Review of International Studies (2002), 28, 163–189

Reflections on nuclear optimism: Waltz, Burke and proliferation

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Abstract. Proliferation optimism is the controversial theoretical and worrisome practical product of neorealism. This article reviews and ultimately rejects proliferation optimism by showing how it actually reproduces what it seeks to eliminate: pessimism. This article interprets proliferation optimism through the lens of Burkean conservatism and contends—adopting the formative reasoning of neorealism and optimism—that as the ideal nuclear society which optimism envisions resembles the ideal conservative society Burke describes in his *Reflections*, that optimism reproduces a core belief of conservatism: flawed human nature. The article contends that, contrary to the first principles of neorealism, an unheralded view of human nature operates within optimism to yield its reservations about widespread proliferation which, in turn, reveal optimism's essential pessimism. Illustrating how optimism is pessimism may diminish its theoretical and practical allure.

Introduction

It is an enduring dispute within international theory.[1] While most scholars of world politics, including traditional political realists, decry proliferation an impressive number of neorealists welcome the spread of nuclear weapons. Neorealists contend states operating under formal anarchy compete and socialize to provide for their individual security. Nuclear weapons, they continue, amplify and thereby render inviolable the constraints upon untoward behaviour that the condition of anarchy alone engenders. Consequently, neorealists maintain, widespread nuclear proliferation will stabilize the international system. The structural effect of nuclear proliferation, in this view, is nuclear peace.[2]

Eckstein says criticism is persuasive when it embraces and then unravels a most-likely claim.[3] This article rejects proliferation optimism, in this spirit, by indicating

* Generous support for this article and the larger project from which it is drawn was provided by: The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, 02912; The United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Washington, DC 20451 (Grant No. AC950G6004); and, The Institute for the Study of World Politics, Washington, DC. The author thanks the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

[1] For example, John Kerry King (ed.), *International Political Effects of the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1979); Bruce D. Berkowitz, 'Proliferation, Deterrence and the Likelihood of War', *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 29 (March 1985), pp. 112–36; Charles P. Cozic (ed.), *Nuclear Proliferation: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1992); and Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995).

[2] Most importantly, Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better', *Adelphi Articles, no. 171* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Autumn 1981); John J. Weltman, 'Nuclear Devolution and World Order', *World Politics,* 32 (January 1980), pp. 169–93; John J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990), pp 5–56.

[3] Harry Eckstein, 'Case Study and Theory in Political Science', in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), *Handbook of Political Science*, 7 (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 79–138.

how its vision of the way the world operates stems from an essential pessimism, rather than why optimism is ill-conceived or otherwise "wrong."[4] Understandably, the urge to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons draws most scholars toward this latter approach. Yet such an approach fails to unhinge proliferation optimism as compelling theory and so diminish its allure. In this sense, general criticism of proliferation optimism contains two components: culture and theory.

Regarding culture, critics recognize it is no longer uncommon for diplomats and analysts, such as those in South Asia, to invoke this claim when rationalizing the pursuit or possession of nuclear arms.[5] Proliferation optimism is now an accessible element in our strategic culture, rather than a mere counterpoint in scholarly discourse. This new prominence of proliferation optimism—its increased availability, use and so legitimacy—critics maintain, will induce even more states to adopt its imperatives and acquire nuclear weapons. The status of optimism as a viable choice encourages proliferation, in this view. Next, regarding theory, critics contend actors exist within and so respond naturally to a multitude of forces, such as organizational routines, which makes unblemished behaviour impossible.[6] Consequently, they dismiss as a rational ideal the uniform restraint vital to proliferation optimism and counter that when nuclear fear and the urge to survive inform ordinary actors, nuclear use is as likely as restraint. In sum, critics claim the assumptions and status of proliferation optimism combine to encourage the spread and use of nuclear weapons. Yet two problems accompany this common approach.

Clearly, criticizing proliferation optimism for its success sounds hollow to proponents while it advertises optimism's enhanced status to states considering a nuclear program. And criticizing proliferation optimism for its choice of assumptions invites similar responses while it leaves optimism's theoretical integrity intact; whether states are rational or routinized actors remains a matter of taste, following this critique. Criticism that tarnishes the attractiveness of proliferation optimism, therefore, must ask not what is wrong with its assumptions but how its vision of the way the world operates reproduces pessimism.[7] In what way is working optimism ineluctably pessimistic about the spread of nuclear weapons?

[4] Bruce Russett, 'Away From Nuclear Mythology', in Dagobert L. Brito, Michael D. Intriligator and Adele E. Wick (eds.), *Strategies for Managing Nuclear Proliferation: Economic and Political Issues* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983), pp. 145–55; Stephen J. Cimbala, 'Deterrence Stability with Smaller Forces: Prospects and Problems', *Journal of Peace Research,* 32 (1995), pp. 65–78.

[5] For example, K. Subrahmanyam (ed.), *Nuclear Myths and Realities: India's Dilemma* (New Delhi: ABC Publishing, 1981); Ravi Shastri, 'Developing States and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons' *Strategic Analysis* [New Delhi], 11 (March 1988), pp. 1379–91; Ali Abbas Rizvi, 'The Nuclear Bomb and Security of South Asia', *Asian Defence Journal* [Maylasia] (April 1995), pp. 21–27; Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Beyond the NPT* (New Delhi: Indian Pugwash Coswa Society, 1995).

[6] Scott D. Sagan, 'The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons' *International Security,* 18 (Spring 1994), pp. 66–107; Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Herbert L. Abrams, 'Sources of Human Instability in the Handling of Nuclear Weapons' in Fredric Solomon and Robert Q. Marston (eds.), *The Medical Implications of Nuclear War* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1986), pp. 490–528.

[7] Behind this question is the claim that nuclear reality is a construct. Constructivism understands that the practice of scientific, social and folk explanation inevitably reproduces what it seeks to explain away: it maintains objective, accepted reality—here, proliferation pessimism. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Doubleday, 1966); Burkhart Holzner, *Reality Construction in Society* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1968); Melvin Pollner, *Mundane Reason: Reality in Everyday and Sociological Discourse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Since analogical reasoning yields proliferation optimism it is the best method of critical inquiry, as it gives optimism the advantage in the debate. Waltz explains the puzzle of a stable international order by drawing a parallel between the acts of self-interest by states and the acts of self-interest by economic units that yield a stable market order.[8] Egoism under anarchy creates order. And just as the known consequences of a price war work with the widespread ability to initiate one to generate uniform restraint among competitors, or market stability, the known consequences of nuclear use will combine with widespread nuclear proliferation to induce nuclear stability, or nuclear peace. Waltz uses the resemblance between international and economic structure to defend proliferation optimism. Yet the similarity between this ideal nuclear world and another ideal society ultimately exposes the pessimism within proliferation optimism. It is the society Burke defends in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.[9]

This article uses Burkean conservatism as Waltz uses microeconomic theory: as a lens to view and understand a puzzling international order, a stable world of nuclear-armed states. It follows Waltz—methodologically—to argue that since the operation of this ideal nuclear world resembles Burke's ideal conservative society, that optimism must share the first principles and consequences of conservatism, as well.[10] Scholars of political theory generally agree that conservatism emanates from a view of human nature as irremediably flawed.[11] This belief motivates and anchors the defining elements of conservatism and, in parallel, ultimately reproduces its pessimism within proliferation optimism. In sum, this article claims, working proliferation optimism contains an unheralded view of human nature that renders it

[8] 'Reasoning by analogy is helpful where one can move from a domain for which theory is well developed to one where it is not. Reasoning by analogy is permissible where different domains are structurally similar.' Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 88–93, p. 89; See also Keith L. Shimko, 'Realism, Neorealism and American Liberalism', *The Review of Politics,* 54 (Spring 1992), pp. 281–301; Charles L. Glaser, 'Realists as Optimists: Co-operation as Self-Help' *International Security,* 19 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 50–90.

[9] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution, in France* in *The Complete Works of Edmund Burke*, vol. 3 (Boston: Little and Brown, 1839).

[10] Analogical reasoning renders the unfamiliar comprehensible by associating it with the familiar and similar and then conveying understanding of the latter domain into the former. The transfer of understanding between domains is what constitutes analogical reasoning; without it analogical reasoning is empty. In this spirit, Vosniadou and Ortony say analogical reasoning transfers understanding from 'a domain that already exists in memory' to new domains and that 'similarity in the surface properties can be used as the basis from which to infer similarity in deeper (more central) properties'. Burke and the *Reflections* act as a known domain in the 'memory' of international theory, in this manner, with surface similarities to neorealism and proliferation optimism that indicate the presence of a deeper, core similarity: their shared view of flawed human nature. Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony, 'Similarity and Analogical Reasoning: A Synthesis', in Vosniadou and Ortony (eds.), *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 1–17. p. 6, p. 16; Philip Thody, *The Conservative Imagination* (London: Pinter, 1993) pp. 118–43.

[11] Christopher Berry, 'Conservatism and Human Nature', in Ian Forbes and Steve Smith (eds.), *Politics and Human Nature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 52–67; Peter J. Stanlis, 'Human Nature', in Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp. 160–94; Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, 'Burke on Human Nature', in Wilkins. *The Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 91–157; William R. Harbour, 'The Conservative View of Human Nature', in Harbour, *The Foundations of Conservative Thought: An Anglo-American Tradition in Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), pp. 32–54; George Fasel, *Edmund Burke* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1983), pp. 11–29; See the criticism of this pivotal claim in Ted Honderich, 'Human Nature', in Honderich, *Conservatism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 45–81.

pessimistic about the wide spread of nuclear weapons.[12] And when optimism is pessimism, optimism is no longer a viable theoretical or practical choice.

Burke and international theory

Burke appears infrequently in international studies, and those who join the two tend to seek Burke's view of international relations rather than how his work influences international theory.[13] Vincent maintains that since Burke does not compartmentalize social relations (all human relations exist as dimensions within the one moral domain that flows from God) he believes that a broad and unified world society—similar to medieval Christendom—envelops international relations just as local society embeds personal relations.[14] And just as local leaders execute the duties society imposes upon them, Burke argues, international relations amount to sovereign states yielding to and abiding by the defensive imperatives, as duties, which a unified, global social order generates. Burke concludes, Vincent writes, that to defend the prevailing order, world society obliges England to intervene in the French Revolution. Boucher complements this analysis with the claim that Burke typifies the approach to international relations Boucher labels 'historical reason': grounding interest and right, as the criteria for state behaviour, in the 'common historical experience of the European nations'.[15] But while Boucher uses Burke to illustrate the need for and usefulness of another category of international theory, and Vincent substitutes modernity for religion to indicate how his views on prescriptive institutions can illuminate the current state system, neither asks directly—as scholars examine the influence of, say, Hobbes or Kant—how Burke informs current international theory. Harle addresses this issue and claims that Burke is a prime source of dualism within international theory, especially in the formation of Cold War enemy images.[16] Yet recalling that dualism originates with the distinction between appearance and reality (not to mention mind and body, Persian Manicheism, and so on) suggests that dualism within international theory has roots much deeper than Burke.[17]

[12] Traditional realism assumes the presence of malevolent human nature, often termed a will to power. Waltz's first contribution to international theory was to dispense with this operational assumption in the initial section of *Man, the State and War*. The fundamental irrelevance of human nature—bad or good—for understanding international phenomena is a founding principle for neorealism, which makes its ultimate presence and effect noteworthy. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 16–79.

