

# Racial Inequalities and Nuclear Policy

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*The Stanley Center for Peace and Security and Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS) forged a partnership in 2020 to explore the systemic nature of racism in the fields of climate change, nuclear weapons, and mass violence and atrocity prevention. Black and Indigenous People and People of Color have experienced these global challenges on unequal terms and in ways exacerbated by the racism inherent to the institutions and multilateral processes built to address them. The Stanley Center particularly acknowledges that we have contributed to the perpetuation of this systemic racism and that only with intention, continued learning, and action can we become an antiracist part of the solution.*

*This series of discussion papers coauthored by WCAPS members considers the history of global systemic racism in each of the policy fields, offering specific examples of how racial injustice has manifested in the policies and policymaking processes and the ways Black and Indigenous People and People of Color have been and are subsequently impacted. The papers are part of the 61st Strategy for Peace Conference: Disrupting the History of Racism in Peace and Security and are intended to help ground in historical context needed conversations about more antiracist policy approaches to global peace and security challenges.*

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Exclusion and privilege are stubborn themes in nuclear policy. They emerge in arguments on who gets to keep, retain, and build nuclear weapons. They are evident in who is at the table when policy is made. Acknowledging these themes is an essential first step for moving beyond them.

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*This paper is written from a historical and strategic viewpoint examining systemic racism and the racial injustices in the nuclear policymaking community. The paper benefited immensely from interviews and discussions with nuclear policy experts: Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, Dr. Vincent Intondi, Ms. Laicie Heeley, Dr. Stephen Herzog, and Mr. Joseph Rodgers. This paper also acknowledges and draws insights from the WCAPS publication on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) global health security, edited by Jenkins, Sylvia Mishra, and WCAPS team members, wherein several women of color from diverse backgrounds have provided policy recommendations on CBRN and global health policy. The authors contributions to this paper are written from their own perspectives and not necessarily those of their employers.*

The year 2020 was an unusual one. The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered life as we have known it. Amid the challenges of the pandemic and country-wide lockdown in the United States, a spate of killings of unarmed Black Americans has precipitated the need to rethink and reevaluate racial injustices. A global movement and protests demanding recognition of Black Lives Matter have triggered discussions that systemic racism, the subjugation of minorities rights, and structural inequalities in the United States and elsewhere need to be combated with great urgency. A critical but mostly overlooked and understudied component of systemic racism is the racial injustices in the strategic nuclear policymaking community.

There is a serious lack of attention given to the racist legacies of the nuclear explosive testing and uranium mining that created nuclear weapons. Those legacies entail death, disease, and dislocation inflicted on the Indigenous and other communities in former colonies throughout the developing world. Reflecting on the ways the current nuclear policy showcases historic racism and colonization, Vincent Intondi argues that race and nuclear weapons have historically been inextricably linked—and this is no different today. He mentions that the first place to look is economics.<sup>1</sup> Since 1945, the United States has continued to spend enormous amounts of money on nuclear weapons as billions of dollars get routinely approved. Expectedly, the US government is planning on spending over a trillion dollars over the next decade on nuclear weapons. Intondi explains that this kind of spending has happened at the detriment of those most vulnerable in society, including people of color.

To delve deeper into the racist origins of nuclear policy and counter racial injustices in the nuclear policy field, this paper seeks to discuss race in the context of nuclear governance and policymaking. The paper aims to throw light on the origins of racist

nuclear policies and underscore how decision making on nuclear weapons issues have been exclusive and deliberately selective. It analyzes international treaties, multilateral regimes, and decision making on disarmament, comparing progress on the disarmament of chemical and biological weapons and the lack thereof with nuclear weapons. Our research also includes interviews with experts who study and work at the intersection of nuclear policy issues and race.

This paper has five sections. The first provides an overview of the origins of racist policies in the nuclear policy field and teases out how policies undertaken almost half a century ago continue to impact disenfranchised communities who carry the legacy of nuclear weapons testing and its high costs to lives, health, and well-being.

The second section considers the importance of building trust and verification for effective multilateralism. It also draws lessons learned from the broader weapons of mass destruction (WMD) fields and looks at the progress registered in the complete disarmament of chemical and biological weapons. The section elaborates on the point that divisiveness in the structures of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) makes it challenging for countries to generate confidence and trust.

The third section focuses on the stasis of nuclear disarmament and discusses the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the widening fissures between the nuclear haves and have-nots, and the failure of the P5 countries to uphold their Article 6 commitment to negotiate complete time-bound disarmament in good faith. The lack of progress on disarmament and discussions on the waning of the taboo on nuclear weapons testing have once again brought into renewed focus the inherent and systemic racism that guided the choices of selecting nuclear weapons testing sites.

