

Nuclear Weapons: Barbaric Tools of Death

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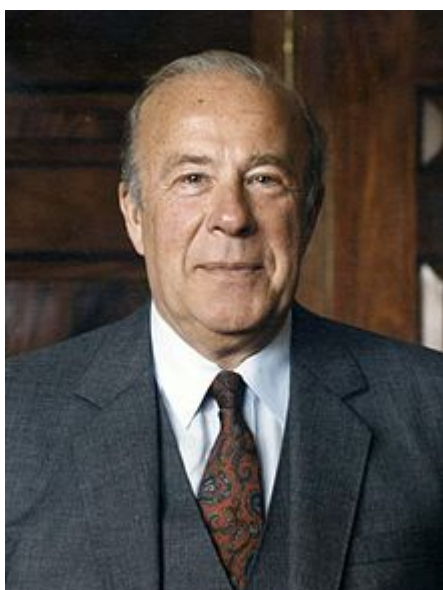
In-depth Report: [Nuclear War](#)

The existence of nuclear weapons is an ugly symbol of the violent consciousness that plagues humanity. Despite tremendous technological advancements, developments in health care and wonders of creative expression, little of note has changed in humanity's collective consciousness: Tribalism, idealism and selfish desire persist, negative tendencies that under the pervasive socio-economic systems are exacerbated and encouraged. People and nations are set in competition with one another, separation and mistrust is fed, leading to disharmony, fear and conflict.

Such engineered insecurity is used as justification for nations to maintain a military force, and in the case of the world's nuclear powers, arm themselves with weapons that, if used, would destroy all life, human and sub-human alike. Despite this, unlike biological and chemical weapons, landmines and cluster munitions, possession of nuclear weapons is not prohibited under international law, although launching them would, according to CND, breach a plethora of conventions and declarations.

Sustainable security is not created through threats and the cultivation of fear, but by building relationships, cooperating and establishing trust. As long as nuclear weapons exist there is a risk of them being used, of an accident – and there have been many close shaves since 1948 – and subsequent annihilation. As the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICANW) rightly [states](#),

“Prohibiting and completely eliminating nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their use.”



George P. Shultz, U.S. Secretary of State, July 16, 1982 to January 20, 1989 (Source: [US Government](#) / [Wikimedia Commons](#))

The rational thing to do is to move towards a nuclear free world and with some urgency; this necessarily entails the nuclear powers disarming, either unilaterally or bilaterally. Someone has to begin the process; by taking the moral initiative others will be under pressure to follow, whereas, as former US Secretary of State George Shultz [put](#) it, “proliferation begets proliferation.”

Clearing the world of these monstrous machines would not only be a major step in safeguarding humanity and the planet, it would represent a triumph of humane principles of goodness — cooperation, trust, unity — over hate, suspicion and discord.

There can be little doubt that the vast majority of people and nations in the world would like nuclear weapons to be decommissioned. It is the Governments of some of the most powerful countries that stand as obstacles to common-sense and progress: Corporate-State governments motivated not by a burning desire to help create a peaceful world at ease with itself, but driven by self-interest, pressure from financial investors and the demands of the arms-industry.

Towards the end of 2016, the United Nations general assembly adopted a landmark [resolution](#) to begin to “negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.” Talks began in February this year, when the first leg of a two stage [conference](#) was held in New York; 123 nations voted to outlaw them, while the nine nuclear powers (USA, China, France, Britain, Russia, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea), rather predictably stood in opposition to a ban and voted against the proposal, as did nuclear host and alliance countries such as Belgium, Italy, Croatia and Norway, among others: Shame on them all. These obstructive governments do not represent the wishes of their populations, their motives are corrupt, their actions irresponsible.

It’s interesting to note that the countries that possess nuclear weapons seem to believe it’s fine for them to have these tools of destruction, but not for other nations, particularly those that have a different world view. Between them, these nine nations boast around 15,000 nuclear weapons; America and Russia own 93% of the total of which some 1,800 are reportedly kept on ‘high-alert status’, meaning they can be launched within minutes. Just one of these warheads, if detonated on a large city, could kill millions of people, with the effects persisting for decades.

Modern nuclear weapons are a great deal smaller and many times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which, far from ending the war, was completely unnecessary, and caused death and destruction on a scale hitherto unseen. As Admiral William D. Leahy, the highest-ranking member of the U.S. military at the time, [wrote](#) in his memoirs, the atomic bomb “was of no material assistance” against Japan, because “the Japanese were already defeated.” General Dwight D. Eisenhower echoed this view, [saying](#),

“Japan was at the moment seeking some way to surrender with minimum loss of ‘face’. It wasn’t necessary to hit them with that awful thing.” In dropping the bombs, Leahy said, the U.S. “had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children.”

