

SEMANTICS AND IDEOLOGY OF NUCLEAR ORDER

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Abstract: The article deals with the substance and rhetoric of the notion “nuclear order” in a deconstructivity manner. Building on the definition of nuclear order as a set of institutions, norms, and practices governing the development and use of nuclear technology, the analysis focuses more on what is behind this “pragmatic compromise” in the world of international (and nuclear) anarchy. The key premise is that the discourse and politics of nuclear order are mechanisms of normalization of nuclear danger as something that can be managed and well-ordered. This kind of thinking and dealing with the nuclear threat, which is becoming an imminent one by a day, is embedded in the ideology of imperial *status quo*. At a time when the humanity faces existential threat(s), *inter alia* because of a possible nuclear clash, the academic rhetoric and action should shift the paradigm away from the “Don’t Look Up” film parody. The current arrangements of nuclear constraints, deterrence, non-proliferation etc. should be pictured for what they really are: a politics of acceptance to a life on a brink of total disaster based on the false belief that the national security state and the military alliances are able to protect Us vs Them.

Keywords: nuclear order, nuclear weapons, semantics, ideology

Introduction

The shadow of nuclear catastrophe has been hanging over mankind since the end of WWII. Ever since, countless scholars and intellectuals have been engaged in raising the awareness of what might spell the end of the world (i.e. nuclear holocaust). On the other side, the statesmen have also been working on the ‘mission impossible’: i.e. establishment of rational and pragmatic arrangements to avoid the worst-case scenario and yet not give up their states’ nuclear arsenal. At a glance, the outcome is impressive: huge academic literature, many important global civil society initiatives and a few important international legal and political documents.

As expected, the voices from the Global South are incidental. They are neither properly heard in academia nor the power circles. Things get even worse if these voices also belong to the peace research community, which is not only marginalized and despised as non-academic enough but is on its deathbed. Whatever the proposed argument, the usual response from the other (superior) side is that it is idealistic, utopian and non-pragmatic – thus, irrelevant and useless. This long-lasting (albeit invisible) division discourages the scholars from the global periphery to join the debate: they are invited either to be a décor and a pretense of ‘global inclusiveness’, or on rare occasions to serve as an academic ‘pacesetter’. In addition, few scholars from Global South can afford to attend important

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events, unless the costs are covered by the organizers or the event takes place in their country of residence.

At a 2021 international webinar on the specificity of the nuclear weaponry, the author of this text faced a dilemma of an outsider: how can a scholar in international security who comes from the Global South contribute to an academic and intellectual debate that had been going on among the best experts and minds ever since Hiroshima and Nagasaki moment? Is there anything meaningful to add to the issue of “the unthinkable” as the consequences of the possible nuclear catastrophe are usually depicted? With brilliant minds and authors such as Richard Falk sitting across from you, one has to ask herself/himself: is there anything new to add? Therefore, it’s honest to admit it: *déjà dit* (Considine 2017)!

Another reason why scholars and activists may feel like outsiders in the debate has to do with the fact that in their part of the world the issue of nuclear order is absent from the public and political discourse. Indeed there are nuclear-free zones across the world (i.e. regions that have decided not to ever get involved with production, stocking, or using nuclear weapons), but the Balkans is not one of them. On the contrary! These states have been most eager to join a nuclear-based alliance (NATO), to get under its security ‘umbrella’ and on the way to getting more militarized. Interestingly, in terms of the dominant public perceptions, it may well be a zone free of any concern or fear of nuclear weapons. The vast majority of laymen are so self-absorbed with everyday worries that there is simply no room for one more. The war drumbeats are again clamorous in Bosnia and Herzegovina (strangely, the war fever is incited by those righteous ones who allegedly want to preserve peace and stability), Montenegro and Kosovo are ridden by instabilities, and Macedonia is fully entangled in identity politics (for the sake of the EU membership), the energy crisis is looming all over the region and beyond, let alone the highest death rates in the covid-19 pandemic.

