

Myth Busting

Nuclear weapons: cause harm now – suicidal risk for humanity

Dr Philip Webber



Scientists
for Global
Responsibility

<http://www.sgr.org.uk/>

philw@sgr.org.uk

<https://www.sgr.org.uk/projects/nuclear-weapons-threat-main-outputs>

Nuclear deterrence – a delusion

❑ **Proposition:** Nuclear deterrence has been keeping us ‘safe for over 70 years’ or ‘works every day to keep us ‘safe’; ‘nuclear umbrella’

❑ **Rebuttals:**

- Extensive uncompensated impacts from testing and uranium mining
- 20 or more serious nuclear near misses over 70 years: equipment failure, false alarms, most dangerous during military exercises / conflicts. Nuclear threat makes crises *more* risky
- We’ve been lucky – so far
- NW are no ‘umbrella’ – an unstoppable mega death threat
- Ukraine war & Gaza bombardment taking place under this threat

Nuclear deterrence – a delusion

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❑ **Rebuttals:**

- It is a very Western-Power-centric view
- Large areas are nuclear free zones – Africa, South America, Polynesia
- There continue to be a whole series of intense conflicts
- Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Ukraine, Gaza – none of these populations feel ‘safe’
- Category error to think that by making others feel unsafe that you are safer
- More sustainable approach - common security, human security

Latest UK military expenditure

Core military spending £bn	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>	<i>2023-24</i>	<i>2024-25</i>
	45.9	53.1	50.9	51.7

Excluding

£2.3bn/yr for Ukraine

Plus £0.5bn more announced July 2023 (and again post-2025)

£1.5 – 2bn / yr new nuclear weapon spending up to 2025

- new nuclear-armed nuclear-powered submarines (Dreadnought/ Trident)
- increased number of warheads 260 up from 180
- conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarines (Trafalgar, Astute, and AUKUS)

Core military spending 7-8 times DEFRA (environment/ agriculture), DESNZ (energy/ climate) budgets

For comparison: £2.4bn to settle teachers pay; £2.5bn for doctors pay; £3.7bn subsidy for Rosebank

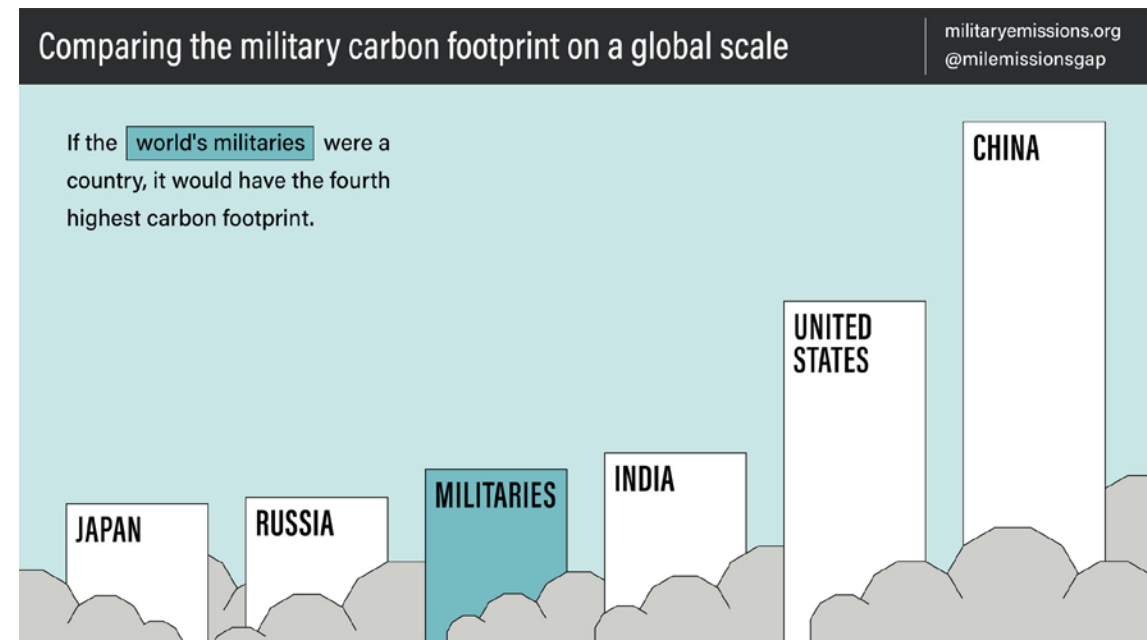
Military carbon emissions are huge (see later). MOD have no meaningful reductions targets.

