



makes the military the most difficult sector of any society for the citizens to monitor. If we do not know what they do, it is very hard for us to stop them. And with the rewards so substantial, with the hostile military establishments beholden to each other in some ghastly mutual embrace, the world discovers itself drifting toward the ultimate undoing of the human enterprise.

Every major power has some widely publicized justification for its procurement and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, often including a reptilian reminder of the presumed character and cultural defects of potential enemies (as opposed to us stout fellows), or of the intentions of others, but never ourselves, to conquer the world. Every nation seems to have its set of forbidden possibilities, which its citizenry and adherents must not at any cost be permitted to think seriously about. In the Soviet Union these include capitalism, God, and the surrender of national sovereignty; in the United States, socialism, atheism, and the surrender of national sovereignty. It is the same all over the world.

How would we explain the global arms race to a dispassionate extraterrestrial observer? How would we justify the most recent destabilizing developments of killer-satellites, particle beam weapons, lasers, neutron bombs, cruise missiles, and the proposed conversion of areas the size of modest countries to the enterprise of hiding each intercontinental ballistic missile among hundreds of decoys? Would we argue that ten thousand targeted nuclear warheads are likely to enhance the prospects for our survival? What account would we give of our stewardship of the planet Earth? We have heard the rationales offered by the nuclear superpowers. We know who speaks for the nations. But who speaks for the human species? Who speaks for Earth?

The upper atmosphere of the planet Earth, seen at twilight. In a full nuclear war, the protective ozone layer would be partially destroyed and the stratosphere would be filled with radioactive debris. A visitor from another world might be tempted to move on. Courtesy NASA.