

Options in Brief

Option 1: Eliminate Nuclear Weapons Now

Today, nuclear weapons are the world's greatest threat. Although they have only been used during wartime twice, we have come too close to nuclear war too often. Today, tens of thousands of nuclear weapons stand at the ready, many on high alert, threatening the lives of hundreds of millions of people and quite possibly the future of civilization itself. These weapons make us less, not more, secure.

Lack of cooperation among countries worsens the problem of nuclear weapons. As the nation with the world's most powerful nuclear arsenal, we need to take the lead. As a first step, we should eliminate all but five hundred of our own nuclear weapons. The resulting increase in trust and cooperation among countries will make it possible to engage in multilateral negotiations focused on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Option 2: Rely on Arms Control

The world is an unstable and dangerous place. Rogue states are working to build or acquire nuclear weapons. Terrorist networks are looking for opportunities to acquire these and other weapons of mass destruction. The world's huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, a remnant of the Cold War, increase the risk of theft, proliferation, and even intentional use.

We must cooperate with the current nuclear powers to reduce the world's nuclear arsenals to minimal levels. This will require using the mechanisms already in place—inter-

national arms control agreements—to reduce the number of weapons incrementally. Arms control treaties should focus on reducing the risks associated with the leftover Cold War arsenals and on stopping proliferation to unfriendly states and non-state actors. Only a small number of nuclear weapons should remain and they should be designed only to deter others from breaking out of arms agreements.

Option 3: Keep Nuclear Weapons as an Essential Part of U.S. Security

Nuclear weapons are critical to the security of the United States. Our nuclear weapons stockpile prevented the Soviet Union from overrunning Europe after the Second World War and protected us from the Soviet goal of worldwide domination. Today, our weapons remind aspiring powers like China and older nuclear weapons powers like Russia that the United States is the world's leading military power. Our nuclear weapons serve as a check on other countries' ambitions. No rational leader of a country would dare to threaten the United States.

But deterrence is no longer enough. The threat of nuclear terrorism—whether carried out by rogue states or terrorist groups—is very real. We must preserve our right and our ability to attack before we are attacked. This might even include developing small nuclear weapons that could strike at hidden terrorist bases or rogue states producing illicit weapons that could be used against us.