UK approach

- UK military strategy now more nuclear weapon focused – breaching NPT
- Only 2 out of 4 nuclear Vanguard subs working - 6 month undersea nuclear patrols – serious problems
 - Preparations for return of US nuclear weapons (B61-B drop bombs) to Lakenheath
USAF ‘surety’ staffing planned for 2024
- so-called ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons in Europe & Belarus dangerous and at the same time useless militarily
 - Negotiation and peace is MUCH cheaper than war – it is also effective
- Multiple failures of militaristic policies: refusal to call even for ceasefire in Gaza (or Ukraine)
 - No discussion of Yemen, wars across Africa: Sudan, Ethiopia

Global estimate: military carbon footprint

- Global total (best estimate): **2,750 MtCO₂e/ 5.5%**
- **Larger than Russia's** total carbon footprint
- Uncertainty range
 - 1,600 to 3,500 million tonnes of CO₂e
 - 3.3% to 7.0% of global GHG emissions
- Significant obstacle to reducing emissions



The extreme impacts of nuclear weapon use

Designed to be extremely destructive when detonated

❑ One weapon:

- Terrible immediate deaths & injuries: intense heat, blast, fallout
- Destruction equivalent to months of artillery shelling in a few seconds
- Medical facilities overwhelmed. Humanitarian assistance impossible
- 81,000 killed, over 200,000 injured – some fatally
- Equivalent to about 6 months of Ukraine war (cf. Gaza casualty rate) – but in minutes

The extreme impacts of nuclear weapon use

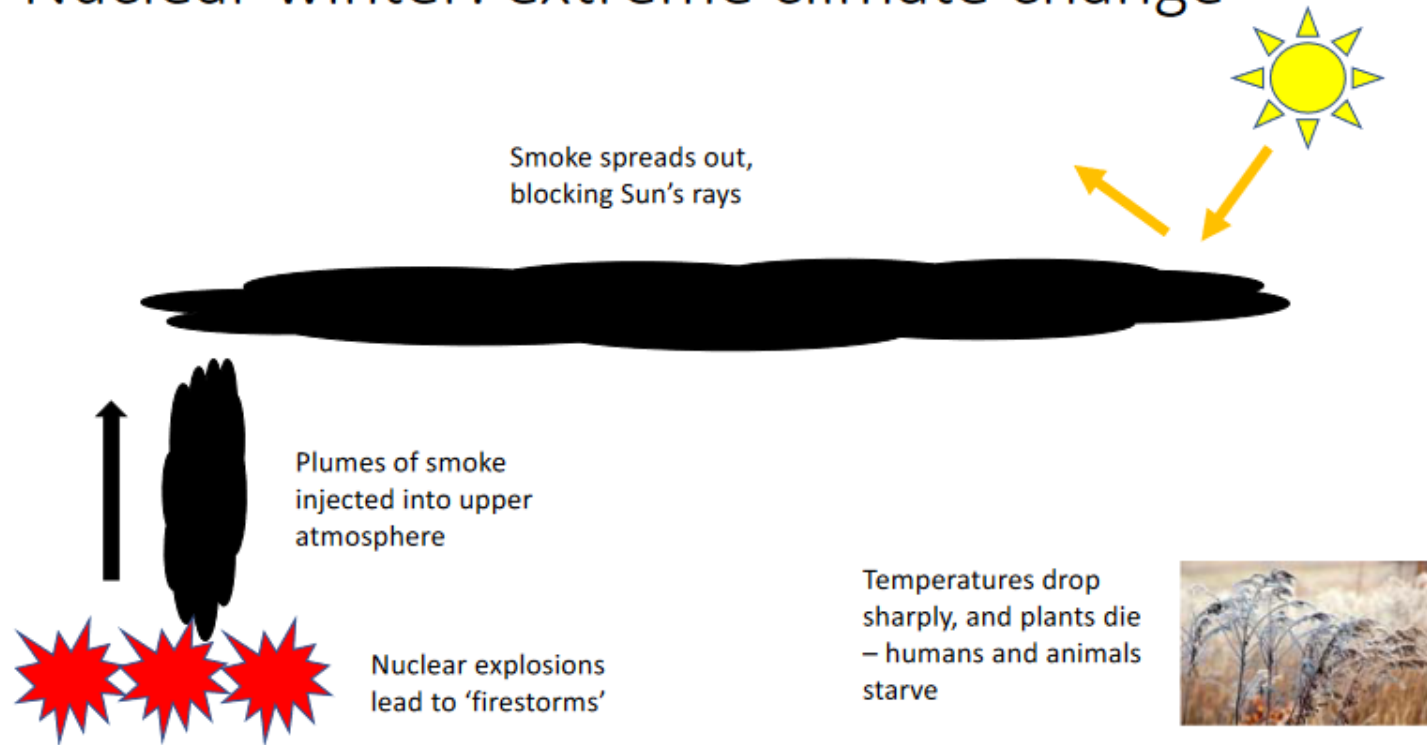
❑ Regional nuclear war:

