

Eight nations 'now equipped to terminate civilization'

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Eight nations now have sufficient weapons of mass destruction to end civilization worldwide in a nuclear winter, a leading science writer has warned.

"Far from receding, the nuclear threat to human survival has never been greater," says Julian Cribb, author of 'Surviving the 21st Century' (Springer 2017), a new book on how humanity can solve the growing mega-risks that confront it.

"One of the huge advances from recent climate science is a far better understanding of the world's atmosphere. From this, leading scientists have concluded it would take the release of no more than 50-100 small nuclear weapons to wreck [global food production](#) for everyone," he says.

"This is a tiny proportion of the total nuclear arsenal of around 14,900 warheads. Eight countries – the US, Russia, China, UK, Pakistan, India, France and Israel – now have sufficient WMD capacity to eliminate civilization on their own. Two more, Iran and North Korea, are believed to aspire to that power also."

Mr Cribb said that old nuclear imagery from the Cold War and disaster movies had left the public with a belief that the main impact of a nuclear clash would be local effects from blast, fireball and fallout.

"This is not correct. The latest science is saying that the tens of billions of tonnes of smoke and dust thrown up by nuclear blasts would block

sunlight, chilling the whole planet by several degrees for several years, restricting plant growth and destroying crop harvests with frost globally. With only three months' supply of food in stock at any time, this could be catastrophic.

"It means even a limited or localised nuclear exchange could potentially cause a worldwide famine, affecting everyone, no matter how far from the war zone they were. In theory, the use of just a half of one percent of the world nuclear stockpile could end civilization as we know it."

The dangers of WMD getting into the wrong hands are growing: the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) trafficking database listed 2889 known cases of nuclear theft up to December 2015.

"This highlights the fact that no form of nuclear energy is safe for the planet, if its materials and wastes can be stolen to make bombs. So far nobody can guarantee their security," Cribb says. "The old arithmetic of mutually assured destruction no longer applies if rogue states, fanatics and non-state players acquire nuclear capability by such means."

"There is also a dangerous illusion that, because the numbers of nuclear devices are coming down slowly, as the US and Russia retire old Cold War stocks, the world is becoming safer. It isn't. Nuclear drones and robotic weapons, AI systems, hypersonic missiles, stealth weapons, space weapons, mini-nukes, dirty weapons and 'smart' bombs are escalating the dangers for everyone."

Furthermore, the world still has no agreement to ban all nuclear weapons – unlike chemical and biological weapons. A current proposed nuclear weapons ban before the United Nations, has received the vote of 113 countries, while 35 remain opposed and 13 are abstaining. Thus, the proposal to end the nuclear nightmare remains deadlocked.

"The issue of whether or not civilization suffers one or more devastating nuclear conflicts in the 21st Century will be decided by nation states – not by ordinary human beings," Mr Cribb warns.

"Only nations own and control nuclear weapons. Not cities, corporations, ethnic groups, tribes or religious orders. If humanity is to be destroyed, it will be because of nationalistic governments."

The wars of the past two centuries claimed more than 200 million lives, mostly civilian, and were almost entirely started by national governments.

In the meantime, doctors, scientists, concerned citizens and the Catholic Church worldwide are speaking out against the nuclear menace. "It is up to every individual citizen and parent, if they wish for a safer world for their children, to oppose the adoption and deployment of [nuclear weapons](#) by their governments. There is no other way this will happen," Cribb says.

"If even a tenth of the US\$1.8 trillion spent every year on new weapons were invested in food production and economic development, we could end both world hunger and poverty within a decade – as well as making the world a much safer place for our children.

"Currently, humans are the only creature than devotes 35 times more of its resources to better ways to kill itself than it does on better ways to feed itself."

Surviving the 21st Century (Springer International 2017) is a powerful new book exploring the main risks facing humanity: ecological collapse, resource depletion, weapons of mass destruction, climate change, global poisoning, food crises, population and urban overexpansion, pandemic disease, dangerous new technologies and self-delusion – and what can

and should be done to limit them.

More information: Surviving the 21st Century:
www.springer.com/us/book/9783319412696

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