The arguments against nuclear weapons
(and the arguments for)

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There are no weapons that can kill hundreds of millions of people in an hour except nuclear weapons. There is no true security or peace while these weapons exist. We must be free of them to protect ourselves and future generations. This booklet marshals the main arguments against their existence. If a sufficient number of citizens insist that those in power legislate for their abolition and create the organisations required to enforce a ban, then it will happen.
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“Here then is the problem which we present to you. Stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?”

Russell-Einstein Manifesto.

IN 1955 Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Joseph Rotblat and eight others signed a manifesto warning of the dire consequences of nuclear war. This statement, the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, was Einstein's final public act. He died shortly after signing it.

Fifty two years ago they wrote in the Manifesto ‘We have to learn to think in a new way. We have to learn to ask ourselves, not what steps can be taken to give military victory to whatever group we prefer, for there no longer are such steps; the question we have to ask ourselves is: what steps can be taken to prevent a military contest of which the issue must be disastrous to all parties.’

The danger is far more dire now than it was then. We Have NOT learned to think in a new way.

John F. Kennedy, said,

“The world was not meant to be a prison in which man awaits his execution.”

Rajiv Gandhi, addressing the U.N. General Assembly on June 9, 1988, said:

"Nuclear war will not mean the death of a hundred million people. Or even a thousand million. It will mean the extinction of four thousand million: the end of life as we know it on our planet earth. We come to the United Nations to seek your support. We seek your support to put a stop to this madness."
The Arguments Against Nuclear Weapons

Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness.
- John F. Kennedy

There are still around 26,000 nuclear warheads in existence. These are enough to incinerate the entire population of the planet five times over.
At least around 2,600 of these weapons are on high alert. This means that they can be launched within about 45 minutes or less of the warning of an attack (the President or Prime minister will have 10 to 15 minutes to make a decision on launch after the Chiefs of Staff have given the opinion that we are under attack. The Chiefs of Staff have 10 to 15 minutes to decide if we are really under attack after receipt of electronic information that we are). The existence of nuclear weapons constitutes a continuous and totally unnecessary threat to the population of our planet making both true peace and peace of mind impossible.

The people of the world do not want these weapons. Of the 192 states of the United Nations only 8 have built and deploy nuclear weapons*. The remaining 184 states are put at risk by the 8 who have them. Of the eight states that have developed these weapons, in no case has the populations of those states been asked if they want them.
* The case of North Korea is disputed

By tolerating the existence of nuclear weapons, you, me and the rest of the world’s population can be putting our very continued existence in the hands of people like President Bush and Vice President Cheney. At one stage in 1995, whilst President of Russia, the drunkard Boris Yeltsin had his finger hovering over the nuclear button because their electronic warning system
was mistakenly indicating a nuclear attack. President Johnson said of Senator Goldwater, who had competed for the presidential nomination in the primaries, “I just shudder to think what would happen if Goldwater won it. He's a man that's had two nervous breakdowns. He's not a stable fellow at all."

As long as nuclear weapons exist we are at risk of incompetents having the power to destroy us. An accidental launch of nuclear weapons can precipitate a nuclear war; nuclear accidents can happen at any time; politicians, generals or dictators could make calamitous misjudgement leading to nuclear war. There are many other arguments against the existence of these weapons, as we shall see, including environmental, financial, legal and moral ones.

*We ignored the threats from the banking system until the first banks started to collapse. Then we took emergency action. We are behaving in the same way with the unsustainable and immeasurably more dangerous nuclear weapons system. If we wait till the first nuclear weapons are launched no emergency action will help the millions of dead and dying.*

Now let us look more closely at why we must rid the world of this curse. In doing so it should be borne in mind that this is an advocacy for all nuclear states to abolish their nuclear weapons and for a reliable system of monitoring and enforcing a world-wide ban.

**Case Against Nuclear Weapons – Human Suffering**

**Nuclear Weapons are insanely destructive and uniquely dangerous.** These are weapons for the indiscriminate slaughter of huge numbers of people. The weapons deployed on British Trident submarines are 100 kiloton warheads. They each have more than six times the destructive power of the Hiroshima bomb. One submarine carries 16 Trident missiles and each missile carries at least three warheads. Each Trident submarine could kill over forty million people.

Nuclear Weapons are weapons of mass destruction. Chemical and biological weapons are also weapons of mass destruction and so it is illegal for anyone to manufacture, or deploy them, let alone threaten their use. Nuclear
weapons, which are much more dangerous and destructive, should be made illegal for the same reasons.

**Nuclear Weapons cause indescribable suffering**

When a nuclear weapon explodes on a city the lucky ones at or near the epicentre of the nuclear explosion just cease to exist or become a stain on a concrete slab, a shadow on a wall. Others, further away, survive for a few hours, lethally irradiated and covered in third degree burns. Yet others survive for days with their skin peeled off and their eyes melted, in agony and suffering from unbearable thirst. After a nuclear war there will be no pain relief or treatment of injuries for those still alive. The nuclear arsenals on high alert are primed to launch hundreds, even thousand of nuclear warheads instantaneously. Countries would be wiped off the map. There would be no place that could send help.

The suffering caused by nuclear explosions is not confined to those alive today. It would extent into the far future with deformed births and cancers. Some radioactive materials created by the explosions and let loose in the ecosphere will be virulent for thousands of years. As Charles Perrow, (a leading pioneer of risk assessment) says with nuclear weapons we have an entirely new system with ‘catastrophic potential’ for innocent bystanders and future generations, and there are few boundaries to this catastrophe ‘in space or in future time’.

**Nuclear Weapons emit radioactive clouds; no one is safe**

""Every time you produce radiation, you produce something that has a certain half-life, in some cases for billions of years. I think the human race is going to wreck itself, and it’s important that we get control of this horrible force and try to eliminate it."" Admiral Rickover (Inventor of N. Submarine)

The radioactive clouds emitted can contaminate, and condemn to death, people hundreds and even thousands of miles from the explosion. Deadly radioactive dust can be carried across and between continents so no one can be sure of escaping a cancerous death.
Nuclear Weapons are out of scale with the human condition
These weapons are so powerful that they are not usable especially in the conditions which prevail today. They have no battlefield utility. They are useless in civil wars or insurgencies against governments. They are useless when a large country wants to bully or subjugate a smaller one because their employment in such circumstances would inspire world wide condemnation, and there are many other weapons whereby countries can defend themselves. They are useless in conflicts between nuclear states because their use in those circumstances would mean the end of both the protagonists.

Nuclear weapons have no place in the fight against terrorists. Nuclear weapons are no use against global warming, shortage of fresh water, famine, overpopulation and pandemics such as AIDS or Asian flu. Nuclear weapons are no use in tackling international organised crime, or trafficking in drugs, people or arms. Not only are they of no use but they deflect wealth, research facilities, and human effort and ingenuity away from those areas in which they are most needed.

Case Against Nuclear Weapons – Use

If Nuclear Weapons are available they will be used

‘If there is a rifle hanging on the wall in the first act, in the third act the rifle will be fired’. Anton Chekhov.

As soon as we had nuclear weapons in World War II we used them; we dropped them on Japan; and on not one but two cities.

The existence of nuclear weapons means that they will eventually be used again. That is the way we humans behave. The only way to ensure that they will not be used is to dispose of them all.

Killing another human being is more difficult when looking him in the eye. With nuclear weapons the carnage is little more than the press of a button away. And the slaughter can take place thousands of miles from the place where the button is pressed, perhaps by a person who has spent a large part of his life playing war-games or someone who has dehumanised himself working on the statistics of mega-deaths.
A group of leading scientists and Nobel Laureates set up an organisation which has been focused on achieving the abolition of weapons of mass destruction. They hold an annual ‘Pugwash’ conference and in July 2007 they stated that

‘As long as nuclear weapons exist, they will one day be used. This sober, inescapable truth continues to haunt the international community. Every minute of every day, more than 26,000 nuclear weapons - many thousands of them on hair-trigger alert - are poised to bring monumental destruction if they are ever used. Nuclear weapons have spread to more countries, and the international non-proliferation regime is perilously close to collapse. Poorly guarded stockpiles of highly enriched uranium and plutonium around the world could fall into the hands of terrorists who would think nothing of exploding a nuclear device in a major city.’ [emphasis added]

www.pugwash.org/publications/nl/nlv44n1/july2007

If nuclear weapons are available there will always be those who will advocate or threaten their use.1

Exact balance and impeccable judgement is required at all times
The stakes are so high with nuclear stand-offs that nothing must ever go seriously wrong with the deployment system, in any nuclear weapons country, at any time, at any level of organisation.

Exact balance – During the Cold War it was thought that for deterrence to work there should be a balance of forces between the two sides. This was not going to happen. The MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) deterrent strategy means each side does not trust the other. Each is going to try to cheat since each will assume that the other will.2
The Assured Destruction strategy is grossly out of balance. America could destroy Russia and China. So both are building up their arsenals. And that is how arms races start.
(A balance of forces is not considered necessary by the lesser nuclear powers like Britain and France who seemingly take the view that so long as a huge population of civilians can be destroyed after an attack this is sufficient deterrent).
Impeccable judgement - People make mistakes. Humans are fallible. It could only take one serious misjudgement by those with their finger on the nuclear button to bring disaster on the world. If a world with nuclear weapons were to be a safe world; if it were to work even in theory we would have to have sane, well-balanced leaders heading all nuclear powers at all times and they would have to have impeccable judgement at all times; an impossible condition.\(^3\)

Robert McNamara, U.S. Secretary of Defence during the Vietnam War, said ‘The indefinite combination of nuclear weapons and human fallibility will lead to a nuclear exchange.’

While nuclear weapons exist there will always be the danger that one nuclear power will launch a nuclear attack on another nuclear power because they think that ‘the other’ is going to attack them.

Because of the monstrous nature of nuclear weapons there is much confusion among the leaders of nuclear states as to ‘if’, ‘when’ and ‘how’ they would be used. This raises the questions of what qualities are required of individuals who wield this power of life and death over hundreds of millions of people and the future of the human race. Are any individuals fit to yield such power? If it is possible that such persons exist, how is it possible to determine who they are? And if they exist and if it was feasible to determine who they are, how would we ensure that these were the people who were elected to the top positions with God-like powers?

