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Recommended Citation

Patel, Shailesh, "The Hopeful Elimination of Nuclear Weapons" (2016). *2016 Honors Council of the Illinois Region Papers*. Paper 2.
<http://dc.cod.edu/hcir2016/2>

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English 1102- 012

21 July 2015

The hopeful elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Developed in a century that saw two world wars, multiple mass genocides, and downright human decency, nuclear weapons represent all the negatives of the 20th century. There is no doubt that the creation of the nuclear weapons was a milestone for humanity. Their creation exemplified the intellect of mankind, and these weapons of mass destruction were indeed needed to maintain some form of peace back then. However, they have no room in the 21st century. Nuclear weapons should be eliminated, because their existence is becoming increasingly useless and dangerous in the modern world.

It began on the bloody battle grounds of the first world war. A war that saw monarchies fall from Asia Minor to the heartlands of Europe itself. The war resulted in no significant gain of land for either side, but did in fact result in a catastrophic loss of human life. It became clear to the “winning nations” that a more effective method of warfare was needed. This research and development was hindered from the beginning due to the effects of the depression that impacted the whole world. This super weapon was not needed until Hitler’s war machine crossed the Polish border starting the second world war. The allies in 1942 decided to create a super weapon, this in order to counter the supposed Nazi atomic bomb project, which had been able to achieve splitting the atom back in 1939. Urged on by Albert Einstein, Franklin Roosevelt and the allied countries of Canada and Great Britain founded the Manhattan Project lead by J. Robert Oppenheimer. This group was able to conceive the first nuclear weapons- the atomic bombs. After

Germany and Italy capitulate, its ally Japan was preparing for an invasion of the homeland. The projected estimations on casualties were extraordinary, and this led to President Harry Truman to drop the only nuclear weapons in history. The bombs were dropped on the cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the toll on infrastructure and human life was ineffable. This bomb led to the surrender of Japan, and began the Cold War. It was during this time when the most technological advances to the bomb happened, and the time the most bombs were manufactured. By the end of century, the Iron curtain had lifted and the Soviet Union was history, but the bomb remained. As a matter of fact more countries become nuclear capable such as: China, India, Israel, France and Pakistan. There are thousands of nuclear warheads in arsenals around the world, each able to deliver death efficiently. Only recently has removing them from existence gained any movement.

Creating and maintaining nuclear weapons is not cheap. Countries spend a large amount of their respective budget towards nuclear weapons. There is a reason that regimes such as Iran have difficulty making nukes- they are expensive. North Korea was able to create a nuclear device, but at the cost of the welfare of all its citizens. In The United States still spends at least \$52 billion annually on nuclear-related programs.(Weeks NP). Now granted this estimation factors in the cost of reactors, and other means of producing nuclear energy. A more precise quote spent on nuclear related weapons comes from the Congressional Budget Office which is around 23.1 billion (Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2014 to 2023 2). This is a lot of money. The United States faces many finance related problems, and these 23 billion dollars would greatly help in solving these problems. There are homeless people on the street, spend that cash helping them. Families who work hard but go hungry, another viable option to spend 23 billion on. In many places schools and public benefits are being shut down, once again spending 23 billion dollars here would impact greatly. The money we use to maintain these weapons can

benefit vast amounts of people. It would seem that as time went along the cost of nuclear weapons would decrease, this is not the case. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2023 the United States will spend 355 billion dollars (Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2014 to 2023 2). In nine years, our government is set to spend 17 times more than what is currently squandered. This also with modern diplomatic cooperation, and the current treaty nonproliferation. In a world that seems to be gravitating towards long term peace, spending on nuclear weapons is counterproductive and borders on being cynical. The funding of these behemoth weapons needs to stop, because as time moves on they become increasingly useless. We should invest in our future more, not on weapons that have the ability to annihilate it.

When Dr. Oppenheimer remarked on the dropping of the first atomic bomb he was quoted saying the phrase, “Now I have become death, destroyer of worlds”. The creation of the bomb also made Einstein quote ““I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones”. Why did the father of atomic weaponry and the man who laid the foundation for atomic energy regrade their “success” so negatively? Because they saw the power of the first bomb, and knew that humans would only enhance its abilities as time went on. They were in fact correct. The weapons that were used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki dwarfed in comparison to the bombs that were developed later on. The largest bomb in the U.S. arsenal the B83, currently holds 1.2 megatons of yield (50 Facts About U.S. Nuclear Weapons Today NP). The Russians largest nuclear bomb was the Tsar Bomba unleashed a massive 50 megatons of yield (Harrison, Katherine, and Hugh 19). The earlier bombs yielded much less, and yet their outcome was devastating. An journal that studies the effect of radiation on humans stated, “This latter type of effect is very likely due to inhaled radioactive material, which caused destruction of inner tissues; that is, internal exposure.” (Ochiai 214). This meant

