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Trends. Nuclear Weapons Redux

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Rationales for reducing the number of various nuclear weapons worldwide are multi-varied. One rationale to abolish all nuclear weapons is founded on the notion that war and other kinds of armed conflict can, therefore, be averted. Another rationale to abolish nuclear weapons is that possessing them is intrinsically immoral and being moral is so important that abolishment must occur. Yet another rationale to abolish nuclear weapons is that war or conflict won't be averted, but the types of war and conflict that will occur will be more moral or lead to fewer casualties, fewer severe casualties, or less residual damage than what would occur through nuclear war.

Reduction may instead refer not to abolishment but to a partial elimination of nuclear weapons. But to what level? Some adherents merely cite the numbers of warheads available as prima facie evidence for some level of reductions. That is, the numbers are too big based on some inferred or implied absolute or relative "too-bigness". Other adherents refer to how various numbers of warheads are much more powerful than the bomb used against Hiroshima. That is, the cumulative power or megatonnage translates into some inferred or implied absolute or relative "too-bigness." Still others refer to how much damage various numbers of weapons would cause if employed--in the same "too-bigness" mode.

All of these rationales depend on belief systems about cause and effect that ultimately must be accepted on faith. That is, decisions about assets created through science must be based on other than scientific foundations. Moreover, the push to develop rationales to reduce nuclear weapons rarely seriously entertain the notion that there are not enough such weapons. Given that some positive features of nuclear weapons are based on variants of deterrence, one might reasonably advocate that more might be better--i.e., that a higher number or more size matters. How much to reduce may need to become why not more? (See Deutsch, M. (1987). Going beyond "Beyond deterrence." *Journal of Social Issues*, 43, 149-153; Horvath, P. (1996). Nuclear weapons concerns, agency beliefs, and social responsibility values in disarmament activism. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 2, 17-35; Kerrey, B. (March 2, 2001). Armed to excess. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Kull, S. (1988). *Minds at war: Nuclear reality and the inner conflicts of defense policymakers*. Basic Books; Nelson, L., & Beardsley, G. L. (1987). Toward an interdisciplinary model of barriers to nuclear arms control. *Social Science Journal*, 24, 375-388; Wessells, M.G. (1995). Social-psychological determinants of nuclear proliferation: A dual-process analysis. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 1, 49-65.) (Keywords: Deterrence, Nuclear Disarmament, Nuclear Weapons.)