CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

The Nuclear Taboo

Why have nuclear weapons not been used since Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945? Nina Tannenwald disputes the conventional answer of "deterrence," in favor of what she calls a nuclear taboo – a widespread inhibition on using nuclear weapons – which has arisen in global politics. Drawing on newly released archival sources, Tannenwald traces the rise of the nuclear taboo, the forces that produced it, and its influence, particularly on US leaders. She analyzes four critical instances where US leaders considered using nuclear weapons (Japan 1945, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War 1991) and examines how the nuclear taboo has repeatedly dissuaded US and other world leaders from resorting to these "ultimate weapons." Through a systematic analysis, Tannenwald challenges conventional conceptions of deterrence and offers a compelling argument on the moral bases of nuclear restraint as well as an important insight into how nuclear war can be avoided in the future.

NINA TANNENWALD is Associate Research Professor of International Relations at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: 87

The Nuclear Taboo

Editorial Board

STEVE SMITH (*Managing editor*)
THOMAS BIERSTEKER PHIL CERNY MICHAEL COX
A. J. R. GROOM RICHARD HIGGOTT KIMBERLEY HUTCHINGS
CAROLINE KENNEDY-PIPE STEVE LAMY MICHAEL MASTANDUNO
LOUIS PAULY NGAIRE WOODS

Cambridge Studies in International Relations is a joint initiative of Cambridge University Press and the British International Studies Association (BISA). The series will include a wide range of material, from undergraduate textbooks and surveys to research-based monographs and collaborative volumes. The aim of the series is to publish the best new scholarship in International Studies from Europe, North America and the rest of the world.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

104 *Benjamin Miller*
States, nations and the great powers
The sources of regional war and peace

103 *Beate Jahn (ed.)*
Classical theory in international relations

102 *Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami*
The English School of international relations
A contemporary reassessment

101 *Colin Wight*
Agents, structures and international relations
Politics as ontology

100 *Michael C. Williams*
The realist tradition and the limits of international relations

99 *Ivan Arreguín-Toft*
How the weak win wars
A theory of asymmetric conflict

98 *Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall*
Power in global governance

97 *Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach*
Remapping global politics
History's revenge and future shock

96 *Christian Reus-Smit*
The politics of international law

95 *Barry Buzan*
From international to world society?
English school theory and the social structure of globalisation

94 *K. J. Holsti*
Taming the sovereigns
Institutional change in international politics

93 *Bruce Cronin*
Institutions for the common good
International protection regimes in international security

Series list continued after index

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

The Nuclear Taboo

The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945

Nina Tannenwald

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521818865

© Nina Tannenwald 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-81886-5 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-52428-5 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2009

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet websites referred to in
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel
timetables and other factual information given in this work are correct at
the time of first printing but Cambridge University Press does not guarantee
the accuracy of such information thereafter.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

	Preface	*page* ix
	List of abbreviations	xiii
1	Introduction: the tradition of nuclear non-use	1
2	Explaining non-use	29
3	Hiroshima and the origins of the nuclear taboo	73
4	The Korean War: the emerging taboo	115
5	The rise of the nuclear taboo, 1953–1960	155
6	Nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War	190
7	Institutionalizing the taboo, 1960–1989	241
8	The 1991 Gulf War	294
9	The taboo in the post-Cold War world	327
10	Conclusion: the prospects for the nuclear taboo	361
	Select bibliography	397
	Index	431

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

Preface

This book had its origins in what seemed to me a disconnect between how ordinary people, including many policymakers, have viewed nuclear weapons and how academic deterrence theory has approached the analysis of such weapons. In college I had been involved in the nuclear freeze movement, aimed at halting the US–Soviet nuclear arms race. Most people in this movement shared a deep sense of revulsion at the tremendous destructive power of nuclear weapons, and held their use to be immoral and irrational.

Later, in graduate school, I studied academic deterrence theory. It focused on the cold, hard calculus of making credible threats of massive destruction. These game-theoretic analyses, I found, had little to say about issues of revulsion and morality. Further, when I studied how we managed to avoid nuclear war during the Cold War, it increasingly appeared to me that deterrence was not the whole story. Deterrence could not explain, for example, why nuclear weapons had not been used when the other side did not possess such weapons. I found it hard to avoid a sense that a powerful revulsion associated with nuclear weapons had played a role in inhibiting their use.

If indeed a nuclear taboo exists, how do we know, and how exactly did this taboo emerge? How has it influenced leaders? I decided to find out. This book is the result.

Although this book is primarily a work of historical analysis, I hope that, in shedding light on how we survived sixty years without using the bomb, it provides some insights for the future. Nuclear weapons no longer pose the threat of immediate annihilation of the planet that they once did. Yet, the risk of their use remains. Use of even a single bomb would be catastrophic. In a world where deterrence is less relevant, power is more asymmetric, and nuclear weapons are

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

increasingly spread around the globe, the nurturing of normative inhibitions on use may be crucial to surviving the next sixty years.