That was the general picture of the Balkan region at the moment of the outbreak of the Ukraine wars. The question if the public perceptions have changed is hard to answer, as nuclear threats are not on the lists of the public opinion agencies. They are more concerned about the side/sympathies taken by the general population. The belligerent atmosphere, and the direct reference to a possibility of a nuclear conflict, are not conducive to rational and theoretical debates but peace researchers have a special moral duty to call on common sense and prudence (Falk 2022). This article deals aims a discussion of the well-explored issue of global nuclear order exactly from the Global South’s standpoint and the perspective of critical theory. It also aspires to approach the problem from a specific and academically less exploited aspect: semantics and ideology of the current nuclear order. The key premise is that the rhetoric and ideological content behind the notion of allegedly existing ‘order’ serve to normalize militarization, including the nuclear danger.

In the first section of this article, the specificity of nuclear weaponry is discussed briefly. The second one focuses on the arrangements, institutions and rules that form the current nuclear order, and eventually deconstructs the rhetoric and ideology that support it. In the third section, we try to offer a new paradigm of dealing with nuclear danger, as seen from the perspective of peace studies. In the final section, we sum up the findings and ideas for a nuclear-free world.

The specificity of the nuclear weaponry

Since the moment the world witnessed the horrors of the unleashed power of the atom, any excuse for keeping such a destructive force at hand has become impermissible and immoral. None of the world leaders may say “we did not know” or “we are not aware of the potential danger” that hangs like Damocles’ sword over all our heads. The same applies to scholars, and especially to the researchers and inventors who work in the military ‘research’ facilities. Why do we think we have time to discuss our potential annihilation? In terms of the ongoing debate between the so-called ‘nuclear optimists’ and ‘nuclear pessimists’ (Sagan and Waltz 2003), the author adheres to the second group of scholars and intellectuals. Instead of insisting on their abolishment, some authors discuss the future of nuclear weapons and what can be done to slow, stop, and reverse their spread (Cirincione 2007).

Now just briefly, about nuclear weapons ‘specificities’ (although one may argue that for the victims it is all the same if they die out of hunger, cold, Covid-19, or (non)democratic bombs):

First, unlike the other (‘normal’) weaponry, concerning the nuclear one, there is an alleged consensus against its use. The so-called *nuclear taboo* means that there is an understanding that nuclear weapons should never be used again, especially having in mind the increased destructive force of the new versions. The notion is best explained by Nina Tannenwald (2007), as widespread inhibition of using nuclear weapons. She finds evidence for the “objective” existence of this taboo in “discourse,” which she defines as “the way people talk and think about nuclear weapons,” which includes “public opinion, the diplomatic statements of states and leaders, the resolutions of international organizations, and the private moral concerns of individual decisionmakers.” International laws, arms control agreements, state policies on nuclear weapons, all “supplement” this discourse, and in her chronological narrative, the taboo emerges “bottom-up” as a result of “societal pressure” and is subsequently “institutionalized in bilateral (U.S.–Soviet) and multilayered arms control agreements and regimes” (ibid., 56). The nuclear taboo stemmed as much from moral revulsion as it did from ‘political’ concerns (i.e. retaliation). But later she also acknowledged that the nuclear taboo was vanishing (Tannenwald 2018).

The optimists (such as former U.S. State Department official Robert Einhorn and former Defense Department official Kurt Campbell) argue that the wisdom of societies and states that have gone without nuclear weapons is reinforced by “a world in which the goals of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) are being fulfilled—where existing nuclear arsenals are being reduced, parties are not pursuing clandestine nuclear programs, nuclear testing has been stopped, the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons is being strengthened, and in general, the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs is diminishing” (cited by Cirincione 2007, p. 156). But, Shampa Biswas (2014, p. 35) rightly asks: how does one measure progress in this regime?

