

## 9. Nuclear Risk Anywhere is a Challenge to Peace Everywhere.

### Outline

#### 1- Introduction

~~Thesis statement~~ Nuclear weapons, despite being touted as an effective deterrent against enemy attacks, pose a grave threat to humanity as a whole. In order to ensure a safe future for all, nuclear states need to take positive steps towards achieving nuclear disarmament.

#### 2. Overview of the topic

#### 3. The global security situation and the significance of nuclear weapons

i- Realist approach towards state security

ii- Bloc politics and the nuclear arms race

iii- Nuclear threat in the Ukraine - Russia war

iv- Nuclear weapons as a deterrent for developing nations

v- Second strike capabilities and Mutually Assured Destruction

#### 4. An increase in nuclear threats on multiple fronts

i- Rivalry between Russia and the United States and their race for nuclear hegemony

ii- The nuclear question between Israel and Iran

iii- India and Pakistan as a potential



## Flashpoint

nuclear flashpoint

iv. A significant increase in China's nuclear spending

v. Inability of international treaties and agencies to achieve nuclear disarmament

## 5. Steps to be taken for minimizing nuclear threats

i. Promoting the significance of bilateral agreements between nuclear states

ii. Resolving the nuclear issue in the middle east through a comprehensive nuclear deal

iii. Neutralizing the nuclear flashpoint between India and Pakistan by resolving the Kashmir issue

iv. Keeping emerging powers from treading the aggressive nuclear path

v. Strengthening international treaties and making them binding on all states

vi. Depoliticizing international monitoring agencies and making them transparent

## 6. Conclusion



During the tenth review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) the United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, "Humanity is one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation." The current global security situation is marked by divisivity and distrust while disarmament ~~and~~ is kept on the back-burner. Realist approach towards security is on the rise globally along with a resurgence of bloc politics, speeding up the arms race. The ongoing war in Ukraine has unveiled major rifts in the global structure for keeping nuclear threats in check. The developing world still perceives nuclear weapons as an effective deterrent in the anarchic security structure. There has been a significant increase in nuclear threats globally in the form of states increasing their nuclear finding to achieve nuclear hegemony. The middle eastern and the South Asian regions are highly vulnerable to nuclear politics and nuclear threats. China has almost doubled the size of its nuclear arsenal. International treaties and agencies, despite keeping a check on nuclear proliferation, have so far failed to achieve nuclear disarmament. Bilateral agreements and foot foot fool proof nuclear deals, however, can



help improve the nuclear situation. Moreover, resolving the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan and convincing emerging global powers against treading the nuclear path can be of significance in minimizing nuclear threats. The international treaties need to be strengthened by making them binding in nature. Monitoring bodies also ~~are~~ need to be made more transparent in their working and neutral towards every state. Nuclear weapons, despite being touted as an effective deterrent against enemy attacks, pose a grave threat to humanity as a whole. In order to ensure a safe future for all, nuclear states need to take positive steps towards achieving nuclear disarmament.

An increasing dependence of states on nuclear weapons to secure their position in the global arena has kicked off a nuclear arms race. States are now acquiring second strike capabilities which would allow them to strike back at their enemies in case of a nuclear attack by an adversary, resulting in mutually assured destruction (MAD). This phenomenon of second strike capability and MAD is essentially what makes nuclear weapons an effective deterrent. A nuclear attack threatens to wipe



the humanity out which is why proponents say there has been no major global war since nuclear weapons were added to the equation. Even the peaceful use of nuclear power has its risks in case of a power plant malfunction or spillage of its nuclear waste into rivers. No matter how high the risk, nations having a realist approach towards security consider acquisition of nuclear weapons a matter of national pride and a guarantor of security internationally.

Over the past few decades, there has been a significant rise in a realist approach towards security whereby states compete in an arms race to ensure their security. The Asian region is home to nuclear powers like India, Pakistan, China and Israel. Iran is also believed to be pursuing its own nuclear program. The Asian region is riddled in territorial and border disputes where regionalism is at its lowest. In such a situation, nuclear arms are considered an effective tool for deterring an enemy from encroaching territory or launching an attack.

With a rise in realist approach to international relations and security, there is also a rise in bloc politics. The world is once again being pushed towards forming groups



and alliances. The emerging Powers are challenging the Western led global rules-based order. The United States (US) and European States are fighting tooth and nail to perpetuate their significance in international relations. Nuclear weapons are an important part of the equation. The US, the United Kingdom (UK), and France are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and are allowed under the NPT to keep nuclear arms along with China and Russia. The war in Ukraine has brought rival blocs confronting each other. This has resulted in an increase of the nuclear threat.

The recent war in Ukraine started by Russia in February of 2022 has escalated the nuclear arms race. The nuclear threat is significantly high. Russia has constantly threatened Ukraine by a possible use of nuclear weapons by deploying them near Ukrainian borders. The struggle for control for controlling the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear power plant posed a grave nuclear threat with far reaching consequences in case of an attack. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led by the US is also a nuclear armed. The risk for a nuclear war has never been



higher, than they are in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, since the end of the cold war in 1991.

Moreover, developing nations are struggling to secure their positions in the current state of affairs. Nuclear weapons, to them, seem a viable option for ensuring national security. The middle eastern region can serve as an example where Israel has acquired nuclear weapons but is doing everything it can to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear power as it would jeopardize Israel's regional hegemony. Iran, however, is surrounded by a hostile neighborhood amid Western sanctions. Acquiring a nuclear weapon would improve Iran's security situation by deterring its enemies from attacking. Similarly, Pakistan acquired nuclear weapons after India became a nuclear power in order to secure its position vis a vis Indian aggression.

