# Glenbrooks dubs

## 1

#### Interpretation: The affirmative debater must not specify a government that is not just.

#### Violation: They specify the Egypt

#### Egypt is an unjust government –

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/11/16/egypt-will-host-cop27-expect-criticism-over-fossil-fuels-human-rights/>

Beyond energy and climate, experts have also expressed concern about the human rights record of Egyptian President **Abdel Fatah al-Sissi**, a former defense minister.

* Sissi's **crackdown on peaceful dissent has led to the arrests of thousands of people, including journalists and activists**, [The Washington Post's **Siobhán O'Grady** reported](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/egypt-sissi-human-rights/2021/10/04/98d73674-214e-11ec-a8d9-0827a2a4b915_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_25).
* "**By choosing Egypt, the world may effectively be giving [Sissi] a pass on what is probably the worst human rights record in modern Egyptian history**," **Robin Wright**, a distinguished scholar at the **Woodrow Wilson Center** and a former diplomatic correspondent for The Post, told The Climate 202.
* **Joe Stork**, deputy Middle East director at **Human Rights Watch**, said in a statement that **world leaders "should press Egypt to release the thousands of people jailed solely for exercising their right to free speech and peaceful assembly, and halt criminal proceedings against civil society activists before committing to attend COP27.”**

In a [statement](https://www.eeaa.gov.eg/Portals/0/eeaaReports/MediaReport/COP26%20EGYPT%20Brochure_final_cs6_2.pdf) about COP27 that did not mention human rights, Sissi said that “no effort will be spared in hosting a successful COP with outcomes that would contribute to putting us on the path of environmental sustainability and climate-friendly growth; the path to 1.5 C.”

#### Vote neg –

#### 1] Precision –

#### A] stasis point – the topic is the only reasonable focal point for debate – anything else destroys the possibility of debate because we will be two ships passing

#### B] internal link turn – violating semantics justifies the aff talking about whatever with zero neg prep or prediction which is the most unfair and uneducational

#### C] Jurisdiction – you can’t vote for them because the ballot and the tournament invitation say to vote for the better debater in the context of the resolution

#### 2] Limits – there are almost 200 national governments in the world which is an unmanageable burden. Only imposing restrictions via the word just can ensure debates are limited and full of clash

#### 3] Fiat abuse – the rez says a just government should. By picking a dictatorial and authoritarian government and having the entire offense and link story about how that government is in the squo refusing and repressing all protest, they have created for themselves a vastly better link story and offense that the rez intends. They are fiating that an authoritarian regime no longer acts authoritarian. That destroys fairnes – I couldn’t predict it based on the rez and they have way too much offense.

#### 4] Accessibility – The aff’s internal links say htat it’s important for Sisi to look good – that’s violent – it wants to hide violence dictators commit and cares about the image of dictators, especially those who have hurt real people in debate. Hold them accountable. Accessibility first – otherwise no one could engage in debate and it’s your obligation as an educator to stop violent practices.

#### 5] TVA – don’t defend Egypt as a just governent and don’t spec. Defend a hypothetically just government.

#### The aff would be topical if the rez said an unconditional govt in order to be just, or consistent with justice.

## 2

#### Permissibility negates – ought implies an obligation but permissibility is a lack of one which means the neg met their burden of disproving an obligation.

#### Presumption negates – a] statements are more often false than true – a pen could be not red in infinite ways but red in only one b] contradictions – would justify saying both p and not p if you knew nothing about p

#### Only constructing ethics from our rational agency can explain the sources of normativity –

#### A] Bindingness – Any obligation must not only tell us what is good, but why we ought to be good or else agents can reject the value of goodness itself. That means ethics must start with what is constitutive of agents since it traces obligations to features that are intrinsic to being an agent – as an agent you must follow certain rules. Only practical agency is constitutive since agents can use rationality to decide against other values but the act of deciding to reject practical agency engages in it.

#### B] Action theory – every moral analysis requires an action to evaluate, but actions are infinitely divisible into smaller meaningless movements. The act of stealing can be reduced to going to a house, entering, grabbing things, and leaving, all of which are distinct actions without moral value. Only the practical decision to steal ties these actions together to give them any moral value.

