# DOES THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS MAKE THE WORLD SAFER OR MORE DANGEROUS?

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## Introduction

How does the spread of nuclear2weapons make the2world a safer or more dangerous place? This essay presents both for and against arguments for nuclear weapons (nuclear peace2hypothesis, otherwise2known as the nuclear2deterrence theory). It will incorporate insights from a variety of academic articles to discuss the nuclear weapon conundrum. Although nuclear weapons do create a nuclear peace in some cases, promoting strategic stabilization and preventing catastrophic conflicts, they also facilitate for more recurrent, lower-intensity confrontations in others. Assertions and standpoints from deterrence optimists, pessimists, and on-the-edge experts will be covered, along with particular instances and research papers, notably from the Cold War (Trauschweizer, 2019, p. 37-67).

The era of nuclear weapons began on2July 16, 1945, when Trinity, the code2name for the initial nuclear weapon, was detonated. Two atomic bombs were unleashed on Japan2three weeks afterwards, precipitating the end of2World War II. For fewer than five years, the United States preserved its new role as the solitary nuclear powerhouse. The first nuclear test to be tested outside of USA territory was performed by the Soviet Union in 1949, kicking off the nuclear arms competition (Bellany, 2013, p. 23-38). In the decades afterwards, both the US and2the USSR have explored, produced, and tested heavier atomic weapons, such as the hydrogen bomb2in 1952, as well as a variety of delivery systems. The first Intercontinental2Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) were tested in the late 1950s. Both nations now acquired enough armaments and launch mechanisms to ensure mutually assured2destruction (MAD) (Foertsch, 2020, p. 175-186). To achieve this task, the US used a strategic triangle of bombers, land-based bombs, and sea-based2missiles on nuclear subs. It wasn't until each faction had accumulated adequate weaponry to inflict a terrifying amount of annihilation that these countries decided "this is enough" and sought new routes to stop the arms rivalry. Several bilateral and2multilateral accords were signed in the21960s and21970s to hold nuclear weapons under restraint and decrease their apocalyptic capability (Foertsch, 2020, p. 175-186).

## Nuclear Peace Hypothesis

The Nuclear2Peace Theory is a foreign affairs concept that contends2that the possession of nuclear weapons promotes2stability and reduces the2likelihood of significant confrontation in certain situations. The absence2of a third2war after the second2was attributed to nuclear tranquility throughout the Cold War. The mutual ownership2of second strike reprisal by the2two superpowers in that conflict, the United States and2the Soviet Union, was considered to have prompted this, as Mutually Assured2Destruction, or the MAD2doctrine, removed the chance of triumph for either party (Lieber & Press, 2016, p.31). The potential to launch a second strike is critical to nuclear2deterrence, as the adversary could try to win2the war by attacking first. Mutual second-strike capacities usually result in a mutually assured2destruction security plan, however one nation may have a lower minimum deterrent policy.

When a country only has what it takes to respond to a second strike, it is said to have lower minimal2deterrence (Long & Green, 2014, p.38-73). Throughout the Cold War, while the US and2the USSR were amassing significant first and2second-strike capabilities, China and India adopted this policy (Jones, 2001). Researchers dispute the Nuclear Peace2Hypothesis because national proliferation raises the risk of low-intensity intergovernmental warfare, as well as the risk of nuclear material2being obtained by terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda, who are immune from nuclear reprisal since they are sovereign (Sagan S., 1994, p.66).

## Proliferation optimists and pessimists

The optimist and2pessimist schools of thinking for a nuclear future exist. Pessimists’ doubt that the stability attained between the two giants nations can be repeated amongst all2the other countries, each with their own set of values, territorial disputes, and political situations. The stability of the2Cold War was dependent on a variety of circumstances, and continuous proliferation will inevitably lead to nuclear confrontation. Optimists, on the other hand, maintain that the existential danger of nuclear2weapons forces governments to exercise enormous caution when confronted with even tiny nuclear risks. Countries are being discouraged from taking activities that could enhance the likelihood of nuclear catastrophe because they are afraid of a nuclear war (Keohane, 2015, p.94).

Why, in the last 60 years, have there2been no significant warfare between the superpowers? On this subject, the three prominent concepts in IR have each provided their own responses and perspectives. The term "neoliberalism" is frequently used. Neo liberals have proposed that the cornerstone of this stability be constructed on democratization (Moaz & Russet, 1993, p.624), trade, and intergovernmental groups, based on Kant's perpetual peace concept (1795) (Rauchhaus, 2009, p.258). The constructivist viewpoint is similar to that of2 (neo) liberals, but it attributes the Long Peace2to social constructions such as acceptable behavior and behaviors inside a government and society. The third main hypothesis, Neorealism, takes an entirely opposite approach, crediting peace to nuclear deterrence2and bipolarity (Seepersad, 2011) (Waltz, 1990, p.730). Despite the fact that nuclear deterrence2is one of the most important aspects of realist thinking for Long Peace, minimal study has been undertaken to prove why it works. The majority of the research has concentrated on nuclear2weapons and emergencies, or nuclear2weapons and warfare intensification (Rauchhaus, 2009, p.258).

