



The Atom Bomb and Popular Culture

A Bomb On The Loose

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By the 1980s the Soviet Union had spent decades pouring money into weapons and foreign wars. It was going bankrupt. And in 1991, the USSR disintegrated. With the Cold War over and the world no longer on the brink of being atomized, nukes could be seen as a game...

In *Fallout*,

the player is a nuclear holocaust survivor destroying a mutant army that threatens what's left of humanity.

You not look like...

Far too much fun to give us any apocalyptic anxiety.

But even if nuclear war was fading from our nightmares, it left us to wonder – Just what would happen if old Soviet nukes got into the wrong hands? And so, Hollywood's new 1990s villain became: The nuclear terrorist.

In *The Peacemaker*,

he's a former Bosnian diplomat who wants to detonate a smuggled nuke in New York to avenge the death of his family. But not if George Clooney can help it. The film examines the popular resentment that many felt towards the superpowers that proliferated these deadly weapons.

Mr Gavrich what is it you want?

I want it to be like it was.

Based on the Tom Clancy novel, *The Sum of All Fears*

is about a Neo-Nazi organization attacking the US with nuclear warheads bought on the black market. Nuclear chaos was just the backdrop to a tale about an All-American hero saving the day.

But the movie's release was pushed back because of 9/11. That day marked a deep shift in the Western psyche. The threat of terrorism in the movies suddenly became real. And we now realized that a nuclear terrorist might attack anytime, anywhere.

In the TV series 24, Jack Bauer

spends a whole 24 hours running after them. The threat of nuclear terrorism is so acute that, controversially, Jack uses torture as his counter-weapon.

Where are the bombs?

Meanwhile, in the UK, the Television film Dirty War went on to explore a new reality in the Nuclear Age. It exposes how authorities would be ill-prepared to cope with the effects of a new kind of nuclear bomb on London. This so-called "dirty bomb" is not only radioactive, but it's homemade.

Away from fictional portrayals, today's nuclear dilemma has become infinitely more complex. Now Iran, Pakistan, India, Israel, and North Korea all have nuclear programs. We can't go back and we can't un-invent the game. But many desperately wish we could put the genie back in the bottle.

The 2010 US documentary Countdown to Zero advocates NOT playing the game, and completely abolishing all 23000 odd, nuclear weapons on earth today. It reinforces the popular view that such powerful weapons should never have existed to begin with, and should be eliminated - for the survival of humankind.

No country should have.

The optimum number is none.

Ideal will be zero.

Zero nuclear weapons.

None, none.