**The existence of nuclear weapons can lead to a pre-emptive strike**

If one nuclear state builds a significantly larger nuclear arsenal than another then the former can have a ‘first strike capability’ (see also Note 2). A ‘first-strike capability’ introduces the possibility of a ‘pre-emptive strike’. Why not hit them now before they catch up? If ‘the other’ does not have nuclear weapons then why not hit them now to prevent them getting them? This is the waging of nuclear war to prevent nuclear war. The United States has considered this as an available option in its attempt to prevent Iran developing nuclear weapons.\(^4\)

**High Alert and Nuclear War**

The concept of MAD deterrence is dependent on immediate retaliation in the event of an attack. Consequently large numbers of American and Russian
nuclear weapons are kept in a state of high alert (sometimes figuratively referred to as hair-trigger alert). It has been estimated that each of them have about 1,300 warheads retained in this state ready to launch at the press of a button.

This greatly increases the chance of nuclear war by accident or misjudgement. Yet it is considered an integral part of the MAD deterrent system.

Steven Starr (a leading expert in these matters) says *With high-alert nuclear forces a nuclear war can be ordered, launched and completed in less than one hour.*

The danger is compounded by the fact that, to a significant degree, human decision-making is kept out of the loop. We become reliant on computers and electronic early warning systems.

Chiefs of Staff and world leaders will have minutes to decide to trigger a counter-attack if the electronic systems tell them that there has been a launch against them.

Is it sane and reasonable to put individuals in such a position? Are we aware of the risks we are being forced to take? Do we feel secure with this arrangement?

Taking nuclear weapons off “hair-trigger alert” has been repeatedly called for by the European Parliament and the UN General Assembly.

The extreme dangers of the deterrent standoff have been recognised for some time.

Taking weapons off hair-trigger alert was a key recommendation of the Canberra Commission in 1996 and the Atlanta Consultation chaired by President Carter in January 2005. This was seen by both assemblies as the first step in getting rid of nuclear weapons entirely as required by article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

**Case Against Nuclear Weapons – Peace and Security**

**Nuclear Weapons do not keep the peace**

Peace is much more than the absence of war. A country is at peace when its citizens can enjoy security and peace of mind. A nuclear standoff, our permanent condition, is not peace; it is being in a state of continuous anxiety. Contrary to keeping the peace the existence of nuclear weapons intensifies mistrust because of their demonic effects. It is difficult not to distrust
someone who insists on retaining the capacity to create hell on earth. Only a suspicion (mistaken as it turned out) of the possession of nuclear weapons was a primary cause of the terrible war in Iraq. The issue of nuclear weapons greatly heightens the tensions and mistrust between the West and Iran. The possession of nuclear weapons by Israel greatly lessens the chances of achieving a stable and lasting peace in the Middle East. The possession of these weapons by India and Pakistan makes the disagreements between these countries orders of magnitude more dangerous.

Nuclear Weapons destroy our sense of security
The leaders of the nuclear powers tell us we need to have a stockpile of nuclear weapons in order to feel secure. In fact, it does the exact opposite. The existence of nuclear weapons condemns the population of the earth to fear and insecurity. The more proliferation continues, the more insecure we will all become.

The threat of accidental nuclear war

The explosion of a nuclear device by accident – mechanical or human – could be a disaster for its allies, and for its enemies. If one of these devices accidentally exploded, I would hope that both sides had sufficient means of verification and control to prevent the accident from triggering a nuclear exchange. But we cannot be certain that this would be the case.

(John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defence, December 1962)

It has never been possible to devise a complex system which was not vulnerable to accidents, mistakes or foul-ups. It never will be. This is part of the human condition. We are not infallible and cannot make ourselves so. Risk assessment expert Charles Perrow has written that it is not possible to ensure that catastrophic nuclear accidents will not happen. The more safety devises are introduced, the more complicated the system becomes and therefore the more subject it becomes to unpredicted and dangerous interactions.
Nuclear Weapons cause proliferation

‘Military planners always need a rationale – a real or potential danger – for why they must have new weapons or new strategies and plans. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which occupied that role for almost 50 years, the United States has turned its attention to China to help fill the vacuum. The Chinese military likewise uses a similar dynamic to justify its actions, pointing to the capabilities and strategies of the United States.’


The deployment of nuclear weapons by the few countries that insist on having them makes other countries extremely nervous. How could it not? It is difficult to trust someone who is holding a gun to your head.

If one state has nuclear weapons then others will want them. There are 8 nuclear weapons states. Within a few years another 10 states will be able to have them.

With nuclear weapons proliferation is endemic.

Nobel Laureate, the late, Professor Sir Joseph Rotblat made this point as follows’ ‘If some nations – including the most powerful militarily – say that they need nuclear weapons for their security, then such security cannot be denied to other countries which really feel insecure. Proliferation of nuclear weapons is the logical conclusion of this nuclear policy.’

By renewing Trident we accelerate proliferation. More countries will acquire these weapons and the risks and insecurities multiply.

The existence of nuclear weapons incurs the development of new ones

The extreme destructive nature of existing nuclear weapons means that the number of opportunities for their use by those who wish to exert power over others is considered limited. This has led to a perceived need to develop new nuclear weapons - ones which are ‘usable’. ‘Usable’ in this context can probably be taken to mean not so powerful that the users think they will be subject to widespread international condemnation if they deploy them.

American and Britain have been working on the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons with ‘usability’ in mind.

Risk of acquisition by non-state individuals and organisations

State nuclear weapons are an invitation for criminals, religious maniacs, and other murderous non-state organisations to steal either weapons or the means
of manufacturing them. The know-how for making a nuclear bomb is now widely available.

The big problem for non-state bomb-makers is the acquisition of the fissile materials and these are only in existence because the nuclear states manufacture large quantities.

To manufacture nuclear weapons, fissile materials in the form of highly enriched uranium and plutonium are required. There is now no shortage of these. Since 1945 more than 3,000 metric tons (3,000,000 kilograms) have been produced. This is enough to make several hundred thousand nuclear weapons; enough to wipe out several planets the size of ours\(^8\).

**Case Against Nuclear Weapons – People and Planet**

**Nuclear Weapons use is a crime against humanity**

Nuclear weapons kill indiscriminately. There have never been weapons like these. They are not for fighting the enemy in the traditional sense. They are for wiping out the populations of countries. There are no other weapons that can kill hundreds of millions of people in a few hours. The civilian populations have no hope; no place to hide. They are led ‘like lambs to the slaughter’.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists tells us that 50 of today’s 26,000 nuclear weapons could wipe out 200 million people.

‘Nuclear weapons have provided us with the capacity of self-destruction. These weapons are suicidal, genocidal and ecocidal’, warned Felicity Hill, former peace and security adviser for the United Nations, launching the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)\(^9\).

Genocide is the deliberate and systematic destruction of an ethnic, religious or national group. That is what nuclear arsenals potentially do. The mass killing of civilians is condemned by international law as a crime against humanity.

In fighting a Just War (a war that is being fought because it is the only available way of defending against an aggressor) it is necessary to fight the attacking force, not slaughter the population as a whole - that is genocide.

In supporting a government which deploys nuclear weapons, and does not work seriously to get rid of them, are we declaring ourselves willing to be party to such a crime?
The support of nuclear weapons means abandoning vital human values
The scientific and technological development of weapons has been contributing to the abandonment of human values for some time. The Second World War saw the acceptance of acts which at other times would have been recognised as atrocities; the carpet-bombing of cities and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We have also developed and used weapons of appalling cruelty such as land mines, cluster bombs, napalm, white phosphorous and depleted uranium, although we are having second thoughts about some of these now.
The acceptance and deployment of nuclear weapons brings this degradation of values to a climax and must work towards a general coarsening of the quality of our culture. It is hard to see how a people who are avowedly prepared to incinerate hundreds of millions of people as an act of hopeless revenge (the threat which underlies ‘deterrence’ and the MAD strategy) can expect to progress emotionally and spiritually. It seems to cut across a respect for the innocent and for human life, the aspiration to empathise with others, the goal of recognising the brotherhood and sisterhood of the human community worldwide.

Nuclear Weapons turn warriors into butchers
We rightly admire the courage and dedication of members of our armed forces who fight to defend us from those who would do us harm. We consider their profession an honourable one.
But nuclear weapons are different. Can we honour a person who obliterates a city by dropping a bomb from 30,000 feet or by launching a missile from a silo thousands of miles from the target? Do servicemen want to be called upon to commit such acts of mass and indiscriminate slaughter? Do we want the responsibility and shared guilt of calling on them to do these things?

In these circumstances soldiers are turned from warriors into technicians of mass slaughter of the innocent. An honourable profession is subverted by the abusers of power.

Nuclear Weapons are an unnatural misuse of natural forces
A primary aspect of the harmony in nature is the way that the fundamental forces of nature work in a positive and creative way to form the universe. The energies which bind the primary particles together in atoms work dynamically in the sun, through nuclear fusion, to form elements, and emit heat and light that make possible the evolution of life. The elements formed eventually become the building blocks of life.
There is a marvellous order and beauty throughout the universe from the ‘music of the spheres’ to the patterns of plants, to the structure of cells. This order is confirmed daily by the discoveries of science. Part of that universal order is in the appropriateness of things. Everything in nature has its place and everything works as an integrated and harmonious whole. Nuclear weapons are a gross rending of that order and harmony; a sacrilegious perversion of the forces of nature. These forces become instruments for the destruction of life rather than its creation; their true role.

The creation of a nuclear weapon is a crime against nature.

**Nuclear Weapons contaminate and blight our planet**
The existence of nuclear weapons casts a permanent shadow over all life on earth. As well as being an unending threat to the survival of our culture and humanity, all of nature is threatened. Nuclear weapons spread radioactive particles in the atmosphere, leave radioactive substances in the soil and contaminate our water. Nothing escapes their destructive effects. A nuclear war would turn vast tracts of the earth’s surface into a no-man’s land.

