Illusion: Replacing Deterrence with Disarmament* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2023), p. 8.

Our webinar today will discuss in more detail the tension between those who favor nuclear disarmament and those who believe nuclear deterrence is the only rational approach to preserve peace in a dangerous world.

Keith B. Payne

Keith B. Payne is President of the National Institute for Public Policy. Previously, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Forces Policy.

It is an honor to participate with such a great panel on an important topic. My comments this afternoon are my personal views only.

I will start by noting that there is a deep and ultimately irreconcilable divide between nuclear deterrence and disarmament policies. My new book, *Chasing A Grand Illusion*, examines the arguments behind contemporary church-based and secular advocacy of disarmament, and the associated drive to replace nuclear deterrence with disarmament. Before that discussion, I will preface my remarks on the subject with some pertinent historical background that is a good set up for today's discussion.

In 1910, Sir Norman Angell first published a book entitled, *The Great Illusion*. With numerous illustrations and detailed evidence, Angell reached conclusions that the world was eager to hear, that war and military preparations were of sharply declining value and could soon be a thing of the past. *The Great Illusion* was a sensation in much of Europe—particularly among the British intelligentsia. Angell was both knighted and awarded the 1933 Nobel Peace Prize for his powerful work.

The basic thesis of Sir Norman's work was that territorial control and military power no longer were the basis for economic advantage and national prosperity. War, he said, had become irrational because cooperative relations provide the potential for mutual prosperity and are the only rational choice. As broad European communities recognized the disastrous economic consequences of war for winner and loser alike, they would rationally seek cooperative transnational ties and reject war and the preparation for war.⁷

The actual history of the Twentieth Century, of course, demonstrates that Sir Norman was deeply mistaken, as he later acknowledged.

Now, over a century after the publication of *The Great Illusion*, the new illusion is that nuclear disarmament can replace nuclear deterrence—this is a contemporary proposition offered by many church-based and secular advocates and is the basis for the UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that advocacy of disarmament is now so absurd that there is no need to bother responding. Yet, political pressure for nuclear disarmament continues apace, and to the extent that it has an effect, it will only be on the Western

⁷ Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage* (London: William Heinemann, 1912), pp. 119, 220.

democracies. For example, a key agenda topic for the May G-7 meeting is how to advance nuclear disarmament.⁸ And, some U.S. allies under the nuclear umbrella are beginning to show less resistance to the U.N.'s Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Fifty-six former leaders of NATO countries have signed an open letter praising the treaty,⁹ and the Australian government reportedly is weighing whether to sign the Treaty.¹⁰ The Australian PM has referred to signing on to the Treaty as "Labor at our best."¹¹ It is in this context that we must understand the fallacies of nuclear disarmament advocacy.

I will offer my conclusion up front. It is that, for all their variety and acclimation, contemporary disarmament proposals are substantively comparable to Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* and are, of course, as favorably received by Western audiences. For example, in line with Angell, contemporary nuclear disarmament proposals virtually always identify a cooperative transformation of international relations as the path to disarmament.¹² Greater amity and cooperation among nations, it is said, can move the international system to some form of global governance that mandates and enforces norms and cooperation, including nuclear disarmament.

Of course, unprecedented global cooperation could, indeed, lead to a new international order, including nuclear disarmament. But that point, usually presented as if some great insight, is both self-evident and useless. It simply shifts the question from how to achieve nuclear disarmament to a different impenetrable question: how to make international relations so amicable and cooperative that nuclear disarmament becomes the prudent choice for national leaderships who now see nuclear arms and deterrence as critical for national survival.

Achieving global disarmament is not about convincing an intelligentsia that is not responsible for national security; that appears to be easy. The requirement is for a fundamental, global transformation in human patterns of thinking and international behavior. That is implausible in any timeframe pertinent to policy planning for national leaderships.

Unlike Sir Norman's elaborate and detailed work in *The Great Illusion*, nuclear disarmament advocates typically point to dynamics for this transformation that are not clearly linked to the goal, and are obscure, arcane, ambiguous, and/or transcendental. They

⁸ "Nuke disarmament to be key topic in G-7 top diplomats' talks in Japan," *Kyodo News* (Japan), Apr. 13, 2023, available at <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2023/04/fc29fc88337e-nuke-disarmament-to-be-key-topic-in-g-7-top-diplomats-talks-in-japan.html?phrase=schools%20&words=>.

⁹ As discussed in, Heather Williams, "What the Nuclear Ban Treaty Means for America's Allies," *War on the Rocks*, November 5, 2020.

