

## **Nuclear Weapons**

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a major East-West confrontation now seems highly unlikely, but as nuclear weapons spread to other nations the temptation to use them on a smaller scale is increasing. We still have not faced the possibility that the most impressive monument to our technological abilities will be nuclear destruction.

## **The Arms Race**

From 1981 to 1988 Iraq spent \$43 billion on advanced military technology for making chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

A more subtle cause of war is male dominance in political and military decisions, that combat and war have been seen as tests of masculinity.

Perhaps as men share in the nurture of children, and as women have a larger role in public life, both men and women will seek less violent ways of settling conflicts between nations.

Unlike investment in industrial equipment or agricultural development, money put into weapons generates no further wealth.

For the period from 1960 to 1988, military expenditures amounted to 10.5 percent of the GNP in the Soviet Union, 6.4 percent in the United States, 3.7 percent in West Germany, and only 0.9 percent in Japan.

Third World countries spent billions on arms even as malnutrition and poverty became more acute.

The sale of arms to the Third World has aggravated regional tensions and has strengthened authoritarian regimes. Since 1945, 125 armed conflicts in the Third World have killed 22 million people (of whom three fourths have been civilians) and created 13 million refugees.

Nuclear war would be the ultimate violation of all human and environmental values.

The bomb dropped on Hiroshima killed 80,000 people by burns, blast, and radiation. Today the world has 51,000 nuclear warheads.

One large nuclear warhead has more explosive power than all the weapons used by all nations in World War II.

*A major nuclear attack* on the United States would result in 70 to 160 million deaths (35 to 77 percent of the population) in the first thirty days.

A major nuclear attack would create a *nuclear winter* over most of the world. Temperatures would drop by 18° to 45° F for 6 to 20 weeks.

The total extinction of the human race would be unlikely, but it cannot be ruled out.

It is sober to realize that we have been willing to accept even a small risk of the *extinction of humanity* and that we might face such a risk again in the future.

Only a vision of our interconnectedness with all people and all forms of life can empower us to try to make such catastrophe impossible by getting rid of these weapons.

## **Ethical and Theological Issues**

The purpose and intention in having nuclear weapons is not to use them but to avoid their use. If an action is wrong, it is wrong to threaten the action, even if one hopes not to have to carry out the threat.

Much of the past debate about deterrence has drawn on the “*just war*” principles elaborated by Aquinas and others in the Middle Ages. The principle of proportionality states that the damage and costs of military action must be proportionate to the good expected from it.

God’s gift of human freedom extends even to the possibility of self-destruction.

The end of humanity would be an immense setback for God’s purposes on planet earth, though it would not be the end of God’s continuing activity here and elsewhere in the cosmos, nor would it end God’s own eternal life.

Religious conflicts today play a major part in some of the most serious regional tensions.

The world’s religious communities must collaborate in furthering a common vision of peace and justice.

## **Arms Control Treaties**

The 1968 *Nonproliferation Treaty* required states without nuclear weapons to refrain from acquiring them.

The nations participating in the U.N. Test Ban Review conference in 1991 voted 75 to 2 to continue efforts to achieve a Comprehensive *Test Ban*. The only two negative votes were those of the United States and Britain.

## **Global Security**

The first steps toward genuine *nuclear disarmament* are the Comprehensive Test Ban and the strengthening of the Nonproliferation Treaty.

*Offensive* conventional weapons could be reduced and phased out while nonthreatening *defensive* weapons were retained and improved.

The Strengthening of the United Nations resources for anticipating conflicts and attempting to resolve them peacefully should be expanded.

The various agencies of the U.N. specializing in food, health, trade, and the environment have all done excellent work, but they could play a much larger role in promoting such a sustainable development.