- 100 Hiroshima size weapons - hundreds of millions killed, injured.
- Terrible long-term impacts – 10 year nuclear winter. 2bn+ at risk.

❑ Global nuclear war:

- 2000 – 4000 warheads - mainly USA & Russia
- Hundreds of millions to over a billion killed and injured
- Radioactive fallout over large areas - especially from nuclear reactors
- Even worse long term nuclear winter, ozone destruction, ecocide
- 'civilisation' at risk

Nuclear winter: extreme climate change



- Extreme cooling (rather than heating from carbon emissions)
- Change would be faster and larger than that due to carbon emissions
- Robust evidence for impacts – derived using modern climate models – published in academic journals

Image credit: Alicja via Pixabay

UK nuclear weapons

- ❑ One UK submarine carries at least 40 Trident warheads
- ❑ At least 4 million fatalities and 10 million casualties across 10 or more cities
- ❑ Only 25 warheads would create a 1,300 km² fire zone (100x Hiroshima) and 5 million tonnes 'black carbon' leading to catastrophic climate cooling
- ❑ Total explosive power huge - greater than 6 years of bombing during World War II !



Image credit: MOD

One Trident salvo !

Climatic changes caused by nuclear conflict

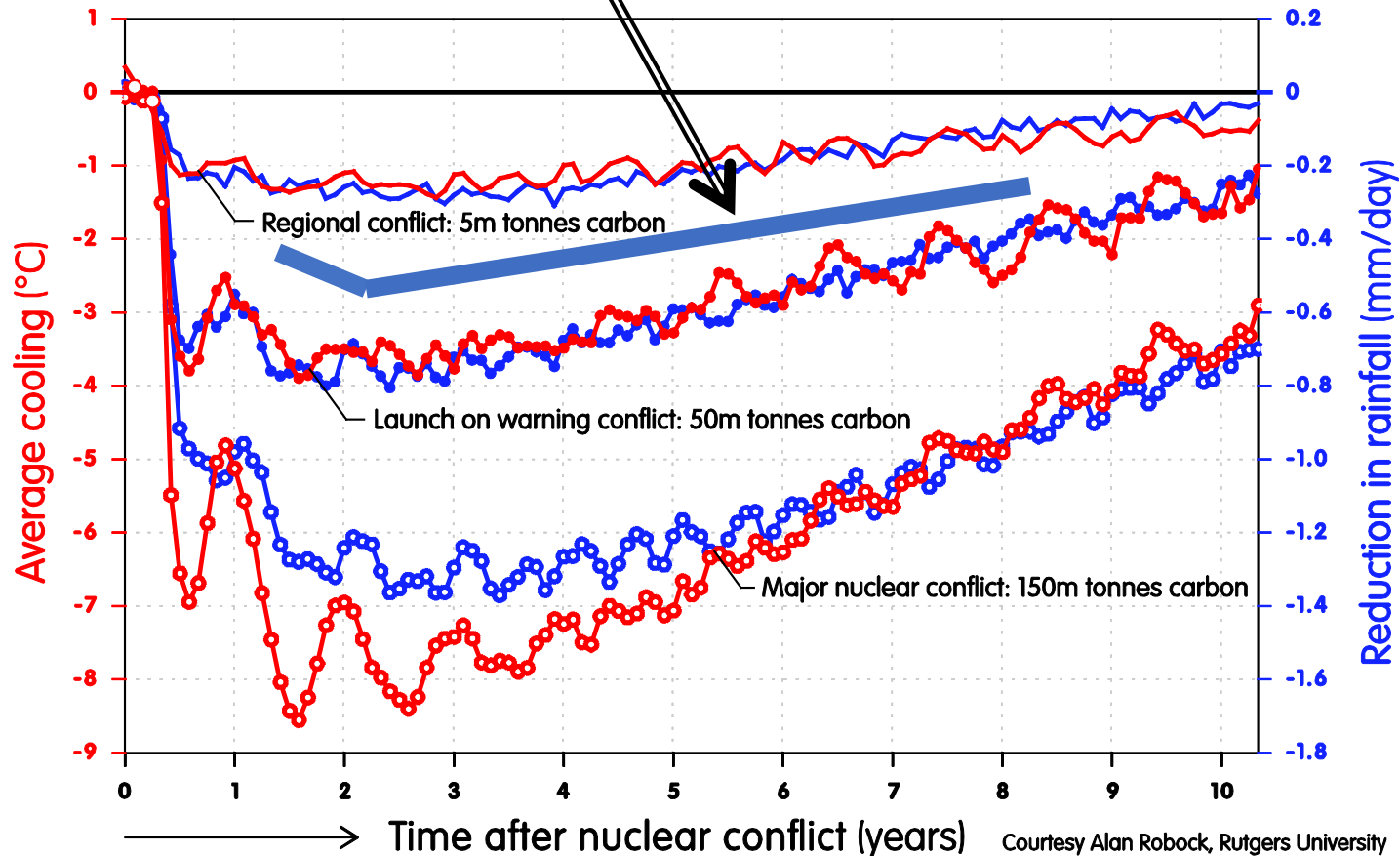


Image credit: MOD

**'Launch on Warning'
260 times WWII bombing!**

Nuclear-armed states - a dangerous minority

- Nuclear weapons are deployed by only 9 nations out of 198 nations in the UN
- China, France, Russia, UK, USA, White House January 2022: 'We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'. But they continue to build & deploy new nuclear weapons.
- Reneged on the NPT promise in 1968 to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles & to disarm.
- TPNW signatories have concluded that nuclear deterrence has not and cannot prevent nuclear war but in fact poses an existential risk for all humanity.
- From 2017, the remaining UN nations opened a new nuclear ban treaty – the TPNW – now signed by almost half of the UN. New signatories continue to be added.

