

Overcoming the politics of fear: Citizen empowerment and the abolition of nuclear weapons by Kevin P. Clements, Director of the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Queensland, Australia. **Abstract:** The political Right has forgotten what sort of past they wish to preserve and the Left has forgotten what sort of future it wishes to realize leaving us caught in a paralyzing present. In response to this sad state of affairs, both the Right and the Left cultivate a politics of fear. Citizens are infantilized, becoming politically and socially paralyzed, overwhelmed, disempowered, and incapable of holding political leaders accountable to high ethical standards. Within this context the most recent War in Iraq was ostensibly fought to remove weapons of mass destruction. The political leaders who pursued this war of choice were simultaneously subverting the NPT regime; playing fast and loose with nuclear safeguards, developing new warheads under the guise of the reliable replacement warhead (RRW) scheme, and showing little or no commitment to honoring their NPT obligations. This paper argues that there is an urgent need to develop more realistic assessments of the primary source of threat for citizens. Is it the prospect of bottom up terrorist incident, or the more likely top down state sponsored terror, that should be worrying citizens? This is a powerful motivator for a new mass based nuclear disarmament initiative. The solution is a concerted effort to persuade Generations X and Y of the imminent dangers of nuclear weapons, to arouse a shift in consciousness in favor of abolition and create a new and reinvigorated humanistic vision within which it is possible for citizens to think afresh about how to deal with fear while promoting global human security.