[13] Wight inspires this work by naming Burke as 'The only political philosopher who has turned wholly from political theory to international theory'. Martin Wight, 'Why Is There No International Theory?' in Herbert Butterfield and M. Wight (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations: Articles in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 17–34. p. 20.

[14] R. J. Vincent, 'Edmund Burke and the Theory of International Relations', *Review of International Studies,* 10 (1984), pp. 205–18; Welsh expands on this argument in Jennifer Welsh, *Edmund Burke and International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995). While Ishay underscores Burke's nationalism in her treatment of the dialectical relationship between it and internationalism, her thesis parallels this general understanding. Micheline R. Ishay, *Internationalism and Its Betrayal* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 77–112.

[15] David Boucher, 'The Character of the Philosophy of International Relations and the Case of Edmund Burke' *Review of International Studies,* 17 (April 1991), pp. 127–48, p. 144.

[16] Vilho Harle, 'Burke the International Theorist—or The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness' in V. Harle (ed.), *European Values in International Relations* (London: Pinter, 1990), pp. 58–79, p. 77.

[17] See R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Paul A. Chilton, *Security Metaphors: Cold War Discourse from Containment to Common House* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

Thus using Burke to understand Waltz and proliferation optimism has a secondary effect: it draws together efforts to join Burke and international relations. Using conservatism, Burke's seminal contribution to political thought (domestic *and* international, Vincent argues), rather than dualism, as an interpretive lens accomplishes the principal task of illuminating proliferation optimism which, in turn, ultimately indicates the way Burke influences a version of current international theory, namely neorealism. The article contains three additional sections. The next section unfolds in greater detail the claims about proliferation optimism. The following section develops the conservative lens, and the final section applies that lens to proliferation optimism to reveal *via* analogy its pessimism. This article then provides a brief conclusion.

The spread of optimism

Convinced the spread of nuclear weapons yields nuclear peace, supporters depict our ordinary aversion to proliferation as the ultimate source of nuclear violence. Restricting wide access to nuclear arms ensures their eventual use, in this view. As a result, scholars work at two tasks over the decades: explaining the basic reasoning behind optimism and ensuring that optimism materializes by rendering the spread of nuclear weapons inevitable among normal states. It is the latter task that most troubles early optimism.

Optimism appears in four waves. It arises in Europe during the 1950s as a response to Europe's perceived vulnerability to Soviet aggression and its unsettled post-war relationship with America. Gallois says the destructiveness of nuclear weapons transforms states and alters both immediate and extended deterrence.[18] Existing under the prospect of annihilation gives self-interested states a reason to constrain their activity and a universal standard against which to assess the rationality of their behaviour. This transformation enhances immediate deterrence by rendering threats to retaliate with nuclear arms at once more credible and less susceptible to misinterpretation.[19] Gallois writes that when: 'the evaluation of the risks to be taken is made by leaders who have all learned to calculate according to the same measuring system [nuclear annihilation], a major error of interpretation is less and less plausible and … the dangers inherent in the policy of dissuasion grow less and less likely.'[20] On principle, nuclear-rational states are secure from attack.

Yet the inspiration for this argument also leads Gallois to view the extended deterrent threats and collective security arrangements meant to protect non-nuclear

[18] Pierre Gallois, *The Balance of Terror: Strategy for the Nuclear Age* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1961); see also Alexander Bregman, 'The Nuclear Club Should Be Expanded', *Western World,* 2 (October 1959), pp. 12–15; Thomas Schelling, 'The Stability of Total Disarmament', *Institute for Defense Analyses,* Study Memorandum no. 1 (Washington, DC: Institute for Defense Analyses, 24 February, 1961); Aaron B. Wildavsky, 'Nuclear Clubs or Nuclear Wars', *Yale Review,* 51 (March 1962), pp. 345–62; Charles Louis Ailleret, 'Defense in All Directions', *The Atlantic Community Quarterly,* 6 (Spring 1968), pp. 17–25; Edward A. Kolodziej, 'Revolt and Revisionism in the Gaullist Global Vision: An Analysis of French Strategic Policy', *Journal of Politics,* 33 (May 1971), pp. 448–77.

[19] Gallois, *The Balance of Terror*, pp. 110–42.

[20] Ibid., p. 121.

allies in a nuclear world as unworkable.[21] When the risk of nuclear war confronts states motivated by self-interest and survival, nuclear retaliation for attacks upon others is untenable. Moreover, this reasoning undermines even the uncontroversial commitments accorded allies by denuding the notion of 'limited nuclear war' and bolstering the threat of 'escalation'.[22] There is only one solution to this problem, contends Gallois, the intentional proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Proliferation has several benefits. First, it makes nuclear war virtually impossible as it provides every recipient with inviolable deterrence. Second, it obviates the need for expensive diplomatic actions meant to bolster suspect alliance commitments. And third, since it renders nuclear-armed states neutral and impotent, proliferation enables all states to pursue their vast economic interests: it contributes to the global economy.[23]

Yet Gallois ultimately tempers his optimism in two ways. First, since only enlightened states will learn these lessons, he warns, a 'double-check' control system must accompany all proliferation. This system allows America to prevent the untoward use of nuclear weapons but provides states with enough nuclear autonomy to reinforce their immediate deterrence. With this qualification, however, Gallois concedes that certain states will never be transformed by nuclear weapons and that those which are will likely revert to non-rational behaviour. Second, even this modification in control is insufficient for Gallois because the contradictions inherent in liberal democracies render the transition to conscientious proliferation virtually impossible to perform.

In this vein, Gallois claims public education, the mass media and excessive leisure time work in concert within democratic society to create the only serious threat to state security: an emotional, partially informed populace which refuses to cede total control of security issues to an omnipotent, rational elite. He laments: 'It is not easy to explain that peace is all the more solid when, on either side, the weapons of retaliation are more numerous, feared, and in readiness. And also that the limitation of these weapons would be more dangerous than their proliferation. No one subscribes to such arguments willingly, though they unfortunately correspond to the realities of our age.'[24] In turn, 'democratic governments find it difficult to justify their actions, and the people are no more apt to grasp the numerous implications of the nuclear fact. Actually, the more enlightened public opinion seems, the more it burdens its governments and the less the latter are free to act and to exploit their specialists' achievements.'[25] The obstacles to optimism and nuclear peace, Gallois avers, are pluralism and unenlightened states.

Gallois devises optimism when he discerns and expresses its main claim: nuclear arms breed rationality, deterrence and peace. Yet other assertions hinder this view.

[21] Pierre Gallois, 'US Strategy and the Defense of Europe', *Orbis,* 17 (Summer 1963), pp. 226–49; André Beaufre, *NATO and Europe* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1966) esp., pp. 86–93.

[22] Gallois, 'US Strategy', pp. 234–36; André Beaufre. *Deterrence and Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

[23] Gallois, *The Balance of Terror*, pp. 161–95; Gallois. 'US Strategy', pp. 245–48; See also Raymond Aron's 'Foreword' in *The Balance of Terror*. He comments: 'Humanity's only chance … is to maintain peace by the anguish which the mere mention of thermonuclear war inspires. Peace the scion of war? It would not be the first nor the worst of Reason's ruses'., pp. vii-xii, p. ix. In his own work, *On War*, Aron declares both that proliferation is inevitable (p. 149) and that it will benefit Europe (pp. 114–22). Aron, *On War* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

[24] Gallois, *The Balance of Terror*, pp. 161–62.

[25] Ibid., pp. 151.

Gallois denies universal rationality in two ways. First, Gallois depicts the world as comprised of differently enlightened states, with only some able to absorb the imperatives of proliferation. Second, he claims emotionalism prevails in pluralist democracies and, by extension, in all representative leaders. Finally, Gallois precludes the assumption of widespread proliferation by identifying proliferation as an avoidable phenomenon *via* his denunciation of effective public opinion-inspired efforts to halt it. Put another way, he lessens the likelihood of peace-via-proliferation since his critique *advertises* proliferation as a thing that remains vulnerable to prevention or reversal by an emotional yet influential populace. In the end, Gallois regards proliferation as subservient to the whims and anxieties of the public; and without inevitability, proliferation will remain partial and thus dangerous. Gallois delineates optimism but gives it little chance of success.

Gallois identifies both the unique claim and enduring problems of optimism: namely, non-rationality among so-called uncivilized states and imperfect or non-existent proliferation as the result of popular sentiment and its enervating effect on elites. In this sense, Gallois serves as a source of inspiration to and as an impetus for refinement among the subsequent waves of proliferation optimism. The second wave appears in the 1970s when events, such as America's retrenchment *via* the Nixon Doctrine, the international oil crisis, revitalized non-proliferation efforts and France and China's (and India's) ascension to nuclear or near-nuclear status, encouraged scholars to revisit and refurbish the claims made by Gallois. While the second wave tackles vigorously the twin problems within Gallois's work, it eventually returns to the same general outlook.

Regarding uncivilized states, the second wave embraces brazenly the transformative potential of nuclear weapons which bolsters the notions of universal rationality and inviolable deterrence. In this sense, the second wave expands the parameters of rationality to such an extent that it envelops even national leaders popularly reviled as borderline psychotics. 'The world may be shocked by the actions of Amin and el-Qaddafi, and even of the Black Septembers and other Palestinian terrorists', Clark observes, 'but their actions pale when compared with the murders, death camps, and unbelievable horrors of Joseph Stalin. Still, even Stalin resisted the temptation to use nuclear weapons once acquired.'[26] The second wave asserts that nuclear arms induce stabilizing rationality in all states, irrespective of the irrationality or instability of national leaders.

In two ways, the second wave casts proliferation as autonomous by removing it from the realm of things under human control and placing it within the realm of things governed by universal laws. First, it presents the spread of nuclear weapons as inevitable by declaring that scientific knowledge, rather than political decisions, determines proliferation. Wentz writes in this manner: 'the natural evolution of [Canada's] military establishment will likely see atomic arms by the early 1970s … [and] developments could hasten this process considerably.'[27] Next, the second wave

[26] Donald L. Clark, 'Could We Be Wrong?', *Air University Review,* 29 (September-October 1978), pp. 28–37, p. 32.

