

# The Future of International Politics: WMDs and Their Proliferation

POSC 1020 – Introduction to International Relations

Steven V. Miller

Department of Political Science



## Puzzle(s) for Today

*We've learned a lot of international politics' present and past, but what does the future hold?*

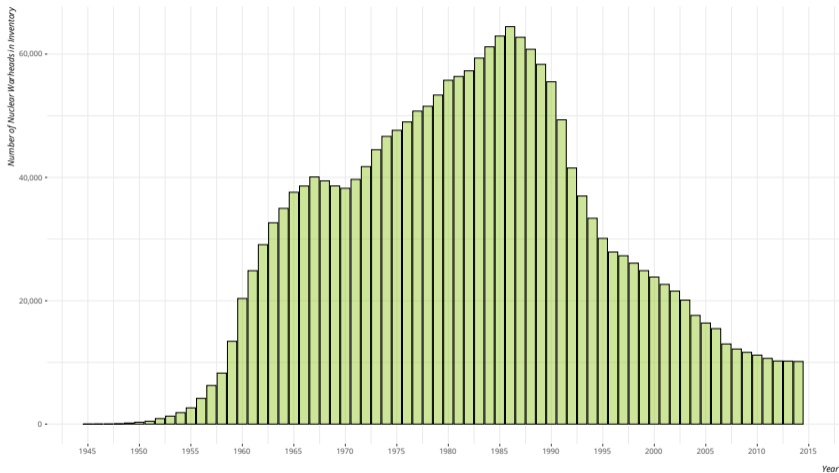
# The Future of International Politics

1. The proliferation of WMDs
2. The future of American global leadership (i.e. "The Rise of China?")
3. Globalization and its discontents

This lecture will be about the first topic.

## Number of Nuclear Warheads in Inventory of Nuclear Countries, 1945-2014

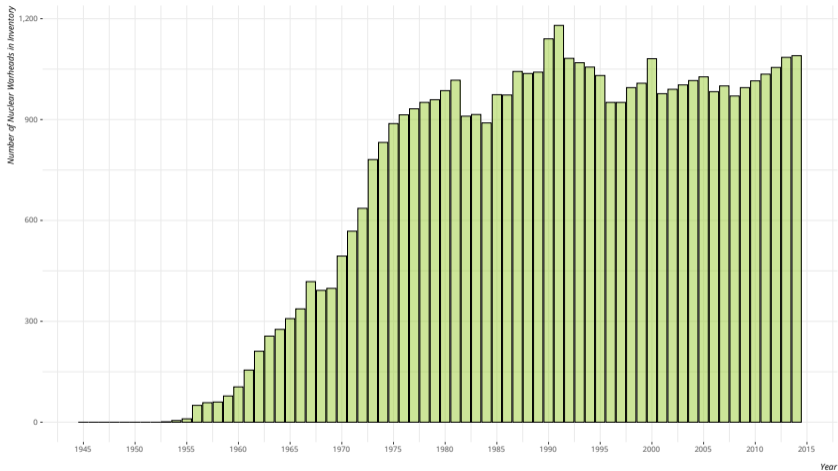
Nuclear treaties, prominently between the U.S. and USSR/Russia, have seen an important decline in global nuclear inventory



Data: Federation of American Scientists

## Number of Nuclear Warheads in Inventory of Nuclear Countries (Excluding the U.S. and Russia), 1945-2014

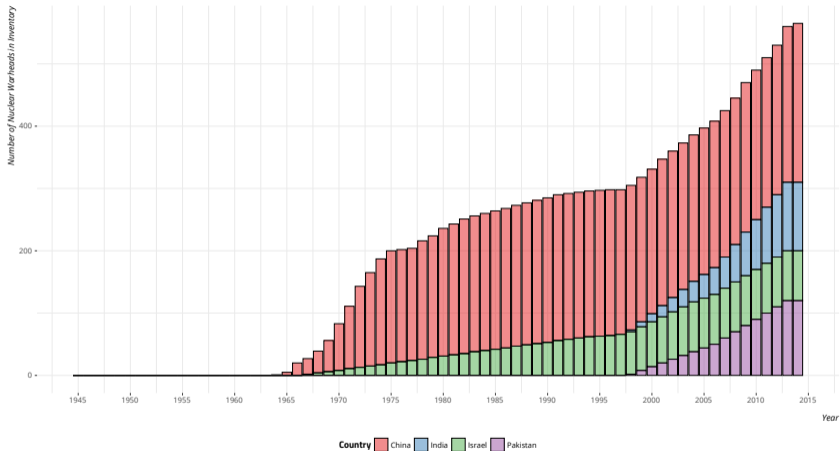
Notice that declines in global nuclear inventory are effectively functions of de-nuclearization in the U.S. and Russia.