There is no2disagreement regarding whether nuclear2weapons reduce the2likelihood of conflict since when2both countries have nuclear weapons, the likelihood2of a large war is2reduced. What hasn't been generally addressed is that they don't reduce2the likelihood of domestic, peripheral, and2small warfare, which nonetheless results in2the destruction of riches, assets, and people (Jervis, 1989, p. 183).

Waltz, a nuclear2optimist, says that "the controlled expansion of nuclear weapons is2more to be desired than dreaded," according to Waltz (1990, p.730-745). He believes that a slow proliferation of these weapons will prevent war by encouraging prudence among nuclear adversaries. The Nuclear2Deterrence Theory, according to John Lewis2Gaddis (1992), is the basis why there hasn't been a third world war, notwithstanding the second war followed the first within2twenty years and the2Cold War succeeding afterwards (GADDIS, 1992, p. 234-246). There hasn't been a large-scale2global conflict since the onset of the nuclear2age in 1945 and the quick end of World2War II. Regional conflicts have erupted during this period: Korea, Vietnam, the2five-year battle in the former2Yugoslavia, and the 1969 confrontation involving China and the USSR all illustrate that wars still exist, but the globe itself has gotten more peaceful since it has grown more intertwined. This was dubbed the "Long Peace" by John2Lewis Gaddis, who claimed it was mostly owing to nuclear2deterrence (Gaddis, 1986, p. 99). Since nuclear weapons2are completely destructive, even the most inept governments can see that utilizing them would be detrimental2to everyone concerned, and hence there are no2conflicts.

Ward Wilson disputes with Gaddis' notion, comparing the concept of nuclear deterrence dependent only on the rarity of a massive war as the basis of peace . Exhaustion and preoccupation; deeper economic relationships; partnerships; and treaty obligations and agencies are among the numerous other possible sociological and economic factors for the globe's rising stability, according to Wilson (Keohane & Nye, 2001).

"Nuclear dyads greatly minimize dispute aggravation amongst nations in respect to level of hostility," according to James Pasley's research on dispute between2nuclear dyads. This is most usually related to symmetrical partnerships encouraging utmost caution and both sides choosing to pursue friction de-escalation (Pasley, 2010, p. 81-98). Is this calm maintained when the opponents' nuclear capabilities are unstable? It does not, according to the same analysis. Because the non-nuclear state only has military equipment materials, the conflict between2asymmetric enemies are significantly reduced. As a result, the usefulness of nuclear2deterrence may be diminished since non-nuclear countries may believe that as long as restricted purposes are sought, nuclear powers are reluctant to retaliate with nuclear2weapons for fear of global uproar. It has been said that one2of the reasons for Argentina's occupation of the Falkland2Islands was that the Regime did not anticipate UK to engage militarily, and2if they did, it could be in a minimal way (Pasley, 2010, p. 81-98).

Proliferation skeptics are defined as people who hold opposing viewpoints. They do not disagree that nuclear deterrence reduces the likelihood of huge wars, but safety, logical, and ethical skeptics argue that the deterrent benefit surpasses the threat of war. Nuclearizing regimes, such as those in South Asia, are widely believed to risk unintended confrontation or additional spread on volatile countries (Sagan S., 1994, p.66).

Safety skeptics including Scott Sagan (1995) say that the risk of nuclear weapons slipping into the clutches of terrorist borderless organizations or being accidentally detonated or traded during the battle is too great, and hence outweighs the positive prospect of them preventing WWIII (Sagan S. D., 1995). Nuclear terrorism is still a major threat around the world. In an April22009 address in Prague, President2Obama claimed that terrorists obtaining and using these weaponry is "the most urgent and serious menace to global security." The United States is greatly worried since Al Qaeda has already sought to obtain comparable material and skills. Prior the 9/11 attacks, the son of a2Pakistani nuclear expert told a News Conference that his father had spoken with Osama Bin2Laden on several instances. The topic of these meetings was "building nuclear weapons." Several US records from the time period reveal that Al Qaeda2was in talks to buy several "nuclear explosives" in 2002-2003. Al Qaeda's hierarchy, according to intelligence, was granted the option to acquire these weapons after a Pakistani specialist certified their authenticity. (Sagan S., 1994, p.66).