that that radioactive material that was inhaled, caused problems to the individual, leading to destruction of tissue and eventually death. The truth of the matter is that people died from health effects even right after the blast (Ochiai 213). The bomb not only produced a great fireball, and an awesome mushroom cloud, it also produced an ample amount of radiation. This radiation not only killed people in the direct aftermath of the bomb, but went on to effect the survivors and their offsprings lives immensely. From the journal that studied the effects of radiation on living organisms, “Another low-exposure effect is seen in the fact that people who survived the atomic bomb have suffered long from a whole variety of illnesses, including various cancers. Some of them are still suffering” (Ochiai 214). The various cancers mentioned before hand carry on in the offspring causing the effects of the bomb to live long after it ceases to exist. These birth defects were however small in number, but they still in fact existed. These are children whose lives were condemned before they were even born, and this because of mistakes from the generation previous. Also take into account the type of bomb that was dropped, the smaller atomic bomb. Bombs that we have today are much more effective in killing. The Tsar Bomba mentioned above was 3,300 more times powerful than the ones dropped in Japan (Harrison, Katherine, and Hughes 18). More sophisticated bombs can cause more damage to a larger population. These nuclear devices are no joke. At the peak of the Cold War the United States possessed 31, 255 nuclear weapons and the Soviets contained 40,159 nuclear weapons (50 Facts About U.S. Nuclear Weapons Today NP). Those numbers are thankfully down today, however, an alarming rate of bombs still remain. The U.S. arsenal contains 4,650 armed warheads today, and this number does not account for the 2,700 bombs that are waiting disarmament (50 Facts About U.S. Nuclear Weapons Today). The effects of nuclear weapons effect the population greatly, and their

impact can be felt long after their dropped. These weapons continued existence creates apocalyptic consequences, and its better to see them gone rather than have humanity suffer.

With the rise of extremists groups, primarily in Iraq and the Levant, nuclear weapons existence has become even more dangerous. Groups such as ISIL and Al-Quade have intentions of acquiring nukes, and using them on a population. These intentions have been expressed, as this article from the *New York Times* shows, “At least four terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, have demonstrated interest in using a nuclear device. These groups operate in or near states with histories of questionable nuclear security practices” (Brill and Luongo NP). Terrorists groups do exactly what their names suggests, spread terror, and what better what to achieve this than possessing a nuclear weapon. They operate near countries like Iran, which until recently had pursued the bomb relentlessly. Although Iran never accomplished a nuclear device they do contain enriched uranium, a key ingredient for a nuclear weapon. This except from an article explains, “Terrorists do not need to steal a nuclear weapon. It is quite possible to make an improvised nuclear device from highly enriched uranium or plutonium being used for civilian purposes. And there is a black market in such material. There have been 18 confirmed thefts or loss of weapons-usable nuclear material” (Brill and Luongo NP). There are still some that claim that this fear is baseless. A quote from Weiss says, “To illustrate in more detail how fear has distorted the threat of nuclear terrorism, consider the three possibilities for terrorists to obtain a nuclear weapon: steal one; be given one created by a nuclear weapon state; manufacture one. None of these possibilities has a high probability of occurring”(77). This may be the case, but as these groups rise in numbers and strength the more power they yield. There nuclear capabilities do not necessarily have to come from Iran or where they operate. Abdul Qadeer Khan, father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, was arrested in 2004 for transferring nuclear weapons

technology (Norris NP). This was the capabilities of terrorists groups in 2004 and as time went on these group gained strength as well as a growing malice to those who do not support their ideologies. The dismantlement of nuclear weapons would help eliminate these risks, because there will be no nukes to steal, as well as no nukes to use as an example. The further existence of nuclear weapons means further dangers from nuclear terrorism.

Mistakes happen. Every human makes them, some more than others. The people in charge of our nuclear weapons are humans and are also prone to mistakes. In an interview by CBC's *60 Minutes*, a reporter goes into a nuclear silo in the United States, and shows how a nuclear missile is kept armed and ready waiting for a command from the President. The following quote is a conversation of the reporter and an officer,

Lesley Stahl: "If by accident or a deliberate act, one of those missiles was launched, is there a way to disarm it or bring it back?"

Carl Jones: "No, we can only launch with direction from the president of the United States.