#### That justifies universalizability.

#### A] The principle of equality is true since anything else assigns moral value to contingent factors like identity and justifies racism, and the principle of non-contradiction is true since 2+2 can’t equal 4 for me and not for you meaning ethical statements true for one must be true for all.

#### B] Ethics must be defined a priori because of the is ought gap – experience only tells us what is since that’s what we perceive, not what ought to be. But it’s impossible to derive an ought from descriptive premises, so there needs to be additional a priori premises to make a moral theory. Applying reason to a priori truth results in universal obligations.

#### Coercion isn’t universalizable—willing your own freedom while violating someone else’s is a conceptual contradiction.

Engstrom [Stephen Engstrom, (Professor of Philosophy @ the University of Pittsburgh) "Universal Legislation as the Form of Practical Knowledge" http://www.academia.edu/4512762/Universal\_Legislation\_As\_the\_Form\_of\_Practical\_Knowledge, DOA:5-5-2018 // WWBW]

Given the preceding considerations, it’s a straightforward matter to see how **a maxim of action that assaults the freedom of others** with a view to furthering one’s own ends results in a contradiction when we attempt to will it as a universal law in accordance with the foregoing account of the formula of universal law. Such a maxim **would lie in a practical judgment that deems it good on the whole to act to limit others’ outer freedom**, and hence their self-sufficiency, their capacity to realize their ends, **where doing so augments, or extends, one’s own outer freedom** and so also one’s own self-sufficiency.  Now on the interpretation we’ve been entertaining, applying the formula of universal law involves considering whether it’s possible for every person—every subject capable of practical judgment—to share the practical judgment asserting the goodness of every person’s acting according to the maxim in question. Thus in the present case the application of the formula involves considering whether it’s possible for every person to deem good every person’s acting to limit others’ freedom, where practicable, with a view to augmenting their own freedom. Since here **all persons are** on the one hand **deeming good both the limitation of others’ freedom and the extension of their own freedom, while** on the other hand, insofar as they agree with the similar judgments of others, **also deeming good the limitation of their own freedom and the extension of others’ freedom, they are all deeming good both the extension and the limitation of both their own and others’ freedom. These judgments are inconsistent** insofar as the extension of a person’s outer freedom is incompatible with the limitation of that same freedom.

#### Thus, the standard is consistency with a system of equal outer freedom.

#### Prefer –

#### An intrinsic feature to any action is the acceptance of the goodness of universal freedom, Gewirth 84 bracketed for grammar and gendered language

[Alan Gewirth, () "The Ontological Basis of Natural Law: A Critique and an Alternative" American Journal Of Jurisprudence: Vol. 29: Iss. 1 Article 5, 1984, https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ajj/vol29/iss1/5/, DOA:9-10-2018 // WWBW Recut LHP AV]

Let me briefly sketch the main line of argument that leads to this conclusion. As I have said, the argument is based on the generic features of human action. To begin with, **every agent acts for purposes [t]he[y] regards as good.** Hence, **[t]he[y] must regard as necessary goods the freedom** and well being **that [is]** are the generic features and **necessary conditions of** his **action** and successful action in general. From this, it follows that **every agent logically must hold or accept** that he has **rights to these conditions**. For if he were **to deny** that he has **these rights**, then he **would** have to **admit that it is permissible** for other persons **to remove** from him the very **conditions** of freedom and well-being **that**, as **an agent**, he **must have**. But **it is contradictory** for him **to hold both that [t]he[y] must have these conditions and also that he may not have them.** Hence, on pain of self-contradiction, every agent must accept that he has rights to freedom and well-being. Moreover, **every agent must further admit that all other agents also have those rights, since all other actual or prospective agents have the same general characteristics of agency** on which he must ground his own right-claims. What I am saying, then, is that every agent, simply by virtue of being an agent, must regard his freedom and well being as necessary goods and must hold that he and all other actual or prospective agents have rights to these necessary goods. Hence, every agent, on pain of self-contradiction, must accept the following principle: Act in accord with the generic rights of your recipients as well as of yourself. The generic rights are rights to the generic features of action, freedom, and well-being. I call this the Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC), because it combines the formal consideration of consistency with the material consideration of the generic features and rights of action.

