

Sample Pro Case

We stand **PRO** on the resolution, “Resolved: States should eliminate their arsenals of nuclear weapons.” We support our case with the following **2** contentions.

Contention 1. Nuclear conflicts.

Nuclear weapons will inevitably be used; it’s not a question of “if,” but “when.” In fact, statistical analysis from economist Alex **Tabarrok**, citing the best expert predictions and model forecasts, shows that, “For a child born today [...] these probabilities [...] suggest that the chance of a nuclear war in their lifetime is nearly 60%.”¹ There are **3** warrants.

A. New technology. Professor Tyler **Cowen** writes, “There are [...] reasons particular to the present moment to be concerned about nuclear weapons. They are becoming easier and cheaper to build, and it is not implausible to think that nations such as Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia might get them in the next 20 years, to the detriment of regional stability. North Korea keeps adding to its stockpile of nuclear weapons and improving the quality of its delivery systems. Meanwhile, a generation of hypersonic delivery systems, being developed by China, Russia and the U.S., will shorten the response time available to political and military leaders to minutes. That raises the risk of a false signal turning into a decision to retaliate, or it may induce a nation to think that a successful first strike is possible.”²

B. Treaty breakdown, as Simon **Tisdall** notes, “even as the risk of nuclear confrontation grows, the cold war system of treaties that helped prevent Armageddon is being dismantled, largely at Trump’s behest. Earlier this month, the US withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Russia [...] The US is also signalling it will not renew the New Start strategic nuclear weapons treaty when it expires in 2021.”³

C. Regional tensions. Alex **Ward** explains that, “Last year, it seemed a nuclear conflict between the US and North Korea was on the horizon. India and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed enemies, could restart their decades-long squabble at any time. And the US and

¹ Alex Tabarrok (Bartley J. Madden Chair in Economics at the Mercatus Center and a professor of economics at George Mason University. Along with Tyler Cowen, he is the co-author of the popular economics blog Marginal Revolution and co-founder of Marginal Revolution University), “What is the Probability of a Nuclear War?”, 1 July 2019, Marginal Revolution, <https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2019/07/what-is-the-probability-of-a-nuclear-war.html>.

² Tyler Cowen (is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He is a professor of economics at George Mason University and writes for the blog Marginal Revolution. His books include “The Complacent Class: The Self-Defeating Quest for the American Dream.”), “Nuclear War Is Still Very Possible and Very Scary”, 15 May 2019, Bloomberg, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-05-15/nuclear-war-is-still-very-possible-and-very-scary>.

³ Simon Tisdall (a foreign affairs commentator. He has been a foreign leader writer, foreign editor and US editor for the Guardian), “The nuclear arms race is back ... and ever more dangerous now”, 17 August 2019, Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/17/nuclear-arms-race-is-back-and-more-dangerous-than-before>.



Russia — the world’s foremost nuclear powers — have had warheads pointed at each other since the earliest days of the Cold War.”⁴

Nuclear conflict is an *existential risk* which *outweighs* deterrence; even a limited nuclear war would be worse than the worst-case conventional war. As Kevin **Loria** notes, a “study found that a ‘limited, regional nuclear war’ [...] could cause a decades-long nuclear winter.”⁵ This would cause famine, ozone loss, ecosystem devastation, and *kill millions more* than even World War 2. And, a new study in the **Journal of Geophysical Research** confirms that, “a nuclear war between the US and Russia would indeed mean extinction for humanity as well as many other species.”⁶ As Kathleen **Lawland** explains, “The only safeguard against nuclear catastrophe is nuclear disarmament.”⁷

Contention 2. Deterrence fails.

The entire justification for retaining nuclear weapons rests upon deterrence, the idea that nuclear weapons make the world safer. However, deterrence is a *myth*. There are **3** warrants.

