**Headline:** The US Makes Most Compelling Case for Nuclear Proliferation

By Vijay Prashad and Dae-Han Song

**Author Bio:** This article was produced by [Globetrotter](https://globetrotter.media/) and [No Cold War](https://nocoldwar.org/).

Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor, and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at Globetrotter. He is an editor of [LeftWord Books](https://mayday.leftword.com/) and the director of [Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research](https://thetricontinental.org). He has written more than 20 books, including [The Darker Nations](https://smile.amazon.com/Darker-Nations-Peoples-History-Third/dp/1595583424/?tag=alternorg08-20) and [The Poorer Nations](https://smile.amazon.com/Poorer-Nations-Possible-History-Global/dp/1781681589/?tag=alternorg08-20). His latest books are [On Cuba: Reflections on 70 Years of Revolution and Struggle](https://thenewpress.com/books/on-cuba) (with Noam Chomsky), [Struggle Makes Us Human: Learning from Movements for Socialism](https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1869-struggle-makes-us-human), and (also with Noam Chomsky) [The Withdrawal: Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Fragility of US Power](https://thenewpress.com/books/withdrawal).

Dae-Han Song is a part of the [International Strategy Center](https://www.goisc.org/home) and the [No Cold War](https://nocoldwar.org/) collective, and is an associate at the [Korea Policy Institute](https://www.kpolicy.org/)**.**

**Source:** Globetrotter and No Cold War Perspectives

**Tags:** News, Politics, Opinion, War, Nuclear Middle East/Israel, Middle East/Iran.

**[Article Body:]**

The atomic bomb has been humanity’s most dangerous creation; that the United States government used the atom bomb twice against Japan’s civilians in August 1945 can neither be forgiven nor forgotten. It is fitting that one of the first [acts](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/1%28I%29) of the United Nations in January 1946 was establishing a commission to deal with the ‘Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy’. Yet, the resolution did not ban atomic weapons but simply sought to study its ‘problems’. Even after the grotesque demonstration in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States government was reluctant to permit the abolition of nuclear bombs. Having opened the doorway to Hell, there was no real desire to close it.

Creating the first major United Nations treaty to tackle atomic weapons took two decades. More importantly, the treaty did not ban nuclear weapons. While preventing further proliferation, it, nonetheless, allowed the then-nuclear powers—the United States (1945), the Soviet Union (1949), the United Kingdom (1952), France (1960), and China (1964)—to keep their nuclear arsenal. When the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/nuclear/npt/) (NPT) came into force in 1968, Israel likely had nuclear weapons [(1967](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/17/world/middleeast/israel-nuclear-weapons.html)). Thereafter, despite the NPT, India (1974), Pakistan (1998), and North Korea (2006) developed and tested nuclear weapons. Of all these countries, only North Korea has been pressured to de-nuclearize by the United States and its allies. If it has refused, it is because denuclearising would [lead to its annihilation](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/world/asia/north-korea-libya-model.html).

These facts and dynamics confirm that there are only two possible paths: the universal abolition of nuclear weapons and the threat of annihilation of countries by imperialism or the inevitable proliferation of nuclear weapons across the globe.

**The Attack on Iran by Israel and the United States**

 The Israeli and US attack on Iran’s nuclear energy facilities this June was illegal; it had neither a UN Security Council resolution nor approval from the US Congress. These two allies conducted their attack in the name of nuclear non-proliferation. They pummelled Iran’s nuclear energy enrichment sites and its research facilities to set back Iran’s nuclear energy programme. In fact, the attack will have the opposite effect. From Iran’s point of view, the attacks by Israel and the US make the acquisition of nuclear weapons a rational and urgent choice.

There has been no verifiable evidence that Iran has been developing a nuclear weapon. It has been a member of the NPT since the day the treaty was opened for signatures on 1 July 1968. In 1996, Iran signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty, another indication of its lack of interest in the development of nuclear weapons. Despite the pressure campaign on Iran, it has cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – according to international law and norms – to have its nuclear energy sites inspected on a regular basis. There has been no report by an international agency that confirmed Iran having a nuclear weapons programme. At most, in 2015, the IAEA [suggested](https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/documents/gov-2015-68.pdf) that Iran had shown some interest in nuclear weapons before 2003 but ‘did not advance beyond feasibility and scientific studies, and the acquisition of certain relevant technical competences and capabilities’. Yet, despite the lack of evidence, Iran was illegally attacked without UN Security Council approval.

After the Israeli attack on Iran, the Iranian Parliament [voted](https://iranwire.com/en/news/142643-irans-parliament-votes-to-suspend-all-cooperation-with-un-nuclear-watchdog/) to suspend all cooperation with the IAEA. Large crowds gathered across Iran to call upon their government to reject the pressure on Iran and to develop a nuclear bomb to protect the country from such wars of aggression. In other words, the tempo has begun to build up in Iran for the country to hastily develop a bomb and test it openly as immunity from a regime change war.

**Logic of Proliferation**

Mainstream media portrays countries pursuing nuclear weapons as rogue states that threaten global stability. In this narrative, authoritarian leaders pursue nuclear weapons out of an inscrutable empty obsession for self-aggrandisement as a nuclear weapon state. Yet, recent history and the US war drive make a clear case that acquiring nuclear weapons is the most rational choice for states seeking any autonomy from US domination. This is illustrated by how Libya’s denuclearization was followed by its destruction while North Korea’s nuclearization has allowed its preservation.

In 2003, the Libyan government announced that it would no longer proceed with its nuclear weapons programme. The Libyan government negotiated with Western powers to no longer be treated as a ‘rogue state’. Between 2004 and 2006, the IAEA came to Libya and dismantled its nuclear weapons project. But despite giving up its nuclear shield, Libya’s Muammar al-Qaddafi continued speaking out. In 2009, he went to the United Nations and spoke openly about a private conversation in which the IAEA chief Mohamed el-Baradei had told him that the IAEA could not inspect the ‘super-powers’. ‘So, is the IAEA only inspecting us?’, al-Qaddafi [asked](https://www.africanews.com/2017/09/19/speech-muammar-gaddafi-at-the-64th-un-general-assembly-in-2009/). ‘If so, it does not qualify as an international organisation since it is selective, just like the Security Council and the International Court of Justice’. Two years later, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) exceeded the UN Security Council mandate from resolution 1973 (2011) to create a ‘no-fly zone’ over Libya and destroyed the Libyan state. The lesson was clear: if you give up your nuclear weapons programme, you can be annihilated.

In 2006, after the US illegal war that overthrew the government of Iraq, the government of North Korea tested a nuclear weapon – the only government to do so in the 21st Century. Since then, despite immense pressure, there has been reticence to openly overthrow the government in Pyongyang.

For a rational person, the example of Libya and North Korea sends out a very clear message: developing nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them are the most effective deterrent. In fact, each stage in the development of North Korea’s nuclear program was precipitated by the US stalling in the peace process or failing to carry out its [promises for peace and security](https://monthlyreview.org/2024/07/01/power-concedes-nothing-without-a-demand-peace-in-korea-and-northeast-asia-now/) made to North Korea. In effect, North Korea’s two-track process allowed it to pursue its security through the diplomatic path when possible and through nuclear deterrence when necessary.

Faced with existential crises, the world needs to shift its focus from war and destruction to healing the planet and taking care of its people. It cannot be dragged into an arms race. Thus, denuclearization is key. Yet, without the conditions for peace and disarmament, for some states, nuclear proliferation may be a matter of survival.