GOVERNANCE VS ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: THE PEACE STUDIES APPROACH

Abstract:

This article explores how peace studies deal with two interrelated issues: nuclearism and militarism. Nuclearism assumes the practice of spreading nuclear threats along with the security thinking and power structures that surround the doomsday weapons. Militarism is about the deeply embedded belief that military power (including the nuclear one) is the only way to preserve one's national security. In short, today's world deals not only with stockpiles of existing weapons but also with the way of thinking about their use, reduction or abolition. The general hypothesis is that the academic and intellectual efforts invested in these issues are (self) limited and developed in a climate of self-censorship and organized hypocrisy. This makes them not only ineffective but also prone to the preservation of the global status quo as the best solution for peace in the world. Scientists are involved in the technical aspects of the weapons management. But scholars from the social sciences and humanities (i.e. where the peace researchers mostly come from) are expected to deal with the deconstruction of the dominant way of thinking (both in academia and out of it) and promotion of the idea that a different world is possible. Or the alternative is nuclear holocaust.

Keywords: nuclearism, militarism, peace research, global governance, abolition of nuclear weapons.

1. Introduction: Contextualization of the Old Problem

Déjà dit! It seems everything has been taken for granted about the disastrous militarization, hurtling arms race and impending nuclear calamity since 1945. Even worse, catastrophe has been standardized (Considine 2017), and militarism (so closely tied to nuclearism) has been normalized (Kuus 2009). The old problems are as persistent as ever, despite the vast academic production on the subject, numerous initiatives launched and myriad of conferences held. The only things that have changed since the end of Cold War I - for good or bad - are the international context and the perception of the problem's urgency and magnitude. Currently, the feeling of urgency comes from the evident collapse of the international system and rise of the multipolar (dis)order, where the proxy war in Ukraine and tensions over Taiwan serve as a catalyst for a general climate of alarmism.

The dominant way of thinking reconciles the non-reconcilable issues, the unthinkable with the possible. Today's struggle for nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear risk reduction and the ban of nuclear weapons takes place in the context of international society based on exploitation, discrimination, social injustice and great power politics. Even the most dedicated anti-war and peace activists do not question the TINA world ("There Is No Alternative" motto)[1] but take the existing context for granted, rarely changeable and even irreplaceable. Hence most efforts are directed to problem-solving rather than to radical transformation of the context that rests on military competition, imperialism and social injustice.

As with other security threats, the process of securitization of the nuclear issue has been perpetually swapping with the opposite process of desecuritization and *vice versa*, depending on the current situation and/or one's (usually geopolitical) interests. According to the Copenhagen school, security is socially constructed in a given context by various (securitizing) agents in order to prioritize the urgency of an issue and the existential threat it poses to the survival of the State or humanity (Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap De Wilde 1998). Under such conditions, the existential threat is removed from the realm of normal policy and situated in the security sphere where the actors are entitled to undertake (or call for) extraordinary measures in order to secure the survival of the referent object. In this context, securitization is a speech act and security is a subjective matter, which does not necessarily depend on the objective presence of the security threat. The same applies to desecuritization, only in an opposite direction: a threat that affects survival may be intentionally dismissed, downplayed and consequently defined as a part of normal policy-making (i.e. something that

---

[1] The TINA acronym means There Is No Alternative, and its origin is related to Margaret Thatcher's famous phrase. In today's meaning, it refers to a vision of the world imposed by the Western (political, economic, cultural) neoliberal mantra. Whoever does not fit in it is considered the enemy of progress and enlightenment.

could be resolved through political means rather than with extraordinary powers and means).

This is exactly what has been going on with the nuclear danger since the end of WWII. The issue would be defined as an existential threat and would provoke public upheaval and protests, only to be forgotten when another existential threat develops. Interestingly, the most frequent securitizing agents were to be found in civil society and protest movements and initiatives. Therefore, the level of nuclear (in)security is difficult to quantify (despite the Doomsday clock). Its immediacy and newsworthiness usually depend on the media interest and civil society engagement and pressure from the bottom up. In general, mankind has been living under Damocles' (nuclear) sword for almost eight decades and got used to it. Peace activism has almost taken the form of a 'peace business' – many people and organizations make their living out of this engagement with no visible effects on the state of affairs. They usually talk to each other and listen to each other, while the power structures remain numb and disinterested in the developments in the civil society arena.