The fourth section discusses the lack of diversity and inclusivity in the nuclear policymaking field, which has negatively impacted policy and contributed to stagnation in the field. There are, however, several organizations that are coming forward with initiatives that deliberately address the lack of diversity and representation in the field, such as WCAPS.

The last section of the paper maps an understanding of how some of the grave injustices of racism and discrimination in the nuclear policy field can be undone. The authors draw on their experience and explore this question with experts in the field to understand what a viable, sustainable, and equitable path forward would look like, and where nuclear dangers are not only minimized but where countries work toward the common goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

The paper concludes by highlighting that while there are several ongoing initiatives on victim compensations and clean-up efforts, many of the sins of the nuclear past cannot be undone. For example, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), which offers compensation related to exposure to radiation from

atomic weapons testing and uranium mining, is scheduled to expire in 2022.<sup>2</sup> Efforts are being made to expand and extend RECA with proposed changes that would allow more downwinders (those people living downwind of a nuclear test site or reactor, where the risk from fallout and radiation leaks is high) from Montana, Idaho, Colorado, New Mexico, and Guam to receive aid, but they are slow.<sup>3</sup>

While corrective actions can certainly begin by acknowledging past wrongs, diversifying the field and making efforts to hear the most vulnerable who are disproportionately impacted by the nuclear weapons policy enterprise need to be a priority—and one that this paper advocates for. It is important to note that in this paper, the terms “nuclear weapons policy enterprise” and “nuclear weapons enterprise” refer to the composite policy-military-industrial complex and supporting infrastructure and personnel that formulate policies and manufacture, maintain, and control nuclear warheads, their associated delivery systems, and systems for their command and control. Most conspicuously absent from the decision-making processes in this enterprise are the frontline communities that have been most adversely impacted for generations by nuclear weapons testing, and that is why this paper is important. Not only does it highlight the racist past of the nuclear weapons enterprise, but it also presents pathways to make our future less racist and more inclusive.

## The Beginnings of Systemic Racism in the Nuclear Policy Field

The nuclear weapons tests and production by the nuclear armed countries display a pattern: nuclear weapons were built and tests conducted in those lands/areas/sites that belong to the most vulnerable in society (e.g., Indigenous populations, disenfranchised communities, former colonies, and people of color) without their consent or any consideration given to their lives. Several policies since the early 1950s offer examples of systemic racism and colonization in decision making on nuclear weapons worldwide. The development and testing of nuclear weapons have disproportionately impacted—and continue to disproportionately impact—Indigenous populations, communities of color, and minority groups inside the United States and around the world. The most important thing to note is that the racism embedded within nuclear policy enterprise was not accidental or an unintended consequence but a deliberate strategy based on the troubling assumption that not all lives are equal.

