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Prepared by the Isegora Briefs Team

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January/February 2026 V1

Resolved: The possession of nuclear weapons is immoral

Notes

Special thanks to everyone on our team who has contributed to make this possible:

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Topicality

Immoral

Morality

The resolution asks a question of morality because of the word 'Immoral'

Merriam-Webster [immoral. (2025). In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved November 30, 2025, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/immoral] //Isegora

: not moral : morally evil or wrong

Possession

Generic

Possession is the act of owning something

Merriam Webster [possession. (2025). In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved November 30, 2025, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/possession] //Isegora

: the act or condition of having or taking into control

Nuclear Weapons

Generic

Nuclear weapons are explosive weapons that use nuclear reactions

Britannica ["Nuclear Weapon | History, Facts, Types, Countries, Blast Radius, & Effects | Britannica." Britannica. n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2025.] //Isegora

nuclear weapon, device designed to release energy in an explosive manner as a result of nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, or a combination of the two processes. Fission weapons are commonly referred to as atomic bombs. Fusion weapons are also referred to as thermonuclear bombs or, more commonly, hydrogen bombs; they are usually defined as nuclear weapons in which at least a portion of the energy is released by nuclear fusion.

Nuclear

Nuclear indicates a use of a nuclear reaction

Merriam-Webster[nuclear. (2025). In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved November 30, 2025, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nuclear] //Isegora

used in or produced by a nuclear reaction (such as fission)

Weapons

A weapon is used to harm something

Merriam-Webster[weapon. (2025). In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved November 30, 2025, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/weapon] //Isegora

something (such as a club, knife, or gun) used to injure, defeat, or destroy

Affirmative Evidence

Miscalc

Tensions between India and Pakistan continue to rise due to allegations of state-sponsored terrorism.

Jones 25 ["Tensions between India and Pakistan Surge after Last Week's Explosions in Delhi and Islamabad." *World Socialist Web Site*, 17 Nov. 2025, www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/11/17/rhea-n17.html. Accessed 29 Nov. 2025. // Isegora] Tensions have surged between India and Pakistan, which fought a four-day war last May, following deadly explosions on consecutive days last week in their respective capitals, New Delhi and Islamabad. Pakistan has blamed India for the November 11 suicide bombing outside the Islamabad District Judicial Court complex, which killed 12 people, in addition to the bomber, and injured dozens more. Almost immediately after the attack, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that it had been carried out by "Indian terrorist proxies" and called on foreign governments to condemn "Indian state terrorism." Defence Minister Khawaja Asif was even more explicit. He claimed the bombing in Pakistan's capital and a November 11 assault by five gunmen on a Pakistan army cadet school in South Waziristan "were orchestrated from Afghanistan, at the behest of India." A faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan has claimed responsibility for the Islamabad suicide bombing, which occurred in a high-security zone. In recent months, Islamabad has become ever more strident in charging that both India and Afghanistan's Taliban regime are providing material support to the Pakistan Taliban—an Islamist insurgent group that arose at the beginning of the Afghan War in response to the scorched-earth military campaign and collective punishments Islamabad and Washington used to suppress Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan's tribal areas. Fighting erupted between Pakistan and Afghanistan along their disputed border last month after Islamabad mounted airstrikes deep inside Afghanistan, targeting what it called Pakistan Taliban bases. Only after a week and a half of border clashes and Pakistani drone and fighter-jet missile strikes across southern and central Afghanistan did the two sides reach a shaky truce with the help of Qatar and Turkey. Not coincidentally, Pakistan launched its illegal campaign of air strikes inside Afghanistan on October 9, just as Afghan Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi was beginning a week-long trip to New Delhi. There he met his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishnakar, and India's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, and signed an "India–Afghanistan Joint Statement" that outlines a framework for increased trade, humanitarian and military-security cooperation. In addition to ratcheting up tensions with India, Pakistan has also made new bellicose threats against Kabul in the wake of the Islamabad bomb attack. Defence Minister Asif said the attack shows Pakistan is in a "state of war," adding that "in this environment, it would be futile to hold out greater hope for successful negotiations with the rulers of Kabul." Pakistan's relations with both India and Afghanistan are now highly fraught, with a growing danger that renewed border clashes or even a full-scale war could erupt at any time. Last May, South Asia's two nuclear-armed powers came to the brink of an all-out confrontation after India, in defiance of international law, launched multiple air strikes across Pakistan after blaming Islamabad, without providing a shred of evidence, for a terrorist attack in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir. Events quickly spiraled out of control, as both sides engaged in combat outside of the disputed Kashmir regime for the first time in decades and made

widespread use of drone strikes and sophisticated air defence systems. With losses of sophisticated aircraft mounting and both India and Pakistan implementing war-mobilization plans, the two sides pulled back on the fourth day of fighting and hastily agreed to a truce. However, there has been no return to even the frigid relations that previously prevailed. India's Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has rejected Islamabad's calls for negotiations; demonstratively declared that its military action against Pakistan (Operation Sindoor) is merely "suspended"; and withdrawn from the Indus Valley Water Treaty, threatening to disrupt Pakistan's water and electricity supply. Both countries have launched crash drives to purchase new armaments, replenish ammunition stocks, and rework their war plans based on the "lessons" of May's last clash. Meanwhile, the BJP, with the support of much of the corporate media, has boasted that India redefined its relations with Pakistan in last May's war. By crossing multiple Pakistani "red lines," India, they assert, has demonstrated that it will not be cowed by Islamabad's "nuclear blackmail"—that is, the possibility an Indo-Pakistani war could rapidly result in the use of tactical and ultimately strategic nuclear weapons. India, or so the argument goes, has now positioned itself to make use of its large preponderance in conventional forces to put its arch-rival Pakistan in its place. In the BJP narrative, credit for India's supposed new prowess lies with the "Hindu strongman" Prime Minster Narendra Modi. During the recently concluded Bihar state election campaign, Modi and his BJP repeatedly boasted that they had led India to victory last May and in so doing decisively altered the Indo-Pakistani dynamic in New Delhi's favour. **The Delhi explosion** It is within this context that events have played out after a car exploded on the evening of Monday, November 10, near the Red Fort, in old Delhi. The powerful explosion killed 13 people and left more than a dozen injured, with several nearby vehicles and rickshaws reduced to twisted debris. A nearby resident, Om Prakash, told AP he was at home when he heard a deafening blast. "I rushed out with my children and saw several vehicles on fire, body parts all over." The explosion, of a car stopped at a traffic light in what is meant to be a high-security zone, stunned the authorities, with Delhi police and National Investigation Agency officials groping to understand what had happened. That did not stop Modi's chief henchman, Home Minister Amit Shah, leading India's political establishment and media in immediately labelling the explosion a terrorist attack and using it to whip up hostility against Muslims and escalate repression in Indian-occupied Kashmir. No sooner did police announce that they suspected the driver of the vehicle that exploded was a Kashmir doctor by the name of Umar Un Nabi, than authorities demolished his family home. With the authorities carrying out widespread raids and arrests across Jammu and Kashmir, the territory's Chief Minister was forced to caution the BJP and the Indian political elite more generally. "We must remember one thing," said Omar Abdullah, "not every resident of Jammu and Kashmir is a terrorist, or associated with the terrorists … [W]hen we look at every resident of J&K and every Kashmiri Muslim with a single lens that each one of them is a terrorist, it is difficult to keep the people on the right track." The authorities are now linking the November 10 explosion to the October 30 arrest of Dr. Muzammil Shakeel Ganaie, who was employed at a college and teaching hospital in Faridabad, a city located in the Delhi National Capital region, and their subsequent recovery of a large cache of explosives. According to this

account, the car driver was, like Dr. Ganaie, a member of an anti-Indian Kashmiri Islamist group, and was probably trying to move explosives, fearing that they too would soon be seized, when they detonated. Nothing that the Indian authorities—or for that matter the Pakistani—say about terrorist attacks should be taken at face value. Both are up to their necks in reactionary intrigues, including in India's case mounting a campaign of assassinations against Sikh separatists in North America and Europe. New Delhi denies any ties to the Pakistan Taliban or to Baluchistan ethno-nationalist insurgents battling the Pakistani state; yet shortly prior to his nomination as India's National Security Adviser, Doval boasted about India's ability to use Baluchi separatists to neutralize Pakistan. At Washington's behest under Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, Pakistan armed, trained and organized the Mujahedin to fight Afghanistan's pro-Soviet government. Later, Pakistan's military-intelligence apparatus used the connections and spycraft it had developed in conjunction with the CIA to further its own strategic conflict with India in Kashmir. The dispute over Kashmir, like the broader India-Pakistan strategic conflict of which it is part, is a product of the reactionary 1947 communal partition of the subcontinent into an expressly Muslim Pakistan and a predominantly Hindu India. Partition was carried out by South Asia's departing British colonial overlords in connivance with rival factions of the national bourgeoisie led by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Both India and Pakistan have run roughshod over the democratic rights of the Kashmiri people. In 2019, to fulfill a long-time goal of the Hindu supremacist right and strengthen India's hand against China and Pakistan, the Modi government stripped Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir of its special autonomous constitutional status and reduced it to a central government-dominated Union territory. At the same time, it spun off the strategic Ladakh region into a separate Union territory to facilitate its transformation into a forward base of military operations against Beijing. Across India, the BJP government and its close ally RSS are in the midst of a new anti-Muslim agitation focused on the so-called "demographic threat" that Muslims constitute to the "Hindu Indian nation." This delusional communalist boogeyman ties together the Hindu right's agitations against an alleged higher Muslim birth rate and Bangladeshi migrants (many of whom have lived most, if not, all their lives in India.) Thus far, the BJP government has not alleged Pakistani involvement in the Delhi blast, preferring to focus on its internal agenda, in which diverting social anger against India's 200 million Muslims plays a critical role. This, however, could soon change. The Congress and other opposition parties are criticizing the government for not having officially declared the Delhi explosion a terrorist strike sooner. For their party, some press commentators are criticizing Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for "boxing India into a corner," by being so categorical in their vows that any future terrorist attack linked to Pakistan would be met with military action.

Chinese aggression against the Philippines risks escalation to conflict.

Campbell 25 [Campbell, Caitlin, et al. "China-Philippines Tensions in the South China Sea." *congress.gov*, Congressional Research Service, 4 3 25, https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/PDF/IF12550/IF12550.5.pdf. Accessed 30 11 2025. // Isegora]

In 2023 and 2024, the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) increased pressure on the Philippines to abandon one of its nine outposts in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea (SCS) and attempted to deny Philippine vessels access to parts of the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ) that China claims as its own territory. The escalation of long-standing Sino-Philippine tensions raises the possibility of a crisis or conflict involving China, the Philippines, and potentially the United States. The United States and the Philippines signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in 1951 and a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., elected in 2022, has refuted China's claims in the SCS more vocally than his predecessor and pursued closer coordination with the United States. Marcos expanded military cooperation with the United States under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), which aims to support U.S. strategic interests in the region and modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Some Members of the 117th and 118th Congresses introduced several bills reaffirming the U.S. commitment to the alliance and supporting Philippine efforts to combat PRC aggression. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio reaffirmed the United States' "ironclad support" for the Philippines and criticized the PRC's "dangerous and destabilizing actions" in the SCS in his first call with his Philippine counterpart in January 2025. Rising Tensions in the South China Sea Second Thomas Shoal, an atoll in the Spratly Islands, is a potential flashpoint in the SCS (Figure 1). A low-tide elevation and fully submerged at high tide, it is roughly 105 nautical miles (nm) from the Philippine island of Palawan, 620 nm from the PRC, and 22 nm from Mischief Reef, a low-tide elevation in the Spratlys where the PRC maintains an outpost. The Philippines posts a small cadre of marines on a now-derelict Philippine Navy ship, the BRP Sierra Madre, which it grounded on the shoal in 1999 to protect its maritime claims. Since 2013, China has increased its presence near the shoal as part of its stated attempt to end the Philippines' presence there. In 2023, the China Coast Guard (CCG) and maritime militia vessels—ostensibly private boats that support PRC maritime claims—interfered with Philippine boats resupplying the BRP Sierra Madre. PRC officials have called occupation of disputed features by the Philippines "a red line" for the PRC. Notable incidents included the PRC's targeting of a Philippine Coast Guard boat with a militarygrade laser, and using water cannons against, surrounding, and colliding with Philippine vessels. In December 2023, China engaged in what the Philippine government called a "serious escalation" in the SCS. PRC vessels reportedly swarmed the area near Second Thomas Shoal and "harassed, blocked, and executed dangerous maneuvers," resulting in a collision between a PRC coast guard ship and a Philippine boat on a resupply mission. Each side accused the other of ramming one of its vessels. A CCG spokesperson stated its December 2023 actions were "professional, standardized, legitimate, and legal." The Philippines successfully resupplied the BRP Sierra Madre on several occasions in 2023 and 2024, despite PRC obstruction. The U.S. Department of

State issued statements critical of PRC actions and supportive of the Philippines' right to operate in waters around Second Thomas Shoal. Figure 1. South China Sea and Disputed Areas Source: CRS. Boundaries from U.S. Department of State. In June 2024, CCG personnel boarded a Philippine rigid hull inflatable boat, assaulted AFP marines, and destroyed equipment. In a separate incident, a Philippine marine lost his thumb when a PRC vessel rammed his boat as it sought to resupply the BRP Sierra Madre. Following these incidents, in July 2024, the two countries agreed to a provisional agreement regulating future resupply missions. The Philippines has successfully resupplied the derelict ship in the months since, and the two countries agreed to maintain the accord in January 2025 despite ongoing PRC harassment elsewhere in the South China Sea. In April 2024, the Philippines deployed its largest coast guard vessel, the BRP Teresa Magbanua, to Sabina Shoal, an unoccupied feature in the Spratlys, responding to reports of crushed coral. China responded by sending CCG vessels, which later rammed Philippine Coast Guard boats and China-Philippines Tensions in the South China Sea https://crsreports.congress.gov prevented the resupply of the BRP Teresa Magbanua. The Philippine vessel withdrew in September, citing bad weather, lack of supplies, and sick crew. Since 2012, the PRC has harassed and blocked Philippine fishing boats operating near Scarborough Shoal, a traditional fishing area for both countries. In December 2023, the CCG deployed a water cannon on Philippine vessels attempting to deliver provisions to Filipino fishermen near the shoal. In 2024, incidents included dangerous aerial maneuvers by PRC fighter jets around Philippine military and civilian aircraft and the deployment of the PRC's largest coast guard ship to the area. SCS Disputes and International Law An arbitral tribunal convened under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ruled in 2016 that the "Nine-Dash Line," which China uses to mark its territorial claims in the SCS, has "no legal basis," and that several PRC actions in the SCS violated the Philippines' sovereign rights. The tribunal found that Second Thomas Shoal, Scarborough Shoal, and the PRCoccupied Mischief Reef fall within the Philippines' EEZ, and that China had unlawfully interfered with Philippine fishing at Scarborough Shoal and created a risk of collision. China declared the ruling "null and void." (For more on the disputes, see CRS In Focus IF10607, China Primer: South China Sea Disputes.) Successive U.S. Administrations have urged both the PRC and the Philippines to abide by the 2016 ruling. The United States is not a party to UNCLOS. U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty Under Article IV of their Mutual Defense Treaty, the United States and the Philippines each agree that "an armed attack in the Pacific Area on either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes." Article V defines such an armed attack as including an attack on the "metropolitan territory of either of the Parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific." The Treaty does not specifically refer to the SCS. Bilateral Defense Guidelines issued by the alliance in 2023 reinforce treaty obligations, stating that an armed attack "anywhere in the South China Sea," on either country's "public vessels, aircraft, or armed forces—which includes their Coast Guards—would invoke mutual defense commitments." U.S.-Philippines Security Cooperation The Philippines has been one of the largest recipients of U.S.

military assistance in the Indo-Pacific region, including $40 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) in FY2023 and assistance under the Department of Defense's Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative. In 2024, the Biden Administration pledged to work with Congress to provide the Philippines with $500 million in FMF from emergency supplemental appropriations for FY2024 (P.L. 118-50). In February 2025, the Trump Administration reportedly exempted $336 million in assistance for Philippines military modernization from the Administration's freeze on foreign aid. Under EDCA, the two countries agreed to deepen military cooperation, upgrade certain Philippine military facilities, and allow U.S. forces rotational access to these facilities. In 2023, the number of these bases expanded from five to nine. The United States and the Philippines engage in approximately 20 military exercises and events annually, including combined patrols in the SCS. A 2024 U.S.-JapanPhilippines trilateral meeting included agreements on maritime security and economic cooperation. In April 2024, U.S. forces deployed a Typhon missile system to the Philippines for use in a military exercise. The missile system's range encompasses the SCS and the Taiwan Strait. The missile system remained in the Philippines following the conclusion of the exercise, and President Marcos has said the Philippines will purchase the system. The PRC criticized that statement. Considerations for Congress U.S. options to support Philippine efforts to defend its sovereign rights within its EEZ include U.S. military, quasimilitary, and diplomatic actions. Congress may consider whether to support, shape, or curtail such efforts, including through oversight, appropriations and authorizations, legislative directives, and policy statements. Military options include sending U.S. forces to support Philippine troops on the BRP Sierra Madre, U.S. Navy escorts to Philippine defensive missions, and assistance shoring up the failing vessel. Some observers caution a direct U.S. military role supporting the Philippines could increase the risk of an incident between U.S. and PRC forces. In June 2024, the Philippines reportedly turned down U.S. offers to assist to avoid provoking Beijing. Some recommend less direct U.S. support, such as additional military assistance and training for the AFP; expanding the U.S. presence in the region; coordinating with other claimants to counter PRC actions; and engaging in U.S.- China consultations to prevent unintended escalation. Non-military options could involve the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). The U.S. and Philippine coast guards regularly conduct exercises and engagements. In October 2024, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement announced $8 million in new funding to support modernization of the Philippine Coast Guard. The USCG's FY2025 Unfunded Priorities List included support for cutter deployments, regional infrastructure improvements, and regional engagements. Congress also may consider how U.S. accession to UNCLOS would impact U.S. diplomacy. Since the treaty entered into force in 1994, the United States has accepted and acted in accordance with customary international law as reflected in UNCLOS's provisions on navigation and overflight. (See "Whether United States Should Ratify UNCLOS," in CRS Report R42784, U.S.-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas: Background and Issues for Congress.)

