

On the face of it, deterrence seems to have played out exactly as expected: certainly to Putin's advantage, somewhat to NATO's advantage, and to Ukraine's catastrophic disadvantage. "If only Ukraine had kept its nuclear weapons", many say. "Nuclear weapons have saved us from a Third World War", say others.

Under the logic of 'more nuclear weapons will make us safer' – the conclusion that many have drawn we assume that their acquisition by any state is a straightforward affair, that other countries can simply buy for themselves a slice of the ultimate supposed security which some states have enjoyed for decades. We speak of nuclear weapons as a kind of oven-ready deterrent.

In thinking about security in this way we conflate the possession of nuclear weapons *per se* with the determined and responsible efforts by states, until recently, to bring about strategic stability, to reduce risks, engage in dialogue, commit to arms control and disarmament, and resolutely uphold the principle of non-proliferation.

A world which fails to appreciate the precariousness of our security and which gives up on the principle of non-proliferation will not be safer for anyone. Nuclear weapons are unique in the existential risk they pose, and some states may go to unprecedented lengths simply to counter the *possibility* of another state acquiring them. Add to that inherent risk and instability of nuclear deterrence itself.

Because of this war, Christians need to reinvigorate the commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, which is not fringe pacifist concern, but is enshrined in the Non-proliferation Treaty, to which 191 states are party - including five nuclear-armed states. *And* we should actively listen to the 66 states who are party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons who met for the first time last month and courageously refused to buy in to the dangerous logic I described earlier.

Where there's a danger of sleepwalking into a volatile new world, we have a duty to draw attention to reality - to wake people up. Professor Niall Ferguson said earlier this week that if we are indeed facing Cold War II, he would much rather skip the Cuban Missile Crisis and go straight to *détente*. And because God hasn't constrained us to a history bound to 'repeat itself', Ferguson's hope can be our urgent mission. Holding ourselves to account on our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, which relies on a commitment to nuclear elimination, is a good place to start.