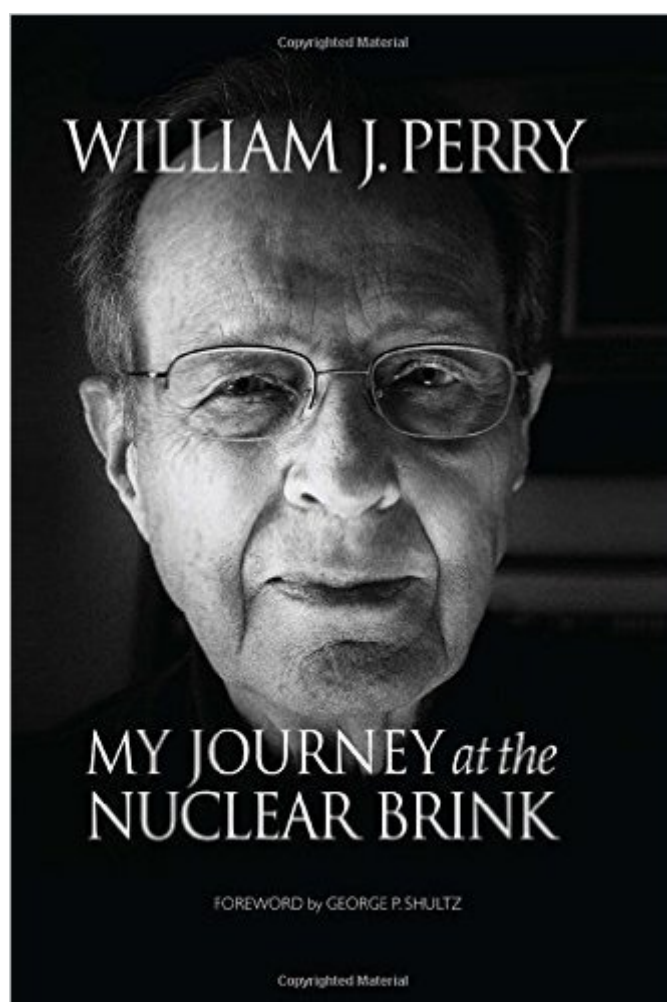


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# My Journey At The Nuclear Brink



## Synopsis

My Journey at the Nuclear Brink is a continuation of William J. Perry's efforts to keep the world safe from a nuclear catastrophe. It tells the story of his coming of age in the nuclear era, his role in trying to shape and contain it, and how his thinking has changed about the threat these weapons pose. In a remarkable career, Perry has dealt firsthand with the changing nuclear threat. Decades of experience and special access to top-secret knowledge of strategic nuclear options have given Perry a unique, and chilling, vantage point from which to conclude that nuclear weapons endanger our security rather than securing it. This book traces his thought process as he journeys from the Cuban Missile Crisis, to crafting a defense strategy in the Carter Administration to offset the Soviets' numeric superiority in conventional forces, to presiding over the dismantling of more than 8,000 nuclear weapons in the Clinton Administration, and to his creation in 2007, with George Shultz, Sam Nunn, and Henry Kissinger, of the Nuclear Security Project to articulate their vision of a world free from nuclear weapons and to lay out the urgent steps needed to reduce nuclear dangers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The world is armed to the teeth and in constant conflict. In particular, despite repeated attempts to reduce their number, thousands of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons are poised for rapid delivery from land silos, from aircraft and from submarines. Thoughtful men and women in every civilized nation yearn for wise, experienced and competent leaders who can manage and reduce the horrific potential of a nuclear weapon used . . . anywhere. Enter William J. Perry, a Palo Alto

engineer, entrepreneur and—in his role as U.S. Secretary of Defense—a leader and diplomat who has devoted his life to reducing and, if possible, eliminating the nuclear threat that, now and in minutes, could destroy civilization. Perry describes his progress from Army observer of post-nuclear attack in post-WWII Japan to becoming a committed, passionate advocate for nuclear arms control. He knows what could happen if a nuke is used anywhere in any way—“accidentally, through terrorism or by an intemperate leader with an itchy trigger finger. He cites, chillingly, the not-infrequent near-misses of potentially catastrophic nuclear accidents. After leaving the Army he worked for Sylvania’s electronic surveillance operations, then founded ESL (Electromagnetic Systems Laboratory) in Silicon Valley, later sold to TRW. In the process he became intimately knowledgeable about the world’s nuclear weaponry, particularly the overwhelming tripartite (land, air, submarine) nuclear capabilities of the United States and the Former Soviet Union. The book, with a powerful and moving introduction by former Secretary of State George P. Schultz, is linear, logical and impeccably reasoned. Though the subject matter is technically complex and highly classified, Perry conveys the intricacies with clarity and power, avoiding jargon that would deter non-technical readers. Detailed footnotes accompany the key references and he provides an essential acronym guide for the uninitiated. Perry takes us in 25 chapters from the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 through his work in and out of industry and Government, up to and beyond his stints in Washington to the present day. He explains the challenge of being SecDef: an activity with three million employees and half-trillion-dollar annual budgets. He makes a convincing case for appointees with management skills rather than politicians with patronage. He reveals in compelling detail the challenging process of trying to negotiate with the FSU and with North Korea, while engaging essentially all the nuclear-capable world nations except, notably, Israel with its Dimona facility and weaponry. He cites glorious successes in reducing nuclear arms with highly intelligent and cooperative adversaries, and shattering setbacks, the latter most particularly in the newly re-engaged nuclear arms race between the U.S. and Russia. Intransigence, and failures to communicate, compromise and negotiate, haunt the process. Considering other states acquiring nuclear weapons, he dismantles logically and scathingly the behavior of the George W. Bush administration (abetted by British Prime Minister Tony Blair) with respect to Iraq’s supposed WMDs, the pretext for world-changing wars still being waged at desperate cost in lives and treasure. But he makes clear, as described by J.A.C. Brown elsewhere, in his seminal book *Techniques of Persuasion*, that (as Brown puts it), “emotion is stronger than reason in the vast majority of people.” World leaders are not exempt. Ah, you noticed. You can even name them. Missing pieces and technical disconnects will