Tensions are high in SCS. China has stepped up gray-zone operations & modernization.
Kraft 24 [Herman Joseph S. Kraft 24, professor of political science at the University of the Philippines Diliman, "A Philippine Perspective on China's WMD Threat," May 22, 2024, https://www.nbr.org/publication/a-philippine-perspective-on-chinas-wmd-threat/]

The Philippines considers China to be its primary threat geopolitically. China has encroached on land features and waters claimed by the Philippines in the South China Sea (and referred to proprietarily by the country as the West Philippine Sea) over which the Philippines has sovereign rights in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). While the dispute has intensified since the accession to power of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in 2022, it started in 1995 when China established what it referred to as "fishermen's huts" on Mischief Reef—a land feature claimed by the Philippines.

China's claim to waters and land features in the South China Sea is the most extensive of any of the five different claimants geographically proximate to the area. It is based on asserted rights to historic waters covered by the so-called nine-dash line. An arbitral court in The Hague ruled in 2016 that China's claim has no basis in **UNCLOS**. While the other claimants have sought to align their claims with UNCLOS, and consequently have largely moderated them, China has insisted on the legality of its extensive claim, refused to accept the 2016 arbitral ruling, and grown more assertive in the disputed area. Specifically, it has used what the United States has referred to as "**gray zone**" tactics to maintain a legal fiction of taking measures short of the use of armed force in its efforts to enforce its claims.1 The increased presence of Chinese vessels and harassment of Filipino fishers and Philippine Coast Guard and Navy ships have made China the principal concern of the Philippines in geopolitical terms.

<<Text Condensed, None Omitted>>

The threat to the Philippines from China, however, has largely not been associated with weapons of mass destruction. There has been a recognition of the WMD threat to the region at large, but very few concerns have been expressed about WMDs targeting the Philippines. In fact, the WMD capability of China and the threat it poses to the Philippines is generally connected with the latter's increasingly strong security relations with the United States. This essay examines the threat to the Philippines from China's WMDs and argues that this threat is seen largely in scenarios that are related to the direct involvement of the Philippines in a conflict arising from China's strategic competition with the United States. The WMD Dimension of the China Threat The geopolitical differences that the Philippines has with China largely derive from their territorial dispute. The dispute escalated after China's seizure of Scarborough Shoal in 2012 and the subsequent arbitral decision from The Hague in 2016 nullifying the legitimacy of China's claim to these disputed land features and waters. This, however, has not translated into any great concern over the possession and possible use of WMDs by China against the Philippines. The National Security Policy of the Philippines under the Duterte

administration (2017–22) mentions that one of the most important threats facing the country "is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction…which has come to occupy center stage in international politics.... [These] pose an unprecedented risk in terms of their potential for large-scale destruction and the indiscriminate nature of their effects."2 In the same document, however, a section discussing China does not mention its WMD capability as a recognizable threat. Instead, it talks about "policy concerns" arising from "socio-cultural interactions, significant trade and investments, as well as territorial claims in the [West Philippine Sea]."3 This shows that—despite statements made by former president Rodrigo Duterte emphasizing the disparity in military capability between the Philippines and China as a rationale for de-emphasizing the territorial dispute between the two countries—the obvious nuclear weapons capability of China has never been a specific concern of the Philippines throughout this episode in the bilateral relationship. China's suspected biological and chemical weapons programs are not specifically identified as sources of concern by Philippine security policymakers either. Even an earlier iteration of the National Security Policy of the Philippines seems to have given little attention to China's WMD capabilities. The 2011–16 policy of the Aquino administration notes the following: [S]ome nations in the region have developed or are capable of developing weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) as well as their associated delivery systems. States with aggressive intensions [sic] in the region and the capability to produce or access to such weapons might use them for geopolitical "blackmail." Furthermore, these weapons could become available for use by state-sponsored terrorists and radical groups.4 China is easily identified in the document as one of the "states with aggressive intentions in the region" that could use WMD weapons for "geopolitical blackmail."5 Although Philippine-China relations reached a nadir during the Aquino administration, the 2011–16 National Security Policy was finalized before the Scarborough Shoal faceoff in 2012 and the eventual submission of the case to the arbitral court in The Hague, which accelerated the downturn in bilateral relations. Yet China's WMDs are also not discussed in subsequent policy and strategy documents. In sum, neither the National Security Policy documents issued under the Aquino and Duterte administrations nor the National Security Strategy of the Duterte administration specifically mention any need to address a WMD threat from China.6

<<Paragraph Breaks Resume>>

Indirect Threats from China's WMD Capability

The **omission** of China's WMDs from policy and strategy documents does not mean that the threat does not exist or that it is not being considered by strategists and security analysts in the Philippines. It simply means that a direct threat from China's nuclear weapons is not recognized by those involved in determining security policy regarding impending threats. The **U.S**. **D**epartment **o**f **D**efense report to Congress in 2020 on the military capabilities of China emphasized the fact that China seeks to develop its own nuclear triad within the next **ten years**.7 At present, China has "more than 1,250 ground-launched ballistic missiles (**GLBMs**) and ground-launched cruise missiles (**GLCMs**) with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers."8

These are armed with non-nuclear warheads. The Philippines is well within range of these weapons systems, which include medium-range ballistic missiles like the DF-21 and intermediate-range ballistic missiles like the DF-26.

China's nuclear forces are also being modernized. While these forces are mainly intended to threaten U.S. targets, the deployment of more **modern** and **capable** nuclear weapons systems means they could be used against targets in the **Philippines**, including U.S. forces that might be deployed there under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (**EDCA**). It is more likely, however, that if a conflict were to arise and these military targets were attacked, they would be hit by weapons with non-nuclear warheads.

Strategic assessments made by the United States also emphasize the danger of China possessing a more modernized **nuclear capability** because it could increase its **confidence** in "**intensify[ing] conventional conflicts**."9 This simply highlights the dangers of China's more aggressive intentions and activities in relation to **Japan**, **Taiwan**, and the **S**outh **C**hina **S**ea. These activities are taking place in the wider context of the competition between the United States and China, with Southeast Asia being a major area of contention. The Philippines' relationship with the **U**nited **S**tates already places it in the center of this competition as a target of political influence and a likely area of military and **naval contention**. China has warned the Philippines that the **EDCA sites** that will house rotational deployments of U.S. forces will drag the Philippines into "**the Taiwan question**" and contribute to the undermining of stability in the region.10

Imagining the Chinese WMD Threat: Potential Scenarios

The deployment of U.S. forces in the Philippines has long been viewed as a potential target of a missile attack, whether nuclear-armed or not. This is not a threat specific to China but was one of the arguments made by Filipino nationalists protesting the presence of U.S. military bases in the Philippines during the Cold War. The bases in Subic and Clark, as well as other smaller facilities, were described as "bases of [Philippine] insecurity" by critics such as Francisco Nemenzo, Edmundo Garcia, and Roland Simbulan because they were potential magnets for an attack, particularly a nuclear attack, from the Soviet Union.11 Protests against the security relationship between the Philippines and the United States diminished after the Philippine Senate refused to ratify a renewal of the Military Bases Agreement in 1991.

The signing of the EDCA between the Philippines and the United States in 2014 gave renewed scope for these protests and the concerns on which they are based. The EDCA covers a number of areas of cooperation between the two allies, but its key element is the identification of sites that would be used by deployed U.S. forces on a rotational basis. The EDCA was signed at the height of Chinese assertiveness directed against the Philippines in the South China Sea after the Scarborough Shoal faceoff of 2012 and coincided with the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia. There is very little doubt that the Philippines' decision to sign the agreement was a response to China's increasingly aggressive actions in the South China Sea.12

Progress on the EDCA stalled under the Duterte administration, which was more inclined to seek a rapprochement with China. No movement on where and when U.S. forces could start deploying in the Philippines took place between 2016 and 2022. The accession of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to the presidency in 2022, however, saw quick progress on this front. The five sites initially agreed on for the U.S. military's rotational presence increased to nine with the identification of four additional sites by both the United States and the Philippines. It was this development that led to the revival of discussions about U.S. bases in the Philippines being magnets for **nuclear** or non-nuclear attacks.13

In fact, the main military threat posed by China to the Philippines is in the context of the U.S.-China geopolitical rivalry. Aside from concerns over an unwanted and unforeseen incident involving **Philippine** and Chinese forces in the **S**outh **C**hina **S**ea, which could escalate **very quickly** because of the high level of **tension**, the more dangerous scenario with WMD-related action on the part of China against the **Philippines** involves **Taiwan**. If China were to try to force reunification using military assets, it is expected that the United States would act to support Taiwan. In this scenario, those forces deployed at the EDCA sites would most likely be targeted by China. Although the use of conventional weapons by China seems more likely in this scenario, Philippine policy discussions have not dismissed the threat of **WMDs**.

Tensions are rising in the Arctic between US, China, and Russia

Brady 25 [Aaron Brady 25, national defense fellow in forward defense at the Atlantic Center's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, "Greenland's Military Possibilities for the United States," April 4, 2025, https://warontherocks.com/2025/04/greenlands-military-possibilities-for-the-united-states]

Moscow aggressively claims vast Arctic territories and has heavily invested in building a formidable Arctic military presence. Russia's invasion of Ukraine proves its willingness to use force in territorial disputes. Expanding access and growing military capabilities are making the Arctic increasingly volatile. While Russia has not yet destabilized the region, provocative actions, such as dropping paratroopers near the North Pole, signal its willingness to escalate. Competition in the high north will only intensify.

In a conflict, Russia's expanding Arctic maneuver space and long-range missile capabilities pose a major security challenge. Opening seas allow Russian and Chinese forces to move between the Pacific and Atlantic, while aircraft and naval vessels can launch long-range missile strikes on North America or the North Atlantic from the relative safety of Russian-controlled waters and airspace.

More concerning, Russia and China are rapidly developing "precise mass" — autonomous air, sea, and undersea forces. China is building the first drone aircraft carrier, while Russia already operates autonomous maritime vehicles. The Russian Sarma autonomous undersea vessels can conduct long-endurance missions, enabling a persistent Russian presence unmatched by occasional American, Canadian, or Danish patrols.

Reframing Arctic Strategy into America's Geostrategy

As the Russia-China-Iran-North Korea axis strengthens, traditional American geostrategic views are outdated. Conventional threats no longer come only from the east or west — the arctic now presents a growing danger beyond the existential risk of nuclear attack. It has become a zone of daily competition and a potential battleground in future Atlantic or Pacific conflicts. Modern threats extend beyond bombers and intercontinental missiles to include a diverse array of air and sea systems. Autonomous vehicles will fight alongside traditional ships and aircraft in large numbers.

America's line of contact with adversaries stretches from the First Island Chain, through the Bering Strait, across the Arctic Ocean to Norway, then down the NATO's eastern border to Turkey.

American national security depends on defeating Arctic-based threats to North America while blocking Russian and Chinese power projection into the North Atlantic and North Pacific. Greenland is the geostrategic linchpin connecting the Arctic, North America, and Europe — a potential the United States and Denmark have yet to fully leverage.

Tensions between the US and Venezuela are rising as relations deteriorate and military buildup continues.

Otis 25 [Otis, John. "'A Giant Game of Chicken': Trump's Venezuela Standoff Edges toward Conflict." *NPR*, 27 Nov. 2025, www.npr.org/2025/11/27/nx-s1-5620605/trump-venezuela-maduro. Accessed 30 Nov. 2025. // Isegora]

BOGOTÁ, Colombia — The U.S. military buildup in the southern Caribbean Sea near Venezuela is raising expectations of an armed strike against that country but also fears that that it could create a South American quagmire. Tension is building as the Trump administration amasses warships and thousands of troops in the Caribbean. On Monday, it designated the Venezuela's government, led by President Nicolás Maduro, as a foreign terrorist organization. And while saying Tuesday that he was open to talking with Maduro, President Trump has also hinted that the authoritarian leader's days are numbered. The U.S. Escalates Pressure on Venezuela But American military intervention, which is strongly supported by many Venezuelans, including opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient María Corina Machado, would be unpopular at home and extremely risky. "This cozy idea that somehow Maduro falls and the next day María Corina Machado walks into the presidential palace and everybody lives happily ever after is fantastical," said Phil Gunson, who is based in Caracas for the International Crisis Group. "That won't happen." Ever since his first term, President Trump has pushed to depose Maduro, who has crushed Venezuela's democracy and led the country into economic misery, prompting some 8 million Venezuelans to flee the country. Trump has long encouraged Venezuelan military officers to overthrow Maduro and in 2019 recognized opposition lawmaker Juan Guaidó as the country's legitimate president. But Maduro has clung to power, prompting Trump, in his second term, to consider military options. Trump says he won't 'rule out' sending troops to Venezuela The most extreme would be a full-fledged U.S. invasion along the lines of the American takeover of the tiny isthmus of Panama in 1989 that involved 27,000 American troops and led to the arrest of that country's dictator, Manuel Noriega. Veterans of 1989 Panama invasion urge caution amid military buildup in the Caribbean But even though Trump has dispatched the largest U.S. naval flotilla to the Caribbean since the Cuban Missile Crisis, experts say the 15,000 U.S. troops aboard those warships would not be enough to take control of Venezuela. The South American country is larger than Texas and home to rugged mountains and Amazon jungle. USS Gerald Ford enters Caribbean Sea as threat of U.S. action against Venezuela rises Should the U.S. put together a more robust invasion force, it could quickly subdue Venezuela's army. Indeed, many of its poorly paid rank-and-file soldiers might switch sides. But there would be substantial push back from unconventional forces, says Jeremy McDermott, co-director of Insight Crime, which analyzes organized crime in Latin America. "Any serious land invasion of Venezuela would be extremely complex," McDermott said. "You put boots on the ground almost anywhere in Venezuela, particularly in Caracas and along the border areas, and you are going to face armed resistance." That resistance, he said, would include pro-Maduro militias, known as "colectivos," as well as at least 1,000 battle-hardened Colombian guerrillas who are based inside Venezuela, sympathize with Maduro, and would act

as a pro-regime paramilitary force in the event of a U.S. invasion. In addition, the Maduro government has been handing out weapons to civilians and training them to shoot. "This is a peoples war to defend our country," one military trainer told Venezuelan state TV. Yet most Venezuelans despise Maduro and voted against him in last year's presidential election that was considered by many — including the U.S. government — to have been stolen by his regime. One Venezuelan analyst, who asked to remain anonymous for his safety, said that most Venezuelans would support U.S. military action to remove Maduro. A rare bipartisan move to rein in Donald Trump on Venezuela "There is no other way," said Zair Mundaray, a former Venezuelan government prosecutor now living in exile in Florida. Last week, opposition leader Machado issued a "freedom manifesto" for a post-Maduro future calling for the restoration of human rights, free markets, free speech, clean elections and the return of Venezuelan exiles. She declared: "We stand at the edge of a new era." Meanwhile, anti-government influencers in Venezuela are promoting AI-generated videos fantasizing about U.S. intervention. One shows Maduro in an orange prison jumpsuit in the custody of American officials, with narration that says: "All Venezuelans want this as our Christmas present." That's in sharp contrast to a new CBS News and YouGov poll in which 70% of Americans opposed American military action in Venezuela. In the same poll, just 13% considered Venezuela a "major threat" to the United States. As a result, even a limited strike against Maduro, such as a catch-and-kill operation like the one against Osama Bin Laden – who was responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks -- seems doubtful, says Venezuelan opposition congressman Henrique Capriles. In contrast to Bin Laden, "do Americans really care about Maduro?" Capriles said. "Not at all." Trump may be betting that his military buildup will create a pressure cooker in Caracas that will provoke a palace coup by military officers. But that's a longshot as Maduro has surrounded himself with loyalists and Cuban bodyguards. Vladimir Villegas, a Caracas radio show host, says that the impact of the U.S. pressure campaign so far has been to create more cohesion within the ranks of the Maduro regime as well as more persecution and repression of the political opposition. Even if Maduro were toppled, there's no guarantee the new leader would forge a stable, democratic government, Capriles says. He points out that Maduro controls all branches of government while members of his United Socialist Party occupy nearly every city hall and state house across the country. What's more, there would be rising demands for U.S. reconstruction aid following U.S.-backed overthrow of Maduro but Trump is, famously, no fan of nation-building. "What about the day after" a coup? Capriles says. "Is the U.S. willing to spend $100 billion to help stabilize Venezuela?"Officially, what's being called "Operation Southern Spear" is an anti-narcotics mission with U.S. forces blowing up alleged drug boats in the Caribbean. But Venezuelan political analyst Benigno Alarcón says that's not much to show for such a massive military buildup."I don't think they can call this operation a success if all they do is sink 10 boats and kill 80 drug traffickers," he says.McDermott, of InsightCrime, calls the standoff "a giant game of chicken." "Maduro knows that if he can hang on, President Trump can't keep 11% or more of U.S. fleet indefinitely off the coast of Venezuela," he says. "So as long as Maduro doesn't blink, time is on his side."

Miscalculation between the United States and China could easily cause a nuclear conflict.

Latham 25 [Latham, Andrew. "The Road to a China-America Nuclear War." *National Security Journal*, 29 Oct. 2025, nationalsecurityjournal.org/the-road-to-a-china-america-nuclear-war/. Accessed 30 Nov. 2025. // Isegora]

Key Points and Summary- While a U.S.-China nuclear war is not inevitable due to mutual deterrence, the risk of "accidental" escalation is rising. -China's rapid nuclear expansion—adding 100 warheads annually since 2023—erodes stability. -A future conventional war, fought at "blinding speed" with cyber and space weapons, could lead to a tragic miscalculation. -A U.S. conventional strike on a "dual-use" Chinese target might be misinterpreted as a disarming first strike, prompting a nuclear "use or lose" response. -Without new arms control dialogues, the world risks "Thucydidean" forces of fear and mistrust tragically leading to a war no one wants.