Now once that missile has gone, there's no way to recall it or disarm the warhead that's on the missile. Once they're gone. They're gone." (Stahl NP)

It does not seem fair, if by accident a nuclear device were to be launched by accident, that there would be an innumerable number of people that will have to suffer for this mistake. These mistakes are not just this author's panicked hypothetical scenarios, this has happened before. In 1961, a bomber broke in half, and two nuclear bombs fell from the sky and landed near the city of Goldsboro, North Carolina (Bordeaux NP). These bombs were active and could have detonated causing the utter annihilation of one of the Carolinas. The reason that these bombs did not explode was, as this quote from an article from CNN tells, "as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara put it back then, "By the slightest margin of chance, literally the failure of two wires

to cross, a nuclear explosion was averted” (Bordeaux NP). This mishap almost caused an Hiroshima and Nagasaki type explosion in the United States itself. These type of accidents just did no happen once or twice, “There are at least 21 declassified accounts between 1950 and 1968 of aircraft-related incidents in which nuclear weapons were lost, accidentally dropped, jettisoned for safety reasons or on board planes that crashed. The accidents occurred in various U.S. states, Greenland, Spain, Morocco and England, and over the Pacific and Atlantic oceans and the Mediterranean Sea” (Bordeaux NP). Those numbers are scary. To think that nearly 21 times our world has come very close to nuclear bombs going off. One mishap may not lead to total extinction of the human race, but the impacted zone would be inhabitable for humans for generations. It is just not low ranking officers and soldiers that make mistakes, high ranking officials often do ridicules ones. One such example is an U.S. general who over saw the 20th Air Force, a division that had three nuclear wings. This general was later fired for reasons that belong on a comedy show, “A U.S. general who oversaw nuclear weapons boozed, fraternized with "hot women" and disrespected his hosts during an official visit to Russia this year” (Karimi NP). One cannot make this up, some of the comments made by him are highly immoral for a man of his stature, “During a layover in Switzerland, the report states, he bragged loudly about his position as commander of a nuclear force, saying he "saves the world from war every day” (Karimi NP). This was the type of person that the United States had commanding multiple nuclear weapons. It is evident that this general was drunk when talking to Russians and that he behaved highly irresponsibly. We as a world put a lot of faith in those who oversee our nuclear weapons, perhaps the best way to avoid another accident is to eliminate nukes all together. As stated once before, one nuclear weapon may not end the world, or even perhaps two, but the actual consequences of dropping them are ones that hopefully mankind never finds out.

Despite the clear uselessness and the sheer danger of nuclear weapons there are some people that would like see the continued existence of nuclear weapons. There are two basic counter arguments for the abolition of nuclear weapons, one is deterrence, and the other is that there has never been a modern war with nuclear possessing countries. The nuclear deterrence theory is that if a nation has nuclear arms, it would prevent war due to the fear of annihilation from those said nukes. This is a policy that was used in the 20th century primarily through the Cold War. Although this policy was arguably effective during the Cold War, this policy is outdated. In the Cold War this deterrence was focused on one sole country- the Soviet Union. As time went along, and when the Soviet Union collapsed, our methods of deterrence have not relatively changed. This excerpt from an article says, "Because deterrence happens in the mind of the enemy, "the requirements for deterrence will differ with each party that we might try to deter and may well differ in each circumstance or scenario" (Bradley 73-74). The rouge states that want to posses nuclear arms today will need to have different deterrence methods. Writing about deterrence is simple, practicing it is more complex. Nations such as North Korea and Iran are still looking for nuclear weapons, mainly because western countries have an abundance of them. Reducing nuclear stockpiles around the world along with international sanction would help end these disastrous pursuits. The other counter argument is that countries that do have nuclear arms have never gone to war. This is pointed out by Tepperman in his article, "Second, there's never been a nuclear, or even a nonnuclear, war between two states that possess them. Just stop for a second and think about that: it's hard to overstate how remarkable it is, especially given the singular viciousness of the 20th century"(NP). Tepperman's argument is that since any of these states have gone to war with each other, they are less likely to use them in the long term. He also defends his argument by mentioning some form of deterrence,

“Their leaders may be stupid, petty, venal, even evil, but they tend to do things only when they're pretty sure they can get away with them. Take war: a country will start a fight only when it's almost certain it can get what it wants at an acceptable price. Not even Hitler or Saddam waged wars they didn't think they could win.” (Tepperman NP)

There are vile leaders, and one would agree that they only wage wars that they can win.

However, it is important to think about what would happen if a leader grows disgruntled, or if they would use nukes weapons as a form of retaliation. The most dangerous people are the ones who have nothing to lose, and if one becomes a leader of a nuclear capable nation the consequences will be astronomically terrifying. Of course all this is hypothetical, however, war is part of human nature and when the next one evidently occurs — can nuclear capable countries be reliable upon to not use those weapons? Nuclear weapons have served the purpose they were created for, and the negatives of their existence far outweigh the benefits.

The creation of nuclear weapons once again exemplified the intellect of mankind. This poses a question that will be raised continuously as technology advances, “Because we can, should we?” These weapons of mass destruction cause chaos on a diabolical level, and the risks of keeping them in our arsenals grow steadily higher each day. The formation of these bombs disgusted and continue to disgust many, including the very man who made them possible. Not only do they have the ability to kill mercilessly, they also represent how far humans are willing to reach in order to exterminate other humans. Weapons of mass destruction indeed. Nuclear weapons should be forced into extinction faster, because they contain the power to force our own.

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July 23rd, 2015