#### Vote neg –

#### 1] A right to strike claims a right to a specific job, which is a positive right, Gourevitch 16 summarizes, bracketed for gendered language:

Gourevitch, A.. “Quitting Work but Not the Job: Liberty and the Right to Strike.” Perspectives on Politics 14 (2016): 307 - 323. //LHP AV Accessed 7/4/21

If **a right to strike** is not a right to quit what is it? It **is the right that workers claim to refuse to perform work they have agreed to do while retaining a right to the job**. Most of what is peculiar, not to mention fraught, about a strike is contained in that latter clause. Yet, surprisingly, few commentators recognize just how central and yet peculiar this claim is (Locke 1984).2 Opponents of the right to strike are sometimes more alive to its distinctive features than defenders. One critic, for instance, makes the distinction between quitting and striking the basis of his entire argument: **the unqualified right to withdraw labour, which is a clear right of free men, does not describe the behaviour of striker**s...**Strikers**...**withdraw from the performance of their jobs, but in the only relevant sense they do not withdraw their labour**. The 2 Don Locke is one of the few to note both how central the claim to ‘keeping the job’ is and how hard it is to ground this claim. “So what is distinctive about **a strike is**....**the refusal to do a particular job, combined with the insistence that the job is none the less still yours.”** Locke 1984, 181. jobs from which they have withdrawn performance belong to them, they maintain. (Shenfield 1986, 10-11) On what possible grounds may workers claim a right to a job they refuse to perform? While many say that every able-bodied person should have a right to work, and they might say that the state therefore has an obligation to provide everyone with a job, **the argument for full employment never amounts to saying that workers have rights to specific jobs from specific private employers.** For instance, in 1945, at the height of the push for federally guaranteed full employment, the Senate committee considering the issue took care to argue that, “**the right to work has occasionally been misinterpreted as a right to specific jobs of some specific type and status.” After labeling this a “misinterpretation,” the committee’s report cited the following words from one of the bill’s leading advocates:** “It is not the aim of the bill to provide specific jobs for specific individuals. **Our economic system of free enterprise must have free opportunities for jobs for all who are able and want to work**. **Our American system owes no [person] ~~man~~ a living, but it does owe every man an opportunity to make a living**.” (Senator Murray, quoted in United States, Wagner, and Radcliffe 1945, 8). These sentences remind us how puzzling, even alarming, the right to ‘specific jobs’ can sound. In fact, **in a liberal society, the whole point is that claims on specific jobs are a relic of feudal thinking.** In status-based societies, specific groups had rights to specific jobs in the name of corporate privilege. Occupations were tied to birth or guild membership, but not available to all equally. **Liberal society, based on freedom of contract, was designed to destroy just that kind of unfair and oppressive status-based hierarchy**. A common argument against striking workers is that they are latter day guilds, protecting their sectional interests by refusing to let anyone else perform ‘their jobs’ (e.g. Hayek 2011, 384-404). As one critic puts it, the strikers’ demand for an inalienable right to, and property in, a particular job cannot be made conformable to the principles of liberty under law for all...the endowment of the employee with some kind of property right in a job, [is a] prime example of this reversion to the governance of status. (Shenfield 1986, 13) If such criticisms fundamentally misunderstand the entirely modern basis for the right to strike, we still need an account of how anyone could claim something like a property right in a job she not only never acquired but that she then refuses to perform.

#### Only negative rights are coherent. Feser Summarizes Nozick 04,

Edward Feser [Philosophy professor at Loyola], On Nozick by Eric Mack, 2004, p. 36-7, Volume 8, Issue 4 //Scopa