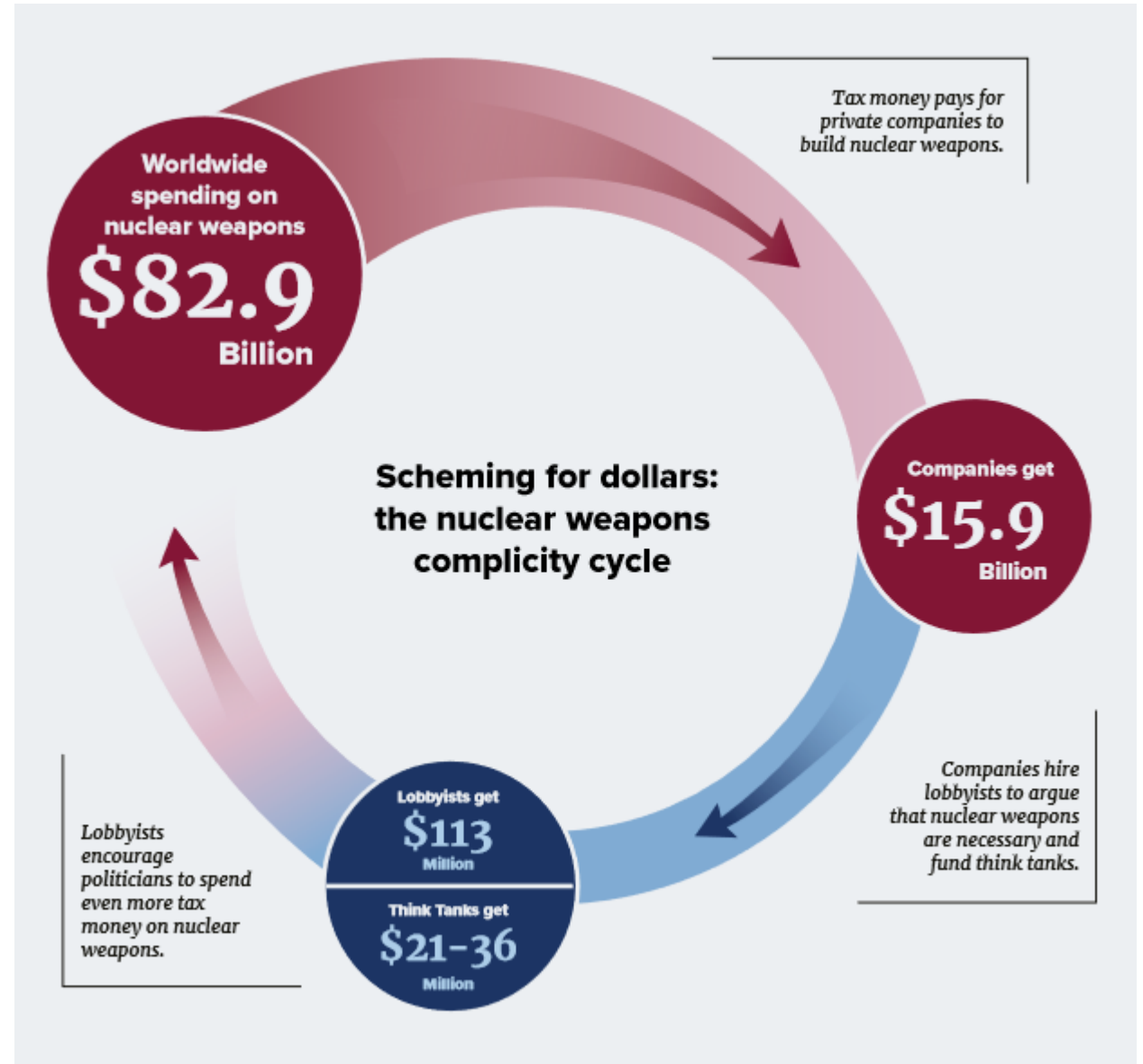
Why do the nuclear states keep unusable and militarily useless nuclear weapons?

- To deter the other nuclear armed states...
- **Power**. Nuclear weapons confer status and power at the UN. The UN security council is set up with nuclear-armed nations having permanent seats and the power of veto.
- Powerful political **lobbying** utilising some of the extensive finances expended on nuclear weapons and nuclear power.
- The deployment of nuclear weapons - a **protection racket**.

The Core Problem: deeply corrupt decision-making

Similar cycle applies to
climate inaction via fossil-
fuel subsidies / profit taking

From 2023 ICAN report: *Wasted: 2022
nuclear weapon spending*



Peak militarism – a suicidal risk for humanity

- **Out of control militarism – huge global arsenals**
- **Terrible ongoing atrocities of militarism in Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen, across Africa**
- **War doesn't solve anything and the end result is worse – eg Afghanistan, Iraq**
- **China, France, Russia, UK, USA, White House January 2022: 'We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'. But they continue to build & deploy new nuclear weapons.**
- **Extensive fossil-fuel / arms lobbying and 'think-tanks' funded to misinform**
- **The public are way ahead of our political leaders – we must work even harder to mobilise resistance to our extinction.**
- **Better active today than radioactive tomorrow - or on a burning earth**