

Creating a World Without Nuclear Weapons

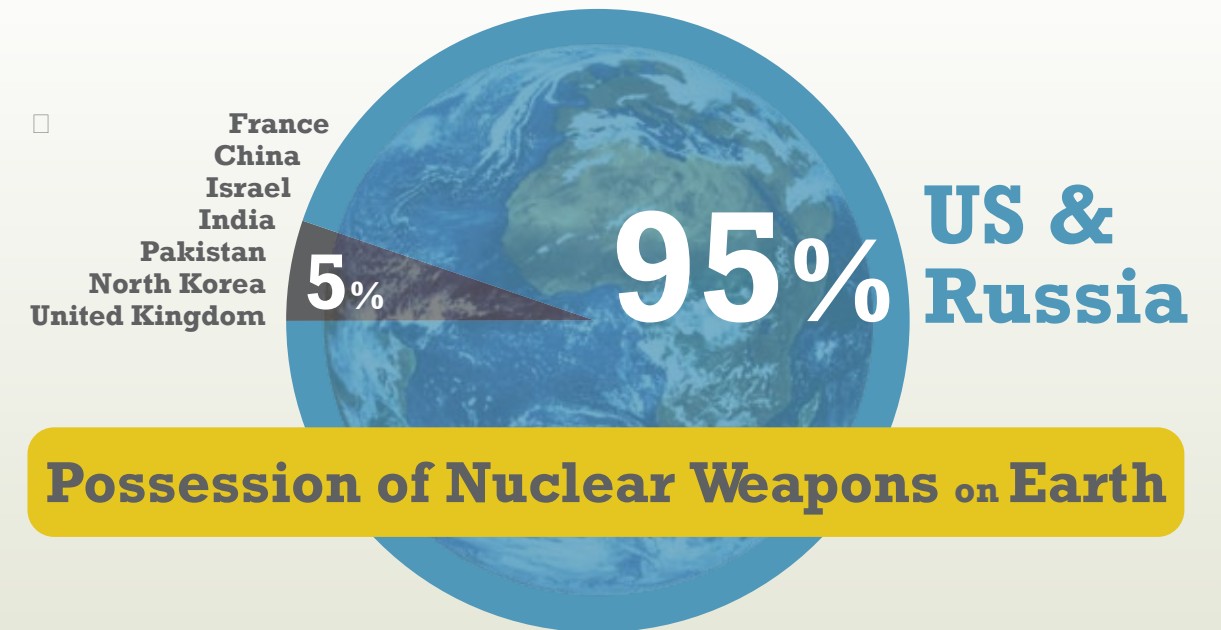
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We are in the seventh decade of the Nuclear Age. With the capacity to destroy civilization and end life on the planet, more than 20,000 nuclear weapons remain in the arsenals of nine nuclear weapon states.

The United States and Russia head the list of countries with nuclear weapons, and together have more than 95 percent of the total on the planet. These two countries still maintain over 2,000 nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert, ready to be fired within moments, raising concerns for accidental launches. The UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea hold the remaining 5 percent of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons endanger the future of our species along with all other forms of life. The only safe and stable number of nuclear weapons on the planet is zero. Achieving zero will require political will, which in turn will require strong public support. It will also require an effective means to verify honesty. As Ronald Reagan, a nuclear abolitionist, said, "Trust, but verify."

Every year, on the anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing there are memorials like this one seen at the A-Bomb Dome, the site of the bombing. They serve as a remembrance of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and a reminder of what these very powerful weapons can do.



The Limits of Deterrence

Weapons of mass annihilation have been used throughout the Nuclear Age to threaten retaliation. But the threat of retaliation, known as deterrence, is not defense. Nuclear deterrence is meaningless when it comes to terrorist groups, which, without territory, cannot be subject to retaliation. No matter how powerful a country's nuclear arsenal, it cannot deter a determined extremist group in possession of a nuclear weapon.

For deterrence to work, the country's leaders must believe in the intent, as well as the opponent's capacity, to retaliate. Without that belief, such a threat may be doubted or dismissed, rendering the deterrence effort useless. Deterrence also relies upon rationality, and history proves that all political leaders do not act rationally at all times.

The more countries that have nuclear weapons, the greater the danger that these weapons will be used by accident, miscalculation or design.

Weapons of the Weak

Nuclear weapons may provide *perceived* security for a weaker country in relation to a stronger one. Iraq, Iran and North Korea were branded as an "axis of evil" in the early days of the Bush administration. The US then proceeded to attack Iraq on the false charge that it had a nuclear weapons program, overthrow its leadership and occupy the country. With North Korea, a country suspected of having a small arsenal of nuclear weapons, the US was much more cautious and engaged in negotiations. This sent the message to Iran that they would be more secure with a nuclear arsenal, which is surely not the message that the US wishes to send to the world.

Thought of as "military equalizers," nuclear weapons may make a country think twice about attacking. But this is a dangerous game of Russian roulette. And the more countries that have nuclear weapons, the greater the danger that these weapons will be used by accident, miscalculation or design.

Today's nuclear weapons, many times more powerful than those that obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have the capacity to destroy cities, countries, civilization, the human species and most life on our planet. As Mikhail Gorbachev has said, "It is my firm belief that

TSAR BOMBA (USSR)
50,000 Kilotons of TNT
(50 million tons)

Castle Bravo (USA)
15,000 Kilotons of TNT
(15 million tons)

Ivy Mike (USA)
10,400 Kilotons of TNT
(10.4 million tons)

Nagasaki: Fat Man
20-22 Kilotons of TNT
(20-22,000 tons)

Hiroshima: Little Boy
12-15 Kilotons of TNT
(12-15,000 tons)

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The new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) re-establishes an inspection regime and could be a foundation for deeper reductions later.

the infinite and uncontrollable fury of nuclear weapons should never be held in the hands of any mere mortal ever again, for any reason." Nuclear weapons could cause irreversible damage, not only to humanity and to the human future, but also to all life.