Steven Lee (1993, p. 407) also poses a logical question: “how can there be a nuclear taboo when nations are actively preparing to violate it? That is, as long as nations continue to rely on nuclear weapons and prepare for their use, how is it possible to speak of a taboo?” Another problem with the nuclear taboo is that it coexists with the immediate argument by the power elites: “we cannot afford to give them up” (because the “bad guys will nuke us immediately”). In other words, in the mind of nuclear-haves, a nuclear free world is a nice idea

but the time is not ripe for its full acceptance. The best example of this Orwellian doublethink (the act of simultaneously accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct) is President Obama's speech in Prague in 2009, but the same type of attitude could be found in the positions of all nuclear powers during the debate about the abolition of nuclear weapons in the UN General assembly in 2017. Obama combined these two sentences into one message: "the US seeks the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons" and "the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal" (*The White House* 2009). Also, the nuclear taboo has its "dark side": it has an indirect "permissive" effect of legitimizing more conventional forms of violence. They may look less deadly and more acceptable in comparison to the stigmatized nuclear weapons.

Second, there is almost a *dialectical unity* in the claim that nuclear weapons are a symbol of humans' technological victory – and the greatest moral defeat (Oberg 2021). While one could say that the Marxist utopia invested all the hopes in human emancipation and development that would enable it, the dystopia we live in turned the table other way around: the technological development such as the atomic bomb has left deep scars not only on the Japanese society (ironically, nowadays becoming as militaristic as before) but even more on the American one that inflicted unprecedented human suffering and never explicitly expressed remorse and ask for forgiveness. The invisible and almost divine power over Life and Death – according to the US presidents, who are mostly war criminals even with no use of nukes – is a source of American exceptionalism. The belief in one's self-righteousness (and therefore, a right to decide on human existence) is nothing but an assertion of arrogance and moral corrosion. Right after Hiroshima and Nagasaki events, Gandhi said: "So far as I can see the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war that made it tolerable. Now we know the naked truth. War knows no law except that of might. The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied arms but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see" (cited from *Mkgandhi.org*, 1998). Unfortunately, later generations have seen that the first nuclear power opened the spiral of the arms race, including the nuclear one. As for the soul of the destroying nation, one can only say that there has been hardly any collective soul-searching and dealing with the horrible past. Once the US went unpunished and even turned into a moral champion of the 'free world', the others only followed suit.

Third, nuclear weapons are usually seen as an existential threat, a force that may erase human civilization from the face of Earth. As many authors have argued, the human invention may spell the end of the entire race, it is a tool for *omnicide* (Goodman and Hoff, 1990; Beres 1983). There is a grave problem with this claim: first, human arrogance is so immense that it makes people believe that there would be no life on the planet without them. That is untrue! Flora and fauna may well be better off without humans. They will surely survive the nuclear Holocaust, even at a cost of severe mutations. Secondly, how is it possible to speak of civilization in a sentence that refers to nuclear destruction? Again, Orwellian doublethink helps us reconcile two contradictory claims: we are civilized people, and yes – we can annihilate millions innocents and commit crimes against humanity for the sake of (our) national security.

As seen from the perspective of the Copenhagen school of security studies, dealing with the current nuclear order (as is called the present state of affairs) assumes both

desecuritization (of 'our/good' nukes) and securitization (of 'their/bad' nukes). It is nothing but a use of selective lenses and the delusion that nuclear bombs can be harmless to civilians, and can be used in a limited space and with limited effects. Nuclear weapons are probably harmless, as they are not here to be used in warfare but 'merely' as a political instrument of extortion, geopolitics and rivalry, say some experts. That's nothing but desecuritization and an appeal to remain calm because the leaders are just playing a geopolitical chess game. On the other hand, the most securitized objects of mass concern, at least according to the media and Western power centers, have been North Korea (the country with the smallest nuclear arsenal) and Iran (a country with no nuclear weapons at all), at least up to the Ukrainian war. Securitization means that the existential threat (to us) should be moved out from the political sphere and 'resolved' in the security domain by use of extraordinary (non-political, urgent and forceful) means. Hence, sanctions against North Korea and Iran have been legitimized despite all the human suffering they involve. Also, as Beck (2018) rightly notes, many politicians and political observers, particularly from the West, tend to securitize the potential nuclear arsenal of Iran but not so the actual arsenal of Israel.