¹⁰ Matthew Knott and Paul Sakkal, "Government considers break with US on treaty," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia), April. 4, 2023, p. 8, available at <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/would-the-us-alliance-survive-signing-nuclear-weapons-treaty-comes-with-risk-20230403-p5cxo3.html>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See, for example, David Krieger in, Richard Falk and David Krieger, *The Path to Zero* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), p. 209; and, David Cortright and Raimo Väyrynen, *Towards Nuclear Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 21.

include, for example, “public opinion” and “human genius.”¹³ A new cooperative world order and nuclear disarmament, it is said, can be the result of a “black swan phenomenon” that “consists of those parts of reality that shape historical change but are currently hidden from our perception or understanding...”¹⁴ Momentum, it is said, “calls on every person to disarm his or her own heart and to be a peacemaker everywhere...”¹⁵ And, it will be “a result of the intervention in our history of some totally unanticipated happening: a shock of some sort to the system, a charismatic leader who mobilizes a new public consciousness, a new cultural turn toward spirituality and universal humanism....”¹⁶

Perhaps pointing to these dynamics for a cooperative global transformation and disarmament is prescient. But how and when such engines of change could have the hoped-for effect is nebulous at best.

This is the critical point because the question is not whether a new, reliably cooperative world order would be far superior to the current anarchic system. That much is obvious. The question is whether national leaders could ever have sufficient confidence in a new, prospective new global order, on a foreseeable timeline, to relinquish sovereignty and the arms they see as critical for national security in the existing anarchic system. Doing so is deeply problematic because the global orderer envisioned would be run by individuals with human imperfections and foibles, and likely have its own institutional sources of failure. There can be no reasonable expectation that it would function as necessary for global cooperation and disarmament.

The end of the Cold War brought widespread expectations that, somehow, international relations had changed; as Paul Bracken says, almost everyone got on the nuclear zero bandwagon—doing so showed that a person’s “heart was in the right place.” Fewer than two decades later, however, it became painfully obvious that the structural and behavioral conditions that are the reasons countries seek nuclear deterrence are much more resilient than the naïve *Zeitgeist* that followed the end of the Cold War.

Nuclear disarmament may, someday, be possible. But the beginning of wisdom in this regard is to understand that some powerful, new dynamics that are now entirely obscure, must first actually drive a transition to a cooperative international order. The need for this transformation is a high bar and not a trivial detail; it is the single most fundamental point.

Yet, the existing anarchic international system is highly resistant to this transformation, not because national leaders are foolish, uninformed or malevolent in this regard. It is because they are responsible for national security and the dynamics for this transformation identified by disarmament proponents are, at best, of dubious power and effect.

¹³ See the American Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter in, “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response,” *Origins*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (May 19, 1983), p. 30.

¹⁴ Richard Falk in, *The Path to Zero*, op. cit., pp. 200, 204.

¹⁵ Peter Turkson, “Foreword,” in, *A World Free from Nuclear Weapons: The Vatican Conference on Disarmament*, op. cit., pp. x-xi.

¹⁶ Falk, in *The Path to Zero*, op. cit., p. 201.

Yielding national sovereignty and power to the hypothetical global authority would demand that national leaders first expect that the global authority would provide protection against foes, and also that it would not itself become a threat to national survival.

Yet, any prospective global authority powerful enough to mandate and enforce norms would be subject to the seemingly enduring patterns of inconsistent and unscrupulous human and institutional behavior. It should be expected to fail to protect consistently, and could, in fact, pose its own security threat to its members. This latter possibility is why Thomas Schelling said that if a powerful global authority ever did emerge, he would likely have to start plotting civil war.¹⁷

In summary, there appears to be little or no basis for nations to trust foes or a prospective global authority as would be necessary for disarmament, and the dynamics for change identified by disarmament advocates shed no light on how to correct this seemingly enduring characteristic of international relations.

It is in light of this harsh reality that leaderships now reliant on nuclear deterrence must weigh calls for nuclear disarmament. It seems unlikely that many ever will judge disarmament to be prudent. When disarmament is incompatible with sustaining deterrence, as it must be, for many leaderships the prudent priority option almost certainly will remain deterrence. Why? Because while deterrence policies have a demonstrated measure of effectiveness for preventing war in the existing anarchic environment, calls for disarmament are based on obscure dynamics and a wholly uncertain global transformation.

It is true that nuclear deterrence is only a palliative with inherent risks and the possibility of failure. A practicable, safer alternative would be a great and unalloyed good.

But a cooperative global transition and disarmament almost certainly is not a plausible planning alternative. The resilience of this truth and its significance seemingly must be relearned by every new generation. Indeed, the seeds of future crisis and conflict may well be sown in the asymmetrical political effect that disarmament advocacy has on Western democracies.

