

APR14-2013-000125

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the APR14 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Joseph A. Burton Forum Award: Some Nuclear Weapons Dilemmas

MICHAEL MAY, Stanford University

Nuclear weapons pose a combination of political and ethical dilemmas the solution to which has not been found. On one hand, in the view of both US government leaders and US allies, nuclear deterrence continues to play an essential part in the US role as the ultimate source of military strength for the alliances among the major democratic countries. It also continues to be in demand by countries that believe themselves to be isolated and threatened. On the other hand, nuclear weapons, besides being effective deterrents, can cause unprecedented loss of life and risk the demise of civilizations. No ban or technical precaution could prevent the rebuilding of nuclear weapons in a crisis. No diplomatic arrangement to date has erased the threat of invasion and war in the world. Only the abandonment of war and the threat of war as instruments of policy can make nuclear weapons obsolete. The slow, halting, risky road to that end remains the only hope for a world in which lasting solutions to the nuclear dilemmas are possible.