Peace researchers and anti-war activists occasionally detect glimmers of hope due to the "growing awareness of the unacceptability of nuclear weapons along with widening appreciation of the need for action concerning the social and environmental dangers facing our planet and its inhabitants" (Barash 2018, p. viii). Today, the world is divided over two key treaties dealing with nuclear weapons. On one side is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968, which is considered the central framework of the existing nuclear order, to which almost all states in the world have joined. However, several nuclear powers are not signatories to the Treaty despite its limited ambition, namely India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea (which initially signed it but left it in 2003). Under Article 1 of the Treaty, nuclear-weapon states undertake not to transfer nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices to any recipient or in any way assist, encourage or induce any non-nuclear-weapon state to produce or acquire them. nuclear weapons. However, in practice these norms were interpreted in a different and even discriminatory way. Namely, the Agreement applies selectively – only to the states that were not nuclear powers at the time of signing, while the five nuclear states actually legitimized their monopoly on the possession of nuclear weapons. That was also the reason why some countries refused to accept such a subordinate position in the very beginning (India is one of the main examples).

Aware of the weaknesses of the existing order, civil society actors set about a more ambitious goal – the adoption of an international agreement on the prohibition/abolition of nuclear weapons. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017 was the ultimate celebratory moment and was seen as the starting point for building a more peaceful future. It did come into effect in 2021. In June 2022, the parties to the Treaty finally met for the first time to agree on a concrete roadmap to a world without nuclear

weapons. The second meeting of this kind took place in November 2023 – but again without much success.

In June 2022, the members of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) finally met for the first time to develop a roadmap toward a nuclear-free world. The Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (TPN) took place in August 2022 – and ended with no palpable result or progress. At the opening session, the UN Secretary-General Guterres warned that humanity was "just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation." Days later, he sent a dramatic appeal from the Hiroshima memorial site: "We must keep the horrors of Hiroshima in view at all times, recognizing there is only one solution to the nuclear threat: not to have nuclear weapons at all" (*UN News* 2022). Yet, even the alarmist cries are nothing new. In 2017, the media reported that "the Doomsday Clock shows we're closer to the apocalypse than we have been since the 1950s", referring to developments in North Korea and Iran (Cornwell 2017). Almost at the same time, there were reports of episodes of nuclear accidents that had increased the probability of global nuclear catastrophe, i.e. Third World War by mistake (Schlosser 2016). What could have been an *annus mirabilis* has already turned into an *annus horribilis*. At the end of 2022, the cries that the Third World War is approaching (or has even begun) come from all parts of the world, while the nuclear optimists still believe that there is still time and more conferences to come to an agreement of nuclear risk reduction and no first use policy. Illustrative is, for example, the official position of Germany according to which "The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, inter alia, prohibits the deployment, possession and transit, storage and stationing of nuclear weapons. These extensive prohibitions create a conflict of interest between this agreement and the commitments that NATO allies have undertaken, for example as part of the so-called nuclear sharing. For this reason, neither Germany nor other NATO members joined the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" (Federal Foreign Office 2023). The irony is in the simultaneous claim of the German government that it is for a world without nuclear weapons, while actively and with weapons helping the conflict in Israel, which could easily escalate into a global catastrophe (due to the eventual involvement of Iran and other countries).

The chain of events related to the Ukrainian war(s) and Taiwan has increased global attention to the nuclear danger. Yet the Western public and expert community fail to see the underlying causes of these cases. The attention is mainly concentrated on the day-to-day military developments, casualties, and statements or irresponsible leaders rather than on the structural problems. Russia's invasion has catalyzed the already deeply-rooted conflict(s) in Ukraine, while Taiwan has always been a pawn of the US policy in the Asia-Pacific region. The current military escalation followed years of turning blind eyes to the root causes and the (geopolitical) conflict potential (notably, NATO's expansion to Russia's eastern border), which have been extremely predictable (and avoid-

able) (*Global Village* 2022).[2] The same scenario has been applied to the Taiwan issue, which is likely to become one more episode of the US's drive for permanent war. The proxy-war(s) make it easier to disguise the root problem. This chapter had been conceived months before the events that are now shaking the world took place. Regardless of the ongoing events, the main idea remains the same: the focus should be on the essence rather than on the phenomenological appearances of the deeply embedded structural problem.