In conclusion, the elegance of disarmament advocacy, and the unarguable beauty of the goal, do not put it within reach, and there is nothing commendable about chasing an illusion or the cost of doing so.

¹⁷ Thomas Schelling, "The Role of Deterrence in Total Disarmament," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (April 1962), p. 405.

Kathleen C. Bailey

Kathleen C. Bailey is Senior Associate at the National Institute for Public Policy, former Assistant Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

Chasing A Grand Illusion is an outstanding analysis of why nuclear disarmament is not practical and the need for nuclear deterrence continues. Today I offer two sets of thoughts I had upon reading it.

First, I envisioned a companion work, perhaps entitled, *U.S. Deterrence Stasis: The Erosive Effects of the Disarmament Agenda*. The theme would be that, despite the logic failures of disarmament outlined in *Chasing A Grand Illusion*, the disarmament quest has been central to hampering modernization of the U.S. deterrent. I mean *modernization* both in the sense of complete and timely life-extension of weapons and maintenance of production capabilities, and in the sense of new capabilities to meet new threats in a multiplicity of scenarios.

Disarmament efforts have frozen much of the technology of the nuclear deterrent through a sort of self-imposed “time lock.” Meanwhile, threats to the U.S. deterrent have evolved in ways to which we have either not responded or responded inadequately. Here are three examples.

1. We now confront a two-peer scenario (Russia + China), or perhaps a two-peer-plus scenario (China & Russia + North Korea...or Iran). Imagine that things heat up regarding Taiwan. A DPRK nuclear missile eliminates a U.S. aircraft carrier. Would we really launch an ICBM, SLBM, or send a bomber in retaliation, with all the risks that would entail? My opinion is, probably not. But if we had a short-range, low-yield missile onshore or near-shore, *that* might be deemed appropriate retaliation and could forestall additional nuclear use.
2. The threat from adversaries’ existing nuclear weapons is not simply numerical. Opponents’ warheads and delivery systems are modern and diverse, including theater-range prompt strike systems, by comparison to those of the United States. We haven’t even maintained a capability to increase offensive force numbers of existing weaponry in the face of China’s rapid build-up of long-range nuclear missiles and the possible end of limitations on Russia in 2026. Again, we are frozen in the 1990s and pedaling hard to stay even at that level...and possibly failing.
3. New technologies are under development that could drastically undermine our nuclear deterrent. A premier example is China’s test in 2021 of a fractional orbital bombardment system that successfully delivered a hypersonic glide vehicle through reentry from low earth orbit and performed high-speed gliding maneuvers. Coming from any azimuth and with unlimited range, it could be used to destroy U.S. nuclear command and control or U.S. bombers before take-off.¹⁸ And there are other

¹⁸ Steve Lambakis, *Space Sensors and Missile Defense* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2023), available at https://nipp.org/monographs_cpt/space-sensors-and-missile-defense/.

survivability issues that need urgent action as well, including: deployment of a submarine-launched nuclear cruise missile (SLCM/N), making a portion of the ICBM force road-mobile, improvement of maneuvering reentry vehicles, and new countermeasures against defense penetration.¹⁹

By no means is creeping disarmament to blame for all of the stasis of the U.S. deterrent today. One could make a long list of other contributors—lack of understanding in Congress, inaccurate intelligence estimates on foreign nuclear developments, non-communication with the public about the *raison d'être* for the deterrent, and so on. But the disarmament arguments have been critical in undermining support for and understanding of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, and in stymieing U.S. maintenance and modernization of the deterrent. There are two major themes to these arguments.

First is the “moral high ground” stance well-described in *Chasing A Grand Illusion*, that argues the United States should not develop any new defense or war fighting capabilities that substantially improve the lethality, usability, or flexibility of our nuclear weapons. The presumption is that our exemplary behavior will result in others behaving similarly.

A second argument for self-limitation is for the sake of arms control agreements. A good example is the compliance with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), even though the U.S. Senate refused to ratify it. Thus the United States has unilaterally denied itself of the benefits of very low-yield testing that would improve confidence in, and safety and security of, existing nuclear weapons. Others have not been so constrained.

Another example is self-limitation in the name of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). While in government, I witnessed myriad instances in which military, diplomatic, and congressional officials argued we must not improve the deterrent because doing so would undermine our disarmament commitment under Article VI.

