

Modern warfare

The Bible does not give Christians a clear answer about whether war is permitted or not.

The ethics of modern warfare

Weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)

The key question is whether it is ever morally justifiable to use modern armaments in warfare. The term 'weapons of mass destruction' (WMDs) is now used for many of these weapons, including nuclear weapons. Examples include:

Chemical weapons – A chemical weapon is a canister containing a poisonous substance. When the canister is detonated, this poison contaminates a large area, causing severe reactions to any living thing. Chemical weapons are inhumane and it can take up to half an hour to die an agonising death. They are also very indiscriminate as they can be blown anywhere by the wind.

Biological weapons – These are also WMDs, similar to chemical weapons. However, the agent which is released is a harmful germ or virus. This means that death is caused through an infectious disease. Like chemical weapons, you cannot choose who to kill. This goes against the rules of war, where only military targets can be justified. Biological weapons also pollute the land for many years.

Smart missiles – These are called 'smart' because they have a computer guidance system in the missile, and (in theory) they can be remotely controlled to a specific target, such as an army base. In practice, they are not completely accurate and widespread civilian deaths still occur. They are also extremely expensive and cost money that could be put to better use. Some people are concerned that war should not be turned into some sort of glorified computer game, making it easier for conflicts to start and continue.

Nuclear weapons

In 1945 the first nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. This one small bomb killed about **150,000** people within the first four months. The immediate impact was 60,000 deaths, the rest were as a result of radiation sickness.

A second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki nine days later and Japan surrendered, ending World War Two.

Since then, no power has used a nuclear bomb in war, though many tests have been carried out on them.

The smallest nuclear bomb now produced is about 20 times more powerful than the one dropped on Hiroshima.

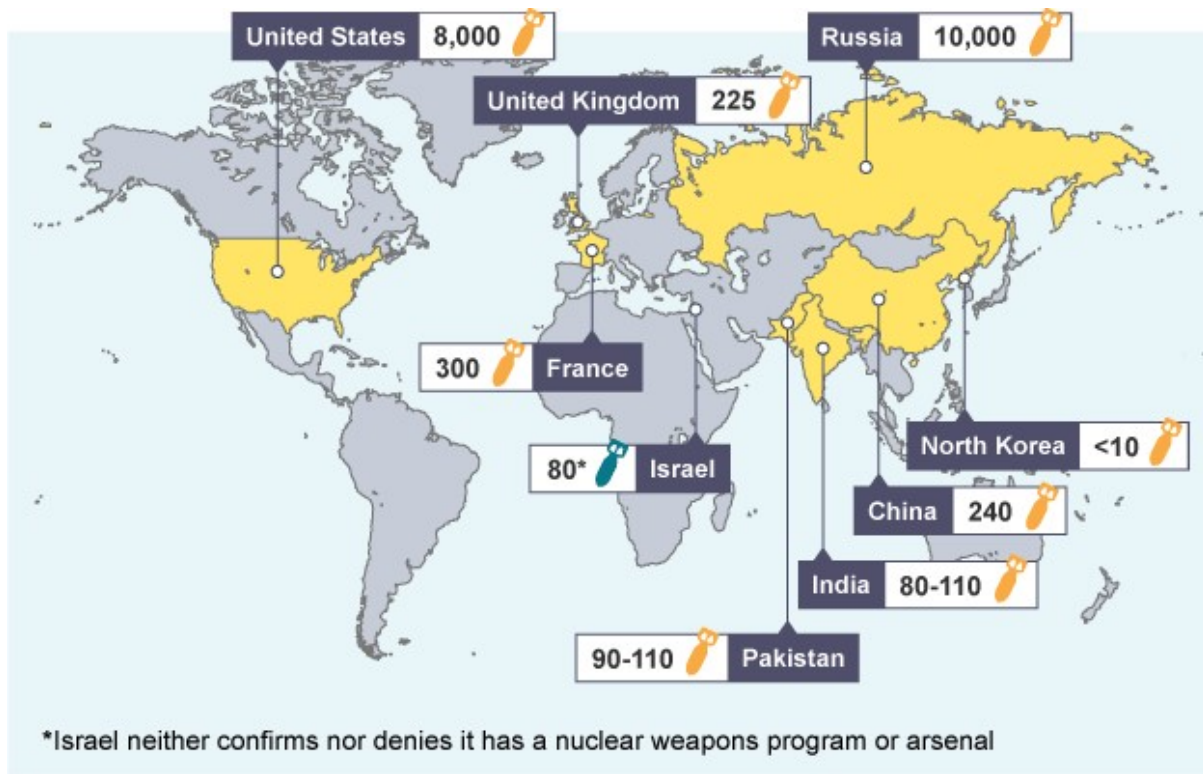
Arguments for nuclear weapons

- The possession of nuclear weapons has kept the major world powers from coming to war since 1955. This is due to fear of what might happen - the term that describes this is '**mutually assured destruction**'.
- It is preferable for the major powers to have these bombs for deterrence than for an unstable dictator to use them in war.

Arguments against nuclear weapons

- Their destructive power is immense and long lasting. Even countries that have nothing to do with the war will be badly affected. Some people estimate that **a small nuclear war could wipe out human life on Earth**.
- They are very costly to develop and maintain. The money could be spent on raising everybody's quality of life.
- There is no effective protection against them, nor can people control who has access to them.

Which countries have nuclear weapons?



Note: All figures are estimates as exact numbers are secret

Countries known to have nuclear weapons and their estimated numbers
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