



# The Ultimate Coloniser: Challenging Racism and White Supremacy in Nuclear Weapons Policy Making

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## Executive Summary

Nuclear weapons have a colonising effect on human thought, similar to the way in which colonial powers asserted their dominance over colonised peoples. These weapons embody a certain kind of hegemonic power associated with white Western culture. Nuclear weapons have become deeply embedded in our psyches, shaping our perceptions of the world and our place in it. They are the manifestation of abject power held by a subset of the global community, a source of military power, and a strategic deterrent. The policy recommendations in this brief aim to address the past harms of racism and white supremacy in nuclear policy making and centre justice and human-centred security frameworks for those impacted by the nuclear weapons complex, particularly marginalised communities to receive the redress they deserve.

# Introduction

Nuclear weapons have played a significant role in Western and global security structures since their first use in 1945. Their origins can be traced back to colonial notions of power, strategic competition, and a desire for global dominance. Today, we witness the manifestation of these neo-colonial and racist ideologies in non-proliferation policies against the alleged threat of non-western proliferation. These policies often employ racialised language that strips states and their people of their agency and humanity. Ironically, many of these entities have no intention of pursuing nuclear weapons but seek inclusion in a global security structure that is not propped up by a hegemonic order and better reflects the diversity of nations worldwide.

Marginalised communities, including Black, Brown, indigenous, and POC, have been disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of the global nuclear weapons system. This is a multifaceted system that encompasses not only the physical infrastructure of nuclear weapons development, production, testing, and deployment but also the underlying power dynamics, ideologies, and historical legacies that shape and sustain it. This implies the historical context in which nuclear weapons emerged, rooted in colonial understandings of power and dominance by Western nations. This also notes that these structures of colonial understanding and systemic oppression, are not upheld simply by western nations but any nation (including the global south) who ascribes to these systems of thinking. From testing and mining, to potential use; POC have borne the brunt of its consequences. It is evident that these dangerous and harmful legacies of the past cannot be ignored any longer. It is imperative to continue to push processes that decolonise nuclear weapons policymaking, seek ways to dismantle these systems and work towards a more equitable and just world that goes beyond the destructive power of nuclear weapons. The NPT, often argued as the legal bedrock of nonproliferation regime, reflects the existing power dynamics within the international system, with the five recognised nuclear-weapon states and does not directly address the broader issues of colonial legacies, power imbalances, or the impacts of nuclear weapons on marginalised communities. NPT primarily prioritises security concerns related to nuclear weapons and their proliferation, and does not emphasise on addressing the broader social, environmental, and humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons.

In this policy paper, we aim to explore the challenges posed by racism and white supremacy in nuclear weapons policy making. By acknowledging the historical and ongoing injustices faced by marginalised communities, we strive to foster understanding, advocate for change, and pave the way for a future where nuclear weapons policies are rooted in inclusivity, justice, and global cooperation with achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Together, we can build a world that transcends the destructive legacy of the bomb and works towards a more equitable, just, and peaceful future.

## Historiography

Racism and the history of nuclear weapons policy making are intertwined. When Arundhati Roy stated that nuclear weapons are 'the ultimate colonisers' and at 'the very heart of whiteness',<sup>109</sup> she gets to the heart of the matter by highlighting that in addition to being symbols of power and prestige, nuclear weapons depict a history of racism and white supremacy in their development, possession, and use. While the 1968 NPT sets legal precedent to pursue disarmament, it also currently enshrines a hierarchy of nuclear haves and have-nots, with the five nuclear weapon states at the top. NPT perpetuates a racialised and exclusionary nuclear order. Recognizing that racialized understandings, are not limited by western nations, rather language that devalues or others any non-western state. The non-proliferation regime depoliticises the problem of nuclear proliferation

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<sup>109</sup> Arundhati Roy, *The End of Imagination* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2016).

as a neutral endeavour to reduce nuclear risk globally, distinct from larger questions of global power and serves the political interests of the United States and European states.<sup>110</sup> The non-proliferation regime does not adequately address the underlying political, economic, and security dynamics that drive nuclear proliferation. There is often selective enforcement of non-proliferation norms. Also, the non-proliferation regime is sustained by financial incentives and creative techniques to uphold the legitimacy of nuclear weapons.<sup>111</sup>

## Effects of Racism on Nuclear Weapons Policy Making

Racism and discrimination have played a significant role in shaping the historiography of nuclear weapons and non-proliferation issues. The structure of the non-proliferation regime, such as the creation of the NPT and the IAEA board membership, has perpetuated a racialised and colonial discourse. For example, Western countries have historically held a significant presence on the board, while the representation of non-Western states, particularly from the Global South, has been limited. Determinations regarding which states can legally and politically possess nuclear weapons and make non-proliferation policies for others to follow are arguably rooted in the racialised and colonial frameworks.