[27] Wentz concludes: 'Proliferation has not been and cannot be stopped' (p. 191). Walter B. Wentz, *Nuclear Proliferation* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1968), quote in text at p. 43. Table 4, (pp. 48–49) depicts when states will obtain nuclear arms while his criteria for prediction appear at pp. 9–35; Lapp and Bethe are not optimists but discuss the technological imperative and proliferation. Ralph Lapp, *Arms Beyond Doubt: The Tyranny of Weapons Technology* (New York: Cowles, 1970); Hans Bethe, 'The Technological Imperative', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* 41 (August 1985), pp. 34–36.

argues that objective, empirical evidence proves that proliferation is neither preventable nor dangerous. Essentially, these scholars invoke the peaceful nuclear experiences of France and China and then defy critics to disavow their own faith (as students of world politics) in the lessons and tides of history. As LeFever comments: 'Looking to the future, the burden of proof certainly rests with those who would argue that additional national nuclear arsenals would be good for local and world stability. But an equal burden of proof rests upon those who maintain as most spokesmen in the arms control community seem to—that all further acquisitions anywhere and in all circumstances are equally dangerous.'[28]

The second wave performs two moves: it reinforces the tenet of universal rationality by including states Gallois shuns, and it preserves the autonomy of proliferation by situating it within the domain of immutable laws. Three conclusions rest on these moves. First, nuclear proliferation makes the ideal of world security realizable. Sandoval writes: 'With the defense of its borders entrusted to forces structured around the firepower of nuclear weapons, any nation not now a nuclear power and not harboring ambitions for territorial aggrandizement, could walk like a porcupine through the forests of international affairs: no threat to its neighbors, and too prickly to swallow.'[29] Second, consequently, nations will reject additional arms control until it is achieved.[30] Reducing the number of nuclear arms requires their initial proliferation, in this view. And third, since war continues only in those areas without nuclear arms, non-proliferation endeavors are more than merely wasteful, ineffective and a hindrance to national security—they are immoral. 'Although I don't exactly love the H-bomb', Baker writes in this spirit, 'it comes close to my idea of what a bomb should be … In the more than 25 years since it became popular, it has never been used against anybody. A person could get fond of a bomb like that.'[31]

Aspirations aside, the second wave realizes the same practical conclusion as Gallois. As ordinary persons are unable to become even a bit fond of the bomb, the world remains a dangerous place. 'Humanity sees in it only a scourge', Gallois says, 'projecting its memories of great wars of the past into an avalanche of atomic missiles and contemplating a future of horrors'.[32] Sandoval echoes this view: 'The principle obstacle appears to be the emotionalism, a legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that has blocked recognition of the nuclear weapon as the dominant force on the battlefield and sees it only as an agency of indiscriminate destruction'.[33] And LeFever adds: 'The stubborn problems of "nuclear proliferation" are made less tractable by the imprecise and often apocalyptic language in which they are discussed'.[34]

[28] Ernest W. LeFever, 'Undue Alarm Over Nuclear Spread?', *The Wall Street Journal,* 15 October, 1976. p. 12.

[29] R. Robert Sandoval, 'Consider the Porcupine: Another View of Nuclear Proliferation', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* 32 (May 1976), pp. 17–19, p. 19.

[30] Colin Gray, 'Arms Control in a Nuclear Armed World?', in Joseph I. Coffey (ed.), 'Nuclear Proliferation: Prospects, Problems and Proposals' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 430 (March 1977), pp. 110–21.

[31] Russell Baker, 'Son of H-Bomb', *New York Times Magazine,* 31 July , 1977, p. 6. Baker was criticising the neutron bomb asserting its less destructive blast would make it more likely to be used than thermonuclear weapons. While not an optimist, Steven Lee explores the moral dilemma of nuclear *non-proliferation* in 'Nuclear Proliferation and Nuclear Entitlement', *Ethics and International Affairs,* 9 (1995), pp. 101–31.

[32] Gallois, *The Balance of Terror*, p. 167.

[33] Sandoval, 'Consider the Porcupine', p. 19.

[34] LeFever, 'Undue Alarm', p. 12.

Countervailing assumptions cause the initial two waves to qualify their optimism, not abandon it. The assumption of rationality receives a boost when Amin is included, but falters when emotionalism is cast as the obstacle to proliferation. Similarly, the assertion that science and history engender proliferation, rather than corruptible elite choices, suffers when popular hysteria is held to account for successful efforts to halt it. Facing this situation, the third wave strives to eliminate every source of resistance on the notions of rationality, proliferation and optimism. It invokes the logic of the structure of anarchy to complement the arguments about universal rationality, and adopts a refined view of history to diminish the effect of popular sentiment on the security elite. In the end, the third wave aims to severe completely its links to Gallois.

Waltz establishes the third wave with two arguments. His initial claim has three sub-claims.[35] One, Waltz contends the organizing principle of international politics is anarchy. The anarchic structure means that states exist in a self-help environment where each state—succumbing to the structure's mechanism (the dual impulse to compete and socialize) and the imperative to survive—is compelled to perform the same task: provide for its own security. Despite this uniform obligation, actual success varies with a unit's relative position within the distribution of power that overlays the international system. Units respond to opportunities to improve their placement (as security) within the system, which means conflict is both natural and to be shunned, whenever possible, due to the dual need to survive and maintain a strong relative position.[36] Consequently, a bipolar distribution of power is the most stable for two reasons. First, bipolarity is simple and simplicity breeds the clear vision that eliminates miscalculations about rivals and opportunities that may lead to conflict. Second, because hegemons balance internally, a bipolar distribution is rigid which reduces the opportunity for and significance of any unit manoeuvering.[37] Armed with the structure of anarchy and the lens of 'unit tasks', Waltz reconstitutes the world of diverse states into a stable, bipolar universe of like-behaving, like-built units. With his next sub-claim, Waltz seizes upon the transformative effect of nuclear weapons to amplify the global stability he manufactures in his first sub-claim.

Two, unlike anything else, Waltz observes, nuclear weapons alter world politics and with it the manner in which states reason about their behaviour. With an apocalypse in every warhead, these weapons create an incurable fear that smothers

[35] Waltz, 'The Spread of Nuclear Weapons'; Other renditions appear in Waltz, 'What Will the Spread of Nuclear Weapons Do to The World?', in King (ed.), *International Political Effects of the Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 165–96; Waltz, 'Toward Nuclear Peace', in Brito, Intriligator and Wick (eds.), *Strategies for Managing Nuclear Proliferation*, pp. 117–34; and Waltz, 'More May Be Better', in Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 1–45; See also Weltman, 'Nuclear Devolution and World Order'; Weltman, 'Managing Nuclear Multipolarity', *International Security,* 6 (Winter 1981/82), pp. 182–94; Steve Weber, 'Realism, Detente and Nuclear Weapons' *International Organization,* 44 (Winter 1990), pp. 55–82; Bradley A. Thayer, 'The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation and the Utility of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Regime', *Security Studies,* 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 463–519.

[36] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 60–101; Waltz, 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', in Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb (eds.), *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 39–52; Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', in Robert L. Rothstein (ed.), *The Evolution of Thought in International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 21–27.

[37] Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Stability of a Bipolar World', *Daedalus,* 93 (Summer 1964), pp. 881–909.

combativeness, incites caution, induces rationality and elevates the dampening power of uncertainty in a nuclear relationship.[38] Waltz uses this analysis to develop two essential points. First, the fear-based reasoning that renders immediate deterrence inviolable has also worked for extended deterrence, despite its earlier abandonment.[39] Rescuing extended deterrence allows Waltz to showcase the transformative effect nuclear weapons have on state reasoning, as well as to contend that a proliferated world will be protected by a thick, double-layer of working deterrence. Second, Waltz applies this thesis to devise several reasons why even so-called rogue states will learn these lessons at least as well as did the current nuclear powers. Aware that victory is impossible, he writes, radical states have reason to restrain both their actions and their incendiary rhetoric. Moreover, while states must protect their vital interests, in the nuclear world territory is no longer an essential security interest. Next, since effective fear requires only a rudimentary nuclear capability, states can and should avoid arms races and forgo expensive command and control systems. Finally, should something go awry, nuclear-armed states are predisposed toward de-escalatory behaviour.[40] In short, nuclear arms evoke a transformation among state/units that intensifies the clarity and stability inspired by the original structure of anarchy.[41]

Three, Waltz deems proliferation a product of the system. Just as prices both align and stabilise as profit-driven businesses react alike to the incentives of the market, proliferation materialises as the unintended effect of units providing for their own security. Presenting proliferation as both inevitable and unintentional allows Waltz to do more than depict a world of nuclear states as something that cannot be avoided and so should be embraced quietly—it also allows him to exempt stable nuclear proliferation from the traditional realist critique that, as a product of human design, universal proliferation amounts to an imperfect institution that will inevitably collapse into nuclear holocaust.[42] Waltz uses both structure and fear to

[38] Waltz endeavours to avoid the slippery notion of rationality by emphasising 'fear'. It is an alias for rationality, however, as fear yields clear thinking, alertness, foreknowledge and right behaviour (e.g., choice of alternatives). Nuclear weapons breed constraining fear in rational persons and states. 'The Spread of Nuclear Weapons', pp. 2–19; 'More May Be Better', pp. 1–10.

[39] Waltz asserts that Cold War behaviour "suggests that deterrence extends to vital interests beyond the homeland more easily than most have thought'. 'More May Be Better', pp. 23–29, p. 26.

[40] Waltz, 'More May Be Better', pp. 8–26; Thus, Waltz agrees with the second wave that war occurs only where there are no nuclear arms: 'Except for interventions by major powers in conflicts that for them were minor, peace has become the privilege of states having nuclear weapons, while wars have been fought mainly by those who lack them'. 'More May Be Better', p. 41.

[41] Nuclear arms also preserve the basic bipolarity of the new multipolar system. Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics' *International Security,* 18 (Fall 1993) pp. 44–79. His essential mixture of structure and nuclear arms contrasts with those who argue that nuclear weapons are irrelevant, that only deterrence matters or that only structure matters when accounting for past and future peace, see respectively: John Mueller, *Retreat From Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Berkowitz, 'Proliferation, Deterrence and the Likelihood of War'; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1988).