The starting premise is that the current *ad hoc*, voluntary and fragmented approach toward the governance of weapons (including the nuclear one) has failed along with the international political and legal order. Mankind has become accustomed to 'sleeping with the (ultimate) enemy', hoping that the elites would abide by the so-called nuclear taboo. Hugh Gusterson (2004) rightly argues that we have taken for granted the fact of living with bombs. Along with this line of thinking, the policy-making community, experts and academia have built an illusion of 'weapon management' and even 'nuclear order' in a 'rules-based international order'. There is a specific set of regulations, institutions, actors and vocabulary meant to produce the fallacy of 'nuclear security' in a world that is obviously approaching its apocalyptic end unless something radical is undertaken as soon as possible. The debate among scholars, activists and policy-makers has been concentrated on two options: weapons management and weapons abolition, with the first one obviously being dominant and seen as more realistic. The abolition of weapons, which *de facto* means abolition of war/militarism, has been merely on a declarative level as an option for the future ("once the time is ripe, but not yet") thanks to the various peace groups and initiatives.

Paradoxically, advocating weapon abolition seems to be the most inadequate position in this most dramatic moment in human history. The context seems to be extremely averse to such ideas, and their advocates are seen as peace loonies. But isn't it true that traumatic events have been more conducive to radical ideas? The very fact that the world is bracing itself for a possible nuclear Armageddon speaks volumes for all the time wasted and lessons not learned since the end of WWII, especially Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[3] On the other hand, the imminence of the nuclear disaster imposes the imperative to urgently undertake anything possible to prevent the end of humankind. Any

---

[2] One could add, that no war is inevitable but it becomes so if the early warnings are dismissed for a long time – or if any of the parties intends to provoke a response from the opponent's side in order to engulf it into a conflict of attrition. During the years, and especially after Euromaidan (colored) revolution, the intra-state conflict escalated and took around 14.000 civilian lives in the eastern provinces of Ukraine.

[3] The phenomenon of the so-called preppers in the USA is getting momentum, while some local authorities (such as the City of NY) are allegedly helping the population's readiness by producing video messages for the citizens in the case of nuclear attack. The peace groups, including ICAN, have reacted strongly to what looks like amateurish and irresponsible acting. See: Bret Wilkins 2022.

doubt at this moment should be dispelled by repeating an old (albeit enigmatic and vague) adage of 1968 protests: *be realistic, demand the impossible*![4] Actually, there have been brave and brilliant voices who have been warning for years that "if we don't effectively challenge the nuclear complacency, we're on a course of species suicide" (Falk 2016).

The theoretical framework of this analysis is determined by the findings (and failings) of peace research, i.e. the academic field that has never been so important but also never so much sidelined. The analysis also relies on the premises of critical theory. Robert Cox's dictum that "theory is always for someone and some purpose," and "there is no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in times and space" rings more accurate than ever (1981, p. 128). Today's dominant epistemology is the best proof for this argument: it mostly serves the interests of power elites, be they state-based or corporate. Furthermore, the hegemony of Western epistemology and knowledge production emphasizes the marginality of the so-called border-thinkers from the world periphery (Mignolo 2000). Shampa Biswas (2014, p. 3) joins the voices from the Global South who rightly ask: "who is this 'we'—this mythical international community that speaks of peace and well-being for all made possible by reining in this nuclear upstart? What kinds of questions about nuclear order and disorder are precluded when we invoke this 'we'?". Consequently, the sprawling corpus of the global nuclear order needs to be dissected and analyzed through different prisms. Biswas does it so brilliantly, offering profound and provocative insights into the hierarchical structuring and colonial governance of contemporary global orders, including the nuclear one. Gusterson similarly points out the phenomenon of a so-called "nuclear Orientalism"—the idea that the "nuclear other" cannot be trusted with nuclear weapons. This idea is based on racialized stereotypes of Asia and the Middle East. Through this rhetoric, Western policymakers claim that 'our' weapons are not a problem, while 'their' weapons and attempts to develop nuclear weapons are a grave threat to global security. (Gusterson 2019; ICAN 2021; Scarry 2020).