There have been incidents of components being hijacked, along with terrorist groups attempting to obtain full devices. There have2been several examples of plutonium or hyper enhanced uranium (HEU) getting reported stolen, according to assessments from the2International Atomic2Energy Agency (IAEA). The detection of 100 grams2of enriched2HEU – enriched to289 percent – available for sale to2an intelligence agent in Georgia2in 2006 was one example (Wendt, 1995, p. 129-177). The Russian citizen who offered the specimen said he had two2to three kg more. The IAEA documented 243 occurrences of nuclear property disappearing or being unlawfully transported during the course of a year, from2June 2007 to June 2008. These findings show that terrorist groups have been making concerted attempts to seek nuclear equipment or gadgets for deployment by them. Agreements and sanctions may promote international collaboration and deterrence, but they are ineffectual against non-state entities (Wendt, 1995, p. 129-177). But if the risk is not detonated, there is a substantial risk of global chaos if a terrorist group obtains it. The persistent danger of a future nuclear explosion would have catastrophic effects and might create tension and extreme insecurity, as terrorists' goal is to induce fear (Wendt, 1995, p. 129-177).

John Mueller2is one of the researchers who is widely regarded as being hostile to the nuclear2peace hypothesis; yet, a close examination of his writings reveals that he has never claimed that nuclear weaponry do not assist maintain the present ceasefire. He attributes the absence of World War2III and the reason of the Long Peace to schooling, evolving customs, and interconnectedness (amongst countries), and he maintains that, notwithstanding nuclear2weapons, WWIII might not have occurred, though he does not dispute that they aided negotiate peace (Mueller, 1988, p.55).

As the readers may have gathered already, and as the readers will learn by the conclusion of this paper, nuclear stability is not2a simple issue, and as we proceed, both pessimists and optimists2will have portions of their assertions proven. As we have already established proliferation2optimists, the ownership of nuclear weapons by both governments reduces the likelihood of a massive war, as Snyder's investigation on the2stability-instability conundrum suggests (Larivé, 2016).Pessimists, on the2other hand, can support the2majority of2their statements2in the following2paragraphs, since if2there is2an inequality, with one nation boasting and the other lacking, the probability of conflict2increases. The prospect of using the US nuclear weaponry is seen as a farce by pessimists. This hypothesis2is founded on conventional2thinking.

In a traditional world, governments may invade one another if they believe they would succeed. In a nuclear-armed universe, however, nations will only strike if they know they will win. The threat of retribution is what keeps the2aggressor from acting (Rajaraman, 2013, p. 133-152). As a result, it generates an2all-or-nothing scenario in which nations are unwilling to strike if their victory is uncertain. This nuclear deterrence is also valid for smaller or less powerful nuclear-armed powers. Because their traditional troops may be destroyed so fast in these scenarios, nuclear2deterrence is significantly more realistic. They are more likely to deploy their nuclear armament to safeguard their existence, heightening the threat to potential adversaries (Rajaraman, 2013, p. 133-152).

The concept that the USA will never deploy nuclear weapons in response to a strike, catastrophic or not, is simply a concept, according to skeptics of conventional2thinking. The fact that the circumstances have not yet arisen to cause the USA to react in this manner does not rule out the possibility. Nuclear thinking differs from2conventional thinking because of the mystery and uncertainties. Only perfect assurance in a truly effective strike would be enough to override the nuclear aversion that prevents all other possibilities (Rotblat, 2020, p. 373).

Furthermore, when takenas a whole, the ownership or development of nuclear weapons is linked to greater confrontation, fatalities, and collisions, but at2a lesser degree. This backs with Snyder's earlier cited2stability-instability paradigm, which shows a connection among nuclear apparent calm and rising low-intensity hostilities, this is backed by2Rauchhaus' Nuclear2Peace Hypothesis *(*Rauchhaus, 2009, p.258).

Neither pessimistic nor2optimistic of proliferation, there is a bunch of academics who presume2that nuclear weapons2inclined to enhance peace2between nations that both2have Nuclear Weapons, but do2not bring about2peace overall. The stability instability2paradox (Krepon,) is an international affairs thesis that two governments2recognize that if they2had a massive war amongst them, it would be2the previously2described Mutually Assured2Destruction (MAD). Nevertheless, because each nation is conscious that the opponent is informed of this, and since there is an unstated aggravating barrier that no country will cross, the collaborative accord result in smaller conflicts, military conflicts, or border conflicts, with none of these battles escalating to nuclear weapons (Foertsch, 2020, p. 175-186).  Throughout the Cold2War, for instance, the squabbling powers (the United2States and the Soviet2Union) never engrossed directly in armed conflict, but instead engaged implicitly via proxy and2minor military conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and2Afghanistan, among2other places, and spent vast amounts of assets and workforce to reclaim the dominant position (Foertsch, 2020, p. 175-186).

