

Christian Peacemaking: Eliminating the Nuclear Scandal
The Challenge of Getting to Zero
Part II



(Swords into plowshares)

Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice. The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law. But since the concrete demands of this common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly.

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965, #78

On January 4, 2007, former Secretary of State George Schultz, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former Senator Sam Nunn published an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal entitled, *A World Free of Nuclear Weapons*. This was a startling op-ed piece not because of the desire to eliminate all nuclear weapons from the face of the earth, but rather, because it was penned by former *Cold Warriors* who were once responsible for the building of nuclear weapons, and strategy planning for the use of U.S. nuclear weapons. The major thesis of the op-ed piece is that the Cold War is over and the risks associated with the indefinite possession and proliferation of nuclear weapons present complex dangers that may lead to first use of nuclear weapons in war since 1945, unless something is done to dismantle and ban such weapons.

These four men are of the mind that the spread of nuclear weapons, even if it is gradual, to other nations raise the level of complexity and danger in managing possible international or regional conflicts that could lead to the launching nuclear weapons and all the destruction and unpredictability of what comes next.

*Nuclear weapons have not been the best thing since sliced bread. They have been a mixed blessing and a dangerous deterrent. The Cold War witnessed many close calls; new nuclear states will be even more prone to deterrence failures.*¹

Such a concern has been raised by a number of policymakers, political analysts, and a number of former chairs of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, statesmen, and religious groups. But one asks, why such a turn of events? One would think with the ending of the Cold War that nuclear weapons would simply vanish because of they are more a liability than an asset to major powers. But as noted in the previous article in this series there are reasons nations retain these weapons.

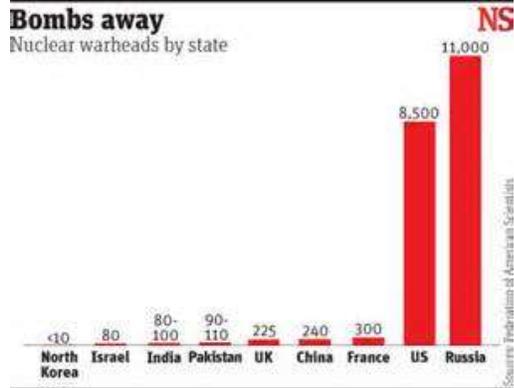


Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty Signing
Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, 1988

Those nations that possess nuclear weapons continue to maintain their nuclear stockpiles. However, the United States and Russia have reduce their nuclear force levels from the high of 1984 levels of 70,000 aggregate to 25% of those numbers, with the prospect for deeper cuts. Super, so why the concern? Well, every nuclear power except the United States is engaged in modernizing their nuclear weapons. These nations include: Russia, China, U.K., France, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. What this points to is not the need for the United States to do the same, its weapons are robust enough, but rather, that nuclear weapons will not simply go away since the Cold War is long over. The present situation suggests quite the contrary, it is clear that nuclear weapons are becoming more deeply embedded in the foreign policy plans of these nations. What's more, nuclear weapons have spread to hotly contested regions of the world that could spark the very real possibility of region nuclear wars, such as might be the case between India and Pakistan.

*The major powers that have the bomb haven't given it up. Indeed, they're modernizing their nuclear arsenals. India, a rising major power, a democracy even, has gone out of its way to get the bomb. Secondary powers are trying to get it. If the bomb is so terrible and so antiquated, then all of these countries must be wrong. But they certainly don't think they're wrong.*²

It is because of such growing concern many nations hold onto their weapons. They are concerned that since other nations have them they dare not be without them. Also, it gives such nations deterrent power that may prevent superpower nations from using or threatening to use military force against them for fear of nuclear retaliation. And of course, if all nations were to disarm these weapons there is the fear that one nation may *break out* of any treaties to disarm and start arming in secret.