**Nuclear Weapons put inordinate power in the hands of a few**
In the world of nation states nuclear weapons put the fate of hundreds of millions of people in the hands of a few individuals who have their fingers on the nuclear buttons. This is both extremely unjust and extremely dangerous. In the world of terrorists and criminals this is similarly true. When in possession of such a weapon a small group of individuals or even a solitary person could threaten a large population.

There is no way of knowing which individuals will hold power in nuclear states in even the immediate future. A population with a relatively benign government might consider that its nuclear weapons are in safe hands, and then find that a minority have been able to manipulate into power a belligerent cartel, or a democratic country might be overthrown by a military dictator with a totally different agenda and attitude to the use of power. It is a matter of simple observation that leaders once in power, do not always carry out the will of the people who put them there. Leaders can have secret agendas and self-images which can greatly influence their decisions but which never enter the realm of public awareness; or even self-awareness in some cases. These observations can, of course, be made...
about many of us but they are a strong argument against giving leaders the power to destroy our world.

Some leader could decided he would benefit from a Nuclear War
The avoidance of catastrophic war when nuclear weapons exist depends on the leaders of all the nuclear countries being rational, sane and humane. It would only take one leader of a nuclear country getting into power who calculated that he would benefit from a nuclear war and catastrophe could result.
Similarly disaster could follow from just one leader of a nuclear state becoming irrational. Leaders such as Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot were totally indifferent to the amount of human suffering they caused. Such individuals may well not be stopped by what we consider a deterrent. This is an appalling risk to take.

Nuclear weapons steal resources from essential projects
Nuclear Weapons, their deployment and accompanying infrastructure, are extremely expensive. They drain human and economic resources.

The true costs of nuclear weapons are shrouded in secrecy but we know, for example, that up to 1996 their cost to the US taxpayer was $5.5 trillion (that is 5.5 million million dollars). The cost of Britain’s present Trident system is £2 billion a year and we are set to spend an additional 75 billion on Trident renewal and maintenance over its 30 year life.

No one knows how much it will cost to clean up leaking waste sites or to store waste materials resulting from nuclear weapons manufacture. But we do know it will be vast and in the case of buried waste costs could recur over thousands of years. We are not just burdening future generations with the threat of their destruction but also with huge expenses.
The opportunities lost by this expenditure are staggering. In all the nuclear weapons states, weapons programmes divert scarce funds away from health care, education and other essential services.
What else could the money be spent on? Well, for example, according to a UN Human Development Report, $40 billion a year would pay for the additional cost of achieving and maintaining universal access to basic education for all, basic health care, reproductive health care for all women, adequate food and clean water and safe sewers.
Case Against Nuclear Weapons – Psychology and Culture

‘The ability and inclination to use physical strength is no indication of bravery or tenacity to life. The greatest cowards are often the greatest bullies...’   Clarence Darrow, ‘Resist Not Evil’

By deploying nuclear weapons we declare ourselves willing to incinerate millions of human beings in order to save our own skin.
If the time comes we will not perform these deeds ourselves. We will delegate the acts of slaughter to young men who we have recruited to prepare for the task with tales of patriotism and necessity.
These weapons are used by individuals who remain at a great distance from the scene of the holocaust they create. We will not see what we are doing but now after Hiroshima and Nagasaki we have no excuse for not knowing. Nevertheless, shamefully we make excuses for ourselves – ‘There is no alternative’ – ‘We are only responding to murderous and evil aggressors’ – ‘We are not really going to do it; we are just pretending to be prepared to do it to frighten the enemy’.
Leaders build deep bunkers for themselves and make preparations for the annihilation of cities and their inhabitants thousands of miles away.

We declare ourselves willing to kill hundreds of millions of people (as an act of revenge?) after we ourselves have been doomed by the launch of a nuclear attack. Is this credible? Would anyone be willing to do it? Are we deceiving ourselves? Would we really be willing to behave like vengeful monsters?
Until the advent of nuclear weapons and the adoption of the MAD strategy, this attitude would be seen as the evidence of lunacy or extreme evil. This seems to have been Hitler’s attitude after he knew the war was lost.

The existence of nuclear weapons makes us passive
We become like animals waiting for the slaughter or the condemned man waiting for a decision on his execution as President John Kennedy said as long ago as 1954.
We tell ourselves, and we are told, there is nothing we can do. The genie is out of the bottle. It is too late.
We were forced into this position and now we are trapped. Anyway these decisions to manufacture and deploy nuclear weapons are made by people who know much more about it than we do; people who are much better
qualified – politicians, generals, experts. The public could not possibly get its collective head round all the intricacies of nuclear interstate strategies.

If the people in power know more than we do then they must tell us and our MPs what they know. It is our lives that are at stake and it is our money with which they built their weapons.

The ancient and tired excuse of those in power for not telling the citizens what is going on, ‘it would damage national security’, has now lost any credibility it might have had. The secret information about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and the, hinted at, evil and imminent plans of Hussein for attacks on the West turned out to be no more that a projection of the paranoid fears of certain leaders and a front for an entirely other agenda. This really was the death knell of the ‘Trust-us-we-know-more-than-you’ brigade.

The judgement of the public on the matter of nuclear deployment is legitimate and valid and should be heard and acted upon. The genie can and must be put back in the bottle. The only people who benefit from the belief that it cannot be put back are the warmongers and the arms manufacturers. The only people who benefit from keeping citizens passive, distracted and uninformed are those in power who want their life to be made easy by being left to make all the decisions and not be held to account when they get it disastrously wrong.

The existence of nuclear weapons makes us mad.
Most of the discussion about nuclear weapons is based on all those involved being sane and rational human beings. Yet both America and Russia have made nuclear ‘gravity’ bombs of a destructive power extending up to around 25 megatons. That is a bomb that can be dropped from an airplane and which has the destructive power of 25 million tons of TNT (30,000,000 tons). The Hiroshima bomb was around 15 kilotons (15,000 tons) and killed 140,000 civilians. So each of these bombs, around one thousand seven hundred times more destructive than the bomb which destroyed Hiroshima, by simple arithmetic, could kill about 240 million innocent civilians; about 4 times the population of the UK (much larger bombs have been tested in above-ground explosions).

What definition of the word ‘sane’ can be applied to describe the people who design and build such weapons? And how can we possibly ensure that all the people who are in charge of nuclear weapons in all the nuclear states, at all times, are sane?
To maintain the human race teetering on the edge of annihilation can very easily be viewed as madness. During the Cold War, Russia and America built up nuclear arsenals of lunatic proportions – enough to destroy the world several times over. We still have these weapons in sufficient numbers to destroy the planet’s human population. Although the hysteria of today may seem marginally less extreme, the on-going existence and deployment of large numbers of these genocidal weapons indicates the continued presence of powerful irrational forces. The Russians and Americans have agreed to limit their deployed arsenals, though not their stockpiles, to between 1700 and 2200 nuclear weapons each. Does this indicate a gradual returning to a clearer sense of reality? It is still a vast number, and much more than would be needed to effectively wipe out another nation. In deciding on such a figure do we hold in our awareness a clear idea of the amount of suffering the use of such an arsenal will cause? Do we consider it entirely sane to threaten our fellow humans in this way?

President Obama is proposing that the U.S. and Russia reduce their arsenals to 1000 weapons each. This could be a promising staging post towards Obama’s goal of total abolition.

The existence of nuclear weapons creates a culture of secrets and lies
Nuclear weapons states are afraid of the spread of nuclear weapons so they keep their technology secret. Nuclear weapons states are afraid that ‘the others’ will know how strong or weak they are so they try to keep secret the exact numbers, types and/or deployment of the weapons in their arsenals. Nuclear weapons states are afraid that the public will not support their nuclear stance so they keep their activities and strategies obscured from their citizens, or justify them with spurious, distracting and false arguments. All this secrecy and lying constitutes enormous dangers to the public. How can the citizens and their MPs have any chance of controlling or even influencing what happens if they are kept ill-informed of the facts, implications and dangers.

The clandestine decision-making continued when the British government determined, in 2007, that America could incorporate part of its missile defence system on British soil (Primarily at Menwith Hill in Yorkshire), thereby making even more sure that Britain would be a target for nuclear weapons if there was a nuclear war between America and another state. Moreover the British public was being put at risk, not in order to defend Britain but in order to defend the US.
Des Browne the Defence Secretary, announced that the huge spy station west of Harrogate at Menwith Hill, with its 1,800 employees, would be used by the US as part of its early warning system. There was no public consultation. One moment we heard that the Government had had no request from the US and the next moment the decision had been made. Des Browne told MPs in April, 2007, that “The UK has received no request from the US to use RAF Menwith Hill for missile-defence-related activities” At the end of July we were told that a decision had been made to allow the US to do just that.

Browne made the announcement in the form of a written statement 48 hours before Parliament broke up for the summer, in full knowledge that by making it that way the matter could not be debated in parliament. He did this because he knew that there would be strong opposition in the House of Commons.

Another huge commitment with no public consultation is the recent allocation of an initial one billion pounds put aside for the ongoing upgrading of the British nuclear bomb factory at Aldermaston.

The full story about nuclear accidents is also kept from the public. In his book The Limits of Safety’ Scott Sagan says:

*Many important pieces of evidence about past nuclear weapons incidents remain classified; some critical documents about sensitive military operations have been destroyed; faulty historical records have sometimes been created by military units ...’ ‘The Limits of Safety’, Scott Sagan, p10.*

It is clearly very much in the interests of the military and the politicians to bury nuclear accidents since the public find them extremely unsettling to say the least, and, in addition, the ones that *have* been uncovered clearly illustrate how profoundly unsound is the strategy of relying on these weapons.

**Fantasy documents** - Power elites do not just lie to the citizens about nuclear weapons. They also lie to each other and to themselves. These weapons are very scary and although governments decide to deploy them, whether for reasons of power or paranoia, they would rather not know exactly how dangerous they are. Because of this, the elites and their bureaucrats draw up what have been called ‘fantasy documents’ to reassure us (and presumably themselves) that a nuclear war would be manageable. We are given fantasy advice - hide under the table, sandbag the doors, when
you get the warning build a shelter in the living room, hang sheets from your windows and so on. They describe impossibly fast, fantasy evacuations of cities - within hours. They fantasise about a nuclear war being like a natural disaster (and will be dealt with in a similar manner – donations, aid workers, relief supplies) when in fact it is the opposite of a natural disaster. Nothing could be more unnatural and nothing could be more unmanageable. But the fantasies make it sound less scary.

