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How nuclear power powers the bomb

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Reuters recently reported that nuclear energy is both too slow and too expensive to present a meaningful response to the climate catastrophe facing our planet So why are countries like the UK, France, Russia, or China still investing in it?

The answer lies in the demands of the military, who require a robust backbone of civil nuclear infrastructure for their nuclear weapons programs. This backbone includes the mining, refinement, transportation, enrichment, and safeguarding of uranium, as well as research and development and a large number of nuclear engineers and scientists. Hence the investments in civil nuclear energy.

Frank Boulton (MedAct), Angelika Claussen (European regional vice president of IPPNW), and I (IPPNW-Germany) have just published **How Nuclear Power Powers the Bomb**, which explains the inherent interdependencies between the civil and military nuclear industries.

The paper's content is summed up in the following 9 conclusions:

- Without a "robust" civil nuclear industry and the associated nuclear infrastructure, nuclear weapons programmes would not be sustainable due to the high costs, risks and need for trained personnel.

- In all nuclear weapon states, the military utilizes the civilian nuclear industry through hidden subsidies regarding human resources, research funds and investments in dual-use nuclear infrastructure.

- The modernisation of nuclear arsenals in nuclear-weapon states is driving the development of new small modular reactors (SMR).

- Although allegedly intended for civilian use, SMRs are used primarily for military purposes, in particular for the propulsion of nuclear submarines, which have become the most important component of the nuclear weapons doctrines of the major nuclear powers.

- If nuclear propulsion units of submarines can be operated with HALEU (enrichment level of 5-20 %) instead of HEU (enrichment level of > 20 %), the civilian nuclear industry can provide relatively cheap and uncomplicated nuclear fuel for nuclear submarines.

- A further field of application for SMRs is the electricity supply of the military in remote combat zones.

- Since the beginning of the civil nuclear industry in the 1950s, its advertising slogans must be met with extreme caution. Nuclear energy does not reduce electricity prices but actually drives them up. Nuclear energy also offers no answer to the climate catastrophe.

- The German Institute for Economic Research comes to a clear conclusion in its 2019 report: "The lack of economic efficiency goes hand in hand with a high risk with regard to the proliferation of weapons-grade materials and the release of radioactivity, as shown by the accidents in Harrisburg (1977), Chernobyl (1986), and Fukushima (2011). For all these reasons, nuclear energy is not a relevant option for supplying economical, climate-friendly, and sustainable energy in the future."

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- The peace movement, ICAN, and the anti-nuclear movement should work much more closely together in view of the evident connection between civil and military nuclear industries.

COMMENT from ACDN

Excellent. All that is correct. That's why we must fight both for the abolition of nuclear and radioactive weapons and for the phase-out of nuclear power-plants.

Consequently, we must reject "the inalienable right of its States Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination" which was affirmed by the Non-Proliferation Treaty and reaffirmed by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This "right" to endanger the planet should never have been given a place in the text of the TPNW.

By the way, this treaty presents a lot of other very serious defects. When it enters into force, it needs to be significantly amended.

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