#### This brings us to a second feature of Nozick’s conception of rights, namely that they are essentially negative. A right to X just is a right not to be hindered in using something you own, X, as you want to use it. It is not a right to have X if you don’t already own it and no one wants to give or sell it to you. Your right to your TV set is just your right not to have it damaged or taken from you against your will; it is not a right that someone should buy you a TV set. Your right to life is just the right not to be killed; it is not a right that others should provide you with what you need to live. You own your life, so no one has the right to take it from you. But by the same token, others own their lives, bodies, labor, and the things they produce with their labor, and thus no one has a right to take those things from them. In particular, you do not have the right forcibly to take, or have someone else take, other people’s resources simply because you want or need them, even if you need them to live (just as you have no right to take their body parts from them even if you needed those to live). A right to what you need in order to live would be a positive right a right to something that someone else must provide you with, as opposed to a (negative) right that someone merely refrain from doing something to you. So-called rights to welfare, health care, education, and the like would be positive rights. But there simply are and can be no such fundamental positive rights on a libertarian view. For no one has a basic right against other people that they must provide things for him; to assume otherwise is to assume, in effect, that a person at least partially owns other people’s property, including their labor, if I claim a right to education, for example, I am in effect claiming that other people must provide me with an education — it won’t just fall out of the sky, after all — which means I’m claiming a right to a part of their labor, i.e. whatever labor must go into paying the taxes that fund my state-run school. But no one has a right to anyone else’s labor — people own their own labor, and cannot morally be forced to give up some of it for others. If you want voluntarily to help me out in paying my tuition. and sign a contract saying you’ll do so, that’s one thing — in that case, I do have the right to your money, because you’ve agreed to provide it but if you don ‘t agree, I have no such right, and I and the government are stealing from you if we take your money anyway. Now many rights that people claim to have are positive rights of this sort. The United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, is filled with claims not only to negative rights, but also to many positive rights — rights to education, health care, even “periodic holidays with pay”! But all such claims are bogus, and the alleged “rights” pure fictions conjured out of thin air. For they conflict with the fundamental rights of self-ownership, and make people slaves to the realization of others’ desires and needs. Being essentially negative, a person’s rights function, in Nozick’s terminology, as moral side-constraints on the actions of others (1974, 28-35). Respecting others’ rights, that is, isn’t to be understood merely as one goal among others that we might seek to maximize, leaving open the possibility that violating rights in some circumstances for the sake of achieving some other good is an acceptable trade-off. Rather, one’s rights constitute a set of absolute restrictions within which all other people must behave with respect to him, and override all considerations of utility or welfare. They lay down the ground rules for our behavior towards others — telling us that, in anything we do, there are certain things we must not do. “Side constraints upon action reflect the underlying Kantian principle that individuals are ends and not merely means,” Nozick says; “they may not be sacrificed or used for the achieving of other ends without their consent. Individuals are inviolable” (1974, 30-31). Being inviolable, their rights are also inviolable — those rights cannot be overridden for any reason. Nor, given that rights are negative, is there any danger that they might conflict, which would put their inviolability in doubt. If your having a right to X just means that I cannot interfere with your use of X, and my right to Y just means that you cannot interfere with my use of Y, then there is no conflict between our rights: All we’re required to do is to leave each other alone. But if I also claim a positive right to Z, and Z requires the use of X, then our rights inevitably will conflict, for the only way I can get Z is if you give me X. Positive rights will generally, and obviously, lead to such conflicts — surely another reason to be suspicious of them. Negative rights, however, will not. Such rights are perfectly compatible with one another, and thus with the notion that rights are inviolable.

#### 2] The right to strike necessarily involves violating the right to property and contract – it’s coercive, Gourevitch 16 summarizes:

Gourevitch, A.. “Quitting Work but Not the Job: Liberty and the Right to Strike.” Perspectives on Politics 14 (2016): 307 - 323. //LHP AV Accessed 7/4/21