**Case Against Nuclear Weapons – Immoral, Illegal and undemocratic**

**Nuclear weapons are immoral – a blasphemy**
The churches of leading religions have no doubt about the evil of nuclear weapons.
The World Council of Churches, through a Muslim-Christian Initiative, has condemned them as immoral in no uncertain terms. Their statement includes the following:

‘We agree that the Christian and Muslim traditions are unambiguous on the sanctity of human life and on the protection of all forms of creation, including the environment.

‘We believe that chemical, biological and particularly nuclear weapons do not discriminate between combatants and non-combatants and inevitably destroy innocent human life, even as they destroy other forms of life such as animals and vegetation, cause irrevocable damage to the environment for many generations to come and cause human suffering and disease. Therefore, we hold that these weapons are contrary to our religious and ethical principles.

‘We… agree that the possession of nuclear weapons is an unacceptable risk for the human community in these times and is a continuing threat to the entire planet and its fragile ecosystem’

‘We therefore believe that the common position held by both of our traditions, expressed as the sanctity of human life, leads us inexorably to say that the only real security for the world and the most responsible position for people of faith in our two traditions is to call upon the United States and other countries of the world to,
gradually and in a verifiable manner, finally eliminate these weapons from the face of the earth’. [emphasis added]

These weapons have also been condemned by outstanding leaders in many fields from diplomats to generals. The distinguished American diplomat George Kennan, for example, warns us:

‘The readiness to use nuclear weapons against other human beings – against people we do not know, whom we have never seen, and whose guilt or innocence is not for us to establish – and, in doing so, to place in jeopardy the natural structure upon which all civilization rests, as though the safety and perceived interests of our own generation were more important than everything that has taken place or could take place in civilization: this is nothing less than a presumption, a blasphemy, an indignity – an indignity of monstrous dimensions – offered to God’

http://www.earthisland.org/project/newsPage2.cfm?newsID=210&pageID=177&subSiteID=44

General George Lee Butler declared that:

My country is badly in need of a new moral compass on this issue [nuclear weapons]. We have committed the fatal sin in public policy-making of becoming cynical and arrogant with respect to decisions affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of people. We have trivialized the likelihood that deterrence might fail, thus providing easy moral cover for ignoring the consequences. We have learned to live with a weapon that numbs our conscience and diminishes our humanity. We need to hear voices of reason, urging us to a higher standard of rectitude and global leadership.

[ General Lee Butler was in charge of all U.S. Navy and Air Force strategic nuclear forces in 1990s]

There are many aspects to the immorality of these weapons, including their extreme indiscriminating destructiveness and the persistence of their polluting effects for generations. In addition we, of the nuclear states, are putting at risk not only our own populations (who arguably hold some responsibility for allowing our leaders to create the arsenals in the first
place) but are also threatening the survival of the other countries of the world (the vast majority of countries) who do not want anything to do with nuclear weapons.

**Nuclear Weapons are Illegal**

The main argument of this section is that:

- nuclear weapons, by their very nature are indiscriminate. They run an unacceptable risk of slaughtering civilians in vast numbers. That makes them illegal under **international humanitarian law**,

- replacement of the UK's Trident nuclear weapons system is a breach of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** which Britain signed in 1970.

**International humanitarian law** - The highest court in the world for general questions of international law is the International Court of Justice in the Hague. It is the judicial branch of the United Nations Organisation. In 1996, in response to questions asked of it by the United Nations General Assembly regarding the legal status of nuclear weapons, the court ruled that:

> "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law."

The Court said it is a "fundamental" and "intransgressible" rule under humanitarian law that "States must never make civilians the object of attack and must consequently never use weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets." It is accordingly prohibited to use weapons causing them such harm or aggravating their suffering. The judges stressed the obligation to work towards abolition, ‘‘there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict international control’’

This goes further than the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty because the Court ruled that nuclear disarmament negotiation should be brought to a conclusion, not just pursued.
It is very difficult to see that the nuclear-armed states are pursuing abolition 'in good faith' and are making every effort to 'bring to a conclusion negotiations' for abolition. "Good Faith" means negotiating sincerely, and not operating from entrenched positions. The objective must be pursued consistently and involve real political will.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) - It has always been realised that if some states hold on to their nuclear weapons then other states will feel threatened and want them also. It is for this reason that the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty was drawn up and opened for signature in 1968. This treaty calls on the nuclear states to work in good faith to achieve global nuclear disarmament and calls on those states who do not have them, not to acquire them. Article VI reads,

‘Each of the parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international controls.’

The conclusion must be reached "with all deliberate speed". Our government claims that the NPT has no timetable for nuclear disarmament. However, the Treaty entered into force in 1970. A lapse of thirty nine years is not compatible "with all deliberate speed". The basic requirement of Good Faith is that the parties must not adopt policies which contradict the very purpose of negotiations. How can the British government claim to be honouring its obligations under this Treaty when it has committed itself to rebuilding its nuclear arsenal, and to holding on to it for many years into the future?

The British government has regularly been challenged both with the judgements of the International Court of Justice and its non-compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It just keeps repeating its stance that '... maintaining a minimum nuclear deterrent is fully consistent with all our international legal obligations.' [white Paper, Box 3-1, para. 7, page 212]. It is not minimal; it is not legal and it does not conform to Britain's international obligations. Such a bald and totally unsupported contention of rectitude in the teeth of overwhelming arguments to the contrary would not be considered remotely adequate in a court of law. If the government has been given legal advice to support its stance surely it should say not only who gave it but what that advice is and what it is based on, so that we, the public,
can consider it in open debate.

The existence of nuclear weapons is an undemocratic imposition –
the vast majority of people do not want them
Numerous resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly present this
message very clearly. The New Agenda Resolution (53/77Y) presented to
the UN General Assembly (4 Dec. 1998) proposed numerous practical steps
towards complete nuclear disarmament. It calls on the Nuclear-Weapon
States to demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to the speedy and total
elimination of their respective nuclear weapons; to pursue without delay
and in good faith, and bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to the
elimination of these weapons, thereby fulfilling their obligations under
Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
(NPT)”

This UN resolution for a commitment to the speedy and total
elimination of nuclear weapons was massively supported by the General
Assembly. 152 member states out of 170 voted for the resolution.
Of the 18 countries that voted against the New Agenda Resolution, 10 were
Eastern European countries hoping for acceptance into NATO, whose votes
seem to have been traded for increased probability of acceptance.
Various polls during the late 1990s showed a rejection by the public of these
weapons and more recent poll results confirm that the vast majority of
citizens want nuclear disarmament. In a poll by Sratcom for Greenpeace, in
March 2006, 69% in aggregate of people polled in France, Italy, Germany,
Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom wanted Europe to be nuclear free.
In a UK poll by YouGov in January 2007, 64% of those polled agreed that
‘International Conventions are in force banning chemical and biological
weapons. The UK government should support a similar convention to ban
nuclear weapons’ In a 2008 poll 73% of Americans and 63% of Russians
polled favour ‘all countries agreeing to eliminate all of their nuclear weapons
assuming that there is a well-established international system for verifying
that countries are complying’.

It is worth noting that these results were strongly against nuclear weapons in
spite of the public at large not having easy access to information concerning
the true horrific nature of nuclear weapons and what is being perpetrated by
the nuclear states in their name.
In spite of all these reasons to ban these weapons, there are still national
governments who put forward arguments in support of retaining them. We
now look at these arguments.

25
The Argument For Nuclear Weapons - 
Deterrence - Our MAD strategy

Deterrence is a slippery conceptual slope. It is not stable, nor is it static, its wiles cannot be contained. It is both master and slave. It seduces the scientist yet bends to his creation…. It gives easy semantic cover to nuclear weapons, masking the horrors of employment with siren veils of infallibility. At best it is a gamble no mortal should pretend to make. At worst it invokes death on a scale rivaling the power of the Creator.

General Lee Butler

The strategy of using nuclear weapons as a deterrent is based on the threat that if an enemy were to attack a nuclear weapons state, that state will retaliate with nuclear weapons and that this promise of retaliation will dissuade the enemy. It is recognised that a major nuclear attack would be so devastating that the target country could be essentially destroyed. So the deterrent is designed in such a way that a massive counter-attack of missiles carrying nuclear warheads can be launched even after the country under attack has been substantially wiped out. For this reason the deterrent strategy has been called MAD standing for Mutual Assured Destruction.

Deploying a ‘Deterrent’ sounds reassuring. The word automatically implies that it does what it says it will do. It avoids the intrinsic threat to wipe out a vast population of civilians in the most cruel way imaginable and it implies that this deployment makes us safe.

(Yet in addition to the arguments given against the existence of nuclear weapons an additional objection to Deterrence has been proposed by some people. It is contended that there is an inherent contradiction in the contention that nuclear weapons are a sound deterrent. ‘Deterrence’ is based on the notion that a nuclear exchange would be so awful that no sane person would engage in one. If this is true, it is said, then a ruthless aggressor will not be deterred because he will calculate that his target will not use his nuclear weapons. His views will prevent him from using them in a hopeless act of revenge. He will realise that this would simply result in the ruination of our species).

Nevertheless, in spite of the many arguments against, the concept is retained by our government and various reasons are given.
Justifications for Deterrence

The justifications have been subject to modification with time. So have the quantities of weapons required (the definition of a ‘minimum deterrent’), size of weapons, methods of deployment, and conditions of use. But the central justifications are those addressed below.