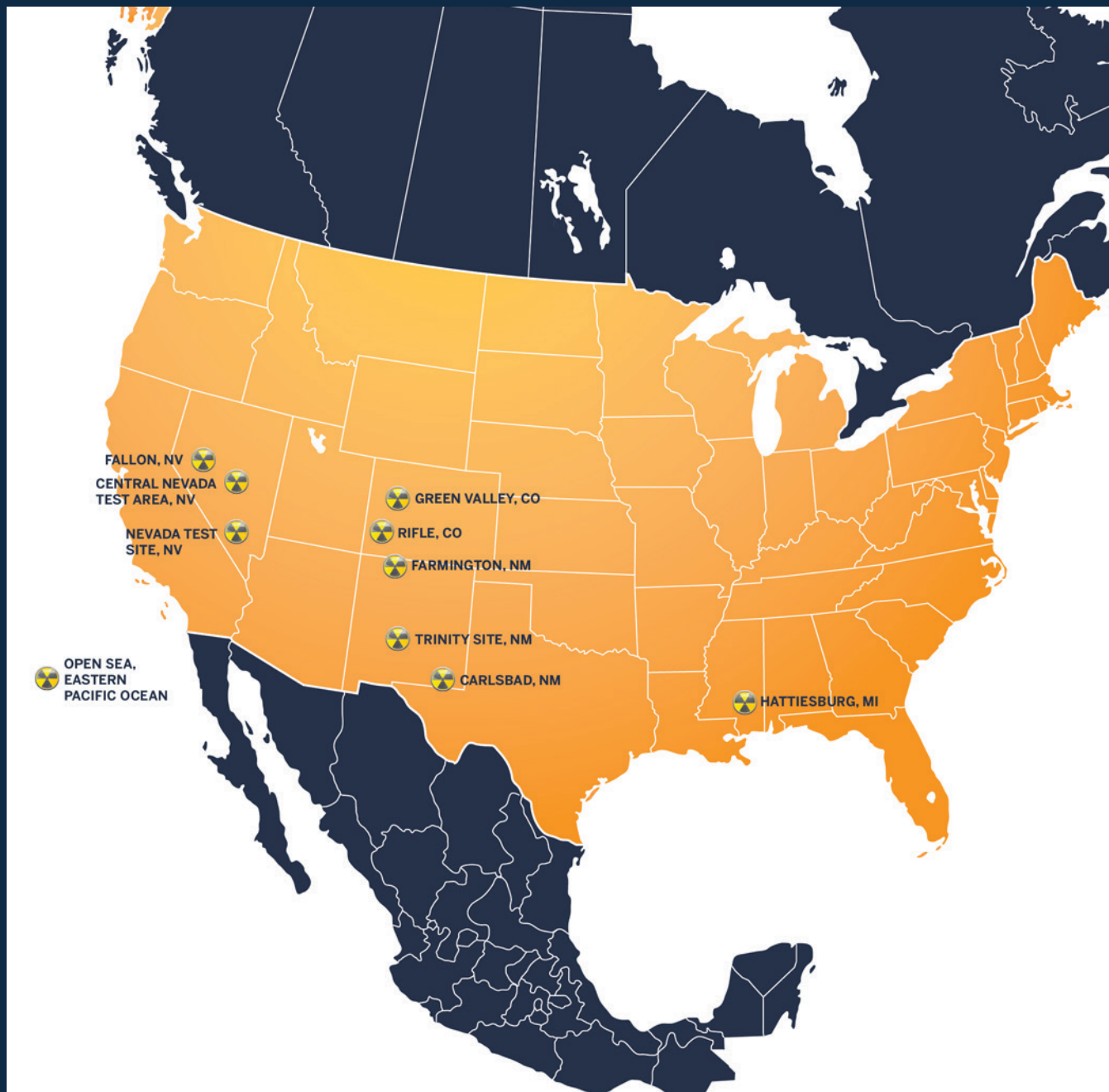
A US Department of Energy document on atmospheric nuclear weapons testing noted that from 1951 through 1958, the United States conducted 120 tests at the Nevada Test Site that “directly contributed to the creation and manufacture of bigger, smaller, better, and safer nuclear weapons” but “on the downside, nuclear weapons testing also produced airborne radioactivity that fell outside the test site.”<sup>4</sup> Before the 1970s, the United States and other countries conducted more than 500 nuclear weapons tests



in the atmosphere, making communities vulnerable to radioactive fallout in the form of radioactive particles and gases that were spread in the atmosphere. A study by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute found that any person living in the United States since 1951 has been exposed to some radioactive fallout, and all of a person's organs and tissues have received some kind of expo-

sure.<sup>5</sup> The communities around the test sites in the United States (Amchitka Island, Alaska; Nevada Test Site in Fallon, Nevada; Trinity Test Site in Carlsbad, New Mexico; Green Valley in Rifle, Colorado; Hattiesburg, Mississippi) and uranium mines have been particularly adversely impacted by the health and environmental costs of nuclear weapons production.

### Nuclear Test Sites in and Near the United States



Source: Atomic Archive, <https://www.atomicarchive.com/almanac/test-sites/testing-map.html>.

In the 1950s, for example, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) decided not to improve ventilation in uranium mines in Nevada, which had a disproportionately large number of Navajo miners. The deliberateness of this policy was aimed at allowing a build-up of radon in the mines so the AEC could better study radiation effects on health.<sup>6</sup> Reports indicate that for almost two decades after the harmful effects of uranium mining were known, protective safeguards were not implemented. The views of scientists who advocated for protection were compromised. The delays in providing protection represent a gross violation of the rights of the miners.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the AEC's decision to select nuclear weapons testing sites in Nevada hit Native Americans hard and exposed the community to radiation.

