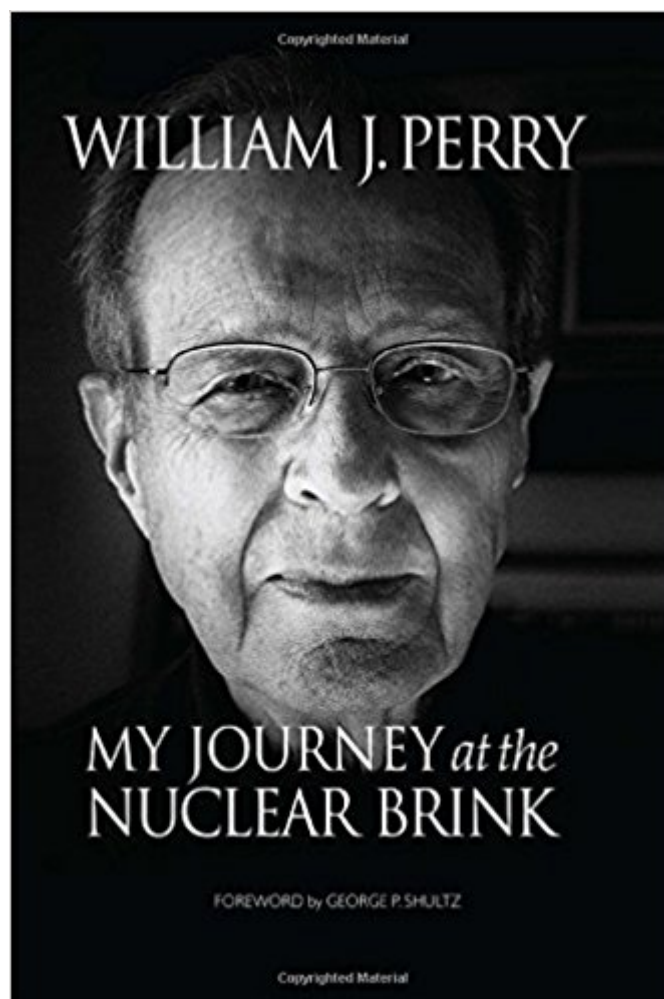


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# My Journey At The Nuclear Brink



## 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.

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## Customer Reviews

"William Perry's dedicated service to our nation spans generations, and this remarkable book documents a lifetime of achievements that have made America stronger and safer. In these pages, you will have an insider's look at the acute tensions of the Cold War and the expansive opportunities that emerged when it ended. Dr. Perry's experiences demonstrate why we must do everything we can to reduce the dangers of nuclear proliferation. You will be inspired by the impact that one gifted

individual can have on the most pressing national security challenges that we face." (Dr. Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall)"Perry, more technocrat than politician, emphasizes his efforts to prevent nuclear war in this sincere and nontriumphalist memoir." (Publishers Weekly)"Perry's authoritative memoir...is a clear, sobering and, for many, surprising warning that the danger of a nuclear catastrophe today is actually greater than it was during that era of U.S.-Soviet competition.a significant and insightful memoir and a necessary read." (Mortimer B. Zuckerman U.S. News & World Report)"Bill Perry has the highest A to E ratio (accomplishments to ego) of anyone I have ever known. His vision and foresight have made America safer, stronger and more secure. He has lived General Omar Bradley's dictum: 'The way to win an atomic war is to make certain it never starts.' Everyone interested in protecting the future of our nation and planet should read this book and learn from Bill's experience." (Former Senator Sam Nunn Co-Chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative)"In clear, detailed but powerful prose, Perry's new book, *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*, tells the story of his seventy-year experience of the nuclear age. Beginning with his firsthand encounter with survivors living amid 'vast wastes of fused rubble' in the aftermath of World War II, his account takes us up to today when Perry is on an urgent mission to alert us to the dangerous nuclear road we are traveling." (Jerry Brown The New York Review of Books)

William J. Perry was the 19th Secretary of Defense for the United States from February 1994 to January 1997. He previously served as Deputy Secretary of Defense (1993–1994) and as Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (1977–1981). He is the Michael and Barbara Berberian Professor (emeritus) at Stanford University.