Given that the disarmament agenda has already led to stasis, what can be done? I believe that better education of Congress, the media, and the public on the reason for nuclear deterrence is vital. *Chasing A Grand Illusion* is an outstanding tool to help citizens, particularly our future decision makers, understand why disarmament is not the answer to the threats we face. However, I think that *Chasing A Grand Illusion* can be bolstered with additional teaching tools might amplify and complement it. What tools?

My own experience is my guide in answering that. In 1974, I took a job as a nuclear weapons intelligence analyst. My view of the need for nuclear disarmament was akin to that of the American Catholic Bishop's Conference described in *Chasing A Grand Illusion*. What set me on the road to more realistic thinking was participation in war games and Red vs. Blue Team training. You can study written works on how to fly for hundreds of hours, but you learn even more by being the decision-maker in a simulator cockpit for just a few hours.

I suggest a similar approach by using *Chasing A Grand Illusion* as step one, and a video game using its principles as step two. So, if money and talent could be mustered, I advocate

¹⁹ *China's Emergence as a Second Nuclear Peer: Implications for U.S. Nuclear Deterrence Strategy*, Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Spring 2023, p. 8.

that a game be produced—a war game playable by one that teaches the same concepts and reasoning as *Chasing A Grand Illusion* does.

Similarly, the task of teaching from *Chasing a Grand Illusion* would be easier if there were a PowerPoint of key arguments and conclusions tailored to college students. And, the package of book, game-video, and PowerPoint could be placed online, free for any teacher who wishes to use it.

John Harvey

John Harvey is former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs and former Director of the Policy Planning Staff of the National Nuclear Security Administration.

Thank you David and the folks at NIPP for inviting me to participate in today's session offering commentary on Keith Payne's recent monograph, *Chasing a Grand Illusion: Replacing Deterrence with Disarmament*. Let me cut to the chase by offering my short "take" on Keith's work that he generously thought worthy of inclusion in his book's commentary. To wit:

To those who seek a world without nuclear weapons, Keith Payne poses an unforgiving question: In a future, more benevolent world order, what are the necessary conditions under which all nuclear powers could safely disarm and, more importantly, what are the practical steps to achieve such a state? In his thoroughly-researched and thoughtfully-argued piece, Dr. Payne concludes that given today's anarchic international system, and still dangerous world, there is no prospect for achieving nuclear disarmament in the near term. Moreover, in light of man's foibles, and the shortcomings of international institutions created by man, such a transformation is, much as he might wish it weren't so, simply implausible even in the long term. Dr. Payne's work provides the intellectual framework that is, without doubt, central to any future debate on these matters.

Now a few details.

When Keith asked me to provide my thoughts on his draft manuscript, I replied "happy to"—most of what Keith writes on deterrence I read "cover to cover" without his even asking! But when I received the draft and looked it over, I gave him a call. I had a question. Given today's strong support among Congress and the American public for U.S. nuclear forces and their modernization, and given that those who advance nuclear disarmament have gained very little if any traction of late in their efforts to achieve it, why was he spending several months of his valuable creative time to take this issue on? His reply: "Well, John, it hasn't always been that way and nuclear disarmament advocates may again raise its specter in coming years. I want my students, and their students, to be prepared; that is, to have a clear,

fact-based statement of the arguments that they can draw from in any future debate.” Keith was focused, not on today, but on the future, and this book will be part of his legacy in seeking to ensure a safe, secure world for future generations.

After I read the draft, I had occasion to pose another question. In the book, he notes “church-based studies conclude that possessing or employing nuclear weapons is immoral, and there is, correspondingly, no acceptable basis for nuclear deterrence.” In thoughtful commentary, he addresses why possession and possible use could be consistent with “just war doctrine” including the concepts of “distinction” and “proportionality” that govern the use of any military force, not just nuclear. That said, he did not address why possession and possible use are, in themselves, not immoral from either a religious or secular standpoint. I asked, “why not.” Keith replied: “I thought long and hard about including this but there are two reasons I did not. First, it would have added seventy pages to what was intended as a shorter piece. Second, I have already written about the morality question in other work.” Let me digress for a moment. As a New Jerseyian born and bred, and who grew up in the same county on the Jersey shore at roughly the same time, I decided about ten years ago that I needed to see Bruce Springsteen perform in concert. We got tickets, and it was an amazing experience. The crowd would not allow the E Street Band to leave the stage and insisted on several encores. Now I consider Keith Payne to be one of the preeminent “rock stars” of nuclear deterrence. And, like Bruce’s fans, I am asking for an encore; specifically, to bring his great store of intellectual capital to bear in addressing the moral implications of nuclear weapons possession and possible use!²⁰