A second problem follows on the first. **If workers have rights to the jobs they are striking then they must have some powers to enforce those rights**. **Such powers might include** mass picketing, secondary boycotts, sympathy strikes, **coercion and intimidation of replacement workers, even destruction or immobilization of property** – the familiar panoply of strike actions. While workers have sometimes defended such actions without using the specifically juridical language of ‘rights,’ in many cases they have used that kind of appeal.3 Even when they have not employed rights-discourse, they have invoked some related notion of demanding fair terms to their job (Frow, Frow and Katanka 1971). Each and any of the above listed activities of a strike – pickets, boycotts, sympathy actions – are part of the way workers not only press their demands but claim their right to 3 See James Gray Pope’s (1997) remarkable reconstruction of the way, in the 1920s, rights-discourse helped organize and sustain a ‘constitutional strike’ against attempts to curtail and outlaw the strike. the job. Strikers regularly implore other workers not to cross picket lines and take struck jobs. **These are more than speech-acts. At the outer edges, they amount to intimidation and coercion**. Or at least, workers claim the right to intimidate and coerce if the state will not itself enforce this aspect of their right to strike. Liberal societies rarely permit a group of individuals powers that come close and even cross over into rights of private coercion. It is no surprise that regulation and repression of these strike-related activities have been the source of some of the most serious episodes of strike-related violence in US and European history (Brecher 2014; Lambert 2005; Forbath 1991; Adamic 1971; Taft and Ross 1969; Liebknecht 1917). So, alongside the unclear basis for the strikers’ rights to their jobs, the problem for a liberal society is that this right seems to include private rights of coercion or at least troubling forms of social pressure. Yet there is more. **The standard strike potentially threatens the fundamental freedoms of three specific groups**. • Freedom of contract **It conflicts with the freedom of contract of those replacement workers who would be willing to take the job** on terms that strikers will not. Note, this is not a possible conflict but a necessary one. **Strikers claim the job is theirs, which means replacements have no right** to it. But replacements claim everyone should have the equal freedom to contract with an employer for a job. • Property rights **A strike seriously interferes with the employer’s property rights**. **The point of a strike is to stop production**. **But the point of a property right is that, at least in the owner’s core area of activity, nobody else has the right to interfere with his use of that property**. **The** **strikers**, by claiming the employer has no right to hire replacements and thus no way of employing his property profitably, **effectively render the employer unfree to use his property as he sees fit**. To be clear, strikers claim the right not just to block replacement workers, but to prevent the employer from putting his property to work without their permission. For instance, New Deal ‘sit-down’ strikes made it impossible to operate factories, which was one reason why the courts claimed it violated employer property rights (Atleson 1983, 46-48). Similarly, during the Seattle general strike in 1919, the General Strike Committee forced owners to ask permission to engage in certain productive activities – permission it often denied (Brecher 2014, 106-111). • Freedom of association Though the conceptual issues here are complicated, a strike can seriously constrain a worker’s freedom of association. It does so most seriously when the strike is a group right, in which only authorized representatives of the union may call a strike. In this case, the right to strike is not the individual’s right in the same way that, say, the freedom to join a church or volunteer organization is. Moreover, the strike can be coercively imposed even on dissenting members, especially when the dissenters work in closed or union shops. That is because refusal to follow the strike leads to dismissal from the union, which would mean loss of the job in union or closed shops. The threat of losing a job is usually considered a coercive threat. So not only might workers be forced to join unions – depending on the law – but also they might be forced to go along with one of the union’s riskiest collective actions. **Note that each one of these concerns follows directly from the nature of the right to strike itself**. **Interference with freedom of contract, property rights**, and the freedom of association **are all part and parcel of defending the right** that striking workers claim to the ‘their’ jobs. These are difficult forms of coercive interference to justify on their own terms and **they appear to rest on a claim without foundation**. Just what right do workers have to jobs that they refuse to perform?

## Case

### Framework

#### Reject consequentialism – it triggers permissibliity:

#### 1] Culpability – actors can only be culpable for their rational decision, not the outcomes. Anything else means actors have no control over the morality of decisions meaning it is impossible for them to be obligated to act.

#### 2] Consequences are infinite – opening a door could one day cause nuke war through an endless chain or shooting someone may end up saving lives – unpredictability means they are not a stable basis for ethics which freezes action since agents never know what action to take

#### 3] Aggregation fails – there is no one for whom aggregate good is good-for. Korsgaard:

Christine Korsgaard, “The Origin of the Good and Our Animal Nature” Harvard, n.d. RE