[42] Waltz's economism echoes Masters who asserts that nuclear stability may be predicted via oligopoly theory: Roger D. Masters, 'A Multi-Bloc Model of the International System', *American Political Science Review,* 55 (December 1961), pp. 780–98; Gordon Tullock, *The Social Dilemma: The Economics of War and Revolution* (Blacksburg, VA: University Publications, 1974), pp. 130–40; Jacob Viner, 'The Implications of the Atomic Bomb for International Relations', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 90 (January 1946), pp. 53–58; E.H. Carr exemplifies the traditional realist critique of fragile political institutions, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–39* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

resituate and fortify the universal elements of optimism (rationality) as well as deflate claims premised upon prejudiced views of human society (uncivilised states). The remaining issue is that with sufficient reason and resources a hegemon can thwart, temporarily, the incentives of anarchy and thus prevent proliferation. Waltz addresses the problem of corrupted elites in his second main argument.

Waltz depicts hegemonic non-proliferation as the product of elites that, ignorant of the workings of history and society, are motivated more by spectacle than insight.[43] The third wave responds to such behaviour in three ways. First, the motivating concern that arms races will be repeated in the future—only with radical states at the helm—relies improperly upon objects as the basis for prediction when it should look to conditions. The past presages the future only when conditions are the same. And new nuclear states operate in novel conditions because the premier nuclear states worked through all the difficulties, thereby altering the nuclear world. The one condition that remains as it was in the past is the fear generated by nuclear weapons. Consequently, the restraint associated with that condition may be expected to characterise the future, too, Waltz argues.[44]

Second, previous rational behaviour during periods of extreme, but non-nuclear, duress presages future rational action since one 'cannot expect countries to risk more in the presence of nuclear weapons than they did in their absence'.[45] The third wave invokes Israel as evidence for the claim that small, vulnerable (even messianic) states will behave rationally when armed with nuclear weapons. State character does not justify non-proliferation. And third, elites motivated by popular sentiment overdraw the public's rare capacity to incite change through activism and ignore its determinative ability to absorb radical change. Joffe describes the failed European anti-nuclear campaign when he writes: 'Though seemingly the very epitome of brooding terror, nuclear weapons apparently do not terrorise enough to rouse the populace from its habitual lassitude in matters of defence and security policy … Once nuclear weapons are psychologically absorbed, once they are hidden in remote silos or isolated bases, they become "good", that is, non-oppressive weapons.'[46] The third wave counsels elites to trust themselves in the execution of their duties and allow the public sufficient time to adjust to distasteful but necessary events.

[43] Distortions in American, British and French nuclear strategy—such as weapons races—emanate from officials who disregard the logic of anarchy and deterrence. See Waltz, 'What Will the Spread of Nuclear Weapons Do', p. 188; Waltz, 'More May Be Better', p. 31.

[44] Waltz, 'The Spread of Nuclear Weapons', pp. 21–23.

[45] Waltz, 'More May Be Better', p. 13; South Asian proliferation optimists agree: 'In the three Indo-Pakistani wars since independence, considerable restraint was exercised in avoiding civilian targets and in not pushing the military advantage to gain territory in the heartland or disputed areas … There is little reason to believe that two countries will change their behaviour after obtaining nuclear capability and act with less caution than before.' Deepa Ollapally and Raja Ramanna, 'US-India Tensions: Misperceptions on Nuclear Proliferation', *Foreign Affairs,* 74 (January-February 1995), pp. 13–18. p. 16. Kotera Bhimaya proclaims the same in 'Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: Civil Military Relations and Decision-Making', *Asian Survey,* 34 (July 1994), pp. 647–61, p. 654.

[46] Josef Joffe, 'Peace and Populism: Why the European Anti-Nuclear Movement Failed', *International Security,* 11 (Spring 1987), pp. 3–40, p. 8, p. 14. Thomas W. Graham, while neither a neorealist nor an optimist, sees a similar effect in America. Mass media dilutes vital information which accounts for the lack of mobilization to promote more arms control. See Graham, 'The Pattern and Importance of Public Knowledge in the Nuclear Age', *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 32 (June 1988), pp. 319–34.

The third wave relies upon two assertions. One, the structure of anarchy combines with the character of nuclear weapons to induce both uniform rational restraint among like-behaving units and the unintentional and so unqualified spread of nuclear arms. Two, while potentially corrosive popular sentiment is present, the nature of history, rationality and society means that public opinion can and should be disregarded. Leaders must rely upon their own clear-sighted wisdom. While the third wave clearly revolves around Waltz it spawned numerous studies that maintain that the spread of nuclear weapons or capability[47] will: re-establish rigidity in a dangerously fluid Europe;[48] inspire a smothering fear in the Middle East;[49] alert South Asia to the lessons of stability;[50] and erode the barriers to technology transfers that would enhance deterrence (such as the diffusion of missile technology) and solidify command and control.[51]

Finally, the fourth wave extends Waltz's way of reasoning by using formal models and methods to evaluate probable unit behaviour under varying systemic conditions. The general conclusion is that the spread of nuclear weapons yields stabilising symmetries and beneficial uncertainties among abstract units that reinforce the

[47] Ramberg comments: 'Perhaps the most significant use of [energy or industrial] facility radioactivity lies in deterrence similar to the way the United States uses its nuclear weapons to deter the Soviet Union'. Bennett Ramberg, *Destruction of Nuclear Energy Facilities in War: The Problem and the Implications* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1980), p. 73; Ramberg, *Nuclear Power Plants as Weapons for the Enemy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Chester L. Cooper, 'Nuclear Hostages', *Foreign Policy,* 32 (Fall 1978), pp. 127–35.

[48] Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War'; Mearsheimer, 'Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War', *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1990), pp. 35–50; Mearsheimer, 'The Case for the Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent', *Foreign Affairs,* 72 (Summer 1993), pp. 50–66; Steven Van Evera, 'Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War', *International Security,* 15 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 7–57; David Garnham, 'Extending Deterrence With German Nuclear Weapons', *International Security,* 10 (Summer 1985), pp. 96–110; Barry R. Posen, 'The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict' *Survival,* 35 (Spring 1993), pp. 27–47.

[49] Steven J. Rosen, 'A Stable System of Mutual Nuclear Deterrence in the Arab-Israeli Conflict', *American Political Science Review,* 71 (December 1977), pp. 1367–83; Rosen, 'Nuclearization and Stability in the Middle East', *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations,* 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 1–32; Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence: A Strategy for the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Christophe Carle, 'Mayhem or Deterrence?: Regional and Global Security from Non-Proliferation to Post-Proliferation', in Shelley A. Stahl and Geoffrey Kemp (eds.), *Arms Control and Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia* (New York: St. Martins, 1992) pp. 45–60.

[50] Subrahmanyam (ed.), *Nuclear Myths and Realities*; Vijai Nair, *Nuclear India* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishing, 1992); Martin L. Van Creveld, *Nuclear Proliferation and the Future of Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), pp. 77–92; Stephen Philip Cohen, 'Solving Proliferation Problems in a Regional Context: South Asia', in Aspen Strategy Group, *New Threats: Responding to the Proliferation of Nuclear, Chemical and Delivery Capabilities in the Third World* (Lanham, MD: Aspen Strategy Group/University Press of America, 1990), pp. 163–95; Devin T. Hagerty, 'The Power of Suggestion: Opaque Proliferation, Existential Deterrence and the South Asian Nuclear Arms Competition', *Security Studies,* 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 256–83; Hagerty, 'Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: The 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis', *International Security,* 20 (Winter 1995/96), pp. 79–114.

[51] Nair, *Nuclear India*, pp. 171–72; Thomas L. McNaugher, 'Ballistic Missiles and Chemical Weapons: The Legacy of the Iran-Iraq War' *International Security,* 15 (Fall 1990), pp. 5–34; John R. Harvey, 'Regional Ballistic Missiles and Advanced Strike Aircraft: Comparing Military Effectiveness', *International Security,* 17 (Fall 1992), pp. 41–83; Thomas W. Dowler and Joseph S. Howard, II., 'Countering the Threat of Well-Armed Tyrants: A Modest Proposal for Small Nuclear Weapons', *Strategic Review,* 19 (Fall 1991), pp. 34–40; Dowler and Howard, 'Stability in a Proliferated World', *Strategic Review,* 23 (Spring 1995), pp. 26–37; while a critic, Steven E. Miller discusses the pros and cons of technical assistance in 'Assistance to Newly Proliferating Nations', in Robert D. Blackwill and Albert Carnesale (eds.), *New Nuclear Nations: Consequences for US Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), pp. 97–131.

thrust of proliferation optimism.[52] As two formal modeller optimists maintain, 'proliferation is conducive to world peace'.[53]

Proliferation pessimism

'I do not fully share your conclusion that an end to nuclear war will come about because of realisation on both sides that by using this weapon an unconscionable degree of death and destruction would result'.[54] Eisenhower's letter to Churchill indicates that if all optimists are realists, all realists are not optimists. Most realists and some neorealists maintain views that challenge optimism. Their beliefs tend to coalesce around the role of the state and the effect of international structure. For some neorealists, for instance, proliferation is synonymous with nuclear violence but there is no consensus on how structure generates such behaviour. Frankel contends that states in a multipolar world are compelled to obtain nuclear arms to replace security commitments lost when the Cold War faded. Confronted with anarchy, fear spurs states toward nuclear brandishment rather than rational passivity.[55] Or an irreversible shift in the deep material structure of world politics, such as nucleonics, Deudney writes, may alter the political structure that shapes security imperatives without changing the state as an institution. Such an incomplete conversion creates a contradiction: aware only of their outmoded duties, states seek nuclear weapons for security even though nucleonics has vitiated the territorial state as a security provider. 'Nuclear weapons may pose a challenge too great for human governance', Deudney proclaims, 'History may end in the ash heap'.[56] Irrespective of their differing opinions of structure, they concur that neither it nor nuclear weapons yield flawless rational actors. 'To be able to say that nuclear weapons have changed the nature of international relations and thus made impossible the outbreak of hege-

[52] Dagobert L. Brito and Michael D. Intriligator, 'Nuclear Proliferation and Stability', *Journal of Peace Science,* 3 (1978), pp. 173–83; Intriligator and Brito, 'Nuclear Proliferation and the Probability of Nuclear War', *Public Choice,* 37 (1981), pp. 247–60; Brito and Intriligator, 'The Economic and Political Incentives to Acquire Nuclear Weapons', *Security Studies,* 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 287–310; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow and Samuel S.G. Wu. 'Forecasting the Risks of Nuclear Proliferation: Taiwan as an Illustration of the Method', *Security Studies,* 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 311–331.

[53] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and William H. Riker, 'An Assessment of the Merits of Selective Nuclear Proliferation', *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 26 (June 1982), pp. 283–306, p. 287. During a conference critical of Western science, Karl Popper dissented, 'claiming that the atom bomb [as science] had brought undoubted advantages to our world. It had succeeded in making almost everybody a pacifist: no statesman or politician thought seriously of war any longer' (p. 131). Richard Gault, 'Karl Popper Says: "Atom Bombs Good for Peace but Bad for Science" ' *Science as Culture,* 5 (1989), pp. 129–34.