However, (de)securitization dialectics creates a special dilemma when applied to domestic audiences as well. Nowadays, fear is probably a more powerful driving force than love. At the time of relative wellbeing, the establishments used to rely on inventing desires with the citizens-consumers, i.e. Marcuse's one-dimensional man (1964), but at times of crisis, fear-mongering works much better. It requires a constant re-invention of enemies and sources of insecurity. Militant media rhetoric and even factual marches of military (NATO) troops across Europe for alleged training purposes serve only as a reminder that the enemy is not far away and we have to be alert. These days it's interesting to follow how this mechanism works in Germany: one issue in the government coalition negotiations is the demand of one party for the removal of the nuclear arsenal from the state's territory. The US, as expected, try to convince the Germans that these are dangerous times and that nuclear weapons serve successfully as deterrence. The Western media comment that Kremlin is satisfied with the fractures in the Western alliance. It is how nuclear weapons become a bargaining chip in domestic but also in the global politics. Any argument in favor of abolishment is seen as a distraction and a dangerous (perfidious) move of the enemies.

When peace researchers stress the importance of not attacking the weapons but the structures and the security thinking, they just echo Albert Einstein's words: "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save *our modes of thinking* and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." Einstein was wise enough to anticipate the developments and to warn against them, but in the meantime, a few generations have been raised in the belief that there is no alternative to the current nuclear order and nuclear balance as if they are an outcome of some natural law.

Before we turn the focus on the institutionalized structural violence on the international and domestic levels equally, as well as the cultural violence infiltrated through the media and academia, let's have a quick view of the current context. The already mentioned second and Third Cold wars are accompanied by the normalization of militarism, as Merje Kuus argues so brilliantly (2009). In such a world, even NATO is seen as a peace force. Laura Considine warns of standardization of catastrophe (2017), Naomi Klein of disaster capitalism (2008), and all that leads towards waging (mostly proxy wars or military interventions) war

for the war's sake. Nothing of this could be possible without the deeply embedded Military-Industrial-Media-Academic Complex (MIMAC), a syntagm coined by Jan Oberg.

Regardless of the way we think (or decide not to think) of nuclear weaponry, it is not an abstract notion at all. It produces concrete effects on human lives daily. For instance, they have an enormous share in draining state budgets, thus creating even greater human insecurity and suffering. It is almost unbelievable that the idea of free health care is presented as a bogeyman, while nuclear weapons are seen as something appropriate for human protection.

Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there has always been a risk of 'calculated' or 'accidental' nuclear war. The dilemma of which one - however the semantical boundary is drawn between them - constitutes the worst danger is still present. Some experts see the accidental case as the most threatening one; the opinion of other authors ranges between agreement with this assessment and seeing accidental nuclear war as 'a more remote possibility' (Wiberg, Petersen and Smoker 1993, p. 3). The dangers of misconduct in the storage of nuclear weapons, human and/or technical mistakes, use of alcohol and drugs by the people responsible for taking care of the silos and similar objects are well documented by some independent media researchers, but the problem is totally marginalized in the public discourse. Daniel Ellsberg (2017) has warned over and over again about the concrete military plans and proposals to nuke some countries by the US. The Vietnam War was certainly one of those occasions, which were allegedly prevented by the nuclear taboo (Dragovich 2019). Even when they do not exist, nuclear weapons serve as a pretext for military interventions, such as the one in Iraq and sanctions (against Iran).

What is orderly in the current global nuclear order?

The theory and practice of nuclear politics and nuclear governance operate with various means and concepts, which could be generally categorized as deterrence, arms control, non-proliferation and a disarmament/abolishment approach. Due to the limited space and the focus of this article, we would offer just a short overview.