Deterrence works –
This is the basic argument put forward for deterrence; it prevents nuclear war (or any other major war) from happening.
Supporters of this argument contend that no state with nuclear weapons has been attacked by another state. Also no state that has nuclear weapons has ever attacked another state similarly armed and there has been no use of nuclear weapons since The Allies used them against the Japanese in 1945. At first glance this sounds a reasonable assertion. However the most we can say, based on the facts, is that there has not been a nuclear war during the period between Hiroshima and Nagasaki and now, and that during that period there were nuclear weapons in existence. It does not follow that there was not a nuclear war because the weapons existed. And, obviously, if the weapons had not existed there would not have been a nuclear war.
There is no doubt that the threat of nuclear retaliation will give the most aggressive (but rational) leader pause before launching an attack. However the argument does not recognise that leaders can not only be irrational but are capable of making wrong judgements; that they can come to invalid conclusions. It does not take into account that leaders can be reckless especially when their egos are in danger of being dented. It does not take account of the endless possibilities for accidents and mistakes from the level of the guy who changes the fuses and repairs the wiring through the computer programme designers, to the cold, remote and abstract upper echelons of strategic planning and decision making.
And, of course, the logic of the deterrent position is that everyone should have nuclear weapons.
These and other arguments against the safety of deterrence are referred to in the previous section, ‘The Arguments Against Nuclear Weapons’.

Nevertheless, the theory is that deterrence works through the fear of retaliation and punishment. And there is no doubt that if we were attacked we could extract a terrible revenge - even from the grave. We could kill hundreds of millions of the attacker’s population, destroy their cities and
render their land poisonous for a hundred years. And surely this would help to inspire caution in any sane leader.

So our leaders purport to be ensuring our security by the perpetuation of A **Balance of Terror**. Yet we know that a balance of terror between two countries during the Cold War was appallingly dangerous and people lived in constant fear. But consider the dangers of all the balances of terror involved when there are eight nuclear countries as now and no doubt more to come if we continue on our present course. Surely the situation is totally untenable.

This balance of terror is envisaged as continuing into the indefinite future (the renewed Trident could continue until 2060) and nuclear weapons are proposed as a panacea for a wide range of eventualities. In supporting Trident Renewal the government wrote, in its 2006 White Paper, ‘The future of the United Kingdom’s nuclear deterrent’ [3.7], that, ‘**increasing pressure on key resources such as energy and water (which could be driven by a range of factors, potentially including population growth, increasing global economic development and climate change) may increase interstate tension.**’

What are we to make of this as a reason for having nuclear weapons? Are we prepared to wipe out populations of people if we believe our energy supply is threatened? Are we going to drop nuclear bombs on countries to get the use of their resources? Are we going to use nuclear weapons to prevent starving citizens, from lands whose crops and water supplies have failed as a result of global warming, coming to our country? Will our nuclear weapons prevent people from over-crowded parts of the world trying to enter Britain?

Then there is the matter of **deterrence against terrorism.** Certainly there is a threat (though probably an exaggerated one) from terrorism. As far as Britain at least is concerned, it seems justified to call it exaggerated since during the most deadly attack experienced in the U.K. (7 July 2007) terrorists were responsible for 52 deaths, whereas the deaths and serious injuries experienced in the U.K. during 2002 alone from road accidents were well over 34,000 and this was not an exceptional year. Of course any person’s untimely death is a tragedy and furthermore the threat of terrorists detonating an improvised nuclear devise in a U.K. city is a grave and serious one which could result in many thousands being killed. Nevertheless none of this is preventable by hoarding nuclear weapons. Quite the contrary. If it were not for the presence of these weapons in our world, the nuclear threat from terrorists could not exist. The way to tackle this threat is by means of
good information, an effective police force and ensuring that the means of making such a bomb are not available. Terrorists in Britain are a matter for the police, not the military.

Then there is the implication that the possession of nuclear weapons will **deter non-nuclear countries** from conventional military attacks or from developing nuclear weapons; yet history shows that this is not the case. The threat from nuclear weapons does not deter non-nuclear countries from attacking nuclear ones. The UK nuclear deterrent did not deter the Argentineans from invading the Falklands, nor did the British and the American deterrents stop Saddam Hussein from invading Kuwait. The possession of nuclear weapons by the U.S. and Russia did not deter India and Pakistan from developing them.

To the extent that deterrence is attainable it could still be achieved with conventional forces. And any retaliation should be meted out to the aggressive leaders and their militaries, not to the innocent civilians of the state as would be the case with the use of nuclear weapons. Punishment of belligerent leaders is best ensured by effective and enforceable international law, a strong United Nations and International Criminal Court, and effective treaties between nations ensuring that aggressors are brought to justice.

The claim that nuclear deterrence works is usually backed by reference to the Cold War during which nuclear war did not occur. However this is not a reassuring precedent. It is NOT the case that nuclear deterrence worked during the Cold War. In fact it led us to the very brink of terminal disaster. Approaching within days or hours of global nuclear war and avoiding it by little more than good luck can hardly be called a strategy which is working. The notion that nuclear deterrence is a viable strategy is an illusion. The best known example of the illusory nature of nuclear deterrence is The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

**Robert McNamara** who was the American Secretary of Defence at the time said ‘...we came within a hairbreadth of nuclear war...' and 'It became very clear to me as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis that the indefinite combination of human fallibility (which we can never get rid of) and nuclear weapons carries the very high probability of the destruction of nations'

President Kennedy himself said the chances of a nuclear war resulting from the crisis was somewhere between 1 in 3 and fifty-fifty²⁰
These are not good odds. I certainly would not bet my life on them let alone the survival of the human race.

The deterrent argument relates to the situation where two or more nuclear states, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons (in the case of the US and Russia with thousands of nuclear warheads on high alert) are eyeball to eyeball with each other in a state of tension; sometimes extreme tension - and this is all advocated to give us a sense of security. Our leaders are playing a game of ‘Chicken’ on a global scale with our lives. After the Cuban Missile Crisis there were some advocates of deterrence who claimed that because we came so close and yet did not have a nuclear war, this was proof that the deterrent strategy works; it saved us even in these extreme circumstances. By this logic the closer we come to a nuclear holocaust (and the more often) without it actually happening, the more we can be sure that deterrence works. It also follows that the only way of determining that this strategy is unsound is by having a nuclear war.

**Nuclear war has not happened therefore it is not going to happen – therefore Deterrence is a safe strategy**

This argument is a corollary of the one above. It discounts the fact that, as we have seen, we already came terrifyingly close to nuclear war. Scott Sagan, an international expert on risk assessment and safety problems, and author of ‘Limits to Safety’, said of the Cuban crisis:

> ‘The widespread belief that nuclear war was unlikely is based in the belief that Nikita Khrushchev and John F., Kennedy really had the power to ensure that the crisis would not escalate to an “unwinnable” war or even an “unthinkable” use of nuclear weapons.’

He questions this view and contends that while there are nuclear weapons there will always be the possibility of a disastrous accidental nuclear war.

> ‘An accidental nuclear war could begin, in theory, in three different ways: an unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, an accidental launch or detonation of a weapon, or a false warning that an enemy attack was imminent or actually under way. The frightening spectre of all three scenarios appeared in the US nuclear alert operations during the Cuban Missile Crisis.’

> ‘The Limits of Safety’, Scot Sagan,p117
Every​thing that has happened in history has happened for the first time, at some time. Fortunately they were not Armageddon happenings so the procession of human events marched on. Nuclear war is different; it would be a unique and possibly terminal event for our species. The view that it will not happen because it has not yet happened denotes the sort of complacency that leads us into disastrous misjudgements.

**Government leaders are in total control so Deterrence is safe**

Another intrinsic assumption, built into the deterrence credo, is that leaders are always in control of what happens. President John Kennedy, for one, did not think so; and he was in a position to know. In a remark he made in October 1962 he put his view of the matter very succinctly – ‘There is always some son-of-a-bitch who doesn’t get the word’.

The accident expert, Scott Sagan, is someone else who expressed serious doubts that nuclear war could only happen because a country’s leaders decided that it should happen, believing it to be in his country’s best interests. As he says there has never been an accidental detonation of a nuclear weapon nor has there ever been an accident which resulted in escalation to the final holocaust, ‘But that might just be a matter of time.’

**The Blair-Brown View**

The view that nuclear weapons make us safe is held by the British government as expressed in its decision to renew Trident.

In the foreword to the White Paper on Trident Renewal the then Prime Minister Blair told us that we cannot predict the way the world will look in 30 or 50 years time, making it clear the minimum time the UK is planning to have its deterrent. Of course, the same statement, if valid now, will be valid in 50 years time and 50 years after that.

It is acknowledged in the Government White Paper that there is no reason at the present time to believe that we are being targeted from any quarter. Thus, ‘Currently no state has both the intent to threaten our vital interests and the capability to do so with nuclear weapons’ [para3-8, p `19]. But we are also told that we cannot be sure that a major nuclear threat to our vital interests will not emerge ‘over the longer term’. We were not told what, in the government’s view, these threatened vital interests would be.

We can agree that no one can be sure of what will happen in the future. However if this were a reason for deploying a stockpile of nuclear weapons
it would not only be a reason for always and forever having a stockpile, but would also be a reason for every one of the 184 non-nuclear states in the world that are members of the United Nations also having stockpiles of nuclear weapons at all times. Why us and not them?

All over the world, people want this threat of annihilation lifted and there is no reason why the achievement of this goal should not be possible if the public and their representatives put enough pressure on world leaders to reach the necessary agreement.

Strictly speaking the polemic for nuclear weapons retention when faced with other nuclear powers, is not relevant to the case for overall abolition. Nevertheless it is sufficiently related to justify being referred to here.

**We need the Deterrent as a hedge against nuclear blackmail -**

*During the Cold War, if we had not had nuclear weapons, Stalin would have been able to dictate terms to us and any country in the world that did not have such weapons.*

We need nuclear weapons, it is said, in case such a circumstance happens again. But the goal of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and the Nuclear Weapons Convention (a draft treaty for the abolition of nuclear weapons lodged with the United Nations) is a world free of nuclear weapons policed by a **powerful inspectorate funded by the world’s states to ensure that there is no clandestine manufacture of these weapons by any state.**

We now know that, during the Cold War, although Russia had nuclear weapons its huge arsenal was substantially a reaction to the weapons in the West. Russia was much less secure internally than we in the West believed. It seems highly unlikely that they had any ambition to overrun Western Europe. The MAD escalation of nuclear weapons during the Cold War was the result of paranoia, poor information, and reckless behaviour of leaders on both sides.