In its long process of development, this book has accumulated many debts. My greatest debt goes to Peter Katzenstein, who, in one of my moments of crisis, reminded me that we do not slay dragons single-handedly. His intellectual guidance and unwavering support gave me the confidence to pursue this study. He provides a model of scholarship and mentorship to which I can only aspire. Richard Ned Lebow's cogent critiques of deterrence theory inspired my own thinking on the subject. Lawrence Scheinman's deep knowledge of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and international law helped me to refine my interpretations in this area. Henry Shue's insights strengthened my understanding of the role of ethical norms in international affairs. I could not have asked for a better group of advisors.

I am also especially grateful to Scott Sagan and Lynn Eden, who offered crucial encouragement early on and challenged me to sharpen my arguments. They and their colleagues at Stanford's Center for International Security and Arms Control provided, more than once, a wonderful environment for doing so. Halfway around the world from Stanford, Harald Muller made possible my research on arms control at the Frankfurt Peace Research Institute. His foundational work on security regimes has inspired and deeply influenced my thinking. A fellowship at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard, made possible by Joseph Nye, immersed me in a stimulating intellectual environment and plunged me more deeply into US nuclear policy. At the University of Colorado at Boulder I benefited from some wonderful colleagues and the opportunity to try out my ideas on students. In recent years, my intellectual home has been at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown. I am grateful to Thomas Biersteker for creating such a vibrant intellectual community there.

Many additional individuals have provided important feedback. William Burr read numerous chapters closely and saved me from egregious historical errors. He brought his prodigious knowledge of archival sources to bear and was extraordinarily generous with both his time and his documents. Daniel Ellsberg, Raymond Garthoff, James Blight, and Peter Hayes provided valuable comments on the Vietnam chapter. Alexander Wendt, David Dessler, Hein Goemans, and Mark Suchman provided extensive comments on the theoretical chapters. Scott Sagan read an early version of the entire manuscript.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

Others who provided valuable comments at various points along the way include Emanuel Adler, Stephen Brooks, Elizabeth Cousens, Matthew Evangelista, Abbott (Tom) Gleason, David Holloway, Terry Hopmann, Mark Lichbach, John Meyer, Richard Price, Randy Rydell, Duncan Snidal, Lawrence Wittner, Dean Wilkening, and William Wohlforth. Any errors of fact or interpretation remain mine, of course.

Numerous knowledgeable archivists at the National Archives made research there a pleasure. David Haight, archivist at the Eisenhower Library, and John Wilson, archivist at the Johnson Library, were indispensable in digging up ever-blacked-out nuclear weapons documents and assisting with declassification requests. I thank George Bunn for sharing with me his extensive personal files on no first use. William Arkin, many years ago, when he was still at Greenpeace, let me make use of his extensive clippings files on the 1991 Gulf War. Peter Hayes of the Nautilus Institute generously shared newly released documents on Vietnam.

For able research assistance I am grateful to Jeffrey Dillon, Cathryn Cluver, Stephan Sonnenberg, Emily Patton, Emily Kanstroom, and Joseph Nagle.

The writing of this book was supported by fellowships from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Institute for the Study of World Politics, the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford, the Frankfurt Peace Research Institute, and the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown.

I would not have made it through this project without the companionship, counsel, and encouragement of numerous friends along the way: Jeremy Adelman, Doug Blum, Chuck Call, Cathleen Fisher, Bobby Herman, Paul Kowert, Barbara Little, Anne Nolin, Steve Rauch, Andrew Tauber, Jeremy Telman, and Alex Wendt. Sarah Mendelson and Wendy Schiller knew when to drag me out for a drink and when to make sure I stayed in my seat.

My parents were wonderfully supportive throughout the process, although they began to worry that a nuclear bomb would get used before I finished the book. My stepfather, Kenneth Ford, an award-winning science writer and my favorite copyeditor, sharpened my prose in numerous chapters. My mother, Joanne Ford, remained ever encouraging. This book is dedicated to my parents – all three of them (my father, Peter Tannenwald, in memoriam).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

Finally, I thank my husband and fellow traveler, Mark Suchman, who undoubtedly has heard more than he ever expected about the nuclear taboo. He has been a constant source of support, tough critiques, good humor, two-by-two typologies, and, in the last three years, child care. Not only would this book not have been completed without him, it would not have been nearly as much fun, either.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-52428-5 - The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945
Nina Tannenwald
Frontmatter
More information

Abbreviations

ABM	anti-ballistic missile
ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
AEC	US Atomic Energy Commission
DDEL	Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS
DDRS	Declassifed Documents Reference System
ENDC	Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee
FRUS	*Foreign Relations of the United States*
GA	United Nations General Assembly
GPO	Government Printing Office
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JFDP	John Foster Dulles Papers
JFKL	John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA
LBJL	Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, TX
NA	National Archives, Washington, DC
NSA	National Security Archive, Washington, DC
NSC	National Security Council
NSF	National Security Files
NPMP	Nixon Presidential Materials Project, College Park, MD
NPT	Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty
PALs	permissive action links
PNE	peaceful nuclear explosion
PNW	Preventing Nuclear War (treaty)
PP	Pentagon Papers, Senator Gravel edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971–72).
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SGML	Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton, NJ
VN	Vietnam

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org