concern informed readers, but the book's subject matter is of such immense scope that this is inevitable. In discussing the evolution of Lockheed's F-117 stealth bomber (it was never a fighter), for example, he does not point out that early, low-frequency radars (e.g. L- and S-band) can detect stealthy targets, as can bistatic radar. He does not explain that a stolen tactical nuke (a small, battlefield device despite its stupendous power) is useless to thieves lacking the coding safeguards, refreshed repeatedly, without which it cannot be detonated. He fails to consider that possessing fissile materials, for example via terrorist theft, is an immense distance from being able to field a functional, deliverable weapon (think: having oil and needing to design and build a modern car). He claims that nuclear horror is unimaginable. But the British created a detailed documentary that imagines precisely what would happen if a nuclear weapon were used. Horrific? No, worse. Much, much worse. He cites interoperability between U.S. and NATO forces, clearly a grave issue. The admission into NATO of former Warsaw Pact nations, he explains, has driven Russian paranoia and rekindled the Cold War. U.S./NATO communications and electronic warfare systems lack commonality. Case in point: the proposed AgustaWestland VH-71 Kestrel Presidential helicopter, delivered for evaluation with NATO systems, had to have them all removed and replaced with U.S. systems, at huge cost. And the U.S., unlike all of NATO, has still not gone metric. unfathomably. He writes of streamlining military systems acquisition but barely gums the F-35 horror show, a trillion-dollar boondoggle (hopelessly late, overweight, far beyond budget) that may never deliver its promises. Minor carping aside, this is a very important book that ought to have been released by a major world publisher and reviewed in depth by major literary publications in the U.S. and UK. It should be read widely, especially by younger readers, Millennials, who may not be aware of the terrifying potential for nuclear disaster that Perry is determined to avert as long as he lives. He has created a project and website ([www.wjperryproject.org](http://www.wjperryproject.org)) to further his goals. Calibration: through Perry's efforts, and those of his capable colleagues and supporters (all identified respectfully, including Senators Nunn and Lugar, Henry Kissinger and current SecDef Ashton Carter), the nuclear nations have reduced their stockpiles from being able to destroy the world 50 times over to being able to destroy world civilization only 10 times over. Some progress, eh, representing taxpayer expenditures in nuclear deterrence of trillions of dollars over the decades since Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I found this book well worth reading. It is well written and chuck full of information. I had only a newspaper understanding of the basic issues in the cold war and was glad to expand them with

information from someone who was party to the decisions. The author was there through his role in electronic reconnaissance, in weapons development as Deputy Sec Defense and then as Sec Defense. Dr. Perry had the personal experience of witnessing the destruction of Tokyo and then Okinawa at the end of WW2 as an 18 year old army draftee. Now, imagining a multiplication this horror by a zillion, he has played a leading role in assuring that the possible holocaust facing us in a nuclear war did not, and hopefully will not, occur. I learned a lot about the workings of the Defense Dept and the development and acquisition of weapons. What was surprising was the amount of diplomacy involved in defense decisions. There were many military to military meetings between countries and particularly between the Soviets (and then Russians) and us. Some of it is natural and unavoidable, but under Perry there was a lot more of it leading to friendly relations amongst the defense establishments of various countries. This was important for nuclear safety in the trust it generates. The world is a lot safer with the reduction of nukes under Start I, Start II, the elimination of intermediate range nuclear missiles, a test ban treaty, and more. The author gives great credit to the Nunn-Lugar law which enables America to assist and lead in the attempt to eliminate "loose nukes" and fissionable material that might fall into the wrong hands. Under this law the US has aided and to a large extent financed the complete elimination of nuclear weapons from the Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Since retiring, Perry along with Nunn, Schultz and Kissinger has continued his efforts toward nuclear sanity.

Headline for your review  
DEFENSE DECISIONS SEEN  
FROM THE INSIDE

This is a book we all should read -- and soon. We get so involved with our lives: projects, family, work -- we forget the sword hanging over our head. It is very uncomfortable to read this book as you know the author has the experience, education, and temperament to write this truthfully and the truth is terrible. However, not without hope as long as we each put some real lifting into savings the nukes -- maybe not turn them into plowshares but at least into low grade usable fuel to power electric stations and not make warheads. Our civilization depends on our fight -- let's not back away. Thank you William J. Perry -- you are a very special man.

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