We are not advocating here that all nations give up nuclear weapons in spite of the existence of some rogue state that refuses to do so. What is being advocated is the phasing out of these weapons throughout the world by mutual agreement with adequate safeguards for all. **The only factor that is lacking is the political will among the nuclear leaders to make abolition a reality.**
There is a number of implications concerning the nature, qualities and behaviour of human beings in the plea that nuclear arsenals are necessary – for some. There seems to be a perception that those who are ‘not us’ have more ill will towards humanity than ourselves, are more greedy and ruthless than we are, and are both altogether more dangerous as well as being less important than ourselves; hence the demonization which is part of all state aggression against other states.

We need the Deterrent as a hedge against a mad dictator - What if some madman like Hitler had nuclear weapons and we did not? The above observation about overall abolition applies here. Also if the leader is mad he could be much less likely to be deterred by the threat of retaliation with nuclear weapons.

If Hitler had had nuclear weapons it is quite likely that he would have used them regardless of other states having them. Hitler, at the head of a relatively small country, hopelessly took on a large part of the rest of the world with no chance of winning. He did not behave rationally. ‘Deterrence’ is entirely dependent on those being aggressive (or those being demonised) behaving rationally.

In fact, the ‘madman like Hitler’ argument is yet another very good reason for getting rid of all nuclear weapons now and simultaneously establishing an effective world-wide inspectorate and police force (backed up by a conventional international army as necessary).

It is OK to have a nuclear Deterrent because by having it we will never have to use it.

This is a rephrasing of the ‘deterrent’ argument. Many people are horrified by the indiscriminate slaughter that would result with the use of these weapons. So this rephrasing of the pro-nuclear argument is one which sounds convincing to some citizens; decent people who are horrified at the amount of killing which goes on in the world and who desperately wish to feel that they can live their lives in a peaceful and secure environment. But this is magical thinking; an attempt to have your cake and eat it. It is an attempt to justify the keeping of the weapons and at the same time deny that we will ever use them to do what they are designed to do, and which we threaten to use them for under certain circumstances.
It is OK to have a Deterrent since we would only use it in the most extreme circumstances. Built into the deterrence strategy is the implication that we might ‘have to’ use nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances. So surely it is legitimate to ask under what circumstances this ‘might have to’ will become a reality? Would we have to use the weapons after we had been subjected to a nuclear attack? Would this not be merely an act of revenge? Would we have to use them in order to prevent a nuclear attack? How would we know we were preventing a nuclear attack? Would we base our decision for a ‘pre-emptive’ attack on our, or the American government’s, assurances that the government has secret information that is too ‘sensitive’ to share with the people who would be the victims of a nuclear war? Or would we carry out a pre-emptive attack on the basis of ‘intelligence’ of the type that was used to start a war with Iraq and which was presented in graphic (and lying) detail to the United Nations in order to (unsuccesfully) get it to sign up to the pre-emptive attack on a sovereign country? Of all the many words (like ‘deterrent’) whose meaning is undermined by the jargon used by the ‘nuclear warriors’ the word ‘intelligence’ must be among the most abused.

The British government makes no attempt to face up to this contradiction that on the one hand deterrence is claimed to work and on the other hand we might have to use our nuclear weapons. On the contrary, as illustrated by the UK’s 2006 White Paper on Trident Renewal, ‘The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent’, blatantly by-passes the issue implying the tired old defence of ‘secrecy to maximise national security’:

"We deliberately maintain ambiguity about precisely when, how and of what scale we would contemplate the use of our nuclear deterrent. We will not simplify the calculations of a potential aggressor by defining more precisely the circumstances in which we might consider the use of our nuclear capabilities. Hence we will not rule in or out the first use of nuclear weapons’ [emphasis added]

But surely we, the citizens and their representatives in the House of Commons, should know what a particular government would do in our name. One government might start a nuclear war for one reason or on one pretext, another government might think quite differently. We should know what sort of foreign policy we are voting for when we elect our leaders.
As far as the public is aware ‘first use’ is not ruled out even though, as ‘The World Disarmament Campaign’ has stated, ‘*First use would surely be the most abject admission of failure in history and would be one of the worst crimes against humanity in the blood-stained history of the human race*’.

There is a sense in which it is true that, with the MAD strategy, *we* would never ‘have to’ use the weapons since it is based on the idea of destroying the enemy *after* he has destroyed us. It is difficult to argue that the destruction is then a necessity. 
The MAD strategy is riddled with contradictions and muddled thinking.

Apart from all that, the ‘only in the most extreme circumstances’ defence is now completely discredited since our primary allies, the Americans, have already threatened to use nuclear weapons in anything but extreme circumstances and against a non-nuclear country in their efforts to demonise and have their way with Iran.

**Even if we had to use our deterrent civilians would be safe -**

**If we used nuclear weapons we would make sure they were only used for military purposes and we would take care not to target civilians.**

Just because we have a nuclear deterrent, we are told, this does not mean that we would use it to wipe out cities if we launched our weapons in a retaliatory attack (or a pre-emptive attack). We would not have to behave in the same mode as an evil aggressor, this argument goes. We could hurt the enemy without killing millions of people even if he were to destroy millions by attacking our urban areas. 
This plea is totally unbelievable. Everyone knows that these are weapons for wiping out populations of people and that their effects cannot be limited to military personnel and their equipment.

**The nuclear weapons genie is out of the bottle; it cannot be put back.**

This is a cliché which is compulsively repeated by some nuclear weapons supporters without getting into specifics. If they mean, now that nuclear weapons have been invented they cannot be un-invented they are right. If they mean, now that they have been invented and built they cannot be dismantled and dispensed with, they are wrong. We are free agents. We make choices. We can do what we want. 
There have been many practices which man has, at some time or place in the past, decided to discontinue including cannibalism, human sacrifice, infanticide, slavery, duelling, and the subjugation of women. There is no
reason why we cannot add nuclear weapons to the list if that is what we decide to do.
Perhaps most indicative of all, we decided to dispense with the manufacture, deployment and use of chemical and bacteriological weapons and have substantially done so.

It is impossible to get rid of nuclear weapons -
Politicians and diplomats have been trying for over sixty years to rid the world of these weapons and failed.
As previously pointed out the fact that something has not been done is not proof that it cannot be done.
It has not been done because the people in power did not want it done – or did not want enough that it is done.
That is changing. Many leading figures and organisations are now speaking out for abolition. President Obama has said that he wants a world free of nuclear weapons. In 2007, George Schultz, William Perry, Sam Nunn and Henry Kissinger first expressed their fear and commitment to abolition in the Wall Street Journal and they repeated their warnings in 2008. In 2008, also, Malcolm Rifkin, David Owen, Douglas Hurd and George Robertson issued a stark warning in The Times newspaper. Margaret Beckett and Des Browne have made speeches stating their support for international moves towards zero nuclear weapons. Last month one hundred international political, military, business and civic leaders launched a new movement called ‘Global Zero’ dedicated to achieving a nuclear weapons free world. Ban Ki Moon, the UN Secretary General, has spoken recently of the urgency of this matter.

The decision has been made -
The international community has decided to go down the road of nuclear weapons and we should stay with that decision.
No it hasn’t – the decision has not be made by the international community; not by the people who would suffer in a nuclear war. The decision was made by a few state leaders. It can be unmade by the states involved. Many governments have decided they want nothing to do with nuclear weapons. There is absolutely no reason why we need to stay with a few bad decisions. They can and should be reversed.
They can be built at short notice -
Even if we get rid of nuclear weapons many countries would have the ability to produce them at short notice.
This is certainly a problem that will have to be tackled. But it is not an argument for keeping nuclear weapons. It is an argument for monitoring a world which is free of nuclear weapons. It is an argument for building up the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA), under the auspices of a reformed and democratic United Nations, into a world-wide Inspectorate with the powers, muscles and legality to ensure that a planet free of nuclear weapons is kept that way.

What if Britain was to stand alone again as it did in 1940?
In such circumstances, the advocates of nuclear weapons, claim Britain would need a strong independent deterrent. Our nuclear submarines, they imply, provide this. These defenders of ‘deterrence’ seem to equate the defensive power of the single propeller Spitfire fighter aircraft, which helped to protect us in World War II, with nuclear weapons forgetting, it would seem, that nuclear weapons are indiscriminate and their effects uncontrollable. They are not for counter-attacking particular combatants.

Moreover Britain does not have an independent nuclear deterrent, it never did and never will in the future. We cannot afford it financially. Our deterrent is almost entirely dependent on America. Its missiles are American missiles. We have not designed and do not manufacture our own. The nuclear warheads are largely of American design. Although they are assembled at a nuclear weapons factory at Aldermaston we are dependent for many of the components on America and even the government’s part ownership of Aldermaston has been sold off to a private company.

It is unclear whether we could launch Trident missiles without American compliance. It may be possible physically but it is unthinkable that we would. And America controls the missile navigating systems so even if we could launch them independently we would be dependent on the approval of the Americans regarding which cities we would destroy. Britain single-handedly embarking on a nuclear war is just inconceivable. If it did so against a nuclear power it would simply be wiped out. If it did so against a non-nuclear power it would probably start a global nuclear war. At the very least it would be a pariah state for countless years
So far we have been looking at the case where other states have nuclear weapons and we do not. But supposing the wishes of the vast majority prevails and *all* nuclear weapons are dismantled? Would there not still be terrible risks? Some nations might develop them secretly then everyone else would be helpless and at their mercy.

**If nuclear weapons were banned a secret aggressor could develop them.**

What if some nation, say China, was to clandestinely manufacture some nuclear weapons in spite of the work of a worldwide inspectorate? It would be very difficult for nations to secretly manufacture these weapons. One positive aspect of the nuclear business is that the vital raw material, the fissile elements, are particularly easy to detect because of their radiating characteristic. In addition methods of detection are now very sophisticated and rapidly becoming more so. Also the infrastructure for producing the fissile materials would be very difficult to hide.

If a major nation were to embark on this course the most direct way of starting to develop a nuclear capability would be to use the by-products of their nuclear power industry. But before they can use these by-products for nuclear weapons a number of processes would have to be gone through to transmute them to useable weapons grade material. These processes would also be difficult to hide from an efficient and well-funded inspectorate.