Historical evidence points out that various Native American tribes were subjected to loss of land, culture, image, and the right to live healthily. The dumping of atomic waste in Nevada highlights the fact that the US government subjected the tribes to radiation exposure knowing full well the costly consequences of such policies.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, cancer rates doubled in the Navajo Nation from the 1970s to the 1990s because of the impacts of testing, mining, and milling in the southwestern United States. From 1944 to 1986, when the mining companies extracted uranium, Navajo children played in mine debris and the livestock drank contaminated water.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, these deeply unsettling issues are not a thing of the past, and their adverse effects are still felt. In 2016, a CDC report revealed the fact that children born to Navajo parents still carry traces of uranium in their urine.<sup>10</sup>

Today, there are only a few active uranium mines in the United States, and more than 500 have been abandoned. However, the legacy of uranium contamination remains, and these abandoned mines continue to pollute nearby water supplies with elevated levels of radiation. Some of the potential health effects from the inhalation of radioactive particles include lung cancer, bone cancer, and impaired kidney function.<sup>11</sup> Highlighting how hard it is to separate much of global security policy from historic racism, Lacie Heeley points out that “these realities are woven, explicitly or implicitly, throughout the fabric of nearly every decision we’ve made.”<sup>12</sup> She mentions that “it’s an unfortunate fact that the people who live near the hallmarks of the US nuclear industrial complex—like test sites in Nevada and the Marshall Islands, mines in the western half of the US, and the Indigenous communities that still house nuclear waste today—have been disproportionately affected by the cost of what it takes to keep the rest of us safe.”<sup>13</sup>

Nuclear policy narratives are full of examples of power, subjugation, and a perverse colonial mindset. Several nuclear armed countries have tested nuclear weapons near Indigenous populations or in colonies. From 1949 until 1989, the Soviet Union conducted 456 tests at Semipalatinsk and showed little regard for the effect of radiation exposure on the local communities. Kazakh health authorities estimate that up to 1.5 million people were exposed to fallout in the process.<sup>14</sup> In a poignant essay, nuclear policy experts

Mariana Budjeryn and Togzhan Kassenova elaborate on the subtle and not-so-subtle shades of Soviet “red” racism. They write that while nuclear weapons might seem like a “field immune to racial overtones” as an explosion would murder millions indiscriminately of their skin color, the nuclear enterprise that brings these weapons into existence is not colorblind. Unpacking the racial injustices of the Soviet regime, Budjeryn and Kassenova underscore the fact that in the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, “lives mattered little, but some mattered even less.”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, France tested nuclear weapons in its colony of Algeria, and the United Kingdom tested nuclear weapons in Australia near First Peoples communities. After almost six decades, local people in Algeria, with the support of the Algerian government, pointed out that the French tests left a legacy of environmental devastation and health problems.<sup>16</sup> Joseph Rodgers, program manager and research associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ project on nuclear issues, says the legacy of these tests continues to impact current nuclear policy through the use of testing data to maintain and modernize nuclear weapons and, importantly, through the lived experiences of nuclear testing victims.<sup>17</sup> The nuclear weapons tests and production by the nuclear armed countries display a pattern: nuclear weapons were built and tests conducted in those lands/areas/sites that belong to the most vulnerable in society (e.g., Indigenous populations, disenfranchised communities, former colonies, and people of color) without their consent or any consideration given to their lives. This inherent sense of biased policymaking showcases contempt: differentiation based on race, skin tone, and ethnicity with an underlying understanding that some lives matter less. This kind of epistemic racism is deeply embedded into how the field was built by normalizing colonialist dehumanization and exploitation of people of color.<sup>18</sup>

## Viewing International Norms through the Lens of Racial Inequities

The global nuclear enterprise is held together through a combination of norms, shared incentives and goals, tacit understanding, and most importantly, a shared sense of mutual vulnerability from the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons use on mankind. International cooperation is at the heart of the global nuclear order. Simultaneously, international cooperation is also vital to the successful implementation of international treaties, which codify the prohibition and nonproliferation of WMDs. Typically, this cooperation is embedded in multilateral trust, which is much more difficult to achieve when the international playing field is not equal.

When countries signed and ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, it was with the understanding that all the state parties were agreeing to give up their chemical weapons programs and stockpiles. There were no exceptions. Today there are 193 state parties to the convention who are equally responsible for



upholding international norms against the development, use, acquisition, and stockpiling of chemical weapons.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, violations of the convention by state and/or nonstate actors demand the enforcement of consequences and accountability as decided by the member states.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the NPT draws a distinction between countries that possessed a nuclear weapons program prior to the treaty and those that developed them after the fact. Only countries that possessed nuclear weapons capabilities before signing the treaty are referred to as “nuclear weapon states,” or the P5: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia. Countries that have developed their programs since the nuclear nonproliferation norms were established under the NPT are accused by the very states that possess nuclear weapons of being in violation of these norms. This represents an international privilege for those countries that had the resources to develop themselves as nuclear powers before others and are now in position to police other countries to not possess them, even though they may be challenging international norms themselves with their possession and modernization of large stockpiles of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

This double standard is dangerous. Capitalizing on the privilege of available resources and technical knowledge, the P5 countries tested and developed their nuclear weapons programs before establishing a norm against the proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction they possessed. As long as these countries continue to possess nuclear weapons, a norm against their possession will be ineffective. Moreover, additional countries will be incentivized to proliferate and develop their own nuclear weapons programs, striving toward acquiring their own international credibility and nuclear privilege.

