



Arms-Based Security: A Precarious Logic

In the search for security, humans have developed increasingly deadly and powerful weapons over thousands of years. But the relatively recent development of weapons of mass destruction has led us to the unimaginable—the time when we are capable of extinguishing all life on earth.

WMD are weapons that can indiscriminately kill large numbers of people. The term includes nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

Biological and chemical weapons have been outlawed by international conventions. Nuclear weapons have not.

Conventional weapons also undermine the security of all people. There is a growing international trade in small arms and light weapons. Many of the weapons end up in developing countries with poor human rights records. Small arms and light weapons fuel civil wars and other conflicts and harm millions of people.

"The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living."

—Omar N. Bradley

THE TRAGIC IRONY OF MAD

During the Cold War, both Eastern and Western blocs were frantically developing nuclear weapons and conducting test blasts. The theory of nuclear deterrence was based on MAD—"Mutual Assured Destruction"—an idea that held the world's people hostage, one button-push away from annihilation. MAD represented the final bankruptcy of the logic of war. War was revealed for what, on some level, it has always been—a suicide pact between armed parties.

Despite the end of the Cold War, billions of dollars are still being spent to maintain and develop nuclear arsenals.

Huge stocks of nuclear weapons, many on hair triggers, are ready to be detonated within minutes. The possibility of accidental use remains very real.

And the threat posed by terrorist groups looms large. For such groups—with nothing to protect and nothing to lose—the logic of deterrence means nothing.