*Nevertheless let us suppose that some country does succeed in cheating the system.* They would only be able to manufacture a small number of warheads before being detected. At this stage they would have incurred the enmity of the entire world and the combined force of the world’s conventional military might would be able to overwhelm them in spite of the ownership of a small number of warheads.

However this is a fanciful and extremely unlikely scenario. If an effective inspection system were in place it is unlikely that there would be an advantage for a government’s leadership to try to go against it.

In addition they would find it difficult to persuade their people to accept such a course of action. It would not be in the people’s best interest and it is becoming progressively more difficult for governments to keep their populations in the dark. States are becoming more urbanised, education is spreading and the internet gives unprecedented access to uncensored information. So even in the many countries, including in countries where the media is part of the establishment, it can be difficult for government propaganda, misinformation, evasions or lies to conceal the truth.
NOTES

1. When commander during the Korean War, General McArthur wanted to use them against the Chinese. In the 1950s the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, prided himself in being prepared to ‘go to the brink’. In 1963 the Washington Post reported that Senator Barry Goldwater advocated that NATO commander in chief should have the discretion to use tactical nuclear weapons for emergencies. In ‘Empire and the Bomb: How the U.S. Uses Nuclear Weapons to Dominate the World’, Joseph Gerson writes “In 1967 and 1970, Presidents Johnson and Nixon respectively threatened first-strike nuclear attacks to ensure continued US predominance in the Middle East. William Arkin estimates that, as in Lebanon in 1958, in each case, the US brought ‘more than one thousand nuclear weapons’ to bear on the crisis”.

The use of nuclear weapons has recently been considered a possible option by American war strategists. American Commentator and columnist Ryan McMaken writes:

‘Only the most bloodthirsty hawks of the Cold War ever planned to establish nuclear arsenals as anything other than a deterrent………’

‘Fast forward to 2002, and we find that things have changed considerably. In February, someone at the Pentagon who had not yet completed the transformation into a complete sociopath leaked the "Nuclear Posture Review" which outlined plans for a nuclear "end game" with Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and Syria, none of which possess nuclear weapons. The report also outlined plans to let the missiles fly on Russia and China as well, even though virtually everyone on the face of the Earth thought we had actually normalized relations with them. It turns out, much to the surprise of the Chinese and the Russians, that they are still potential enemies in a nuclear holocaust.’

www.lewrockwell.com/mcmaken/mcmaken63

2. The super-powers have their eyes on space as the next potential ‘launch platform’. Already inter-continental ballistic missiles are designed to enter space to speed their journey to Armageddon. When one side succeeds in building up its nuclear arsenal to such a degree that it has clear supremacy over the other it may feel more secure but also another possibility comes into view. It can become possible for the dominant side to attack the other so effectively that it can destroy the victims’ entire nuclear arsenal in one surprise assault. This is called a ‘first strike’ capability. The execution of a first strike option against a major power would mean the killing of countless millions of civilians. The Americans had nuclear superiority over the USSR in the 1950s:
‘If the Soviets had invaded Western Europe in the 1950s, the United States intended to win World War III by immediately launching a massive nuclear strike on the Soviet Union, its Eastern European clients, and its Chinese ally. These plans were not the concoctions of midlevel Pentagon bureaucrats; they were approved by the highest level of the U.S. government.’


Now, after the Cold War the U.S. is again in a significantly dominant position. At the same time as the American nuclear arsenal has become stronger, the Russian arsenal has become much weaker. The balance of terror’ strategy of ‘deterrence’ is inherently unstable.

3. General Curtis E. LeMay, someone else with extensive experience of matters of military command and control, having been founder and former Commander in Chief of the United States Strategic Air Command has written, “In my opinion a general war will grow through a series of political miscalculations and accidents rather than through any deliberate attack by either side.”

(http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/fredikle)

Bruce G. Blair, President of the Centre for Defense Information and at one time a launch officer at a U.S. Minuteman missile base, has remarked, referring to the need of leaders to make almost instantaneous decisions when nuclear alarms are raised, that “It is obvious that the rushed nature of the process, from warning to decision to action, risks causing a catastrophic mistake.”... “This system is an accident waiting to happen.”

http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/fredikle

Fred Ikle of the Rand Corporation (an influential American conservative ‘think tank’) has written, “Given the huge and far-flung missile forces, ready to be launched from land and sea on both sides, the scope for disaster by accident is immense. ... In a matter of seconds - through technical accident or human failure - mutual deterrence might thus collapse.”

http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/fredikle

Colin S.Grey, Chairman of the National Institute for Public Policy warns us very clearly of the appalling risk we are taking: “The problem, indeed the enduring problem, is that we are resting our future upon a nuclear deterrence system concerning which we cannot tolerate even a single malfunction’.

http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/fredikle

4. In August 13, 2005, President Bush was asked what would happen if diplomacy failed in his negotiations s with Iran. He replied ‘All options are on the table’. On April 18th 2006, he was asked if the options included a nuclear strike, he replied ‘All options are on the table’.
5. HIGH ALERT

Robert Joseph, President Bush’s Under secretary of State for Arms Control, wrote in 1998 that the US should not make any agreement with Russia to ensure greater safety and security because:

‘De-alerting undermines a basic principle of deterrence, namely, the ability to retaliate promptly so as to prevent any aggressor from assuming it can achieve a “fait accompli.” In this context, assertions that de-alerting of U.S. strategic forces would eliminate fear of surprise attack have not been demonstrated…..De-alerting should not be allowed to become a back door to unilateral nuclear disarmament.’


In his paper ‘The Future of Britain’s Weapons of Mass Destruction’, Dan Plesch wrote:

‘Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of the continuation of the hair trigger alert is the risk of Armageddon by accident, a problem made worse since the public and political leaders alike are mostly unaware that the nuclear threat still hangs over them’. [emphasis added]

For our security we have made ourselves reliant on computers and electronic warning systems. Bruce Blair wrote in 2003:

‘The United States and Russia remain in each other's nuclear cross-hairs. War planners in both countries remain, believe it or not, preoccupied with preparing to fight a large-scale nuclear war with each other on short notice. Both sides keep thousands of weapons aimed at each other and poised for immediate launch.’

www.edi.org/blair/hair-trigger-dangers

Moreover,

‘Much of this decision process has been designed to be quasi-automatic. It can reasonably be described as going to war by checklist, enacting a prepared script, with little margin for human error or technical malfunction. The nuclear war machinery has a hair-trigger quality. And that quality has been a constant in the nuclear equation for decades.’

www.armscontrolwonk.com/1697/blair-on-hair-trigger-alert. 2007

Accident or misunderstanding are not the only hazards. Bruce Blair considered that by keeping weapons on hair-trigger alert there is a huge risk of terrorists stealing and using such weapons:

‘In an era of potential nuclear terrorism, the theft of a nuclear weapon from a storage site could spell an eventual disaster for an American city,'
but the seizure of a strategic missile or group of missiles ready for immediate firing could be apocalyptic for entire nations.’ [emphasis added]

www.edi.org/blair/hair-trigger-dangers

During April 2005 A highly significant statement was issued calling for the removal of all strategic nuclear weapons from “hair-trigger alert” and “launch on warning” status (“launch on warning” means that the nuclear arsenal is launched as soon as the leader and Chiefs of Staff decide that they are under attack, on the basis of electronic data and before detonation on the ground)).

The statement was signed and endorsed by 32 Nobel Laureates, 237 organisations and parliamentarians from around the world, the European Parliament and the Australian Senate. Of the 32 Nobel Laureates signing the Statement, eight were Peace Laureates, including the Dalai Lama, Mairead Maquire, Joseph Rotblat, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It was signed by a total of 53 parliamentarians from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Russia, Belgium, Germany, Brazil, U.S.A., and Italy.

This statement was issued at a press release by Association of World Citizens and included the following paragraphs:

‘A number of terrifying 'near misses' to nuclear war have taken place, both during and after the end of the Cold War, in which the fate of civilization has depended on correct decision-making by highly stressed military personnel or on presidents whose sobriety has sometimes been questionable’

‘Moreover, the nuclear danger has accelerated with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan, and the evolution of centralized command and control systems in those countries. The subcontinent is moving toward a highly dangerous 'hair trigger' status.’


Steven Starr of Columbia, Missouri, is a scientist who has made a point of thoroughly investigating this subject.

In October 2007 Mr Starr made a power-point presentation, to delegates from the world’s superpowers and developing nations, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

"Right now," Starr said, ‘Leaders can order a strike that could destroy all of civilization in under an hour." He further spelled out the nature of the menace:
"What we have, in essence, is a computerized self-destruct mechanism for the Northern Hemisphere that is sitting there just waiting to go off, whether by accident or miscalculation or menace." [emphasis added]

"If you launch a successful first strike, but it makes the world uninhabitable, then how successful was it?" Starr asked. "They call it a regional war, but nothing is regional when you’re dealing with nuclear arms. ... When it comes down to it, we have to start looking at ourselves as a species." He likened the present nuclear situation to a loaded gun aimed at the planet.

The non-nuclear nations are particularly conscious of the extreme danger to which everyone is exposed by the high alert posture. Consequently at the beginning of November 2007, The General Assembly of the UN’s Disarmament Committee were asked to vote on a motion calling for the high alert status of nuclear weapons to be withdrawn everywhere. The vote was 124 to 3 in favour of taking them off high alert.

To our shame one of the three countries opposing the motion was the UK (the other two were France and the US – Russia abstained). It is amazing that the British government should oppose such an eminently sane suggestion. Is this what the British public want? Were they asked for their opinion? They were not; nor were they generally informed of the British Government’s behaviour in the matter.

6. The relationship between proliferation and countries deploying and stockpiling nuclear weapons is widely known and acknowledged although not by the countries which posses them. This common sense insight and common knowledge was recognised by a major investigation and report instigated by the United Nations.

In 2003 Dr Hans Blix was asked to set up an independent international commission to look at the issues concerning Weapons of Mass Destruction and their means of delivery. Dr Blix was given the mandate to handpick the commissioners and to chair the commission. 14 experts from all over the world were chosen, representing a broad and relevant geographical and political base with a vast reservoir of expert knowledge and political experience, spanning the governmental, academic and nongovernmental arenas.