In South Asia, both India and Pakistan acquired nuclear capabilities after the NPT entered into force. While neither of these countries count as “nuclear weapon states,” given the timeline of their program falling after a nonproliferation norm was established under the NPT, it is interesting to consider the potential effect of colonialization on these states in a nuclear context. India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947, following an era of British colonial rule. The British came to South Asia for trade via the East India Company, gained control after the downfall of the Mughal Empire, and ultimately departed a fractured South Asia with two new, industrialized, and independent countries: India and Pakistan.

The effects of British colonialism in South Asia are not just limited to **historical conflict and bloodshed** but **also can be seen in modern-day relations** between two independent nuclear states. While both India and Pakistan violated the nonproliferation norms set under the NPT, the historical context reminds us that the colonials and the victims of colonization are held to different standards set under the same norms. At present, both the colonial state and those formerly colonized possess nuclear weapons, but only the colonial receives the title of a “nucle-

ar weapon state” while those that bore the brunt of colonialism are the “violators” of the NPT. We must look equally to all states in possession of nuclear weapons as “violators” of international norms, keeping in mind the historical context—not just from the perspective of Western states.

These inequalities are also seen in multilateral regimes, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group, that have faced criticism for being exclusive since not all countries can be members of these regimes, such as India and Pakistan. To participate in this multilateral regime overseeing nuclear exports, participants must be party to a nonproliferation agreement and in compliance with the agreement. This excludes the South Asian nuclear powers, limiting participation to the P5 with nuclear privilege.<sup>21</sup> Modern-day multilateral regimes like the Nuclear Suppliers Group not only fail to be inclusive but also sustain international inequities on what states are considered to be in compliance with international norms (such as the United Kingdom—the colonial) and which are not (such as India and Pakistan—the colonized).

Even prior to the nuclearization of South Asia, according to Stephen Herzog, there was little concern among European and American policymakers, or their publics, about British and French proliferation, but plenty of racist fears of a nuclear “Red China.” According to Herzog, “This sparked panic that other states outside the West might go nuclear and great interest in nonproliferation.”<sup>22</sup> As Rodgers notes, “Some academics and defense analysts have argued that the NPT creates a system of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots.’” Under this paradigm, four of the P5 states are predominantly white nations: France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia.<sup>23</sup>

The creation of the nonproliferation norm, if viewed through a racial lens, may have been for these predominantly white countries to maintain the upper hand and exclude certain others from developing a nuclear weapons program. Herzog says the NPT “aimed at preventing developing states from getting the world’s most powerful weapon.” He also points out that conveniently, the treaty presents vague language on disarmament, which “has often served the purposes of policymakers in states who seek to permanently maintain stockpiles of these indiscriminate and disproportionate weapons.”<sup>24</sup> It adds to a power dynamic between states with “nuclear privilege” and those without.

There is an African proverb that says, “Until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” This proverb applies to the drafters and creators of the nonproliferation norms we have come to accept. According to Intondi, Western nations have taken the charge in writing, backing, and rallying support for the international treaties under which norms against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are set, with little to no input from countries in Latin America or Africa. Similarly, Intondi observes, “We tend to analyze [the Cuban Missile Crisis] through the lens of the US or Soviet Union. But what about Cuba? It got little say in what happened and was used as a pawn in the entire ordeal.”<sup>25</sup>

More recently, the Iran nuclear deal is an example of how the United States chose to enter and then back out of an agreement. While the United States and its allies agree that Iran should not acquire a nuclear weapon, the unequal playing field shows again when Israel's compliance (or the lack thereof) with international norms is not met with a consistent response. Israel has never openly confirmed the existence of its nuclear program but is estimated to have about 90 nuclear warheads. Israel has not supported efforts to establish a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, nor has Israel ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention or even signed the NPT.<sup>26</sup> Intondi notes, "Why is there no discussion about Israel giving up their nuclear weapons? They remain the only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons."<sup>27</sup>

## The Quest of Disarmament and Making Nuclear Weapons Illegal

On January 22, 2021, the TPNW came into force. The treaty prohibits nuclear weapons, makes illegal the possession of nuclear weapons, and establishes the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons in the world. Presently, there are 86 signatories and 59 state parties to the Treaty.<sup>28</sup>

The increasing number of signatories and state parties to the TPNW indicates there is growing frustration among the nonnuclear weapons states (NNWS) about the slow reduction rate of the goal of nuclear disarmament. The nuclear weapons states' (NWS) complete dismissal of the treaty and the nations of the Global South's choice to join the treaty is indicative of the festering disharmony between the nuclear haves and have-nots. The NWS expects that the NNWS would adhere to the nonproliferation obligations outlined by the NPT while they themselves do not meet the Article 6 objective of the NPT (commitment toward nuclear disarmament).