Today's context is determined by intra-imperialist and inter-imperial contradictions, visible especially along global faultlines (Fouskas and Gokay 2019, p. 2). The countries from the periphery have the misfortune to live exactly on those faultlines and suffer the collateral effects of the clash but usually have no say in global debates, be they political, academic or activist.

Peace studies in the apocalyptic age: withering away

There is something paradoxical about the birth and development of peace research: it has been highly connected to traumatic events and historical watersheds; mostly *ex post facto*. The overview of its origin convincingly shows

---

[4] The saying's origin is in the 1968 protest movement of students in Paris, and then spread elsewhere.

that peace research has developed in response to a set of formative events in history – the two World Wars, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Cold War, the ethnic wars in the post-Cold War era and 9/11 (Wallensteen 2011).[5] The primary goal of the discipline has always been detection and elimination of root causes of violence/wars/conflicts, detecting their different forms of appearance and providing paths to an emancipatory (national and international) policy which would enable the existence of international society based on the premises of positive peace.

Peace research combines a few features that may (wrongly) be seen as contradictory or even not feasible: first, it relies on theoretical rigor and methodological sophistication but does not shy away from its inherently normative drive; second, it boldly combines rational analysis with utopian thinking in the spirit of the famous Karl Marx thesis that the goal of any (philosophical) thinking is not to explain/understand the world but to change it; third, peace research has always assumed various forms of activism, with anti-nuclear movement and protests (as well as the initiatives for the abolishment of war and military through conscientious objection to military service) as a significant part of it, at least during the Cold War. Genuine peace research is and has to be radical by default: it challenges the foundations of power, hegemony, and imperial structures, i.e. the structural violence according to Johan Galtung. By the same token, Richard A. Falk and Samuel S. Kim coined the term "war system" (war as a social system) as "an all-embracing structure of mutually interlocking organizational and behavioral variables, in which violence or force is accepted and legitimized as the ultimate arbiter of social conflicts at all levels of human society. Viewed in this systemic perspective, it is not easy to disentangle 'war' from its economic, social, psychological, cultural, and normative complex of interactions that has shaped human struggle over the course of centuries." (Falk and Kim 2019, 15-16). Being radical means seeking an intervention in the root causes of the problems rather than seeking solutions for consequences in human society based on inequalities, discrimination and violence. No wonder peace research was qualified as "reds-under-the-bed herring", i.e. as dangerous leftists during the Cold War status quo. Today's McCarthyism toward anyone who is against the 'just war' in Ukraine (or elsewhere, as Julian Assange's case proves) is probably more dangerous for freedom of thought and action.

Peace research/studies in the last one hundred years have had a changing agenda, determined partly by the imperatives of the current historical epoch or by its voluntary retreat from the most burning issues and converging to the *de facto* mainstream academia (Buhaug, Jack S. Levy and Henrik Urdal, 2014). It is in constant evolution; some research agendas wane while others experience rapid increases in scientific attention over time (ibid). Unfortunately, in the end it has lost its main focus and sharpness of thought and action. Ken Booth (2007,

---

[5] As Wallensteen stops at 9/11 events, one could suggest another brilliant work that analyses the disastrous consequences of the post-9/11 interventions, such as Susan L. Woodward, 2017.

p. 65) used to point out its multidisciplinary approach as a possible problem, but also the perception of being 'too political' (according to the opponents). The problem with today's peace research is that it has become too apolitical and disengaged from the burning global issues. The (alleged) end of the Cold War announced the peace dividend and triumph of liberalism on a global level. The fall of the Berlin wall shed a negative light on any left-wing ideas as morally and politically discredited. Instead of preserving the Gramscian approach to the cultural hegemony and radical change of unjust and militarized global society, the peace researchers were pushed aside to deal with the so-called *non-CNN conflicts (*meaning the ones that do not attract the attention of the mainstream Western media).