The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC)
This commission commenced its work in early 2004 and two and a half years of research and study later the unanimous WMDC report ‘Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms’, was presented to the United Nations. Its central message is that in the last decade the arms control and disarmament process has stagnated and must be revived and pursued in parallel with efforts to prevent the spread of WMD to further states and to terrorist movements.
The Report contends that the way to prevent the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction is to totally remove them from the planet.

7. Although the Americans have the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world the Bush administration proposed to build 8 new sites around the US specifically for the design of more weapons. Peter Wilk, M.D., President of the US’s Physicians for Social Responsibility found this absolutely incredible. He wrote on the 2007 anniversary of Hiroshima:

‘Now, 62 years later, the Bush administration wants to start building new nuclear bombs. They’ve got to be kidding. How is this possible?
It is not only possible; the planning for it is well under way. A new design has been selected. A proposal to proceed with development is before Congress. Even more ominous, plans have been drafted to build a new generation of nuclear bomb-making factories at eight sites across the country -- intended to produce thousands of new nuclear weapons for decades to come. What are they thinking? How could this possibly be serving our national security interests?
The stunning reality is that nobody knows the answers to these questions. U.S. nuclear weapons policy is completely out of date.’

http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/08/06/3007 and
www.pressherald.mainetoday.com

Under President Bush the U.S. government created a competition among armaments companies to design a new generation of more useable nuclear weapons. The new administration should reverse such trends.

In September 2005 President Putin said that Russia was developing “new strategic high-precision systems” that can alter “course and height”. The purpose of this development is to make the Russian weapons more elusive so that they can avoid the missiles of the U.S.’s proposed Missile Defense System which will deploy American missiles that can destroy Russian missiles. Russia’s plans are likely to induce the US to design its missiles so that they can chase the elusive Russian missiles which will then have to be improved …and so on and on. The two countries are on a treadmill and as the MAD system of measure and counter measures accelerates it becomes more and more complex and more accident prone.

8. …One third of this produce, a million kilograms, is in Russia. We are warned by Professor John Avery, of the Nobel Peace Prize winning Pugwash group, that:

‘There is a continuing danger that these fissile materials will fall into the hands of terrorists, or organized criminals, or irresponsible governments……. If the
world does not take strong steps to eliminate fissionable materials and nuclear weapons, it will only be a matter of time before they will be used in terrorist attacks on major cities.

http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/treat.htm

In view of the dangers from proliferation and terrorists, Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said, in 2005, that he found it ‘almost incredible’ that the necessary restrictions on fissile materials were not imposed long ago.

As John Avery said, ‘In this dangerous situation, the only logical thing for the world to do is to get rid of both fissile materials and nuclear weapons as rapidly as possible.’

http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/fredikle

It has repeatedly been pointed out by physicists that the manufacture of a small nuclear weapon would be quite feasible for terrorists who acquire the necessary fissionable material. The Italian nuclear physicist Francesco Calogero, for example, believes that terrorists could easily construct a nuclear bomb if they had obtained a critical mass of highly enriched uranium. He said that such a device could kill more than 100,000 people if exploded in a large city (see www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/fredikle).

The deterrent, of course, cannot address the problem of fissile material being smuggled into the country and since hundreds of thousands of containers enter the country every year sooner or later some highly enriched uranium is going to get in.

9 In supporting nuclear weapons deployment we condone the building of Armageddon machines capable of killing hundreds of millions of people at the press of a button and we authorise others to press the button at their discretion. If it is a crime to use nuclear weapons then arguably in reality, if not yet in law, it is a crime to prepare to use them.

At the beginning of the 20th century civilian war casualties were 5% of the total. By the 1990s the proportion was at least 75%. In Iraq it is over 90%. If we accept this escalation uncritically there could be a danger that modern wars become a staging post to the acceptance of attack on civilian populations with nuclear weapons.

As George Lakoff, author and Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley writes Modern warfare is ‘not just military in the traditional sense. It leaves a nation in rubble, and leads to death, maiming, disease, joblessness, impoverishment, starvation, mass refugees, lawlessness, rape, and incalculable pain and suffering’.

10. A faint indication of the effects of nuclear contamination can be gauged from the devastation that was threatened in certain nuclear accidents. During the 50 years
up to 2002 the United States had suffered 32 known major nuclear weapons accidents.

One of these, on 17th January 1966, occurred when a B-52 bomber carrying four nuclear weapons collided with a tanker aircraft during refuelling and crashed near Palomares, Spain. The high explosive in the weapons detonated on impact and two of the nuclear bombs spread deadly plutonium over a 650 acre area. Cleanup operations had to include destruction of crops, ploughing up the soil to a depth of 10 inches and the stripping and carting away of topsoil, depending on the severity of the contamination. Radiated material was placed in four thousand six hundred, 55 gallon steel drums and shipped to the U.S. for burial.

The persistence of the radiating effects of materials is described by naming their ‘half-life’. This is the time which must elapse before its rate of emission of radiation is half its original amount. The half-life of plutonium is 24,000 years. There is no way of ensuring that the poisoned material will not find its way back into the ecosystem in that time span.

The nuclear disaster at Chernobyl caused huge amounts of pollution. Richard Rhodes wrote in his book ‘Arsenals of Folly’ "When the leaves fell from the chestnut trees that are the glory of Kiev, proud on its high bluff above the Dnieper River, they had to be raked up, all three hundred thousand tons of them, baled and buried outside the city as low-level nuclear waste."

11. www.brookings.edu/projects/archive/nucweapons
12. www.publicpolitics.net
13. www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/sep/21/military.armstrade
14. (see www.arrtu.co.uk/globalstats).

Furthermore even a legitimate military target must not be attacked if civilian death or injury, or damage to civilian objects, would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated from the attack. Henry Kissinger, in a February 2009 speech could not see how nuclear weapons could meet this criterion:

“Any use of nuclear weapons is certain to involve a level of casualties and devastation out of proportion to foreseeable foreign-policy objectives.”

The inhumanity of these weapons, the amount of suffering caused and their indiscriminate nature was emphasized by one of the judges, Judge Fleischhauer of Germany, who said in a separate opinion,

"The nuclear weapon is, in many ways, the negation of the humanitarian considerations underlying the law applicable in armed conflict and the principle of neutrality. The nuclear weapon cannot distinguish between civilian and military targets. It causes immeasurable suffering. The
Judge Bedjaoui, President of the Court, in a separate statement, called nuclear weapons "the ultimate evil".

[This concept of the 'ultimate evil' is an important and chilling one; one which is worth pondering. It means that in deploying and stockpiling these weapons we humans who own them have reached a nadir from which we desperately need to rise up if we are to regain a justified pride in our humanity]

The International Court of Justice had been asked to give an Advisory Opinion on the legality of nuclear weapons. In arriving at its Advisory Opinion the majority view of the Court included that they could not conclude definitely whether or not the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in one extreme scenario only. That was in the extreme circumstance of self-defence 'in which the very survival of a state would be at stake.' They stated that they were not giving an Advisory Opinion one way or the other on that extreme case. The UK Government says that it would use nuclear weapons only “in extreme circumstances”. It consistently fails to add the ICJ’s essential additional criterion: “in which the very survival of a State would be at stake”. There has been no explanation of how widely or narrowly the Government interprets the meaning of “State survival”. Some Government statements suggest that the threshold for use falls well below that of an extreme circumstance involving state survival. For example, the Government has often referred to nuclear weapons defending our “vital Interests”. These could refer to conventional UK forces overseas under threat from biological or chemical warfare. It has never been made clear what is meant by “vital interests”.

However, although the majority made this provision, three of the seven judges, including Judge Weeramantry (one of the worlds greatest jurists and for a time Vice-President of the International Court of Justice), considered that this exception should not be made. He held that there is no exception under any circumstances (including that of ensuring the survival of a State) to the general principle that use of nuclear weapons is illegal.

In the years since the opinion of the International Criminal Court was given many international lawyers have further analysed the judgement and other information and concluded that nuclear weapons are indeed illegal in all circumstances. These include Louise Doswald-Beck (of the University Centre for International Humanitarian Law, Geneva), and Professor Philippe Sands, QC (Co-director of the Project on International Courts and Tribunals at London University). The reasons given are the unpredictability of the effects of nuclear weapons. Any use of these weapons, as well as creating a highly radioactive fireball and generating an intense blast wave and heat flash, also emits radiation and radioactive fallout. Any use is therefore likely to cause
'superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering' to targeted combatants and to expose non-combatants (civilians of an attacked state or of neutrals or even of the attacker) to the risk of radiation sickness, to leukaemia and other cancers for decades to come and perhaps genetic change leading to harmful mutations in succeeding generations [see World Disarmament Campaign, Memo SND3 1101].

Some Nuclear-Armed states have claimed that modern nuclear weapons can be accurately targeted and that they would not therefore automatically transgress International Humanitarian Law. However, the unforeseeable effects of a weapon must also be taken into account when assessing compliance with the principle of discrimination. No one could reliably forecast the complex atmospheric conditions and the direction of the wind at any given moment. The effects would be so unpredictable that accurate targeting would be irrelevant. No nuclear weapons could be used with any assurance that their effects would fall within the bounds of legality.

Henry Kissinger, confirms the uncertainty factor:

“In office I recoiled before the options produced by the prevalent nuclear strategies, which raised the issue of the moral right to inflict a disaster of such magnitude on society and the world. Moreover, these prospects were generated by weapons for which there could not be any operational experience, so that calculations and limitations were largely theoretical.”

17. The clinging to and modernising of nuclear arsenals has been condemned from many quarters. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations from 1997 to 2007, said,

‘...by clinging to and modernising their own arsenals, even when there is no obvious threat to their national security that nuclear weapons could deter, nuclear weapon states encourage others – particularly those that do face real threats in their own region – to regard nuclear weapons as essential, - both to their security and to their status. It would be much easier to confront proliferators if the very existence of nuclear weapons were universally acknowledged as dangerous and ultimately illegitimate'  

www.un.org1News1Press1docs120061sgsm10767.dot.Htm

19.  www.ICANw.org
Ronald Reagan called for the abolition of "all nuclear weapons" which he considered to be "totally irrational, totally inhumane, good for nothing but killing, possibly destructive of life on earth and civilization."