Historically speaking, deterrence has the longest history among the nuclear powers. The basic premise is that reliance on nuclear weapons is due to the necessity to deter other (unreliable) states from attacking with their arsenal. It is defined as "the power to dissuade" (Snyder 1983, 129). The very possession of nuclear weapons holds a promise of retaliation, but also potentially mutually assured destruction. In order to work and secure this nuclear *status quo*, the system of weapons should be credible and advanced. Thus arms innovations and race among the nuclear powers make the notion of 'credibility' central for the deterrent effect. The nuclear weapon system then is a 'floating system of balances' implicating a continuous arms race in order to get the upper hand (Tunander 1989, cited from Wiberg 1993, 174). The 'semiotic' aspect of nuclear strategy is rather fascinating as it balances on the edge of the use of enormously destructive weapons not meant to be used but yet meant to be credible in order to deter. According to the theory, the more credible the use of nuclear weapons the more credible the deterrent and the less probable the use of nuclear weapons. Thus it could also be argued that the more credible the threat from the defendant the more probable the risk of preemption by the enemy and the more probable the risk of inadvertent nuclear

war (*ibidem*). Deterrence is both a powerful argument against nuclear disarmament and a considerable obstacle to those who wish to prevent proliferation (Wilson 2008, 421).

On the other side of the spectrum is the concept of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Indeed the leading nuclear powers during the Cold War started talking about the reduction of nuclear heads, but the plan did not go far enough to question the MAD ability. It proved to be just a symbolic act and a gesture of goodwill, although many experts see great importance in the very act of negotiating, learning one's rhetoric, strategic thinking, etc. However, under this umbrella concept, quite many of bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements are being brought together. With lots of ups and downs on the trajectory of establishing confidence-building measures and control mechanisms that would provide the so-called 'nuclear security' in 2022, the world is on the brink of nuclear war.

It is believed that the "global nuclear order" centered on a much-celebrated and extremely important treaty - the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It was meant to craft a global nuclear order that would restrain the dangers of nuclear power while liberating possibilities for its use in peaceful purposes for the larger collective good. The NPT (signed in 1968, came into force in 1970) is an international treaty supported by 189 UN member states, with an idea to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. It has three main pillars: nonproliferation, disarmament, and the right to peacefully use nuclear technology. The ultimate successes are seen within the UN system and its tendency to prohibit nuclear weapons altogether. In the landmark resolution 1653 of 1961, entitled "Declaration on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons," the UN General Assembly stated that the use of nuclear weaponry "would exceed even the scope of war and cause indiscriminate suffering and destruction to mankind and civilization and, as such, is contrary to the rules of international law and to the laws of humanity".

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (signed 2017, entered into force in January 2021) prohibits possession, manufacture, development, and testing of nuclear weapons, or assistance in such activities, by its parties. So far South Africa has been known as the only country to ever dismantle an indigenously-developed nuclear arsenal completely. Worldwide there are nuclear-free zones made of countries that do not possess nuclear weapons. None of these 'radical' initiatives is supported by any nuclear power states.

It seems the world exists with an illusion of nuclear order, or order based on (written and unwritten) rules and principles when it comes to the use of nuclear weapons. The notion of *order* in various dictionaries is explained as follows: as an arrangement or disposition of people or things in relation to each other according to a particular sequence; pattern or method; a situation in which everything is arranged in its correct place; a situation in which rules are obeyed and people do what they are expected to do. Orderly means that something is neatly and methodically arranged.

According to Walker (2000), nuclear ordering has been based on two essential governmentally created systems: a managed system of deterrence (for the nuclear power haves) and a system of abstinence - for everyone else in the world. He also argued that the NPT-centered nuclear order embodied an Enlightenment project that combined faith in human rationality (deterrence) with efforts to prevent proliferation (abstinence). Thus strangely, the possession of nuclear weapons (for deterrence purposes) has been seen as an expression of the enlightened mind of the nuclear power states. In such an order, one should really trust the human rationality of the ones who decline nuclear disarmament. Throughout

the years, some other ideas have been developed. Even a brief overview displays a wide range of policies, treaties, strategies, and initiatives that comprise the alleged 'nuclear order'. In practice they collide with each other, the participants in that order are not equal (or equally committed to respect for the rules), and the threat of nuclear war seems more imminent than ever before. While many are concerned over the 'destroyed nuclear order', others rightly argue that implicit in the creation of any order are new centers and other peripheries (Biswas 2014). Where is the center of the global nuclear order? What happens when this center can no longer hold?

