

## MAD, SAD, AND NUTS

After Buffalo, Uvalde, and Tulsa, and the many mass shootings which have taken place beforehand, many people say that mass shootings like ours don't take place in other advanced countries. As it turns out, they do, but when they happened in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, and Scotland, the governments there acted effectively to stop any further slaughter. Our state and federal governments haven't, and probably won't. What makes matters worse is that gunfire is now the leading cause of death among our children. Even sadder is that most gun deaths in our country are suicides.

Along with the domestic bloodletting, we have a three-legged arms race based on **MAD**, **SAD**, and **NUTS**. **NUTS** is a US nuclear strategy, dating from the Obama administration, which considers fighting and winning a nuclear war at any level of military engagement a sensible thing to do.

**MAD** was originally called **Assured Destruction**. This strategic policy acknowledged that waging a nuclear war would likely result in mutual destruction, and theorized that one superpower could deter another from initiating a nuclear attack by guaranteeing a devastating counterstrike. The resulting exchange would damage the aggressor as much as it would its victim. Strategists argued that no rational leader would engage in nuclear war on those terms, and so Assured Destruction became the dominant nuclear arms strategy in the 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1960s and 1970s, defense analysts whose strategic thought was reflected by the Committee on the Present Danger argued that Assured Destruction was suicidal, and called it “**mutual assured destruction**,” or **MAD**. Nobel Laureate economist Thomas Schelling supported Assured Destruction in his *Strategy of Conflict* (1960). He proposed that a superpower with a guaranteed counterstrike that could withstand an aggressor's first strike would effectively deter a hostile nation. He added that nuclear-armed submarines would provide sufficient deterrent force without the need for either land-based nuclear missiles or air deployed nuclear bombs.

In actuality, **MAD** is simply a mask for **SAD (Self-Assured Destruction)**, since either the US or Russia could induce a nuclear winter that would make the earth uninhabitable by launching 1000 of its own average-yield missiles, without a retaliatory response from its opponent.

**Nuclear Use Targeting Selection (NUTS)** builds on the deterrence theory that Herman Kahn proposed in his *On Thermonuclear War* (1960). While **MAD** recommends maintaining a secure counterstrike capability (known as massive retaliation during the Eisenhower years) to avoid nuclear war, **NUTS** holds that deterrence will work only if the United States commits itself to fighting a nuclear war at every level of military engagement. Kahn described 44 rungs on a ladder of military escalation, with nuclear war beginning on rung 15. **NUTS** is radically different from **MAD** in several ways. To begin with, it minimizes the risk of accidental nuclear war due to either communication error or hardware failure, and ignores the climate damage that would result from nuclear conflict. **NUTS** proposes that the US must be able to threaten hostile nations with nuclear war to assure its own security and that of its allies, and embraces the first strike use of

nuclear weapons. **NUTS** requires viewing nuclear weapons as no different from conventional arms, and endorses both the development and flexible use of nuclear weapons suited to lesser than all-out war. **NUTS** suggests that the US must dominate every level of military escalation, supports coercive bargaining to promote US security and power, and acknowledges that winning a nuclear war may require securing the best chance of long-term survival in a post-apocalyptic world with massive levels of radioactive and ecological contamination.

One can only guess how humanity would fare under such conditions. So it goes.

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