After having acquired nuclear weapons, nuclear states are now devising ways to strengthen their second strike capabilities which would allow them to strike back at an enemy state in case of a first strike. Nuclear submarines, missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads and other such technologies are being used by states to strengthen their second strike



capabilities. After Russia, the US and China, India is on its way towards acquiring hypersonic missiles capable of carrying conventional as well as nuclear weapons. This in turn has jeopardized the security situation of Pakistan. In this way, the world is tangled in a never ending arms race increasing the risks of nuclear threats manifold.

In recent years there have been multiple manifestations of the threat nuclear arms pose to the world of which the war in Ukraine has been the most significant one. As witnessed in the Cold War era, the US and Russia are in a constant struggle for achieving nuclear hegemony. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Russia possesses 5,889 nuclear warheads and the US possesses 5,244 nuclear warheads. Both these countries possess 90 percent of all nuclear weapons. The rivalry between these two states poses a grave nuclear threat by perpetuating the global arms race.

In the middle-eastern region, the rivalry between Iran and Israel is playing out on the nuclear front. Israel is lobbying against entering into any nuclear



deal with Iran after the American President Donald Trump left the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) reached with Iran for keeping a check on Iran's nuclear program. Iran, however, has assured the western powers that its nuclear program is peaceful multiple times but they remain skeptical of it. The middle east can prove another nuclear flashpoint threatening humanity as a whole.

Furthermore, the rivalry between India and Pakistan is also of concern when it comes to nuclear risks and threats. Neither Pakistan nor India is a signatory of the the NPT signed in 1968. The west has time and again questioned the nuclear program of Pakistan and its security against falling into the hands of terrorist groups. As per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) India possesses 164 nuclear warheads while Pakistan possesses 170 of them. Any conflict between the two neighbors can potentially trigger a nuclear war of global outreach.

With the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, China has experienced a significant growth in its economic, military and diplomatic power. China is expanding its nuclear arsenal at



a fast pace. As per the SIPRI's estimates for 2023, China's nuclear warheads arsenal expanded from 350 warheads in January 2022 to 410 warheads in January 2023. The global nuclear spending ~~stood at~~ ~~82.9 billion dollars in 2022~~ by 9 ~~countries~~ stood at 82.9 billion dollars in 2022 according to the "Wasted: 2022 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending" ~~report~~ data published by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICANW). This increasing importance of nuclear weapons in international relations is a major nuclear threat.

When it comes to the effectiveness of international ~~treaties~~ treaties and monitoring bodies on resolving nuclear issues, they have been somewhat successful in controlling horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons but have failed in bringing about disarmament. Israel, North Korea, India and Pakistan, despite being nuclear states remain out of the NPT. The International Atomic Energy Agency tasked with ensuring secure and peaceful use of nuclear technology is often denied access by non-cooperative states. In this way, nuclear threats remain at an all-time high.



In order to neutralize threats posed by nuclear weapons, there are certain steps which need to be taken. First and foremost, bilateral agreements between rival parties like India and Pakistan, Israel and Iran, Russia and the US should be reached to decrease tensions and the possibility of a nuclear confrontation. Disarmament should replace disunity.

Furthermore, a comprehensive new nuclear deal brokered by global powers like China and the US should be reached in the middle east for improving the nuclear situation in the region. A deal like the former JCPOA with Iran should be concluded as a confidence building measure. Nuclear weapons should be taken for what they are, weapons of destruction not of prestige.

In the South Asia, the Kashmir issue has led to three wars between India and Pakistan and several other armed skirmishes. The UNSC should play its role in resolving the Kashmir issue and treat it with seriousness as it can escalate to an all out nuclear war between India and Pakistan as a result of which the whole of humanity would suffer.



Another necessary step is minimizing the nuclear threat would be to convince emerging powers like the BRICS (China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar) and Iran from pursuing military power. According to SIPRI estimates, the global military spending was at an all time high of 2.2 trillion dollars in 2022 in the wake of the war in Ukraine. ~~For~~ ~~states~~ Nations need to focus more on spending on humanitarian efforts rather than military gains because as the Pope ~~has~~ laid in his 2019 Easter blessings, "The humanity needs bread, not bomb."

Moreover, international treaties must be strengthened and made binding. The NPT is a non-binding treaty where states act on voluntary basis. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) became the first legally binding international agreement to prohibit nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal of reaching complete disarmament. The TPNW entered into force on 22 January 2021. It must be ensured through international law that the treaty is implemented in letter and spirit.



Last but not the least, international monitoring bodies like the IAEA need to be depoliticized ~~and~~ depoliticized and made transparent. These monitoring bodies should be given access to all points of nuclear activity throughout the world under the international law. The monitoring bodies should work for every state without any bias. The IAEA was allowed to inspect the Zaporizhzhia Power Plant in Ukraine despite Russian control over the Plant which was quite a positive step for ensuring minimum nuclear threats.

The recent surge in tension in international relations has increased the importance of national security through hard means. Bloc politics and a nuclear arms race has multiplied the nuclear threat as witnessed in the Russia-Ukraine war. States are in a constant rush to outnumber their rivals in terms of nuclear capabilities. The Middle East and South Asia are volatile regions for nuclear conflicts. China has also increased its nuclear funding to be in a better position to counter its rivals. International treaties and agencies are still far from achieving



disarmament. Nuclear threats can be minimized through bilateral agreements, comprehensive nuclear deals, resolving contentious issues between rival parties. Strengthening international law and making monitoring bodies more powerful can help guide humanity towards a ~~sa~~ shared, safe and secure future. Nuclear weapons, despite being touted as an effective deterrent against enemy attacks, pose a grave threat to humanity, as a whole. In order to ensure a ~~sa~~ safe future for all, nuclear states need to take positive steps towards achieving nuclear disarmament.