On the peace studies' journey from negative to positive peace, the nuclear issue and disarmament have gradually disappeared from the radar of institutionalized peace research.[6] Instead, the focus has moved on to intra-state, and particularly ethnic conflicts, failed/failing states, conflict management and resolution, reconciliation, conflict prevention, peace-keeping and peace-making operations, etc. It appeared as if the main problem of the world is the unviable and traumatized societies in the world periphery, which should have been fixed. In other words, the focus was moved away from the global core, its militarization, imperialist structures, capitalist-induced inequalities, neocolonialism, etc. – and *inter alia* the international environment and architecture that actually buttress not only the global problems but also prevent any changes to the existing nuclear security architecture. Some research efforts have been focused on development, forced migrations, climate change, scarcity of resources, poverty and inequality. These issues are not unimportant, but the point is that the scope of peace research has dispersed so widely that it has lost its compass and its central *raison d'être*.

The 'salami tactics' of peace research have led to turning towards 'problem-solving' of individual challenges rather than keeping the focus on finding a systemic solution for a world society/security that would not produce all those 'small/local problems'. (Jerneck, Kronsell and Steen, 2018).[7] Also, academic capitalism did not spare peace studies, so mainstreaming, publishing with the most esteemed publishers, getting the right place in the 'serious academia', etc. have become the driving forces among many scholars who believe they work in the

---

[6]According to Terry Terriff and his colleagues (2000), out of five phases of development, peace research dealt with nuclear danger and disarmament in two: in the early stage of the Cold War (the second phase) and again in the 1980s, (the fourth phase) when they returned to superpower concerns, due to revived fears of nuclear war.

[7]Some peace researchers rightly point out the differences between problem-solving and critical theory: "The problem-solving approach tries to find solutions that do not disturb (or disturb the least) the prevailing socioeconomic order while critical theory is willing, if necessary, to question the prevailing order, often from a normative perspective. … (Mahmoud, Y., A. Jerneck, A. Kronsell, and K. Steen 2018).

field of peace research.[8] Cox's understanding of knowledge and interests applies to peace research as well: knowledge is socially and historically produced, with knowledge producers being inseparable from contexts, identities, and interests.

Shattered illusions of non-nuclear peace in a militarized world

At present, peace research is in disarray, facing its possible demise even as a recognized academic field. There are hardly any researchers who work and believe that positive peace is a possibility. The activism has vanished, and few scholars are at the same time public intellectuals and leaders/participants of peace movements. Some of the most persistent ones have intentionally left academia and devoted their lives to peace work and activism in various forms (art, journalism, social media, doing independent research and publishing mainly online, and free of charge – with one single aim, to reach as many people as possible).[9] Academia has become too neoliberal, profit-oriented, elitist and self-centered. Publishing is just business as usual rather than spreading knowledge and raising public awareness.

A quick survey done for this analysis showed that the phrase(s) "nuclear weapons/security/disarmament/abolishment" etc. seldom appear in the most recent literature in the field. The peace institutes – with exception of SIPRI and PRIO - have been swallowed by entities with a different (i.e. mainstream) focus and a wider research agenda. A good example of this phenomenon is ex-COPRI (Copenhagen Peace Research Institute) that merged with the Danish Institute for International Studies[10] as well as the peace study program at the EPU in Austria.[11] The same tendency is to be seen in many parts of the world, including my university and some other peace centers/institutes in the Balkans that now deal more with the EU and NATO integration, democratic peace, etc. Johan Galtung, celebrated as a "father of peace research", or at least one of the pioneers, faced a

---

[8] For instance, esteemed peace institutes (i.e. the ones that 'survived' and did not transform into strategic or security centers) continue working with the biggest publishers, which means an expensive book product which would not be widely available especially for those who can hardly afford to buy the latest literature. One of the most recent examples, which is pointed out only because it appeared amidst the worst nuclear crisis, is the following: Ramesh Thakur (ed.), 2022).

[9] One of the most inspiring peace researchers today that comes to mind is Jan Oberg and his Transnational Foundation for Future and Peace Research. His website indicatively bears the subtitle "Peace by Peaceful Means" – i.e. the dictum and essence of the UN Charter. See more: https://transnational.live/.

[10] See: https://www.diis.dk/en/about-diis/the-institute/about-diis.