The instances of racism can be traced back to the early days of the nuclear era with the Manhattan Project. Nuclear weapons policy making regarding the selection of nuclear weapons production sites, nuclear testing sites, and nuclear weapons targets (for example, the debate about the legitimacy of potential targets, including why Hiroshima and Nagasaki were good targets as opposed to the culturally richer Japanese city Kyoto<sup>112</sup>), as well as nuclear waste disposal sites, depicts racism and discrimination. Many of these sites were located in low-income, and in communities or countries of colour including, Marshall Islands, Navajo reservations, Western Sahara, and the list continues.

The success of the NPT-based non-proliferation regime in preventing the wider proliferation of nuclear weapons is debatable, as it may also be attributed to independent efforts by states to refuse nuclear weapons, for example, the establishment of nuclear weapons-free zones in Latin America, Africa, Oceania, and Southeast Asia.<sup>113</sup> The recent trilateral security pact between the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, also known as AUKUS, to share nuclear technology is an example of how extended deterrence commitments while arguably rooted in strategic considerations, can also cede non-proliferation concerns to racial logic. The civilisational discourse depicts that in the post-1945 international order, the United States and the West have aimed to preserve their military dominance by strengthening their own armed forces while suppressing other countries' efforts to do the same, as it was interpreted as undermining Western control.

## Human Consequences of Racist Nuclear Weapons Policy Making

The systemic hierarchies of racism, white supremacy, and colonialism were not only built into the formation of the global nuclear order, but were embedded into nuclear weapons production, development, and testing at the outset of the nuclear age. These processes privileged certain nations based on the colonial power dynamics and

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<sup>110</sup> Shampa Biswas, *Nuclear Desire: Power and the Postcolonial Nuclear Order* (U of Minnesota Press, 2014), 98; Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, 'The Nonproliferation Complex,' *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no. 3 (2013): 329–48, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0892679413000257>.

<sup>111</sup> Kjølsv Egeland, 'Sustaining Social License: Nuclear Weapons and the Art of Legitimation,' *International Politics*, September 9, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-022-00404-w>.

<sup>112</sup> Mariko Oi, 'The Man Who Saved Kyoto from the Atomic Bomb,' BBC News, August 8, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33755182>.

<sup>113</sup> Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh, 'Obedient Rebellion: Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Global Nuclear Order, 1967–2017' (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2020), <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:1989894d-1e20-419e-8b39-84a02b53cf05>

established them as arbiters of nuclear legitimacy which is depicted by the politically neutral view of proliferation, ignorance of drivers of proliferation, and perpetuation of global power imbalances. Their consequences have lasted to this day. The extensive nuclear testing during the Cold War had the same profound impacts on global (marginalised) communities as a nuclear war. Despite no nuclear exchange between the nuclear weapons states, it was the non-nuclear weapon states which suffered the consequences of radioactive fallout by experiencing early mortality, disease, displacement, and contamination of food sources and ecosystems.<sup>114</sup>

*Nuclear testing:* Nuclear weapons states were aware of the long-term harmful effects of radiation contamination due to nuclear testing. This is the reason the United States tested most of its nuclear weapons in territories of other countries and France and the United Kingdom did not test a single weapon on their own soil. The United States government understood the disastrous effects of radioactive fallout due to the testing of hydrogen bombs and made it a policy to not test the H-bomb on the United States mainland. Even though the United States studied the behaviour of fallout particles in ecosystems and strategised how to weaponise these effects to both kill and psychologically terrify an enemy population, it asserted that fallout from these tests posed no health risk to people living downwind from test sites.<sup>115</sup> France's nuclear tests in Algeria during the 1960s caused widespread environmental contamination and negative health effects on local populations. Many Algerians who worked on the tests have suffered from illnesses, including cancer, and their families continue to be affected by the tests' long-lasting effects. Despite this, the French government has not acknowledged the harm caused by the tests or provided sufficient compensation to those affected.<sup>116</sup>

