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# **Nuclear Threats to US Security after the Cold War: Symptoms of an Emerging Civilizational World Order?**

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*“US analysts and officials need to stop dismissing [WMD] in general, and covert delivery in particular, as the stuff of farfetched, nightmarish scenarios. The risk is real, and rank among the most serious challenges to vital US national interests in the post-Cold War era.”*

**Harvard University Study**

*“The progressive deterioration of Russian command-control and early warning networks represents the most serious current threat to Western security...it is not unreasonable to anticipate a catastrophic failure of Russian nuclear control if current trends persist.”*

**Bruce Blair**  
**Brookings Institution**

*“The North Korean example illustrates that this danger [of the procurement of WMD by have-nots] is far from hypothetical.”*

**Ashton Carter and William Perry**  
**Harvard-Stanford Preventive Defense Project**

*“Acquiring weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty. If I have indeed acquired these [atomic] weapons, then I thank God for enabling me to do so. And if I seek to acquire these weapons, I am carrying out a duty. It would be a sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harms on Muslims.”*

**Osama bin Laden**

*“Politics is not the art of the possible. Rather it consists of choosing between what is disastrous and what is merely unpalatable.”*

**John Kenneth Galbraith**  
**Harvard University**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The premise that this research paper builds on is that the US mainland faces non-tactical nuclear threats, that are not strategic by default, from Russia, North Korea, and terrorists. This phenomenon is an international politics curiosity because of the absence of the structural imperatives of the Cold War. To try to explain it conceptually through an empirical investigation is the scope of this thesis. It builds on the assumption that this phenomenon, on the surface, can neither be explained within the framework of the systemic realist- or the sub-systemic democratic peace paradigm. An alternative paradigm for understanding these post-Cold War nuclear security threats could be the civilizational paradigm. It is that which is applied to three case studies of post-Cold War nuclear threats to the US mainland. The hypothesis is that in order for the civilizational paradigm to provide an explanatory framework, these security threats should originate in an actor identification shift—from an identity built on ideology to one built on culture, or religion to be more exact—that has given rise to new interest formations and whose advancements are linked to the current nuclear threats to the US mainland. While concluding that the applicability of the civilizational paradigm is at best ambiguous, and at a worst irrelevant, the implications of the empirical findings are significant, both for the US and the international community. A plausible worst-case scenario is that the circumstances around these nuclear threats to the US mainland could result in both horizontal and vertical nuclear proliferation, an increased risk of nuclear war, and limited freedom of action for the US and the international community as the risk of nuclear terrorism could force them to have to choose between the disastrous and the mere unpalatable.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CTBT	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
DEFCON	Defense Condition
DOS	Department of State
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile
IRA	Irish Republican Army
KT	Kiloton
MAD	Mutually Assured Destruction
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NYC	New York City
PRC	People's Republic of China
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The seed of this research project was sown in the fall of 1999 when I wrote an article for the *Uppsala Association for Foreign Affairs* on the American Senate's refusal to ratify the CTBT. While doing the background research, I probed the question of why the American security community was so concerned about the possibility of a rogue-state and/or terrorist nuclear threat, both from a technical- as well as a motivational angle. A little over six months after I wrote the article, I have a more in-depth understanding of the current nuclear threats to the US as I made parts of the theme of the article the topic of my master's thesis.

Having done considerable amounts of readings, I suspect that parts of the thesis might be controversial because of the paradigm I apply to my case studies and the degree of uncertainty in some instances as far as the data is concerned. My intention has not been to be controversial, but to find the truth. Because of this imperative, I have attempted to judge the paradigm in question by its merits, that is, its degree of descriptiveness. In terms of the degree of uncertainty vis-à-vis some of the data, I elaborate in greater detail in the main body what my rationale has been for supporting one particular view over another. The crucial point is that my discussions are not based on opinions, which I define as the view somebody takes on a certain issue based solely on personal judgment, but on an analysis of what are reasonable research assumptions, based on a body of evidence compiled from the academic- and security practitioner discourse. I hope a close reading of this thesis reveals that I have taken great care to craft a solid piece of academic work.

As with any major research project, others have made contributions in one way or another. To those I am thankful. There are three to whom I owe gratitude in particular. I am grateful to Lars van Dassen for being my adviser, *Forskraftstiftelsen Theodor Adelswårds Minne* for awarding me a research grant to work on my thesis in the San Francisco Bay Area during April-May 2000, and the World Affairs Council of Northern California for granting me a scholarship to attend its annual conference in Pacific Grove. Thank you.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In October 1999, the US<sup>1</sup> Senate refused to ratify the CTBT that would make all future nuclear weapon testing illegal.<sup>2</sup> The Senators critical of the treaty argued that it was not in the US' best interest to ratify it because it would not stop others from procuring nuclear weapons, i.e. rogue states and terrorists.<sup>3</sup> The same month, the Pentagon tested the missile interceptor that would be part of a limited American missile-defense system. When senior Pentagon officials met with the Russian Foreign Minister in April 2000, they did their best to reassure him that the system, were it to be implemented, would not be sufficient to threaten Russia's strategic nuclear deterrence. In other words, Russia had no reason to fear that the Cold-War doctrine of MAD would not survive the deployment of a limited American missile-defense system, whose purpose would be to counter only a small number of ICBMs launched by rogue states, among which North Korea was named as the most immediate threat.<sup>4</sup>

These recent developments illustrate that the current American perceptions of nuclear threats and security are not only similar to those of the Cold War, but in some ways also considerable extended. They are similar because the US and Russia still appear to be locked in a nuclear security dilemma that guarantees security against a nuclear attack through the second-strike capability of each state, manifested through the continued practice of the launch-on-warning doctrine. They are extended because the US fears nuclear threats from actors that did not previously have nuclear capabilities, i.e. rogue states and terrorists.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the latter, today "WMD present more and different things to worry about than during the Cold War...(meaning that) there is less danger of complete annihilation, but more danger of mass

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<sup>1</sup> All abbreviations and acronyms will henceforward be without periods, even when quoting.

<sup>2</sup> Nylund, Patrik. "Obstinat Senat." *Uttryck*. Nr. 3, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that although there have been accusations of domestic American politics influencing some of these developments, there are researchers who support the technical feasibility of the concerns brought forward by critics of the CTBT. E.g., Joshua Goldstein of the American University in Washington, DC, argues that small states and/or non-state actors may acquire nuclear weapons in the future, although he concludes that they would be unlikely to use ICBMs as the means of delivery. Goldstein, Joshua. (1996). International Relations. New York: HarperCollins, pp. 250, 259.

<sup>4</sup> Alter, Jonathan. "Swords vs. Shields." *Newsweek*. May 8, 2000; Lee, Steven. "Russians Get Briefing on US Defense Plan." *The New York Times*. April 29, 2000; Newman, Richard. "Surprise Missile Attack may be Fatal." *US News & World Report*. May 8, 2000; Thompson, Mark and Waller, Douglas. "Shield of Dreams." *Time*. May 8, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Please note that this is what Pentagon strategists refer to as asymmetric warfare, "which means that even small nations (as well as terrorists) with the right weapons and technologies will be able to pose very real security threats to big powers such as the US." Clark, Wesley. "How Will We Fight?" *Time*. May 22, 2000; see also Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, pp. 94-6, 110.

destruction... (as) the probability that some smaller number of WMD will be used is growing.”<sup>6</sup> Because it has been about a decade since the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union, these developments raise some questions. Is the contemporary world order all that different from that of the Cold War? After all, even though the US and Russia are not involved in an ideological struggle, they still appear to be locked into the same nuclear security thinking. Why is that? And are the origins of the other emerging nuclear threats remnants of the Cold War world order? Or are there other factors at play?

The most obvious explanation to these questions might be that the very existence of nuclear capabilities creates a security threat, and the greater the capabilities, the greater the security threat. If this were the case, it would seem like nothing much has changed in terms of the nature of international politics since Thucydides analyzed the causes of the Peloponnesian War 2,500 years ago.<sup>7</sup> It would also vindicate the arguments of the systemic realist paradigm. But if the capabilities of another state matter that much, why isn't the US locked into a nuclear security dilemma with other states that have considerable nuclear capabilities, e.g. Great Britain and France? Although the nuclear arsenals of Great Britain and France are considerably smaller than those of the US and Russia, they are still large and lethal enough, as well as very accurate as far as their delivery systems are concerned, for a “credible second-strike capability.”<sup>8</sup> That arsenals that small are large enough to produce a credible second-strike capability (read: security from a strategic nuclear threat through deterrence as captured by the military doctrine MAD) is an argument supported by former US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who during his tenure in the Kennedy administration in the 1960s commissioned a study on nuclear deterrence.<sup>9</sup> It concluded that 400 nuclear weapons are enough of a capability for the survival of a first strike and the launch of a retaliatory, second strike. Four decades later, McNamara concludes that the

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<sup>6</sup> Betts, Richard K. (1998). “The New Threat of Mass Destruction.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1), pp. 26-7.

<sup>7</sup> According to Thucydides, what “made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.” Quoted in Shafritz, Jay M., Williams, Phil and Calinger, Ronald S. (1993). The Dictionary of Twentieth Century World Politics. New York: Henry Holt and Company, p. 661.

<sup>8</sup> Goldstein, Joshua. (1996). International Relations. New York: HarperCollins, p. 261; a 1996 figure has the nuclear arsenal of Great Britain at the size of 100 strategic warheads on long-range submarine-launched missiles and that of France at 400 strategic warheads on long-range submarine-launched missiles. Goldstein, Joshua. (1996). International Relations. New York: HarperCollins, p. 261; another source sets the number of British nuclear weapons for that same year at 260 and that of France at 450. Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 65.

PRC currently has enough nuclear weapons for effectively deterring the US from a first strike, and that number is less than one-hundred.<sup>10</sup> The idea that Great Britain or France would pose a nuclear threat to the US is of course one that very few people would take seriously. But why wouldn't these states pose a nuclear threat to the US? After all, Great Britain and France have a second-strike capability that, even if smaller than that of Russia, is still great enough to provide for effective deterrence, meaning that the potential damage these states can inflict upon the US constitutes a serious threat. In short, (1) *the mere existence of dual nuclear capabilities does not seem to justify the US-Russian continuation of the Cold War doctrine of nuclear stability through guaranteed MAD*, (2) *the size of a nuclear arsenal is not the only factor that matters*, and (3) *thus, a realist argument cannot explain the continuation of the Cold War nuclear security practices*. The second most obvious explanation might be that Great Britain and France are democracies, which according to the sub-systemic democratic peace paradigm would be the most compelling reason why they would not pose a nuclear threat to the US. E.g., Bruce Russett of Yale University argues that in "the modern international system, democracies have almost never fought each other."<sup>11</sup> But *because Russia is a democracy too, the democratic peace paradigm cannot provide the explanation* either. A third possible explanation could be that the US, Great Britain, and France are allies. While this is true, this argument too fails empirical scrutiny, because the US and the Soviet Union were allies during World War II, but turned against each other once the common enemy had been defeated. With the Soviet Union having lost the Cold War, there is no common enemy for the US, Great Britain, and France against which to form an alliance. Thus, there seems to be no support for this argument either. Also, alliances are not perfect organizations against intra-conflicts, as evident by Turkey and Greece clashing over Cyprus, despite that they are both members of NATO. In sum, that the US and Russia would be caught in a similar nuclear security thinking as during the Cold War challenges the systemic realist- and sub-systemic democratic peace paradigm, because, although the state behavior of the

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<sup>9</sup> The World Affairs Council of Northern California Conference. "Looking Ahead: US Interests, Roles and Responsibilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Symposium on the Nuclear Threat and Plenary of Future Directions in National Security Policy." May 6, 2000. Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA, USA.

<sup>10</sup> Goldstein, Joshua. (1996). International Relations. New York: HarperCollins, p. 261; please note that another estimate of Chinese nuclear capabilities sets its 1996 arsenal at the size of 400 deployed nuclear weapons, although it is not clear how many are strategic vs. tactical. Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Russett, Bruce. (1993). Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 4.

Cold War may still be practiced, an empirical inquiry suggests that the origins of the state behavior ought not to be the same, neither on a systemic or sub-systemic level.

Having established that (1) the systemic realist paradigm may not provide explanations as to why US post-Cold War nuclear security in regard to Russia looks similar as during bipolarity and (2) the sub-systemic democratic peace paradigm may not fill the gap, I turn to post-Cold War world order paradigms for answers to the following questions: What is the exact nature of the current Russian nuclear threat to the US? What interests are behind that nuclear threat? What are the origins of those interests? Can those origins be placed within a larger framework, i.e. that of an emerging new world order? And may the nuclear threats coming from rogue states and terrorists be explained within that framework as well, meaning are these old and new nuclear security threats symptoms of a new world order? To examine these questions is the scope of this thesis.

### **A. Post-Cold War World Order Paradigms**

According to Samuel Huntington of Harvard University, four major paradigms challenging that of realism have emerged since the end of the Cold War.<sup>12</sup> One, the *One World: Euphoria and Harmony* paradigm: It holds that the end of the Cold War represented “the end to significant conflict in global politics and the emergence of one relatively harmonious world.”<sup>13</sup> One of the paradigm’s most recognized models is that of Francis Fukuyama, the end of history thesis, which holds that “we may be witnessing the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”<sup>14</sup> Two, the *Two Worlds: Us and Them* paradigm: It recognizes the reality of a world divided up between in- and out-groups, along cultural and economic lines, and world zones of war and peace. One examples of this paradigm is the thinking that the world may be “divided economically between the North and South or culturally between East and West.”<sup>15</sup> Three, the *184 States: More or Less* paradigm: It is a remnant of classic realism, basically

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<sup>12</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 31-6.

<sup>13</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 33.

holding that states are rational, interest-optimizing entities acting during conditions of international anarchy in which power matters in relative terms, thus making interactions a zero-sum game. Four, the *Sheer Chaos* paradigm: It stresses the increasing degree of chaos in the world, represented by breakdowns in government authority, breakups of states, the intensification of intra-state conflicts with non-political origins, the shift in power from the state to non-state actors such as international crime syndicates, huge movements of refugees across the globe, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the spread of terrorism.

While Huntington recognizes that all four of these paradigms to some degree combine realism and parsimony, he concludes that none of the paradigms have satisfactory explanatory powers vis-à-vis the emerging post-Cold War world order. The challenge, according to Huntington, “is to develop a paradigm that accounts for more crucial events and provides a better understanding of trends than other paradigms at a similar level of intellectual abstraction.”<sup>16</sup> This is exactly what Huntington claims to have done.

## **B. The Civilizational Paradigm**

In 1993, Huntington published two *Foreign Affairs* articles<sup>17</sup> in which he introduced what he perceived as the best paradigm to date for understanding post-Cold War international politics, the civilizational paradigm, which he discussed more elaborately in his 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.<sup>18</sup> The latter, full-length book version of the civilizational paradigm is that which I use in this thesis.

Huntington recognizes that while the realist paradigm was useful as a tool for understanding international politics during the Cold War, it is no longer relevant because the world has changed.<sup>19</sup> Having concluded that no other paradigm has yet taken the place of that of realism, Huntington puts forward the civilizational paradigm, which at its most basic level holds that in “the emerging era, clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace.”<sup>20</sup> The

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<sup>16</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1993a). “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*. 72(3); (1993b). “If Not Civilizations, What?: Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World.” *Foreign Affairs*. 72(5).

<sup>18</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

<sup>19</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 321.

civilizations Huntington refers to are the highest common denominator among different sub-groupings of collectives of people, that of a common religion. He puts forward the proposition that there are seven major civilizations present in the world today: The Sinic, the Japanese, the Hindu, the Islamic, the Orthodox, the Western, the Latin American and possible the African.<sup>21</sup>

Huntington argues that after the end of the Cold War, there has been a shift from ideological- and political self-identifications to an identity built on cultural belonging. International politics has begun to be reconfigured along cultural lines, in part because these emerging cultural identities require the presence of 'the other.' But also, the interests originating in the new identity formations cause conflicts when they clash with the interests of actors from other civilizations. In Huntington's own words, "culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilizational identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration and conflict in the post-Cold War world....local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations."<sup>22</sup> One example of this new world order is the fact that the two Germanys reunited, because even though they were separated by ideology during the Cold War, they had continuously been united by culture.<sup>23</sup> But while Huntington believes that the civilizational paradigm is a better framework for viewing international politics than any other current alternative, he admits that the civilizational paradigm cannot account for everything that takes place in international politics. But nor could its predecessor realism. Rather, the civilizational paradigm's meaningfulness and usefulness rest in whether or not it can provide a superior lens for viewing current international politics than any alternative paradigm.

In sum, Huntington suggests that the post-Cold War world order is, or will increasingly be, characterized by tensions and conflicts between actors from different civilizations, originating in the major cultural groupings of the world, which to a large degree overlap with its main religious communities. "Cultural commonalties and differences shape the interests, antagonisms, and associations of states. The most important countries in the world come overwhelmingly from different civilizations. The local conflicts most likely to escalate into

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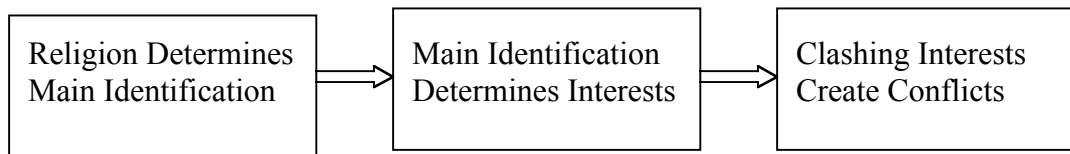
<sup>21</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 45-8.

