The Nuclear Threat

The Global Threat of Nuclear Weapons

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What is a Nuclear Weapon?

- Explosive weapon with destructive force from sudden release of energy
- Using “fission” and/or “fusion”
  - **Fission**: energy derived by SPLITTING atoms (1st gen bombs)
  - **Fusion**: energy derived by FUSING together atoms
- Today’s nukes have a combo of both fission and fusion
- Detonate chemical explosives around a sub-critical sphere/“pit” – usually Uranium or Plutonium
Video of Nuclear Weapon

- https://youtu.be/5gD_TL1BqFg?t=1m52s
History of Nuclear Weapons

- United States was first country in the world to develop and use nukes

- **Manhattan Project** (Robert Oppenheimer, Father of Atomic Bomb)
  - Project sponsored by U.S. govt
  - U.K. and Canada supported it
  - Assigned to gather intelligence on German nuclear weapons project + create own nuke

- **Why was the U.S. govt interested?**
  - Pearl Harbor (Dec. 7, 1941)
  - “atmosphere of enthusiasm and urgency”
  - First atomic bomb detonated in New Mexico, July 1945 (Trinity Explosion)
Use of Nuclear Weapons

World War II (First and only time in history)

- **Hiroshima**: August 6, 1945, “Little Boy” detonated
- **Nagasaki**: August 9, 1945, “Fat Man” detonated

- Killed an estimated of 226,000 people in Japan
- President Truman justified decision saying:
  - “We have used [the bomb] against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor...against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare”
- Truman [Address](#) to the American public
Did we win? Yes and No…

- Sept. 2, 1945, Japan surrenders after attack (V-J Day)
- But… two weeks after Hiroshima/Nagasaki, Stalin signed a decree to lay the basis for a Soviet nuclear program
- Four years later (1949) USSR conducted its first nuclear test explosion

“The fact that the Americans used the bomb meant a lot. That meant they were ready to use it again, perhaps against another enemy, against another target.” – Vladislav Zubok, Russian Historian

- U.K. (1952), France (1960) and China (1964) followed suit thereafter
- A nuclear arms race began this way…
Arms Race (Cold War)

- Nuclear Arms Race took place during the Cold War (1947-1991)
- **Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)** was reached
  
  MAD: military doctrine which full-scale use of nuclear weapons by two or more opposing sides would cause complete annihilation of BOTH the attacker and defender

- Both U.S. and Russia reached enough nuclear power to obliterate each other
- EX: Cuban Missile Crisis (next slide)
Cuban Missile Crisis (Cold War)

- **Cuban Missile Crisis** (October 1962): nuclear confrontation between U.S. and U.S.S.R.-- 90 miles away from Florida
  - **Closest the Cold War came to escalating a full scale nuclear war!!!**
- U.S. attempts to invade Cuba in Bay of Pigs Invasion (fails)
- US ballistic missiles deployed to Italy/Turkey (NATO allies); Soviet ballistic missiles deployed in Cuba (USSR ally)
Cuban Missile Crisis (Continued...)

• President Kennedy attempted a naval blockade to stop shipment of nukes to Cuba; Soviets continued to ship missiles

• Invasion and nuclear war ALMOST broke out!

  • Thankfully, due to diplomacy efforts by Kennedy/Khrushchev, a solution worked out, but close call (VIDEO)
Deterrence Theory

- Some argue that **nuclear weapons are necessary to avoid wars and conflicts**. AKA: Deterrence Theory
- **Deterrence**: dissuading(deterring) an adversary from using force by threatening with own force
- Could lead to a nuclear arms race
  - Belief that if one side had more weapons than enemy, they would be safer (enemy less likely to attack)

**Why is this problematic?**
- Spend so much on weapons! $$$
- Race seems to never end– how many do we need to feel secure?
- Only works in **THEORY** with a stable leadership
  - What happens when you deal w unstable leaders? (Ex: North Korea, terrorists)
Who are the nuclear powers today?

- 9 countries have nuclear weapons
  - U.S.: 7,200
  - Russia: 7,500
  - China: 260
  - India: 90-110
  - Pakistan: 100-120
  - Israel: 80
  - France: 300
  - U.K.: 215
  - North Korea: <10

See interactive map [here](#)

How MANY total nukes?
There are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons on Earth
Who is seeking nuclear weapons today?

- **Other countries**
  - Iran
  - South Korea
  - Japan
  - Syria
  - Saudi Arabia

- **Terrorists**
  - Security of nuclear facilities has been weak
    - 84 year-old Catholic nun, Susan Rice, + 2 activists broke into a nuclear facility in Tennessee to make a point
    - Spent two hours defacing the facility before caught
Mistakes, Miscalculations, Madness...