*Nuclear weapons production:* Indigenous peoples and their lands have been exploited by Western governments and corporations for nuclear weapons production. These sites of nuclear colonialism extend over every continent: 70% of the world's uranium is mined from Indigenous lands in Kazakhstan, Australia, Canada, and 15% is mined in African nations.<sup>117</sup> Indigenous scholars and activists have been instrumental in raising awareness about this issue.<sup>118</sup>

The uranium used for Fat Man, the bomb dropped by the United States on Nagasaki, was mostly mined from the Congo, a former Belgian colony.<sup>119</sup> The Congolese miners who worked in the Shinkolobwe mine, where the uranium was extracted, were subjected to forced labour, harsh conditions, and exposure to radiation without

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<sup>114</sup> Robert A. Jacobs, *Nuclear Bodies: The Global Hibakusha* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

<sup>115</sup> Jacobs, 'Nuclear Bodies', 2022.

<sup>116</sup> Lamine Chikhi, 'French Nuclear Tests in Algeria Leave Toxic Legacy,' *Reuters*, March 4, 2010, sec. Latest Crisis, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUKCHI233933>.

<sup>117</sup> These estimates change from year to year, but the general trends of uranium production and trade have largely remained the same. According to World Nuclear News, Kazakhstan was the top global producer of uranium in 2022, accounting for 43% of the world's supply. Canada ranked second with a 15% share, followed by Namibia with 11%. See more at 'World Uranium Mining – World Nuclear Association,' accessed May 31, 2023, <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/nuclear-fuel-cycle/mining-of-uranium/world-uranium-mining-production.aspx>

<sup>118</sup> Danielle Endres, 'The Rhetoric of Nuclear Colonialism: Rhetorical Exclusion of American Indian Arguments in the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Siting Decision,' *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (March 2009): 39–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420802632103>; Ward Churchill and Winona LaDuke, 'Native American: The Political Economy of Radioactive Colonialism,' *Insurgent Sociologist* 13, no. 3 (April 1986): 51–78, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089692058601300306>.

<sup>119</sup> Frank Swain, 'The Forgotten Mine That Built the Atomic Bomb,' *News*, BBC, August 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200803-the-forgotten-mine-that-built-the-atomic-bomb>

proper protection.<sup>120</sup> They were treated as disposable and expendable by the Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK), the Belgian mining company that owned the mine and sold the uranium to the United States and its allies.<sup>121</sup> The Congolese people were not informed of the link between their uranium and the bombs that killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians, nor were they compensated or acknowledged for their contribution to the Manhattan Project.

Nuclear waste is routinely dumped on Native lands in the United States and Canada, violating the 2008 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>122</sup> This racial and colonial ecology in the nuclear fuel cycle harms Indigenous people, for example, the mining of uranium in Indigenous lands in North America.<sup>123</sup> The largest United States nuclear accident occurred in Church Rock, New Mexico, in 1979, just three months after the more widely remembered Three Mile Island incident, yet it is little discussed today outside of New Mexico, highlighting the colonial politics of erasure in what kinds of nuclear waste disasters are remembered.<sup>124</sup>

*United States decision to attack Japan:* The atomic bombing of Japan was motivated by military and strategic considerations, also arguably involved racial prejudice and imperial ambition, which was used to demonstrate the superiority and dominance of the Western powers over Japan and other non-white nations. The decision to use nuclear weapons against Japan was influenced by racist stereotypes and propaganda that portrayed the Japanese as subhuman and fanatical enemies who deserved no mercy.<sup>125</sup> The nuclear weapons policy making was dominated by white men who excluded and marginalised the voices and perspectives of people of colour, women, and other groups who were affected by the nuclear threat.<sup>126</sup>

## Examples of Human Agency

Examples of agency (resistance) by individuals and groups against the inherent injustice of the nuclear order abound from post-WWII till the present day including the Bandung Conference's calls for disarmament and rejection of nuclear recolonization,<sup>127</sup> African-American anti-nuclear activism, and African and Asian resistance

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<sup>120</sup> 'Uranium Mine Poses on Going Risk, UN Reports,' *The New Humanitarian*, November 10, 2004, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2004/11/10/uranium-mine-poses-going-risk-un-reports>

<sup>121</sup> Tom Zoellner, 'A (Radioactive) Cut in the Earth That Will Not Stay Closed,' *Scientific American*, March 27, 2009, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-radioactive-cut-that-will-not-stay-closed/>

<sup>122</sup> Endres, 'The Rhetoric of Nuclear Colonialism.'

