



Taking nuclear vulnerabilities seriously

Context:

- The article discusses the concerns associated with nuclear weapons.

What are the concerns?

- **Increasing nuclearization:** Since 1945, the United States, the Soviet Union/Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea have armed themselves with destructive nuclear weapons.
- Over 1,26,000 nuclear weapons have been built since the beginning of the atomic age.
- **Damage potential:** The use of existing weapons against civilian populations can cause a high number of casualties as observed in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed over 2,00,000 people. Another 2,00,000 people or more who survived the bombings of these two cities have suffered permanent disabilities.
- The large number of nuclear tests are causing grave and **long-lasting damage to the environment and public health.**
- **Vulnerability:** Nuclear weapons could be launched at any moment against any target around the world.
- There is **no realistic way to protect against nuclear weapons**, whether they are used deliberately, inadvertently, or accidentally.
- The **availability of ballistic missiles** has made it impossible to intercept nuclear weapons once they are launched. Neither fallout shelters nor ballistic missile defence systems have succeeded in negating this vulnerability.





- **The problems of deterrence:** Nuclear weapons supporters have often argued that the use of nuclear weapons is impossible because of deterrence.
- Deterrence theory holds that nuclear weapons are intended to deter other states from attacking with their nuclear weapons, through the promise of **retaliation and possibly mutually assured destruction (MAD)**.
- **Lack of restraint:** Nuclear weapons supporters claim that nuclear weapons do not just protect countries against the use of nuclear weapons by others, but even prevent war and promote stability. However, the article argues that the claims of deterrence do not hold up to evidence.
- Nuclear threats have not always produced fear and caution as propounded by nuclear enthusiasts. On the contrary, countries with nuclear weapons have gone to war quite often, even with other countries with nuclear weapons, albeit in a limited fashion. **Countries have not always shown the expected restraint.**
- **Unstable policy:** Nuclear deterrence cannot be considered stable.
- Strategic planners often use worst-case assumptions about the intentions and capabilities of other countries to argue for the acquisition of greater destructive capabilities, driving **endless upgrades of nuclear arsenals, and offering a rationale for new countries to acquire nuclear weapons.**
- All nuclear-weapon states have admitted to the possibility that deterrence could fail, evident in their plans for **preparing to fight a nuclear war.**
- **The illusion of control:** A major concern with respect to nuclear weapons is the **illusion regarding the controllability of nuclear weapons.**
- In the real world scenario, it would not be possible to have complete control. The desire to believe in the perfect controllability and safety of nuclear weapons creates overconfidence, which is likely to lead to **accidents** and possibly to the use of nuclear weapons.