



Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Silicon Valley Chapter
<http://www.wagingpeace.org>

Study Guide for use with *NUCLEAR TIPPING POINT*

Introduction

This study guide is intended for use with the film, *Nuclear Tipping Point*.¹ It is designed to assist small groups of adults and mature young people in exploring how nations can best achieve security and reduce the nuclear threat. The small group study can be completed in either one 90-minute session that omits part of the film, or two 60-minute sessions that show the entire film. In either case, we strongly recommend that the facilitator allow sufficient time for discussion. The goal is not to achieve consensus, but to encourage people to contemplate whether changing world conditions call for new ways of thinking about nuclear weapons.

Synopsis: *Nuclear Tipping Point* is a conversation with four men intimately involved in American diplomacy and national security over the last four decades: former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, and former Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Senator Sam Nunn. These four men share personal experiences that led to their calling for a world free of nuclear weapons and lay out how to get there. The film is introduced by General Colin Powell, narrated by actor Michael Douglas, and includes interviews with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Film length: 55:24

For a free copy of the DVD: go to www.nucleartippingpoint.org

Disclaimer: The use of this DVD is not an endorsement of the individuals who appear or their views on these or other issues; its purpose is to stimulate discussion on nuclear weapons. While the DVD can be a helpful resource, the views expressed in this film and on the website do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of the Silicon Valley Chapter of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation or its parent organization.

¹ This guide is based on a similar guide prepared by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that is available at <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/2010-nuclear-tipping-point-study-guide.pdf>. The primary change is that rather than exploring the religious and moral issues surrounding nuclear deterrence, we focus on whether the existence of nuclear weapons arsenals makes the United States more or less secure.

Instructions for the Facilitator

Before the meeting: At least a week before the meeting, make available to participants the position statements on national security and nuclear risk on page 4. On the day of the session, have copies available for all participants.

Room Set up: Arrange for a DVD player and TV to be in the room and set up chairs to face the TV. Select one person to read the Opening Statement at the appropriate time (found below).

Beginning the session: Welcome everyone and remind them that the purpose of the gathering is to reflect on the nuclear threat in our world today. We will do this by watching parts of the film, *Nuclear Tipping Point*, and thinking seriously about the nature of the risks we face. Indicate that this session will explore the topic from the perspective of both policy experts and our common experience.

Introductions: Invite everyone to briefly introduce himself or herself, and to share one word that captures how he or she feels when thinking about the topic of this session.

Opening Orientation Statement: Invite everyone to a state of open mindedness. Invite the reader to read the opening Orientation Statement.

Watch the Film. For a single session, watch from the beginning until 26:27, the beginning of the section entitled “Reducing the Threat Step by Step.” Then use the “Next” button to skip to the section entitled “The Mountain Top” and watch through to the closing credits, for a total of 34 min. For two sessions, during Session 1, again watch from the beginning of the film until 26:27; during Session 2, watch the remainder of the film.

Review the Quotes: Invite everyone to spend a few minutes reviewing the handouts.

Discussion: Explain the guidelines and then use the questions and action suggestion on page 3.

Closing Statement: Invite participants to offer intentions based on the discussion. Close with a statement of appreciation for everyone’s thoughtful participation.

Opening Statement

The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.

– Albert Einstein, 1946

Closing Statement

At the recent nuclear security summit in Washington, 47 world leaders agreed to do whatever is necessary to keep such weapons and materials safe. Their shared sense of urgency reflects an accepted reality. Nuclear terrorism is not a Hollywood fantasy. It can happen. ... Everyone recognizes the catastrophic danger of nuclear weapons. Just as clearly, we know the threat will last as long as these weapons exist.

– U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, April 10, 2010²

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/29/opinion/29iht-edmoon.html>

Small Group Discussion

Discussion Guidelines:

- Remember that the purpose is to reflect on the nuclear risk, not to win an argument.
- Stay on the topic; keep the discussion non-political.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Use “I” statements. (Take responsibility for what you express. Do not speak for “them.”)
- Help all to participate. (Do not allow one or two people to dominate.)
- Be respectful at all times.³