<sup>123</sup> Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

<sup>124</sup> Trip Jennings, 'Remembering the Largest Radioactive Spill in U.S. History,' *New Mexico In Depth*, July 7, 2014, <https://nmindepth.com/2014/remembering-the-largest-radioactive-spill-in-u-s-history/>.

<sup>125</sup> Elaine Scarry, 'Memorial Days: The Racial Underpinnings of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombings,' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (blog), August 3, 2020, <https://thebulletin.org/2020/08/memorial-days/>

<sup>126</sup> David W. Moore, 'Majority Supports Use of Atomic Bomb on Japan in WWII,' *Gallup.com*, August 5, 2005, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/17677/Majority-Supports-Use-Atomic-Bomb-Japan-WWII.aspx>; Bruce Stokes, '70 Years after Hiroshima, Opinions Have Shifted on Use of Atomic Bomb,' *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed May 4, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2015/08/04/70-years-after-hiroshima-opinions-have-shifted-on-use-of-atomic-bomb/>

<sup>127</sup> Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest, 'On History and Authority: The Cold War Nuclear Arms Race and Its Importance for Critical Security Theory,' *Critical Studies on Security* 10, no. 3 (September 2, 2022): 157–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2023.2167773>.

to French nuclear testing.<sup>128</sup> The latest example is the demand for reparations from the French government by the French Polynesian community affected by nuclear testing.<sup>129</sup> A less discussed aspect of the anti-colonial struggle against nuclear weapons is the role of the Black Freedom Movement. Intondi's in-depth work covered this history of seven decades and underscored that nuclear weapons affected black Americans and hindered their struggle for racial justice.<sup>130</sup>

## Analysis

The history of racism in nuclear weapons policy making illustrates the ways white supremacy is embedded in the social practices of Western states and that colonial ideology remains prevalent in the functioning of global institutions and non-proliferation norms. Just like the central tenet of white supremacy that 'the white race possesses inherent intelligence to make rational and objective decisions', a foundational argument of Western colonial non-proliferation policies is that only Western states are developed, stable, and advanced enough to master nuclear weapons technology. Even non-western nuclear nations, prop up this notion, when they delegitimise the sanity of their global south counterparts. This argument legitimises the possession of nuclear weapons by the predominantly White states and justifies the exclusion of non-Western states. Through our analysis and suggestions, we will outline some key features of the current issue of neo-colonialism and white supremacy in nuclear policy making and situate it to challenge these notions.

### Centring Justice

Nuclear justice in concept entails holding individuals, countries, and systems accountable for the harmful effects of the nuclear weapons complex on people (especially those most marginalised) and the environment. Disproportionate harms have been caused to the marginalised communities. Therefore, we must address issues such as environmental contamination, negative health impacts, displacement, and social and economic impacts of racist nuclear weapons policy making. The pursuit of nuclear justice must involve seeking reparations, remediation, compensation, and/or legal action against the actors who have caused harm or neglect in the nuclear industry, as well as advocating for policies that prioritise public safety, environmental protection, and disarmament.

Accountability in nuclear justice should be framed through a conference resolution framework that may involve criminal liability, reparations, truth-telling, and institutional reforms aimed at preventing the recurrence of nuclear harm.<sup>131</sup> It is essential when working to challenge racism and white supremacy, one must enact an equitable framework, that situates the needs of victims at the centre in order to redistribute power and reframe redress.

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<sup>128</sup> 'France Owes French Polynesia 'a Debt' over Nuclear Tests: Macron,' France 24, July 28, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210728-france-owes-french-polynesia-a-debt-over-nuclear-tests-macron>.

<sup>129</sup> Jon Henley, 'France Has Underestimated Impact of Nuclear Tests in French Polynesia, Research Finds,' *The Guardian*, March 9, 2021, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/09/france-has-underestimated-impact-of-nuclear-tests-in-french-polynesia-research-finds>.

<sup>130</sup> Vincent J. Intondi, *African Americans against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement*, Stanford Nuclear Age Series (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014).

<sup>131</sup> Jana Baldus, Caroline Fehl, and Sascha Hach, *Beyond the Ban a Global Agenda for Nuclear Justice* (Frankfurt am Main: Leibniz-Institut Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (HSFK), 2021).

