

Global Security in the Post-Cold War Era and the Relevance of Nuclear Weapons

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Abstract:

Are nuclear weapons still relevant to global security? Compared with the nuclear confrontation in the depths of the Cold War, nuclear weapons and deterrence appear to have lost their salience. Considering the conflicts in which the major powers engaged, the focus in strategic studies changed to counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and sub-conventional conflict.² Only recently, with the conflict in Ukraine and the increasingly confrontational relationship between the United States and China has this narrative come into question. The general perception on international security exhibits a strange paradox. On the one hand the US-led military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and other parts, the conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, the nuclearization of North Korea and the conflict between India and Pakistan among other regional security issues have given rise to a view that the modern world is less secure than ever, and we live in a world of chaos riven by unpredictable patterns of violence. By contrast, Steven Pinker has demonstrated the

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² Adam B. Lowther, *Deterrence: Rising Powers, Rogue Regimes, and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 49; Andrew Fetter, *The Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2020), 3.