

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

A Very Short Introduction

By Joseph M. Siracusa

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. And why does it matter?
- The bombings of Hiroshima, and three days later, Nagasaki, were a terrible act of war, but they were no crime. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? And why?
- Compare and contrast the Baruch Plan and the Gromyko Plan. What were the sticking points?
- 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. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Be specific.
- Most scholars agree that the post-Cold War world was decidedly not post-nuclear. Do you agree or disagree? And why?
- There is a great debate today surrounding the issue of no first use of nuclear weapons. Why is this significant?
- 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.
- 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?
- The fact that during the Cold War nuclear war did not erupt from technical malfunction, operational stress or decision-making miscalculation may be attributed to sheer luck. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? And why?
- Based on the analysis in *Nuclear Weapons*, do you believe that a nuclear-armed Iran would cause the spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and around the world and a weakening of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime? Be specific.
- What is the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency? And why is it significant?
- Do you believe that the use of nuclear weapons today pose an existential risk, unlike every other kind of risk our species has ever before encountered?

Other Books by the Author

David M. Blades and Joseph M. Siracusa, *A History of U. S. Nuclear Testing and Its Influence on Nuclear Thought, 1945-1963* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014)

Richard Dean Burns and Joseph M. Siracusa, *A Global History of the Nuclear Arms Race: Weapons Strategy, and Politics* (2 vols, Praeger, 2013)

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

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

Joseph M. Siracusa, *Diplomacy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

Further Reading

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

Richard Dean Burns and Philip E. Coyle III, *The Challenge of Nuclear Non-Proliferation* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015)

Francis G. Gavin, *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age* (Cornell University Press, 2012)

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