

Power and the Nuclear Bomb: Conducting Foreign Policy with the Threat of Mass Murder

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#),
[Militarization and WMD](#)

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

"Some fell to the ground and their stomachs already expanded full, burst and organs fell out.

Others had skin falling off them and others still were carrying limbs. And one in particular was carrying their eyeballs in their hand."

The above is an account by a Hiroshima survivor talking about the fate of her schoolmates.

It was recently [read out in the British parliament](#) by Scottish National Party MP Chris Law during a debate about Britain's nuclear arsenal.



Hiroshima Street Scene August 1945



In response to a question from another Scottish National Party MP, George Kereven, British PM Theresa May said without hesitation that, if necessary, she would authorise the use of a nuclear weapon that would kill hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children.

Previous PMs have been unwilling to give a direct answer to such a question.

But let's be clear: a single modern nuclear weapon would most likely end up killing many millions, whether immediately or slowly, and is designed to be much more devastating than those dropped by the US on Japan.

On the other hand, opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has stated that he would not make a decision that would take the lives of millions. He said, "I do not believe the threat of mass murder is a legitimate way to go about international relations."

It says much about the type of society we have when someone like Corbyn or Green Party MP Caroline Lucas is attacked by the mainstream and depicted as some kind of harebrained extremist who places 'the nation' in danger because they do not want Britain to renew its submarine-based [Trident](#) nuclear missile system (at the cost of at least £100 billion in 'cash-strapped' austerity Britain).

Chiming in with emotive gutter tactics, May suggested that those wishing to scrap Britain's nuclear weapons are siding with the nation's 'enemies'.

Theresa May reading from the script

Politicians like May are reading from a script devised by the [elite interests](#). Members of this elite comprise the extremely wealthy of the world who set the globalisation and war agendas at the G8, G20, NATO, the World Bank, and the WTO. They are from the highest levels of finance capital and transnational corporations. This transnational capitalist class,

dictate global economic policies and decide on who lives and who dies and which wars are fought and inflicted on which people.

The mainstream narrative tends to depict these individuals as 'wealth creators'. In reality, however, these 'high flyers' have stolen ordinary people's wealth, stashed it away in tax havens, bankrupted economies and have imposed a form of globalisation that results in devastating destruction and war for those who attempt to remain independent from them, or structurally adjusted violence via privatisation and economic neo-liberalism for millions in countries that have acquiesced.

While ordinary folk across the world have been subjected to policies that have resulted in oppression, poverty and conflict, this is all passed off by politicians and the mainstream media as the way things must be.

The agritech sector poisons our food and agriculture. Madeline Albright tries to say it was worth it to have killed half a million kids in Iraq to secure energy resources for rich corporations and extend the wider geopolitical goals of 'corporate America'. The welfare state is dismantled and austerity is imposed on millions. The rich increase their already enormous wealth. Powerful corporations corrupt government machinery and colonise every aspect of life for profit. Environmental destruction and ecological devastation continue apace.

And nuclear weapons hang over humanity like the sword of Damocles – not to protect the masses from the wicked bogeyman, but to protect the power and wealth of a US-led capitalist elite (that institutes all of the above) from competing elites in other countries or to bully, cajole and coerce with the aim of expanding influence.

The public is supposed to back this status quo. And ordinary young men (and women) are supposed to sign up to fight 'their' wars. In reality, to fight for what? Austerity, powerlessness, imperialism, propping up the US dollar and a moribund system. For whom? Monsanto, Occidental Petroleum, Soros, Murdoch, Rothschild, BP, JP Morgan, Boeing and the rest of the elite and their corporations whose policies are devised in think tanks and handed to politicians to sell to a largely ignorant public.

For those who are aware of the ruthlessness of imperialist intent and the death and destruction it brings, Theresa May's comments may come as no surprise at all.

But what about the wider population? Those who swallow the lie about some 'war on terror' or Washington as the world's policeman, protecting life and liberty. Those who believe the sanctimonious drivel pumped into their heads by Hollywood, the BBC and other mainstream media about the US-led West being a civilising force for good in a barbaric world.

What civilised 'values' is May basing her threat of mass murder on when she talks about unleashing a nuclear weapon? The media and much of the public seem to shrug their shoulders and accept that nuclear weapons are essential and the mass murder of sections of humanity is perfectly acceptable in the face of some fabricated, whipped-up paranoia about 'Russian aggression' (or Chinese, Iranian or North Korean – take your pick).