Few would overtly subscribe to any ideological attitude towards nuclear weapons/nuclear security because it is usually portrayed as a non-ideological issue, as something that is above politics and ideology. The nuclear danger is perceived and dealt with as a 'struggle with the tremendous power of technological discovery' that should be 'managed'. However, it is not hard at all to distinguish two dominant positions determined by the school of IR thought: the realists believe that liberalists are irresponsible when proposing complete nuclear disarmament (as the end of non-proliferation endeavors), while the liberals stress the necessity to stick to Enlightenment reason. With no intention to go further into the exchange between the representatives of these two grand schools of IR, it is however important to stress their ignorance or bias when it comes to non-West. For instance, Krause argues that "the possession and non-possession of nuclear weapons cannot be dissociated from the issue of democracy and freedom" (2007, 498–99) – and of course, it is a well-known 'fact' that the Western societies are by default founded on these ultimate values. Rühle (2007, 520) prefers a nuclear-armed democracy to a nuclear-armed dictatorship. Yost (2007, 574) fears "the rise of new power centers, particularly in Eurasia, and the emergence of violent and highly capable non-state actors," a precipitous decline in the international order in a "direction unfavorable to the West". In sum, both camps agree to a certain degree that the real threat comes from unenlightened others (Biswas 2014, 92). The bias and artificial geopolitical schism between the West and the Rest have deepened in the last year, if not longer. "Nuclear Orientalism" remains in place.

On a general level, however, the debate boils down to two frameworks of thinking (and/or practical alternatives): are we to live with the potential nuclear threats or there is a possibility – as Richard Falk would put it, a policy of *possibilism* – of a nuclear-free world? From the ethical point of view, the dilemma is deceitful because the answer of any decent human being is predictable. The mantra of keeping a nuclear arsenal for the sake of peace and stability (hegemonic stability in a multipolar world is a problem of a different type) is morally unacceptable, although legally possible and justified in many ways. In sum, thanks to the national security policies and strategies of the nuclear haves (including here the fact that NATO, the mightiest military alliance in the world history, is a nuclear alliance *per se*), we are enforced to live either with the awareness that we sleep with our worst enemy and nightmare – or in denial and escapism.

No wonder, the people engaged (directly or indirectly) use newspeak, in the context of nuclear weapons – nuke-speech. Many authors have concluded that the talks about nuclear danger have turned into a cliché, and its ultimate function is to be non-creative, not radical, and able to normalize the unthinkable. Nuclear weaponry is legitimized by the appeals to preserve the so-called nuclear order (which is an oxymoron *per se* in the world of global disorder), made of a plethora of conventions, institutions, summits, norms, and rules... One

can even hear about research projects on ethics and nuclear sovereignty (Brixey-Williams and Ingram, 2017), the latter being something analog to R2P (*sic!*). Nuclear weaponry is an issue debated in numerous (mostly non-effective) talkshops run by the so-called “nonproliferation complex”, i.e. the web of think tanks, university programs, NGOs, commissions, and expert groups. This is how Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka (2013) have dubbed the ideological apparatus of the current nuclear order. In this context, the prohibition and the abolition of nuclear weapons are hailed but at the same time presented only as a vision, something to come in years ahead, an almost unreachable utopia, while everything else (the real-politics thinking) is *de facto* focused on the preservation of the nuclear *status quo*.

