



As the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the CTBT approaches, progress towards the goal of a comprehensive ban of nuclear tests has stalled. With the recent US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the bleak state of affairs as portrayed in the 2018 US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the goal of a world without nuclear weapons appears further away than ever. Given the current state of the international nuclear arms control regime, it is a useful exercise to engage in introspection. One frequent criticism is the disproportionate representation of women in the arms control debate. It is crucial for more women to participate as they would bring a more diverse perspective in the discourse and perhaps this diversity may result in some progress towards the goal of disarmament. From the ubiquitous 'manel' to the lack of female led think tanks and the lack of gendered perspective is unmistakable.<sup>1</sup> This issue is a complex problem and efforts such as increasing women participation fall short of affecting the necessary systemic change. One of the areas in which change can be advanced is in theoretical terms, that in order to bring about gender parity we should draw perspectives from a more diverse group. A school of thought which began on the periphery but has more recently worked its way into the mainstream is Feminist Security Studies (FSS).<sup>e</sup> for some time and has come to prominence through authors such as Carol Cohn, Claire Dickenson, or Ann Tickner.

Limited progress has been made towards the goal of nuclear disarmament and with the recent political changes in perspectives on disarmament treaties, perhaps it is time to take a more concrete step in having a more diverse discourse. One such change is the White House announcement on February 1, 2019 of its intention to withdraw from the INF because they alleged that Russia has breached the terms of the treaty. The US has also alleged that Russia had been covertly developing new nuclear capable missiles as well as the deployment of the prohibited missiles in Europe and the former Soviet states during the Ukraine crisis in 2014. The US is set to exit from the treaty in six months unless Russia destroys the prohibited missiles. In more recent times, another allegation was made by US officials in the Defence Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council.<sup>2</sup> Their, as of yet unsubstantiated, claims states that Russia engaged in low yield nuclear tests, violating the testing moratorium established under the CTBT.

