

Nuclear Weapons: A Very Short Introduction
By Joseph M. Siracusa

Despite not having been used in anger since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Bomb is still the biggest threat that faces us in the 21st century. As Bill Clinton's first secretary of defence, Les Aspin, aptly put it: 'The Cold War is over, the Soviet Union is no more. But the post-Cold War world is decidedly not post-nuclear'. For all the effort to reduce nuclear stockpiles to zero, it seems that the Bomb is here to stay. This Very Short Introduction reveals why.

The issues are set against a backdrop of the changing international landscape, from the early days of development, through the Cold War, to the present-day controversy of George W. Bush's National Missile Defence, and the threat and role of nuclear weapons in the so-called Age of Terror.

Joseph M. Siracusa provides a comprehensive, accessible, and at times chilling overview of the most deadly weapon ever invented.

Questions for thought and discussion

- *Nuclear Weapons: A Very Short Introduction* rests on a single premise: the bomb still matters. Do you agree or disagree? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Does the spread of nuclear weapons make the world safer or more dangerous? Be specific in your answer.
- Describe and examine the race to beat the Nazis to the bomb.
- Was President Truman justified in his decision to order the bombing of Hiroshima? Was it necessary or unnecessary?
- Compare and contrast the Baruch Plan and the Gromyko Plan. See Chapter 3.
- To what extent if any did the Soviet detonation of an atomic device in August 1949 alter the nuclear arms race?
- What was the purpose of President Ronald Reagan's missile defence system (SDI)? Was it ever practical or merely a bargaining chip in arms negotiations?
- The H-bomb really changed everything, transforming the very nature of war and peace. Defend this statement. Be specific.
- Most scholars agree that the post-Cold War world was decidedly not post-nuclear. Do you agree or disagree? If so, why? If not, why not?
- There is a great debate today surrounding the issue of no first use of nuclear weapons. Why is this significant? Relate to American nuclear doctrine.
- Why would North Korea want nuclear weapons? And what would it take for them to forego their development?
- Describe and examine the significance of the 1972 ABM Treaty. See Chapter 6.
- The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has become the cornerstone of a loosely structured non-proliferation regime. Why is this so? And what is required to strengthen it.
- Who was J. Robert Oppenheimer? And what does his career have to say about the role of science and scientists in the ongoing nuclear debate?
- What was the significance of the Cold War in the evolution of nuclear weaponry? Special attention should be paid here to the history of arms control, deterrence, and Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD).

- What are Nuclear Free Zones? And what is their importance?
- What was the significance of the dismantling of Dr A. Q. Khan's nuclear network?
- Do you agree with the notion that the acquisition of nuclear weapons has become the Holy Grail of terrorists?
- What is the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency? And is it significant?
- The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was presented mainly as an effort to destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destructions, for fear that Saddam could not be deterred and, implicitly, that he might try to turn the tables on the United States and its allies. Could there be any justification for this course of action? Be specific.

Other Books by Joseph M. Siracusa

David G. Coleman and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Real-World Nuclear Deterrence: the Making of International Strategy* (Praeger Security International, 2006).

Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War* (Praeger Security international, 2008).

The Politics of Nuclear Weaponry, eds Richard Dean Burns and Joseph M. Siracusa (Regina Books, 2007). See especially Chapters on the Hiroshima decision by Wilson D. Miscamble and the Cuban Missile Crisis by Lester Brune.

Further Reading

Michael Quinlan, *Thinking about Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Richard Dean Burns, *The Evolution of Arms Control* (Praeger Security International, 2009).