The U.S.-China Nuclear War Threat? A nuclear war between China and the US is not inevitable. Both know that the price would be incalculable; both have powerful incentives to avoid it. But rational aversion to war — conventional or nuclear — is not always sufficient to prevent war. As Thucydides wrote over two millennia ago, the forces of fear, honor, and interest—the eternal causes of state action—can lead to wars that no one wants. In the 21st century, the same forces might well be at play in the growing—and increasingly fraught—competition between the United States and China. And even as Beijing and Washington act rationally, the structures of power, pride, and paranoia in which they move can still make disaster possible. The Erosion of Deterrence Since 2023, Beijing has added to its arsenal at a rate of about one hundred warheads per year, now possessing at least six hundred and counting. The U.S. intelligence community has assessed that this "rapid expansion," combined with the collapse of arms-control agreements, is likely to be "the most significant driver of the threat environment" for the rest of the decade. China's official doctrine of "no first use" and limited nuclear use remains in place, but its deployment of more survivable missiles, new launch platforms, and more capable sensors is undermining the mutual understanding that once stabilized the nuclear relationship. The world is entering a period when both capabilities and uncertainty are growing—just the combination that makes escalation harder to control. This does not mean that a nuclear war between the United States and China is preordained. The most plausible

contingencies between the two would begin—and might remain—entirely conventional. Both sides have powerful incentives to keep it that way. Economic interdependence, political legitimacy, and the mutual knowledge that nuclear use would destroy what each most values are all powerful disincentives to crossing the nuclear threshold. In past statements and international exercises, Beijing has signaled that it would reserve nuclear use for existential threats, a stance that, in a limited war, might keep nuclear restraint in place. Deterrence, at least for now, still works. The logic of mutual vulnerability has been battered but not broken. The Cold War's "mutual assured destruction" may not map perfectly onto the U.S.–China relationship, but the central idea remains: each side fears what the other can do. China fears an American counter-force strike; the United States fears a sudden Chinese launch. Both understand that a nuclear war would be catastrophic. This mutual recognition breeds caution. In war games that model U.S.–China conflict scenarios, participants often escalate conventional violence to extraordinary levels but draw back at the nuclear threshold, revealing an instinctive sense of the abyss that lies beyond it. The Rising Risk of Escalation But the guardrails are eroding. A conventional war in East Asia today would unfold at blinding speed, in multiple domains—air, sea, cyber, and space—all threaded through dense networks of sensors and automated command systems. In such an environment, uncertainty and fear can become as dangerous as intent. A conventional attack against dual-use targets such as radar installations, missile batteries, or submarines might easily be seen as an attempt to degrade a second-strike capability. Even a limited operation by the United States could be seen in Beijing as the opening phase of decapitation. In that moment, the rational logic of deterrence gives way to the tragic logic of "use or lose." The arms race itself fuels the danger. The era of nuclear reductions is over. New delivery systems, increased warhead production, and the development of exotic technologies—hypersonics, space-based sensors, autonomous targeting—are all eroding the predictability on which deterrence depends. The frameworks that once moderated this competition are collapsing. What is left is a volatile brew of modernization and mutual mistrust. The more each side tries to secure itself, the less secure both become—a paradox that would not have been unfamiliar to Thucydides. The Pathways to Nuclear Use If war does come, the

slide from conventional to nuclear could follow several plausible paths. A conventional strike on Chinese nuclear or dual-use assets could be misinterpreted as a disarming first strike, prompting nuclear retaliation from Beijing. Or China, fearful of an imminent U.S. strike and unwilling to lose its retaliatory capacity, might use a small number of nuclear weapons preemptively to try to compel Washington to back down—a move aimed at restoring deterrence through shock. Or a false alarm, a cyber intrusion, or a misinterpreted military exercise could trigger a hair-trigger response before either side understood what had happened. In each pathway, there is a tragic choice: in the crucible of a major crisis, one side or the other might be left with the unbearable choice between accepting defeat—backing down, losing a conventional war, or risking a crippling first strike—and using nuclear weapons. And even if nuclear use were limited, its effects would be unpredictable. A single detonation intended as a warning could instead produce uncontrolled escalation. What one side sees as coercive restraint, the other might see as the opening salvo of annihilation. The grim truth is that nuclear use might not end the war; it might transform it. One side might step back, horrified; the other might press forward in fury or fear. History gives no warrant that reason would prevail once the nuclear threshold has been crossed. Preserving Stability in an Age of Instability The lesson is that crisis stability must be restored before it is tested. Both Washington and Beijing must work to strengthen communication channels, safeguard command and control, and revive serious arms-control dialogues. Even limited agreements on transparency, on reducing the risk of misinterpretation of dual-use systems, or on notification of exercises could help to reinject friction into the hair-trigger machinery of deterrence. The goal is not to end rivalry but to manage it, to keep fear from turning into fatalism.If deterrence fails, it is much likelier to do so not through deliberate aggression but through accident, panic, or the tragic logic of reciprocal fear. A nuclear exchange, if it ever occurred, would not only destroy those nations but would also mark the ultimate failure of the international system to restrain itself. The United States and China still have time to prevent that outcome, but time alone will not do the work. Seen from Washington, the central mission of American strategy is to maintain those disincentives to crossing the nuclear threshold. And that is the most prudent

course. Thucydides would have seen the risk, however: that when fear, pride, and necessity meet, even prudent states can do imprudent things. The lesson of tragedy is not that disaster is inevitable, but that it becomes possible when power and hubris outrun restraint— a truth as old as Athens and no less true in the Indo-Pacific today.

Rising tensions between India and Pakistan make nuclear war likely

Kirk 25 [Biswas, Soutik. "India-Pakistan Conflict: How Real Is the Risk of Nuclear War?" *Bbc.com*, BBC News, 13 May 2025, www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2e373yzndro. Accessed 30 Nov. 2025. // Isegora]

The massacre of 26 tourists in a lovely vale beneath snow-covered Himalayan peaks last month carries implications far beyond the bloodshed. Looming above the carnage is the apparition of nuclear war erupting between two of the world's nine nuclear powers, on a subcontinent with an aggregate population approaching 2 billion. Neither India nor Pakistan has conducted a nuclear test since 1998, but they're primed to tip missiles with warheads, or drop them from planes, if the massacre lights the spark that ignites a nuclear holocaust. They've both raised the stakes, with India going beyond missile tests to deadly strikes at what it claims were the hideouts of terrorists in the portion of Kashmir that's held by Pakistan. Pakistan claims to have shot down two Indian warplanes, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowing revenge for "an act of war." India ordered the missile barrage as soldiers, police and civilian agents rounded up at least 2,000 Kashmiris suspected of playing a role, directly or indirectly, in the worst terror incident in years in the hotly disputed region. As tensions reach a breaking point, war — conventional or nuclear — is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid. One major difference between this and previous episodes of violence is that Pakistan has cancelled an agreement establishing the "line of control" in Kashmir between India and Pakistan. The two sides came together at Simla in the aftermath of the founding of Bangladesh, previously known as "East Pakistan," which was separated from "West Pakistan" by about 1,800 miles of Indian territory. Pakistan, with the blessing of the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, waged a bloody war to preserve its eastern and western sectors as one country. Indian military support against Pakistan was essential in Bangladesh's victorious freedom struggle. India and Pakistan have come to blows periodically since then, but last month's attack could have lasting, far-reaching repercussions. Almost nightly, Indian and Pakistani forces exchange fire across the "line of control" as Indian authorities comb Kashmir for suspects. Repeatedly denying anything to do with the massacre, Pakistan has raised the specter of nuclear war in terms that would be foolish to ignore. "The clash between two nuclear powers is always worrisome," Pakistan's defense

minister, Khawaja Asif, warned in an interview with Britain's Sky News. "If there is an all-out attack, then obviously there will be an all-out war." Incredibly, Asif also accused India of having staged the attack in a "false flag" operation, with the implication that India had plotted the entire incident to fool people into believing Pakistan had perpetrated a slaughter that could ultimately lead to war. "We will measure our response to whatever is initiated by India," Asif said. Indians whom I contacted, however, are downplaying the likelihood of war breaking out right away. "India and Pakistan are very unlikely to fight a nuclear war," the founder of the Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies in New Delhi, Chintamani Mahapatra, told me. "The deadly outcome of nuclear exchange is known to both parties. … Notwithstanding nuclear saber-rattling by Pakistan, it would not go to the extent of using nuclear weapons." One safeguard for India: "Pakistan knows that India has a large Muslim population," Mahapatra told me. "It would not use a weapon that could kill a large number of Muslims." Besides, he said, "The final outcome of a nuclear exchange could result in total obliteration of Pakistan — though the cost to India will be gargantuan as well." Indian commentators cite a declassified CIA report, exposed by a Washington nonprofit, National Security Archives, as concluding, "Pakistan sees nuclear weapons primarily as a deterrent and as insurance for its survival if a conflict developed with conventionally superior India." The logic in the CIA report was simple: "Rapid Indian military improvements would strain Pakistan's ability to remain competitive," the Indian broadcaster Times Now quoted the report as saying. Pakistan would have to "rely more heavily on nuclear deterrence." It was to match India that the Pakistan physicist A.Q. Khan began developing nukes in the 1970s. His research, supported by massive funding, led to Pakistan's first nuclear test in 1993, nearly 20 years after India's first test in 1974. Now venerated in Pakistan as "father" of the Pakistan A-bomb, Khan was notorious for exchanging the secrets of nuclear technology with North Korea, Iran and others before dying in 2021. The violence sparked last month gives testament to the hatred that simmers in Pakistan, an Islamic nation known to harbor terrorist groups. "The hostility between Pakistan and India is one of the longest-standing and most dangerous rivalries in modern history," the website scientificorigin.com noted. "Born out of the traumatic partition of British India in 1947," it said, the enmity "has broader implications for regional stability in South Asia, especially given that

both nations are nuclear-armed." Several years ago I visited Srinagar, the capital of India-held Kashmir, which today has taken on the appearance of a city under siege. Police and soldiers wear body armor and sandbags protect buildings. Is war imminent? A prominent consultant and author, Lakhvinder Singh, doubts it. "There will be no war," he assured me. "The incident is too minor to provoke serious escalation." Singh predicted India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, "will make some noise for public consumption, but things will calm down." We can only hope he is right.

The SCS goes nuclear---causes draw in even after one small attack.

Kluth 24 [Andreas Kluth 24, Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering U.S. diplomacy, national security, and geopolitics; former Editor-in-Chief of Handelsblatt Global and writer for The Economist; holds degrees from Williams College and the London School of Economics, "The South China Sea Is the Next Test of American Resolve," March 3, 2024, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-03-03/the-south-china-sea-is-america-s-next-crucible?leadSource=uverify%20wall]

If we weren't so preoccupied with Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Gaza, North and South Korea or China and Taiwan, we'd also be paying due attention to another **conflict zone**: the **S**outh **C**hina **S**ea. US strategizing there, as it happens, can **clarify** Washington's stance in those **other hotspots**. The question in all of them is when, why and how the US should intervene, and whether it should be prepared to go to war.

The aggressor in the South China Sea is communist China. Like five other littoral nations — Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam — China is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. A sixth, Taiwan, can't sign the treaty only because it isn't a member of the UN. (The US is not a signatory, although in practice it abides by UNCLOS.) If China respected international law, therefore, there wouldn't be any disputes in the first place.

As ever and everywhere, however, international law coexists awkwardly with the reality of state power and national interests. And **China** has long staked a **claim** to almost the entire South China Sea.

In doing so, Beijing points to an old map of obscure provenance, first drawn when the Nationalists still controlled China. It shows a nine-dash line around the South China Sea. In other contexts (most bizarrely, the movie Barbie), this alleged boundary has ten or eleven dashes. In 2016 a tribunal in The Hague ruled that under international law and UNCLOS the line was poppycock. That should have settled the matter.

It did not. China kept building **military structures** on disputed shoals and rocks — one atoll is aptly named Mischief Reef. Its intent is to **turn** these isles into unsinkable **aircraft carriers** that will one day help China to **push** the US **Navy out** of waters Beijing considers to lie within its "**first island** chain" — that is, inside China's proper sphere of influence.

That build-up naturally pits China against Vietnam and others who claim the same islands. China has also resumed bullying the **Philippines**, a former US territory that now has a mutual-defense treaty with its one-time overlord. In recent months, the Chinese coast guard water-cannoned, blocked, harassed and even rammed Philippine boats sailing in shoals over which Manila has sovereignty.

The two nations are not yet close to going to war. But collisions and clashes can **easily escalate**. China's truculence therefore raises the question: Under what circumstances should the **US** show up to back its ally, with the attendant **risks** of a **conflagration**?

It's tempting to argue, as Lyle Goldstein at the think tank Defense Priorities does, that America "should not go to war over rocks or reefs or shoals." But there's more at stake than fish, coral and sand, as Jacob Stokes at the Center for a New American Security told me. The stakes are both similar to those in today's other conflicts and different.

The **S**outh **C**hina **S**ea, like the Red Sea, is one of the world's **busiest waterways**, with more than **$3 trillion** in goods passing through **every year**. Allowing China to fortify the sea to a point where it can **close off** maritime **trade** to specific countries in the event of a war would seem poor strategy. But China wouldn't do that at first; it would merely seize shoals and reefs.

In doing so, however, China would again disdain and break international law, or what the US (which itself doesn't always want to be bound by that law) prefers to call the "rules-based order." In that way, the South China Sea is analogous to Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine with a tale as spurious as China's nine-dash line: a mystical narrative that Ukrainians are really Russians and therefore belong to the Kremlin. Russia is now trampling on the sovereignty and integrity of a fellow member state of the UN. If Putin isn't stopped, he will go on — to Moldova and elsewhere. Likewise, if Beijing got away with seizing a Vietnamese or Philippine island, it would grab more. The UN Charter and international law would become as irrelevant as the League of Nations did when it failed to stop Mussolini and Hitler.

Admittedly, the Filipinos wouldn't experience anything remotely as disastrous as the Ukrainians are suffering. The latter are fighting for their national existence, being bombed in their own homes and mourning the loss of children the Russians have abducted. The former, at least initially, only stand to lose some uninhabited islands.

But there's also the **defense alliance** between the US and the Philippines to consider. If the Chinese **seized** the islands, America's other **allies** would **observe** Washington's response. **So**uth **Ko**rea would determine whether it can still feel safe under the US **nuclear umbrella** against North Korea, as would **Japan** with an eye to both Pyongyang and Beijing and **NATO** members such as Estonia that are in **Putin's crosshairs**. If the US **reneged** on its commitments to defend the Philippines, all its other **alliances** would lose value, triggering new **nuclear** and conventional **arms races** and inviting **aggression** by America's enemies.

Simultaneously, though, the US is facing the same moral hazard vis-a-vis the Philippines that it incurs in its other alliances. What if Manila becomes overconfident in responding to Chinese provocations, assuming that the Americans will clean up any messes? Washington therefore has a right to consult with the Philippines in any crisis, as with its other allies.

The US should also ensure that it never has to fight alone. So it ought to keep expanding its network of partners to align the equivalent of posses — in the Indo-Pacific region that could include the "Quad," a partnership with Australia, Japan and India; and AUKUS, a triad formed with the Brits and Aussies. China, like Russia, should always have to worry that its aggression might face a response from a large part of the world.

Two other major conflicts raging today are qualitatively different, however. One is the war between Israel and Hamas. It's not an interstate conflict (and only will be once there is a two-state solution). Instead, it's the fight by a militarily strong nation, Israel — which is a partner of the US but doesn't have a mutual-defense treaty — against a terrorist group, Hamas, that attacked it in the most sadistic ways. In the process of retaliating against Hamas, however, Israel now stands accused in The Hague of violating international law. In this struggle the US can mediate, but it cannot side simply with either Palestinians or Israelis. In the long term, it must distance itself from the region, where its own interests are increasingly unclear.

The other worry is about China and Taiwan — Beijing indeed sees the cross-Strait question as linked to its ambitions in the South China Sea. This too isn't officially an interstate dispute. The US recognizes only one China, and in the 1970s acknowledged the People's Republic as its representative. At the same time, with the Taiwan Relations Act, Washington expressed its "expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means" and that anything else would be a matter "of grave concern." Deliberately ambiguous, the phrase nonetheless suggests that the US might go to war on behalf of a democratic friend if the mainland attacked.

All these **conflicts** — in Ukraine, the Korean peninsula, the Taiwan Strait and even the Middle East, where Israel has nukes and Iran could soon get them — involve **nuc**lear power**s**, making the stakes potentially **existential**. As it's been said, such wars "cannot be won and must never be fought."

But the US would be wrong to conclude that it should therefore deter itself rather than its enemies. The best way to ensure a world that's worth living in is for the **US** to make clear to its adversaries that it would, if it came to it, go to **war** — even **over reefs**, shoals and rocks.

Arctic war escalates through miscalculation.

Wallin 25 [Matthew Wallin 25, Chief Executive Officer of the American Security Project and holder of a Master's in Public Diplomacy from USC, "Is the Arctic Destined to be the Most Likely Flashpoint for a Nuclear War?", May 12, 2025, https://www.americansecurityproject.org/is-the-arctic-destined-to-be-the-most-likely-flashpoint-for-a-nuclear-war/]

Amidst these tensions, melting polar ice is opening Arctic sea lanes to increased shipping traffic, resource exploration, and military posturing. NATO's newest members, Finland and Sweden, are Arctic nations. Russia currently dominates the Arctic region, holding 53% of its total coastline, operating the world's biggest icebreaker fleet, and has been upgrading its Arctic military bases. China is also increasingly playing a role, conducting joint Arctic military exercises with Russia and employing an icebreaker fleet of its own, despite its complete lack of territory in the Arctic Circle.

But is the Arctic destined to be the most likely flashpoint for a nuclear war? Let's look at the possibilities.