<sup>22</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 20, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 28.

broader wars are those between groups and states from different civilizations. The key issues on the international agenda involve differences among civilizations.”<sup>24</sup> As recently as March 1999, Huntington re-stressed this argument by concluding that during “the past decade global politics has changed fundamentally...(in that) it has been substantially reconfigured along cultural and civilizational lines...(and) cooperation is more likely between countries with cultural commonalties; antagonism is more likely between countries with widely different cultures.”<sup>25</sup> Over a year later, Huntington writes that in “the future, our loyalties may be determined by what we believe rather than where we live...People now identify with those who are most like them, those with whom they share a common language, religion, tradition, and history.”<sup>26</sup>

### 1. Summary Flowchart of the Civilizational Paradigm



### C. Problem Formulation: Non-Military Nuclear Threats to the US Mainland

During the Cold War, strategic imperatives provided the superpowers with an incentive to maintain a nuclear capability, because their second-strike capabilities secured them against a nuclear first strike. The dual nuclear capabilities also created a security dilemma, because when one superpower enhanced its security, it diminished that of the other, or at least that was the perception. An arms race got on its way. It made the perceived security dilemma worse, hence the utility of arms control. In the end, nuclear weapons served no purpose for the state that had them except for deterring the other state from using its first.<sup>27</sup> When the Cold War ended, the strategic imperatives, deterrence through guaranteed retaliation, of nuclear capabilities disappeared along with the bipolarity resulting from the international ideological struggle

<sup>24</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1999). “The Lonely Superpower: US Military and Cultural Hegemony Resented by Other Powers.” *Foreign Affairs*. 78(2).

<sup>26</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. “Will You Become Your Own Nation?” *Time*. May 22, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> “The reason for possessing nuclear weapons is almost always to deter another state from a nuclear...attack by threatening ruinous retaliation. Deterrence should work if state leaders are rational actors wanting to avoid the

between the Western and Eastern blocks.<sup>28</sup> Yet, despite this fact, state and non-state actors alike are still interested in maintaining (state actor: Russia) or acquiring (state actor: North Korea/non-state actor: Al-Qaeda) nuclear capabilities that pose a non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland. Please note the emphasis on *non-military nuclear threat*, by which I mean a nuclear threat to the US mainland that does not fall into the category *tactical* nuclear threats, because the former would not be aimed at realizing battlefield-related military objectives. Please also note that a non-military nuclear threat does not automatically imply that the nuclear threat is *strategic*, because when calling the nuclear threat strategic, there is an automatic assumption about the causes of the threat, which is that the threat results from the existence of dual nuclear capabilities, which, as illustrated, is not enough of a contributing factor. In other words, *the way I define a non-military nuclear threat is that the nuclear threat is not tactical because it is removed from the potential battle-field, nor is it strategic by default, because a strategic nuclear threat requires more than the existence of dual nuclear capabilities.*

In other words, *these three cases represent a non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland that does not originate in the strategic imperatives of the Cold War, because, as previously illustrated, the distribution of capabilities is, by itself, not a determining factor. That observation is the phenomenon that I focus on in this research thesis, in which I examine what factors have contributed to the phenomenon and whether or not these factors may be understood within the framework of the civilizational paradigm.* To examine the origins of this phenomenon is a crucial endeavor because understanding them may help identify the nature of the current, or emerging, world order, provided that there is one to be discovered.

#### **D. Case Studies**

I apply the civilizational paradigm to three cases that represent a non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland in the post-Cold War era. The cross-case-compatibility is that all three cases involve attitudes vis-à-vis nuclear capabilities that challenge the systemic realist paradigm. That

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huge costs of a nuclear attack.” Goldstein, Joshua. (1996). International Relations. New York: HarperCollins, p. 257.

<sup>28</sup> When the US President Bill Clinton took office in January 1993, “the traditional Soviet threat had evaporated.” A new Russian military doctrine was approved in the fall of that same year after the Russian military had radically reevaluated the national security threats. At that point, as is still the case, there “is widespread acceptance among the (Russian) military leadership and the political elite that *there is no threat to Russia from the United States...*(and thus the) utility of strategic nuclear weapons in this environment is perceived to have

is, the distribution of nuclear capabilities should not be a determining factor, as evident by Great Britain and France being excluded from this logic, a fact that may not be explained using the sub-systemic democratic peace paradigm. The large nuclear weapon actor (Russia) is a democracy, which should cancel out the strategic imperatives, and the non-democratic nuclear weapon actors (North Korea and Al-Qaeda) are insignificant in size vis-à-vis the US, which should also cancel out the strategic imperatives, especially as there are no American strategic nuclear weapons threatening either one of these two actors. In other words, the Cold War logic does not apply to these cases. Yet, in all three cases, the actors have opted for maintaining their present nuclear capability,<sup>29</sup> or alternatively, have tried to acquire one they never had. Further, in all three cases the US is the state that is threatened by the nuclear capabilities. In other words, these cases represent three variations of the dependent variable: A non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland. The cases are also significant in that they represent three different parts of the world, and thus three different civilizations.

The state is the focus of the first case study. I picked Russia because although the Cold War is over, it has chosen to keep the nuclear capabilities it inherited from the Soviet Union, even if limited by START. Because conventional discourse wisdom holds that strategic nuclear weapons, the second-strike capability, only serve a deterrence purpose, it is reasonable to conclude that Russia should have no incentive to keep its nuclear arsenal, being as it is that it has no enemies against which it needs to protect itself through retaliatory nuclear capabilities, especially not the US. Still, Russia maintains its nuclear arsenal, which, as I illustrate, poses a real non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland. Why? What Russian interests are promoted this way? And do the reasons have anything to do with a world order organized along civilizational lines? The rogue state is the focus of the second case study. I picked North Korea because although it is light-years behind established nuclear-weapon states, it has indicated an interest in acquiring nuclear capabilities. Without jumping ahead too much, I will stress that there are different positions in terms of the North Korean nuclear capabilities. A minimalist position would suggest that North Korea had a nuclear program that has been permanently halted, while a maximalist position would suggest that the North Korean nuclear program may

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declined fundamentally.” Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). *Russia after the Cold War*. Harlow: Longman, pp. 262, 224; emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Even after START II goes into effect the year 2007, the Russian nuclear weapons arsenal may contain as many as 3,500 nuclear weapons. Goldstein, Joshua. (1996). *International Relations*. New York: HarperCollins, p. 261.

produce both nuclear weapons and means of delivery in a near future. While I analyze the different positions, I work under the assumption that North Korea poses a non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland. My reasons why are outlined in the case study, in which I address issues such as why North Korea is interested in developing nuclear capabilities, what North Korean interests are promoted this way, and if the reasons have anything to do with a world order organized along civilizational lines. The non-state rogue is the focus of the third case study. Or in a more exact language, terrorists pursuing nuclear capabilities. Please note that my justification for comparing a non-state actor with two state actors is derived from Huntington's own argument that no "reason exists why—in addition to states—nationalities, diasporas, religious communities and other groups should not be treated as legitimate actors in global affairs."<sup>30</sup> I picked Al-Qaeda, the terrorist group led by Osama bin Laden, because of bin Laden's documented willingness to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear capabilities. An immediate caveat needs to be stressed. Because of the very nature of terrorism, meaning that terrorists are non-state actors that have to work outside the scrutiny of governments and the public, questions are constantly raised as to what degree of certainty one may prove anything in terms of terrorists' motivations and capabilities. Although the sources I use are virtually exclusively those of researchers with solid academic backgrounds, I concede that it is prudent to recognize that some uncertainty may be assumed. In the cases that my data is supported by more than one source, or by one very well-respected and well-established source, I work, for the sake of the theoretical part of the research, under the assumption that the data is reliable. The reason why is because the scope of the thesis is not to identify all the exact details regarding nuclear terrorism, as that would only be a prudent task if I were in law enforcement. Since I am not in law enforcement, but in academia, my task is to examine the phenomenon of terrorists wanting to acquire nuclear capabilities in the context of a certain paradigm. Thus, as long as I find no reason to question if the writers have utilized proper research methods, I consider them legitimate sources, while at the same time recognizing the prudence of being aware of the added element of uncertainty. In short, the assumption I work under is that of a Harvard University study which concludes that "*US analysts and officials need to stop dismissing (WMD) in general, and covert delivery in particular, as the stuff of farfetched, nightmarish scenarios. The risk is real, and rank among the most serious challenges to vital US*

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<sup>30</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. "Will You Become Your Own Nation?" *Time*. May 22, 2000.

*national interests in the post-Cold War era.*”<sup>31</sup> Other experts agree, arguing that “catastrophic terrorism has moved from far-fetched [sic] horror to a contingency that could happen tomorrow...(and the) danger of WMD being used against America and its allies is greater now than at any time since the Cuban Missile crisis of 1962.”<sup>32</sup> With this caveat clearly spelled out, this case study addresses the following questions: Why are the terrorists affiliated with bin Laden pursuing nuclear capabilities? What interests of theirs are promoted by so doing? Do the reasons have anything to do with a world order organized along civilizational lines?

### **E. Method and Operationalization**

This study is qualitative because the nature of each case study is such that a quantitative approach is virtually impossible. A qualitative study is always problematic because of the flexibility that the researcher may utilize in terms of the coding of data (variables) and the interpretation of findings. To avoid this scholarly trap, the tasks at hand must be to (1) identify the exact meaning of the concepts that make up the civilizational paradigm and (2) turn the concepts into tangible variables. The key concept is that of civilization, which Huntington himself defines as “the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.”<sup>33</sup> It involves the “values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance’...(and of) all the objective elements which define civilizations...the most important usually is religion...To a very large degree, the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world’s great religions.”<sup>34</sup> In short, a civilization is a major religion. Currently there are seven. Although Huntington himself has identified the contemporary civilizations being, more or less, equivalent to seven world religions, I will nonetheless state the obvious by summarizing his core argument in the context of this thesis: *Interests (the independent variable) are determined by cultural identification (the*

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<sup>31</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 337-8; emphasis added.

<sup>32</sup> Carter, Ashton, Deutch John, and Zelikow, Philip. (1998). “Catastrophic Terrorism: Tackling the New Danger.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(6), pp. 80, 81.

<sup>33</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 43.

<sup>34</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 41, 42.

*antecedent variable), and when interests clash, conflicts emerge, and conflicts combined with nuclear capabilities add up to nuclear threats (the dependent variable).*

## **F. Research Hypothesis**

The research hypothesis is as follows: If the post-Cold War world order is taking shape along civilizational lines, defined by the seven major world religions, the attitudes of state and non-state actors vis-à-vis nuclear capabilities should to a large degree depend on the interests they try to promote through nuclear capabilities being determined by their cultural, or religious, identities, especially vis-a-vis the US. In other words, *the interests of these actors should be based on their cultural identities, and the realization of these interests should have resulted in them wanting to maintain or acquire nuclear capabilities that pose a non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland.* In order for the civilizational paradigm to apply in this particular study, the findings must be affirmative. Yet, if they are not, they may not disprove the paradigm as such, because the empirical work represents too few cases for proving or disproving its overall validity. Alternatively, one could argue that the cases are in a transitional phase in their post-Cold War world order development. In other words, the civilizational paradigm will at a maximum help us understand the phenomenon that cuts across the three case studies, and at a minimum be irrelevant. In order for the findings to affirm the above hypothesis, we should expect to find the following in our case studies. The first case study, focusing on the state, should lead to the conclusion that Russia has maintained its nuclear capabilities because it perceives the US as a threat to national interests defined by its civilizational identity, and the non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland is viewed as advancing these interests. The second case study, focusing on the rogue state, should lead to the conclusion that North Korea has pursued nuclear capabilities because it perceives the US as a threat to national interests defined by a civilizational identity, and the non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland is viewed as advancing these interests. The third case study, focusing on the non-state rogue, should lead to the conclusion that Al-Qaeda has pursued nuclear capabilities because bin Laden, along with his host-country of Afghanistan, perceives the US as a threat to national interests defined by a civilizational identity, and the non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland is viewed as advancing these interests.

## **G. Summary**

This research paper builds on three major assumptions. One, because the strategic imperatives of the Cold War are no longer present, the willingness of state and non-state actors to maintain or acquire nuclear capabilities in recent years may not be assumed as a given. This assumption is supported by the fact that there is a large, ongoing security discourse focusing on an alternative to the realist paradigm for understanding post-Cold War security. In other words, the distribution of capabilities cannot, by itself, be the determining factor. Two, even though the Cold War is over, the US mainland remains the object of non-military nuclear threats, both from the traditional state, the rogue state, and the non-state rogue. The scope of the thesis is to try to explain this phenomenon through an examination of the factors that have contributed to it. Three, this phenomenon might be explained within the framework of the civilizational paradigm. If this were the case, the willingness of state and non-state actors in recent years to maintain or acquire nuclear capabilities that pose a non-military threat to the security of the US mainland (the dependent variable) originates in a world order where the nature of international politics is determined by an identification shift in favor of civilizations (the antecedent variable) that determines the interests of state and non-state actors (the independent variable).

## II. CASE STUDIES

In this part I apply the civilizational paradigm to three case studies, all of which represent a non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland despite the absence of the imperatives of the Cold War, meaning that the international distribution of capabilities alone cannot be the determining factor. The first case is that of a state actor, represented by Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The second case is that of a rogue state, represented by North Korea. The third case is that of a non-state rogue, represented by Al-Qaeda. While each case study ends with a conclusion regarding the relevance of the civilizational paradigm vis-à-vis the particular case, I save the overall evaluation of the paradigm's usefulness for understanding the origins of the particular phenomenon in focus of this thesis for the concluding chapter. Before discussing each case study, I outline the physics and technical aspects of nuclear capabilities,<sup>35</sup> as they raise issues that come up in the case studies. Also, as a rule, when I discuss nuclear weapons in the context of this research paper, I refer to fission bombs, or what is popularly called atomic bombs, the kind of nuclear weapon created by the Manhattan Project during World War II and which is different from a fusion weapon, what is typically referred to as a thermonuclear- or hydrogen bomb, which requires a fission bomb as a detonator.

In order to pose a nuclear threat to the US, the state or non-state actor needs to have an actual nuclear weapon as well as the means to deliver it. The nuclear weapon may be a fission bomb. The way a fission bomb works is that one type of atoms (elements) is fissioned, or split, into new types of atoms, whose total mass is less. The lost mass is converted into energy. If the fissionable atoms are packed closely enough to acquire a critical mass, a chain reaction occurs. The result is a nuclear explosion. Two elements (fissionable material) can be used for making a fission weapon. One is uranium-235 (U-235) and the other is plutonium (Pu-239). Both must be manufactured. Among these two fissionable materials, plutonium is the one most easily produced, and extracting it is done in a separation plant through low-grade uranium. However, building a plutonium bomb is more difficult than building a uranium bomb, but getting enough uranium is more difficult than getting enough plutonium, which is a nuclear power plant by-product. Although uranium is naturally occurring, extracting the fissionable U-235, which is called enriching the uranium, is cumbersome. After extracting plutonium from a nuclear power

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<sup>35</sup> Goldstein, Joshua. (1996). International Relations. New York: HarperCollins, pp. 245-63; Mazarr, Michael J. (1996). North Korean and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, pp. 36-40.

plant, it is taken to a plutonium reprocessing facility, after which point it may be used to produce a nuclear weapon. After successfully producing a nuclear weapon, a warhead, it needs to be able to reach the target area. This can be done in several different ways. Either by ballistic missiles, among which the main differences are the distances they can travel, which may be as far as intercontinental. Some ballistic missiles can be launched from sub-marines. Nuclear warheads can also be delivered by cruise missiles, which act more like an airplane, as opposed to a ballistic missile which is basically a rocket travelling along a fixed trajectory. Before the advent of missiles, strategic bombers were the preferred delivery vehicle. A nuclear weapon may also be brought to the target area by covert means.

### **A. The State: Russia**

The first case study examines (1) the non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland coming from Russia, (2) the interests behind that nuclear threat, and (3) the origins of those interests and whether or not the factors accounting for these origins fit within the framework of the civilizational paradigm.

#### *1. The Nuclear Threat*

Whether or not Russia poses a nuclear threat to the US mainland depends on two factors. One, that Russia wants to inflict damage upon the US. Two, that Russia has the nuclear capabilities to do so. In terms of the former, there are scenarios during which the contemporary, democratic Russia definitely wants to inflict damage upon the US. In terms of the latter, there is no doubt that Russia has the nuclear capabilities to do so.

During the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union had to learn empirically about the dangers of dual nuclear capabilities. Whereas for Josef Stalin the emergence of nuclear weapons “made the prospect of a future war more terrifying, but no less likely...Khrushchev was the first to realize that nuclear bipolarity dictated permanent ‘peaceful coexistence’ between the two antagonistic social systems.”<sup>36</sup> Khrushchev’s belief in the inevitability of nuclear war by means of deterrence was shaken when he during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis “seemed to realize that a

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<sup>36</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis, Gordon, Philip H., May, Ernest R., and Rosenberg, Jonathan, eds. (1999). Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 60, 141.

nuclear war might result from an escalation of tensions and a series of mutual miscalculations.”<sup>37</sup> After the crisis, Khrushchev began understanding the dangers of an unregulated superpower nuclear arms race. For the US, its strategy of massive retaliation lost the last of its credibility once the Soviet Union developed sufficient second-strike capabilities in the beginning of the 1960s. As a means of escaping the risk of accidental nuclear war, the superpowers resorted to arms control agreements, some of which were designed to lock the two into parity. The 1972 ABM Treaty represented a de facto recognition of the stability that the dual second-strike capabilities provided through the MAD doctrine.

After Russia emerged as an independent state, following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, “the traditional perceptions of the international security environment that dominated the cold war [sic] period were abandoned surprisingly quickly by the political elite (although the military was somewhat slow to follow along a similar path.”<sup>38</sup> “By the time Clinton entered the White House (in January 1993), the traditional Soviet threat had evaporated.”<sup>39</sup> A new Russian military doctrine was approved in November that same year after the Russian military had radically reevaluated the national security threats. At that point, as is still the case, *there “is widespread acceptance among the military leadership and the political elite that there is no threat to Russia from the United States...(and thus the) utility of strategic nuclear weapons in this environment is perceived to have declined fundamentally.”*<sup>40</sup> Even so, the 1993 military doctrine, which was still in effect as late as 1998, recognizes the effectiveness of deterrence by promising Russian retaliation in kind in the event of the use of nuclear weapons against Russia.

In January 1995, after its radar detected an incoming missile, Russia proved to the world that it was serious about its 1993 nuclear deterrence doctrine.<sup>41</sup> The Russian command and control system, after interpreting the missile as a possible attack by the West, began a count-down for a retaliatory nuclear weapon launch while Yeltsin prepared for the final authorization. Eight minutes into the event, and only a few minutes before the procedural deadline for launching the retaliatory nuclear strike, the Russian military realized it had made an error. What it had thought was as an incoming missile was actually a US scientific rocket launched from

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<sup>37</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis, Gordon, Philip H., May, Ernest R., and Rosenberg, Jonathan, eds. (1999). Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 159.