False, Expensive Logic

The perverse attitude surrounding the possession of nuclear weapons was evident during the UK election campaign when Jeremy Corbyn – a lifelong peace activist and co-founder of the Stop the War Campaign – was repeatedly criticized by the right-wing media (including the BBC), Conservative politicians and manipulated members of the public, for refusing to say whether he would, or would not, launch a nuclear attack. He met such irrational hypotheticals with composure and suppressed irritation, saying that he would do all he could to avert conflict in the first place and that every effort should be made to rid the world of these ultimate weapons of mass destruction.

He is right and should be applauded for taking such a sane, common-sense approach, but the collective imagination has been poisoned to such a degree that advocating peace, and engaging in dialogue with one’s enemies is regarded as a sign of weakness, whereas sabre rattling and intransigence are hailed as displays of strength.

In addition to the risk of human and planetary death, the financial costs of producing, maintaining and developing these instruments of terror is staggering and diverts resources from areas of real need – health care, education, dealing with the environmental catastrophe, and eradicating hunger. Globally, ICAN [reports](#) that the “annual expenditure on nuclear weapons is estimated at USD 105 Billion – or \$12 million an hour”. Unsurprisingly America spends the largest amount by far; equivalent, in fact, to the other eight nuclear-armed nations combined. Between 2010 and 2018 the US will spend at least \$179 billion and probably more, while 50 million of its citizens live in grinding poverty.

In 2002 the World Bank forecast that “an annual investment of just US\$40–60 billion, or roughly half the amount currently spent on nuclear weapons, would be enough to meet the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals on poverty alleviation by the target date of 2015.” But the powerful and tooled up prefer to invest in an arsenal of total destruction. It makes no sense; it is another example of the insanity that surrounds us.

The irrational political choice of maintaining a nuclear arsenal is justified by duplicitous politicians as a means of establishing of peace; it is they claim, a necessary deterrent against aggression. This is not only dishonest, it is totally false logic: far from making the world a safer place, the very possession of nuclear weapons by any one country allows for and encourages their proliferation, thereby increasing the risk of them being used, or accidentally detonated.

If retaining nuclear weapons is not to deter would be invaders what is the reason for the massive financial investment and the dangers that are inherent in patrolling the Earth with these weapons of total destruction?

National image and bravado, the men with the biggest sticks ruling the roost, sitting around the UN Security Council (a remnant of the past that should be scrapped altogether) is, no doubt, one factor, but the primary reason why the nuclear powers consistently block moves

to rid the world of these killing machines lies in the world of business. The companies and financial investors involved in developing, manufacturing and maintaining the weapons as well as trading in related technology, parts or services do not want to see an end to the cash cow of nuclear indulgence.

In its detailed [report](#) *Don't Bank on the Bomb* ICAN relates that in America, Britain, India and France private companies are given contracts worth billions of USD to develop "new, more useable, and more destabilizing nuclear weapons." In Russia, China, Pakistan and North Korea this work is done by government agencies, where no doubt corruption is rife. Financial institutions, including high-street banks and insurance companies, are investing in companies involved in manufacturing and maintaining nuclear weapons; such organizations should reveal their investments and be boycotted by the public. I would go further and say that investment in firms connected with making these abominations should be illegal.

If peace is the collective objective, nuclear weapons must be regarded as a major obstacle and those connected in their construction, including investors, seen as collaborators in the creation of an atmosphere of mistrust and conflict, facilitators of fear and insecurity. The contemporary threats to national security come not from potential armed invasion, but from terrorism, cyber-security issues, poverty and the environmental catastrophe - which, unless drastic steps are taken, will result in an unprecedented worldwide refugee crisis. In the light of such threats, nuclear weapons as a so-called deterrent are irrelevant.

Peace will not be established by ever-larger arsenals of nuclear weapons [held](#) by more and more nations. It will be built on a firm foundation of trust, and as Pope Francis has said "on the protection of creation, and the participation of all in public life," as well as "access to education and health, on dialogue and solidarity." It is by negating the causes of conflict that peace will be allowed to flourish. Such causes are rooted in social injustice, community divisions, prejudice and discrimination, competition and inequality, and must be countered by demonstrations of tolerance, the cultivation of cooperation and expression of compassion.

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