According to the second view I will consider, hedonism, the good just is pleasurable experience or consciousness and the absence of painful experience or consciousness. What makes a being capable of having a final good is simply that the being is conscious. Otherwise, its good is not relative to its nature. As is often noticed, on this theory it is a real question whether some of the other animals might not have a better life, or at least be capable of having a better life, than human beings, given their apparent enthusiasm for simple and readily available joys. Although I’ll treat it as a separate theory, hedonism, I believe, has an inherent tendency to collapse either into a version of the intrinsic value theory, or into a version of the third view I am about to describe. Obviously, it is possible to regard hedonism simply as a particular instance of the intrinsic value theory, one that singles out conscious experience as the only possible bearer of intrinsic value. But I think this way of looking at hedonism does not do justice to the intuition that has made hedonism seem plausible to so many thinkers, which is precisely the idea that the final good must have an irreducibly subjective or relational element. That is, what makes hedonism seem plausible is precisely the idea that the final good for a sensate being must be something that can be felt or experienced as a good by that being. It is something that can be perceived or experienced as welcome or positive from the being’s own point of view, and that is therefore relative to the being’s own point of view.9 The intrinsic value version of hedonism tries to capture the essentially subjective element of the final good by attaching objective intrinsic value to a subjective experience, but when this move is made the essentially relational or relative character of subjectivity tends to drop out. The goodness of the experience is detached from its goodness for the being who is having the experience, and instead is located in the character of the experience itself. This defect shows up most clearly in utilitarian versions of hedonism, which allow us to add the goodness of pleasant experiences across the boundaries between persons or between animals. There is no subject for whom the total of these aggregated experiences is a good, so the aggregate good has completely lost that relational character: the goods are detached from the beings from whom they are good. This relational element of value, I believe, is better captured by the third theory I am about to describe.

#### Moen:

#### 1] Practical reason is more intrinsic since you can’t opt out but you can change what you value

#### 2] Masochists prove this false and at worst prove what is painful is inconclusive meaning their theory can’t prescribe action

#### And if they lose this their theory has no basis so no other warrants apply.

#### ASPEC:

#### 1] We hijack since the purpose of a Kantian state is systematizing freedom

#### 2] Is-ought fallacy, just because governments can use util easily doesn’t mean they should

#### 3] You don’t need to account for every instance – just create the correct laws

#### 1] Its consequence based and presumes goodness resides within sustenance of life

#### 2] It freezes action since every action potentially creates a tiny chance of extinction

#### 3] it forgoes any chance of goodness since there’s always SOME uncertainty – we must act on what’s probably moral at some point

### Contention

#### Nuke war won’t cause extinction, but it’ll spur political will for meaningful disarmament.

Deudney 18 [Associate Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. 03/15/2018. “The Great Debate.” The Oxford Handbook of International Security. www.oxfordhandbooks.com, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198777854.013.22] // Re-Cut Justin

Although nuclear war is the oldest of these technogenic threats to civilization and human survival, and although important steps to restraint, particularly at the end of the Cold War, have been achieved, the nuclear world is increasingly changing in major ways, and in almost entirely dangerous directions. The third “bombs away” phase of the great debate on the nuclear-political question is more consequentially divided than in the first two phases. Even more ominously, most of the momentum lies with the forces that are pulling states toward nuclear-use, and with the radical actors bent on inflicting catastrophic damage on the leading states in the international system, particularly the United States. In contrast, the arms control project, although intellectually vibrant, is largely in retreat on the world political stage. The arms control settlement of the Cold War is unraveling, and the world public is more divided and distracted than ever. With the recent election of President Donald Trump, the United States, which has played such a dominant role in nuclear politics since its scientists invented these fiendish engines, now has an impulsive and uninformed leader, boding ill for nuclear restraint and effective crisis management. Given current trends, it is prudent to assume that sooner or later, and probably sooner, nuclear weapons will again be the used in war. But this bad news may contain a “silver lining” of good news. Unlike a general nuclear war that might have occurred during the Cold War, such a nuclear event now would probably not mark the end of civilization (or of humanity), due to the great reductions in nuclear forces achieved at the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, politics on “the day after” could have immense potential for positive change. The survivors would not be likely to envy the dead, but would surely have a greatly renewed resolution for “never again.” Such an event, completely unpredictable in its particulars, would unambiguously put the nuclear-political question back at the top of the world political agenda. It would unmistakeably remind leading states of their vulnerability It might also trigger more robust efforts to achieve the global regulation of nuclear capability. Like the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that did so much to catalyze the elevated concern for nuclear security in the early Cold War, and like the experience “at the brink” in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the now bubbling nuclear caldron holds the possibility of inaugurating a major period of institutional innovation and adjustment toward a fully “bombs away” future.