## Reparations

In 2023, a new process began to establish an MoU between the Republic of the Marshall Islands government and the United States. This MoU, part of a new Compact of Free Association for a 20-year term, renews the United States Navy's rights to operate in the Pacific and includes provisions for financial compensation to the Marshallese people affected by nuclear testing.<sup>132</sup> The funds allocated under the MoU will be used for health care programs, an education and research facility, and a trust fund controlled by the Marshallese government. However, the compensation is limited to specific segments of the population and does not include the entire Marshallese diaspora. This arrangement resembles historical dynamics between colonial powers and occupied territories, where the territory is vulnerable and forced to accept terms that may not prioritise its interests.

Compensation is not only financial, a component of it also involves acknowledgment and formal apology for the wrongs committed under the guise of nuclear testing and attacks. Whilst an apology would be predominantly symbolic, it would signal a significant shift in government perspectives on the moral justification of carrying out nuclear tests and the casualties and generational trauma (emotional and environmental) it has caused. In a Ploughshares Fund podcast, Selina Leem, a Marshallese climate and nuclear testing awareness activist listed the inclusion of nuclear testing in United States educational curricula as one of the most important steps the United States must take as part of its reparations pathway.<sup>133</sup>

Discussions have begun to establish a victim assistance and environmental remediation mechanism under the TPNW. The draft proposal, initiated at the Meeting of State's Parties, aims to provide resources for assistance and remediation. However, challenges arise due to the non-participation of Nuclear Weapons States and the need to engage with nuclear umbrella states. The proposal includes contributions from various entities, including states, non-state actors, and supports a wide range of programs. The management of the fund would be overseen by a committee established by a diverse commission (inclusive of NGOs, community groups, and especially vulnerable populations e.g., indigenous communities).<sup>134</sup> The funding of housing is yet to be determined, with potential options being the International Committee of the Red Cross or the establishment of a standalone organisation, similar to the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal.

Lastly, building on the work of the Marshall Islands, another form of redress could include establishing an annual day to honour the testing affected diaspora, similar to the Hibakusha. This would provide an opportunity to honour victims of nuclear testing and accidents across the globe, ensuring the stories and experiences of the Hibakusha diaspora and other victims of nuclear testing are never forgotten.

## Diversity in Order to Combat Racism in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Debate

Considering the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on non-white communities, their inclusion within the debate is essential in capturing the full spectrum of impacts and making informed policy decisions based on lived experiences. Nuclear policymaking environments tend to be orthodox and resistant to change and consequentially, these are exclusionary of marginalised identities. Those in positions of power also tend to yield not only great power in shaping the work environment for their subordinates but also a great influence on

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<sup>132</sup> Daryl G. Kimball, 'U.S., Marshall Islands Sign Deal on Nuclear Testing Impacts,' Arms Control Association, March 2023, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-03/news/us-marshall-islands-sign-deal-nuclear-testing-impacts>.

<sup>133</sup> 'Press the Button | Ploughshares Fund,' accessed May 31, 2023, <https://ploughshares.org/pressthebutton>.

<sup>134</sup> 'An International Trust Fund for Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation: Briefing Note and Recommendations from ICAN' (The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), February 16, 2023), [https://assets.nationbuilder.com/ican/pages/3166/attachments/original/1676637600/ICAN\\_written\\_comments\\_Trust\\_Fund\\_questions\\_UPDATED.pdf?1676637600](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/ican/pages/3166/attachments/original/1676637600/ICAN_written_comments_Trust_Fund_questions_UPDATED.pdf?1676637600).

agenda-setting and policy making. Given that marginalised individuals experience disproportionately more harassment and encounter racialised or gendered expectations in the workplace, resulting in more mental and emotional weight than their peers, individuals perceive higher costs attached to attempts at injecting innovation into the field.<sup>135</sup>

Unfortunately for many, they eventually must conform to the orthodoxy of the field, reinforcing that by adopting conventional modes of thinking and slimming the chances for innovative policy making one will possibly have better personal and policy outcomes.<sup>136</sup> This should prompt us to think more deeply about the policies we put in place to extract the highest utility from diversity in nuclear policy making fields for the greatest positive impact, including the restraint in the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Diversity in voices also forces discussions to pan out from the hegemonic perspective, therefore including non-white voices has some power in directing narratives to include non-white and other more diverse perspectives. However, while there has been slow progress in grassroots movements and civil society, there must be further inclusion. There deserve to be more than a few individuals or prominent groups who are often given tokenistic recognition, rather than inclusive opportunities. Amplification and mainstreaming of under-represented voices are needed.