<sup>38</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, p. 224.

<sup>39</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, p. 262.

<sup>40</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, p. 224; emphasis added.

Norway, an event of which Russia had been notified ahead of time. This almost fatal error has some people warn “that the ‘progressive deterioration of Russian command-control and early warning networks represents the most serious current threat to Western security... (and it) is not unreasonable to anticipate a catastrophic failure of Russian nuclear control if current trends persist.’”<sup>42</sup>

The fact that Russia in 1994 re-aimed its strategic nuclear weapons away from the US<sup>43</sup> does not detract from the reality that the above incident might have brought the US closer to a nuclear Armageddon than during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the 1973 October war.<sup>44</sup> Even if this were not the case, the close call illustrates that Russia poses a genuine nuclear threat to US security. That this particular case was a matter of almost accidental war does not change that fact, because the important feature of it is that the Russian launch-on-warning doctrine lives on, although the utility of strategic nuclear weapons is perceived to have declined fundamentally. This illustrates that the Cold War thinking is still prevalent, even if the US is not singled out as an arch enemy, or even perceived as a threat. The Russian reluctance to let the US violate the 1972 ABM Treaty supports the notion that nuclear deterrence is an important part of Russia’s nuclear thinking. In other words, the Russian reliance on its second-strike capabilities for deterrence, willingness to use them, and fear of an American anti-missile system that could render the Russian second-strike capabilities less effective, indicate that on the surface, not too much has changed since the Cold War. In sum, Russia poses a non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland. What Russian interests are behind this nuclear threat?

## *2. The Interests behind the Nuclear Threat*

The Russian “policy in the sphere of nuclear weapons is to eliminate the danger of nuclear war by deterring aggression... There is a policy of no nuclear use against non-nuclear states that have acceded to the (NPT), but there is no longer such a policy vis-à-vis nuclear weapons states or

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<sup>41</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). *The Ultimate Terrorists*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 91.

<sup>42</sup> Bruce Blair, quoted in Stern, Jessica. (1999). *The Ultimate Terrorists*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 91.

<sup>43</sup> Thompson, John M. (1996). *A Vision Unfulfilled: Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century*. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, p. 519.

<sup>44</sup> The US global nuclear forces have been brought to a DEFCON 3 status twice: In 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis and in 1973 during the October War. Sagan, Scott D. (1993). *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 212.

non-nuclear states which enjoy a nuclear guarantee from nuclear weapons states.”<sup>45</sup> It is clear that Russia poses a nuclear threat to the US because its interest in this area is physical, national survival.

### *3. The Origins of the Interests*

Huntington argues that while “the Soviet Union was a superpower with global interests, Russia is a major power with regional and civilizational interests.”<sup>46</sup> But although he concludes that Russians are increasingly mobilizing around, and marching behind, symbols of new cultural identities, he also recognizes that Russia for centuries has been a torn country, by which he means that it has not yet fully embraced its civilizational identity.<sup>47</sup> According to Huntington, the collapse of the Soviet Union facilitated the Russian debate on its civilizational identity. It is more or less divided up between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. The former promotes a Russian return to a distinct Orthodox identity whereas the latter advocates that Russia adopts a more Western style society. One major difference between these groups is their view on foreign policy. The Slavophiles generally tend to take an adversary position towards the West, criticizing the Russian government for subordinating the country’s interest to those of the West. Since the end of the Cold War, the West has expanded the NATO membership to include members of the former Soviet block. This development has Russians friendly towards the West warn that NATO “expansion would greatly strengthen nationalist and anti-Western political forces in Russia.”<sup>48</sup>

An initial look at the current Russian nuclear threat to the US does not lend much support to the argument that it would have originated in a civilizational cleavage between the West and Russia, or more specifically, the Orthodox civilization. The following analysis of the origins of the threat seems to confirm that conclusion: That Russia does pose a nuclear threat to the US is clear by the fact that Russia as late as 1995 was ready to launch a retaliatory nuclear strike against the US with the purpose of proving the credibility of its nuclear deterrence doctrine. In order to put the doctrine in a context suitable for the civilizational paradigm, the military and political developments of Russia during the 1990s need to be examined. Russia does not have the

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<sup>45</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, pp. 224-5.

<sup>46</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 164.

<sup>47</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 19, 139.

capabilities to defend itself “against a large-scale external attack without recourse to nuclear weapons.”<sup>49</sup> Russia’s “policy in the sphere of nuclear weapons is to eliminate the danger of nuclear war by deterring aggression...There is a policy of no nuclear use against non-nuclear states that have acceded to the (NPT), but there is no longer such a policy vis-à-vis nuclear weapons states or non-nuclear states which enjoy a nuclear guarantee from nuclear weapons states.”<sup>50</sup> If Russia does not perceive the US as a threat, why would it be prepared to launch a nuclear strike against the US in the event of a surprise missile attack by the West? The obvious answer is that the very existence of nuclear capabilities is a threat and the only way to counter that threat is to deter the other state from using its nuclear capabilities first. This is clearly the essence of the Russian 1993 military doctrine, expressed as action in the form of the almost accidental 1995 launch. This fact might easily lead one to conclude that the nuclear deterrence of the post-Cold War era is no different from that of the Cold War, when it seemed like deterrence worked in the sense that dual nuclear capabilities “preserved the peace until the Cold War could be won.”<sup>51</sup> Yet, even if it were the case that dual nuclear capabilities preserved the peace during the Cold war, the obvious irony must be stressed. A need for deterrence comes from there being an enemy to deter, and for deterrence to work, the threat must be credible and stated clearly ahead of time. The “essence of nuclear deterrence (is) to establish some degree of credibility for an inherently incredible threat.”<sup>52</sup> When Russia prepared to launch a nuclear attack on the West in 1995, it was obvious that Russia must have realized that deterrence had failed because it had not stopped the West from striking first. When deterrence fails--which Russia must have concluded it had, even if going by an incorrect assumption--launching a retaliatory attack is really meaningless, because the purpose of nuclear retaliation is to deter the other from striking first. Thus, clearly, when deterrence fails, the guaranteed nuclear retaliation will not realize the goal of deterrence, which, obviously, is to deter. Hence, the preparedness of Russia to launch a nuclear strike against the US in 1995 may not be assumed as a given, because it ultimately defeats logic, even an absurd logic. The one possible exception is when there is the possibility of a flexible, or limited, response, as opposed to massive retaliation. Taking a game-theory

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<sup>48</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, p. 223.

<sup>50</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, pp. 224-5.

<sup>51</sup> Kort, Michael. (1998). The Columbia Guide to the Cold War. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 88.

approach to the 1995 incident, one may argue that by putting its money where its mouth was, Russia changed the West's pay-off matrix so that in the next round, Russia's, as well as the collective, outcome would have been greater. Since there is no second round in total nuclear war, this is really not a valid argument. In limited nuclear war, however, there are second, third, and perhaps even fourth rounds, which would render the logic of limited nuclear retaliation more acceptable. If Russia in 1995 intended to retaliate against the US with limited capabilities, for Russia to be following through on its doctrine of guaranteed nuclear retaliation was logical because it would have served towards the realization of Russia's goal of survival. If Russia in 1995 intended to retaliate against the US with massive capabilities, for Russia to be following through on its doctrine of guaranteed nuclear retaliation was illogical because it would not have served towards the realization of Russia's goal of survival, or any other obvious Russian interest, with the possible exception of revenging the West with a vengeance. Being as it is that we may not determine positively what level of nuclear retaliation Russia would have responded with, had Yeltsin gone ahead and authorized the launch, we may not decidedly determine the level of logic involved in this particular case of a nuclear threat to US security. However, what we may determine is that (1) the current Russian military doctrine of guaranteed nuclear retaliation is different from that of the Cold War in the sense that the US is not perceived as a direct threat, although its nuclear capabilities seem to be, (2) Russia nevertheless poses a nuclear threat to the US, but (3) not for reasons originating in civilizational cleavages, but for idiosyncratic reasons originating in a deteriorating Russian command and control system.

Having determined that this particular case of a nuclear threat to US security may not be explained within the framework of the civilizational paradigm, I will nonetheless continue a discussion of how Western foreign policy and military doctrines may be relevant in terms of Huntington's argument. I will not do so in order to try to prove the paradigm's relevance, but rather to stress that there are aspects of US and Russian nuclear capabilities that deserve a closer examination in the context of the paradigm. And ironically enough, these aspects are put forward by a scholar who tries to distance himself from Huntington, Peter Shearman of the University of Melbourne, who argues that the perceived Russian threat that in part accounts for the

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<sup>52</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis, Gordon, Philip H., May, Ernest R., and Rosenberg, Jonathan, eds. (1999). Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 7.

enlargement of NATO may actually become a self-fulfilling prophecy because of the enlargement of NATO. Shearman's argument is that neither the existence or enlargement of NATO serves a purpose in the post-Cold War era, because the threat that it was created to counter is no longer present.<sup>53</sup> He suggests that NATO has survived because of, inter alia, US domestic electoral politics and effective lobbying on part of the arms industry. Not only does Shearman render the official reasons for the NATO enlargement irrelevant, but he also goes as far as to conclude that the NATO enlargement might "draw a new dividing line between 'East' and 'West'...(and) strengthen hyper-anti-western nationalism in Russia, stirring militarist ambitions."<sup>54</sup> Although he does not wish "to give any credence to Samuel Huntington's civilizational thesis—indeed, like most specialists on World Politics (he does) not find it at all convincing—we should not ignore the saliency of the politics of identity...concerning Russia's relationship with the West...NATO enlargement runs the danger of strengthening those hyper-nationalist forces in Russia that argue that the West is deliberately seeking to weaken Russia...(because they can, given the fragile domestic situation of Russia) result in militarism and hyper-nationalism. NATO enlargement simply enhances these prospects, as a consequence risking the very creation of the security threat that it is supposedly designed to deter."<sup>55</sup> While Huntington recognizes that "Russia (has) vigorously opposed any NATO expansion, with those Russians who were presumably more liberal and pro-Western arguing that expansion would greatly strengthen nationalist and anti-Western political forces in Russia,"<sup>56</sup> he nevertheless stresses the virtue of a NATO enlargement along civilizational lines, because NATO needs to prevent "the reimposition of Russian political and military control in Central Europe."<sup>57</sup> In other words, while both Shearman and Huntington believe that there is a relationship between NATO enlargement and civilizational cleavages, the former suggests that NATO enlargement could be their cause whereas the latter argues that NATO enlargement should be their effect, a Western organization designed to stand guard at the civilizational border between the Western and Orthodox worlds.

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<sup>53</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, pp. 299-318.

<sup>54</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, p. 311.

<sup>55</sup> Bowker, Mike and Ross, Cameron, eds. (2000). Russia after the Cold War. Harlow: Longman, pp. 312-3.

<sup>56</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 161-2.

<sup>57</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 161.

Although it will have to be a purely hypothetical and speculative discussion, the implications of Shearman's and Huntington's arguments vis-à-vis NATO enlargement are relevant in the context of a possible future Russia nuclear threat to the US. Because NATO exists a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, three former Soviet satellites joined as recently as 1999, and there is no indication that the organization might collapse any time soon the way its counterpart the Warsaw Pact did, one might reasonable assume that NATO will be around for at least a few more years. If it were the case that during this time, the tensions between the West and Russia (read: Orthodox civilization) escalated, both Shearman and Huntington might feel vindicated. The former because NATO could have contributed to the civilizational cleavage, and the latter because NATO would protect the West against the predicted civilizational clash. Looking at only these factors, it would be impossible to know who of the two was right in terms of their assertions of the cause-and-effect relationship. (Please note that a RAND study warns of this possible, future scenario: "A revived and antagonistic Russia could...emerge as the sponsor or terrorist proxies acting against US interests and impelled by nationalist rather than leftist ideology."<sup>58</sup>) If it were the case that tensions grew along a civilizational line, with the West on one side and Russia on the other, it would not be farfetched to speculate about the possibility of a new Cold War—this time organized along civilizational rather than political, or ideological, lines—as two blocks faced one another with suspicion and fear of the other. If a new Cold War emerged, both sides would have nuclear capabilities just like they did during the first Cold War. In light of this possible scenario, it is evident that the future of US nuclear security could become quite similar to that of the past, with one major exception. Since the current Russian control and command system is inferior to that the Soviet Union had during the Cold War, the chances of accidental nuclear war would be greater than ever before. Therefore it is imperative that the US did everything it could to prevent the possibility of a new Cold War between the West and Russia. However, if Huntington is right, this might be inevitable, since the world might be shifting towards a world order organized along civilizational lines. This would not promise a very bright future for US nuclear security.

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<sup>58</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 105.

#### *4. Conclusions*

The current nuclear threat that Russia poses to the US does not seem to be related to a global shift in identities. In other words, it appears that the civilizational paradigm is irrelevant in this case. Rather, because the current nuclear threat, exemplified in the almost, accidental, 1995 nuclear launch, originates in a military deterrence doctrine, which defeats logic when put to the test, in tandem with a deteriorating command and control system, the origin of the threat is virtually idiosyncratic. If it were not, meaning that the international distribution of capabilities is enough of an explanation, the US would face the same threat from states such as Great Britain and France, which both have sufficient strategic, second-strike capabilities. Because the US does not, the very existence of nuclear capabilities cannot be the explanation. The democratic peace paradigm could explain the difference as being caused by one state not being a democracy. This is the only compelling alternative to trying to explain the Russian nuclear threat as idiosyncratic, but it relies on a willingness to label Russia a non-democracy. While few would be willing to do this, many would agree that Russia is still not a perfectly consolidated, or liberal, democracy. In other words, whether or not the democratic peace paradigm could explain what the civilizational paradigm cannot depends on how one defines democracy. A minimalist definition would be an electorate democracy, a political regime in which public offices are filled through contested elections. While this conception of democracy recognizes the virtue of civil rights and liberties, it does not include them in the definition- or measurement of the degree of democracy. A maximalist definition would be a liberal democracy, a regime that, in addition to being an electorate democracy, allows extensive political pluralism and grants considerable civil rights and liberties. A consolidated democracy means that all major actors accept the regime type as the only game in town.<sup>59</sup> I will not probe this matter further because its resolution depends on one's willingness to conceptually admit or refuse Russia into the family of democracies, and this is a matter of personal opinion, not facts. In terms of the possibility of a new Cold War, organized along civilizational lines, being the cause or effect of a NATO enlargement, I concede that because of the hypothetical aspect of the analysis, no conclusions should be drawn in the context of applying the civilizational paradigm to the current Russian nuclear threat to US security. However, I will make one exception by re-stressing a crucial point. Because of Russia's

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<sup>59</sup> Hague, Rod, Harrop, Martin, and Breslin, Shaun. (1998). Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction. London: MacMillan Press, p. 31.

deteriorating command and control system, a possible new Cold War could potentially be more fatal than the first one. This is surely something for American policy makers to bear in mind as the US shapes the course of its future relations with Russia.

## **B. The Rogue State: North Korea**

The second case study examines (1) the non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland coming from a rogue state, (2) the interests behind that nuclear threat, and (3) the origins of those interests and whether or not the factors accounting for these origins fit within the framework of the civilizational paradigm. By rogue state I mean a state that violates international commitments and norms and is not overly concerned about the image it projects outwards through its internal and external behavior and military- and foreign policy preferences and practices. The particular case I use is North Korea and the perceived nuclear threat it poses to the US. Because reservations could be made that North Korea is not a declared, or confirmed, nuclear power like Russia, I start by outlining the background to the perceived North Korean nuclear threat to the US and illustrate why the US may have reasons to be concerned from both a technical- and political perspective.<sup>60</sup> I also suggest alternative scenarios that could challenge the argument that North Korea currently does, or soon will, pose a nuclear threat to the US.

### *1. The Nuclear Threat*

Whether or not North Korea poses a nuclear threat to the US depends on two factors. One, that North Korea wants to inflict damage upon the US. Two, that North Korea has, or may soon have, the nuclear capabilities to do so. In terms of the former, there is no real consensus that North Korea may want to inflict damage upon the US mainland.<sup>61</sup> While some academics, experts, and policymakers view this as a very likely threat scenario, others do not. In terms of the latter, there is a debate on (1) what nuclear capabilities, if any, North Korea may have at this point as well as

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<sup>60</sup> North Korea is among the states that are suspected of attempting acquisition of nuclear weapons. Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 64.

<sup>61</sup> Please note that North Korea could use nuclear capabilities against US troops on the Korean peninsula. While this would pose a serious threat, I will not discuss it in depth as it is a matter of battle-related tactical nuclear use, thus beyond the scope of this essay, because the use of tactical nuclear weapons is not an issue related to North Korea's status as a rogue state threatening the US mainland. Also, non-rogue states might be likely to decide on the same option if they faced a similar threat scenario.

in a near future and (2) whether or not North Korea could technically deliver a nuclear strike against the US, should it have nuclear weapons. I examine all the different positions.

It is evident that there is a perception among American security experts of North Korea having wanted to acquire nuclear capabilities. In the 1980s, North Korea's interest in acquiring nuclear weapons became clear from satellite photos showing a detonation test site, various secret military facilities, and a plutonium reprocessing plant.<sup>62</sup> "The North Korean example illustrates that this danger (of the procurement of WMD by have-nots) is far from hypothetical."<sup>63</sup> The possibility of a North Korean nuclear capability is not something the US security community takes lightly. Senior Pentagon officials met with the Russian foreign minister in April 2000 to reassure him that the American anti-missile system in the planning was not the SDI that Ronald Reagan had dreamed up, but a much more limited system that in its first phase would be aimed at countering North Korean ICBMs equipped with nuclear warheads. This anti-missile system in the planning represents a widespread fear. Its most immediate origin and rationale go back to 1993 when North Korea announced that it would suspend its membership in the NPT that it had joined as recently as 1985, and with which the IAEA in 1992 suspected that North Korea might not be in compliance. Almost three months after North Korea announced its planned withdrawal from the NPT, it declared that it was temporarily suspending its decision to leave the regime. That same fall, the IAEA concluded it was likely "that the North Koreans were 'using their nuclear facilities for production of plutonium.'"<sup>64</sup> US governments experts concluded that North Korea "could have enough plutonium to make one and possible two atomic bombs."<sup>65</sup> Over the course of the next five months, North Korea and the UN were entangled in a struggle over IAEA inspections in North Korea. At this point, the West "had virtually no doubt that North Korea either had nuclear weapons in its possession already or had created the scientific experimental and industrial basis for producing such weapons."<sup>66</sup> Then in April 1994, North Korea let the

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<sup>62</sup> Mazarr, Michael J. (1996). North Korean and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, p. 36; for an insider view, see Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 123-42.