Despite being so cold, the Arctic is no stranger to military conflict, holding **major strategic value** and serving as a passageway to both the Atlantic and Pacific. During World War II, the Battle of the Atlantic extended into the Arctic and ships carrying American war supplies to the Soviet Union traversed the Northern Sea Route. Germany invaded Norway, and the Soviet Union invaded Finland in the Winter War of 1940. As the Cold War evolved, the Arctic became a major theater for submarine activity.

Today, President Trump's insistence on acquiring Greenland "one way or the other" highlights the growing importance of the Arctic to the security interests of the United States. Greenland's geographic location, combined with the U.S.' operation of Pituffik Space Base in the high north, provides key "missile warning, missile defense, and space surveillance" capabilities. The shortest flight paths for nuclear missiles between the U.S. and Russia exist over the Arctic Ocean, and the loss of this base on account of a diplomatic blunder could open a key blind spot in America's strategic defense. Alternatively, the loss of this base to a Russian attack aimed at disabling American missile detection infrastructure is unlikely due to the danger of immediate retaliation and escalation.

Currently, the most likely path to a potential nuclear exchange in the Arctic would be through a conventional or "gray zone" Russian attack on a NATO member. Border skirmishes, cyber-attacks, airspace incursions, reckless military intercepts, and support to separatist groups intentionally sit in the "gray zone" between peace and outright war, but could ultimately lead to **open conflict** that escalates to nuclear war. Conceivably, a gray zone or overt attack on other Greelandic infrastructure, or an information operations campaign aimed at dividing the U.S., Greenland, and Denmark, are not outside of the realm of possibility.

With NATO's addition of Sweden and, more importantly, Finland—which shares a 1,343 km border with Russia—there is increased opportunity that a NATO Arctic state could be attacked. Highlighting this risk, American forces in Alaska recently staged a drill in which hundreds of troops were flown to Finland to defend against a mock Russian invasion. Yet rather than an overt invasion of a NATO member, Russia is far more likely test the waters by conducting provocative and destabilizing small-scale gray zone activities. The disastrous results of Russia's invasion of Ukraine have likely raised doubts in Moscow about its ability to achieve its objectives in a direct attack on a nuclear armed country, let alone a large NATO ally, making a direct attack unlikely. It is not entirely clear where the red line on gray zone activities would be for Finland or what would trigger an Article 5 collective defense declaration short of a direct attack across the border.

Though the threat of American nuclear weapons has long-served to deter a Russian attack on the European NATO members, President Trump's many public pronouncements expressing doubt about his willingness to defend a NATO member that comes under attack has shaken confidence in Europe about America's commitment. As a result, France and the UK are considering expanding their arsenals, signifying an increased reliance on nuclear posturing for deterrence, including for the defense of Arctic NATO members. France is reconsidering whether it wants to decommission its current warheads as it brings replacements online, potentially doubling of the size of its arsenal. It is simultaneously upgrading an airbase closer to the German border to be able to host nuclear weapons. The UK, which has been historically dependent on the U.S. for its nuclear arsenal, is recently questioning that dependence, and may seek other options to assure an effective and reliable deterrent. This could foretell a new nuclear arms race.

The upcoming February 2026 expiration of New START, the last remaining strategic nuclear arms treaty between the U.S. and Russia, portends a period of nuclear proliferation that could echo the nuclear arms buildups of the Cold War. Meanwhile, China, which has been operating in the Arctic, has been engaging in its own rapid nuclear buildup in an effort to potentially exceed 1,000 warheads by 2035. China has consistently rejected efforts to join a multilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty with the U.S. and Russia, citing its comparatively much smaller nuclear arsenal.

Navigation issues in the Arctic could also lead to military escalations reaching the nuclear level. The Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), which includes satellite constellations like the American GPS system or Russian GLONASS, sees decreased reliability and accuracy in the Arctic. The reasons for this are abundant, like the orbital inclination of the satellites themselves and ionospheric interference. With increased incidents of Russian GNSS jamming in Europe, it's conceivable that Russia may employ similar tactics in the Arctic, including spoofing, for the purpose of disruption or causing navigational errors to trigger an exploitable international incident. Military or civilian vessels straying into Russian territory could be captured, their

cargoes seized, or crews held hostage for the purpose of conducting hostage diplomacy. Resolving such a confrontation military could **quickly spiral out of control.**

Yet considering these combined factors, the Arctic does not exist in a vacuum, and there are other regions in which nuclear tensions are rising.

The threat of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is the most likely scenario for a direct confrontation between the United States and another nuclear power. Though he has not signaled any specific intent to attack, President Xi aims for the Chinese military to be capable of invading Taiwan by 2027. While President Biden indicated his intention to directly aid Taiwan if this occurred, President Trump appears to defer to the traditional American position of strategic ambiguity over the island. Should China decide to invade, and the U.S. responds to defend Taiwan, it is difficult to see Washington opting to detonate a nuclear weapon over an issue that does not directly threaten the U.S. mainland or a NATO ally. On the other hand, a subsequent attack on Chinese mainland military sites in order to disable an attacking Chinese invasion force could plausibly incite a nuclear response.

What is most concerning is that provocative military behavior **anywhere** could lead to an unintentional cycle of escalation that ultimately results in a nuclear exchange. As the Arctic opens to more military and commercial activity, the frequency of encounters between military forces is likely to increase. As those encounters increase, so too does the probability that an **accident or unintended attack** may occur. As Russia routinely flies patrols into the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone, an area of international air space in which the U.S. identifies all aircraft, aggressive behavior by Russian pilots raises the risk of a routine encounter evolving into an international incident. But these aggressive incidents are much more frequent elsewhere, like the Baltic and North Seas. For example, in 2022, a Russian SU-27 fighter jet fired two missiles against a British RC-135 surveillance jet over the Black Sea, but fortunately neither missile hit their target. Similarly, China is known for conducting frequent unsafe intercepts of foreign aircraft in the East and South China Seas.

Miscalculation could cause convention war to escalate

Talmadge 17 [Talmadge, Caitlin. Caitlin Talmadge is the Raphael Dorman and Helen Starbuck Associate Professor of Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States." International Security, vol. 41, no. 4, Apr. 2017, pp. 50–92, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00274. // Isegora]

"Escalation pessimists worry that the U.S. approach could lead inadvertently to Chinese nuclear use. Their arguments echo Barry Posen's contention that NATO's approach to conventional warfighting in the late Cold War could have generated pressures for Soviet nuclear use by unintentionally infringing upon vital components of the Soviet retaliatory capability, such as its SSBN force and ground-based early warning radars.6 For example, Thomas Christensen writes that Posen's analysis "should apply even more clearly to attacks on the Chinese homeland in a future U.S.-China conflict."7 As Christensen explains, "China is simultaneously developing conventional and nuclear coercive capabilities that overlap significantly." He points in particular to the dual nuclear and conventional relevance of Chinese submarines, missiles, space assets, and command and control systems, emphasizing that "if strikes by the United States on China's conventional coercive capabilities or their critical command and control nodes and supporting infrastructure were to appear in Beijing as a conventional attack on its nuclear retaliatory capability or as a precursor to a nuclear first strike, even a China that generally adheres to a No-First-Use posture might escalate to the nuclear level."8 Avery Goldstein, too, argues that a U.S.-China conventional war could inadvertently escalate to the nuclear level. In his view, the use of conventional force is inherently unpredictable, and as two nuclear-armed states using force to bargain at the conventional level, the United States and China might miscalculate in ways that could eventually lead to "unanticipated nuclear catastrophe." A particular danger stems from the possibility that the United States might mistakenly sink a Chinese SSBN during the course of a conventional war, "inviting Chinese nuclear retaliation."

Miscalculation causes nuclear war.

Radzinsky 21 [Brian Radzinsky 21, postdoctoral research fellow at the Center for Global Security Research (CGSR) at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, specializing in net assessment, nuclear deterrence, emerging technologies, and regional security dynamics, "Miscalculation, Misperception and Risk Reduction," U.S. Department of Energy / Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, September 2021, www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/1820013]

Miscalculation resulting in deterrence failure

Miscalculation in crisis can resulting a **failure to deter** the outbreak of war via the same pathways as above. First, in a crisis, either side could continue to **miscalculate** the scope of the other's interests. Although the immediate interests at stake in a crisis would become clear, Blue might **underestimate** Red's willingness to **exploit the crisis** to secure a related interest; Red might seize on the crisis to engage in horizontal escalation. For instance, Russia **annexed Crimea** weeks into the Euromaidan crisis. Second, a crisis could **escalate to war** through Blue or Red's **failure to assess** the other's **resolve**. Although Blue and Red will have **strong incentives** to **signal their resolve** in a crisis over vital interests, in a **more complex** crisis, **miscalculations** of resolve may accompany miscalculation of interests. In the Crimean crisis, NATO did not see a need to **signal resolve** because it **miscalculated** Russia's interests. If a crisis arises from a mishap, Blue may be **hesitant** to engage in **overt shows of resolve** to avoid provoking rather than deterring Red. A crisis atmosphere may also make **signaling harder** due to a complex and contested information environment, further limiting each side's "strategic vocabulary." Third, a crisis may exacerbate the risk of miscalculating the military balance. All sides will have incentives to be less transparent and predictable. To preserve warfighting advantages, Blue may be hesitant to reveal decisive capabilities, especially those that depend on secrecy. Blue may also hesitate to court escalatory risk through signaling capabilities while Red may conceal forces used for hybrid warfare.

Miscalculation resulting in inadvertent escalation

In a crisis, **inadvertent escalation** can **result** from miscalculation of the intent behind mishaps, responses to mishaps, or shifts in the **military balance**. Although status quo-oriented powers may seek to **avoid war** and thus may be **generous** with their interpretations of complex and uncertain events, a sufficiently **tense atmosphere** could **exacerbate paranoia**, risk-aversion, and **mistrust**, fueling escalation. The impact of military behaviors during a crisis on escalation risk are not clear. Blue might respond to a mishap in a way that increases the resilience of their forces, which could allow Blue to avoid further escalation while it assesses the cause of the mishap. Red or Blue might also be aware of the potential for inadvertent escalation and actively seek to manage this risk. Greater senior decision maker attention to military matters during a crisis could contribute to risk management. At the nuclear level, escalation would almost certainly involve deliberate decision making by both sides, reducing the risk. Conversely, crises

increase incentives for opacity, **limiting** the ability to distinguish between true **mishaps** and guises for aggression. Changes in **force readiness** could also be **escalatory** in some contexts, while conventional forces could interactin ways that escalate the conflict even if national leaders do not decide to escalate. Measures to enhance resilience and signal resolve may also cast a nuclear shadow on a crisis and provoke unanticipated escalation. If Blue or Red do not anticipate inadvertence, they might overestimate their ability to control escalation.

Miscalculation in war

Miscalculation resulting in a **failure to deter** vertical or horizontal escalation. Although each side's core interests might be well understood when the fighting begins, the war itself may lead Red or Blue's interests to evolve in ways that increase the risk of miscalculation. Red might **view the war** as an **opportunity** to pursue other interests, but Blue might **miscalculate** Red's ambitions and **fail to deter** horizontal escalation. Red might also **miscalculate** Blue's interests in the conduct of the war, such as Blue's reputational interest in punishing violations of the nuclear taboo. **Miscalculating** Blue's interests, Red could then see an **opportunity to gain advantage** through limited nuclear escalation. In a war, both sides will also have strong incentives to signal resolve. Yet the **fog of war**, as well as a **breakdown** of diplomatic relations and a **shift to a wartime** domestic information environment, could make it **difficult** to send and **receive such signals**. The conduct of the war itself could also complicate strategic messaging. Forces that might be used to send signals could be committed to other operations or destroyed in the fighting, constraining each side's strategic "vocabulary."

Each side's actions in war may reveal information about the military balance, which could reduce the potential for miscalculation of capabilities. Yet inherent **uncertainties** about the outcomes of certain military **contests** may contribute to **miscalculation**. Some forms of miscalculation may be **advantageous**. For instance, the US has an interest in encouraging Red to be extremely pessimistic about the outcome of any nuclear exchange. By the same token, however, Red may be **prone to overestimate** its ability to fight a **nuclear war**. The uncertainty of how a nuclear war would unfold could make it difficult to dispel Red's overconfidence without engaging in actions that themselves risk further escalation.

Deterrence systematically fails; arms controls is the only way to actually increase stability.

Ward 25 [Ward, John. "The Myth of Deterrence: Why More Nukes Don't Make Us Safer - Our Planet Project Foundation." *Our Planet Project Foundation - Together We Can End Nuclear Weapons*, 14 Feb. 2025, ourplanetproject.com/global-nuclear-realities/the-myth-of-strategic-deterrence/. Accessed 1 Dec. 2025. // Isegora]

The theory of nuclear deterrence has shaped military strategies since the dawn of the atomic age. The idea is a simple one. If two adversaries possess nuclear weapons, neither side will use them for fear of retaliation. It is a concept built on logic and the belief that rational leaders will always act in their nation's best interests. But this persuasive argument conceals a dangerous truth—one that has brought the world closer to destruction than most people realize. The Belief and the Paradox Deterrence theory came of age during the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union raced to build massive nuclear arsenals. The notion of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) became the bedrock of their strategic calculus. It seems logical to believe that no one would launch a nuclear strike if their adversary could respond in kind. MAD was not about peace in the usual sense. Instead, it was a face-to-face military standoff, with nuclear weapons poised to retaliate on a moment's notice. Policymakers and military strategists argued that an equal balance of terror prevented war, not because of diplomacy or goodwill, but because of the sheer horror that followed. But deterrence theory assumes a lot. It relies on perfectly accurate information, perfectly rational leadership, and perfectly flawless systems. But history has consistently shown that none of those things can be relied upon. Miscalculations, Misfires, and Misinformation Several events have defied the logic of deterrence theory. False alarms, misinterpreted data, and human error have nearly triggered nuclear wars in the past. From the 1979 NORAD nuclear false alarm to the 1995 Norwegian rocket incident, those moments revealed the immense risks concealed beneath the surface of Mutually Assured Destruction. At least a dozen close calls that we managed to escape were a test of human judgment under immense pressure. In some cases, our civilization was saved by a single individual choosing to ignore established protocol. In others, technical failures came within minutes of causing nuclear Armageddon. The logic of deterrence is exposed as a shallow illusion in the face of such unpredictable events. Human Nature, the Inevitable Wild Card The assumption that leaders will always act rationally might be the weakest part of nuclear deterrence theory. History is replete with examples of political and military leaders making decisions driven by emotion and pride, instead of logic and reason. Consider the Cuban Missile Crisis. Though often seen as a triumph of nuclear deterrence, it was nearly a terrible tragedy instead. Nuclear war was not avoided because deterrence theory worked, but because President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev exercised admirable restraint under extraordinary circumstances. And yet, despite their best efforts, a last-minute decision by Soviet naval officer Vasili Arkhipov probably saved the world from a massive nuclear war. Deterrence did not prevent disaster; individual courage and lady luck did. The Modern Landscape: More Weapons, More Players Today's nuclear landscape is more complex

than ever before. Nuclear arsenals have grown exponentially since the Cuban Missile Crisis, and more countries possess them. Some are long-standing rivals with deep-seated animosities and desires for revenge. North Korea, India, Pakistan, Israel, and potentially Iran introduce new layers of unpredictability. Unlike the bipolar standoff of the Cold War, today's deterrence framework is more fragmented. Communications are less centralized, and protocols vary. Nuclear command structures may be vulnerable to cyberattacks. More actors and increasingly complex technology create more chances for error. In addition, the development of hypersonic missiles and AI-driven systems has reduced the decision-making window to mere minutes. In today's world, leaders have less time to verify threats and consider options, while facing far greater pressures to act immediately. The assumptions that once supported deterrence theory, including time to respond, situational clarity, and rational decision-making, have nearly vanished. Deterrence as Justification, Rather than Strategy Deterrence has also become a convenient excuse for maintaining and expanding nuclear arsenals. Nuclear powers claim their weapons are purely 'defensive' measures that are necessary to deter unwarranted attacks. But in truth, this fractured logic leads to dangerous arms races instead of genuine stability. Perhaps worse, the belief in deterrence can create a false sense of security. It lulls policymakers and the public into thinking that nuclear war will not happen. Yet the very existence of these weapons—and the fallible systems required to control them—ensures that existential risks are ever-present. Some analysts also argue that deterrence might embolden risky behavior. If leaders believe that nuclear weapons will prevent retaliation, they may engage in more aggressive conventional warfare, confident that adversaries dare not escalate. This paradox makes deterrence not a path toward peace, but to war instead – especially if pride becomes a factor, as it often does. Why the Myth Persists On its face, deterrence is a convincing theory. It is simple, powerful, and oddly reassuring. But it has never been tested to failure. Close calls have happened, but a nuclear exchange has not yet occurred. Supporters cite that as proof of deterrence theory's reliability, but correlation is not causation. Peace in the nuclear age owes more to chance, diplomacy, and the caution of lone individuals than to any strategic doctrine. The fact that disaster has not yet struck does not mean deterrence works—it only emphasizes the luck we've experienced so far. A New Paradigm is Needed The stakes are tremendous, but human suffering is seldom considered during nuclear war games. Relying on deterrence in the 21st century is like playing Russian roulette with our entire civilization and the lives of every human being on Earth. It places enormous destructive power in the hands of fallible systems and a few imperfect people, while at the same time counting on perfection. A new security framework is needed—one based not on fear, but on transparency, diplomacy, and disarmament. Confidence-building measures, honest diplomacy, and verifiable arms reductions are not naive ideals. They are the beginnings of long-term stability. The myth of deterrence has outlived whatever usefulness it may have once had, if any. The risks are too extreme, the players too many, and the systems too fallible. Genuine security cannot be built on a bluff. Why This Matters The more we understand the limits of deterrence, the more urgent our need is for change. Our lives and our planet's future depend upon rejecting the idea that peace can be maintained through threats of annihilation. To the contrary, the idea itself

conjures up images of insanity when you think about it. At Our Planet Project Foundation, we believe these truths to be self-evident. Enduring peace is not ensured by fragile policies that can fail, but by conscious choices we must renew every day. Choices like deciding to end our reliance on deterrence theory before it's too late.