In the past 50 years, the NPT has been successful in preventing more states from acquiring nuclear weapons and made progress toward reducing nuclear weapons inventories by 90 percent compared to Cold War levels. However, as of mid-2021, the existence of 13,150 warheads and the slow pace of reduction of present nuclear weapons inventory is worrisome.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the NPT's lack of recognition of states possessing nuclear weapons—India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea—creates conundrums and tensions of how best to address the challenge of the lack of nonproliferation and disarmament commitment by nuclear-armed states outside the NPT.

In the NPT Review Conference due to take place in 2022, there needs to be serious discussion about how India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea can be brought under the nonproliferation treaty agreement. The lack of recognition of these nuclear-armed states has delayed serious decision making on a verifiable global disarmament effort, and their inclusion can possibly speed up the process of disarmament.

TPNW is thus the manifestation of the many systemic challenges of the global nuclear order. The NWS' ignoring of the treaty showcases a tone-deaf approach and unwillingness to address the problems in the existing global nuclear order. Tom Sauer argues that it will not be wise to ignore the TPNW, as it can provide an impetus for NNWS to **withdraw from the NPT** as a next possible step, as Iran has already threatened to do. It is likely that if Iran follows through with that threat, several other countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt, will follow.<sup>30</sup> This reluctance among NWS to acknowledge the growing frustration among members of the Global South further accentuates the divide.

The P5 countries have been at the forefront of many initiatives to limit and prevent the proliferation of the bomb and its related technologies. In the last 75 years, the P5 countries have actively pursued three different tracks of nonproliferation, arms control, and disarmament policies to manage and avoid conflict and secure a stable global nuclear order. The grand bargain was that the P5/NWS would pursue disarmament and eliminate their arsenals while the NNWS pledged to forgo proliferation.<sup>31</sup> Yet despite this pledge, four states—India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel—developed the nuclear bomb and remain outside some of the major nonproliferation regimes and treaties to date.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, countries like the United States, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are expanding their nuclear arsenals and have been developing sophisticated, new, and technologically more capable nuclear delivery systems. This is a violation of the NWS' NPT Article 6 obligations.<sup>33</sup>

The P5 countries, therefore, have not adhered to the Article 6 commitment to engage in discussions on complete and verifiable disarmament in good faith. The slow pace of progress toward nuclear disarmament has led to questioning the seriousness of the NWS' commitment to pursue deep cuts to arsenals in recent years. On the other hand, the NWS continues to scrutinize treaty-granted peaceful nuclear energy aspirations of NNWS.<sup>34</sup> This reinforces the idea of exclusion of the nonproliferation regime. Herzog notes that the "stigmatized outgroup is predominantly former colonies and non-Western states lacking nuclear protection. Nuclear arms and umbrella pledges are apparently reserved for some states, just not countries with colonial legacies and where people look different from those setting the terms of the regime."<sup>35</sup>

The NWS' approach of sharpening their nuclear arsenals comes at a time when there's been significant progress in the other two pillars of the NPT (nonproliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy). However, the disarmament agenda and commitment continue to remain lopsided. Since the NNWS are holding up their side of the NPT bargain, it is important that P5 countries along with India, Pakistan, and North Korea also undertake steps to stop building new delivery systems and minimize the role of nuclear weapons in their respective military strategies. With the TPNW making the possession and the threat of use of nuclear weapons illegal, the differences between the nu-



clear haves and have-nots are ever widening.<sup>36</sup> Unless the P5 plus India, Pakistan, and North Korea take decisive actions to limit nuclear weapons and embark on verifiable nuclear disarmament discussions, increasingly, nonproliferation efforts will become challenging. Additionally, many NPT-signatory states may choose to undermine the NPT.

## Analyzing the Decision Makers: Straitjacketed Policies and the Lack of Diverse Voices

To fully understand the implications of race on nuclear weapons policy, we must examine the people who have been convening discussions on nuclear issues. Historically in the United States, the field has been dominated by white men. Creating the nuclear stockpiles that have been inherited were decisions made by them. From the inception of the Manhattan Project to the decision to use nuclear weapons on Japanese territory twice, these consequential decisions were made in rooms that were lacking diversity.

