



Physicians for Social Responsibility
10 Dumfries Court
Sacramento, California 95831
www.sacpsr.org • info@sacpsr.org
916-955-6333

Second Place Winner (\$2,500 Scholarship)

Chet Hewitt

Christian Brothers High School
Sacramento, California

Untitled

It is no secret that humanity possesses an unparalleled drive to create, an ability to look at the world not just as it is, but how it could be. Over the last century, that drive to construct has paradoxically given rise to an immense ability to destroy in the form of nuclear weapons. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the dormant capacity of these manmade catastrophes caused horror, fear, greed, and even awe as nations rushed to create their own WMDs, believing it the only way to attain safety. In recent years, the danger has grown even more pronounced, with developing countries seeing nuclear weapons as a sign of civilization in the modern era, and citizens of developed countries so accustomed to the looming presence of warheads they hardly even think about it. At the current rate of nuclearization and global conflict, nuclear annihilation could occur within a century; a threat so unimaginable cannot remain unaddressed.

In 2019, the world's nuclear powers spent \$72.9 billion on nuclear weapons, building on trillions over previous decades (1). During this time, healthcare has become inaccessible for many, a global hunger crisis has taken root (as has an obesity epidemic), and the gap between rich and poor has grown so wide that life in the developing world lies beyond the imagination of most first-worlders. Countries spend funds on self-destruction while their foundations rot beneath them.

Extinction isn't inevitable, however. The rejuvenation of humanity's future depends on choosing the path that leads away from the escalatory tactics of nuclear deterrence. Instead of investing in the faults of the past, we must look toward the future. Attentions in the developed world should be turned to goals such as providing universal education and healthcare, eradicating prejudice, constructing affordable housing, and minimizing domestic terrorism. All of these pursuits focus on positive effects for many, rather than negative effects on those we see as "other". In doing so, the global superpowers of today can set an example for the powers of tomorrow: what makes a country successful is its ability to care for its citizens well, not a nuclear arsenal. Besides withdrawing from the race to acquire nuclear power, world leaders hold a responsibility to de-escalate situations currently or potentially exacerbated by such power. The Koreas, Indian Subcontinent, Iran, and Palestine have all been victims of the various proxy wars and turf battles of the Cold War. As such, they are now considered some of the highest-risk holders of WMDs. When their citizens are asked why they support regimes and politicians obsessed with these

programs, answers center on a lack of international support or a feeling of diplomatic isolation. When speaking about things like disarmament and alternate methods for international conflict resolution, the UN and its members must be clear: this is a process where everyone is welcome and held as equals. If humanity does not want to be ruled by fear and ultimately wiped from history, we must choose to put down the means of our own destruction together.

References

1. Enough is Enough: Global Nuclear Weapons Spending 2019, ICAN, 2020.