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Third Place Winner\* (\$2,000 Scholarship)

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*Respect or Fear?*

"Neutrality is a negative word. It does not express what America ought to feel. We are not trying to keep out of trouble; we are trying to preserve the foundations on which peace may be rebuilt." In 1915, Woodrow Wilson, the father of moral diplomacy, was promoting an active presence in foreign relations, but a peaceful one rather than one with hostile motives. It has been 75 years since the United States deployed the first and only nuclear weapons used in warfare. Since this devastating act, diplomacy has become a game of fear, rather than one of respect. But I ask you: which is more powerful, a nation that can destroy its enemies, or a nation that does not have to?

The optimist in me wants to believe that the world can be better off without nuclear weapons. Ideally, the nations of the world should be able to come together to prevent a nuclear war. Through moral diplomacy we could agree to ban nuclear weapons and dismantle what we have. We could eliminate any concerns that nuclear weapons will be the end of us. It seems like an ideal solution; however, it also seems naive.

Many claim that nuclear weapons have had a positive impact; they act as a deterrent and prevent many conflicts. That may be true, but nuclear weapons are still a danger to humanity. They can end thousands of lives in an instant, with untold effects, lasting for decades after. We seem to be so obsessed with mutually assured destruction, and it may appear inevitable. I hope that we are not so stubborn that we cannot change. While it is hard to imagine a future in which all nuclear weapons are gone, I do think that we can work towards a world in which we no longer feel nuclear weapons are necessary.

As we learned from the Cold War, an environment of fear can exponentiate the dangers we pose upon ourselves. We cannot always predict the actions of other governments, and so we instead need to learn to communicate with them. In order to avoid a nuclear war, we need to create a political environment of respect, not fear. According to the Federation of American Scientists, the worldwide stockpile of nuclear weapons has decreased rapidly since 1986. Long after the Cold War ended, the stockpile is still decreasing. To maintain this trend, citizens of the world need to empower officials who can use moral diplomacy in foreign policy to create a worldwide political climate of respect rather than fear.

So what will end the story of nuclear weapons? I believe that we will be the ones to end them. It will take time for nations to feel comfortable letting go of their weapons. For now, we must foster a political atmosphere of respect, not fear in order to hasten this process.

#### References

Americanism: Woodrow Wilson's Speeches on the War--why He Made Them and what They Have Done: the President's Principal Utterances in the First Year of War : with Notes, Comments and War Dates, Giving Them Their Historical Setting, Significance and Consequences, and with Brief Quotations from Earlier Speeches and Papers.

\*Two students tied for third place.