Support of2stability instability2paradox theory was2seen in Robert2Rauchhaus’s quantitative study in22009, *Evaluating the*2*Nuclear Peace*2*Hypothesis,*which builds2on the dyadically analyzed2Democratic Peace Theory, and includescontrols to search for2nuclear only inclusive2conflicts (Rauchhaus, 2009, p.258). Working in symmetrical2and asymmetrical variables (asymmetrical being2one state has2nuclear weapons, and the other2being symmetrical) he includes2regression analysis that2controls the study2for nuclear weapons only, so the2results only show2conflicts between2states that include2nuclear weapons.

His findings are intriguing, as they reveal that nuclear weaponry are linked to an upsurge in all sorts of confrontation, including armed, oppressive force, and deaths among all nations, as well as war amongst asymmetric dyads (one state possessing2nuclear weapons2and the other2not). Whilst the findings show that nuclear weapons create friction, they also show that there are no outright battles between nuclear-weapons-wielding nations, though there2is a high likelihood of slight or indirect confrontations. The relationship between2MAD and the2stability instability enigma is based on the notion that as a result of this2truce-like conduct, players will become reasonable and adapt that reason to how they handle disputes, with the ultimate objective of avoiding nuclear weapons and therefore catastrophe (Foertsch, 2020, p. 175-186). Though reasonable, this may not be the situation in foreign politics, as some countries may believe that life beyond mortality is a huge upgrade over life as we know it, and will try to facilitate a quick transfer to the 'afterlife.' This would make perfect sense to them, but2not to numerous other countries with a majority of atheists (Harris, 2005).

Nuclear weapons have expanded to a few more nations following the initial military utilization atomic weapons2on Japan in21945. Nuclear weapons2have never been utilized in the United States in 69 years. Kenneth Waltz analyzes nuclear nations' increased caution and the deterrent impact nuclear weapons2have on violence in his article The Spread of Nuclear2Weapons: More May2Be Better. He claims that as deterrence and defensive forces improve, "the risk of war reduces" (Waltz, 1990, p.730-745). A nuclear globe is manageable, regardless of the number of nations, if those countries can transmit credible deterrent messages." Nuclear-armed adversaries are more careful in their interactions with one2another.

As per Saull (2012, p.221), the Kennedy Presidency was faced with a prior regime's strategy of nuclear2deterrence as the capability to undertake a first launch nuclear counterforce2attack on a Soviet2conventional attack into2Western Europe when it took office in January 1961. According to a source, the "counterforce approach was considered useless since even a very devastating first attack by the United States would not stop the Soviet retaliation assault from destroying over 602million Americans." As a result, the US administration began to pursue a nuclear deterrent strategy centered on a feasible second attack to inflict excessively large losses on the Soviet2Union (Saull, 2012, p. 221).

Throughout the Cuban Missile2Crisis in October 1962, the government deliberated whether or not to target Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba with military equipment first. Those in favor of the pre-emptive2attack believed it would demonstrate might, and that any retaliation would be limited to missiles stationed in Turkey or Berlin. However, the Sec2of State, National Defense Council, and Head of state all opposed the2preemptive attack, believing the risk of escalating was too great (Garthoff, 1992, p. 41-53).

Earlier in the Korean War, a resolution was reached to restrict the employment of nuclear weapons. Initially envisioned as a way to counter marauding Chinese strikes, it was determined that there were no objectives in Korea that2could not be hit with traditional ammunition, and that using nuclear2weapons targeting Chinese or Soviet facilities could spark a third world war (Foertsch, 2020, p. 175-186). In some cases, the United States aided in the spread of nuclear weaponry. Even after the NPT was signed, President Carter permitted the shipping of nuclear material to India, disregarding India's reluctance to adopt all of the terms of the2treaty precautions. "We must do everything we realistically can to support peace in the region and to improve our connections with Governments there, especially those who can have major part in curbing Soviet influence," he said in his plea to Congress not to challenge his move (Bellany, 2013, p. 23-38).