[11] See the chronology at https://www.aspr.ac.at/en/education-training/aspr-campaigns/40-years/history-in-figures#/. The author was a faculty staff member of EPU for almost a decade.

gloomy destiny in his old age: he was canceled by his fellow-peace researchers as a result of a smearing campaign. Nowadays some of the most outspoken peace researchers-cum-activists are blacklisted as pro-Putin advocates (*Unheard* 2022).[12]

In addition to the aforementioned challenges that brought (radical) peace research to its (academic) deathbed, it is indicative that there is practically no anti-war movement on the ground, now when it is needed the most. The so-called 'Vietnam dilemma' is bigger than ever. The peace movement and activism are suffering from internal moral and political divisions. One part is seeking a peaceful/diplomatic solution to the Ukraine war, thus defusing the imminent threat of nuclear war, while others demand victory of the weaker side in the asymmetric conflict at any cost, reflecting on the right of the Vietnamese people to defend their country. Thus, the nuclear cloud is hanging over us, but the Left is either unwilling or incapable of taking a clear position.

Albert Einstein's words are painfully accurate: "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." He believed that the solution to this problem lies in the heart of mankind. Today's problem is that the traditional way of security thinking has led toward the advancement of military technology and skills in killing people more efficiently (be it directly or indirectly), while the academia *de facto* has adjusted to the power structures instead of being a voice of dissent. Financially and socially dependent on the corporate capital (i.e. donor community), a significant number of scholarly projects work on issues of preserving the 'nuclear order', armament control, or even 'nuclear sovereignty'. Peace philosophy and dissent are expelled not only as non-realistic and utopian but rather as dangerous and irresponsible. No wonder in the Orwellian world like ours, war is peace and peace is war. It seems as if many radical/critical thinkers and centers fear being blamed for *angélisme* (i.e. excessive idealism). It is more acceptable to be diabolically intelligent and analytical, rather than humane, ethical and emotional in the face of catastrophe.

On the other hand, a peace researcher reflects accurately on the complicity of well-intended IR and/or peace scholars: "How come our research has been co-opted so easily? The second takeaway is our imbrication in it. How did this language that we have, that we use to express our quest for a different system of governance in global affairs, of relating to each other… how did it get co-opted so easily? Maybe our research is not so obscure that it gets co-opted, maybe it also has to do with how we position ourselves, academics in neoliberal academia, how we need to navigate this system and must make our research visible. What worries me is that critical research, research that is supposed to disrupt power, can be also complicit in the neoliberal project via the neo-liberalization of the academy." (Confortini 2021).

---

[12]About the decision of the Ukrainian government see: *Unherad*, 2022. However, the phenomenon is much wider and takes different forms in different countries.

Today the original premises of peace research sound more radical than ever because they point out the necessity not to 'fix the problem' with nuclear weapons but to eliminate the basic roots of violence in three elementary forms: direct/physical, structural (embedded in the national and international structures) and cultural (glorification of war heroism, military history and triumphalism along with the emphasis on the 'image of the Enemy', all of which legitimize the first two forms of violence). The shock doctrine (Klein 2008) and the war addiction (war for war's sake) (Wiberg 2010) work on the pacification of the population, its disempowerment and acceptance of the unthinkable. Weaponization rhetoric and policies are evident literally everywhere: from the weaponization of finance to the weaponization of food and energy. Instead of engagement with the key problems of societal problems and superstructure (in the Gramscian sense), identity wars are promoted as ways of distraction from the class elements of injustice and militarism (Zizek 2022).[13]

According to Karl Marx (1852), "men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." In the TINA world, it means that peace research or any other peace-oriented initiative should start with a deconstruction of the narratives concerning the existing structures and circumstances. The key obstacle is the organized insistence on having only one alternative (which is *per se* an illogical presumption). The coercive and militant structures are made of a myriad of powerful elements that form the MIMAC matrix: Military-Industrial-Media-Academia Complex.[14]

Concerning the threat of nuclear war, the public is made to believe that the *status quo* and the ostrich policy are the recipes for peace. The truth is that we can hardly say with all honesty that we live in (real, albeit negative) peace – the ominous depiction given by a peace journalist is that this is a fragile pseudo-peace maintained by the threat of Armageddon (Koehler 2021). Nuclear pacifists, who categorically reject nuclear weapons on ethical grounds, or believe that the dangers that go along with these weapons outweigh their potential

---

[13] Slavoj Zizek argues that culture wars have displaced class struggle as the engine of politics, but one would add that culture/identity politics and struggles *de facto* fragment the body politic and turn the focus away from the doomsday prospects of humanity. Zizek's (2022) most disturbing conclusion is that "Europe is under attack, and it needs to mobilize, not just militarily but socially and economically as well. We should use the crisis to change our way of life, adopting values that will spare us from an ecological catastrophe in the coming decades. This may be our only chance." He does not offer any idea how military mobilization can spare us from social and ecological catastrophe, let alone a nuclear one.