#### Empirics – we’ve nuked ourselves 2,000 times and the largest event was only 1/1000th as powerful as natural disasters

Eken 17 [Mattias Eken - PhD student in Modern History at the University of St Andrews. “The understandable fear of nuclear weapons doesn’t match reality”. 3/14/17. <https://theconversation.com/the-understandable-fear-of-nuclear-weapons-doesnt-match-reality-73563>] // Re-Cut Justin

Nuclear weapons are unambiguously the most destructive weapons on the planet. Pound for pound, they are the most lethal weapons ever created, capable of killing millions. Millions live in fear that these weapons will be used again, with all the potential consequences. However, the destructive power of these weapons **has been vastly exaggerated**, albeit for good reasons. Public fear of nuclear weapons being used in anger, whether by terrorists or nuclear-armed nations, has risen once again in recent years. **This is** in no small part **thanks to the current political climate** between states such as the US and Russia and the various nuclear tests conducted by North Korea. But whenever we talk about nuclear weapons, it’s easy to get carried away with doomsday scenarios and apocalyptic language. As the historian Spencer Weart once argued: “**You say ‘nuclear bomb’ and everybody immediately thinks of the end of the world.**” Yet the means necessary to produce a nuclear bomb, let alone set one off, remain incredibly complex – and while the damage that would be done if someone did in fact detonate one might be very serious indeed, **the chances that it would mean “the end of the world” are vanishingly small**. In his 2013 book Command and Control, the author Eric Schlosser tried to scare us into perpetual fear of nuclear weapons by recounting stories of near misses and accidents involving nuclear weapons. One such event, the 1980 Damascus incident, saw a Titan II intercontinental ballistic missile explode at its remote Arkansas launch facility after a maintenance crew accidentally ruptured its fuel tank. Although the warhead involved in the incident didn’t detonate, Schlosser claims that “if it had, much of Arkansas would be gone”. But that’s not quite the case. The nine-megaton thermonuclear warhead on the **Titan II** missile had a blast radius of 10km, or an area of about 315km². The state of Arkansas spreads over 133,733km², meaning the weapon **would have caused destruction across 0.2% of the state.** That would naturally have been a terrible outcome, but certainly not the catastrophe that Schlosser evokes. Claims exaggerating the effects of nuclear weapons have become commonplace, especially after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. In the early War on Terror years, Richard Lugar, a former US senator and chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, argued that terrorists armed with nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to the Western way of life. What he failed to explain is how. It is by no means certain that a single nuclear detonation **(or even several)** would do away with our current way of life. Indeed, **we’re still here despite having nuked our own planet more than 2,000 times** – a tally expressed beautifully in this video by Japanese artist Isao Hashimoto). While the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty forced nuclear tests underground, **around 500 of** all **the nuclear weapons detonated were unleashed in the Earth’s atmosphere**. This includes the world’s largest ever nuclear detonation, the 57-megaton bomb known as **Tsar Bomba**, detonated by the Soviet Union on October 30 1961. Tsar Bomba was more than 3,000 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. That is immense destructive power – but as one physicist explained, **it’s only “one-thousandth the force of an earthquake, one-thousandth the force of a hurricane”.** The Damascus incident proved how incredibly hard it is to set off a nuclear bomb and the limited effect that would have come from just one warhead detonating. Despite this, some scientists have controversially argued that an even limited all-out nuclear war might lead to a so-called nuclear winter, since the smoke and debris created by very large bombs could block out the sun’s rays for a considerable amount of time. To inflict such ecological societal annihilation with weapons alone, we would have to detonate hundreds if not thousands of thermonuclear devices in a short time. Even in such extreme conditions, the area actually devastated by the bombs would be limited: for example, **2,000 one-megaton explosions with a destructive radius of five miles each would directly destroy less than 5% of the territory of the US**. Of course, if the effects of nuclear weapons have been greatly exaggerated, there is a very good reason: since these weapons are indeed extremely dangerous, any posturing and exaggerating which intensifies our fear of them makes us less likely to use them. But it’s important, however, to understand why people have come to fear these weapons the way we do. After all, nuclear weapons are here to stay; they can’t be “un-invented”. If we want to live with them and mitigate the very real risks they pose, we must be honest about what those risks really are. Overegging them to frighten ourselves more than we need to keeps nobody safe.