The impact of nuclear use outweighs all other risks---disarm is the only way to solve.

Roser 22 [Max Roser 22, researcher at the University of Oxford and Director of the Oxford Martin Programme on Global Development; founder and editor of Our World in Data, "Nuclear weapons: Why reducing the risk of nuclear war should be a key concern of our generation," 2022, www.ourworldindata.org/nuclear-weapons-risk]

The consequences of nuclear war would be devastating. **Much more** should – and **can** – be done to reduce the risk that humanity will ever fight such a war. The shockwave and heat that the detonation of a single nuclear weapon creates can end the lives of millions of people **immediately**. But even larger is the devastation that would follow a nuclear war. The first reason for this is **nuclear fallout**. Radioactive dust from the detonating bombs rises up into the atmosphere and spreads out over large areas of the world from where it falls down and causes deadly levels of radiation. The second reason is less widely known. But this consequence – 'nuclear winter' and the worldwide famine that would follow – is now believed to be the **most serious consequence** of nuclear war. Cities that are attacked by nuclear missiles burn at such an intensity that they create their own wind system, a **firestorm**: hot air above the burning city ascends and is replaced by air that rushes in from all directions. The storm-force winds fan the flames and create immense heat. From this firestorm large columns of smoke and soot rise up above the burning cities and travel all the way up to the stratosphere. There it spreads around the planet and **blocks the sun's light**. At that great height – far above the clouds – it cannot be rained out, meaning that it will remain there for years, darkening the sky and thereby **drying** and **chilling** the planet. The nuclear winter that would follow a large-scale nuclear war is expected to lead to temperature declines of 20 or even 30 degrees Celsius (60–86° F) in many of the world's agricultural regions – including much of Eurasia and North America. Nuclear winter would cause a '**nuclear famine**'. The world's food production would fail and **billions** of people would **starve**.1 These consequences – nuclear fallout and nuclear winter leading to famine – mean that the destruction caused by nuclear weapons is **not contained** to the **battlefield**. It would not just harm the attacked country. Nuclear war would devastate **all countries**, including the attacker. The possibility of global devastation is what makes the prospect of nuclear war so very terrifying. And it is also why nuclear weapons are so unattractive for warfare. A weapon that can lead to self-destruction is not a weapon that can be used strategically. US President Reagan put it in clear words at the height of the Cold War: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The only value in our two nations possessing nuclear weapons is to make sure they will never be used. But then would it not be better to **do away with them entirely**?"2 Nuclear stockpiles have been reduced, but the risk remains **high** 40 years after Reagan's words, the Cold War is over and nuclear stockpiles have been reduced considerably, as the chart shows. The world has learned that nuclear armament is not the one-way street that it was once believed to be. **Disarmament is possible**. But the chart also shows that there are still almost ten thousand nuclear weapons distributed among

nine countries on our planet, at least.3 Each of these weapons can cause enormous destruction; many are much larger than the ones that the US dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.4 Collectively these weapons are **immensely destructive**. The nuclear winter scenario outlined above would kill **billions** of people—billions—in the years that follow a large-scale nuclear war, even if it was fought "only" with today's reduced stockpiles.5 It is unclear whether humanity as a species could possibly survive a full-scale nuclear war with the current stockpiles.6 A nuclear war might well be humanity's **final war**. Close Calls: Instances that threatened to push the 'balance of terror' out of balance and into war The 'balance of terror' is the idea that all involved political leaders are so scared of nuclear war that they never launch a nuclear attack. If this is achievable at all, it can only be achieved if all nuclear powers keep their weapons in check. This is because the balance is vulnerable to **accidents**: a nuclear bomb that detonates accidentally – or even just a false alarm, with no weapons even involved – can trigger nuclear retaliation because several countries keep their nuclear weapons on '**launch on warning**'; in response to a warning, their leaders can decide within minutes whether they want to launch a retaliatory strike. For the balance of terror to be a balance, all parties need to be in control at all times. This however is **not the case**. In the timeline, you can read through some of the close calls during the past decades. The risk of nuclear war might well be low – because neither side would want to fight such a war that would have such awful consequences for everyone on the planet. But there is a risk that the kinds of **technical errors** and **accidents** listed here could lead accidentally to the use of nuclear weapons, as a nuclear power can incorrectly come to believe that they are under attack. This is why **false alarms**, **errors**, and **close calls** are so **crucial** to monitor: they are the incidents that can push the 'balance of terror' out of balance and into war. Accidents and errors are of course not the only possible path that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons. There is the risk of a terribly irresponsible person leading a country possessing nuclear weapons. There is the risk of **nuclear terrorism**, possibly after a terrorist organization steals weapons. There is the possibility that **hackers** can take control of the **nuclear chain of command**. And there is the possibility that several of these factors play a role at the same time. How to reduce the risk of nuclear war? An escalating conflict between nuclear powers – but also an **accident**, a **hacker**, a **terrorist**, or an irresponsible leader – could lead to the detonation of nuclear weapons. Those risks **only go to zero** if **all nuclear weapons are removed** from the world. I believe this is what humanity should work towards, but it is exceedingly hard to achieve, at least in the short term. It is therefore important to see that there are additional ways that can reduce the chance of the world suffering the horrors of nuclear war.8

Nuclear Testing

Nuclear testing has a laundry list of destruction to the environment

Hodges 25 [Meghan, environmental engineer and renowned expert in pollution control, published by ShunWaste, https://shunwaste.com/article/why-is-nuclear-testing-bad-for-the-environment, 11/21/2025, accessed 11/26/2025 // Isegora]

Nuclear testing has severe and long-lasting detrimental effects on the environment, primarily due to the release of radioactive materials into the atmosphere, water, and soil. These radioactive isotopes, such as strontium-90, cesium-137, and plutonium, can persist for thousands of years, contaminating ecosystems and entering the food chain. Exposure to radiation from nuclear tests can lead to genetic mutations, increased cancer risks, and reproductive issues in both wildlife and humans. Additionally, the physical destruction caused by detonations disrupts habitats, while the fallout can travel vast distances, affecting regions far from the test site. The cumulative impact of nuclear testing exacerbates environmental degradation, posing a significant threat to global biodiversity and public health.

Radionuclides released during nuclear tests cause contamination to the environment and food chain and significantly increase health risks directly linked to radiation.

Prăvălie 14 [Remus, Faculty of Geography of Bucharest University, published by NIH, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4165831/#Sec6, 2/22/2014, accessed 11/27/2025 // Isegora]

The nuclear tests conducted in the second half of the twentieth century had a predominant geopolitical characteristic (part of the nuclear programs of the great powers, a means for the nuclear states to reassert their position on the global geopolitical stage), but with serious ecological and social consequences. From the ecological point of view, at this stage, there are a few critically contaminated test sites both on land (the Nevada Test Site, Semipalatinsk) and in the marine environment (especially the Bikini, Enewetak, Moruroa, Fangataufa atolls, and Novaya Zemlya marine areas). ^{137}Cs, ^{90}Sr, $^{239–240}$Pu, ^{241}Am, and ^{131}I stand out among the radioactive isotopes released during nuclear tests, in terms of having caused **a major impact on the environment** and irradiation of the human body; these isotopes were predominantly found in most of the nuclear test sites worldwide. Since approximately two thirds of the Globe's surface is covered by water, a significant share of these radionuclides has been transferred into the marine environment, as in the cases of radionuclides ^{137}Cs and ^{90}Sr, with negative consequences being primarily related to the bioaccumulation through food chain cycles.

The indirect transfer of radionuclides into the geospheres and their accumulation in living cells, by way of the food chain, was yet another form of radioactive contamination of the marine and terrestrial ecosystems. One of the most representative examples is the isotope ^{14}C released into the atmosphere during nuclear tests, which is later integrated into the CO_2, and then reaches the marine environment, by means of the ocean–atmosphere gas exchange, or the biosphere through the process of photosynthesis.

In terms of human exposure, the increase in the thyroidal cancer incidence in many areas of the globe (strongly affected by the radioactive contamination with the ^{131}I radionuclide) is the one among the worst consequences of nuclear testing. This paper's case study, the United States, could be a relevant example, as a significant thyroidal cancer incidence increase can be noticed in the most severely affected states. However, determining to what extent this radionuclide had influenced the incidence dynamics is not easily accomplishable, given the fact that the development of various therapeutic radiation treatments over the recent decades represents another major cause for the increase in the thyroidal cancer incidence in the United States.

Healthy environments are key to biodiversity

IERE 25 [Institute for Environmental Research and Education, first EPD program ever in North America, https://iere.org/the-importance-of-biodiversity-conservation/#A_Call_to_Action_Securing_a_Future_Rich_in_Life, 6/23/2025, accessed 11/29/2025 // Isegora]

Ecosystems provide a vast array of services that underpin human civilization. These services **are directly linked to biodiversity.** Consider **pollination**: Insects, birds, and bats are responsible for pollinating a significant proportion of our crops. Declining pollinator populations due to habitat loss and pesticide use directly threaten food security. Similarly, forests play a vital role in **carbon sequestration**, helping to mitigate climate change. When forests are cleared or degraded, their capacity to absorb carbon dioxide is reduced, contributing to global warming.

Healthy ecosystems also regulate **water cycles**, ensuring the availability of clean water for drinking, agriculture, and industry. Wetlands, for example, act as natural filters, removing pollutants from water and reducing flood risk. The loss of biodiversity weakens these ecosystem services, making them more vulnerable to disruption and diminishing their capacity to support human needs. This creates a cascade of negative consequences, impacting everything from food security and human health to economic stability and social well-being. The intricate web of life depends on each species playing its role, and the loss of even a single species can have far-reaching consequences.

Environments are directly linked to climate change

EPA 25 [Environmental Protection Agency, government organization for environmental awareness and action, https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-impacts-ecosystems#impacts, 8/8/2025, accessed 11/29/2025 // Isegora]

Climate change is affecting some of the critical services that **ecosystems** provide to society.[13] For example, ecosystems provide a bounty of food to people. Climate changes, like drought and heat, could affect the availability and quality of some foods, as well as farmer's ability to grow certain crops.[14]

Climate change can also affect ecosystem services such as carbon capture and storage. Forest ecosystems play a critical role in the carbon cycle, helping to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in roots, soil, and the forest floor.[15] But climate-driven increases in wildfires, flooding, pests, and diseases can limit the ability of an ecosystem to provide this important service.[16]

Radiation lasts for centuries on end—that's significantly increases magnitude

Rust 23 [Joshua, writer for Brigham Young University, published by BYU, https://universe.byu.edu/2023/07/20/legacy-of-decades-long-atomic-bomb-testing-lingers/, 7/20/2023, accessed 11/28/2025 // Isegora]

Generational problems among the descendants of downwinders are also prevalent in the states proposed for RECA coverage. According to some studies, female reproductive organs are especially susceptible to radioactive toxins.

'We're seeing children of those exposed getting sick. **Future generations are still being affected.** So it's not over,' Dickson said.

Nuclear byproducts such as plutonium-239 remain in the environment and **can still pose** some **risk** to residents. Radioactive isotopes like plutonium can linger in the soil for **24,000 years**, or, as Valdez said, 'a really, really, really, really long time.'

Although, the Environmental Protection Agency reports that many of the most harmful elements, strontium and cesium, ~~broke~~ [break] down 30-40 years after the testing.

War Principles

Nuclear weapons used in or near populated areas inevitably kill massive numbers of civilians and cause incalculable human suffering.

ICRC 24 [International Committee of the Red Cross, "Nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humanity," statement to the UN, 26 September 2024, https://www.icrc.org/en/statement/un-idenw, accessed 20 November 2025]

Nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humanity. Their use, especially in or near populated areas, would cause massive casualties and devastation, leading to incalculable human suffering. A nuclear war would have a dramatic impact on human health, the environment, climate, food production and socio-economic development, with irreversible consequences for future generations. The devastation witnessed by the Japanese Red Cross Society and the ICRC in Hiroshima and Nagasaki some eighty years ago is proof that no humanitarian response can adequately address the catastrophic aftermath of a nuclear detonation. The only way to prevent such suffering is through complete nuclear disarmament. Eliminating nuclear weapons is not only a humanitarian and moral imperative but also a legal obligation under Article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).We welcome the renewed commitment of world leaders to nuclear disarmament and their determination to accelerate progress towards achieving it, as recently agreed in the Pact for the Future. But how can we get there? First, a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons is a necessary step in this direction. The adoption and entry into force of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) precisely signaled this crucial step, strengthening the nuclear taboo by means of a universally applicable prohibition – but one that did not come in a vacuum. For one, international humanitarian law fully applies to the use of nuclear weapons, be it strategic or tactical, for offensive or defensive purposes. In the view of the ICRC, and of the broader Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, it is extremely doubtful that the use of nuclear weapons could ever comply with the rules and principles of IHL. These are notably the principle of distinction and the prohibitions of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, the prohibition against weapons of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, as well as the rules protecting the natural environment. Moreover, in the view of the ICRC, the use of and threat to use nuclear weapons is abhorrent to the principles of humanity and dictates of public conscience. Second, through cooperation and synergies. Today, almost half of all States in the world have joined or signed the TPNW. But the TPNW does not stand alone; it is an integral part of the broader nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework, which it complements and reinforces. We urge all States that have not yet done so to join the TPNW, the NPT, the CTBT and the regional treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones without delay. Third, through taking urgent action to prevent the risk of deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons, pending their total elimination. Amid rising global tensions, the modernization of nuclear arsenals, and enhanced deterrence doctrines, nuclear risk reduction measures are more important than ever. States have long committed to many such

measures under the NPT, including substantive reductions in nuclear arsenals, unequivocal commitments never to use nuclear weapons first, the removal from high operational alert, and steps to reduce their role in security policies. It is urgent that all nuclear-weapon States now translate these commitments into action rather than unravel them under our very eyes. In addition, freezing all modernization efforts, condemning any threats to use nuclear weapons and raising awareness of their devastating humanitarian consequences also constitute important risk reduction measures. And fourth, a nuclear-free world must also address the harm caused by past nuclear use and testing. We urge all States to collaboratively provide meaningful assistance to victims of nuclear weapons and take measures to remediate the contaminated environment. Healing the wounds of the past is essential for building a peaceful future. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will continue to work tirelessly until we achieve a world where the shadow of nuclear weapons no longer looms over us.

Because nuclear weapons are indiscriminate and disproportionate, their use is incompatible with the core principles of international humanitarian law.

ICRC 25 [International Committee of the Red Cross, "Hiroshima 80 years on: The humanitarian imperative to eliminate nuclear weapons," 5 August 2025, https://www.icrc.org/en/article/hiroshima-80-years-humanitarian-imperative-eliminate-nuclear-weapons, accessed 20 November 2025]

Eighty years ago, Hiroshima, and then Nagasaki, became symbols not only of war's horror, but of its devastating escalation. They were the first - and the only - cities in history to suffer the devastation of nuclear weapons. Tens of thousands of people were killed instantly; hundreds of thousands more would suffer the consequences for years, decades, and generations to come. In Hiroshima, 92% of nurses and 90% of doctors were killed. Eighty percent of the city's medical infrastructure was destroyed. Those who survived were left with severe injuries, radiation sickness, and little to no medical care. Yet, almost unbelievably, the atomic bombs dropped on those cities were, by today's standards, relatively small. Today, an estimated 12,000 nuclear weapons remain in global arsenals - over 9,000 of which are operational, with some ready to be launched at a moment's notice. Together, they represent 2,000 megatons of destructive power - the equivalent of 135,000 Hiroshima bombs. As geopolitical tensions rise and conflicts continue to rage around the world, the risk of nuclear weapon use - intentional or accidental - is growing. At the same time, long-standing commitments to disarmament are eroding. The detonation of even a single nuclear weapon in or near a populated area would result in mass casualties, total destruction of medical infrastructure, and long-term environmental damage. It is unlikely any state, international body or humanitarian organization could adequately respond to the scale of immediate humanitarian needs. The impact on modern society — food production, health systems, trade — would be catastrophic. International humanitarian law (IHL) applies to all means and methods of warfare - including nuclear weapons. It prohibits indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, requires distinction between civilians and combatants, and protects the environment from widespread, long-term and severe damage. Given the wide-scale, long-lasting and uncontrollable effects of nuclear weapons, it is extremely doubtful they could ever be used in accordance with the principles and rules of IHL. The ICRC's long-standing position is clear: the use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.

Violating humanitarian war norms erodes global trust and cooperation.

Crane 23 [David M. Crane – Founding Chief Prosecutor, UN Special Court for Sierra Leone, Commentary in *JURIST*, June 8, 2023, accessed 20 November 2025]

Continued attacks on civilians and civilian objects by the armed forces of the Russian Federation violate international law and basic human decency. Over the past centuries, mankind has attempted to govern conduct on the battlefield in the hope that those found on the battlefield, such as the wounded and sick, prisoners of war, and civilians, are treated humanely and are protected.

Since the establishment of the United Nations after World War II, there are a number of conventions, protocols, and treaties that ensure during an international or non-international armed conflict the methods and means of warfare are regulated by international law.

The former Soviet Union and the Russian Federation ignore the law and conduct themselves lawlessly and commit horrific violations of that law. They are committing war crimes on a daily basis. A recent attack on a hospital, a protected place, is an example.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 play a crucial role in protecting individuals found on the battlefield, ensuring that even amidst armed conflicts, basic human rights and principles are respected. These conventions establish rules for the humane treatment of wounded and sick soldiers, prisoners of war, and civilians caught in the midst of armed conflicts.

By adhering to the Geneva Conventions, nations acknowledge the significance of upholding humanitarian principles during times of war. These treaties emphasize the prohibition of torture, cruel treatment, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians. They also outline the responsibilities of states to provide medical care, ensure fair treatment for prisoners of war, and facilitate the exchange of information between parties involved in a conflict.

While the Russian Federation is a signatory to the Geneva Conventions, concerns have been raised about its adherence to these principles in certain situations. Non-compliance with the Conventions not only risks the lives and well-being of individuals affected by armed conflicts, but it also undermines the international community's trust in a nation's commitment to humanitarian norms.