[54] 'Dwight D. Eisenhower Letter to Winston Churchill', in The National Security Archive, *Nuclear Non-Proliferation, 1945–1990* (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey/The National Security Archive, 1992), 27 April, 1956. Document no. 00255, p. 1.

[55] Benjamin Frankel, 'An Anxious Decade: Nuclear Proliferation in the 1990s', *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 13 (September 1990), pp. 1–13; Frankel, 'The Brooding Shadow: Systemic Incentives and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation', *Security Studies,* 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 37–78.

[56] Daniel Deudney, 'Dividing Realism: Structural Realism *versus* Security Materialism on Nuclear Security and Proliferation', *Security Studies,* 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 7–36, p. 33; see also Ciro Elliott Zoppo, 'Nuclear Technology, Multipolarity, and International Stability', *World Politics,* 18 (July 1966), pp. 579–606; Steve Chan, 'Incentives for Nuclear Proliferation: The Case of International Pariahs', *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 3 (May 1980), pp. 26–43.

monic war', Gilpin maintains, 'a transformation of human consciousness itself would have to take place'.[57]

Traditional realists also adopt a sullen view of proliferation, presenting domestic power struggles and the yearning for regional prestige as motivations that rival the quest for security. Lavoy, for instance, describes the way elites concoct nuclear myths to succeed politically.[58] And Betts recounts how status propels regional nuclear competition.[59] Since traditional realists locate the cause of proliferation inside both the state and mankind, their basic conclusion is that the spread of nuclear arms is neither manageable nor benign. 'A realistic evaluation of the world scene has convinced me since 1955 that if the nuclear armaments race cannot be brought under control before any number of nations will have nuclear weapons', Morgenthau comments in 1960, 'only a miracle will save mankind'. Some years later he adds: 'It would indeed be the height of thoughtless optimism to assume that something so absurd as a nuclear war cannot happen because it is so absurd'.[60]

Dismissing Morgenthau's teachings on the fragile and ephemeral nature of all human institutions, one dissenting traditional realist expects an effective and enduring non-proliferation institution to emerge as states pursue their complementary vital interests. Rejecting the structural argument, as well, Davis contends cooperative restraint will be undertaken because it enhances state power as it civilizes anarchy and eventuates in a truncated international institution.[61]

A conservative lens

Traditional realists say proliferation leads inescapably to nuclear violence while neorealists see it as a source of enduring stability or nuclear peace. Since our

[57] Robert Gilpin, 'Theory of Hegemonic War' in Rotberg and Rabb (eds.), *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*, pp. 15–37, p. 35; see also Ludwig Dehio, *The Precarious Balance: Four Centuries of The European Struggle* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1962) pp. 270–90; Questor adds a twist to this view. He agrees with neorealism that proliferation should be benign, but he anticipates disaster because humanity has created moral, psychological and philosophical impediments to strategies premised on annihilation, such as mutual assured destruction. Our positive humanity ensures disaster. See George Questor, 'Cultural Barriers to an Acceptance of Deterrence', in Roman Kolkowicz (ed.), *The Logic of Nuclear Terror* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 82–108; Questor, 'The Necessary Moral Hypocrisy of the Slide into Mutual Assured Destruction', in Henry Shue (ed.), *Nuclear Deterrence and Moral Restraint: Critical Choices for American Strategy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 227–70.

[58] Peter R. Lavoy, 'Nuclear Myths and the Causes of Nuclear Proliferation', *Security Studies,* 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 192–212; see also Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), especially pp. 1–65.

[59] Richard K, Betts. 'Paranoids, Pigmies, Pariahs, and Non-proliferation', *Foreign Policy,* 26 (Spring 1977), pp. 157–83.

[60] Respectively, Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Turning Point', *The Washington Post* [Letters], 23 February, 1960. p. A16; Morgenthau, 'Death in the Nuclear Age', in Nathan A. Scott, Jr. *The Modern Vision of Death* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), pp. 69–77, p. 77; In a similar tone, Dulles believes: 'The world would indeed become an unhappy place to live in if humanity had to accept an ever present threat of this character … [namely,] the promiscuous spread of nuclear weapons throughout the world.' John Foster Dulles, 'Challenge and Response in United States Policy', *Foreign Affairs,* 36 (October 1957), pp. 25–43, p. 33. Wight derides such nuclear optimism as 'the latest in a series of optimistic constructions going back more than a hundred years.' Wight. 'Why is There No International Theory?', p. 29.

[61] Zachary S. Davis, 'The Evolution of Realist Theories: Lessons from the Fossil Record', (Charlottesville, VA: unpublished article, *Security Studies* Conference on Realism, 6–8 October, 1994); Davis, 'The Realist Nuclear Regime', *Security Studies,* 2 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 192–212. Thirty years earlier James R. Schlesinger poses a similar argument, 'The Strategic Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation', *The Reporter,* 35 (20 October , 1966), pp. 36–38.

question asks how proliferation optimism ultimately reproduces proliferation pessimism, it seems reasonable to search for an answer within the basic cleavage between realism and neorealism.

Shimko claims that the sharp exchange between ideological conservatives and liberals regarding human nature mirrors the division separating realism and neorealism. Generally, conservatism and realism share a pessimistic view of human nature, whereas American liberalism and neorealism possess an optimistic view.[62] Specifically, Shimko continues, it is these hidden associations that explain both why realism flounders in America as neorealism thrives, and why so much confusion and dissatisfaction surrounds this vast and rich literature. Presumably, in turn, these associations also parallel and so illuminate the split between neorealism and realism regarding nuclear proliferation: liberal neorealism is optimistic about the unchecked spread of nuclear weapons while conservative realism is pessimistic. But while this account appears, initially, to align nicely with Shimko's analysis, it soon falters indicating a much deeper flaw in this general assessment.

Briefly, the claim collapses under its own weight. Comparing the association between conservatism, realism and pessimism to prevailing scholarly, political and commonplace views about proliferation over the past half-century, suggests that it is realism-as-pessimism rather than neorealism-as-optimism that typifies American (and global) security discourse. Liberal institutionalists and superpowers alike discuss the problem of nuclear proliferation using the terms of conservative pessimism: inequality, authority, *status quo* and no experimentation by the 'masses'.[63] Recalling that neorealism and realism address, more often than not, issues of national security renders this a puzzling situation. On one hand, embracing Shimko means liberalism, neorealism and optimism characterise American security theory. While, on the other hand, after examining five decades worth of books, articles and opinions about the consequences of proliferation it is quite evident that conservatism, realism and pessimism actually prevail. The problem within Shimko's argument is not his assertion about which realism flourishes in America, it is his version of neorealism: neorealism has a pessimistic view of human nature rather than optimistic. And this is a central rather than irrelevant motivation for neorealism. Neorealism is as conservative as realism and thus as pessimistic about nuclear proliferation. Establishing this claim requires delineating the main themes of conservatism, particularly its determinative view of human nature.

Burkean conservatism

Customarily, scholars receive Burke and conservatism as one. Kramnick casts Burke, in this vein, 'as the prophet of Conservatism. One need only mention his name

[62] Shimko, 'Realism, Neorealism and American Liberalism'. See also Glaser, 'Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help'; John Farrenkopf, 'The Challenge of Spenglerian Pessimism to Ranke and Political Realism', *Review of International Studies,* 17 (July 1991), pp. 267–84. Kjell Goldman discusses the division between realisms in Goldman, 'The Concept of "Realism" as a Source of Confusion', *Cooperation and Conflict,* 23 (1988), pp. 1–14. On American optimism: Samuel DuBois Cook, 'The New Conservatism *versus* American Traditions', *American Behavioural Scientist,* 17 (November/December 1973), pp. 205–22.

[63] Joseph S. Nye, 'NPT: The Logic of Inequality', *Foreign Policy,* 59 (Summer 1985), pp. 123–31.

today to suggest an attitude, a stance, an entire world view.'[64] Yet Burke is not one-dimensional. And critics invoke Burke's several voices[65] and opinions as evidence to discredit his consistency and unsettle this convention. O'Brien upsets this effort by tying Burke's mature conservatism, the *Reflections* (1790)[66], to his earliest publication, *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), and denuding the notion that Burke's support for Ireland and America laid aside his conservative principles. He writes: 'The more one reads Burke the more one is impressed … by a deep inner consistency, not always of language or opinion, but of feeling.' Be it France, Ireland, America or England, O'Brien clarifies, 'as Yeats so clearly saw—it is all the same Burke'.[67] Since Burke evinces conservatism, they endure together.

Burkean conservatism is a critical response to the rationalist conviction that man could explain and so regulate scientifically every dimension of human social life.[68] Conservatism casts society as the product of enduring and determinative forces that render deference and resignation among ordinary persons, in tandem with moral obligation, prudence and respect among leaders who work to preserve prescriptive institutions, as conditions essential to the realization and continuance of the good society. Through his lament, Burke presents a rough image of this good society:

> the age of chivalry is gone: that of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honor … which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity … now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason.[69]

Burkean conservatism has three interrelated elements, which answer the 'how, what and why' questions regarding conservatism.

In ascending order of importance, the first element regards how to conserve the good society: *via* leadership. Conservatism casts political leaders as rare and gifted persons essential to the achievement and preservation of a sound, stable society.

[64] Issac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke* (New York: Basic Books, 1977) p. xi.

[65] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Edmund Burke, Master of English* (London: The English Association, Presidential Address, December 1981).

[66] The *Reflections* is 'a considered philosophy of politics and society which may fairly be called *essential mature Burke*'. Stanley Ayling, *Edmund Burke: His Life and Opinions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 204. Emphasis in original; O'Brien, 'Introduction', pp. 46–47.

[67] Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Introduction', in O'Brien (ed.), Edmund Burke. *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: Penguin English Library, 1984), pp. 1–76. p. 23 and p. 40. 'Those who seek to cast doubt on Burke's sincerity and consistency … have a very poor case.' See: O'Brien, 'A Vindication of Edmund Burke', in Donald Harman Akensen, *Conor: A Biography of Conor Cruise O'Brien: Anthology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 289–303, p. 291.

[68] See generally, Samuel Huntington, 'Conservatism as an Ideology', *American Political Science Review* 51 (June 1957), pp. 454–73; Karl Mannheim, 'Conservative Thought', in Mannheim, *Articles on Sociology and Social Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), pp. 74–164; Francis P. Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1960); Robert Nisbet, *Conservatism: Dream and Reality* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 27–74; Jerry Z. Muller, 'What is Conservative Social and Political Thought?' in Muller (ed.), *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought From David Hume to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 3–31.

