

# Banning Nuclear Weapons

By [Matthew Costlow](#)

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Let the international diplomatic finger-wagging begin. [Today](#) the United Nations will begin a new session on negotiations to make possession of nuclear weapons illegal, setting the stage for the eventual requirement of total abolition.

Much like the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, where the signatories “renounced” war as an instrument of national policy, the proposed Nuclear Ban Treaty would simply outlaw something viewed as morally abhorrent and hope states adhere to it.

Yet somehow proponents of the Nuclear Ban Treaty have surpassed the naiveté of the Kellogg-Briand Pact negotiators, who at least were able to get the countries with the largest militaries to sign on to their agreement. The United States, Russia, China, Great Britain, and France, which possess over 95% of the nuclear weapons in the world, [will not attend](#) the UN Nuclear Ban Treaty “negotiations,” making the meeting a one-sided exercise in diplomatic “airing of grievances.”

At issue is the pace of nuclear disarmament worldwide which some nations see as unacceptably slow. Never mind that the United States has done more than any other nation to reduce the size of its nuclear arsenal, cutting it [by 85%](#) since the end of the Cold War, and [reducing the role](#) of nuclear weapons in its defense planning.

The current U.S. nuclear force is old, much of it built in the 1960s and 1970s and needs to be replaced. President Obama supported the modernization programs to replace these old systems, much to the dismay of the international intelligentsia, and President Trump supports continuing this prudent legacy.

Sensing an opening, however, nongovernment activist groups teamed up with sympathetic countries to lobby the United States to end its nuclear weapons modernization programs and unilaterally disarm. After receiving a curt “no,” these groups persuaded the United Nations to take a break from its anti-Israel agenda and squeeze in a thinly-veiled anti-United States effort.

The anti-nuclear crowd will claim that their efforts focus on all nuclear weapon-possessing countries equally, but in reality, they know their only hope for success is persuading the U.S. public which democratically elects its leaders, thus making policy changes much more achievable.

Russia and China, on the other hand, are authoritarian regimes whose policies are not open to public negotiation; and Britain and France are not seen as leaders in the nuclear world whose actions other countries would necessarily follow. This leaves the United States as the world’s nuclear disarmament punching bag. However, perhaps the new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, and former Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley can punch back.

Ambassador Haley should remind the disgruntled nations of the world of the unparalleled U.S. commitment to nuclear nonproliferation, both monetarily and programmatically. In addition, and just as forcefully, Ambassador Haley should redirect international ire toward those countries truly deserving of it: Russia and China.

While the United States leads the world in the [transparency](#) of its nuclear arsenal and policies, Russia and China prefer aggression and subterfuge. Russia has deployed intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missiles [in violation](#) of the INF Treaty while making nuclear threats against NATO allies, even the [beloved peacemaking Norwegians](#). China, likewise, explicitly [pursues a policy of opacity](#) both to the size and role of its nuclear weapons while making significant gains in the quality and quantity of its nuclear forces.

The United States is not the roadblock to a secure nuclear peace that many claim, Russia, and China are. The proposed UN Nuclear Ban Treaty will do nothing to stop their cheating and deception and instead, will devolve into another forum for U.S.-bashing.

In Shakespeare's famous play of the same name, Macbeth laments the brevity of life saying, "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." The same could be said of the UN effort to ban nuclear weapons.

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