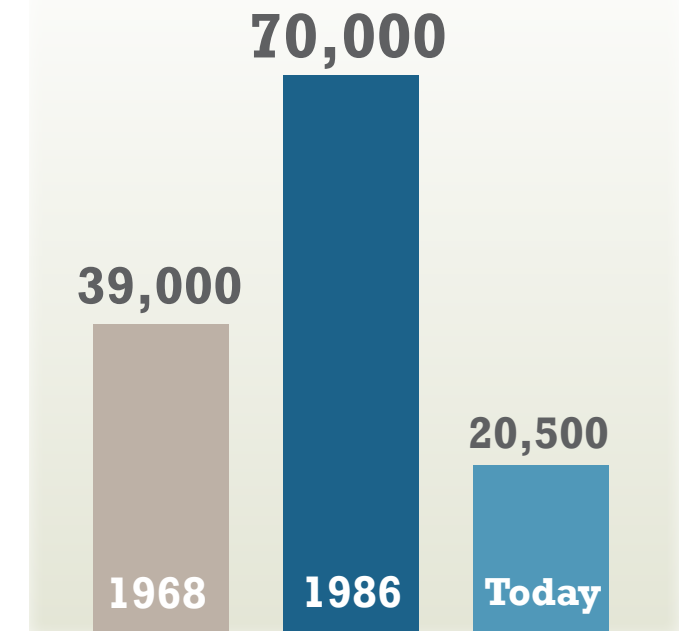
The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. The NPT requires the nuclear weapon states that are parties to the treaty—the US, Russia (formerly Soviet Union), UK, France and China—to engage in good-faith negotiations for nuclear disarmament in return for other countries agreeing not to acquire nuclear weapons. Obviously, this agreement has not been kept. The number of nuclear weapons in the world grew from some 39,000 in 1968 to a high of over 70,000 in 1986, before coming down to some 20,000 today, still enough to destroy civilization many times over.

Many world leaders believe that the United States has been the principal obstacle to nuclear disarmament. Under the leadership of President Obama, the United States has been playing a more constructive role and

negotiated a new Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (New START) with Russia. Under the treaty, which entered into force on February 5, 2011, each side must reduce the number of its deployed strategic warheads to 1,550 and the number of its deployed delivery vehicles to 700 by the year 2017. In actuality, due to counting rules and past reductions, neither side would have to eliminate large numbers of weapons to meet the new limits. But the treaty re-establishes a lapsed inspection regime and could be a foundation for deeper reductions later.¹

Number of Nuclear Weapons in the World



President Barack Obama attends a New START meeting hosted by Vice President Joe Biden in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Nov. 18, 2010.



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Nuclear weapons are immoral weapons.... They are the enemy of humanity and the future, and we must rise up and make our voices heard for the total elimination of these weapons.

Although it's not a pledge to zero, it is a small step in the right direction. However, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty refers to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy as an "inalienable right." This moves the world in the wrong direction in terms of nuclear proliferation and nuclear waste. Nuclear energy provides a pretext for the creation of fissile materials for nuclear weapons through uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing technologies. Once commerce is established in such bomb materials, the prospects of nuclear proliferation, even to terrorists, increase dramatically. In addition, there is still no good answer to the problem of nuclear waste, which will remain dangerous to human health and the environment for many times longer than human civilization has existed.

Changing Our Thinking

We need to shift our thinking if we are to confront the serious dangers to the human future posed by nuclear weapons. As Albert Einstein warned early in the Nuclear Age, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." The needed changes in thinking will require a major shift in our orientation toward nuclear weapons, in our willingness to imagine possible alternative futures and in our empathy for others.

Nuclear weapons are immoral weapons; they are not just another, albeit more powerful, weapon of war. They

are the enemy of humanity and the future, and we must rise up and make our voices heard for the total elimination of these weapons. Countries with nuclear weapons must stop basing their security on the threat to annihilate vast numbers of innocent people.

The Need for Greater US Leadership

The United States, as the world's most powerful country, must lead in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. In his speech in Prague on April 5, 2009, President Obama said, "...as a nuclear power—as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon—the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it."

To get to zero nuclear weapons in this lifetime, the leaders of the world's nations, particularly the leaders of nuclear weapon states, need to agree upon the phased elimination of all nuclear weapons, with provisions for effective verification and enforcement.

Each generation has a responsibility to pass the world on intact to the next generation. Those of us alive today are challenged as never before to accomplish this. Technological achievement does not necessarily make us stronger. It may simply make us more vulnerable, and our old ways of thinking may seal our fate. The alternative to waiting for another nuclear catastrophe to



On the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, rallies and demonstrations around the world encouraged the ban of nuclear weapons and a peaceful way forward together.

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occur is to join with others who are committed to assuring a human future, and act to rid the world of this most menacing of all human inventions. It is the power of ordinary people working in concert that has the potential to move political leaders to effective action. It is this power that must be mobilized on behalf of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

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David Krieger is a founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (www.wagingpeace.org) and has served as its president since 1982. He is a leader in the global effort to abolish nuclear weapons. Among the books he has written or edited are Nuclear Weapons and the World Court (with Ved Nanda), At the Nuclear Precipice: Catastrophe or Transformation? (with Richard Falk) and The Challenge of Abolishing Nuclear Weapons.



Forty-seven heads of state gathered for the Nuclear Security Summit to discuss a plan for locking down nuclear materials.

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