[69] Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, pp. 98–9.

Burkean conservatism views the various moral qualities, such as virtue, cognitive qualities, for instance the capacity for proper historical learning[70], and social qualities, such as access, experience and practice in ruling, that together yield effective political leaders as distributed unevenly among human beings. Burke responds:

> But in asserting, that any thing is honorable, we imply some distinction in its favour. The occupation of a hair-dresser, or of a working tallow-chandler, cannot be a matter of honor to any person—to say nothing of a number of other more servile employments. Such descriptions of men ought not to suffer oppression from the state; but the state suffers oppression, if such as they, either individually or collectively, are permitted to rule. In this you think you are combating prejudice, but you are at war with nature.[71]

Persons imbued with such qualities tend to live and mature within the ruling class, where the wisdom, temperament and learned skills most appropriate for governing are most easily and effectively passed along from earlier generations of leaders. Such uncommon qualities and experiences allow and encourage leaders to maintain society by rendering judicious decisions upon, rather than applying rationalist formulas to, emerging social problems.[72] Within Burkean conservatism political leadership is dutiful behaviour, wise counsel and proper judgement by exceptional human beings.

Second, conservatism depicts enduring prescriptive or organic (*versus* contrived) social institutions as the resource and reason for governance. On one hand, it views enduring social institutions as the archives of wisdom, repositories of past accomplishments and collections of sound habits, particularly subordination and command, to which both leaders and ordinary persons may turn for guidance. On the other hand, because enduring social institutions inform ordinary and elite behaviour, which makes social interaction smoother and so governing easier, the presence of enduring social institutions motivates leaders to ensure their continued existence and operation—since persistence indicates naturalness or functional utility—while it absolves all leaders of the need to inquire into and defend their (often iniquitous) origins.[73] Established institutions guide action:

> You see, sir, that in this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess, that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his

[70] Proper learning by leaders means drawing practical rather than abstract, and so universal, lessons from historical experience. 'In history,' Burke promotes cautiously, 'a great volume is unrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind. It may, in the perversion, serve for a magazine, furnishing offensive and defensive weapons for parties in church and state.' *Reflections* in *Works*, pp. 167–68.; Thody, *Conservative Imagination*, p. 45; Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, pp. 167–94.

[71] Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, p. 69; Mannheim, 'Conservative Thought', p. 106.

[72] Michael Oakeshott, 'Rationalism in Politics', in Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics, and Other Articles* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), pp. 1–36.

[73] It must be the exception when men 'are driven to search into the foundations of the commonwealth … The foundations, on which obedience to governments is founded … are not to be constantly discussed. That we [the members of Parliament] are here, supposes the discussion already made and the dispute settled.' And: 'There is a sacred veil to be drawn over the beginnings of all governments'. Quoted in Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p. 70 and p. 121, respectively. See also Fasel, *Edmund Burke*, pp. 17–18; Muller. 'What is Conservativep', pp. 7–8.

own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and ages … prejudice, with its reason, has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence. Prejudice is of ready application in the emergency; it previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision, skeptical, puzzled, and unresolved. Prejudice renders a man's virtue his habit, and not a series of unconnected acts. Through just prejudice, his duty becomes a part of his nature.[74]

Burkean conservatism receives prescriptive institutions as the repositories of skills, habits, wisdom and accomplishments that give rise to political leaders who—from an inculcated sense of duty to the past and unborn future[75]—receive, revitalise and reproduce the knowledge, practices, skills and privileges that constitute those prescriptive institutions.[76] This second element, then, indicates what should be conserved.

Leadership and institutions operate as one within conservatism to effect its signature traits.[77] In this sense, conservatism venerates family, emotion, guild, community, tradition, faith, authority, discipline, hierarchy and church while it disdains liberal individualism, natural rights, autonomous reason (as in science and progress[78]) and rapid social change. Leadership and institutions thus support conservatism's sanguine view of society. As arrangements marked by continuous institutional order, intense social discipline and an ingrained respect for past and future (*versus* present desires) allow persons to live by their own customs, conservative society is the most free. 'Social freedom', Burke remarks to a correspondent, 'is that state of things in which liberty is secured by equality of restraint'.[79] Finally,

[74] Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, pp. 109–10; Nisbett, *Conservatism*, pp. 29–34.

[75] Burke writes: 'Society is indeed a contract … It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.' And: 'All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust; and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great master, author and founder of society.' Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, p. 120 and p. 116, respectively.

[76] John MacCunn, *The Political Philosophy of Burke* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), pp. 38–103; Charles Parkin, 'The Natural Relation of Society and Government', in Parkin, *The Moral Basis of Burke's Political Thought* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), pp. 30–53; Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p. 97.

[77] 'Nothing is more certain, than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners, and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles; and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion'. Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, p. 101.

[78] "Thanks to our sullen resistance to innovation, thanks to the cold sluggishness of our national character, we still bear the stamp of our forefathers … We are not the converts of Rousseau … We know that *we* have made no discoveries; and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born … we look up with awe to kings … Why? Because when such ideas are brought before our minds, it is *natural* to be so affected." Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, pp. 108–109. Emphasis in original.

[79] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [ed. Thomas H.D. Mahoney,] (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955). p. xviii. Emphasis removed. 'Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites—in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption—in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves'. Burke in a letter quoted in Wilkins, *Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy*, p. 107; Mannheim, 'Conservative Thought', pp. 106–107; Nisbett, *Conservatism*, pp. 47–54.

when social inadequacies prevent such dimensions from materialising, the good society may be realised by turning to the natural embodiment of social order, discipline and obligation: experienced leadership.[80]

Yet these two main elements work together in another way, as well: as products. Third, when seen as interrelated elements directed toward a similar purpose—preserving order—it becomes evident that leadership and institutions are determined outgrowths of conservatism's most influential element, its view of human nature. Burkean conservatism regards leadership and institutions as conditions essential to the realisation of the good society only because it receives human nature as implacable and determinative[81]; they are not intrinsic elements of conservatism, only partial correctives made necessary by essential human nature.[82] This third element addresses the 'why' question of conservatism.

Conservatism emanates from the central assumption that humanity is imperfectible.[83] And while contending schools of thought each claim to know the precise source of mankind's flaw, they agree that humanity's dependent status, its need for institutional guidance, indicates its irremediable imperfection.[84] Sociologists, for instance, relate various societal imperatives—such as defending the family—to specific and temporal dependencies that emanate from mankind's biological limitations. In this way, social cohesion requires that children acquire a language and bundle of customs from their parents: however, cognitive limits mean this takes many years of dependence to achieve. Christian conservatives, in sharp contrast, link their critique of individualism and autonomous reason to humanity's divine creation and original sin. Adam's turn from God and assertion of autonomy causes all mankind to be born as sinners, dependent upon Christ for Salvation.[85] "The main point I want to make about the theoretical interpretation of conservatism", in general, Quinton goes on to say:

> is that in both its forms, religious and secular, it rests on a belief in the imperfection of human nature… .The consequence of men's intellectual imperfection is that they should not conduct their political affairs under the impulsion of large, abstract projects of change arrived at by individual thinkers working in isolation from the practical realities of political life … The consequence of men's moral imperfection is that men, acting on their own uncontrolled impulses, will on the whole act badly … They need, therefore, the restraint of customary and established laws and institutions, of an objective and impersonal barrier to the dangerous extravagance of subjective, personal impulse.[86]

[80] Keith L. Nelson and Spencer C. Olin, Jr., *Why War? Ideology, Theory and History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 8–33.

[81] Gerald Chapman, *Edmund Burke: The Practical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 7; Wilkins, *Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy*, p. 98.

[82] Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p. 89.

[83] See Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* and his exhaustive survey and list of Burke's references across all his works to humanity's ineliminable infirmities, p. 292, note 37; Berry. 'Conservatism and Human Nature'; Wilkins, *Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy*; Harbour, *The Foundations of Conservative*; George Fasel, *Edmund Burke*.

[84] David Wendelken, 'Contemporary Conservatism, Human Nature, and Identity: The Philosophy of Roger Scruton', *Politics,* 16 (February 1996), pp. 17–22; Wilkins, *Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy*, pp. 108–109.

[85] Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), pp. 39–42; Michael J. Smith, 'The Prophetic Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr', in Smith, *Realist Thought From Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), pp. 99–133.

[86] Anthony Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection: The Religious and Secular Traditions of Conservative Thought in England from Hooker to Oakshott* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 13.

Fasel writes about Burke: 'An honest investigation of the human past, Burke and his forebears in this tradition were convinced, led to certain unavoidable and unflattering conclusions about human nature … Human life may have been better in the eighteenth century than in the eighth, but it was questionable that human beings were.'[87] Stanlis argues:

> Nothing violated Burke's faith in the corporate nature of man, in the Classical Natural Law and in moral prudence and temperance, as the sensibility of Rousseau. The theory that morality was based upon private intuitive feeling … contradicted Stoicism and Christianity. It implied belief in the inherent goodness of natural man… . It should now be evident that Burke's Stoical and Christian conception of man was the foundation of his whole social and political philosophy.[88]

As Minogue summarizes: 'The only position conservatives cannot take without ceasing to be conservative is the belief that men are fundamentally good and perhaps ultimately perfectible'.[89] Mankind, whether frail or evil, is intrinsically faulty. 'He censures God, who quarrels with the imperfection of man'.[90]

Since human nature is ineradicably flawed, according to conservatism, leadership and institutions are vital to realizing the good society. Yet humanity is the determinative element. Human nature at once engenders leadership and institutions as elements within conservatism and, in the end, renders them ineffectual constraints. Imperfect human nature shapes society while leadership and institutions dampen it for discrete periods of time. 'One can also, by knowing something about the ways in which human nature does not change, understand that certain characteristic features of man's relations with other men will recur or reappear in civil society, so long as civil society endures, regardless of how ambitious our programmes of social and political change may be'.[91] Thus while leadership and institutions, when taken alone, generate conservatism's sanguine vision of society, the combination of human nature, leadership and institutions yields conservatism's reservations regarding society.

In this sense, since human nature is flawed, ordinary persons must be ruled.[92] And since previous rule worked, new leaders must be like earlier ones.[93] Yet since human nature is faulty, most ordinary persons are unable to assume immediately the tasks

[87] Fasel, *Edmund Burke*. pp. 22–23; John C. Weston, Jr., 'Edmund Burke's View of History', *The Review of Politics,* 23 (April 1961), pp. 203–29, pp. 206–207.

[88] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, pp. 192–93.

[89] Kenneth Minogue, 'Conservatism' in Paul Edwards (ed.) in chief, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan & The Free Press, 1967), pp. 195–98, p. 196.