### **Inclusion and Diversification in Order to Combat Racism in the Discussion Space**

The lack of engagement from nuclear and aligned states during the Humanitarian Impact on Nuclear Weapons Conference highlights the deep divide and perceived exclusion. To address the colonial impacts of the nuclear weapons complex, it is crucial to prioritise discussions on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons within a neutral framework, separate from existing treaties. This allows for education and understanding of the historical implications of racist and colonial systems surrounding nuclear weapons.

There is a need for greater emphasis on educating policymakers, state actors, and the public about the colonial legacies of the nuclear weapons complex and the impediments to transitioning to a new security structure without these weapons. Discussions on nuclear issues often lack a real understanding of the harms caused by nuclear weapons development and maintenance and tend to focus solely on strategic considerations without considering the human impact.<sup>137</sup> The use of dehumanising language in nuclear rhetoric and the presence of racist tropes further undermine the conversation. An example of this issue, illuminated by a study, shows that the United States' public believed a nuclear attack that would kill hundreds of thousands of civilians belonging to a foreign enemy population would be justified if it was to save the lives of a few thousand American troops.<sup>138</sup> To challenge these notions and promote decolonisation in nuclear policy making, there should be a focus on humanising the enemy and highlighting the humanitarian impact of conflict decisions. Education and engagement should include impacted communities sharing their experiences, alongside experts providing

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<sup>135</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 'Sexual Harassment: NNSA Could Improve Prevention and Response Efforts in Its Nuclear Security Forces,' April 19, 2021, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-307.pdf>.

<sup>136</sup> Heather Hurlburt, Elizabeth Weingarten, Alexandra Stark, and Elena Souris, 'The Consensual Straitjacket': Four Decades of Women in Nuclear Security,' New America, Washington, DC, 2019. Available at: <https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/the-consensual-straitjacket-four-decades-of-women-in-nuclear-security/>.

<sup>137</sup> Marga Ferré, 'NATO and the Construction of the Enemy,' transform! European network for alternative thinking and political dialogue, July 4, 2022, <https://www.transform-network.net/en/blog/article/nato-and-the-construction-of-the-enemy/>.

<sup>138</sup> Paul Slovic et al., 'Virtuous Violence from the War Room to Death Row,' *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 34 (August 25, 2020): 20474–82, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2001583117>.



quantitative research on humanitarian impacts. Conferences and forums should operate independently from state party meetings to foster inclusive discussions and break down silos. By creating opportunities for diverse voices and promoting equity, a substantive conversation on disarmament can be achieved while broadening community expertise and decolonizing the current structure.

## Systemic Change in the International Order

Systems are built to guide processes and create outcomes, but the result of every system at its core is dependent on the nature of its structure. The global nuclear weapons complex order is not exempt. Due to colonial and racist understanding of many Black and brown countries, this sometimes means that non-nuclear weapon states are portrayed as 'irrational', 'emotional', and somehow 'less capable' in the international nuclear fora.<sup>139</sup> In contrast, the impact of the actions of nuclear weapon states including nuclear testing and production are felt by all. This culture of pervasive power highlights the entrenched nature of racism and white supremacy in the international nuclear order. The power imbalance between nuclear-armed states and non-nuclear states; the under-representation of different ethnic and racial backgrounds in decision-making roles and processes; and unequal stakeholder access to resources and opportunities are all but a few systemic issues that continue to permeate the international nuclear fora.

Promoting change in nuclear weapons narratives can lead to increased inclusivity in policymaking and diverse voices being represented. It is important to consider non-western experts for leadership positions in nuclear policy organisations. Researchers should prioritise incorporating perspectives from those who have firsthand experience with the dangers of nuclear weapons. Marginalised communities should have leadership roles in conferences such as the NPT Review Conference and TPNW Meeting of State Parties. Planning conferences and meetings well in advance, considering entry permit requirements and providing visa assistance, can facilitate participation from a diverse range of invitees.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, choosing event locations that are less problematic for non-western nations should be considered.