Iran's quest of the nuclear arsenal, according to Waltz (1990, p.730-745), is a sign of the Middle East's continuous effort to regain the power structure that was squandered in the 1960s when Israelis emerged as a nuclear country. There is no other place in the world where an unconstrained nuclear power wields such dominance. While the United States may be used as an instance, it is challenged by countries that can strike the US territory, such as the Soviet Union and China. Counter to the claims of journalists and politicians, who stress that a nuclear-armed Iran would be fast to use its weapons or back a terrorist outfit in a nuclear assault, First, Waltz contends that the Iranian administration is not2irrational, and that, like other reasonable regimes that have shown prudence after attaining nuclear status, Iran will follow suite. Their goal is to ensure their own safety (Waltz, 1990, p.730-745). Iran reportedly vowed to close the Strait2of Hormuz in response to new restrictions. Despite being bombastic in their threatening, they did2not carry them out, most likely because they assumed the US will retaliate quickly and decisively.

The nonproliferation2treaty (NPT) and how Nonnuclear2Weapon States (NNWS) are offered safety and nuclear deterrence through proxy examine prolonged deterrence. Many international treaties have stretched a "security2umbrella" from2the Nuclear Weapon2State (NWS) to the2NNWS as an extra reason against building their independent core nuclear capabilities, despite the fact that this is not contained in the NPT. In the2Quadrennial Defense Review of22001, the US said that ongoing funding was a strategic political objective (Lanoszka, 2018, p. 110-131). It proclaimed that:

*“The country will keep its promises and be a trustworthy security ally. Its readiness to employ violence in its own protection and those of others, as well as to accomplish mutual objectives, exemplifies its readiness to utilize aggression.”*

This extended deterrence, that involves the placement of nuclear weapons in overseas nations, accomplishes a range of objectives. Nuclear deterrence2in South Korea:...protects South Korea and2Japan from nuclear assault, disincentives nuclear armaments advancement, convinces their politicians that the US will2not "disentangle" its troops from the geographical area, demotivates DPRK [Democratic People's2Republic of Korea] nuclear alliances with third2parties, oblige the DPRK to revert back to nuclear disarmament discussions, and bolsters US power2projection functionality (Lanoszka, 2018, p. 110-131).

If this "nuclear2umbrella" is jeopardized due to haphazard denuclearization, it could have unexpected repercussions (Tanter & Hayes, 2011, p. 5-21). The assumption that US progress towards denuclearization will result in nonproliferation achievement is a myth, according to Keith Payne, a security expert and senior head of the2George W. Bush government. The US nuclear weapons, on the other hand, have been the solitary single significant instrument for nonproliferation in memory, and eliminating it could be a major loss. The possible consequences could be2that as the nuclear2umbrella disappears, those countries that have2been covered will forfeit the protection that it provides (Tanter & Hayes, 2011, p. 5-21). As a result, they may begin developing their independent nuclear arsenal in response to any existential danger, territorial or worldwide, that nation may face. Owing to the devastating potential of proliferation, nuclear deterrence sustains the status quo and prevents war in various ways. Concerns of international terrorism must now be viewed from a new perspective (Roehrig, 2017, p. 651).

## Conclusion

Nuclear weapons have evolved from apocalyptic armaments to a means of reassuring, deterrent, and diplomacy. For a long period of time, nuclear2weapons have been considered2as either a positive or an evil entity, but the actuality is that, as the debate above shows, nuclear weaponry are a very complicated and2bipolar subject. While they promote a2kind of peaceful ceasefire2between nations with nuclear missiles in the2event of large2warfare, there has2been a demonstrated upsurge in lesser hostilities2between those2governments, so can this be called peace? Do2smaller warfare losses contribute towards the2cease-fire, or are they2ignored in relation to the harm that nuclear2bombardment might2cause? In2contrast, if there2is an imbalance, there is a high risk of conflict and catastrophe from the2nuclear-weapons-wielding2side. The stability instability2paradox has been described and validated when these concepts are merged.

This essay has proved my conviction that, while2nuclear weapons avert2big warfare, they do not bring peace in2the traditional understanding, as the2peace depicted is more2of a tense and tenuous2cease-fire pact, with several smaller but2still harmful wars continuing. If this form2of truce could truly be called2peace, it'd be a2peace driven by terror, suspicion, and resentment, which isn't truly peace at2all.

It would be fascinating to see further research into the relationship between nuclear weapons and peace. It would be fascinating to investigate the possible consequences of governments attempting to obtain nuclear weapons, as well as the likelihood of their opponents (or other interested countries) engaging in conflict with them to avoid this. To put it another way, if the2proliferation procedure inherently has the potential to exacerbate violence. A modern example scenario would be Iran's attempt to gain accessibility to nuclear2weapons, as well as the United States' unfavorable reaction. Another intriguing option a study may take is to speculate on what2would happen if nuclear2weapons were prohibited, and if mankind would design a new nightmare in the shape of DNA-based microbial armaments?

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