Disregarding the Geneva Conventions can have significant consequences for the Russian Federation. It may lead to diplomatic isolation, strained international relations, and potential legal repercussions. Moreover, failure to abide by these conventions undermines Russia's credibility as a responsible global actor, impacting its standing in the international community. Additionally criminal liability attaches to the actions by President Putin, his military commanders, and soldiers. The International Criminal Court has opened war crimes cases and has already issued an arrest warrant for Putin and another colleague for war crimes.

Recognizing the importance of the Geneva Conventions is crucial for all nations, including the Russian Federation. By upholding these humanitarian principles, countries demonstrate their commitment to protecting the lives and dignity of individuals affected by armed conflicts, fostering stability, and promoting respect for human rights even in the midst of war.

When powerful states disregard nuclear and humanitarian rules, they weaken the institutions and expectations that sustain a rules-based international order.

Christian, Speyer & Zimmermann 24 [Ben Christian, Johanna Speyer, and Lisbeth Zimmermann, "The rules-based international order will not survive if its institutions only work in powerful states' interests," LSE USAPP Blog, 11 December 2024, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2024/12/11/the-rules-based-international-order-will-not-survive-if-its-institutions-only-work-in-powerful-states-interests/, accessed 20 November 2025]

We disagree with both the authors' diagnosis of the problem and their proposed solutions. As for how they set out the problem as they perceive it, we generally do not see that great powers like the US are overly constrained by international institutions. Quite the opposite: the institutional design of many international organizations already gives these states much more power and privilege. This applies not only to the UN Security Council with its well-known veto rights, but also to the IMF or the World Bank, for example, where voting shares are based on a quota system that gives richer countries significantly more formal (and informal) influence over decision-making. Overall, the list of international institutions that objectively work against the interests of powerful states – or that constrain "their sovereign control over their own policies" – is very short to non-existent. Instead, the old rule-of-thumb still holds: if international organizations have significant enforcement authority, they are controlled by the most powerful states.

In those cases where major powers cannot control the policies and outcomes of an international institution – such as in the UN Human Rights Council, which our colleagues cite as an example of institutional expansion that led to US withdrawal, or in the UN General Assembly – the resolutions or decisions adopted are legally non-binding. In other cases, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court or international human rights treaties, great powers either do not sign and ratify inconvenient treaties or use the legal exemptions that already exist. While we do not argue that great powers are completely "unbound," we want to stress that they already have a high amount of flexibility.

On a more general level, we also know that trends towards inclusion and democratization in global governance are almost always accompanied by "closures" of various kinds, both formal and informal – for example, through the establishment of new exclusive forums and clubs such as the G7. The current international order is already reflecting the unequal power distribution and is full of nuanced exceptions for some actors, with international institutions reproducing and maintaining these inequalities – which has been a major source of challenges and contestations to the present order since its very beginning. We argue that the current crisis of global cooperation cannot be resolved by institutional reforms that give major powers more freedoms and privileges than others – since this is already the status quo.

What's the point of a rules-based order and international institutions?

Any vision of an international order for a state-based system has to deal with the dilemma that it will only be effective if great powers take part but also needs to have an inclusive vision so as to attain legitimacy. In the case of the Liberal International Order (LIO), its supporters (most importantly the US) have sought to promote such an inclusive element in a combination of rules-based multilateralism, economic freedom and human rights. The restricted implementation of this vision and a highly complex web of international treaties and organizations based on all the hierarchical elements described above has time and again brought about major contestation. Today, challenges are also fueled by great power rivalry and more nationalist and nativist agendas – both aspects, which are not solved by merely offering more "flexibility".

We agree that the LIO is facing major challenges, and that we will most likely see changes that will restrain or stop altogether intrusive (and liberal) aspects of various international institutions. Challenges will include further nationalist inspired withdrawals from organizations or major funding problems for multilateral institutions that are less of a political priority (such as UNDP), pursue inconvenient objectives and mandates (UNWOMEN or UNFPA) or have contrasting agendas to the US Trump administration (WB and IMF). Successful negotiation and effective implementation will become even more difficult in many of these international institutional contexts.

Yet what do we generally expect from an international order to be able to consider it effective? In its most basic form, an international order should help to peacefully solve the conflicts and disagreements that occur among its followers. In a multilateral order, this should be based on state cooperation – an idea that Daßler, Heinkelmann-Wild and Kruck do not seem willing to give up. However, in advocating for increasing flexibility of the great powers, our colleagues overlook that such an order crucially depends on all its members following its rules to achieve this aim. But what is the point of a rules-based order, in which the rules that have been set out do not equally apply to everyone, not even on paper? Exemptions from rules always need to strike a balance between providing flexibility and honoring a rule's substance and validity.

Openly establishing an even more pronounced two-class system that further deepens existing hierarchies, we argue, will diminish any "pull" to a rules-based order – especially at a time in which "double standards" are increasingly criticized; rightly so in most cases, but sometimes also to justify one's own norm violations. Our colleagues' proposal for reforming the institutional structure of the LIO necessarily implies an (unacknowledged) undermining of the basic normative underpinnings on which most global governance arrangements are based. In our view, the proposed measures will not save a more modest multilateral order but further disintegrate it.

How much institutionalized inequality can an order endure?

Our colleagues are not willing to give up on multilateral cooperation that encompasses all states – and neither are we. However, we do not believe that a reformed order that rests on giving great powers greater privileges can accomplish that goal. Instead, we believe it would further cement the inequalities that are already apparent in many aspects of the Liberal International Order. Given that these inequalities have always been and remain a significant source of international conflict, the question arises: how much institutionalized inequality can the international order endure before it implodes? Not much more, we believe. After all, the dilemma remains: international institutions depend on great powers' participation, but they will hardly be effective without also striving for greater inclusivity. While our colleagues advocate for solving this dilemma by privileging great power participation, we do not think that most states would subjugate themselves under such an order. The envisioned order will therefore hardly attain global reach and solve the many global (cooperation) problems we face. Instead, the current multiple crises call for even more inclusivity.

The absence of trust and effective international cooperation greatly increases the risk that disputes escalate into war.

Daly 15 [Patrick Daly, "The Most Precious Commodity in the World," LinkedIn Pulse, 20 April 2015, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/most-precious-commodity-world-patrick-daly, accessed 20 November 2025]

What is the most valuable and precious commodity in the world? Oil? Gold? Saffron? Or perhaps some rare Earth metal? The correct answer is; none of the above. The most valuable and precious commodity in the world is trust. An abundance of trust lubricates and accelerates positive endeavour in business, politics and personal relationships. In extreme cases the absence of trust leads to war, pestilence and famine. Even in the best case the absence of trust acts as a brake imposing costs and delay on progress in any enterprise.

Trust is difficult to build and easy to squander. To have trust deposited in you, you must be trustworthy. This is a quality with a component of competence and a component of character, both are necessary. When a client, an employee, a boss, a partner looks at you and asks themselves – "do I trust this person?" they are trying to discern whether you have the wherewithal to deliver what you say you will deliver as well as whether you have their best interests at heart. Absent one or absent the other, you are not worthy of trust in this particular circumstance.

How is trust built? Trust is built by providing value and providing it consistently over time. By value, I don't mean just transactional monetary value, but rather value in its widest sense that may consist of good advice, a helping hand, keeping a promise, providing a recommendation or a piece of valuable information.Also you provide this value without expecting a reciprocal and immediate quid pro quo in every case.

In times past, people lived and worked in small communities and could determine quickly through direct contact and recommendation who was trustworthy and who was not. In our modern world of social media, email and long-distance, multi time-zone working the obstacles to building trust through direct person-to-person contact are increasing just as the need to have trustworthy friends, colleagues and associates in extended networks becomes ever more essential for success in life and business.

The value of trust is high and rising fast. If you have it, nurture it and grow it like the precious thing that it is. If you don't yet have it investing in building your trustworthiness through providing consistent value to those around you may be the single biggest factor in your future success.

Inequality

The nuclear order is structurally unequal because only a small group of states are allowed to possess nuclear weapons.

Stärk & Kühn 22 [Franziska Stärk and Ulrich Kühn, "Nuclear injustice: How Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows the staggering human cost of deterrence," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 26 October 2022, https://thebulletin.org/2022/10/nuclear-injustice-how-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-shows-the-staggering-human-cost-of-deterrence/, accessed 20 November 2025]

The global nuclear order—built on policies of nuclear deterrence, nonproliferation, and disarmament—is unjust. Russia's war against Ukraine proves that the distribution of the costs and benefits of nuclear deterrence is particularly discriminatory. The current situation is a painful reminder that nuclear weapons are to global security what fossil fuels are to a green economy: a costly legacy of past generations thwarting justice and sustainability efforts in the long-term.

It is time for nuclear scholars, policy makers, and the general public to (re)politicize the ongoing and future negative effects of this Nuclear Injustice and push for fundamental change in the role of nuclear weapons in the world. They can do so by making Nuclear Injustice front and center at all relevant conferences and actively engaging in the debate about the nuclear lessons learned from the war in Ukraine.

An unjust order in plain sight. Nuclear Injustice has a long and complex history, but the injustice has long been obvious. Cold War theorists knew that a relative stable deterrence relationship could paradoxically induce instability at lower levels of US-Soviet conflict. More realistically, superpower stability transferred instability to developing countries. The staggering human costs of past proxy wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Korea, or Angola underscored that nuclear deterrence between the few came with a hefty price tag for the many. These populations experienced firsthand the injustices of a nuclear order built on hierarchical spheres of (in)security.

To maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent and thus enjoy the continued benefits of stability, nuclear-weapon states outsourced long-term human and environmental costs to other countries. Throughout the Cold War and shortly thereafter, their nuclear testing and uranium-mining activities affected indigenous and vulnerable groups in particular. The signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963 and then the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1995 sought to rectify part of this injustice. For the CTBT to finally enter into force, however, China and the United States, among others, have to ratify the treaty—which these countries continue to refuse to do. While the environmental and radiation impacts of nuclear-weapon states' testing legacies are increasingly well documented, the victims of testing are still waiting for justice.

In 1968, a milestone agreement sealed an unjust order by codifying unequal nonproliferation and disarmament commitments. Pushed forward by the superpowers, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) established two forms of inequality. First, nuclear

“have-nots” committed not to pursue nuclear weapons while accepting the nuclear-armed status of the “haves” (i.e., China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States—the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, or P5). In return, they gained support and access to civil nuclear energy and received promises from the haves to pursue complete disarmament. Second, the NPT made fulfillment of member states’ nonproliferation commitments a matter of individual safeguards, negotiated with and observed by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The NPT, however, left the issue of possible disarmament noncompliance mostly unattended. The indefinite extension of the treaty in 1995 finally cemented this unjust order, which holds today.

Nuclear weapons let a few states impose security hierarchies and externalize the human costs of deterrence onto non-nuclear populations.

Stärk & Kühn 22 [Franziska Stärk and Ulrich Kühn, "Nuclear injustice: How Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows the staggering human cost of deterrence," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 26 October 2022, https://thebulletin.org/2022/10/nuclear-injustice-how-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-shows-the-staggering-human-cost-of-deterrence/, accessed 20 November 2025]

Ukraine and the consequences. Today, the consequences of Nuclear Injustice are again on full display in Ukraine. Back in February 2022, the world watched with horror as Russia shielded its blatant aggression by using nuclear threats. On February 24, 2022, Vladimir Putin warned "those who may be tempted to interfere […] from the outside. No matter who tries to stand in our way or all the more so create threats for our country and our people, they must know that Russia will respond immediately, and the consequences will be such as you have never seen in your entire history."

Deterring external military intervention, nuclear weapons are the de facto facilitators of Russia's aggression against and war crimes in Ukraine. Therewith, Russia is the first 21st century nuclear perpetrator under an unjust order, and Ukraine is the first 21st century victim of that order. The nuclear-weapon-free country could not deter Russian aggression, nor could the nuclear-armed West. Much of the justified furor in the West has to do with Moscow openly leveraging its nuclear arsenal to its own benefit. While supporting Ukraine against Russia has been rightfully termed a moral imperative by Western leaders, preventing direct confrontation with Moscow—which eventually could end in nuclear Armageddon—is nothing less. Advancing risky policies between these two objectives translates for Western leaders into accepting the limits and detriments of an unjust nuclear order—one that the West helped establish and maintain for decades.

Extinction

Nukes leads to certain extinction

Letman 8/4/25 [Jon, writer on nuclear weapons, militarism, human rights, and the environment, published by Truthout, https://truthout.org/articles/threat-of-nuclear-war-is-rising-but-scientists-say-the-public-can-change-that/, 8/4/2025, accessed 11/28/2025 // Isegora]

Brian Schmidt, an American-Australian astrophysicist who received the Nobel Prize for physics in 2011, pointed out that many of today's nuclear weapons are far more destructive than the bombs used in the horrific Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. In contemporary arsenals, a single bomb can contain as much destructive power as was unleashed in all of World War II.

Currently, the world's nine nuclear-armed nations are estimated to possess the destructive equivalent of 146,600 Hiroshima-sized bombs, **many of which are ready to launch on short notice.**

Schmidt told *Truthout* that even a "small" nuclear weapon could precipitate the use of a gigaton's worth of nuclear arsenal being used, **causing the collapse of civilization.**

"I think the public needs to be focused on asking our respective governments to lower the risk of nuclear war," he said.

Nuclear Spending Is Rising as Arms Treaties Are Abandoned

Today, nuclear weapons spending is rising, nuclear-armed nations are modernizing and upgrading their weapons, and China is rapidly expanding its arsenal. Currently, the U.S. has seven modernization programs underway, is building two new nuclear weapons facilities, and replacing its entire intercontinental ballistic missile force with a new system that is 81 percent over budget. The U.S., which spends more on nuclear weapons than the other eight nations combined, is forecast to spend an average of $95 billion per year over the next decade, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

In contemporary arsenals, a single bomb can contain as much destructive power as was unleashed in all of World War II.

In recent years, nuclear threats have become increasingly common while diplomacy and dialogue are overshadowed by mistrust, conflict, and war. As reliance on nuclear weapons grows, there are fears of a new arms race and possible return to nuclear explosive testing. This comes as critical arms treaties have been abandoned or face an uncertain future.

In 2001, George W. Bush announced the U.S. would withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and under Donald Trump, the U.S. has rejected or withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty, the (conventional) Arms Trade Treaty, and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between the U.S. and Russia, the New START Treaty, will end in February 2026 unless it is renegotiated or replaced soon.

After World War II, the U.S., followed by the Soviet Union, invested heavily in developing nuclear weapons, with the U.K., France, China, and later Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea building their own bombs. In the mid-1980s, global nuclear arsenals peaked at just over 70,000 warheads. Arms control treaties and diplomacy succeeded in reducing those numbers to roughly 12,200 today, nearly 90 percent of which are possessed by Russia and the United States.

While some argue that nuclear deterrence provides safety and security, many in the arms control and scientific communities believe that the **threat of nuclear war has never been higher.** In the first six months of 2025, five nuclear-armed countries (Russia, India, Pakistan, Israel, and the United States) have engaged in military hostilities or outright war, increasing the risk of nuclear war by **accident, miscommunication, or design.**

Uranium Mining

Industry rising, countries and uranium mining industries to use uranium for nuke production through 2050

ForoNuclear 25 [ForoNuclear, nonprofit organization substantially regarding nuclear energy, https://www.foronuclear.org/en/updates/in-depth/reservas-de-uranio-y-desarrollo-nuclear-mundial/, 5/13/2025, accessed 11/29/2025 // Isegora]

Global uranium resources are sufficient to support current and expanded nuclear energy use through 2050 and beyond

The 2024 edition covers 2021–2022 and includes a comprehensive statistical profile of the uranium sector, along with 62 country profiles detailing mine development plans, regulatory frameworks, and the environmental and social aspects of uranium mining.

As of 1 January 2023, global identified recoverable uranium resources totaled 7,934,500 tonnes, representing reasonably assured and inferred resources recoverable at market prices between $40 and $260 USD/kgU ($15–$100 USD/lb U_3O_8). This marks a modest increase of less than 0.5% from the 2022 edition. However, further additions could come from undiscovered or unconventional sources, especially as uranium prices rise and 31 countries **commit to tripling nuclear capacity** by 2050, as announced during COP28.

Uranium reserves and global nuclear development

The Red Book includes projections of nuclear generating capacity and uranium requirements through 2050, as well as an analysis of long-term uranium supply and demand.

Investment in uranium exploration and development rebounded after a downturn caused by weak markets and the COVID-19 pandemic. Expenditures rose to $800 million in 2022 and are projected to reach $840 million in 2023.

The Red Book outlines uranium demand forecasts and supply scenarios through 2050, presenting both low- and high-growth models. While the uranium base appears sufficient even for high-growth trajectories, significant investment is necessary to maintain supply, especially in exploration, new production centres, and improved processing.

Uranium mining kills the environment—natural disasters, contamination, wildlife exposure, and destruction of local environments

Radzyminski 21 [Rochelle, physics professor at Saddleback College and Stanford University graduate, published by Stanford University, http://large.stanford.edu/courses/2021/ph241/radzyminski2/, 3/27/2021, accessed 11/29/2025 // Isegora]

Tailing deposits can cause landslides, air contamination, and wildlife exposure. Uranium tailings contain small particles that are picked up and transported by the wind. The radioactive particulates in the air can be concentrated enough to cause health issues including lung cancer and kidney disease. [6] These particles also contaminate soil and water. Furthermore, growing piles of mining debris become unstable and can result in fatal landslides, such as the 1966 landslide of Aberfan, which resulted in the death of 144 people. [7] Tailing ponds pose **serious hazards to the environment** as well through leaks, in which underground water becomes contaminated with heavy metals. [5] This can lead to the pollution of lakes and rivers. Local ecosystems, too, are harmed and destroyed by waste piles and ponds. Rain can interact with tailings and introduce sulfuric acid in aquatic ecosystems, similar to in-situ leaching. Wildlife exposure can also occur directly through interaction with tailing ponds. In particular, waterfowl often land and use tailing ponds, resulting in dire consequences. In 2008, 1600 ducks flew into a tailing pond and died in Alberta, Canada. [8] Evidently, the **repercussions of uranium mining are far-reaching.** Certain groups of people, however, are at greater risk of exposure to associated hazards.