<sup>63</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 142.

<sup>64</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 148.

<sup>65</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 126.

<sup>66</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 148.

IAEA inspect sites previously declared beyond its mandate. A few months later, the US sponsored a UN draft resolution imposing economic sanctions on North Korea, which the same month reaffirmed “its previous decision to suspend the country’s membership in the NPT.”<sup>67</sup> Two weeks later, North Korea issued a statement explaining that it felt no specific need to replace the nuclear reactor that produced plutonium and worried West so much, but it was prepared to do so if that would remove “suspicions about its secret production of nuclear weapons.”<sup>68</sup> This statement, which represented the turning point in the crisis between North Korea and the international community, laid the foundation for the US-North Korean nuclear negotiations that resulted in the Agreed Framework, an agreement signed in October 1994 that promised \$5 billion in aid to North Korea for the replacement of a heavy-water reactor with a light-water one, as well as a guarantee that the US would not use nuclear weapons against North Korea. In return, North Korea would stay as a member of the NPT and allow for IAEA inspections. While this agreement may have ended the North Korean crisis, the events leading up to it contributed--as did other considerations, such as North Korea’s attempts to develop long-range missiles, and lingering suspicions of an ongoing secret North Korean nuclear program--to an American perception of North Korea posing a nuclear threat to US security. As recently as 1998, American spy satellites “discovered several underground complexes burrowed into the hillsides of North Korea near Kumchang-ri.”<sup>69</sup> After this discovery, the Clinton administration appointed former Secretary of Defense William Perry, at the time serving at the Stanford University think-tank the Center for International Security and Arms Control, as the President’s special adviser on North Korea. Dr. Perry concluded in the spring of 1999 that “North Korea is working on its nuclear program despite Clinton Administration statements that the program is frozen...What they are doing is moving ahead on their nuclear weapons.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, *as recently as last year, a security expert with a solid academic- and policy background concluded that the North Korean nuclear program is real and ongoing*, adding that the North Korean “long-range missile program itself suggests in parallel the development of a nuclear weapons

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<sup>67</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 150.

<sup>68</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 151.

<sup>69</sup> Becker, Elizabeth. “Clinton Adviser Says North Korea Is Advancing Its Nuclear Program.” *The New York Times*. March 12, 1999.

<sup>70</sup> Becker, Elizabeth. “Clinton Adviser Says North Korea Is Advancing Its Nuclear Program.” *The New York Times*. March 12, 1999.

program.”<sup>71</sup> Yet, in order to put the North Korean nuclear threat in the context of this research paper, a few key issues need to be analyzed.

There may never have been a North Korean nuclear program, or alternatively, not one advanced enough to be taken seriously. There are those who would argue that North Korea used the crisis as a bargaining tool, and very skillfully so since the West had no reason to fear a North Korean nuclear program. E.g. Vladimir F. Li concludes that during the crisis, nobody “among analysts of international relations seemed to be prepared even to think that the North Korean might start playing an intricate nuclear bluff...(and that the) strategy was difficult to discern because of the especially tight veil of secrecy surrounding (North Korea).”<sup>72</sup> There are sources supporting the claim that North Korea might have been bluffing, or at least misrepresented its potential to produce nuclear capabilities. In 1992, the former chief of the Soviet nuclear weapons program, Viktor N. Mikhailov, stated that as “a specialist, I believe that, considering the level of development of North Korean industry, the creation of the A-bomb there is impossible, at least in the near future, due to difficulties of a technological nature. He has not changed his opinion since then.”<sup>73</sup> While there are more sources supporting such a claim,<sup>74</sup> there are several others suggesting that this assertion would be incorrect. E.g., in the fall of 1993, the CIA director James Woolsey declared that North Korea had enough plutonium for the production of one or two nuclear weapons.<sup>75</sup> Academic sources support such claims, as well as the feasibility of a North Korean nuclear program. A Harvard University study concludes that “North Korea is believed to have produced and separated a small amount of plutonium, perhaps enough for one or two (nuclear) weapons.”<sup>76</sup> Leon V. Sigal of Columbia University argues that North Korean nuclear related developments since the 1950s “suggest why most experts in and out of government could regard North Korea as a principal threat to the nonproliferation regime...(and there is evidence)

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<sup>71</sup> Becker, Elizabeth. “Clinton Adviser Says North Korea Is Advancing Its Nuclear Program.” *The New York Times*. March 12, 1999.

<sup>72</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 140.

<sup>73</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 35; note that the time reference occurs in a book published in 2000.

<sup>74</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, pp. 35-6.

<sup>75</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 145.

<sup>76</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999) American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 15.

of North Korea's interest in making a bomb."<sup>77</sup> I.e., in "the 1970s, Kim II Sung made a decision to begin work on the development of a domestic nuclear weapons capability...(after concluding) that the development of a nuclear deterrent was the only means of ensuring the regime's survival."<sup>78</sup> In sum, the exact nature and size of the North Korean nuclear program may not be positively determined, although it is evident that North Korea has harbored nuclear weapon ambitions.

If there was a North Korean nuclear program, regardless of its nature and size, it may or may not have been put on permanent, or even temporary, hold. This means that there is a possibility that North Korea continued working on its nuclear program despite the 1994 Agreed Framework, or alternatively, that it might resume at some point soon. Clearly this is what the US is concerned about. The question is if this is a realistic concern, meaning, is there evidence for such a proposition? A former Soviet military official that worked in North Korea for many years "reports that all North Korean facilities earnestly working for defense purposes were hidden within mountains in areas where foreigners are not allowed."<sup>79</sup> American experts concluded as recently as 1999 that "there is mounting evidence that North Korea may be developing a nuclear program away from the Yongbyon facility...One indication is the construction of a huge underground facility that US intelligence believes might be designed to house a reactor and reprocessing facility like those of the 'frozen' program at Yongbyon"<sup>80</sup> If this were the case, that North Korea secretly continued its nuclear program, it would have had to overcome some challenges, e.g. the acquisition of plutonium. Given the problems that Russia has faced in recent years in the area of nuclear-related smuggling, it is not surprising that North Korea during just two months in 1992 is reported to have received 56 kg of plutonium, smuggled from the former Soviet Union.<sup>81</sup> The feasibility of a nuclear program taking place in secrecy is not unreasonable to assume, being as it is that *the IAEA did not uncover the Iraqi nuclear program until after the*

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<sup>77</sup> Sigal, Leon V. (1998). Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 22, 93.

<sup>78</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>79</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 36.

<sup>80</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp. 132, 220-1.

<sup>81</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 37.

*Gulf War*.<sup>82</sup> In other words, the American fear of a secret North Korean nuclear program capable of producing nuclear weapons is not unjustified, although its continued existence cannot be completely proven.

If there was, and/or is, a North Korean nuclear program, and if it produced nuclear weapons, North Korea may still not pose a nuclear threat to US security. There are two reasons why not. One, North Korea might want to use its nuclear capabilities against targets on the US mainland, but is prevented from doing so because of delivery problems. This is a problem possible for North Korea to overcome, and it is thus a threat to the US, according to the US Secretary of Defense William Cohen, who in 1999 warned: “The Taepodang-1 test was another strong indicator that the United States will, in fact, face a rogue nation missile threat to our homeland against which we will have to defend the American people.”<sup>83</sup> Other security experts agree. “With only high explosive warheads, (missiles like the Taepodang, although it could probably reach parts of the US,) pose a negligible military risk, but in tandem with a nuclear program, they become a deadly threat.”<sup>84</sup> Whereas the US wants to build a missile-defense system to protect itself against a North Korean missile attack, a Harvard University study concludes that all “plausibly hostile powers that might attack the US directly, including North Korea...presently have only covert means of intercontinental delivery at their disposal. This fact is unlikely to change in the near future.”<sup>85</sup> The study also concludes that although there “are many relevant differences between the ballistic missile threat and the covert (nuclear) threat...there is no sound basis on which to judge the ballistic missile threat more serious than the covert (nuclear) threat.”<sup>86</sup> Others are even less optimistic. It “seems safe to predict that (North Korea) will require no less than fifteen years to develop an ICBM capable of carrying a

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<sup>82</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999) American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 278-9; Sigal, Leon V. (1998). Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 48.

<sup>83</sup> Cirincione, Joseph, Fetter, Steve, Lewis, George, Mendelsohn, Jack, and Steinbruner, John. (Spring 2000). “White Paper of National Missile Defense.” Washington, DC: Lawyers Alliance for World Security/Committee for National Security, p. 17; the North Korean Taepodong-1 missile test took place in August 1998.

<sup>84</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 221.

<sup>85</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999) American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 237-8.

<sup>86</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999) American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 242.

nuclear warhead.”<sup>87</sup> Recent intelligence reports have US officials, including the most dovish, believe that North Korea is within five years of developing ICBMs.<sup>88</sup> Two, even if North Korea would be able to use nuclear capabilities against targets on the US mainland, North Korea may not have the motivation of doing so. In other words, North Korea may not want to make the US a nuclear weapon target, because no North Korean interests would be realized by such an action. American officials seem to believe that rogue states do not act rationally in the sense that their actions are not part of a greater strategy based on well-defined interests and goals. This is of course almost by definition the meaning of being a rogue state in the first place, so the reasoning is not too farfetched. This argument could be supported by the fact that North Korea, as well as other states, have sponsored terrorist acts. That is why Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria are all officially designated terrorism patron-states by the US DOS.<sup>89</sup> North Korea’s terrorism record includes “a number of massive terrorist attacks in the 1980s...(e.g., in 1987), North Korean agents placed a bomb on Korean Airlines flight 858; in the ensuing crash, 115 people were killed.”<sup>90</sup> But while North Korea in 1993 announced that it has stopped sponsoring all kinds of terrorism, there are concerns that this change reflects “a major tactical shift in North Korean strategy, a realization that investment in international terrorism was not productive, and possibly even counterproductive, while the production of weapons of mass destruction was far more promising...North Korea evidently realized it was unwise and impractical to pursue international terrorism and at the same time to engage in the building of long-range missiles and nuclear bombs.”<sup>91</sup> In other words, although there seems to be no obvious logical reason why the US should fear a North Korean nuclear attack by covert or missile delivery, past North Korean behavior suggests that its preferences and policies do not always comply with the rules that govern the behavior of non-rogue states, meaning those that adhere to international norms of prudent state behavior.

In sum, a best-case scenario is that North Korea never had much of a nuclear program, what little it had has been halted permanently, and thus there is no North Korean nuclear threat to

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<sup>87</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 105.

<sup>88</sup> Alter, Jonathan, “Swords vs. Shields,” *Newsweek*, May 8, 2000.

<sup>89</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 14.

<sup>90</sup> Laqueur, Walter. (1999). The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 181.

US security. A worst-case scenario is that North Korea had a nuclear program that continued in secrecy after the 1994 Agreed Framework, North Korea currently has, or will soon have, nuclear capabilities, and it is willing to use them against the US as a means of promoting its interests, either through covert delivery or by using the ICBMs it will acquire in a near future. Either scenario is possible. If the former is closer to reality than the latter, it would be difficult to verify because of the inherent difficulty of proving a negative. If the case were the opposite, that the latter is closer to reality than the former, it too would be difficult to verify because of the secrecy involved, especially taking into consideration North Korea's determination to isolate itself from the rest of the world. In other words, there is an element of uncertainty involved in this case. But because (1) American officials feel that there are good reasons for the US to build its defense planning around the worst-case scenario, (2) there are no apparent technical reasons for concluding that North Korea could not develop and deliver nuclear weapons, and (3) former US Secretary of Defense William Perry concluded as recently as last year that North Korea is still working on its nuclear program, it is against the worst-case scenario which the civilizational paradigm will be applied. The prudence of using this scenario is further supported by discussions I have had with colleagues from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California that support the notion that it is not possible for scholars to escape the uncertainty, period.

## *2. The Interests behind the Nuclear Threat*

Two interests appear to be promoted by the North Korean acquisition of nuclear capabilities, and they appear to be the constant over time. The first, and primary, is the survival of the regime, and it originated in the 1970s when "Kim II Sung made a decision to begin work on the development of a domestic nuclear weapons capability...(after concluding) that the development of a nuclear deterrent was the only means of ensuring the regime's survival."<sup>92</sup> In other words, the North Korean leadership saw nuclear capabilities as essential for the survival of the regime, and it seems to be the case still.<sup>93</sup> Nuclear capabilities would deter an outside aggressor as well as prevent external interference in North Korea's internal affairs. In this context, it is clear that

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<sup>91</sup> Laqueur, Walter. (1999). The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 181.

<sup>92</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>93</sup> Hayes, Peter L., Vallance, Brenda J., and van Tassel, Alan R., eds. (1997). American Defense Policy. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 517.

having nuclear capabilities became even more imperative as the Soviet Union and the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe faded into history at the same time as China emerged as a more unreliable Communist partner. Having lost its ideological allies, North Korea remains, along with Cuba, the last state adhering dogmatically to Communism.<sup>94</sup> In such a climate, it is reasonable for North Korea to feel more threatened, especially when considering the possibility of a reunification with South Korea shaped by the south's political culture, which would be the de facto death of the North Korean regime. In this context, nuclear capabilities can deter states from waging an aggressive war, be it conventional or nuclear. If it were the case that North Korea has completely halted its nuclear program, this fact would challenge the notion that the survival of the regime was the interest promoted by means of nuclear capabilities. This assertion would be true were it not for the fact that the US in connection with the Agreed Framework guaranteed North Korea that it would not use American nuclear weapons against it.<sup>95</sup> For North Korea, this was a guarantee that increased its security tremendously, because, as illustrated by Pentagon computer simulations, the North Korean conventional forces are so numerically superior to the troops stationed in South Korea<sup>96</sup> so that the only thing that would threaten North Korean security vis-à-vis South Korea would be the use of American tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>97</sup> In sum, North Korea seeking nuclear capabilities in the past can easily be tied to regime survival as the interest being promoted. If North Korea is still pursuing nuclear capabilities, and if they threaten the US, it seems like it should be for the same reasons, to deter the US to act in a way that would threaten the survival of the North Korean regime. And what better way may there be than the prospect of one or two ballistic missiles equipped with nuclear warheads being able to hit targets in the US? The other, secondary, interest is the reunification of the two Koreas under the umbrella of North Korea's political system. Both North- and South Korea have declared "reunification as their basic national aspiration and goal," and it is because of that reason the

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<sup>94</sup> According to experts, North Korea "is the last Stalinist nation remaining in the world." Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 124.

<sup>95</sup> Mazarr, Michael J. (1996). North Korean and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, p. 173.

<sup>96</sup> Mazarr, Michael J. (1996). North Korean and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, pp. 142, 143.

<sup>97</sup> During my 1997-98 tenure as a research assistant at the Stanford University think-tank the Center for International Security and Arms Control, I had the opportunity to hear former US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, talk about the only recent scenario which might have resulted in the US using nuclear capabilities, and that was in a situation where tactical nuclear weapons would have to be used against North Korean troops to make up for the US-South Korean military numerical inferiority.

Korean peninsula “constitutes a hotbed of tension and instability in the pacific region, with potentially global consequences should a conflict break out.”<sup>98</sup> This secondary interest of North Korea is that which has created the threat of the survival of the regime, because while the two Koreas want the reunification, both fear that it would threaten their own survival. North Korea, having once attempted the reunification by military means, knows that the US remains one of the obstacles to the advancement of this interest, especially if the US were to use tactical nuclear weapons to even out the numerical military disparity between North Korea and itself. Hence, the US is a part of the North Korean reunification equation that needs to be taken out in order for it to come out even. And what better way may there be than to deter the US from getting involved in a war on the Korean peninsula than the prospect of one or two ballistic missiles equipped with nuclear warheads being able to hit targets in the US?

### *3. The Origins of the Interests*

Huntington himself does not credit the tensions on the Korean peninsula as resulting from civilizational cleavages, because they are “leftovers from the Cold War...(and while violence between the two Koreas) remains possible, cultural commonalties are likely to erode that possibility over time.”<sup>99</sup> Huntington’s argument that North Korea’s nuclear ambitions may be nothing but the last remnant of the Cold War is credible to some degree, but so is an argument that the North Korean nuclear threat to the US can be explained by its interests originating in the notion of a common identity with South Korea, which might make the civilizational paradigm more relevant than even Huntington admits.

During the Cold War, the border between South- and North Korea constituted one of the frontlines in the struggle between the Western- and Communist blocks. Because North Korea is one of the few surviving Communist regimes, it is tempting to assert that tensions have continued because of Cold War imperatives, and gotten worse because of the Cold War ending, leaving North Korea alone, surrounded by a hostile world. During such circumstances, it is not surprising that North Korea would feel threatened by the US, and thus wanting to acquire nuclear

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<sup>98</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 210.

<sup>99</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 219, 220.

capabilities, thinking that if “you have nuclear weapons, the United States won’t fight you.”<sup>100</sup> Or alternatively, if you have a numerically superior military force and the US can’t use its nuclear capabilities to fight you, the US does not pose a threat to the survival of your regime. And the reality is that the American nuclear capabilities have been cancelled out by the US’ guarantee to North Korea not to use them against it. If the US would not make good on this promise, it would be a good insurance for North Korea to be able to deter the US from using nuclear weapons through threatening nuclear retaliation against the American mainland. In sum, there are some compelling arguments in favor of the proposition that the North Korean nuclear threat is not organized along civilizational lines, but along Cold War ideological ones.