[90] Burke quoted in Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, p. 177.

[91] Wilkins, *Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy*, p. 99; Burke. *Reflections* in *Works*, pp. 167–69.

[92] 'Society cannot exist, unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.' Burke in a letter quoted in Wilkins, *Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy*, p. 107.

[93] 'The revolution was made to preserve our *ancient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *ancient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty … We wished at the period of the revolution, and do wish now, to derive all we possess as *an inheritance from our forefathers*. Upon that body and stock of inheritance we have taken care not to inoculate any scion alien to the nature of the original plant. All the reformations which have hither to been made, have proceeded upon the principle of reverence to antiquity.' And: 'A spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper and confined views. People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors.' Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, p. 50 and p. 52, respectively. Emphasis in original.

of real leadership. Having matured outside the ruling class or in the absence of virtuous social institutions, ordinary persons are ill-equipped to govern. 'Believe me, sir', instructs Burke:

> those who attempt to level, never equalize. In all societies, consisting of various descriptions of citizens, some description must be uppermost. The levelers therefore only change and pervert the natural order of things; they load the edifice of society, by setting up in the air what the solidity of the structure requires to be on the ground. The associations of tailors and carpenters … cannot be equal to the situation, into which … you attempt to force them.[94]

Compelling or allowing the ordinary to govern before they are prepared only threatens past achievements and future potential. Consequently, social change—particularly delegating the power to rule—must proceed slowly and cautiously.[95] This pace preserves social institutions as it allows ordinary persons to learn and experience what they would have had, had they matured within the ruling class. In short, gradual change encourages the present to assume the shape of the past. Yet even with slow change, imperfect human nature guarantees that hordes of ordinary persons will never absorb the lessons of governance, Burke argues:

> It is said, that twenty-four millions ought to prevail over two hundred thousand… . This sort of discourse does very well with the lamp-post for its second; to men who *may* reason calmly it is ridiculous. The will of the many, and their interest, must very often differ; and great will be the difference *when they make an evil choice*. A government of five hundred country attorneys and obscure curates is not good for twenty-four millions of men … you seem in every thing to have strayed out of the high-road of nature.[96]

Given their duty to past and future as well as their obligation to maintain order, conservatism holds, political leaders are obliged to prevent such deficient persons from harnessing the means to rule. As ordinary persons are unequal in their capacity to rule, leadership must use its judgement to discern the qualified from the unqualified.[97] Finally, as human nature is flawed and leaders are only human, periodic social disruption or collapse is thus inevitable as experienced leaders misjudge situations, worthy persons misbehave or depraved persons acquire undue influence in society. 'Although Burke held legislators most strictly accountable to God for abuses of power, even their occasional common weaknesses were exceptions

[94] Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, p. 69.

[95] 'Rage and frenzy will pull down more in half an hour, than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in an hundred years … When the useful parts of an old establishment are kept … a vigorous mind, steady preserving attention, various powers of comparison and combination, and the resources of an understanding fruitful in expedients, are to be exercised … But you may object—"A process of this kind is slow … Such a mode of reforming, possibly might take many years." Without question it might; and it ought. It is one of the excellences of a method … that its operation is slow, and in some cases imperceptible. If circumspection and caution are a part of wisdom, when we work only upon inanimate matter, surely they become a part of duty too, when the subject of our demolition and construction is not brick and timber, but sentient beings … By a slow but well sustained progress, the effect of each step is watched … We see that the parts of the system do not clash. The evils latent … are provided for … We compensate, we reconcile, we balance … What your [Revolutionary] politicians think the marks of a bold, hardy genius, are only proofs of a deplorable want of ability. By their violent haste, and their defiance of the process of nature, they are delivered over blindly to every projector and adventurer, to every alchymist and empiric.' Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, pp. 196–99. See also p. 40.

[96] Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, p. 72. Emphasis on 'may' in original, other emphasis added.

[97] Ibid., p. 70.

implied and allowed for in the understood covenant by which power was delegated by fallible men to other men who were not infallible'.[98]

Conservatism promotes three admonitions: humans are unalike in their ability to rule; qualified persons must be introduced gradually to ruling; and, the unqualified must be denied the capacity to rule. Burkean conservatism and its reservations emanate from a categorically pessimistic view of human nature. In this sense, it is reasonable to presume that modes of thought which closely resemble such conservatism and its reservations harbour a categorically pessimistic view of human nature as well.

Reflections on nuclear optimism

Employing conservatism and its admonitions as a lens through which to view neorealism helps to answer our question, since indicating how neorealism resembles conservatism indicates how neorealism retains a pessimistic view of human nature. This illuminates the way proliferation optimism reproduces proliferation pessimism and, by associating neorealism and pessimism, reconciles the division within Shimko's argument while it hinders the post-Cold War effort to recharacterize neorealism as liberalism. The claim is that conservative reservations about the spread of nuclear weapons evince an unheralded but clearly pessimistic view of human nature operating within neorealist proliferation optimism. This unrecognized belief ultimately prevents optimism from embracing unqualified nuclear proliferation—despite the presence of its like-units, rational fear, same conditions, nuclear clarity and market (survival) imperatives—and so reveals 'optimism' to be an essentially empty dimension of neorealism. This claim does not join the chorus of scholarship that says optimism uses unrealistic assumptions and is thus unsound.[99] It maintains that working optimism reproduces unintentionally what it seeks to eliminate: proliferation pessimism. The presence and influence of imperfect human nature (rather than its posited irrelevance within structural analysis) compels neorealism as optimism to reproduce proliferation pessimism *via* conservative reservations regarding the unqualified spread of nuclear weapons.[100]

Optimism resembles conservatism in several ways. First, its rendition of a proliferated world approximates conservatism's good society. Current nuclear-weapon states are its experienced leaders, deterrence is its main enduring institution and all

[98] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, p. 177. Burke recognizes that the best leaders make mistakes, such as when: England enforced its 'abstract right' to tax the American colonies, precipitating the revolution; Hastings abused his power in India; the *ancien régime* ignored the lessons of history, becoming vulnerable to Jacobinism; England resisted intervention in the French Revolution, which threatened England's constitutive principles; and of course, when King James II had to be removed for 'a multitude of illegal acts', 'king [sic] James was a bad king with a good title'. Burke. *Reflections* in *Works*, latter quotes at p. 46 and p. 42, respectively.

[99] Cimbala, 'Deterrence Stability with Smaller Forces'; Sagan, 'The Perils of Proliferation'; Jacek Kugler, 'Terror Without Deterrence: Reassessing the Role of Nuclear Weapons', *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 28 (September 1984), pp. 470–506.

[100] The way in which reservations manifest a determinative view of human nature within neorealism unsettles Waltz's claim that neither individuals nor mankind may account usefully for international behaviour. See Waltz. *Man, The State and War,* pp. 16–41; Fareed Zakaria, 'Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Article', *International Security,* 17 (Summer 1992), pp. 177–98.

other states are the ordinary actors to which the power to rule may be delegated. Stability typifies this good society for several reasons: current nuclear-weapon states are examples for ordinary states to imitate, rejecting their history only invites disaster.[101] Current conditions remain the same as previous conditions, meaning non-nuclear states may regard the experiences of the current nuclear states as lessons and thereby achieve the same stability. As a prescriptive institution, strategic deterrence is an accessible archive of organic injunctions and past achievements (for example, prejudices, humanity's 'second nature') that: induces and is renewed by right behaviour (revives extended deterrence); denies the need for inquiry into its practical origins (persistence begets naturalization)[102]; and, absolves current leaders of the on-going need to legitimize either their inherited privileges (say, permanent security council seats) and property (nuclear arms) or their social duties (say, retaliation). Nucleonics is an encompassing, quasi-religious authority which compels universal submission. When change does occur, nuclear weapons render novel multipolar arrangements akin to enduring, traditional bipolar ones. The main threat to this good society is an idea that inverts the natural order of things: just as the Revolution instructs humans to not do what they must, namely submit, the non-proliferation movement tells states to not do what they must, that is, acquire what they need to survive.[103] And last, among others, instinct as fear overrules abstract, contrived designs, and is ultimately what precludes nuclear use. Mannheim observes: 'The peculiarity of the conservative way of putting things into a wider context is that it approaches them in some way *from behind*, from *their past*… . The conservative … sees all the significance of a thing in what lies *behind* it… . Where the [liberal] progressive uses the future [utopia] to interpret things, the conservative uses the past.'[104] Alone, leadership and institutions allow optimism to pronounce that with proliferation the potentially unruly present assumes the shape of the quiescent past. As Waltz intones: 'In a nuclear world, conservative would-be attackers will be prudent'.[105]

Contemporary optimism resembles conservatism in a second and more surprising way, given its origins in microeconomic theory. It regards actors as unequal in their capacity to rule, where rule is the possession of nuclear weapons. Optimism cautions that while some states are qualified, many more states are unqualified and so must

[101] 'You might, if you pleased, have profited of our example … Your privileges … were not lost to memory … You might have repaired those walls; you might have built on those old foundations … but you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society, and had every thing to begin anew. You began ill, because you began by despising everything that belonged to you … Under a pious predilection for those ancestors, your imaginations would have realized in them a standard of virtue and wisdom, beyond the vulgar practice of the hour: and you would have risen with the example to whose imitation you aspired. Respecting your forefathers, you would have been taught to respect yourselves.' Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, pp. 54–55.

[102] George Perkovich, 'A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia', *Foreign Policy,* 91 (Summer 1993), pp. 85–104. p.88.

[103] In addition, optimists claim it is not the nuclear weapon as material object but the idea of usability—nuclear states as non-proliferators assert nuclear weapons are useable—that actually threatens a stable proliferated world. Neorealists maintain they are not useable. Jasjit Singh writes the: 'real danger from nuclear weapons stems not so much from their existence as from attitudes and perceptions regarding their usability as weapons.' Singh, 'Nuclear Weapons Threat', in J. Singh and Thomas Bernauer (eds.), *Security of Third World Countries* (Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth/United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1993), pp. 57–79, p. 73.

[104] Mannhaim, 'Conservative Thought', pp. 110–11. Emphasis in original.