Security policy and programming, particularly on hard security issues like WMDs, is often threat driven. It is easier to gain support for a policy or decision if there is a perceived external threat that policymakers can unite behind to eliminate. This is where diversity in security policy is crucial, so that the threat that is being programmed against is credible, and decisions that are being made to mitigate the perceived risk are impactful, without implicating side effects for marginalized communities. Intersectionality is critical when conducting threat assessments, to ensure that the way we implement nuclear policy is not adversely affecting populations that have little to no say in the decisions that could potentially affect them.

For example, in the case of nuclear testing disproportionately affecting people of color, the decision to conduct these tests were made by those who would not be affected by the fallout. Similarly, in the United States, the decision to use a WMD that can kill and maim indiscriminately **is an exclusive power granted to the US president** alone, and we must consider if the decision to use such a weapon should exclusively be determined by a single opinion or if **introducing a more diverse, inclusive, and robust decision-making process** could save millions from death and injury. Let's not forget the United States is the only country in the world to have used nuclear weapons in two nuclear attacks, when a similar decision was made twice by President Harry Truman. The fact that a white US president authorized the use of the atom bomb twice against large Japanese populations in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but not against the white Germans, is indicative of racism—historically, the only victims of nuclear attacks have been people of color.

Now organizations like the WCAPS have led the charge and continue to actively work to improve the input of diverse voices and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion across the peace and se-

curity field.<sup>37</sup> The need to bring more perspectives into the field of nuclear policy was the catalyst for its founder and executive director, Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, to create WCAPS in 2017. The inclusion of these diverse voices at policy tables matters because it has a direct impact on the contents of a discussion and the next steps that are decided from it.

WCAPS has identified that women of color are impacted by the issues that are often discussed in their absence, including issues related to WMDs. Whether it be the women and children who have fallen victim to chemical attacks in Syria or the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, the policy and priorities for WMDs could change if underrepresented voices and perspectives are included when decisions are made. One of the authors of this paper, Wardah Amir, in efforts to bring attention to issues such as racism, colorism, and discrimination in national security started a podcast series with her cohosts, *A Seat at the Table*, to record candid conversations led by women of color on racism and discrimination.<sup>38</sup> The podcast has been an important initiative to share the perspectives of diverse voices as the nuclear and WMD field grapples with its lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Jenkins also launched the WCAPS initiative on “Redefining National Security” in 2017, looking at the lack of a diversity lens in US national security, and has worked on that issue and published articles on the concept. It is only when we become more inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives that our national security objectives and priorities will reflect the issues affecting each demographic in the United States and will have the potential to change the substance of our policies to depict the security interests of all groups, including those who are underrepresented.<sup>39</sup> WCAPS has hosted many events on the concept of redefining national security and will be releasing a publication on the concept in March 2022.

Another initiative is Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy, in which organizations have pledged to improve gender equality in the nuclear policy workforce.<sup>40</sup> The organization Women in International Security (WIIS) released a 2020 scorecard that also presents data on gender equality in the nuclear security workforce, particularly measuring metrics at think tanks and popular arms control journals. The WIIS data shows that women make up about 35 percent of the workforce in foreign policy and security institutions. Of the institutions surveyed, 10 percent of experts focused on nuclear policy, and of those only 3 percent were women. In the nuclear security publications assessed between 2015 and 2019, only 15 percent of contributions on nuclear issues were written by women.<sup>41</sup>

In the US government, a 2020 report by the Government Accountability Office not only revealed the lack of diversity in the Department of State but also highlighted the lack of progress to improve it. Between fiscal years 2002 and 2018, the representation of minorities in the department increased by only 4 percentage points, so that minorities represented 32 percent



of the full-time, permanent career workforce in FY 2018. While Hispanic and Asian representation increased to 7 percent and 6 percent respectively, African American representation decreased from 17 percent in FY 2002 to 15 percent in FY 2018.<sup>42</sup> The US Agency for International Development, in efforts to increase staff diversity, reviewed how its workforce changed from 2002 to 2018. The subsequent report found that while the overall proportion of racial or ethnic minorities in the agency's career workforce rose from 33 percent to 37 percent, racial or ethnic minorities in the civil service were 31 to 41 percent less likely to be promoted than whites with similar jobs.<sup>43</sup>

Following the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, WCAPS launched the Organizations in Solidarity initiative that creates a pathway for organizations to prevent racism and discrimination within their work spaces. As part of this initiative, individuals and entities have signed onto 12 commitments reflected in the WCAPS United States and United Kingdom Solidarity Statement to combat racism and discrimination in the fields of peace and security that they will implement at their own institutions.<sup>44</sup>