In the final copy of his book, one thing stands out even before flipping through the pages. The cover art is not typical of that one usually encounters in works on nuclear deterrence. Three parallel strands of barbed wire are framed by what seems to be a blazing sunset but, after gazing at it for a while, could be a nuclear explosion. The top strand of the barbed wire is cut and emanating from that cut are barbs that morph into the shape of birds flying away from the sun/explosion. To a nuclear disarmament, the barbed wire might represent a world still constrained by the aura of nuclear deterrence and the birds, possibly doves of peace (although they look more like seagulls), as reflecting evolution to a world in which nuclear deterrence is no longer needed. Folks like me, not yet having succumbed to the “Grand Illusion,” can imagine another bird—a hawk of totalitarianism—just beyond the frame, swooping down to attack the doves before they can get too far! We must give credit to the artist, Stephanie Koeshall, for her amazing work. My third question to Keith: Where did you find her?

Finally, it is worthwhile for those who come down on either side of the debate to consider what else can be done to manage global nuclear dangers because, as Keith poses, we may never get to elimination. Even so, over the past 40 years remarkable progress has been made on a path to that ultimate goal. The intense nuclear arms race of Cold War days was, in fact, halted. The United States has reduced its nuclear forces and nuclear weapons stockpile in a consistent fashion through both unilateral and bilateral initiatives, and has worked

²⁰ I have since learned that Rebeccah Heinrichs is working on a book to do just that. Stay tuned.

cooperatively with allies, partners, and adversaries to further reduce nuclear threats and associated dangers. The track record is remarkable:

- Arms control treaties between the United States and Russia have led to substantial reductions in nuclear forces, both long-range and intermediate range forces.
- The START process with Russia had reduced so-called “accountable” strategic nuclear weapons from over 10,000, deployed at the end of the Cold War, to about 1,500 today.
- The U.S. nuclear stockpile is less than one-quarter its size at the end of the Cold War.
- The most dramatic transformation is the elimination of many thousands of U.S. short-range tactical nuclear warheads—reductions to less than one-tenth of Cold War levels.
- The only nuclear weapons that remain in the U.S. stockpile today are those carried by the nuclear triad of ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers and by dual-capable fighter aircraft.
- Adjustments in the alert posture of nuclear forces has made forces safer and more secure against accidental or unauthorized use.
- Adjustments to de-MIRV U.S. ICBMs to single warhead systems, bolster nuclear command and control, and reduce reliance on ICBM launch under attack have acted to strengthen strategic stability. Also, to this end, decisions made in the Carter-Reagan nuclear modernization program encouraged Russia to evolve its ICBM force to lower throw-weight, less highly-MIRVed, and more survivable mobile ICBMs.
- The United States has been able, since 1992, to maintain its moratorium on nuclear testing.
- Threat reduction cooperation with Russia (now ended by Russia) made remarkable progress in destroying nuclear delivery systems and securing weapons and weapons materials (i.e., plutonium and highly-enriched uranium) further reducing nuclear dangers.

Given recent negative developments in the international security arena, it is unclear whether this strong record of achievement can be continued. That said, this record demonstrates that the United States is serious about managing global nuclear threats. Sadly, it does not go far enough to satisfy the idealists—who want to move much faster toward global nuclear elimination.

The debate between the nuclear disarmers and the nuclear realists is central to Keith’s book. In another of his pieces, I believe it was in NIPP’s *Information Series #540*, Keith cites Sir Michael Howard, the Oxford Professor, who provides an important insight into a less well understood tension between the two sides. Quoting from Sir Michael:

Nobody who has been brought into contact with that inner group of civil and military specialists who are responsible for the security of this country can fail to notice the almost physical pressure exerted on them by that responsibility, affecting their processes of thought (and often their manner of speech) in much the same way as the movements of a man are affected when he tries to walk in water . . . they share a common skepticism as to the possibility of disarmament, or indeed of the creation of any effective international authority to whom they can turn over any portion of their responsibilities . . . the impatient onlookers, who have never themselves been plunged into that element, cannot understand why.²¹

In my career from graduate school to retired DoD official, I have lived on both sides of this divide and can vouch for the accuracy of Sir Michael's statement. Those of us who have been given the privilege to serve our country in ensuring its security to the gravest of all threats cannot be anything but humbled by this burden when faced with its harsh reality. Not to demean any of their arguments, those on the "outside" are free to offer up ideas that pose risks they deem acceptable. Those on the "inside," often irrespective of presidential administration, do not have the luxury to gamble with the security of the American people or those of its allies. This, in large part explains their more conservative approach to issues involving nuclear weapons.

²¹ Michael Howard, *Studies in War and Peace* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), pp. 215-216.