Water gets contaminated for centuries and threatens animals—that spills over into the food chain and leads to significant environmental damage

Montgomery 23 [Ellen, Director of the Great Outdoors Campaign, published by Environment America, https://environmentamerica.org/arizona/center/articles/uranium-mining-what-can-go-wrong/, 8/3/2023, accessed 11/29/2025 // lsegora]

In the past, mining companies operating open pit mines discarded waste rock outside of the pit. If this practice continues, wind blowing by these waste rocks can pick up and spread radioactive dust that can enter surface water used for drinking and contaminate groundwater. This dust may also be inhaled by humans and sit in their lungs for a long time. Contamination of water can exist for hundreds of years and threaten a variety of species, including humans, various types of fish, and other wildlife. Contamination can cause reproductive deformities and a buildup of radioactive materials in the food chain. Water with high uranium radiation can cause kidney damage in those who ingest it.

Uranium mining significantly contributes to climate change

Radzyminski 21 [Rochelle, physics professor at Saddleback College and Stanford University graduate, published by Stanford University, http://large.stanford.edu/courses/2021/ph241/radzyminski2/, 3/27/2021, accessed 11/29/2025 // Isegora]

The world is rapidly approaching the point of no return in which the consequences of climate change cannot be reversed. With its high energy density and promise as a sustainable and clean source, nuclear energy is undoubtedly an appealing and feasible alternative during a time of great urgency. The long-term effects of nuclear energy on the environment and human health must carefully be considered, however. As the demand for uranium grows, so too do the hazards associated with uranium mining. Do the benefits of nuclear energy outweigh the risks of air and water pollution, and consequent illness, destroyed ecosystems, and injured wildlife? The search for clean energy stems from the desire to protect and preserve the earth, but **uranium poses threats that** seemingly **accomplish the opposite.** The consequences of nuclear energy must therefore be carefully assessed and considered when regarding its future.

Negative Evidence

Impact Turns

War is inevitable---nuclear weapons must be used first.

Dergham 24 [Raghida Dergham 24, founder and executive chairwoman of the Beirut Institute and columnist for *The National*, "Is a broader European war with Russia becoming inevitable?," *National*, 6/2/24, https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/comment/2024/06/02/is-a-broader-european-war-with-russia-becoming-inevitable/]

Europe finds itself at a perilous juncture, as a direct military confrontation between Russia and Nato appears **likelier than ever**. Britain and France recently sent out strong signals that Moscow must not be allowed to win the war in Ukraine, as such an outcome could threaten the rest of the continent.

The prevailing belief so far has been that Russia would refrain from launching tactical nuclear strikes on British or French soil, despite its threats to do so if Kyiv used western-made missiles to strike inside its territory. The reason for this, in their estimation, is that Moscow would not risk an existential crisis as a consequence of such a countermeasure on its part.

However, those familiar with the Russian leadership's mindset contend that it might be willing to take such a risk. This is because, for the Kremlin, the Ukraine issue is **existential** and non-negotiable – and thus, Moscow cannot ignore provocations or back down from its red lines.

The next two weeks could, therefore, prove critical for Europe, beginning with the 80th anniversary celebrations of D-Day in Normandy on Thursday, and leading up to the G7 summit in Italy and the Ukraine peace conference in Switzerland in mid-June.

But how did we get here? There has been a notable shift in the stance on the war, adopted by some European countries, in that they have endorsed Ukraine's right to use Nato-supplied weaponry to strike military targets inside Russian territory.

Initially, US President Joe Biden hesitated to support Britain, France, Denmark and Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on this issue, but Secretary of State Antony Blinken has since aligned with this view, thereby lifting a previously enforced ban on Ukraine's use of western weapons in Russia.

Of course, significant divisions persist within Europe and between Europe and the US, particularly over the transfer of frozen Russian funds to aid Ukraine's defence amid Moscow's new military offensive that could alter the dynamics of the war. These divisions also concern Ukraine's Nato membership, with the US and Germany showing caution. Berlin also disagrees with London and Paris over the use of western missiles to hit Russia, considering it to be dangerously escalatory.

Britain has further provoked Russia by supplying Ukraine with Storm Shadow missiles. Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron is openly providing missiles and threatening

further action, believing that the only way for Ukraine to halt Russia's advance is by striking on its soil.

Mr Macron is expected to announce in Normandy that he will send 150 military advisers and trainers to the frontlines, seen by some as a precursor to Paris becoming embroiled in a direct war with Moscow – one that could even involve the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

Despite divisions among Nato members, some Baltic states are also ready to send in their forces. It's worth noting here that individual Nato countries are allowed to act independently; it appears that Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic support this approach, while Hungary and Slovakia oppose it.

Poland and Romania are key players, as they are set to receive F-16 aircraft bound for Ukraine, with the Kremlin asserting the right to **strike these aircraft**. For its part, Poland has hinted at action against Kaliningrad, a Russian semi-exclave that houses nuclear facilities.

I am given to understand that there is internal pressure on Russia's leadership to conduct a **nuclear test** in Novaya Zemlya, a site used by the erstwhile Soviet Union for atmospheric and underground nuclear tests. There are also popular calls for a test to demonstrate Moscow's readiness to use nuclear weapons **against Nato**.

Curiously, I am told, Russia isn't ready to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine, but it is prepared to use them against western forces targeting Russian territory, viewing this as justified.

On the eve of the Ukraine peace conference, the European message to Moscow is clear: either de-escalate and sue for peace or prepare for missile strikes inside its territory. Russia is unlikely to agree to a ceasefire, at least right now, for that would amount to defeat in its eyes.

The peace conference will be noteworthy, especially as the G7 summit will reaffirm support for Ukraine at a time when the West is increasingly concerned about Russian breakthroughs on the military front (even though, as some point out, Moscow hasn't even managed to "liberate" the Donbas yet).

Western provocations, as seen by Moscow, include not only military actions but also what the latter considers to be the illegal seizure of its frozen assets. Estonia, for instance, recently adopted a law to confiscate such assets, further heightening **tensions**.

We will concede China invades Taiwan! That's good because that causes a collapse of the CCP.

Talley '25 [Thomas Talley 25, Former U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, M.A. in International Relations from Troy University, M.A. in Military Arts and Sciences from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College; *The Highland County Press*, "China and Taiwan: Beware the law of unintended consequences," February 10, 2025, https://highlandcountypress.com/opinions/china-and-taiwan-beware-law-unintended-consequences]

Then, in rapid sequence, the **PLA** will **fail**, the PRC will **fracture**, and the **CCP** will **collapse**. Why?

Because the **PLA** will **not** be able to expand out of the **beachhead**, thus dooming the invasion, and the **US** will impose a **blockade**, severing China from global markets and global finance. Imagine the effect on **Chinese** citizens seeing their vaunted **military**, heroes of a hundred parades, **stranded**, isolated, and besieged, on the shores of Taiwan. That's bad. The effects of a blockade are worse. Like **COVID**, panicked citizens will **hoard** food and money, and microeconomic **activity** will all but **cease**. Unlike COVID, China will no longer have access to global trade and global finance. Production of goods and services will stall and then **collapse**. **Unemployment** will skyrocket. No jobs, no money, no food. That description will apply to hundreds of millions of Chinese, everywhere, all at once. Urban **populations** will **flee** to rural areas, in search of **food**. But China cannot feed itself. It even has to import fertilizers. **No region** of China will be **spared** extreme stress.

Why will the invasion fail? Because the one thing that is **harder** than gaining the beaches in an amphibious operation is expanding beyond the **beachhead**. Salerno, **Normandy**, Peleliu; these battles all attest to the **difficulty**. Those operations were conducted by **battle-hardened**, professional militaries who enjoyed complete **control** over the seas and air, were continually **reinforced** by an uninterrupted supply line, and were **directed** by headquarters already experienced in commanding complex **op**eration**s** against a determined foe. **Not** a single one of those characteristics define the **PLA** or the situation in Taiwan. To suggest that China will be able to expand out of the beachhead is to assume that everything that must go right for them, will; and everything that must go wrong for Taiwan, will. That's **beyond probable**; it's **impossible**. The PLA will be revealed to be less than the sum of its parts. It may look like a modern military, but the reality is that it is the armed wing of a political party, bereft of actual combat experience, **unversed** in conducting, coordinating, and sustaining complex joint operations. Its **culture** discourages subordinates taking **initiative**, leaders assuming **risk**, and anyone **critiquing** any political decision. The PLA is a product of the CCP's political culture; it lacks a **military culture**.

Why will the US initiate a blockade? Because it must. Failing to do so would amount to surrendering leadership of the world to a resurgent, aggressive, domineering China. It is the

fastest, cheapest, surest means of achieving an immediate effect. And it is also the easiest to de-escalate from (an important consideration: always best to avoid kinetic exchanges between nuclear powers, right?). A blockade demonstrates the US' dominant position and brings pressure to bear on China's critical vulnerability: it is utterly dependent upon global trade and global finance. It can be initiated hundreds (thousands) of miles away from China, beyond China's ability to effectively respond; and it poses the least risk to US naval forces.

Long before the economic impact is felt, the **psychological impact** on Chinese population and social stability will be **devastating**. Contrary to appearances, China is not a monolith, and it abounds with social, economic, and political fissures and stress points. The **cascading** crises will trigger a **political crisis**, and **Xi's** regime will **cease** to exist. It won't go quietly, but it will go, nonetheless.

Primacy deters nuclear war with revisionist powers---multipolarity fragments the global order.

Brands & Edel 19 [Hal Brands & Charles Edel 19, PhD, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, PhD, Senior Fellow and Visiting Scholar at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, *The Lessons of Tragedy: Statecraft and World Order*, Ch. 6: Darkening Horizon, Yale University Press]

The revival of **great-power competition** entails higher international tensions than the world has known for decades, and the revival of **arms races, security dilemmas**, and **other artifacts** of a more **dangerous past**. It entails **sharper conflicts** over the international rules of the road on issues ranging from freedom of navigation to the illegitimacy of altering borders by force, and **intensifying competitions** over states that reside at the intersection of rival powers' **areas of interest**. It requires confronting the prospect that **rival powers** could **overturn** the **favorable regional balances** that have **underpinned** the U.S.-led order for decades, and that they might construct **rival spheres of influence** from which America and the liberal ideas it has long promoted would be excluded. Finally, it necessitates recognizing that great-power rivalry could lead to **great-power war**, a prospect that seemed to have followed the Soviet empire onto the ash heap of history.

Both **Beijing** and **Moscow** are, after all, **optimizing their forces** and **exercising aggressively** in preparation for potential **conflicts** with the United States and its allies; Russian doctrine explicitly emphasizes the limited use of **nuc**lear weapon**s** to achieve escalation dominance in a war with Washington. In Syria, U.S. and Russian forces even came into **deadly contact** in early 2018. American airpower decimated a contingent of government-sponsored Russian mercenaries that was attacking a base at which U.S. troops were present, an incident demonstrating the increasing boldness of Russian operations and the corresponding potential for escalation. The world has not yet returned to the epic clashes for global dominance that characterized the twentieth century, but it has returned to the **historical norm** of **great-power struggle**, with all the associated dangers.

Those dangers may be even greater than most observers appreciate, because if today's great-power competitions are still most intense at the regional level, who is to say where these competitions will end? By all appearances, Russia **does not simply want to be** a **"regional power"** (as Obama cuttingly described it) that dominates South Ossetia and Crimea.37 It **aspires** to the **deep European** and **extra-regional impact** that **previous incarnations** of the Russian state enjoyed. Why else would Putin boast about how far his troops can drive into Eastern Europe? **Why else** would Moscow be **deploy**ing military

power into the **Middle East? Why else** would it be continuing to cultivate intelligence and **military relationships** in regions as remote as **Latin America?**

Likewise, China is **today** focused primarily on securing its own **geopolitical neighborhood**, but its ambitions for **tomorrow** are **clearly much bolder.** Beijing probably does not envision itself fully overthrowing the international order, simply because it has profited far too much from the U.S.-anchored global economy. Yet China has nonetheless positioned itself for a **global challenge** to **U.S. influence**. Chinese military forces are deploying **ever farther** from China's immediate periphery; Beijing has **projected power** into the **Arctic** and **established bases** and **logistical points** in the **Indian Ocean** and **Horn of Africa**. Popular Chinese movies depict Beijing replacing Washington as the dominant actor in sub-Saharan Africa—a fictional representation of a real-life effort long under way. The **Belt and Road Initiative** bespeaks an aspiration to **link** China to countries throughout **Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe**; BRI, AIIB, and RCEP look like the beginning of an alternative institutional architecture to rival Washington's. In 2017, Xi Jinping told the Nineteenth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party that Beijing could now "**take center stage in the world**" and act as an **alternative** to **U.S. leadership**.38

These ambitions may or may not be realistic. But they demonstrate just how significantly the world's leading authoritarian powers desire to shift the global environment over time. The **revisionism** we are seeing today may therefore be **only the beginning**. As China's power **continues to grow,** or if it is successful in **dominating the Western Pacific**, it will **surely move on** to **grander endeavors**. If Russia reconsolidates control over the former Soviet space, it may seek to bring parts of the former Warsaw Pact to heel. Historically, this has been a recurring pattern of **great-power behavior**—interests **expand with power**, the appetite **grows** with the eating, **risk-taking** increases as **early gambles** are seen to **pay off**.39 This pattern is precisely why the revival of great-power competition is so concerning—because **geopolitical revisionism** by **unsatisfied major powers** has so often presaged **intensifying international conflict**, confrontation, and even **war**. The great-power behavior occurring today represents the warning light flashing on the dashboard. It tells us there may be still-greater traumas to come.

The threats today are compelling and urgent, and there may someday come a time when the balance of power has shifted so markedly that the postwar international system cannot be sustained. Yet that moment of failure has not yet arrived, and so the goal of U.S. strategy should be not to hasten it by giving up prematurely, but to push it off as far into the future as possible. Rather than simply **acquiescing** in the **decline** of a world it spent generations building, America should **aggressively bolster its defenses**, with an eye to **preserving** and perhaps even selectively **advancing** its remarkable achievements.

Conventional Warfare

Nuclear use quickly ended World War II and avoided a far bloodier invasion of Japan.

HistoryExtra 25 [Paul Ham, "Were the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki justified?" HistoryExtra, 27 May 2025, https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/atomic-bomb-hiroshima-nagasaki-justified-us-debate-bombs-death-toll-japan-how-many-died-nuclear/, accessed 20 November 2025]

For years debate has raged over whether the US was right to drop two atomic bombs on Japan during the final weeks of the Second World War. The first bomb, dropped on the city of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, resulted in a total death toll of around 140,000. The second, which hit Nagasaki on 9 August, killed around 50,000 people. But was the US justified? We put the question to a panel of expert historians...

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States in August 1945 brought the Second World War to a sudden and devastating close, and sparked a moral and historical debate that has continued since. Well over 100,000 people, most of them civilians, were killed instantly or in the immediate aftermath, with many more suffering from long-term effects of radiation exposure.

The decision by US president Truman to authorise the use of nuclear weapons against Japan was unprecedented. It marked the first (and so far only) time that atomic bombs have been used in warfare. The justification offered at the time was that the bombings would force Japan's surrender and avoid a prolonged and bloody invasion of the Japanese mainland. Yet the question remains: was the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki justified?

Historians continue to debate the military necessity, political motivations and moral implications of the bombings. Was it a strategic decision to end the war quickly and save lives? Or a demonstration of power aimed as much at the Soviet Union as at Japan? Here, a panel of historians offers their perspectives on one of the most controversial chapters of the Second World War, and considers whether the US was right to bomb Japan in 1945.

Was the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki justified?

"Yes. Truman had little choice" – Antony Beevor

Few actions in war are morally justifiable. All a commander or political leader can hope to assess is whether a particular course of action is likely to reduce the loss of life. Faced with the Japanese refusal to surrender, President Truman had little choice.

His decision was mainly based on the estimate of half a million Allied casualties likely to be caused by invading the home islands of Japan. There was also the likely death rate from starvation for Allied PoWs and civilians as the war dragged on well into 1946.

What Truman did not know, and which has only been established quite recently, is that the Imperial Japanese Army could never contemplate surrender, having forced all their men to fight to the death since the start of the war. All civilians were to be mobilised and forced to fight with

bamboo spears and satchel charges to act as suicide bombers against Allied tanks. Japanese documents apparently indicate their army was prepared to accept up to 28 million civilian deaths.

Nuclear deterrence makes leaders more cautious about major war by threatening unacceptable costs, which can reduce large-scale conventional bloodshed.

U.S. Department of War 22 [U.S. Department of Defense, *"Nuclear Strategy and Policy – Nuclear Posture Review Fact Sheet,"* October 2022, https://www.war.gov/Portals/1/Spotlight/2022/NDS/NUCLEAR%20STRATEGY%20AND%20POLICY%20-%20NPR%20Factsheet.pdf, accessed 20 November 2025]

The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) takes a comprehensive and balanced approach, striking the proper balance between: 1) maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent and strong and credible extended deterrence; and 2) taking those steps needed to reduce the risk of nuclear war and the salience of nuclear weapons globally. Nested within the Department of Defense's National Defense Strategy, the NPR recognizes that nuclear weapons undergird all our national defense priorities and that no element of U.S. military power can replace the unique deterrence effects that nuclear weapons provide. Although the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack, more broadly they deter all forms of strategic attack, assure Allies and partners, and allow us to achieve Presidential objectives if deterrence fails.

