



Security without nuclear deterrence

Henk J Groenewegen

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BOOK REVIEW

Security without nuclear deterrence, 2nd edition, by Robert Green, Nottingham, UK, Spokesman Books, 2018, 266 pp., £14.99 (Hardback), ISBN 9780 85124 8721

The dogma of nuclear deterrence forms the basis of the justification for the possession and threat of use of these weapons held by nuclear weapon states, in particular the original five. Deterrence is considered by them to be essential for keeping peace and security on earth. This dogma is strongly challenged by Commander Robert Green (Ret'd) in this revised and updated edition of *Security without Nuclear Deterrence* (first edition 2010). Green, during his 20 years of service in the British Royal Navy (1962–1982), was involved in several nuclear tasks.

His very readable overview and analysis of the problem of nuclear weapons includes their development from their first use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 up to the present day and the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) by the United Nations in July 2017. One of his (optimistic) conclusions in the last chapter is that 'We could move from a position of the threat of nuclear war as security, to one of verification as security'.

The author starts by describing his personal history of involvement with nuclear weapons and explains why in the early eighties he came to reject nuclear deterrence. In the subsequent chapters a detailed account is given of how nuclear deterrence has not lead to a safer world, but rather to a situation in which even more countries possess these weapons. A large number of them in the arsenals of the two superpowers US and Russia are still on trigger alert, an extremely unsafe situation. Nuclear deterrence has not prevented conventional wars, will not be effective against terrorist groups, may lead to such groups getting their hands on nuclear weapons themselves, and continues to lead to the proliferation and the development of even more sophisticated devices.

Green notes some hopeful developments which include the facts that a number of countries have given up their nuclear status (e.g. several former USSR states, South Africa and others), and that nuclear weapon-free zones have been created, such as in the southern hemisphere and in parts of Asia. Furthermore, the unanimous conclusions of the International Court of Justice (1996) that '... any threat or use of nuclear weapons must conform to international humanitarian law' and that '... the unique characteristics of nuclear weapons [mean that] the use of such weapons in fact seems scarcely reconcilable with such requirements', provides a potential legal basis for the challenge of nuclear deterrence. In other words, in the view of the author one of the possible ways to put pressure on the nuclear weapon states is to play the cards of legality and morality. His plea is to start negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (similar to those for chemical and biological weapons, landmines,

and cluster munitions). In the context of nuclear weapons this requires a complete shift of mindset by the nuclear weapon states. But with the support of the majority of non-nuclear weapon states (TPNW) and strong grass root movements like ICAN (Nobel Prize winner 2017), this is the only way out of the dead-end street of nuclear deterrence. As Green states: ‘... the nuclear deterrence dogma is about using the most immoral means imaginable to achieve allegedly moral ends’.

This book is highly recommended for those involved in the anti-nuclear movement since it gives a clear and very well documented account of the problems the world faces with the continuing policy of nuclear deterrence. The author is very well informed, not only because of his previous work in the UK Navy, but also as a result of his close involvement in projects like the International Court of Justice, ICAN and, most recently, TPNW. It is a must-read for politicians, and not only for those who deal with nuclear issues.

Henk J Groenewegen
Anatomy and Neurosciences, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands
NVMP, Dutch IPPNW affiliate

 henk.groenewegen@gmail.com

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