[14] The author of the MIMAC acronym is peace researcher Jan Oberg, who refers to the complex structure of Military-Industrial-Media-Academia Complex. Often the entertainment industry is also included in this matrix of power and dominance. See more: Der Derian, 2009.

stabilizing effects, have brandished a notion of non-nuclear peace. The aim is nuclear war prevention: "We therefore define non-nuclear peace as a concept of peace that takes issue with the logic of nuclear deterrence and that envisions a peace order attuned to the exigencies of a post-nuclear world." (Sauer, Kustermans and Segaert, 2020, p. 2). Yet, peace is much more than an abolition of nuclear weapons, although they represent an existential threat and an urgent matter. Non-nuclear peace may enable deadly and disastrous consequences, even when nuclear weapons are not used. Non-nuclear peace is but a form of negative peace, which may bring some relaxation from one source of annihilation but disregard others (such as environmental ones and mass starvation, for instance).

In the wake of the latest crisis, what is left of peace research faces three significant dilemmas (originating at the time of its birth): nuclear danger/confidence building, diplomacy and disarmament/'Vietnam syndrome'. Starting in reverse order, the so-called Vietnam syndrome does not apply to the current situation. The ongoing globalization of NATO opens military fronts with two nuclear powers – Russia and China. Nuclear danger is imminent as never before, while the total dismissal of diplomacy and even elementary communication between the opposing sides makes things worse than during the Cuban crisis. Going back to its roots and more 'radical' approaches is a necessity for anyone engaged in peace research/action.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Barash David P. (2018), *Approaches to Peace. A Reader in Peace Studies*, 4th edition, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Biswas Shampa (2014), *Nuclear Desire. Power and the Postcolonial Nuclear Order*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Booth Ken (2007), *Theory of World Security*, Cambridge and NY: Cambridge University Press.

- Buhaug Halvard, Jack S. Levy and Henrik Urdal (2014), "50 years of peace research: An introduction to the Journal of Peace Research anniversary special issue", *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(2).

- Buzan Barry, Ole Waever and Jaap De Wilde (1998), *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. London: Lynne Rienner, Boulder.

- Confortini Catia Cecilia (2021), commentary on the book by Alexandra Budabin and Lisa Ann Richey (University of Minnesota Press, 2021), available at https://thedisorderofthings.com/2022/08/08/batman-white-saviourism-and-international-politics-a-colloquium/.

- Considine Laura (2017), "The 'standardization of catastrophe': Nuclear disarmament, the Humanitarian Initiative and the politics of the unthinkable", *European Journal of International Relations*, 23(3).

- Cornwell Rupert (2017), "Nuclear war is no longer the stuff of dystopian novellas – it's a very real and immediate threat", The Independent, 28 January, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/donaldtrumpnuclearwardoomsdayclockrussiaputingorgeorwellapocalypserealimmediatethreat-a7550761.html.

- Cox Robert (1981), "Social forces, States and World orders: Beyond International Relations Theory", *Millennium*, 10(2).

- Der Derian James (2009), "Virtuous War Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment-Network", London and NY: Routledge.

- Falk A. Richard and Samuel S. Kim (eds.), (2019), *The War System: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, London and New York: Routledge.

- Falk Richard and Asli Bali (2022), "Ukraine and the Risk of Geopolitical Conflict — Richard Falk on the return of the nuclear question", *Global Governance Forum*, 8 June, available at https://globalgovernanceforum.org/ukraine-risk-geopolitical-conflict-richard-falk-return-nuclear-question/.