[105] Waltz, 'More May Be Better', p. 28.

be denied nuclear weapons. It implicitly casts such states as somehow immune to the universal constraining elements neorealism promotes, while being driven by a will to power or just doomed by their internal inadequacies. While unheralded in the literature, this general reservation about the spread of nuclear weapons to unfit states recurs in each wave of optimism. In 1959, for instance, Knorr acknowledges it is: 'Very likely the possession of nuclear arms will have a chastening effect on the leaders of those states instead of encouraging them to rash actions … [but] the very idea of atomic bombs at the disposal of, say, Egypt or Israel conjures up a nightmare in American minds.'[106] And in 1962, Wildavsky embraces proliferation since:

> A policy of spreading nuclear weapons presents the possibility of defense against nuclear blackmail … [But] Obviously, possession of atomic weapons should not be encouraged in nations which are unstable, trigger-happy, in the mood for vendettas, or what have you. Many nations … are not good candidates … other nations—Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, and Turkey are a few that come to mind—should be encouraged to acquire nuclear weapons if they wish to do so.[107]

Several years later, after writing that proliferation is good for Europe, Aron cautions: 'If there is one area in the world where the big powers have an obligation to block the introduction of nuclear arms, it is certainly the Middle East … [similarly] China's acquisition of an atomic force will probably lead to consequences that are distinctly unpleasant to contemplate.'[108] 'Thus we have an example of the possibility of stabilizing the present world political system in part by the discrete diffusion of atomic arms,' Wentz writes optimistically. Yet, 'This does not imply the offering of nuclear weapons to all takers. Such a policy would clearly deteriorate American security'.[109] Similar conservative reservations appear in the latest waves of optimism, as well.[110] As a prominent structural realist and optimist, Mearsheimer counsels in 1990 that Germany alone, among non-nuclear European states, is qualified to receive nuclear arms. He explains:

> The most likely scenario in the wake of the Cold War is further nuclear proliferation in Europe… . Mismanaged proliferation could produce disaster, while well-managed proliferation could produce an order nearly as stable as the current order. Unfortunately, however, any proliferation is likely to be mismanaged … a stable nuclear competition might not emerge between the new nuclear states … elites and publics of the emerging nuclear European states might not quickly develop doctrines and attitudes that reflect a grasp of the devastating consequences and basic unwinnability of nuclear war … widespread proliferation

[106] Knorr, 'Nuclear Weapons: "Haves" and "Have Nots," ' quotes at p. 175 and p. 173, respectively.
[107] Wildavsky, 'Nuclear Clubs,' quotes at p. 346 and p. 357, respectively.
[108] Raymond Aron, 'The Spread of Nuclear Weapons', *The Atlantic,* 215 (January 1965), pp. 44–50, p. 46.
[109] Wentz, *Nuclear Proliferation*, p. 11.
[110] Calder describes how: 'Jean-Louis Gergorin, who runs the [French] Foreign Ministry's analysis and forecasting centre, explains French opposition to the spread of nuclear weapons by distinguishing between two kinds of areas. In parts of the world like Europe, where nuclear deterrence already operates, nations must be free to adjust to that fact of life, and national deterrent forces, like those of Britain and France, can enhance stability. Elsewhere, in regions not covered by nuclear deterrence, acquiring nuclear weapons is dangerous … A country getting the bomb is likely to have a hostile neighbor that will follow its example; moreover, that will not create a situation of stable mutual deterrence, because the nations deploying their bombs for the first time are unlikely to have sophisticated forces that can survive a surprise attack, so the incentives to strike first in time of tension will be very strong.' Nigel Calder, *Nuclear Nightmares: An Investigation into Possible Wars* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), pp. 54–5.

would increase the number of fingers on the nuclear trigger, which in turn would increase the likelihood that nuclear weapons could be fired due to accident, unauthorized use … or irrational decision-making… . It would be best if proliferation were extended to Germany but not beyond.[111]

In 1993, Posen writes that nuclear weapons tempered the disintegration of the Soviet Union but would have inflamed the conflict associated with the disintegration of Yugoslavia. 'In some cases, [but not all] nuclear weaponry may be an effective way of protecting the weak from the strong'.[112] Finally, Bandow cautions in 1994 that: 'mutual possession of nuclear weapons may deter possible aggression. Yet as one moves away from Europe to regions with a higher propensity for war, and where potential strife is multilateral, the risks grow. This is why North Korea is so unsettling.'[113] Clearly, proliferation optimism regards states as unequal in their capacity to rule in international society. In this regard, it agrees with Burke when he writes: 'all men have equal rights; but not to equal things … and as to the share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct, original rights of man in civil society.' And when he warns: 'The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please; we ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risk congratulations, which may be soon turned to complaints'.[114]

Optimism resembles conservatism in a third way. It underscores deep respect and slow change as conditions essential to realizing the good society. Within optimism, qualified states have leaders whose defining trait is actually not, as Waltz describes, 'rational fear' but conservative 'respect' (*qua* the manners of a gentleman): respect for nuclear arms, the lessons of history, previous achievements and the unborn future. Introducing the notion of 'respect' better captures the sharp distinction between pedestrian hysteria and elite fear implied in the optimist literature. In other words, because hysteria and fear share an emotional heritage that respect and hysteria do not, it is respect-as-manners, not fear, that separates the dutiful leadership from the quivering populace. And respect for the authority vested in nuclear technology obviates the need for artificial social institutions, or forms of control, such as the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the implementation of which can only make matters worse.[115] When respect and gradual change coincide, the good society may be achieved. In this vein, Bull writes in 1968 that: 'short of a revolution in the present organization of world politics, the spread of the capability to make nuclear weapons is inevitable … [mitigating this] requires slowing down the pace of the spread so that the international political system is able to absorb its

[111] Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future', pp. 37–38.
[112] Posen, 'The Security Dilemma', p. 44.
[113] Doug Bandow, 'Let'em Have Nukes', *The Sunday New York Times*, 13 November, 1994, sec. 6, p. 56.
[114] Burke, *Reflections* in *Works*, p. 80 and p. 26, respectively. Hierarchical institutions bring about peace, egalitarian ones produce war: 'So too is there a close affinity between democracy and the widening and leveling of warfare'. Nisbett, *Conservatism*, p. 44.
[115] Alluding to unintended consequences, Burke captures neorealism's aversion to treaties, agreements and the like. 'There is, by the essential fundamental constitution of things, a radical infirmity in all human contrivances; and the weakness is often so attached to the very perfection of our political mechanism, that some defect in it,—something that stops short of its principle,—something that controls, that mitigates, that moderates it, becomes a necessary corrective to the evils that the theoretic perfection would produce'. In a letter quoted in Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p. 89.

impact."[116] Waltz, the consummate optimist, voices similar reservations over the next three decades. In 1995 he reiterates a position he first expresses in 1979: 'I have argued that the gradual spread of nuclear weapons is better than either no spread or rapid spread … Since rapid changes in international conditions can be unsettling, the slowness of the spread of nuclear weapons is fortunate.'[117]

Provided the claim in this article, optimism resembles conservatism in two final ways. It ultimately preserves prevailing social or community opinion. Canavan notes conservative 'Prejudice is not only old opinion. As a social force it is common or social opinion. When such opinion was founded on long popular experience, Burke had great faith in it.'[118] Quester, in an introduction, reveals that non-proliferation endeavours rest on subjective feeling—social opinion—rather than objective truth. He writes: 'consistent with the general opposition to further proliferation, most of us as authors simply view a proliferated world with unrelieved dread … [it is] a common sense, which is increasingly affecting the world on the proliferation issue, that such proliferation would simply be bad.'[119] Proliferation optimism ultimately succumbs to prevailing international social opinion—the way things are or should be—when it reproduces pessimism. Lastly, when Waltz and his followers qualify their view of nuclear proliferation they distance themselves from abstract neorealism and its main classical figure, Rousseau[120], just as does Burke throughout the *Reflections*. Waltz concedes that states are not abstract units free to act on their assessment of the future in a self-help environment, but are bound to the past and its institutions: 'To give therefore no more importance, in the social order, to such descriptions of men, than that of so many units, is a horrible usurpation.'[121]

Optimism resembles conservatism. It views states as unalike in their capacity to handle nuclear weapons, counsels gradual spread to qualified states and denies unfit states the means to rule in global society. Recalling the microeconomic analogical reasoning that allows Waltz to develop sequentially his *Theory of International Politics* and proliferation optimism, it is reasonable to wonder why optimism confronts the spread of nuclear arms with such dismay and hesitancy. A conservative lens provides the answer. Since conservatism emanates from a determinative and pessimistic view of human nature, and since optimism abandons its faith in microeconomics (through qualifications on self-help units, reciprocal relationships and likely behaviour in favour of denial, leadership and authority) yet reproduces quite conservative admonitions, it is clear that optimism as neorealism retains a deeply pessimistic view of humankind. In this way, since all humanity is flawed and human nature shapes society (which neorealism admits *via* its conservative reservations) *all* proliferation is dangerous as imperfect human nature determines all political leaders and social institutions, not merely the so-called depraved or rogue members of international society. When the question is the actual spread of nuclear

[116] Hedley Bull, 'On Non-proliferation', *Interplay,* 1 (January 1968), pp. 8–10, p. 9.
[117] Waltz, 'More May Be Better', quotes at p. 42 and pp. 1–2, respectively; Thayer writes similarly, 'By making nuclear proliferation more difficult, the regime marginally decreases the speed at which states acquire nuclear weapons capability. A slower pace of nuclear proliferation may make nuclear war less likely … ' 'The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation', p. 508.
[118] Canavan, *Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p. 75.
[119] George Quester, 'Introduction: In Defense of Some Optimism', *International Organization,* 35 (Winter 1981), pp. 1–14, p. 2 and p. 8, respectively.
[120] Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, pp. 159–86.
[121] Burke in a letter in Canavan, *Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p. 98.

weapons, Waltz and his optimists come to resemble Burke much more than, say, Friedman.

Conclusion

Proliferation optimism, which asserts that the wide spread of nuclear arms leads to nuclear peace, is the controversial theoretical and practical product of neorealism. To hinder optimism and so the continued proliferation of nuclear weapons, most scholars criticize as inappropriate, unrealistic or just plain wrong, the basic yet prominent assumptions of proliferation optimism and neorealism. This article uses a different approach. Rather than preserving pessimism by disproving optimism, it embraces a basic principle of critical theory and asks how proliferation optimism reproduces what it seeks to explain away: proliferation pessimism. It interprets optimism through the lens of Burkean conservatism and contends that, as the ideal nuclear society which optimism envisions resembles the ideal conservative society Burke depicts in the *Reflections*, so optimism reproduces a central tenet of conservatism: flawed human nature. This article argues that an unheralded view of human nature operates within proliferation optimism to produce its reservations about the wide spread of nuclear weapons, which in turn, indicates its essential pessimism. Since the irrelevance of human nature is a first principle for neorealism, as delineated in Waltz's *Man, the State and War*, its presence and effect are unexpected and noteworthy. By illuminating how optimism is pessimism the article diminishes its theoretical and practical allure—it is an empty rather than viable theoretical or practical choice—and second, illustrates how Burke influences a version of contemporary international theory.