There are, however, also compelling arguments in favor of the civilizational paradigm in this case. North Korea wants nuclear capabilities because it feels they would promote its interests, which is first state survival, and then Korean reunification under a North Korean umbrella. The first and primary interest may be assumed as a given and universal interest of all states. However, because the survival of the North Korean regime is threatened by the imperatives of a Korean reunification, there seems to be a civilizational aspect to this argument. After all, Huntington argues that the fact that the two Germanys were able to reunite, despite the ideological differences between West- and East Germany, illustrates that a common culture trumps different ideologies.<sup>101</sup> In 1972, North- and South Korea issued a joint statement in favor of a peaceful reunification without foreign intervention and on the basis of ‘national consolidation.’<sup>102</sup> Being as it is that (1) Communism does not recognize the concept of a nation, but holds that a nation is a bourgeois construct invented to make the proletariat identify with its class oppressor, and (2) North Korea is a Communist regime, *the ideological goals of the North Korean regime should trump those of the notion of there being a Korean nation*. But because they do not, it is evident that the national considerations are more vital in defining North Korean interests than any ideological ones. After all, North Korea wants reunification because it and South Korea form a nation, not because North Korea wants to spread Communism. Although that is likely to be a consequence of a reunification under the umbrella of the North Korean

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<sup>100</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 187.

<sup>101</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 28.

<sup>102</sup> Moltz, James Clay and Mansourov, Alexandre Y., eds. (2000). The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia. New York: Routledge, p. 231.

regime, it does not seem like the spread of Communism is what motivates North Korea as much as the national reunification of one people separated into two by the forces of history. In this context, the US is hindering the Korean reunification because it is prepared to assist South Korea. In order to prevent this, North Korea may attempt to deter the US from getting involved by threatening the American mainland with nuclear strikes. In sum, a shared Korean identity has determined North Korea's interest, a national reunification, which in turn has caused the promotion of a more primary interest, regime survival; the interests of the US has remained constant over time, the promotion of Western values in South Korea, and because those interests clash with the nationalist interests of North Korea, it could be concluded that the nuclear threat to the US mainland is organized along civilizational lines .

#### *4. Conclusions*

There are compelling reason to believe that either one of two scenarios is possible. A best-case scenario is that North Korea never had much of a nuclear program, that it has ended permanently, and that there is no nuclear threat to US security. A worst-case scenario is that North Korea has acquired, or is developing, nuclear capabilities, and that it can, and might want to, target the US some time soon, either using covert means of delivery or ICBMs. If the latter were the case, North Korea might want to target the US mainland because of the promotion of traditional state interests such as regime survival. That North Korea perceives such a threat can be explained as either a Cold War remnant, *or* resulting from clashing US-North Korean interests, as determined by different cultural belongings: The US wanting to advance its interests in Asia, the spread of Western values and society, whereas North Korea seeks national reunification. Because the simultaneous promotion of these interests is not possible, the result is a civilizational clash.

#### **C. The Non-State Rogue: Al-Qaeda**

The final case study examines (1) the non-military nuclear threat to the US mainland coming from a non-state rogue, (2) the interests behind that nuclear threat, and (3) the origins of those interests and whether or not the factors accounting for these origins fit within the framework of the civilizational paradigm. By non-state rogue I mean an actor that tries to realize his ends by means of large-scale terrorism. The particular case I use here is that of Al-Qaeda, the terrorist

organization led by Osama bin Laden, a Saudi millionaire and devoted Muslim who has declared war against the US and is alleged to have acquired nuclear capabilities. To reemphasize the caveat from the introduction, some doubt might be raised as to whether the terrorists within the network of bin Laden actually can, have, or might want to acquire nuclear capabilities. Before applying the civilizational paradigm to this case study, I outline research supporting the argument that there is no theoretical reason why bin Laden may not be able to acquire, deliver or detonate a nuclear device. The purpose of outlining this research is not to assess the exact nature of a possible nuclear terrorist threat to American security, but rather to establish that there are sufficient reasons for examining the origins of the threat coming from this non-state rogue against the civilizational paradigm.

### *1. The Nuclear Threat*

Whether or not Al-Qaeda poses a nuclear threat to the US depends on two factors. One, that the terrorists within bin Laden's network want to inflict damage upon the US. Two, that they have the nuclear capabilities to do so. In terms of the former, there is wide consensus that bin Laden is on a worldwide campaign against the US and that Al-Qaeda is responsible for mass-scale terrorist attacks, among them the synchronized bombings of two American embassies in Africa in August of 1998.<sup>103</sup> There are also indications that bin Laden was connected to the 1993 NYC World Trade Center bombing, masterminded by Ramzi Yousef, who "several senior Pakistani and American investigators believe...was teaching and receiving tuition in Osama bin Laden's terrorist training camps in the spring of 1992,"<sup>104</sup> and whose "final words in court were theatrical declarations of war, not unlike those which Usama [sic] bin Laden, with whom Yousef was proved to have been in contact with, would make to journalists in his Afghanistan lair. America, said Yousef, had invented terrorism. 'I support terrorism as long as it is used against the United States and Israel.'"<sup>105</sup> American officials estimated that had the World Trade Center bomb been placed differently, and had both towers been brought down as allegedly planned, over 200,000

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<sup>103</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. "Understanding the New Terrorism." *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 162.

<sup>104</sup> Reeve, Simon. (1999). *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, p. 247.

<sup>105</sup> Cooley, John K. (1999). *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*. London: Pluto Press, p. 239; emphasis added.

people would have been killed.<sup>106</sup> Against this background, it is not surprising that “Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (has concluded) that the United States is at war with religious terrorism.”<sup>107</sup> While in office, her predecessor “Warren Christopher assured the public that *the United States government regarded terrorist acts in the name of religion and ethnic identity as ‘one of the most important security challenges we face in the wake of the Cold War.’*”<sup>108</sup> Other security experts support these conclusions: “Catastrophic terrorism will be an A-list national security concern in the (21<sup>st</sup>) century;”<sup>109</sup> “The primary risk is (that terrorists) might attempt to punish the United States by triggering catastrophes in American cities.”<sup>110</sup>

In terms of the latter, there are several sources that support the claim that Al-Qaeda has attempted to acquire nuclear capabilities. Some of these sources go as far as to suggest that the terrorists within bin Laden’s network have succeeded in their quest. Gavin Cameron, senior research associate at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, ascertains that Al-Qaeda “sought nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s.”<sup>111</sup> One of the founding members of Al-Qaeda, Mahmoud Salim, was arrested in September of 1998 and charged with the bombings of the American embassies in Africa the month before. A court document related to his arrest concludes that Al-Qaeda in 1992 “tried to obtain components for nuclear weapons, including enriched uranium, to attack US forces in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Somalia.”<sup>112</sup> Yossef Bodansky, the former director of the US Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, makes the following claim in his 1999 book *bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America*:<sup>113</sup> “A senior Arab intelligence official asserted in early October 1998 that ‘Osama bin Laden has acquired tactical nuclear weapons from the Islamic republics of Central Asia established after the collapse of the Soviet Union.’ This overall assessment is shared by Russian intelligence and several Arab

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<sup>106</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. “Understanding the New Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 159.

<sup>107</sup> Finan, William, Jr. “Book Reviews.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 186.

<sup>108</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. “Understanding the New Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 163; emphasis added.

<sup>109</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 155.

<sup>110</sup> Betts, Richard K. (1998). “The New Threat of Mass Destruction.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1), p. 30.

<sup>111</sup> Cameron, Gavin. “Nuclear Terrorism Reconsidered.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 154.

<sup>112</sup> Cooley, John K. (1999). *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*. London: Pluto Press, p. 219.

<sup>113</sup> Bodansky, Yossef. (1999). *bin Laden: The Man who Declared War on America*. Rocklin: Forum/Prima Publishing.

intelligence services based on recent evidence of bin Laden's quest for nuclear weapons. Although there is debate over the exact quantities of weapons purchased, there is no longer much doubt that bin Laden has finally succeeded in his quest for nuclear suitcase bombs...Evidence of the number of nuclear weapons purchased...for bin Laden varies between 'a few' [Russian intelligence] to 'more than twenty' [conservative Arab intelligence services]."<sup>114</sup> An independent source supports the claim that bin Laden's core group Al-Qaeda has acquired nuclear capabilities.<sup>115</sup> Peter Probst, a senior Pentagon terrorist expert, concludes that bin Laden "is very much interested in obtaining weapons of mass destruction and...has the money to pay for them."<sup>116</sup> In 1993, bin Laden attempted to buy HEU for the production of a nuclear device as well as acquire a complete nuclear missile from the former Soviet Union. While these attempts failed, a second attempt might have been more successful: "Reports emerging from Israel and Russia suggest that bin Laden gave his contacts in the Chechen mafia [sic] several million dollars in cash, and heroin...in exchange the Chechens launched an all-out campaign to obtain 'nuclear suitcase' bombs for al Qaeda [sic]...According to one senior American intelligence source close to America's bin Laden investigation, officials from al Qaeda [sic], or possibly senior members of the Taliban, obtained several of the nuclear suitcase bombs in the autumn of 1998, and transferred them into storage in the Taliban's main secure complex near Kandahar in Afghanistan."<sup>117</sup>

Some of the above writers are within the fields of investigative journalism and government. As their work is perhaps not that which one might expect to show up in an academic context, I will not use their claims as proof that Al-Qaeda has acquired nuclear capabilities. However, what I will do is to assume that—based on discussions I have had with colleagues from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California that confirm the notion that although it is hard to prove the existence of terrorist nuclear capabilities, there are enough factors supporting the feasibility—at a minimum, *Al-Qaeda has attempted to acquire nuclear capabilities and at a maximum succeeded*. Reputable academic sources suggest that

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<sup>114</sup> Bodansky, Yossef. (1999). bin Laden: The Man who Declared War on America. Rocklin: Forum/Prima Publishing, pp. 329-30.

<sup>115</sup> Reeve, Simon. (1999). The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism. Boston: Northeastern University Press, pp. 214-6.

<sup>116</sup> Reeve, Simon. (1999). The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism. Boston: Northeastern University Press, p. 214.

<sup>117</sup> Reeve, Simon. (1999). The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism. Boston: Northeastern University Press, pp. 215, 216.

there is nothing to disprove either one of these two assumptions. If anything, the case is the opposite. According to Jessica Stern, Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, some “Islamic extremist groups, such as those affiliated with bin Laden...appear to be capable of overcoming the...technical, political, moral, and organizational (obstacles)...to the use of WMD, and to be strongly motivated to use them.”<sup>118</sup>

Technical obstacles could prevent the terrorists within the network of bin Laden from acquiring nuclear capabilities as well as detonating a nuclear device in the US. In terms of the acquisition of nuclear capabilities, there are three different possibilities. First, the terrorist may manufacture their own nuclear device. The constraints they would face are the acquisition of fissile material and the know-how. In terms of the former, the former Soviet Union is a potential source, as evident from the tremendous problems it has experienced since the end of the Cold War as far as nuclear related thefts and smuggling are concerned. “There is clear-cut evidence that fissile materials have been stolen from former Soviet facilities.”<sup>119</sup> “Nuclear leakage is more than a hypothetical concern. Fissile material—the material necessary to make a nuclear bomb—has been stolen from storage facilities in Russia and put up for sale.”<sup>120</sup> In terms of the know-how, “all the scientific information necessary to design a simple nuclear weapon is publicly available...(and) developing a viable nuclear weapons design is a serious technical problem, but one that can be solved by a state or non-state actor that possesses, or can recruit or hire, a handful of intelligent scientists and engineers.”<sup>121</sup> “Between 1,000 and 2,000 individuals (in Russia) have detailed knowledge of nuclear design,” and some of those have been tempted to offer their services to actors outside of Russia.<sup>122</sup> In 1987, a group of nuclear weapons designers concluded “that building a crude nuclear device was ‘within reach of terrorists having sufficient resources to recruit a team of three or four technically qualified specialists.’”<sup>123</sup> A Harvard University study concludes that some “exceptionally capable non-state actors could design and build a nuclear weapon, particularly if they had access to a substantial quantity of HEU metal,

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<sup>118</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 86.

<sup>119</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 99.

<sup>120</sup> Allison, Graham T., Cote, Jr., Owen R., Falkenrath, Richard A., and Miller, Steven E. (1996). Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy: Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 23.

<sup>121</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 127, 129.

<sup>122</sup> Cameron, Gavin. (1999). Nuclear Terrorism: A Threat Assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 58.

which allows an inefficient but simple weapon design to be used.”<sup>124</sup> Second, the terrorists may acquire tactical nuclear warheads through theft or purchase on the black market. “Although details remain murky, Russian mafias [sic] are already reported to be involved in obtaining and smuggling nuclear materials, and in the most extreme case, perhaps even small nuclear weapons.”<sup>125</sup> Third, the terrorists may acquire so called suitcase bombs,<sup>126</sup> tactical nuclear weapons manufactured by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, that have an explosive charge of 1 KT of TNT.<sup>127</sup> These tactical nuclear weapons are small enough to fit in a suitcase, thus the name, and they may be activated in 20-30 minutes, very possibly without any secret codes.<sup>128</sup> According to the former Russian general Alexander Lebed, the whereabouts of 84 suitcase bombs of an arsenal of 132 are unknown.<sup>129</sup> For terrorists with nuclear capabilities, “delivery is a simple matter of transporting the weapon to the target area...(e.g. through smuggling the) weapon or its components into any of a large number of uncontrolled harbors by boat...the

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<sup>124</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 99.

<sup>125</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 107.

<sup>126</sup> The technical name is RA-115.

<sup>127</sup> Reported by Lebed to an American congressional delegation in the summer of 1997. While massive official denials followed Lebed's announcement, several credible persons supported his claim that the former Soviet Union had as a matter of fact produced these suitcase bombs. E.g., Dr. Alexei Yablokov, former Science Advisor to Boris Yeltsin, who in a testimony before the Research And Development Subcommittee of the US House National Security Committee on October 2, 1997, asserted his belief that Russian suitcase bombs existed and that some of them were unaccounted for. Eventually, the Russian government too seemed to concede that suitcase bombs existed and even that their security might have been imperfect. Lee, Rensselaer. (1998). Smuggling Armageddon: The Nuclear Black Market in the Former Soviet Union and Europe. London: MacMillan Press Ltd., pp. 125-7; Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 60, 90; please note that the US in the 1960s built hundreds of similar mini-nuclear-devices, the Special Atomic Demolition Munition, which weighed 80-100 lbs., had an explosive charge of roughly 1,000 tons of TNT, and was small enough to fit in a duffel bag Lee, Rensselaer. (1998). Smuggling Armageddon: The Nuclear Black Market in the Former Soviet Union and Europe. London: MacMillan Press Ltd., p. 127; PBS Frontline. “Russian Roulette;” please also note that the *air burst* nuclear weapon yield of the bomb dropped over Hiroshima in 1945 was 12.5 KT. Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999) American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 157.

<sup>128</sup> While some reports indicate that the suitcase bombs may be activated without secret codes, there “appears to be some confusion...within the intelligence community whether the bombs are still programmed with a Soviet-era coding system that requires a signal from Moscow before detonation is possible.” Reeve, Simon. (1999). The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism. Boston: Northeastern University Press, p. 216.

<sup>129</sup> Lee, Rensselaer. (1998). Smuggling Armageddon: The Nuclear Black Market in the Former Soviet Union and Europe. London: MacMillan Press Ltd., pp. 125-7; Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 60, 90.

chance of getting caught would be small.”<sup>130</sup> Although customs radiation detectors may reveal the smuggling of fissile material or a nuclear weapon, “shielding can defeat even the best radiation detectors.”<sup>131</sup> Once the nuclear weapons are in the target area, they “could be either fused to detonate on their own...or received by agents...(for) detonation.”<sup>132</sup> That these are technical obstacles possible to overcome is a proposition supported by other researchers.<sup>133</sup>

The technical obstacles are not the only ones Al-Qaeda seems to be able to overcome according to Stern. Political obstacles could prevent the terrorists within the network of bin Laden from using nuclear capabilities against the US, meaning that such an action might be counterproductive. This requires that the terrorists are rational in the sense that their methods are linked to their goals, as well as aware of their overall pay-off matrix. If they are not, they run the risk of losing political goodwill with the constituencies whose support they need. Mass-casualty “attacks tend to undermine political support for the organizations that commit them and the causes that motivates them.”<sup>134</sup> Because the terrorists within the network of bin Laden lack real constitutes, Stern argues, they “are probably more likely to use WMD terrorism than the IRA.”<sup>135</sup> It may even be the case that they would resort to a nuclear attack as a means of maintaining the integrity of the group. Further, moral obstacles could prevent the terrorist within the network of bin Laden from using nuclear capabilities against the US. To overcome these obstacles, the terrorists must be morally detached from the consequences of their actions. In order to accomplish this, a terrorist group may utilize any of the following four rationalization techniques. One, by using moral justification, the “terrorists may imagine themselves as the saviors of a constituency threatened by a great evil, as...Islamic extremists do when they label the United States the Great Satan.”<sup>136</sup> Two, the displacement of responsibility allows terrorists to shift their responsibility for an action upon somebody else. Three, by ignoring the actual

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<sup>130</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 139, 140.

<sup>131</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 141.

<sup>132</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 142.

<sup>133</sup> Cameron, Gavin. (1999). Nuclear Terrorism: A Threat Assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc, pp. 131-2; Laqueur, Walter. (1999). The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 71.

<sup>134</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 181.

<sup>135</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 78.