## Undoing the Wrongs: Racial Injustices and the Path Forward

Centuries of racism are reflected in decades of nuclear policy—all of which can seem overwhelming to fix. When we think about undoing the wrongs, it shouldn't be limited to a historical discussion but also a current one. Not only must there be accountability for those who have suffered injuries or loss of life by WMDs in the past, but we must also be aware of how racism is impacting nuclear weapons policy and norms today. Heeley reflects on the path forward: "Steps should be taken to right historical wrongs, including providing support to all those impacted by nuclear development and testing, as well as to consider alternate proposals such as the ban treaty. Nuclear weapons were created within an unequal system, and our solution for halting their spread is unequal."<sup>45</sup> Nuclear disarmament movements continue to be dismissed by nuclear weapons states that rarely if ever join tables with those advocating for a ban. Failing to introduce diverse perspectives on nuclear weapons policy will keep some ideas off the table, and therefore nuclear policy cannot be all-encompassing.

According to Intondi, the path forward starts with education and must include the existing movement to ban nuclear weapons. He recommends: "We need to educate the public on the relationship between race and nuclear weapons, including economic conversion, nuclear testing, uranium mining, and who actually possesses nuclear weapons. We need to organize around the TPNW. It is the clearest and simplest campaign in terms of having mass appeal and showing the difference in those who are fighting to eliminate nuclear weapons and those who possess them."<sup>46</sup>

The conversation on how to combat racism in nuclear policy needs to happen in classrooms, where policymakers learn about

WMDs and formulate opinions on nuclear policy issues they would then act on in the real world. The way international relations theory was traditionally taught up until a few years ago ignored racial and gender perspectives. While that is gradually changing, universities and other academic institutions will need to undertake concerted efforts to not only diversify syllabi and reading lists but also restructure and reimagine how to teach concepts of national security and nuclear policies, such as deterrence, disarmament, and security dilemmas, as the implications of these concepts in the 21st century is vastly different from those of the Cold War period. As policymakers address these shifts, it is important to acknowledge and understand whose analyses are being read and who is being left out from conversations on nuclear weapons policymaking.

In a positive step in March 2021, Princeton University's Science and Global Security Program released a curriculum and resources on "Countering Racism and Other Structures of Exclusion and Domination in Teaching and Research on Nuclear Issues."<sup>47</sup> As universities gradually begin to incorporate syllabi, classroom lectures, and discussions on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, it is essential to hire faculty members who are diverse in thought, age, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

As Herzog mentions, "Coursework on nuclear weapons simply can no longer focus only on theories of preventing proliferation to 'irresponsible' states in the developing world and deterrence relationships between 'rational' nuclear powers. It is essential to discuss the troubled history of the nonproliferation regime, the frustrations expressed by the Ban Movement, and the horrific legacies of nuclear testing, uranium mining, and the use of nuclear weapons themselves. Increased efforts to assign (and cite) works representing diverse domestic and global perspectives and backgrounds are essential to this endeavor."<sup>48</sup> Rodgers reflects on acknowledgement of the wrongs and advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the nuclear workforce. He underscores the fact that some of these problems can't be solved. The historical legacy of racism in nuclear policy cannot be reversed, but it should be acknowledged. He adds that for the problems that can be solved, "expanding diversity and inclusion in the nuclear policy field is a huge first step."<sup>49</sup>

We interviewed several nuclear experts for this paper to get a diverse perspective on the implications of racism on nuclear policy and where we go from here. Through our interview responses it was clear there is a broad range of options to consider for next steps, not limited to the contents of this paper. While we figure out the path forward, we must come to terms with the wrongs of our past, with an intention to fix the inequalities in our present, to determine an appropriate path forward guided by diverse experts, voices, and opinions on how to combat racism and discrimination in the nuclear field.

The disgrace of racial injustices for centuries is a shameful past whose burden we collectively carry. The past cannot be undone. Rectification of the mistakes of the past for a better present and

a brighter tomorrow can begin with acknowledgment, education, and acceptance of the past. As we grapple with the tensions of our historic wrongdoings in a bid for a better today, dismantling structures of exclusion while building on justice, diversity, equity, and inclusivity efforts are key. At the heart of this paper lies an attempt to cogently showcase the ingrained racial injustices that existed in nuclear weapons policymaking. As we acknowledge the past, this paper explains the need to be forthcoming and vocal about the importance of bridge-building efforts between the nuclear weapons enterprise and the impacted frontline communities most adversely impacted by the effects of nuclear weapons testing. Furthermore, the global nuclear order needs to accept that looking past the differences that exist between the NWS and NNWS might prove to be dangerous and can seriously aggravate stability and overturn the successes and achievements of the NPT.

## Endnotes

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