Toward a “Look up!” paradigm: a world with no nuclear weapons

There is an impression that we deal with a ‘natural force’, *vis major*, rather than a man-made Thing. Thomson (1980) was right in arguing that ‘the Bomb, that is a Thing, and a Thing cannot be a historical agent’. But, we, the People, are – or at least, we should be within the context we live in. To quote Karl Marx (1852), “men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.”

The current “perfect storm” of fears and insecurities disempowers ordinary people, even in developed democracies. The wider picture shows that apparently, the citizens in the ‘nuclear haves’ (i.e. the states that possess and include nuclear weaponry in their national security strategies) are not primarily concerned with this issue. The people on the streets may protest against human rights violations, covid-19, wokeism is on the rise, etc. – everything except nuclearism (defined as dependence on or faith in nuclear weapons as the means for maintaining national security)! Lately even anti-war and pacifist movements have been demonized as pro-Putin forces. It seems the effects of nuclear weapons use are so unthinkable that we do not really often think of them! In some corners of the world, it is politically incorrect to think and publicly speak against them, especially if the identified address of complaints belongs to “our mighty allies”.

The citizens in the Western countries have never been involved in the debates over the national security policies. Charles de Gaulle’s statement that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians applies even more to the defense and security policies. War is too serious a matter to be left to the military establishments. The citizens of allegedly developed democracies have given up their liberties for the sake of alleged protection by their states, and the global war on terrorism has long been a good example of this unfair exchange. The Ukraine wars display another level of irrationality: the public is mobilized pro-war for the sake of peace and calls for actions (such as ‘no-flight-zone’) that directly lead to the escalation of violence on a global scale.

What can we do about the problem of ‘living with our worst nightmare’, i.e. with nuclear weaponry? As seen from a historical perspective, there is progress, the latest proof of which is the Treaty for Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) that came into force at the beginning of 2021. It is a legally binding document but only for the states signatories, *de facto* the non-nuclear states. The balance of power remains the same, with the nine nuclear

haves, a number of states that host nuclear weapons on their territories, and a big number of satellite-states that did not even dare vote for or against the Treaty in the UN General Assembly. Sadly, Japan and Germany are among them. As for Macedonia, being a NATO member state means a source of biggest political legitimacy as the story that is sold to the population is that the Alliance's umbrella gives perfect protection against all evils in the world (but also in the country, i.e. 'domestic enemies' that are against NATO & the West). In other words, whoever is critical of the militaristic way of thinking is the enemy of peace and security as well as a national traitor. The political elites behave as if they have been given a share in the 'divine' power, so they openly point the finger at the 'bad guys' – thus creating enemies all around the world. Ironically, Macedonia is a signatory of the Humanitarian Initiative, but *de facto* behaves as if it is a nuclear power. To sum up, the progressive treaties, initiatives and so, remain just dead letters or nice declarations that have no effects on real life.

Gandhi's words and deeds would sound ridiculous today just like the people who still oppose MIMAC and cherish genuine peace research and activism. Actually, we are almost extinct species. We may be invited to join some big projects and asked to think big/creative/radical for a better world, but the risk to be seen as not academic enough, not serious or even delusional because we do dare talk and write about a nuclear-free world as a starting point for a peaceful world and human civilization. Nevertheless, the peace studies are on their deathbed all over the world – either closed down or (probably worse scenario) coopted into the MIMAC.

No matter how important is to frame the nuclear weapons debate on a global scale, let's be honest: nuclear weapons exist, are produced, legitimized and used within national frameworks. Global civil society and international deals and treaties sound great but they all remain empty rhetoric and lip-service unless the internal democratic forces start fighting against current security and defense policies. Years ago when I had the privilege to teach at the European Peace University in the beautiful and peaceful town of Stadschlaining (Austria), my students used to ask me: what should we do to help spread peace in the world? The simple answer was (and would have been if there had still been a Peace University now): please, do your homework instead of running all around the world to preach peace and democracy while your governments drop humanitarian bombs! Human security begins at home, otherwise, it becomes perverted biopolitics that differentiates worthy from deplorable lives.