Many believe nuclear weapons are a necessary evil and fall into line with hegemonic thinking about humanity being inherently conflictual, competitive and war-like. Such tendencies do of course exist, but they do not exist in a vacuum. They are fuelled by

capitalism and imperialism and played upon by politicians, the media and elite interests who seek to scare the population into accepting a 'necessary' status quo.

Co-operation and equality are as much a part of any arbitrary aspect of 'human nature' as any other defined characteristic. These values are, however, sidelined by a system of capitalism that is inherently conflict-ridden and entangled in its own contradictions and which fuels wealth accumulation for the few, exploitation (of labour, peoples and the environment), war and a zero-sum class-based system of power.

Much of humanity has been convinced to accept the potential for instant nuclear Armageddon hanging over its collective head as a given, as a 'deterrent'. However, the reality is that these weapons exist to protect elite, imperialist interests or to pressure others to cave in to their demands. If the 20th century has shown us anything, it is these interests are adept at gathering the masses under notions of the flag, 'the bomb' and king/god/goodness (or whatever) and country to justify their slaughter.

Theresa May is on cue with her finger-pointing 'enemy of the state' rhetoric concerning opposition to nuclear weaponry.

Now and then, though, the reality of a nuclear armed world comes to the fore, as May's response demonstrates. But to prevent us all shuddering with the fear of the threat of instant nuclear destruction on a daily basis, it's a case of don't worry, be happy, forget about it and watch TV. It was the late academic Rick Roderick who highlighted that modern society trivialises issues that are of ultimate importance: they eventually become banal or 'matter of fact' to the population.

People are spun the notion that nuclear-backed militarism and neoliberalism and its structural violence are necessary for securing peace, defeating terror, creating prosperity or promoting 'growth'. The ultimate banality is to accept this pack of lies and to believe there is no alternative, to acquiesce or just switch off to it all.

There is an alternative

Instead of acquiescing and accepting it as 'normal' when someone like May advocates mass murder in the name of peace or she and others accuse those who refuse to comply as being a danger to the nation, it is time to move beyond rhetoric and for ordinary people to take responsibility and act.

Writing on the Countercurrents website, [Robert J Burrowes](#) says this about responsibility:

"Many people evade responsibility, of course, simply by believing and acting as if someone else, perhaps even 'the government', is 'properly' responsible. Undoubtedly, however, the most widespread ways of evading responsibility are to deny any responsibility for military violence while paying the taxes to finance it, denying any responsibility for adverse environmental and climate impacts while making no effort to reduce consumption, denying any responsibility for the exploitation of other people while buying the cheap products produced by their exploited (and sometimes slave) labour, denying any responsibility for the exploitation of animals despite eating and/or otherwise consuming a range of animal products, and denying any part in inflicting violence, especially on children, without understanding the many forms this violence can take."

Burrowes concludes by saying that ultimately, we evade responsibility by ignoring the existence of a problem.

The 'problem' humanity faces goes beyond the threat of nuclear war.

The 'problem' encompasses not only ongoing militarism, but the structural violence of neoliberal capitalism, aided and abetted by the World Bank, IMF, WTO and trade deals such as NAFTA or the proposed TTIP. It's a type of violence that is steady, lingering and a daily fact of life under globalised capitalism.

Of course, not everything can or should be laid at the door of capitalism. Human suffering, misery and conflict have been a feature throughout history and have taken place under various economic and political systems. Indeed, in his various articles, Burrowes goes deep into the psychology and causes of violence.

Burrowes is correct to argue that we should take responsibility and act because there is potentially a different path for humanity. In 1990, the late British MP Tony Benn gave a speech in parliament that indicated the kind of values that such a route might look like.

Benn spoke about having been on a crowded train, where people had been tapping away on calculators and not interacting or making eye contact with one another. It represented what Britain had become under Thatcherism: excessively individualistic, materialistic, narcissistic and atomised.

The train broke down. As time went by, people began to talk with one another, offer snacks and share stories. Benn said it wasn't too long before that train had been turned into a socialist train of self-help, communality and comradeship. Despite the damaging policies and ideology of Thatcherism, these features had survived her tenure, were deeply embedded and never too far from the surface.

For Tony Benn, what had been witnessed aboard that train was an aspect of 'human nature' that is too often suppressed, devalued and, when used as a basis for political change, regarded as a threat to ruling interests. It is an aspect that draws on notions of unity, solidarity, common purpose, self-help and finds its ultimate expression in the vibrancy of community, the collective ownership of productive resources and co-operation. The type of values far removed from the destructive, divisive ones of imperialism and capitalism, which May and her backers protect and promote.

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