<sup>136</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 80.

suffering of the victim, which becomes easier the further away physically the terrorist is from the victims of the terrorist attack, they can distance themselves psychologically. Four, the terrorists may overcome moral barriers by dehumanizing the victims, e.g. through labeling them ‘infidels.’ Also, organizational obstacles could prevent the terrorist within the network of bin Laden from using nuclear capabilities against the US. The chance of this decreases as the group dynamics create ‘groupthink,’ a phenomenon in part characterized by collective intolerance of individual dissent. Groups “may develop unrealistic beliefs in their own morality and invulnerability...(and during some) circumstances the survival of the group—rather than any particular political objective—becomes the primary goal...terrorists might employ WMD, not to pursue political objectives, but to maintain the integrity of the group or to meet their own psychological needs.”<sup>137</sup> Finally, motivational obstacles could prevent the terrorist within the network of bin Laden from using nuclear capabilities against the US. A conventional view on terrorism and nuclear capabilities is that the attraction for terrorists is not that “the possession of a nuclear weapons capability would enable them to kill a lot of people...(and that) killing a lot of people has seldomly been a terrorist objective...(because) terrorists want a lot of people *watching*, not a lot of people *dead*.”<sup>138</sup> Today, however, “there is a growing body of evidence that non-state actors are becoming more interested in causing human casualties on a massive scale. This is a relatively new development, and it is poorly understood.”<sup>139</sup> The “general aversion to large-scale organized killing appears to be diminishing.”<sup>140</sup> “The norms of (terrorist) war often imply maximizing destruction: Osama bin Laden and his Arab Afghan associates can be viewed within (the war) paradigm.”<sup>141</sup> In other words, there are concerns that the terrorists within the network of bin Laden would not be constrained from using nuclear capabilities against the US because of motivational obstacles because their motivation may be to create mass-destruction.

In sum, it is evident that Al-Qaeda poses a threat to the US and there are sufficient reasons to conclude that it is possible for a non-state rogue such as Al-Qaeda to overcome the technical obstacles, to acquire, deliver, and detonate a nuclear device. A Harvard University

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<sup>137</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 82-3.

<sup>138</sup> Alexander, Yonah and Leventhal, Paul, eds. (1986). Nuclear Terrorism: Defining the Threat. Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s, p. 28.

<sup>139</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 169.

<sup>140</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 179.

study supports the second half of this claim: Nuclear “weapons are potentially available to...non-state actors...(and these weapons) whether they originate at home or abroad, can be delivered against targets in the United States with limited likelihood of detection...(the) United States is thus acutely vulnerable to covert (nuclear weapon) attack.”<sup>142</sup> The argument that they may overcome the remaining non-technical obstacles is strong as well. Yet, while this is relevant in the overall context of nuclear terrorism, the crucial point here is that the technical obstacles may be overcome. Although this assertion may not prove the claim that bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda has acquired nuclear devices, some of which may be so called suitcase bombs, it is credible enough to form a discussion on the origins of this nuclear threat in the context of the civilizational paradigm, especially against the background of Al-Qaeda’s documented desire to acquire nuclear capabilities. In other words, the primary concern at this point is the question if the origins of bin Laden’s motivation to acquire nuclear capabilities fit within the framework of the civilizational paradigm.

## *2. The Interests behind the Nuclear Threat*

A 1999 RAND study concludes that bin Laden is on a worldwide campaign against the US.<sup>143</sup> The reason is because the American support of Israel and military presence in Saudi Arabia are perceived as threats to Islam.<sup>144</sup> The organization bin Laden operates within is a complex network of autonomous groups which he organizes and supports through his own core group Al-Qaeda, based in Afghanistan where it is a de facto guest of the Taliban regime.<sup>145</sup> The campaign

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<sup>141</sup> Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David and Zanini, Michele. “Information-Age Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 185.

<sup>142</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 158.

<sup>143</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force; see also Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 189-91.

<sup>144</sup> In bin Laden’s own words: “Our holy land is occupied by Israeli and American forces. We have the right to defend ourselves and to liberate our holy land.” Time Magazine interview, January 11, 1998. Quoted in Reeve, Simon. (1999). The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism. Boston: Northeastern University Press, p. 214.

<sup>145</sup> Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David and Zanini, Michele. “Information-Age Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 184, note 3; Maley, William, ed. (1998). Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban. New York: New York University Press, pp. 100-1, 210.

against the US has resulted in mass-scale terrorist attacks.<sup>146</sup> In 1998, bin Laden supplemented his declared war on the US with an Islamic religious edict. By so doing, “bin Laden endowed his calls for violence with an incontrovertible theological as well as political justification. To this end, he is believed to be able to call on the services of an estimated 4,000-5,000 well-trained fighters scattered throughout the Muslim world.”<sup>147</sup> The terrorism bin Laden practices is represented by the War Paradigm, which “implies taking a strategic, campaign-oriented view of violence that makes no specific call for concessions from, or other demands upon, the opponent. Instead, the strategic aim is to inflict damage, in the context of what the terrorists view as an ongoing war.”<sup>148</sup> Its immediate objective is “to compel the removal of US forces from the region, and (the terrorists within the network of bin Laden) have reasons to believe that higher casualties increase the probability of success.”<sup>149</sup> The US Secretary of Defense William Cohen, who has drawn a similar conclusion, warned in 1997 that violent Islamic extremists “believe that their only way to fight America, given the US military superiority, is to use WMD against US troops or civilians.”<sup>150</sup> bin Laden’s own words support these claims: “*Acquiring weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty. If I have indeed acquired these [atomic] weapons, then I thank God for enabling me to do so. And if I seek to acquire these weapons, I am carrying out a duty. It would be a sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harms on Muslims.*”<sup>151</sup> In sum, bin Laden defines his interest as removing the US physically and politically from the Muslim world.

### *3. The Origins of the Interests*

Huntington supports his civilizational paradigm by arguing that there is a trend of growing tensions between the Islamic and Western civilizations. Since the 1970s, massive numbers of Muslims have turned towards Islam as a source of identity. This Islamic resurgence, which has

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<sup>146</sup> E.g. the Riyadh and Khobar blasts in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996, killing 24 Americans. Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 61.

<sup>147</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 10.

<sup>148</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 69.

<sup>149</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 191.

<sup>150</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 5.

<sup>151</sup> Time Magazine interview, January 11, 1998. Quoted in Reeve, Simon. (1999). The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism. Boston: Northeastern University Press, p. 214; emphasis added.

partly manifested itself as a rejection of the West and its culture and values, “is mainstream not extremist, pervasive not isolated.”<sup>152</sup> As of 1995, with the exception of Iran, every country with a predominantly Muslim population was more Islamic in terms of culture, society, and politics as was the case fifteen years earlier.<sup>153</sup> The Islamic resurgence has resulted in an increasing perception among Muslims of conflicts with Muslim and non-Muslim participants as civilization wars, e.g. the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the Western intervention after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. These two events were both seen by many Islamist fundamentalist groups “as a war against ‘Islam and its civilization’ by an alliance of ‘Crusaders and Zionists.’”<sup>154</sup> As a prediction of the civilizational paradigm, during wars, sub-identities fade as the identity most relevant in the context of the conflict emerges, and it is “almost always defined by religion.”<sup>155</sup>

Huntington’s argument that tensions between groups might increasingly be formed along civilizational lines (where religion forms the identities of oneself and the other as well as interest formations) seems to provide an almost perfect explanatory framework vis-à-vis this particular case study. This is not to imply that a majority of Muslims are terrorists or that they engage in violence, far from it--or alternatively, that all of the Islamic civilization is at war with all of the Western world. Rather, that the civilizational paradigm applies to this case study is because there has been an mainstream Islamic resurgence of which bin Laden is a part: His key identity is formed along religious lines and so are the interests he tries to advance through organizing and sponsoring mass-scale terrorist attacks against the US. Any doubt as to the validity of this argument may be swept away by bin Laden himself, who in a 1998 interview declared that “the call to wage war against America was made because America has spear-headed the crusade against the Islamic nation, sending tens of thousands of its troops to the land of the two Holy Mosques over and above its meddling in its affairs and its politics, and its support of the oppressive, corrupt and tyrannical regime that is in control. These are the reasons behind the singling out of America as a target...I have to stress the necessity of focusing on the

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<sup>152</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 110.

<sup>153</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 111.

<sup>154</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 247, 249.

<sup>155</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 267.

Americans...it is far better for anyone to kill a single American soldier than to squander his efforts on other activities.”<sup>156</sup> Stern as well recognizes that Huntington’s civilizational paradigm finds much support in a case like that of Al-Qaeda, because violent “Islamic extremists have already recognized that they cannot defeat the United States in a conventional war, but they can impose significant pain through acts of terrorism,”<sup>157</sup> and by so doing, they become part of the clash of civilizations.

One argument challenging the claim that this case study may be explained within the framework of the civilizational paradigm could be that bin Laden represents an isolated case, as opposed to being a part of a larger Islamic resurgence, which in part is represented by an increased perception of the West as a threat. Several writers would support such a counter argument. Bruce Lawrence of Duke University argues that the perceived Islamic threat in the West does not reflect the reality of Islamic societies as much as it reflects the biases of the Western news media. According to Lawrence, Huntington and others “continue to dominate most media representation of issues that shape Islam and Muslims. While Muslims themselves must bear some responsibility for being an absent or negative voice in the major geopolitical issues of the day, it is still necessary to note that they are victimized...by the structure of international news.”<sup>158</sup> Lawrence is not alone when it comes to this argument. E.g., Peter Marsden argues that the “Western media have created simplistic images of Muslims as terrorists and oppressors through the catch-all term ‘Islamic fundamentalism.’”<sup>159</sup> While it is true that most Muslims are not terrorists or engage in violence, these arguments are still problematic. Although it could be possible for the Western media to report news from the Islamic civilization in such a way that it falsely looked as if there were popular support for anti-Western sentiments, it appears these reports reflect the reality. E.g., during the 1991 Gulf War, “Saddam Husayn’s [sic] defiance of the United States, Israel’s most important ally, was popular (among the Palestinians)...there was no denying that many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were attracted by Saddam Husayn’s claim to be their liberator and openly sided with Iraq during the

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<sup>156</sup> Interview May 1998. PBS Frontline. “Hunting bin Laden.”

<sup>157</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). *The Ultimate Terrorists*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Lawrence, Bruce B. (1998). *Shattering the Myth: Islam beyond Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 170.

<sup>159</sup> Marsden, Peter. (1999). *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*. London: Zed Books Ltd., p. 57.

war.”<sup>160</sup> The many Palestinians that sided with Iraq did so after Hussein “attempted to rally international Islamic opinion to his side by presenting the US-led coalition as an anti-Islamic campaign and calling on Muslims to wage a jihad throughout the world.”<sup>161</sup> That Hussein may have rallied around Islam for political reasons is irrelevant in this context because the fact that he did use Islam to mobilize popular support against the West, and that it worked, supports the civilizational paradigm, and it thus seems evident that the “last two decades of the twentieth century have been a period in which Islam has played a much more overt role in Middle East politics, from Algeria to Iran...(and by the 1980s) it had emerged as a self-assured and active alternative to European-style nationalism.”<sup>162</sup> John L. Esposito of Georgetown University argues that in “the post-Cold War period, many who seek new demons warn of an Islamic threat to western civilization or of an impending clash of civilizations.”<sup>163</sup> According to Esposito, the West has by projecting stereotypes been able to incorporate into its thinking that there is an Islamic threat. If Esposito is right, we should expect to find that the Islamic resurgence has not resulted in a more hostile attitude towards the West. Yet, it seems to be the case that there has been an increase in both negative attitudes towards Western society as well as violent acts against the West. “The driving force behind the Islamic resurgence was not a rejection of change...it was a rejection of the Middle East’s dependence on Western and other alien models of development.”<sup>164</sup> And although the combination religion and terrorism is not new, it did not take off in its modern form until 1980, a repercussion of the revolution in Iran the year before.<sup>165</sup> Twelve years later, the number of religious terrorist groups had increased nearly six-fold, being responsible for a quarter of all terrorist attacks that year.<sup>166</sup> Over the following three years, the number of religious terrorist groups increased by 150 percent.<sup>167</sup> “In 1998, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announced a list of 30 of the world’s most dangerous groups, over half

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<sup>160</sup> Cleveland, William L. (1994). A History of the Modern Middle East. Boulder: Westview Press, p. 431.

<sup>161</sup> Cleveland, William L. (1994). A History of the Modern Middle East. Boulder: Westview Press, p. 417.

<sup>162</sup> Kimmerling, Baruch and Migdal, Joel S. (1994). Palestinians: The Making of a People. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 270-1.

<sup>163</sup> Esposito, John L. (1995). The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 188.

<sup>164</sup> Cleveland, William L. (1994). A History of the Modern Middle East. Boulder: Westview Press, p. 414.

<sup>165</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, pp. 16-7.

<sup>166</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 17.

<sup>167</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 17.

of them were religious and included Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism.”<sup>168</sup> In 1980, that list “contained scarcely a single religious organization.”<sup>169</sup> While Esposito’s warning about the danger of stereotyping may be prudent to some degree, it is not a sufficient explanation to why the perception of a Islamic threat has emerged. Rather, it seems to be based on the empirical data available, supporting the notion that negative attitudes and violence vis-à-vis the West have increased, which the experiences the West has had with Iran and Afghanistan in recent memory illustrate. According to a team of RAND researchers, while traditional Middle Eastern terrorist organizations maintained a nationalist or Marxist agenda, “most new-generation groups that rose in the 1980s and 1990s...rely on Islam as a basis for their radical ideology...(and among those) bin Laden’s terrorist network have become (one of) the most active organizations.”<sup>170</sup> A Harvard University study draws a similar conclusion: “New (terrorist) groups are emerging with hazier objectives...and a more direct interest in violence for its own sake, often for reasons rooted in religious fundamentalism...The ascendance of Western culture and US power in the post-Cold War international system is making the United States and its allies increasingly attractive as targets of terrorism...(Local) opposition to US influence and military presence appears to be intensifying in the moderate, pro-American sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf region, resulting in increasingly frequent and damaging anti-American terrorist attacks.”<sup>171</sup>

Another popular counter-argument is that the Islamic resurgence is ultimately not about religion, but a matter of socio-economic issues camouflaged as an international religious cleavage. E.g., Fatima Mernissi argues that seen “today as the culture most capable of channeling popular frustration, Islam has given the faithful enormous expectations of social solidarity...(the Islamic resurgence) has become, as at the time of its birth, a force for the destabilization of privilege, whether regional or global.”<sup>172</sup> Huntington views the Islamic resurgence somewhat differently. In his view, it was conceived in the twilight zone between traditional society and modernization where masses of people were robbed of their traditional identifies, those of the

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<sup>168</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. “Understanding the New Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 158.

<sup>169</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. “Understanding the New Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 158.

<sup>170</sup> Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David and Zanini, Michele. “Information-Age Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 183.

<sup>171</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 169-70, 181.

<sup>172</sup> Mernissi, Fatima. (1992). Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, p. 113.

village and the clan. The alienation and identity crisis that followed made fertile soil for an emerging Islamic identity.<sup>173</sup> The reality is that the factors leading up to the Islamic resurgence are somewhat irrelevant in this context. The fact that there was one is what matters. But why then has the Islamic resurgence not produced more Islamic states? That there would have been may be a reasonable assumption. The answer is partly that there are more Islamic states today than during the take-off of the Islamic resurgence three decades ago. And by Islamic state I mean that the regime governs with considerable considerations of the religious dogmas of Islam, as is the case in Iran and Afghanistan, and could have been the case in Algeria if the Islamic Salvation Front—a religious party that had promised to introduce the shari’ah, the all embracing law of the Islamic society—had been allowed to enter the parliament after winning 82 percent of the votes in the 1991 election.<sup>174</sup> According to William Cleveland of the Simon Fraser University, this event suggests that the Islamic resurgence is more than a passing phenomenon.<sup>175</sup> This is a claim against which it is hard to argue.

#### *4. Conclusions*

bin Laden’s declared war against the US has its origin in his religious identification as a Muslim. This identification has formed bin Laden’s interests, which are initially that the US leaves the Muslim world both physically and politically. Towards the realization of this end, bin Laden utilizes means of mass-scale terrorism and he may have acquired the nuclear capabilities he is documented to have pursued. If he has not, it is reasonable to assume that he could technically do so if he wished to. Because the Islamic resurgence that bin Laden is a part of is not insignificant in size, nor a passing phenomenon, this case study seems to fit within the framework of the civilizational paradigm. The non-military nuclear threat that the non-state rogue Al-Qaeda poses to the US is organized along civilization lines. This conclusion is also shared by a RAND study: “Among current terrorist movements, the extremist transnational Islamic groups (e.g. the Arab Afghans) come closest to (Samuel Huntington’s) model.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 116.

<sup>174</sup> Cleveland, William L. (1994). *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder: Westview Press, p. 421.

<sup>175</sup> Cleveland, William L. (1994). *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder: Westview Press, 421.

<sup>176</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). *Countering the New Terrorism*. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 105.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS**

The scope of this thesis was to examine a phenomenon--perceived non-military nuclear threats to US mainland security--that on the surface could not be explained within the framework of the realist paradigm. The reason why the realist paradigm seemed irrelevant as an explanation was because the international distribution of capabilities should in these particular cases not have warranted a willingness to maintain or acquire nuclear capabilities that posed a non-military security threat to the US. In other words, non-battlefield related nuclear capabilities should only be useful to deter other actors from launching a first nuclear strike. Thus, when the Cold War ended, any and all non-military nuclear threats against the US mainland should have ended along with bipolarity. This did not happen. Instead, Russia still poses a non-military nuclear threat to the US, which cannot be explained as resulting from strategic imperatives, because these fail to explain why Great Britain and France do not pose the same threat. Because the democratic peace paradigm could not fill the explanatory gap, this continued nuclear threat is an international politics abnormality.

Are the non-military nuclear threats to US security symptoms of an emerging civilizational world order? This was the question examined in three case studies, including Russia (the state), North Korea (the rogue state), and Al-Qaeda (the non-state rogue). The latter two were added to the Russian case study because they represented two additional cases of non-military nuclear threats to the US mainland that on the surface could not be explained within the framework of the realist paradigm. But if the post-Cold War world is not a realist world, what is it? According to Samuel Huntington, in the post-Cold War era, conflicts and threats are increasingly determined by clashing interests between civilizations. To determine if these cases could be explained within the framework of the civilizational paradigm was the scope of part II. In this last, concluding part, I (A) analyze to what degree Huntington's paradigm might apply to the post-Cold War non-military nuclear threats to US security, (B) examine US policy options for meeting these nuclear threats, and (C) elaborate on the implications that the US policy options have for the international community.