The problem with nuclear security resembles the popular movie "Don't Look Up!", in which political elites and media try to shift the public attention away from the coming Armageddon against the scientists' warnings. The nuclear issue has been an object of securitization and desecuritization, but also of de-politicization. In that context, the world indeed needs genuine popular movements that would make ultimate pressure on the power-holders primarily in their societies, and then on a global scale through networking.

Conclusion

The debate on the most pressing security issues – nuclear threat and climate change – centers on hope. In the context of the definition of the exemplary person (a line from The Analects of Confucius), i.e. the person who keeps on trying even though he knows there is no hope, Chomsky concludes that we are far from exemplary people; we believe there is still hope to turn the developments in a better direction. Yet, we pretend not to know how to

do so, giving nuclear weapons supernatural power as if they exist without the will of (some) people. However, the skeptic doubt hope too: what was Hope doing in Pandora's Box in the first place? In a 2014 interview, Chomsky said: "... for the first time in history, the human species is now on the edge, rushing toward a precipice like the proverbial lemmings. I think of two crises. One is the threat of nuclear war which we've miraculously avoided so far, but there's no reason to expect the miracle to continue. The other one, which has been there for a long time but is only recently and apparent to any literate person, is the crisis of environmental catastrophe. We have this curiously historic situation that the most advanced, richest, educated societies – the United States and Canada – are leading the race to disaster with eyes open."

Indeed, *déjà dit!* The only 'novelty' about nuclear politics as of today is the ongoing process of modernization and proliferation as we speak today, including media games and political jokes such as the mushroom cloud over Moscow published in a British daily months before the outbreak of the Ukraine war. Probably an element of novelty is the rapidly changing international order that witnesses the Second and even the Third Cold war along with the US defeat in Afghanistan and the war on European soil. Right after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, George Orwell spelled it clearly: "We have before us the prospect of two or three monstrous super-states, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds, dividing the world between them ... [and] a permanent state of 'cold war'." In other words, the cold war is a product of nuclear order and not of the Berlin wall or any other divide.

Nuclear weapons are not a natural force, they are man-made. Therefore, one of the first tasks for anyone who works for peace is to deconstruct the myth of their deterrent function. The rhetoric should be liberated from clichés and the perverted nuke-speech. Also, especially the West has a great responsibility (that goes with its military power and economic strength and international influence) to see that it is a source and partner in crime with all those that are blacklisted as autocrats and crazy and irresponsible guys. UN (with P5, i.e. the current configuration of the Security Council), NATO and the EU are deeply implicated in the current nuclear order. They are among its main pillars – so one should not idealize them as forces for peace and security. The gross reality of the Ukraine war proves the immaturity of the 'leaders' of the nuclear order who try to normalize nuclear weapons (Acheson 2022).

In conclusion, Raymond Williams' words (1980) still ring true if one really seeks a sustainable and comprehensive solution: "If 'the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist', what are we given by those Satanic mills which are now at work, grinding out the means of human extermination?' The question is urgent and relevant, but behind it, of course, is another question: who 'gave us' the hand-mill, the steam-mill, the missile factories? The intricate relations between a technology and a mode of production, and indeed between a mode of production and a social order, are only rarely of a kind to permit simple analysis of cause and effect." Edward Thomson (1980) also put it directly: "We need a cogent theoretical and class analysis of the present war crisis. Yes. But to structure an analysis in a consecutive rational manner may be, at the same time, to impose a consequential rationality upon the object of analysis. What if the object is irrational? What if events are being willed by no single causative historical logic ('the increasingly aggressive military posture of world imperialism', etc.)—a logic which then may be analysed in terms of origins, intentions or goals, contradictions or conjunctures—but are

simply the product of a messy inertia? ... What Wright Mills calls "the drift and thrust towards World War Three" is indeed to be ascribed to the existence of oligarchic and military ruling classes (whose distribution over the continents of the globe is, incidentally, somewhat more widespread than the Partisans of Peace ever hinted)".

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