Major Concerns About Nuclear Weapons and War and Peace



Nuclear Weapons, and the questions of what to do with them and about them, have been with us since 1945. During the *First Nuclear Age*, 1945-1991, the major powers had to feel their way through the dangerous waters of the build-up of these weapons and the ideological struggle between the United States/NATO alliance and the Soviet Union/Warsaw Pact. There were a number of near misses that could have resulted in nuclear war in some form or another; the most dangerous was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.³

Mr. President, I appeal to you to weigh well what the aggressive, piratical actions, which you have declared the USA intends to carry out in international waters, would lead to. You yourself know that any sensible man simply cannot agree with this, cannot recognize your right to such actions.

If you did this as the first step towards the unleashing of war, well then, it is evident that nothing else is left to us but to accept this challenge of yours. If, however, you have not lost your self-control and sensibly conceive what this might lead to, then, Mr. President, we and you ought not to pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war, because the more the two of us pull, the tighter this knot will be tied. And a moment may come when that knot will be tied so tight that even he who ties it will not have the strength to untie it, and then it will be necessary to cut that knot. And what that would mean is not for me to explain to you, because you yourself understand perfectly of what terrible forces our countries dispose.

Consequently, if there is no intention to tighten the knot and thereby to doom the world to the catastrophe of thermonuclear war, then let us not only relax the forces pulling on the ends of the rope, let us take measures to untie the knot. We are ready for this.

The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis

However, with the fall of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991, many felt that the danger had passed forever. Today, with the spread or proliferation of nuclear weapons to Israel, Pakistan, India, North Korea, and more than likely Iran, the political calculus is configured in an ominous direction. These nations are enmeshed in the most volatile regions in the world including the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia. All of these nations border nations that they have fought wars with in the 20th century, and there remain many unresolved political issues in these regions. One of the most troubling concerns of the international community of nations is the lack of sophisticated *command, control, communications and information* systems(C3I) of emerging nuclear nations. It is important that nuclear nations have firm control over their nuclear weapons, especially in the midst of a crisis situation. This helps to ensure what is known as *crisis stability*.

The term *crisis stability* refers to assurance by nuclear powers that an adversary will not and is not preparing to launch their nuclear weapons during a crisis.⁴ This is based on a number of factors, such as, the nuclear weapons on either side are not on alert, even if used they could not destroy enough of the adversary's weapons to eliminate their deterrent force, and both sides understand that they shared a similar cost-benefit calculus about the employment of nuclear weapons in war. However, if a nation perceives, especially in a crisis situation, that the other nation may have the capability for a devastating first strike on their nuclear weapons, and fear loss of control, than we have a situation of *crisis instability* that can be very dangerous. That is a real concern for today's world where newer nuclear nations that do not have the elaborate and reliable C3I networks in place may find themselves acting with incorrect or misinterpreted information; which in a nuclear confrontation is very dangerous.



The elimination of nuclear weapons by the world community faces other challenges as well. We know that any system devised by human beings is liable to be imperfect and breakdown. We also know that the more complex a system the more difficult it is to trace the problems to their source. Also, we know that there are interactions in complex systems that we are unaware of and may lead to outcomes that we do not desire. This is noted by the political scientist, Robert Jervis of Columbia University:

*...systems often display nonlinear relationships, outcomes cannot be understood by adding together their units and their relationships, and many of the results of actions are unintended.*⁵

This requires that working for a world free of nuclear weapons understand that failure to work on this issue could lead to interactions among variables we cannot see that could propel the world into an unforeseen and unwanted nuclear crisis.

It is in the light of these developments, and what appears to be the growing and modernization of nuclear arsenals of these second tier nuclear nations, that the call for the elimination of nuclear weapons by these former Cold Warriors was issued. What can people of faith do in light of these new developments? That will be discussed in the final article of this series.

Notes

1 Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: Enduring Debate, Third Edition* (New York; W.W. Norton, 2013), p. 226. This debate between two political scientists about the spread of nuclear weapons is important and engaging. This is an important debate for citizens and policymakers to avail themselves of for forming opinion on this issue.

2 Paul Bracken, *The Second Nuclear Age; Strategy, Danger, and the New Power Politics* (New York: Times Books, 2012), pp.32-33.

3 *ibid*; also, John Newhouse, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1989).

4 Please reference, Kurt Gottfried and Bruce G. Blair, *Crisis Stability and Nuclear War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) and Bruce G. Blair, *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1993).

5 Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 6

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