A. It is **contradictory**; either catastrophic nuclear war is likely, or deterrence theory is false. Professor Matthew **Kroenig** explains that, “If the probability of nuclear war is zero, then nuclear weapons should have no deterrent effect. States will not be deterred by a nuclear war that could never occur [...] If, on the other hand, the probability of nuclear war is nonzero, then there is a real danger that [...] nuclear weapons will result in a catastrophic nuclear war.”⁸

⁴ Alex Ward (the staff writer covering international security and defense issues, as well as a co-host of Vox’s “Worldly” podcast. Before joining Vox, Alex was an associate director in the Atlantic Council’s Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security where he worked on military issues and US foreign policy. He also wrote the #NatSec2016 newsletter for War on the Rocks where he covered the 2016 presidential election and the candidates’ views on national security(, “This is exactly how a nuclear war would kill you”, 26 December 2018, Vox, <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/10/19/17873822/nuclear-war-weapons-bombs-how-kill>.

⁵ Kevin Loria (Tech and science journalist). “Even a ‘limited’ nuclear war could trigger cruel nuclear winters and global famine.” 10 August 2017, Business Insider, <http://www.businessinsider.com/nuclear-explosions-earth-atmosphere-temperature-2017-8>.

⁶ Mike Wehner (author and tech writer at BGR), “Study confirms that, yes, a nuclear war between the US and Russia would be the end of days”, 19 August 2019, BGR, <https://bgr.com/2019/08/19/nuclear-war-russia-united-states-simulation/>.

⁷ Alex Ward (the staff writer covering international security and defense issues, as well as a co-host of Vox’s “Worldly” podcast. Before joining Vox, Alex was an associate director in the Atlantic Council’s Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security where he worked on military issues and US foreign policy. He also wrote the #NatSec2016 newsletter for War on the Rocks where he covered the 2016 presidential election and the candidates’ views on national security(, “This is exactly how a nuclear war would kill you”, 26 December 2018, Vox, <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/10/19/17873822/nuclear-war-weapons-bombs-how-kill>.

⁸ Matthew Kroenig (Associate Professor in the Department of Government and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and a Senior Fellow in the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security at The Atlantic Council). “The History of Proliferation Optimism: Does It Have a Future?” Journal of Strategic Studies. Volume 38, 2015 - Issue 1-2. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2014.893508>.



B. Fallibility. As Ward **Wilson** explains, “there are no right hands for nuclear weapons. The problem is the need for perfection. A single slip-up could lead to catastrophe. The instruments of deterrence are inherently fallible. [...] Human beings are intimately involved at every step. As the president is so vividly demonstrating, people lose their tempers, overreact, and get overwhelmed by emotion. People can lose their sanity—raving and acting at random.”⁹

C. Historical evidence. According to professor David **Barash**, “[...] it is not legitimate to argue that nuclear weapons have deterred any sort of war [...] During the Cold War, each side engaged in conventional warfare: the Soviets, for example, in Hungary [...], Czechoslovakia [...], and Afghanistan (1979-89); the Russians in Chechnya [...], Georgia [...], Ukraine [...], as well as Syria [...]; and the US in Korea [...], Vietnam [...], Lebanon [...], Grenada [...], Panama [...], the Persian Gulf [...], the former Yugoslavia [...], Afghanistan [...], and Iraq [...], to mention just a few cases. Nor have their weapons deterred attacks upon nuclear armed states by non-nuclear opponents. In 1950, [...] that US nuclear arsenal did not inhibit China from sending more than 300,000 soldiers across the Yalu River, resulting in the stalemate on the Korean peninsula that divides it to this day [...] Following the US-led invasion in 1991, conventionally armed Iraq was not deterred from lobbing Scud missiles at nuclear-armed Israel, which did not retaliate [...]”¹⁰

Since deterrence fails, there is no justification for retaining nuclear weapons and *only a risk* that it results in a catastrophic nuclear war that kills millions or billions due to a slip-up. Thus, states should eliminate their arsenals.

For all these reasons, we stand PRO.

⁹ Ward Wilson (is a senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists and the author of Five Myths About Nuclear Weapons), "Nuclear Deterrence Will Fail", 11 August 2017, The Nation, <https://www.thenation.com/article/nuclear-deterrence-will-fail/>.

¹⁰ David P Barash (Professor of Psychology emeritus at the University of Washington), "Nuclear deterrence is a myth. And a lethal one at that", 14 January 2018, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/14/nuclear-deterrence-myth-lethal-david-barash>.