The United States continues to rely on nuclear weapons to deter all forms of strategic attack – including nuclear employment of any scale – and high consequence attacks of a strategic nature using non-nuclear means. While retaining a very high bar for U.S. nuclear employment, this approach complicates adversary decision making and reflects a sensible and stabilizing approach to deterring a range of attacks in a dynamic security environment. The United States continues to adhere to a negative security assurance that it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states party to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons that are in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

Any adversary use of nuclear weapons would fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict. We must therefore be able to deter both large-scale and limited nuclear attacks from a range of adversaries. The capability to deter limited nuclear attacks is critical given that some competitors have developed strategies for warfare that may rely on the threat or actual employment of nuclear weapons in order to terminate a conflict on advantageous terms. Some Allies and partners are particularly vulnerable to attacks with non-nuclear means that could produce devastating effects. Given that the U.S. global alliance network is a military center of gravity, the United States will continue to field flexible nuclear capabilities and maintain country-specific approaches that reflect our best understanding of adversary decision-making and perceptions.

Proliferation Solves

Proliferation dampens conflict – only our evidence does a statistical, controlled study.

Suzuki 15 [Akisato Suzuki 15, Researcher at the Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction, School of Law and Government, Dublin City University, MA in Violence, Terrorism and Security at Queen's University; Research and Politics, SagePub, "Is more better or worse? New empirics on nuclear proliferation and interstate conflict by Random Forests" June 2015]

Given these conflict-reducing/provoking effects of nuclear proliferation, what overall effect would nuclear proliferation have on a systemic propensity for conflict? This is difficult to answer, not only due to the controversy over whether nuclear states are more or less prone to conflict, but also because the existing theories do not explain whether those conflict-reducing/provoking effects are large enough to influence a systemic propensity for interstate conflict, given the ratio of nuclear states to non-nuclear states in the system. This challenge motivates the empirical examination of the relationship between nuclear proliferation and a systemic propensity for conflict. Empirical investigation by Random Forests The interstate–systemic year data are used here to investigate the relationship between nuclear proliferation and a systemic propensity for interstate conflict. The dependent variable is the number of militarized interstate dispute onsets (Palmer et al., 2015; version 4.01 is used) per systemic-year, standardized as the ratio to the number of states in the interstate system (Correlates of War Project, 2011) – hereafter, the 'dispute–state ratio'. Observations one year ahead (t+1) are used to make sure that causal effects precede a variation in the dispute–state ratio.2 Two regressors are used to examine the effect of nuclear proliferation: the number of nuclear states in the interstate system; and a count of the years since the number of nuclear states changes (hereafter 'nuclear year counter'), measuring the effect of new nuclear states (Horowitz, 2009). The data about nuclear states are from Gartzke and Kroenig (2009); additionally, the current paper codes North Korea as a nuclear state since 2009 (Table 1).3 The model also includes the number of democratic states (Polity2 score $\geqslant$ 6 in Marshall, 2013) in the interstate system, the gross world product (Earth Policy Institute, 2012), and the binary variable of unipolarity (coded zero until 1989 and one from 1990; see Monteiro, 2011/2012); these three variables control for democratic peace (Russett and Oneal, 2001), capitalist peace (Gartzke, 2007), and polarity (Monteiro, 2011/2012) respectively. The number of nuclear states and these control variables suffer from multicollinearity (see Table A-9 in the online appendix), and this paer later explains how to resolve this problem. A lagged dependent variable is also included to address the temporal dependence of time-series data. The temporal scope is 1950–2009 (i.e. N=59) due to the data availability and the use of the dependent variable at t+1. The descriptive statistics of all variables are displayed in Table 2.4. As mentioned in the introduction, this paper uses the machine learning, non-parametric method Random Forests for the empirical investigation.5 Although it is unfamiliar to most political science and international relations analysts, Random Forests has been widely used in numerous scientific studies (Strobl et al., 2009: 324; Strobl et al., 2008). The popularity of the method is also apparent from the fact that Breiman's (2001) original paper has been cited 12,721 times in the literature.6 Random Forests generates two useful analytics: first, 'conditional variable importance' measures how 'important' each

regressor is, conditional on the remaining regressors (Hothorn et al., 2006; Strobl et al., 2007, 2008). This is analogous to statistical significance in conventional regression models. The significance threshold proposed by Strobl et al. (2009: 343) is whether the importance score of a regressor is negative, zero, or lower than the absolute value of the lowest negative score. If none applies, the regressor is considered as important; and the second relevant analytic is a partial dependence plot (Friedman, 2001). This estimates the marginal effect of each regressor on the dependent variable while taking the remaining regressors into consideration. Random Forests has three attractive and distinctive characteristics for the purposes of this paper: first, the estimation of conditional variable importance and partial dependence plots enable conventional applied researchers to interpret non-parametric analysis in an intuitive way; second, Random Forests can examine non-linearity (Strobl et al., 2009: 339–341), which is desirable because, as already noted, some theories expect non-linearity between nuclear proliferation and a systemic propensity for conflict; and finally, it can cope with potential interactions and multicollinearity between regressors (Strobl et al., 2009: 339–341; Strobl et al., 2008). As noted before, most of the regressors here are highly correlated, and also it is plausible to anticipate some interaction effect between them (e.g. the number of democratic states and the **g**ross **w**orld **p**roduct). **The specific capabilities of Random Forests are therefore essential**. The estimation of conditional variable importance shows that the nuclear year counter has a negative importance score.7 Thus, the nuclear year counter is not important in explaining the dispute–state ratio. This suggests that **the optimist theory is supported**. The remaining regressors have an importance score higher than the absolute value of the importance score of the nuclear year counter, meaning that they are all important. **Controlling for democratic peace, capitalist peace, and polarity**, the number of nuclear states is **still a significant predictor** in explaining a systemic propensity for interstate conflict. Figure 1 presents the partial dependence plots of the model.8 First, on average, a larger number of nuclear states is associated with a lower dispute–state ratio, although the changes from two nuclear states to three and from six to seven increase the ratio instead. Thus, **the relationship is empirically non-linear**, as Bueno de Mesquita and Riker (1982) and Intriligator and Brito (1981) expected in part. Overall, however, the optimist theory is supported, and the change from two nuclear states to nine nuclear states decreases the dispute–state ratio approximately from 0.228 to 0.18. This means that, if there are 194 states in the system (as there were in 2009), the number of militarized interstate dispute onsets per system-year decreases approximately from 44 to 35. **This is a substantively significant decline.** Second, the nuclear year counter shows a concave relationship with the dispute–state ratio, suggesting that new nuclear states are less prone to conflict than middle-aged nuclear states. Thus, **the pessimist theory finds no support** from either the variable importance estimation or the partial dependence plot. Finally, as for the control variables, the number of democratic states and the gross world product have a complex non-linear relationship with the dispute–state ratio, but if the number of democratic states and the **g**ross **w**orld **p**roduct are sufficiently large, they tend to decrease the dispute–state ratio. Their substantive effects are also significant, though **not as much as the number of nuclear states**. When comparing the effect of their lowest and highest

values (23 and 94 in the number of democratic states and 7 and 71.2 in the gross world product), the number of democratic states decreases the number of militarized interstate dispute onsets per system-year approximately from 40 to 37, and the gross world product from 44 to 37. Unipolarity is also associated with a decline in the dispute–state ratio, suggesting that unipolarity is better than bipolarity in terms of a systemic propensity for interstate conflict; **however, its effect is negligible**, as it reduces the number of militarized interstate dispute onsets per system-year from 39 to 38. One caveat is, as explained in the online appendix, that the results of the number of democratic states and unipolarity are significantly sensitive to a parameter setting. Thus, these predictors are less robust, and the aforementioned points about them should be treated with caution. Discussion and concluding remarks **The main findings reveal that the optimist expectation of the relationship between nuclear proliferation and interstate conflict is empirically supported**:9 first, a larger number of nuclear states on average decreases the systemic propensity for interstate conflict; and second, there is **no clear evidence** that the emergence of new nuclear states increases the systemic propensity for interstate conflict. Gartzke and Jo (2009) argue that nuclear weapons themselves have no exogenous effect on the probability of conflict, because when a state is engaged in or expects to engage in conflict, it may develop nuclear weapons to keep fighting, or to prepare for, that conflict. If this selection effect existed, the analysis should overestimate the conflict-provoking effect of nuclear proliferation in the above model. Still, the results indicate that a larger number of nuclear states are associated with fewer disputes in the system. This conclusion, however, raises questions about how to reconcile this study's findings with those of a recent quantitative dyadic-level study (**Bell and Miller**, 2015). The current paper finds that nuclear proliferation decreases the systemic propensity for interstate conflict, while Bell and Miller (2015) find that nuclear symmetry has no significant effect on dyadic conflict, but that nuclear asymmetry is associated with a higher probability of dyadic conflict. It is possible that nuclear proliferation decreases conflict through the conflict-mitigating effects of extended nuclear deterrence and/or fear of nuclear states' intervention, to the extent that these effects overwhelm the conflict-provoking effect of nuclear–asymmetrical dyads. Thus, **dyadic-level empirics cannot solely be relied on** to infer **causal links** between nuclear proliferation and a systemic propensity for conflict. The **systemic-level empirics deserve attention**.

Nuclear Power Plants

Modern conflicts show that nuclear power plants themselves will be turned into de facto radiological weapons or military leverage.

Rossi 23 [Melissa Rossi, "Could Nuclear Power Plants Become Radioactive Weapons?" Outrider Foundation, 6 February 2023, https://outrider.org/nuclear-weapons/articles/could-nuclear-power-plants-become-radioactive-weapons, accessed 20 November 2025]

Videos of Russian rockets striking Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia power plant — Europe's largest nuclear facility — had the world holding its breath when Vladimir Putin's forces took control of the area in March. The situation has become more treacherous, so much so that television's *60 Minutes* recently dubbed the Zaporizhzhia facility "The Most Dangerous Place in the World."

It is a chilling illustration that no international treaty prevents nuclear plants from becoming targets in wartime and that nuclear reactors can turn into radioactivity-spewing weapons themselves. The hazards of nuclear power plants during wartime have long been known and largely ignored. Bennett Ramberg, a former foreign affairs officer in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, literally wrote the book on the matter — *Nuclear Power Plants as Weapons for the Enemy,* published by the University of California Press in 1984.

He's been ringing the alarms ever since. Two weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine in February, Ramberg published an article predicting that Ukraine's 15 nuclear reactors would become targets, transforming into "radiological mines," he wrote. A year later, Ramberg said, "The war in Ukraine has exposed wartime risks like nothing else."

Impacts of bombing a nuclear power plant would be numerous

Mark 23 ["What Happens If a Nuclear Power Plant Is Bombed - a Sustainable Pathway to a Low-Carbon Future." *A Sustainable Pathway to a Low-Carbon Future*, 20 Dec. 2023, www.the-weinberg-foundation.org/what-happens-if-a-nuclear-power-plant-is-bombed/. Accessed 1 Dec. 2025. // Isegora]

If a nuclear power plant is bombed, the immediate impact is the destruction and release of radioactive materials. This leads to environmental contamination and the spread of radiation. Both short-term and long-term health risks arise, affecting human well-being. Evacuation and emergency response are crucial to ensure public safety. The economic consequences are significant, disrupting infrastructure and industry. Moreover, the international community faces security concerns, as this event has implications for global nuclear policy. Learn more about the devastating effects of a nuclear power plant bombing in this article. Immediate Impact: Destruction and Release of Radioactive Materials If a nuclear power plant is bombed, the immediate impact will be the catastrophic destruction and release of highly dangerous radioactive materials. The explosion will cause extensive damage to the infrastructure of the plant, leading to the release of radioactive substances into the environment. This release of radiation poses a significant threat to human health and the surrounding ecosystem. Reconstruction efforts following such an event would be of utmost importance. The affected area would require a massive cleanup and containment operation to minimize further harm. This would involve the removal and disposal of contaminated materials, decontamination of the surrounding environment, and the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of radiation. The psychological impact of a nuclear power plant bombing cannot be underestimated. The fear and anxiety caused by such an event would be widespread and long-lasting. Communities living near the plant would experience heightened levels of stress and trauma, leading to mental health issues. Rebuilding trust and providing support to those affected would be crucial in the recovery process. Environmental Contamination: Spread of Radiation One of the major consequences of a nuclear power plant bombing is the widespread contamination of the environment with radioactive materials. The release of these materials into the atmosphere can lead to their dispersion over large areas, posing significant risks to human health and the environment. To assess the extent of contamination, radiation monitoring is crucial. Monitoring stations are strategically placed to measure radiation levels and detect any potential hotspots. This information helps authorities determine the areas that require immediate attention for decontamination. Decontamination procedures are essential to minimize the long-term effects of radiation exposure. These procedures involve the removal and disposal of contaminated materials, such as soil, vegetation, and water. Decontamination efforts aim to reduce radiation levels to acceptable limits and prevent further spread of contamination. Strict protocols are followed to ensure the safety of workers involved in the decontamination process. Additionally, decontamination measures also include the cleaning of structures, equipment, and infrastructure within the affected area. This helps reduce the potential for ongoing contamination through contact with contaminated surfaces. It is crucial to

understand that environmental contamination resulting from a nuclear power plant bombing can have long-lasting effects. Therefore, prompt and effective radiation monitoring and decontamination measures are vital to minimize the risks posed by the spread of radiation and protect both human health and the environment. Health Risks: Short-term and Long-term Effects on Human Health You will experience both short-term and long-term health effects if a nuclear power plant is bombed. The release of radiation from the explosion can have immediate and lasting impacts on your well-being. Here are three key points to consider: Short-term symptoms: Immediately after the bombing, you may experience symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and skin burns. These symptoms are a result of the high doses of radiation exposure. Additionally, you may also suffer from fatigue, dizziness, and loss of appetite. It is crucial to seek medical attention promptly to mitigate the effects of radiation. Long-term diseases: Exposure to radiation from a nuclear power plant bombing can lead to the development of serious long-term diseases. Cancer is one of the most significant risks, with an increased likelihood of developing various types, including leukemia, thyroid cancer, and lung cancer. Other potential long-term diseases include cardiovascular disorders, genetic mutations, and reproductive issues. Psychological impact: Apart from the physical health consequences, the psychological impact of a nuclear power plant bombing can be severe. The fear and anxiety of developing radiation-related illnesses may lead to long-term mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. It is vital to prioritize safety measures, evacuation, and immediate medical assistance in the event of a nuclear power plant bombing to minimize both short-term symptoms and long-term diseases associated with radiation exposure. Evacuation and Emergency Response: Ensuring Public Safety To ensure public safety in the event of a nuclear power plant bombing, prompt evacuation and efficient emergency response are crucial. Evacuation protocols are designed to swiftly move people out of harm's way and minimize exposure to radiation. These protocols typically involve the establishment of designated evacuation routes and shelters, where individuals can seek protection and receive necessary medical attention if needed. Emergency preparedness plays a significant role in ensuring a swift and effective response to a nuclear power plant bombing. This includes having well-trained emergency response teams in place, equipped with the necessary resources and knowledge to handle the situation. Additionally, communication systems must be established to disseminate timely and accurate information to the public, enabling them to make informed decisions regarding their safety. Evacuation drills and exercises are conducted regularly to test the efficiency of evacuation protocols and identify any areas for improvement. These drills help familiarize the public with the evacuation process and ensure a smooth and organized response in the event of an actual emergency. Economic Consequences: Disruption of Infrastructure and Industry Prompt evacuation and efficient emergency response in the event of a nuclear power plant bombing can result in significant economic consequences, such as the disruption of infrastructure and industry. The disruption of supply chains and the subsequent impact on industries can lead to an economic recession. Here are three ways in which a nuclear power plant bombing can disrupt infrastructure and industry: Disruption of transportation networks: A nuclear power plant bombing can damage roads, bridges, and railways, making it difficult to

transport goods and materials. This can result in delays and increased costs for businesses, affecting their operations and profitability. Damage to critical infrastructure: Nuclear power plants are typically located near water sources for cooling purposes. A bombing can contaminate these water sources, making them unusable for industrial purposes. This can disrupt the operations of industries that rely on water, such as manufacturing and agriculture. Loss of power supply: A nuclear power plant bombing can lead to a loss of electricity supply in the surrounding area. This can disrupt the operations of industries that depend on a reliable power supply, such as manufacturing, data centers, and healthcare facilities. The disruption of infrastructure and industry caused by a nuclear power plant bombing can have far-reaching economic consequences. It is crucial for governments and businesses to have contingency plans in place to mitigate these risks and ensure a swift recovery.International Security Concerns: Implications for Global Nuclear PolicyHighlighting the international security concerns surrounding a nuclear power plant bombing, implications for global nuclear policy become a pressing matter. The potential devastation caused by such an attack raises questions about the adequacy of current measures in place to prevent and respond to such incidents. The international community must prioritize global cooperation and diplomatic negotiations to address these concerns effectively.In the wake of a nuclear power plant bombing, the implications for global nuclear policy are far-reaching. The incident highlights the need for robust international cooperation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities worldwide. It becomes crucial to strengthen existing frameworks such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to deter potential threats and enhance the overall security architecture.Diplomatic negotiations play a pivotal role in addressing international security concerns related to nuclear power plant bombings. Countries must engage in dialogues to foster trust, promote transparency, and establish mechanisms for sharing information and intelligence. This includes enhancing cooperation in intelligence gathering, threat assessment, and response coordination. Additionally, diplomatic efforts should focus on strengthening non-proliferation regimes, including the negotiation of new agreements and the enforcement of existing ones.

Civilian nuclear power plants provide reliable low-carbon electricity and substantial economic benefits, making them central to modern economies.

IEA 24 [International Energy Agency, "Nuclear Power," Electricity Tracking, 2024, https://www.iea.org/energy-system/electricity/nuclear-power, accessed 20 November 2025]

What is the role of nuclear power in clean energy transitions? Nuclear power accounts for about 10% of electricity generation globally, rising to almost 20% in advanced economies. It has historically been one of the largest global contributors of carbon-free electricity and while it faces challenges in some countries, it has significant potential to contribute to power sector decarbonisation. Why does it matter to energy security? Nuclear power plants contribute to electricity security in multiple ways by keeping power grids stable and complementing decarbonisation strategies since, to a certain extent, they can adjust their output to accompany shifts in demand and supply. As the share of variable renewables like wind and solar photovoltaics (PV) rises, the need for such services will increase.