Data: Federation of American Scientists

## Number of Nuclear Warheads in Inventory of Select "Problem" Countries, 1945-2014

Non-proliferation measures haven't stopped some countries from pushing for and even expanding nuclear arsenals.



Data: Federation of American Scientists.

Qualifier: Most onlookers believe DPRK has around 20-40 warheads as of 2016.  
Source for that estimation: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-warns-north-korean-nuclear-threat-is-raising-1429745706>

## So is North Korea a Nuclear Country?



Yes, and we are *way* past that part of the puzzle.

## So What Is At Stake With North Korea?

There are a few things still on the table:

1. Delivery/guidance
2. Payload
3. Second-strike
4. Acceptance/legitimacy

These are more about scope and repercussions. North Korea is already a nuclear-armed country.



## Is Non-Proliferation Even a “Bad Thing?”

There is a strand of scholarship that argues for proliferation.

- i.e. “mutually assured destruction”
- “The Long Peace”

## How Would Mutual Deterrence Work?

1. Guaranteed second-strike
2. Leaders must be rational/strategic (i.e. value survival)
3. Identification of first-strike initiator

# Why Should We Be Skeptical of Nuclear Deterrence?

- “Small  $n$ ” and conspicuous cases
- Rivals like India and Pakistan may be only a bit more cautious, and still as conflict-prone.
- Nuclear weapons still alter distribution of power.
- Nuclear countries may not meet some of the previous assumptions (see: Pakistan)
- Proliferation into non-state actors

# How Can We Prevent Nuclear Proliferation?

Same way you discourage anyone from doing anything:

1. "Carrots and sticks"
2. Prevention of access to raw materials

## Providing Assurances

So many nuclear weapons programs follow direct fears from rivals.

- The U.S. developed theirs in response to Nazi Germany's efforts.
- The Soviets developed theirs in response to the Americans.
- Likewise: UK and France vis-a-vis the Soviets.
- Sino-Soviet split = nuclear weapons in China
- India in response to China
- Pakistan in response to India
- DPRK in response to the U.S.

## Providing Assurances

Guaranteed security interests can dissuade states from developing their own arsenals.

- The Soviets dissuaded Syria from a nuclear program.
- The U.S. has blocked nuclear programs in Germany, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea.

However, *these assurances must be credible and indefinite.*

- So much of the current problem in North Korea is a function of broken assurances to Libya.

# Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an important milestone in non-proliferation.

- Signals strong interest from all nuclear powers, with some credible punishments.

However, the empirical record is mixed.

- NPT can't fundamentally alter state interests (e.g. India, DPRK).
- Still recognizes rights to a civilian nuclear program, which compounds commitment problem (e.g. Iran)

# Coercive Disarmament

One final option: threat and use of military force. However, this is fraught with problems:

1. Commitment problems (see: Libya)
2. Not a good option when nuclear weapons aren't the focal point of the problem (see: Iran, DPRK)
3. Most nuclear development is *sub rosa* after the Osirak reactor bombing.



## Conclusion

WMDs have become easier and cheaper to produce, and more countries are producing them.

- Solutions require altering the incentives of would-be proliferators, through both carrots and sticks.
- Arguments that contend they're not a big deal rest on the peculiar case of the Cold War.

There's real reason to be wary of nuclear proliferation.

- It's also not evident we can effectively stop it.

# Table of Contents

Introduction

The Future of International Politics  
The Proliferation of WMDs

Conclusion