## Restoring Agency

Marginalised communities have historically borne the brunt of the global nuclear weapons complex, with First Nations peoples, POC, women, and children being disproportionately affected. Empowering these communities requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of their marginalisation and allows them to take an active role in advocating for change. Agency, or having a voice and the ability to act independently, is crucial for their healing and improvement of their lives. Frontline communities have been at the forefront of anti-nuclear movements, influencing policy through activism and demanding accountability. Their perspectives and experiences are invaluable in understanding and improving nuclear weapons policy. Creating inclusive spaces and networks, and providing opportunities for engagement and dialogue, is essential to restore their agency. The voices of diverse individuals and communities should be amplified, and both bottom-up and top-down approaches should be employed to ensure their meaningful participation in nuclear policy making. Stakeholder consultation and consideration of preferred forms of contribution are important for empowerment and capacity-building initiatives. Encouraging creativity and fostering cross-community collaboration can further enhance accessibility and inclusion of diverse knowledge and experiences.

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<sup>139</sup> Richard Falk, 'Nuclear Weapons Proliferation As a World Order Problem,' *International Security* 1, no. 3 (1977).

<sup>140</sup> Olamide Samuel, 'Travelling While Black: A First-Hand Account of the Restrictive Visa System Impacting Diversity at Nuclear Policy Conferences,' *European Leadership Network*, August 8, 2022, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/travelling-while-black-a-first-hand-account-of-the-restrictive-visa-system-impacting-diversity-at-nuclear-policy-conferences/>.

# Policy Recommendations

To provide equitable policy for all states, we must work towards decolonising the current power structures of the nuclear complex. Regardless of the complex nuances of security structures, this includes encouraging the practice of empathy when considering the cost-benefit of policy decisions. Working toward a new security structure that is more equitable, recognising the rising role of non-western states in geopolitics. This includes encouraging current and emerging leaders to think critically about policies currently in place, analysing their efficacy, and thinking past colonial and racist understandings of states across the globe. This also requires that non-western states advocate for themselves, displaying their value and reason to be included in the geo-political security conversation.

There must be an increased representation and participation of non-western countries in international nuclear policy forums (but also at a state and civil society level). This can include more seats for non-western countries on the governing bodies of these forums/ organisations/ conferences. Overall, a greater emphasis on the aspects communities have in common including the indiscriminate impacts of current policies.

- Regardless of the complexity of the geopolitical structures of the current climate; for there to be a just solution to previous implications of nuclear policymaking, acknowledging the fragility of the geopolitical structure, leaders must still seek reparations, remediation, compensation, and/or legal action against the actors who have caused harm or neglect in the nuclear industry, as well as advocating for policies that prioritise public safety, environmental protection, and disarmament.
- Seek to create and promote a decolonised framework that centralises justice and disarmament to achieve progress towards equity.
- Establish a conference resolution framework to ensure accountability in nuclear justice, encompassing criminal liability, reparations, truth-telling, and institutional reforms to prevent future nuclear harm.
- Promote inclusive and diverse representation by amplifying and mainstreaming under-represented voices in nuclear policy discussions, moving beyond tokenistic recognition and ensuring inclusive opportunities for non-white and diverse perspectives.
- There must be more expansive work done as part of the mechanism of the TPNW on victims' assistance and environmental remediation.
- Nuclear-armed states must implement financial compensation policies to provide fiscal restitution to countries and communities affected by nuclear testing, mining, and use.
- International policymaking entities must include those impacted by the nuclear weapons complex at the decision-making table in all multilateral discussions.
- Prioritise stakeholder consultation and incorporate preferred forms of contribution in empowerment and capacity-building initiatives for marginalised communities impacted by nuclear weapons, promoting inclusivity and diversity.
- Encourage creativity and facilitate cross-community collaboration to enhance accessibility, inclusion, and the amplification of diverse knowledge and experiences in efforts to improve nuclear weapons policy.
- Increase representation and participation of non-western countries in international nuclear policy forums, granting more seats on governing bodies to ensure diverse perspectives and inclusive decision-making.

- Emphasise commonalities among communities, highlighting the indiscriminate impacts of current policies and promoting dialogue and collaboration at both the state and civil society level.

## Conclusion

There is much to be done to address the generationally negative harms, caused by racism and white supremacy in nuclear policy making, rather than hiding from our past we must just begin. The first step in this process is to provide agency to those impacted by the harms of the nuclear weapons complex. Learning what redress and remediation looks like to them, and then working to create just fiscal, ecological, emotional, and legal reparations to create a more just security structure. We must then decolonise our systems and structures, work towards disarmament, and create a global security framework rooted in human centred security, equity and justice. If we are going to be a world that is transparent about states national security and global foreign policy, we must address and work for a world that is more equitable and just for all.