#### **A. The Civilizational Paradigm and Non-Military Nuclear Threats to the US Mainland**

The findings in the Russian case study did not match the hypothesis derived from the predictions of the civilizational paradigm. Because the realist- and democratic peace paradigms could not

provide any answers either, the Russian non-military nuclear threat to the US seems to be virtually idiosyncratic, resulting from a deteriorating command and control system, not an old or a new world order. This is perhaps not an explanation that social scientists may find appealing, being as it is that we like to organize the world into general abstractions. If there is a general abstraction that can help us understand this case study, it is my opinion that it is none of the above paradigms. In other words, the conceptual explanation must be found elsewhere. Yet, it may be that eventually, Huntington's predictions come true, meaning that Russia could realign its main identity along an Orthodox civilizational line and define its national interests accordingly. But because this has not yet happened, the Russian non-military nuclear threat to the US can at this point not be explained as originating in the forces that might cause clashes between civilizations.

The North Korean case study was more ambiguous, by which I mean that depending on how one looks at it, the civilizational paradigm may or may not apply. In terms of the latter, it might be a realist world after all, at least on the Korean peninsula. Perceiving the survival of the regime as being threatened, North Korea might have pursued nuclear capabilities and might threaten the US mainland because that would change the odds of regime survival in North Korea's favor. The case for this proposition is compelling, but so is the case in favor of a civilizational approach. That is, the survival of the regime is threatened as a result of North Korea's goal of Korean reunification. That goal is in term dictated by a joint Korean national identity, not a North Korean desire to spread Communism (although that would be likely to be a consequence). Thus, what makes the North Korean case different from Cold War international security threats is that for the Soviet Union, the goal was to spread Communism, whereas for North Korea, the goal is to reunite the Korean nation. Because the US' interests, spreading Western values, clash with the North Korean interests, national reunification, a clash of civilizations takes place, and out of it springs a North Korean nuclear threat to the US mainland. In the end, neither one of these two propositions can be proved or disproved. Perhaps the truth is somewhere in-between. Maybe time will tell.

The Al-Qaeda case study was virtually a text book example of the relevance of the civilizational paradigm in the post-Cold War world. That is, bin Laden is a devoted Muslim who has defined his interests according to his religious identity. Among them is the desire to remove the US physically and politically from the Muslim world. Towards this end, the terrorists within

bin Laden's network use mass-scale terrorism. They have indicated a desire to acquire WMD, and have allegedly acquired nuclear capabilities, including so called suitcase bombs, which they might use against targets in the US in the same way that the NYC World Trade Center was targeted in 1993. The only objection to Al-Qaeda being a text book example of the civilizational paradigm could be that it represents an isolated case. However, I haven't seen any proof of that, by which I mean that bin-Laden's desire to target the US because of his interests, being formed by a Muslim religious identity, seems to be a part of a mainstream Islamic resurgence, of which anti-Western sentiments are typical characteristics.

Did the civilizational paradigm help us understand the origins of the post-Cold War non-military nuclear threats to US security? Taking a minimalist position, the answer is no, because such a position would have to support the argument that the North Korean case is a Cold War remnant. That means that only the Al-Qaeda case study may be explained within the framework of the civilizational paradigm. Being able to account for only one case out of three is not a very good record. Taking a maximalist position, the answer is a maybe, right on the border of a yes, because such a position would have to support the argument that the North Korean case study is not a Cold War remnant as much as it is a struggle taking place between a US trying to promote Western values and a North Korea trying to advance nationalist ambitions. Being able to account for two cases out of three is a better record. In sum, although the civilizational paradigm's overall usefulness in the case of non-military nuclear security threats to the US after the Cold War may be ambiguous, the paradigm is far from irrelevant, a conclusion shared by a RAND study: "Security of identity has emerged as an important issue in many settings. It is not necessary to accept arguments about a global clash of civilizations to acknowledge that perceptions of cultural identity are shaping relations between societies and regions in the post-Cold War era."<sup>177</sup> A final word about the civilizational paradigm is in order. I never set out to test the civilizational paradigm as such, as much as I set out to examine if it could help us understand the particular post-Cold War phenomenon that I was interested in exploring. Thus, I have no reason, or justification, for arguing for or against the paradigm as a whole, because all I can really suggest at this point is that its relevance in my study is ambiguous, yet not irrelevant. If these nuclear threats to US security are not, unquestionably, part of an emerging civilizational

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<sup>177</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 97.

world order, does this mean that they are remnants of realism by default? I would argue no at a minimum, and, barely, maybe at a maximum. The former proposition would have to recognize the civilizational argument of the North Korean case study, and by so doing, dismiss the realist aspect of it. That would leave us with only the Russian case study in support for the proposition that there might be remnants of realism at play here. Because the Russian case study does not support such a claim—being as it is that the mere existence of capabilities is not enough of a determining factor—there is little overall support for the argument that these three cases could be explained as remnants of realism. The latter proposition would have to recognize the realist argument of the North Korean case study, but this would only justify the conclusion that there is a realist world on the Korean peninsula, as opposed to one lingering on globally, contributing to all non-military nuclear threats to the US mainland. In sum, when pooled together, these three case studies do not unambiguously fall within the framework of neither the realist- or civilizational paradigm. This conclusion suggests that similar international politics phenomena may at times have causes that fail to fit into general intellectual abstractions. In other words, the phenomenon in focus does not seem to be a symptom of an emerging world order, nor a remnant of an old one.

## **B. US Policy Options**

In a previous research paper on nuclear threats to the US during and after the Cold War, I suggested a few different policy options available to the US for encountering emerging nuclear threats from non-state actors.<sup>178</sup> The following analysis of current US nuclear security policy options is in part derived from that paper, although the organization here is somewhat different, basically building on a three step escalatory approach.<sup>179</sup> The first step builds on the logical assumption that in order for there to be a state and/or non-state nuclear threat to US security, the actor needs to possess nuclear capabilities. The second step builds on failed prevention and the third step builds on failed deterrence.

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<sup>178</sup> Nylund, Patrik. “On the Impact of Nuclear Terrorism on State Security and Global Governance: Comparative Analysis of Nuclear Security during- and after the Cold War.” Uppsala University/Department of Peace and Conflict Research. Programme of International Studies. Challenges to Global Governance. April 3, 2000.

<sup>179</sup> I am thankful to former US Secretary of Defense William Perry for putting forward the order of policy options this way. The World Affairs Council of Northern California Conference. “Looking Ahead: US Interests, Roles

## *1. Prevention*

The first nuclear security policy option the US has available to it is the prevention of horizontal- and vertical proliferation of nuclear capabilities. The former refers to the proliferation of nuclear capabilities to states that have none. The latter refers to the proliferation of nuclear capabilities within states that already have some; or alternatively, the complete reduction of existing nuclear capabilities.

In terms of Russia, the horizontal proliferation is clearly not a relevant option, although it is obvious that arms control agreements between the US and Russia are an important step in the reduction of vertical proliferation. Still, even after START II goes into effect in 2007, the Russian nuclear arsenal may include as many 3,500 nuclear weapons. This is an arsenal almost nine times as large as the 400 nuclear weapons former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in the 1960s concluded were enough for effective deterrence, meaning providing for sufficient retaliatory second-strike capabilities. If there is an increased risk of accidental nuclear war due to a deteriorating Russian command and control system, for the US, the prevention of vertical proliferation is more imperative than ever, and the ideal number is zero nuclear weapons on both sides, which logically would reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war to zero. The 1968 NPT clearly has this as a stated goal of the nuclear-haves and START II is the latest arms agreement aimed at realizing this goal. While it is prudent to recognize the arms control successes that have taken place since the 1960s, it is also imperative to recognize the inherent danger of accidental nuclear war, the incredible large size of the American and Russian nuclear arsenals even after START II goes into effect, and the increased risk of accidental nuclear war because of the deteriorating Russian command and control system. In other words, the prevention of vertical proliferation and reduction of existing arsenals are absolute imperative, but until the number of nuclear weapons is down to zero on all sides, the risk of nuclear war remains, and might even be greater than before because of the idiosyncratic Russian nuclear situation.

In terms of North Korea, the prevention of horizontal proliferation may or may not have been a success story. That North Korea joined the NPT in 1985 and that the US was able to change North Korea's behavior after the 1993-94 crisis could suggest that the prevention of horizontal proliferation works in practice, even if it sometimes takes a little bit of arm-twisting to

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and Responsibilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Symposium on the Nuclear Threat and Plenary of Future Directions in National Security Policy." May 6, 2000. Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA, USA.

realize it. On the other hand, that North Korea threatened to leave the NPT and is suspected of having violated the treaty could suggest that the prevention of horizontal proliferation is not contingent upon international agreements, but rational state calculations of the national interest, meaning that when it is in the best interest of the state to violate an international treaty, it will, and vice-versa. Ultimately, following this reasoning, arms control agreements might not be contracts detailing the nature of future international relations, but confirmations of existing international relations. If it were the case that this reasoning is true, it would paint a gloomy picture of the future of non-proliferation, especially if a suspected North Korean nuclear program might trigger a chain-reaction in north-east Asia, meaning that North Korea's neighbors might want to pursue nuclear capabilities as a means of deterring North Korea from using its first.<sup>180</sup> In other words, the prevention of horizontal proliferation is imperative--but if it fails in the case of one state, it might lead to further regional horizontal proliferation, which would increase the risk of nuclear war, perhaps even with major players involved if client states were implicated. This would be particularly concerning if the civilizational paradigm proved to be accurate in its prediction that the next world war could be a war between civilizations.

In terms of Al-Qaeda, the prevention of horizontal proliferation may or may not have been a success story. What is especially bothersome is the existence of the so called Russian suitcase bombs, some of which are reported to have ended up in the hands of the terrorists within bin Laden's network. In other words, it might be too late for preventing nuclear capabilities from falling into the hands of Al-Qaeda. If it is not, there are steps that might be taken, and the imperative of doing so is great because of Al-Qaeda's proven willingness to create mass-destruction and stated ambition to acquire nuclear capabilities. The good news is that the "Clinton administration has launched a multitude of programs, initiatives, discussions, and negotiations to deal with the threat of nuclear leakage from the former Soviet Union."<sup>181</sup> The bad news is that "the threat of nuclear leakage has so far (not) been appreciably reduced by the US effort."<sup>182</sup> In other words, while efforts like the US Nunn-Lugar program is a good step towards

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<sup>180</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 221.

<sup>181</sup> Allison, Graham T., Cote, Jr., Owen R., Falkenrath, Richard A., and Miller, Steven E. (1996). Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy: Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 143.

<sup>182</sup> Allison, Graham T., Cote, Jr., Owen R., Falkenrath, Richard A., and Miller, Steven E. (1996). Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy: Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 144.

the realization of the prevention of the horizontal proliferation of nuclear capabilities, there might have been too little, too late.

## 2. Deterrence

Should the prevention of horizontal proliferation and the complete reduction of existing nuclear capabilities fail, the US has a second nuclear security policy option available to it, that of deterrence, defined as the “dissuasion of a person or a state from an action by installing within (them) fear of the consequences.”<sup>183</sup> The making of a successful deterrence strategy requires a known adversary, access to information about his motivations, preferences, capabilities, and that the adversary is rational, meaning that he is capable of making a cost-benefit analysis after the US has communicated to him what will happen if he takes the action at which deterrence is aimed.<sup>184</sup> Also, nuclear “retaliation must be agreed upon and authorized in advance.”<sup>185</sup>

In terms of Russia, the current US deterrence policy is a de facto recognition of the failure of vertical proliferation, at least as it is spelled out in the 1968 NPT, meaning the complete elimination of existing nuclear capabilities. Having already suggested that deterrence is currently the only nuclear security policy option available to the US vis-à-vis the Russian nuclear arsenal, as evident by Pentagon’s reassurances to the Russian Minister of Defense that a limited US missile-defense system will not threaten the joint nuclear security possible through MAD, I do not probe the matter much further here. What I will do, however, is to mention a few words about nuclear parity because it is typically perceived as an important feature of deterrence.<sup>186</sup> Nuclear parity is not about two states having an equal number of nuclear weapons, but about two states having enough nuclear weapons for effectively deterring each other from a first-strike. In this view, the US and the PRC enjoy nuclear parity, because although the latter’s nuclear arsenal

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<sup>183</sup> Shafritz, Jay M., Williams, Phil and Calinger, Ronald S. (1993). The Dictionary of Twentieth Century World Politics. New York: Henry Holt and Company, p. 210.

<sup>184</sup> Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 130.

<sup>185</sup> Alexander, Yonah and Leventhal, Paul, eds. (1986). Nuclear Terrorism: Defining the Threat. Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s, p. 126.

<sup>186</sup> I am thankful to former US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara for suggesting this alternative way of looking at nuclear parity. The World Affairs Council of Northern California Conference. “Looking Ahead: US Interests, Roles and Responsibilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Symposium on the Nuclear Threat and Plenary of Future Directions in National Security Policy.” May 6, 2000. Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA, USA; please note that Kenneth Waltz shares the notion that the nuclear arsenals of the US and the Soviet Union were excessive for deterrence, as a few survivable warheads would have been enough, an understanding that American and Soviet military planners never gained. Sigal, Leon V. (1998). Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 247.

is only a fraction of that of the American, the threat of even a handful of those destroying a few American cities is credible enough to deter the US from striking the PRC first. In other words, deterrence built on thousands of nuclear weapons is just as effective as deterrence built on a few dozen. The main difference between deterrence with only a few nuclear weapons vs. deterrence with a lot is that the former would serve the same purpose as the latter but with a lower level of destruction, should deterrence fail. In other words, although prevention might have failed in the case of Russia, thus warranting a policy of deterrence, a significantly lower number of nuclear weapons would realize the same results, but with less dire consequences in the case of deterrence failing.

In terms of North Korea, should it gain nuclear capabilities and be able to deliver them, deterrence would follow the same logic as it does in the Russian case, meaning that North Korea might only need a few nuclear weapons in order to have nuclear parity with the over 6,000 strategic nuclear weapons currently in the US arsenal. In other words, while the US might reasonably assume that North Korea would be deterred from using its nuclear weapons against the US mainland because of the guaranteed American nuclear retaliation, North Korea might reasonably assume the same in terms of the US. That the US would not use nuclear weapons against North Korea was of course a part of the Agreed Framework, but North Korea might feel more secure if it knew that it had the power to persuade the US to live up to its promise. In sum, should prevention fail, the US might be able to deter North Korea from using its nuclear capabilities, and vice-versa. Being a nuclear have-not with enemies that are nuclear-haves, this conclusion should unfortunately give North Korea an incentive to pursue nuclear capabilities.

In terms of Al-Qaeda, deterrence might be virtually impossible, because non-state actors such as terrorists do not operate with the same pay-off matrix as states, or according to the same constraints and considerations, and thus, the logic of deterrence does not apply in the same way as it does in cases of states with nuclear capabilities. bin Laden's network is loosely organized in ad hoc groups, their motivations and preferences appear to be detached from their goal of ending the American physical and political presence in the Muslim world, and their previous attacks against American targets suggest that they are not rational because the attacks primarily seem to have been aimed at killing a large number of people, the War Paradigm, as opposed to forming a part of a larger strategy. In other words, deterring terrorists may be impossible because they represent a case which does not live up to the conditions necessary for deterrence to work, a

claim supported by a Harvard University study: “(It) is not at all clear that deterrence would be a rational motivation for a non-state actor’s acquisition of” nuclear weapons.<sup>187</sup> The same study also concludes that the “United States can retaliate only against the state sponsors of terrorist attacks, and can only do so when they can be conclusively identified.”<sup>188</sup> Thus, the only real alternative the US might have here in terms of deterrence is to target the state that has aided the terrorists, e.g. Afghanistan, as its motivations and preferences may be assumed to be more rational, especially when it comes to issues of military retaliatory actions. “Against state sponsors, where these still exist in the traditional sense and can be identified, the most effective approach may be to find targets of value to the regime in the most direct sense, the loss of which would threaten the leadership’s hold on power.”<sup>189</sup> One problem though is that it may be difficult to determine what state to threaten with retaliatory actions in the case of nuclear terrorism, because the terrorists may be loosely organized, and sometimes even across many states, e.g. the Arab Afghans affiliated with bin Laden, who have reportedly been active in countries such as Bangladesh, Bosnia, Chechnya, India (Kashmir), Pakistan, Tajikistan, Somalia, and Kosovo.<sup>190</sup> Another problem involves the level of retaliatory violence. Because the retaliatory action must be clearly announced ahead of time, as to alter the cost-benefit analysis of the state, the level of violence must be determined, and this is difficult because the exact capabilities of the terrorists are not always known. If the retaliatory level is too low, it might not deter that, or another, state, from aiding terrorists. If the level is too high, the US would lose moral and political capital around the world, especially in the Muslim world which at this point forms the most likely target of a retaliatory attack. That could cause the risk of widening the gap between the Muslim world and the US, which is the ultimate goal of terrorists like bin Laden, and hence not an appropriate American response. Thus, the level of retaliation would have to respond to the level of damage inflicted upon the US, which in terms of a terrorist nuclear attack might mean a great destruction of one or more population centers in the target state. Hence, the scenario is that the US in return for the destruction of a part of NYC would destroy a city like the Afghan capital Kâbul.

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<sup>187</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 210.

<sup>188</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 191.

<sup>189</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 129.

<sup>190</sup> Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David and Zanini, Michele. “Information-Age Terrorism.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 184.

However, in “some cases, as in Afghanistan...state behavior may constitute a gray area, with tolerance for terrorist activity short of outright sponsorship. Such a regime may not be a US target for preemption or retaliation, but it cannot expect to enjoy immunity from counterterrorism attacks or sanctions.”<sup>191</sup> That the US would destroy a whole city in retaliation does not seem like a very likely proposition and nowhere in the literature have I found evidence that this is considered a serious policy option, probably because the destruction of that population center and the Afghan regime’s failure to prevent a case of nuclear terrorism are too far apart conceptually, as opposed to during the Cold War when the Soviet regime and the nuclear threat were closely linked.<sup>192</sup> In sum, deterring terrorists from using nuclear weapons is virtually impossible and deterring a state from helping terrorists is difficult because that state may be too detached from the terrorist nuclear attack.

### *3. Defense*

Should deterrence fail, the only remaining option left is defense. At this point in time, over a decade after the end of the Cold War, we know that the prevention of both horizontal- and vertical proliferation has failed, but we cannot know whether or not deterrence has succeeded, meaning that because there have been no nuclear weapons used since 1945, neither against nuclear haves or nuclear have-nots, the exact relationship between deterrence and the absence of the use of nuclear weapons remains speculative. Obviously, there are parts of the security community in the US that question the effectiveness of deterrence, because otherwise there wouldn’t be support for a limited missile-defense system.