- Falk A. Richard (2016), "Overcoming Geopolitical Obstacles to Nuclear Zero", *Nuclear Age Peace Foundation*, 24 October, available at https://www.

wagingpeace.org/overcoming-geopolitical-obstacles-nuclear-zero-richard-falk/.

- Federal Foreign Office (2023), *Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, 1 December, available at https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/-/2634018.

- Fouskas Vassilis and Bülent Gökay (2019), *The Disintegration of Euro-Atlanticism and New Authoritarianism. Global Power-Shift*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.

- *Global Village (2022)*, "Ukraine invasion was inevitable: Notable strategists", 2 March, available at https://www.globalvillagespace.com/ukraine-invasion-was-inevitable-notable-strategists/.

- Gusterson Hugh (2019), "Nuclear Orientalism", in: Roberto J. Gonzales, Hugh Gusterson and Gustaaf Houtman (eds), *Militarizm. A Reader*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

- Gusterson Hugh (2004), "People of the Bomb. Portraits of America's Nuclear Complex", Minnesota University Press.

- ICAN (2021), "Racism, Colonialism, and Nuclear Weapons", *Briefing Paper*, available at https://www.icanw.org/racism_and_nuclear_weapons.

- Jerneck Y. A. Mahmoud, A. Kronsell, and K. Steen (2018), "At the nexus of problem-solving and critical research", *Ecology and Society*, 23(4).

- Klein Naomi (2008), *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, London, Penguin.

- Koehler C. Robert (2021), "Nukes Are Illegal, Now What?", *Common Wonders*, 27 January, available at http://commonwonders.com/nukes-are-illegal-now-what/.

- Kuus Merje (2009), "Cosmopolitan militarism? Spaces of NATO expansion", *Environment and Planning*, A vol. 41.

- Marx Karl (1852), *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, available at https://revolution.chnm.org/d/580.

- Mignolo Walter (2000), *Local Histories /Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Ramesh Thakur (ed.) (2022), *The Nuclear Ban Treaty: A Transformational Reframing of the Global Nuclear Order*, London and NY: Routledge.

- Sauer Tom, Jorg Kustermans and Barbara Segaert (eds.) (2020), *Non-Nuclear Peace. Beyond the Nuclear Ban Treaty*, Palgrave Macmillan Cham.

- Scarry Elaine (2020), "The Racist Foundation of Nuclear Architecture", *Boston Review*, 5 August, available at https://bostonreview.net/articles/elaine-scarry-tk/.

- Schlosser Eric (2016), "World War Three, by Mistake", 23 December, available at https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/world-war-three-by-mistake.

- Terriff Terry, Stuart Croft, Lucy James, and Patrick M. Morgan (2000), *Security Studies Today*, Cambridge: Polity.

- *Unherad* (2022), "Ukraine Government issues blacklist of 'Russian propagandists'", 25 July, available https://unherd.com/thepost/ukraine-government-issues-blacklist-of-russian-propagandists/.

- *UN News (2022)*, "Secretary-General's remarks at the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima", 6 August, available at https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-08-06/secretary-generals-remarks-the-anniversary-of-the-atomic-bombing-of-hiroshima.

- Wallensteen Peter (2011), "The Origins of Contemporary Peace Research". In: Kristine Höglund and Magnus Öberg (eds), *Understanding Peace Research Methods and Challenges*, London and NY: Routledge.

- Wiberg Hakan (2010), "Afghanistan War in a Comparative Perspective", *Security Dialogues*, 1(1).

- Wilkins Bret (2022), "'You Don't Got This': Peace Group Blasts NYC's New Nuclear Survival PSA", 16 July, available at https://www.pressenza.com/2022/07/you-dont-got-this-peace-group-blasts-nycs-new-nuclear-survival-psa/.

- Susan L. Woodward (2017), *The Ideology of Failed States. Why Intervention Fails*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Zizek Slavoj (2022), "What the "Woke" Left and the Alt-Right Share", *Project Syndicate*, 3 August, available at https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/woke-alt-right-fake-civil-war-between-capitalist-interests-by-slavoj-zizek-2022-08?utm_source=Project+Syndicate+Newsletter&utm_campaign=d89833b093-sunday_newsletter_08_07_2022&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_73bad5b7d8-d89833b093-93749541&mc_cid=d-89833b093&mc_eid=ca8b1d1533