Questions⁴

1. The film identifies two major types of risk:
 - (a) The risk that with continued large arsenals and proliferation, terrorists will either get the materials needed to make a bomb or will steal a bomb, and in either case will use it.
 - (b) The risk that a confrontation between nuclear-armed nations (perhaps initiated by a terrorist incident) will escalate into a major nuclear exchange.If the status quo continues, how likely do you think each will happen in the next 5 years? the next 20 years? the next 100 years?
2. How does the issue of nuclear proliferation impact our goal of achieving security? Do you think the existence of the current nuclear arsenals preserves or imperils our security?
3. In the film, despite recognizing the difficulties, the Four Statesmen call for working toward a world free of nuclear weapons.
 - (a) Do you agree or disagree with this as a goal?
 - (b) Do you think the U.S. would have greater or less security in a world without nuclear weapons?
4. Since early in the Cold War, the U.S. has adopted a policy of using nuclear weapons for deterrence, and has justified the need to protect our allies with a “nuclear umbrella.” What problems with current nuclear policies does the film highlight?
5. What (if anything) can the U.S. do to increase the chances that other countries (particularly countries that feel threatened by more powerful adversaries) might give up their nuclear weapons, or might refrain from developing them?⁵
6. What (if anything) can I as an individual do to help bring about changes in national policy that might significantly reduce the nuclear risk?

³ For more guidance in holding a constructive discussion, see <http://nuclearrisk.org/5principles.php>.

⁴ If two sessions are used, you might reserve questions 4 through 6 for the second session.

⁵ The following steps are specifically listed in the film as ways to reduce the nuclear risk. Can you think of other steps that the U.S. might take to reduce the incentive for non-nuclear weapons states to seek to acquire them?

- * Secure all nuclear weapons and materials globally to the highest standards
- * Discard Cold War practices to decrease the danger of accidental, mistaken or unauthorized launch
- * Reduce substantially nuclear forces in all states that possess them
- * Eliminate short-range battlefield nuclear weapons
- * Halt the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons globally
- * Develop cooperative missile defense and early warning systems
- * Bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into effect
- * Develop a new international system to manage the risks of producing fuel for nuclear power
- * Phase out the use of highly enriched uranium in civil commerce
- * Strengthen verification and enforcement capabilities
- * Redouble efforts to resolve conflicts.

Arguments for maintaining the *status quo*

1. Nuclear weapons have prevented World War III for over 60 years.
Changing policies that have worked for a long time invites instability.
("If it ain't broke, don't fix it.")
2. Even if we got to zero, the knowledge of how to build the bomb will always be with us.
Treaties and inspections won't work. If someone secretly rearmed, they could seize enormous power.
("You can't put the genie back in the bottle.")
3. Small countries have no choice – it is their only defense against more powerful adversaries.
4. The U.S. has provided a "nuclear umbrella" via its various military alliances.
If the U.S. appeared to be serious about significant nuclear disarmament,
its allies would be forced to develop their own nuclear weapons.
5. Zero is unachievable. Therefore, even the aspirational goal of zero has no practical value.
Worse, voicing that goal distracts attention from trying to reach achievable nuclear safeguards.
("Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.")
6. A president who entertains the concept of "zero" loses credibility.
That causes our deterrent to lose credibility, making war more likely.

Arguments for reducing or eliminating nuclear weapons

1. Even during the Cold War, it was a myth that nuclear weapons provided national security.
We have been extremely lucky to get by with only two wartime uses.
The Cuban Missile Crisis was only one of a number of extremely dangerous incidents.
The risks are much greater than most people think, and are highly unacceptable.
2. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of terrorism, the world has changed.
If terrorists can get their hands on nukes, they will use them. It will be world changing.
3. Loose nuclear materials must be controlled, and this has to be an international effort.
Treaties and verification methods may not be foolproof, but the alternatives are worse.
The only practical way to enlist other nations is to reinvigorate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
Part of the deal was that nations without nukes agreed not to seek them.
But the other part of the deal was that nations with nukes promised to eliminate them.
4. The risk to the U.S. is much greater in a world with nuclear weapons than a world without them.
America's conventional arsenal would provide greater national security in a world at zero
than our nuclear weapons do today.
5. In the film, Colin Powell says "The one thing that I convinced myself after all these years of exposure to the
use of nuclear weapons is that they were useless." It is widely acknowledged by the military that if we have
to resort to using them, then we have lost – and then at an unthinkable cost.
Their only possible justification is for deterrence – and terrorists will not be deterred.
6. Times have changed. With people like George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn
calling for a world free of nuclear weapons, it can no longer be dismissed as a hopeless fantasy.
It is now a broadly accepted, non-partisan goal.