While a limited missile-defense system would not be a nuclear security guarantee for the US against Russian nuclear weapons, it would ironically pose a perceived nuclear security threat to Russia. The logic for the US is that the Russian nuclear capabilities are large enough to survive the deployment of a limited US missile defense-system and that Russia thus has nothing to be concerned about. The logic for Russia is that a limited missile-defense system might be the beginning of a massive missile-defense system, the kind outlawed by the 1972 ABM Treaty. If a

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<sup>191</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 130.

<sup>192</sup> Some argue that the “United States has not yet reached the point where it will retaliate against state sponsors of terrorism without strong confirmation of a direct connection between the sponsoring state and a terrorist act.” Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 193.

limited system were to grow into a massive one, Russia might reasonable conclude that its second-strike capabilities were threatened, and thus, it might feel less secure against a US nuclear attack. If this were the case, it would be logical for Russia to increase its nuclear weapon arsenal as to regain the second-strike capability cancelled out by the missile-defense system. Such an increase would affect vertical proliferation is a negative fashion, which in turn could cause further horizontal proliferation. In other words, an American missile-defense system could lead to further nuclear proliferation, both vertical by Russia and horizontal by other states. This would be a very negative development for the non-proliferation trend as well as increase the risk of accidental nuclear war, being as it is that possessing nuclear capabilities is the first condition for an accidental nuclear war to take place.

In terms of North Korea, a limited missile-defense system might be completely moot, because even if the system worked flawlessly, there are concerns that North Korea would be more likely to use covert means of delivery: Although there “are many relevant differences between the ballistic missile threat and the covert (nuclear) threat...there is no sound basis on which to judge the ballistic missile threat more serious than the covert (nuclear) threat.”<sup>193</sup> In other words, even if the limited-missile defense system were technically feasible, meaning that it would provide for perfect defense against ICBMs, it would not provide for the defense against a rogue-state covert nuclear threat.

In terms of Al-Qaeda, a limited missile-defense system would most likely be completely moot, because even if the system worked flawlessly, the risk of terrorists using ballistic missiles is insignificant. Rather, just like in the North Korean case, a covert attack is more likely, and against such a missile-defense system can do nothing. In other words, even if the limited-missile defense system were technically feasible, meaning that it would provide for perfect defense against ICBMs, it would not provide for the perfect defense against a non-state rogue nuclear threat. Ultimately, it seems realistic to conclude, as Gideon Rose of the Council on Foreign Relations has done, that WMD in the hands of terrorists are “hard to defend against..(and while monitoring) and deterring states are hardly easy...they pale in difficulty compared with the task of monitoring and deterring obscure and fleeting groups and individuals.”<sup>194</sup> The alternative

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<sup>193</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American's Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 242.

<sup>194</sup> Rose, Gideon. “Will Everyone Have the Bomb” *Time*. May 22, 2000.

defense approach in this case could be a civil defense that could limit damage, but not minimize it.<sup>195</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

I'm going to start by discussing the middle-level policy option, deterrence, because its logic and imperatives are instrumental in understanding the overall nuclear weapon predicament. The most important feature of deterrence is retaliation, which has been mentioned but not explicitly discussed. Retaliation serves the purposes of confirming that deterrence was a serious policy in terms of the technical ability and the political will. But as I suggested in the Russian case study, when deterrence fails, retaliation may not be a rational choice, because if deterrence fails--and if all the core values it was meant to protect are destroyed, as is likely to be the case in terms of strategic nuclear strikes--there is no point in retaliating, because retaliation will not realize the goals of the security policy of deterrence. This is of course an absurd logic, and what makes it even more absurd is the awareness that the opponent knows that retaliation against him is meaningless, thus making deterrence less credible. The only way to remove the absurdness from this logic is to remove the possibility of retaliation not taking place because of the inherent illogic. The way to do this is to remove the human factor from the decision to retaliate, because it is the part of the equation that may make it come out uneven. This would require an automatic nuclear retaliation, the kind put forward in the film satire "Dr. Strangelove," in which the Soviet Union designed a doomsday machine that would destroy the whole world in the case of even one nuclear weapon attack against the Soviet Union. Although the doomsday machine was part of a work of fiction, the film's main character Dr. Strangelove makes a compelling case when he argues for the perfect nuclear stability that the deterring effect of the doomsday machine provides. Because of some human, idiosyncratic reasons, deterrence failed in the film, even when it followed the wonderful, yet absurd, logic of MAD. What makes deterrence even less attractive of a policy is that after the Cold War, the US "can never be totally confident of successfully deterring every eventual threat to its territory or that of its allies (because it cannot always be known what retaliatory threats states will find credible or persuasive)...(and thus, the) United States must recognize that deterrence could fail."<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> See Betts, Richard K. (1998). "The New Threat of Mass Destruction." *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1).

<sup>196</sup> Hayes, Peter L., Vallance, Brenda J., and van Tassel, Alan R., eds. (1997). *American Defense Policy*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 428.

The bottom line is that deterrence is not a perfect nuclear security policy and that the only real safeguard against a nuclear threat is the complete prevention of all vertical and horizontal proliferation, because when prevention fails, deterrence follows, and as it is not perfect, some are compelled to create a defense, and that in turn makes deterrence even more imperfect, which can cause first vertical proliferation, and then horizontal proliferation. This conclusion is shared by many others,<sup>197</sup> including the US intelligence community, which in a secret CIA report, leaked to the media the month before its release in June 2000, warns that the “missile defense system could trigger a wave of destabilizing events around the world...Russia and China both would increase proliferation...India is deemed likely to increase its nuclear-armed missile force if it detects a sharp buildup by China, its neighbor and longtime rival. That, in turn, probably would spur Pakistan, India’s arch-enemy, to increase its own nuclear strike force.”<sup>198</sup> In other words, even a limited missile-defense system is dangerous--as well as ineffective because it will not protect the US against nuclear threats from rogue states and non-state rogues--because a limited-missile defense system can trigger a new nuclear arms race. And with more potential nuclear actors than ever before, the risk of an accidental nuclear war would increase, especially over the long run. And the longer the run we consider, the very small, yet existing, probability of accidental nuclear war increases. Support for parts of this conclusion may be found in the argument made by Scott Sagan of Stanford University: “Nuclear weapons may well have made *deliberate* war less likely, but, the complex and tightly coupled nuclear arsenal we have constructed has simultaneously made *accidental* war more likely.”<sup>199</sup>

We may at this point summarize a few conclusions.

- The best and only true safeguard against nuclear war is the complete prevention of horizontal and vertical proliferation, a conclusion shared by George Lee Butler, former four-star general and Commander-in-Chief of the US Strategic Command (1991-94).<sup>200</sup> Like Mr. Butler, I do

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<sup>197</sup> See Davidson, Keay. “Foes Poke Hole in Idea of Missile Defense System: Cranston, Others Say, Controversial ‘Shield’ May Provoke Enemies.” *San Francisco Examiner*. May 19, 2000; Jackson, J.D. and Sessler, M. “Proposed Junior Star Wars a Threat to US Security: Defense Missile System Would Hurt Progress in Nuclear Weapons Reductions.” *The San Francisco Chronicle*. May 19, 2000.

<sup>198</sup> Los Angeles Time. “Secret US Report Says Missile Defense Plan Poses Global Peril.” *The San Francisco Chronicle*. May 19, 2000.

<sup>199</sup> Sagan, Scott D. (1993). The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 264.

<sup>200</sup> The duties of this position included the responsibility for the deployment of American nuclear bombers and ballistic missiles, the development of nuclear target plans, and the advising of the US president on how to

not know how to get the numbers down to zero. It may even be that once the genie is out of the bottle, it can't be put back in.

- The failure of prevention creates an incentive for states to opt for a policy of deterrence.
- Deterrence is a high-risk/high-reward policy, meaning that if it works, it's perfect, but if it doesn't, it might destroy the very core-values it was meant to protect.
- Deterrence is unlikely to work in terms of a non-state rogue (read: terrorist) nuclear threat.
- A limited-missile defense system is likely to promote both vertical and horizontal nuclear proliferation without realizing the goal of protecting against nuclear threats from rogue states and non-state rogues, because those would be more likely to use covert means of delivery.
- Vertical and horizontal proliferation may create a new arms race with the result of more states possessing nuclear capabilities.
- More states possessing nuclear capabilities increase the risk of nuclear war and decrease the chance of the complete prevention of horizontal and vertical proliferation, the best and only true safeguard against nuclear war.

### **C. Implications: A Choice between the Disastrous and the Mere Unpalatable?**

I started this thesis by highlighting the phenomenon that there are currently non-military nuclear threats to US security despite the absence of the imperatives of the Cold War. After determining that the civilizational paradigm was somewhat ambiguous in terms of the understanding of the factors contributing to this phenomenon, I analyzed US policy options for meeting the threats. The conclusions drawn from that analysis have two significant implications for the international community. One, international security might become more fragile if the current developments lead to an international arms race. Thus, it is absolutely imperative that the trend towards nuclear non-proliferation continues uninterrupted. In order for this to happen, current proliferation tendencies need to be reversed and the American limited missile-defense system must not be implemented.

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respond to a nuclear attack on the US. Mr. Butler is now retired and serving as the president of the "Second Chance Foundation," a non-profit organization promoting the responsible reduction of nuclear dangers. The World Affairs Council of Northern California Conference. "Looking Ahead: US Interests, Roles and Responsibilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Symposium on the Nuclear Threat and Plenary of Future Directions in National Security Policy." May 6, 2000. Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA, USA.

Two, in the post-Cold War security debate, terrorism is by some “seen as a threat to the state and the international system,”<sup>201</sup> which is relevant in this context because the ability of the global community to govern effectively might be threatened as a result of the effect that nuclear terrorism could have on US policy. Although the American government has reacted to the risk of nuclear terrorism (read: threat), ultimately, government efforts can only reduce the risk and the consequences,<sup>202</sup> should a terrorist nuclear attack take place, and this fact has tremendous implications for both the US as far as its freedom of action (read: state core value) is concerned, as well as for the global community in terms of its ability to govern effectively (read: international core value). That the US government takes nuclear terrorism seriously is evident. “In June 1995, President Bill Clinton issued an executive order...requiring the government to ‘give the highest priority to developing effective capabilities to detect, prevent, defeat and manage the consequences of nuclear...materials or weapons by terrorists.’”<sup>203</sup> Three years later, he appointed a national counterterrorism coordinator “to bring the full force of all (US) resources to bear swiftly and effectively.”<sup>204</sup> The current US counterterrorism policy is (1) not to make any concessions to terrorists or to strike any deals, (2) bring terrorists to justice, (3) isolate and pressure states that sponsor terrorism, and (4) bolster the counterterrorism capabilities of countries friendly to the US that require assistance.<sup>205</sup> There are those who warn that successful “anti-American terrorism could make it politically impossible to sustain the foundation of US policy in the (Middle Eastern) region—a forward military presence.”<sup>206</sup> Other security experts warn that “organized terrorism could become a means of coercing the United States to take actions contrary to (its) interests.”<sup>207</sup> “The most troubling conclusion for foreign policy as a whole is that reducing the odds of attacks in the United States might require pulling back from

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<sup>201</sup> Wallensteen, Peter, ed. (1998). Preventing Violent Conflict: Past Records and Future Challenges. Uppsala: Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research, p 174.

<sup>202</sup> A case in point of how difficult it can be to prevent all terrorism despite a high priority to do so may be found in the Israeli experience, meaning that despite its efforts to prevent terrorism by all means necessary, Israel still experiences terrorist acts; please note that several experts have suggested government programs for how to meet this threat, e.g., Betts, Richard K. (1998). “The New Threat of Mass Destruction.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1); Carter, Ashton, Deutch John, and Zelikow, Philip. (1998). “Catastrophic Terrorism: Tackling the New Danger.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(6); Stern, Jessica. (1999). The Ultimate Terrorists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>203</sup> Finan, William, Jr.. “Book Reviews.” *Current History*. April 2000. Vol. 99, No. 636, p. 186.

<sup>204</sup> Carter, Ashton, Deutch John, and Zelikow, Philip. (1998). “Catastrophic Terrorism: Tackling the New Danger.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(6), p. 82.

<sup>205</sup> US State Department: Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (Internet).

<sup>206</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 189.

involvement in some foreign conflicts...as the only nation acting to police areas outside its own region, the United States makes itself a target for states or groups whose aspirations are frustrated by US power.”<sup>208</sup> These are concerns related to a conclusion drawn by Henry Stimson, the US Secretary of War, and which he shared with the American President Harry Truman as early as April 1945: “The future may see a time when (a nuclear) weapon may be constructed in secret and used suddenly and effectively with devastating power by a willful nation or group against an unsuspecting nation or group of much greater size and material power. With its aid even a very powerful unsuspecting nation might be conquered within a very few days by a very smaller one.”<sup>209</sup> Considering that the US might not be able to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear capabilities, deter them from using them, or defend itself against a terrorist nuclear attack, the future that Stimson warned of may soon be the present. After all, deterrence is “not what it used to be. Some threats may not be deterrable...(and thus, deterrence) now covers fewer of the threats the United States faces than it did during the Cold War.”<sup>210</sup> When, or if, this dire prediction becomes reality, there may be few options left for the US as far as policy is concerned, because nuclear terrorism gives rise to a “vulnerability (that) cannot be eliminated or substantially reduced in the same way as some military threats.”<sup>211</sup> Ultimately, it seems like terrorist “risks cannot be eliminated, only contained and managed.”<sup>212</sup> Richard Betts of Columbia University suggests that the best capability that the US might have in the case of a foreign power or group lashing out at the US is “to keep people from believing that the United States is responsible for their problems (by avoiding) involvement in their conflicts.”<sup>213</sup> In a worst case scenario, the only real option (read: capability) the US may have is to change its current policy of never making any concessions and comply with the demands of terrorists with nuclear capabilities, which would not be the first time the US had appeased terrorists. “Negotiations were integral to the release of the hostages in Teheran, and the United States has negotiated officially

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<sup>207</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 145.

<sup>208</sup> Betts, Richard K. (1998). “The New Threat of Mass Destruction.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1), pp. 27-8.

<sup>209</sup> Quoted in Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 261.

<sup>210</sup> Betts, Richard K. (1998). “The New Threat of Mass Destruction.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1), pp. 27, 33.

<sup>211</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 335.

<sup>212</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 126.

<sup>213</sup> Betts, Richard K. (1998). “The New Threat of Mass Destruction.” *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1), p. 40.

and unofficially for the release of hostages in Lebanon, including the notorious arms-for-hostages deal with Iran.”<sup>214</sup> In the case of Al-Qaeda, it would mean that the US would have to comply with the demand that it leaves the Muslim world physically and politically, like the US partly did after the 1983 bomb attack on US marines in Beirut.<sup>215</sup> The alternative would be to sacrifice the American citizens who live in the population centers likely to form the targets of nuclear attacks. This does not seem like a very likely proposition because the role of the US government is to protect the American people. Combine the threats of simultaneous nuclear explosions in the US’ economic and political centers, NYC and Washington, DC, and it is questionable if US policy makers would have any other choice than to give in to nuclear blackmail. After all, if they were prepared to appease and negotiate with terrorists and change US behavior when the stakes were low, it seems reasonable to assume they would be even more prone to appease and negotiate with terrorists and change US behavior when the stakes are high. This is not a very attractive scenario, but neither is the alternative, and the only appealing aspect of it is that it at this point is not a confirmed reality, but a plausible, future worst-case scenario. Yet, to restate the conclusion drawn by a Harvard University study, “*US analysts and officials need to stop dismissing (WMD) in general, and covert delivery in particular, as the stuff of farfetched, nightmarish scenarios. The risk is real, and rank among the most serious challenges to vital US national interests in the post-Cold War era.*”<sup>216</sup> In other words, if Al-Qaeda has acquired, or may soon, nuclear capabilities, the US might find itself between a rock and a hard place as far as its policy options are concerned. Although “there is little to indicate that terrorism or the threat of terrorism has been successful in changing US policy on issues such as support for key allies or the use of force,”<sup>217</sup> it may be the case that the nuclear terrorist threat may change that past behavior. Richard Betts argues that *the “United States should not give up its broader political interests, but it should tread cautiously in areas—especially the Middle East—where broader interests grate against the core imperative of preventing mass destruction within*

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<sup>214</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, pp. 113-4.

<sup>215</sup> Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 144.

<sup>216</sup> Falkenrath, Richard A., Newman, Robert D., and Thayer, Bradley A. (1999). American’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 337-8; emphasis added.

<sup>217</sup> Lesser, Ian O., Hoffman, Bruce, Arquilla, John, Ronfeldt, David, and Zanini, Michele. (1999). Countering the New Terrorism. Santa Monica: RAND Project Air Force, p. 90.

*America's borders.*"<sup>218</sup> If the US changed its policies vis-à-vis its Muslim allies in order to protect itself against nuclear terrorism, the terrorists would have won. This is not only a setback in terms of the US' ability to optimize its national interest around the world, but also a very dangerous proposition in terms of the ability of the legitimate international community to set an agenda: If terrorists can alter state policies with the help of nuclear weapons, the ability of the legitimate global community to govern effectively diminishes because nuclear capabilities provide non-state actors such as terrorists with a de facto veto right. In other words, if we consider the ability of the global community to govern effectively a core value that ought to be protected, the non-military nuclear security issues that the US faces not only poses a threat to the US (freedom of action as a core value), but to all states as far as they are members of the international system and global community. In the end, nuclear terrorism could change the nature of international politics and force the US and the international community to choose between what is disastrous and what is merely unpalatable.<sup>219</sup> Not a very attractive scenario for the post-Cold War era.

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<sup>218</sup> Betts, Richard K. (1998). "The New Threat of Mass Destruction." *Foreign Affairs*. 77(1), p. 41; emphasis added.

<sup>219</sup> "Politics is not the art of the possible. Rather it consists of choosing between what is disastrous and what is merely unpalatable." John Kenneth Galbraith; quoted in Carter, Ashton B. and Perry, William J. (1999). Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, p. 123.

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