I found this book well worth reading. It is well written and chock 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

At times it seems as though about a dozen people run the federal government. They change jobs from one administration to the next, occasionally drop out to work in academia or industry for a time, but then pop up again when another President comes along. At their level the cabinet and sub-cabinet positions the political party tends not to matter as much as the public might think. History is full of such examples. One of those people is William J. Perry. Six decades combating the nuclear menace

Now 88 years of age, Perry is best known as the former Deputy Secretary and then Secretary of Defense under Bill Clinton, but his career in government and in a variety of private-sector positions elsewhere in the military-industrial complex began in the 1950s. In *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*, Perry ably recounts his efforts over six decades to combat the menace of nuclear weapons from his positions in government, private industry, academia, and, now, the nonprofit sector. His account is brisk, readable, and ultimately terrifying.

The enduring nuclear threat

Perry makes his case at the outset: "Nuclear weapons no longer provide for our security they now endanger it. Because of the failure of the U.S. and Soviet governments to reach agreement on eliminating nuclear weapons entirely, a step that was within their reach three decades ago, and the proliferation of nuclear technology to at least seven other nations, the human race is if anything more at risk from nuclear bombs than we were at the height of the Cold War, with the sole exception of the Cuban Missile Crisis. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea collectively possess a total of more than 16,000 nuclear weapons. A single missile, with ten nuclear warheads, could obliterate all the major capital cities of Europe or the ten biggest cities in the United States. Perry foresees three principal threats: the increasingly

bellicose stance of Russia under Vladimir Putin, the ever-present possibility of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, and the possibility that terrorists might steal or purchase a weapon and detonate it in a large American city. A chilling history of nuclear confrontation Perry's memoir brings to light several little-known events and circumstances that might have led to a full-blown nuclear conflagration between the U.S. and the USSR. "Although the Cuban Missile Crisis [in October 1962] ended without war," he writes, "I believed then, and still believe, that the world avoided a nuclear holocaust as much by good luck as by good management. . . . For example, we now know that the Soviet ships approaching our blockade of Cuba had submarine escorts, and that the Soviet submarines were armed with nuclear torpedoes . . . [T]he commanders had been given the authority to fire [those] torpedoes without authorization from Moscow. Only years after the crisis did we learn that one of the Soviet commanders had seriously considered firing one . . . at an American destroyer that was trying to force him to surface. He was dissuaded from doing so only by the other officers on the submarine. This is scary stuff. Very scary. At the time I was terrified. Yet I didn't understand just how close we came to Armageddon. Perry makes clear that politics rather than military necessity has dictated the massive expansion of our nuclear forces in the past and prevents its further reduction today. "I can testify," he writes, "that during the Cold War, no US president was willing to accept nuclear forces smaller than those of the Soviet Union even though both nations had armed enough missiles to reduce the planet to ashes many times over. It was this imbalance that powered the nuclear arms race rather than the need for deterrence. In fact, the Triad of our nuclear forces on land, in the air, and under the sea is unnecessary. "I am convinced that we could have confidence in our deterrence if we had only submarine-based missiles. A front seat at the brink In his memoir, Perry recounts the various ways in which he personally has been involved in holding back the nuclear threat. In the 1950s and 60s, as a research scientist, he helped to develop the reconnaissance technology that revealed the true extent of the Soviet Union's nuclear forces (undermining the fantasy of the "nuclear gap" that politicians used to frighten the American people). In the 1970s, as a senior Defense Department official, he helped engineer the development of the U.S. deterrent that (in theory) prevented a Soviet attack. Then, in the 1990s, in collaboration with Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, he implemented the U.S. program to remove nuclear weapons and nuclear materials from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Now, in the 21st century, he is working through

the nonprofit sector with other former federal heavyweights (George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn) to campaign for nuclear nonproliferation and for reforms in the nuclear alert system that he believes to be antiquated and dangerous.

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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