**Mistakes**
- Computer errors (technology is technology)
- Goldsboro Bomber Crash, 1961
  - One parachute opened normally, second did not
  - A single switch prevented a U.S. nuclear catastrophe

**Miscalculations**
- Black Brant Scare, 1995
  - 1995, NASA rocket interpreted by Soviets as a nuclear missile. Pres. Yeltsin took out the nuclear football for the first time. Thankfully didn’t press the button.
- Miscommunication, 2007
  - Six nuclear warheads were mistakenly and unbeknownst to the pilots flown on a bomber in U.S. – weapons were unaccounted for 36 hours, left unattended

**Madness**
- Nuclear terrorism
- Lost warheads/nuclear material
  - “In the past two decades, there have been at least 25 instances of nuclear explosive materials being lost or stolen”– former CIA Operative, Valerie Plame Wilson
Why eliminate nuclear weapons?

- **Humanitarian Perspective**: results in massive human death toll
  - Long term effects: cancers, tumors, genetic damage, infertility, birth defects

- **Economic**: $1 trillion spent on nukes in next decade!
  - While cutting essential services such as education, jobs, healthcare, clean energy, public safety

- **Morality of War**:
  - Cold War is over, no desire for WW3
  - World isn’t safer, breaks principles of just war

- **Maybe we should learn from history?**
  - Hibakusha warns us against using them
  - Oppenheimer regretted creating them, “Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds”
  - Perhaps we should listen to those who experienced and built them…?
What have we done to stop the spread of nukes?

- **NPT: Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1970**
  - Aimed at limiting the spread of nukes in non-proliferation, disarmament, peaceful use of nuclear energy
  - 191 states signed on, N. Korea withdrew

- **CTBT: Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, 1996**
  - Bans any nuclear weapon test or any nuclear explosion in any environment
  - Has NOT entered into force, 8 countries have not signed/ratified it
  - U.S. is one of the countries that has signed but not ratified!
What have we done to stop the spread of nukes?

  - Reagan/Gorbachev met in Reykjavik
  - Served as example for subsequent arms control reduction treaties

- New START Treaty, 2010
  - Obama/Medvedev agreement
  - Nuclear arms reduction treaty in Prague
  - Agreement for ceiling of 1,550 nuclear warheads
Problem Cases: Iran

- **2016: Iranian Nuclear Deal**
  - P5+1 struck a deal to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon

- **Major victory for global security**
  - Less nukes in world!
  - Stop nuclear arms race in Middle East

- **Opposition**
  - Don’t trust Iran, don’t want to relieve sanctions
  - Trump says it’s the “worst deal ever made”

**Support**
- Why not give diplomacy a chance?
- Sanctions/not talking hasn’t worked for 30+ years
Problem Cases: North Korea

**North Korean Nuclear Program**
- Withdrew from NPT in 2003
- Bush attempted negotiations, but failed. Obama no attempt
- Developed first nuclear weapons in 2009

**Problem:**
- NK nuclear weapons cannot reach U.S. yet, conflict with S. Korea or Japan affects U.S.
- Nuclear catastrophe = radiation spreading across the Pacific
- Anti-missile system deployed in S. Korea after latest NK nuclear test

**What can be done?**
- Instead of worrying about Iran, let’s focus on N. Korea
- Reopen dialogue, consider easing sanctions; Trump could have foreign policy legacy
- Rex Tillerson has rejected talks with North Korea on nuclear program
Looking towards the future...

**Negatives:**

- Trump pre-election: “proliferation will happen anyway”
- Denounced START Treaty, said was one sided w Russia
- U.S. recently deployed anti-missile system in S. Korea after N. Korea’s latest test

- More nuclear spending—“U.S. must be on top of pack”
- 2018 budget= 11.3% increase in NNSA
Looking towards the future…

• **Positives:**
  • Overall, we cut a large part of the world’s nuclear arsenal
    • From 70,300 in 1986 to 14,900 in early 2017
  • In the last 8 years, we have reduced U.S. and Russian arsenals; we can and should continue to do so!

**Perspective that nuclear proliferation is inevitable?**

“Such fatalism is a deadly adversary. For if we believe that the spread of nuclear weapons is inevitable, then in some way we are admitting to ourselves that the use of nuclear weapons is inevitable.” – Obama, 2009 Prague speech
How can YOU make a difference?

- **Educate yourself:**
  - Countdown to Zero movie
  - Do your research

- **Participate:**
  - Activism/Marches/Protest
  - Contact your Representative, write to Trump, make your voice heard
  - Join orgs that seek to eliminate nuclear weapons (GZ, ICAN)
Resources

- Nuclear Blast site map: https://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/
- Status of World Nukes: //fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/
- Animation of how powerful nukes have become: https://t.co/MKk2A3zrEY
- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on nukes: https://vimeo.com/26176369
- How young people get involved: https://vimeo.com/25716425
- U.S. deploys anti-missile system in South Korea: http://www.reuters.com/northkorea-missiles-kcna-idUSKBN16D2MC
- Hibakusha Short Film about Hiroshima Experience: https://youtu.be/pYmW-6MV7GM
Whatever you do... DON’T LOSE HOPE!

• You are the future generation
• You have a voice; USE IT
• You can make a difference

Thank you!
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