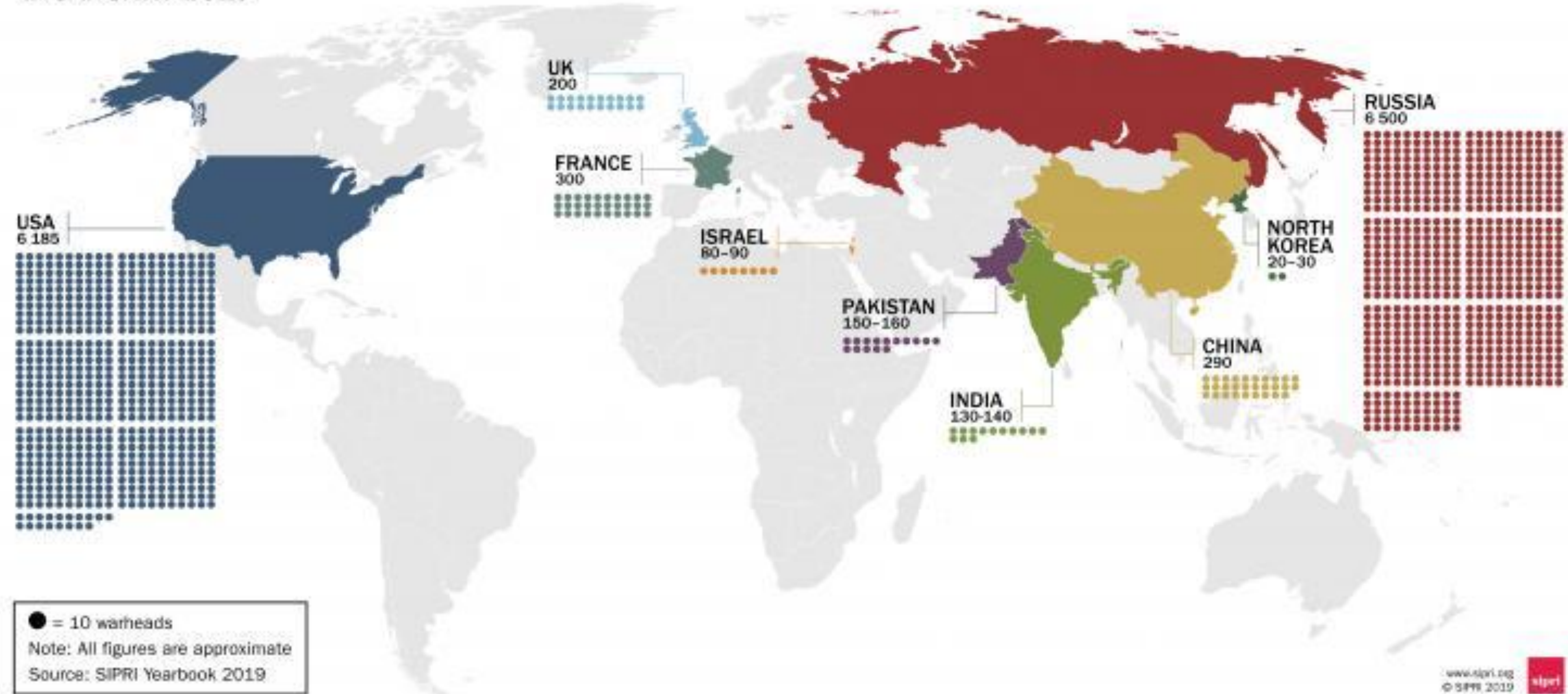
Current US attitudes towards arms control treaties can be encapsulated by the 2018 US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) released by the Department of Defense on February 5, 2018. It assessed the changing directions of foreign nuclear programs and how these developments impact the US and their response. The report is the first since 2010, and represents a stark deviation from previous reviews, in tone and in viewpoint. The review begins by alluding to these changes such as North Korea's nuclear development, Iranian unchecked nuclear ambitions, Russian aggression in the Crimea which threatens US allies in the region. New developments including "Moscow's decided return to Great Power competition"<sup>3</sup> a renewed course of action which is a departure from the policy of non-proliferation. It assessed the changing directions of foreign nuclear programs and how these developments impact the US and their response. The report is the first since 2010, and represents a stark deviation from previous reviews, in tone and in viewpoint. The review begins by alluding to these changes such as North Korea's nuclear development, Iranian unchecked nuclear ambitions, Russian aggression in the Crimea which threatens US allies in the region. New developments including "Moscow's decided return to Great Power competition"<sup>3</sup> a renewed course of action which is a departure from the policy of non-proliferation. The NPR cites modernized Chinese nuclear forces and North Korea nuclear capability a source of concern as well as an explicit challenge to US military superiority in the Western Pacific. Given these circumstances, the review asserts that modernizing nuclear forces including the replacing of "nuclear ballistic missile submarines, strategic bombers, nuclear cruise missiles ICBMs, and associated nuclear command and control"<sup>4</sup> as well as the "recapitaliz[ation] of the nuclear weapons complex of laboratories and plants."<sup>5</sup> This approach shifts away from the previous administration of advancing arms control to the threat of engaging the use of nuclear weapons. The expenditures on modernized nuclear weapons would ensure that the US would be able to effectively deter threats which would be less costly than fighting wars. The report also restates the US continued commitment to long-held non-proliferation goals but that the best way to pursue this goal is by "ensuring our nuclear deterrent remains strong"<sup>6</sup> which "provides the best opportunity for convincing other nuclear powers to engage meaningfully in arms control initiatives."<sup>7</sup>



Timeline of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: 1987-2019. Source: European Parliament. 2019. "Briefing: The End of the INF Treaty? A Pillar of European Security Architecture at Risk."

Although it continues to maintain that nuclear weapons would only be deployed in "extreme circumstances", but the overall tone and text is somewhat malleable as it also emphasizes that the US will use tailored strategies and flexible capabilities in their deterrence approach. The review advocates the notion that nuclear weapons are effective in deterring large-scale conventional warfare furthering global security. Further on through the document, under the heading "Non-Proliferation and Arms Control", the US reaffirms their commitment to non-proliferation, citing the development of North Korea as a nuclear power and Iran as a challenge to overcome. The NPR also notes the inability of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons in the long term; a common talking point from American hawks. The NPR also references the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and notes that the US will not seek to ratify it but continue to support the goals put forth by it. It is difficult to parse their position towards non-proliferation as they previously attempted to reduce funding to the CTBT and to other international organizations which do not benefit the US adequately. Additionally, the US commitment to disarmament is inconsistent with their stance to modernize their nuclear arsenal which actively undermines other arms control initiatives.

## GLOBAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS STOCKPILES IN JANUARY 2019



Global Nuclear Weapons Stockpile in January 2019. Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "World Nuclear Forces."

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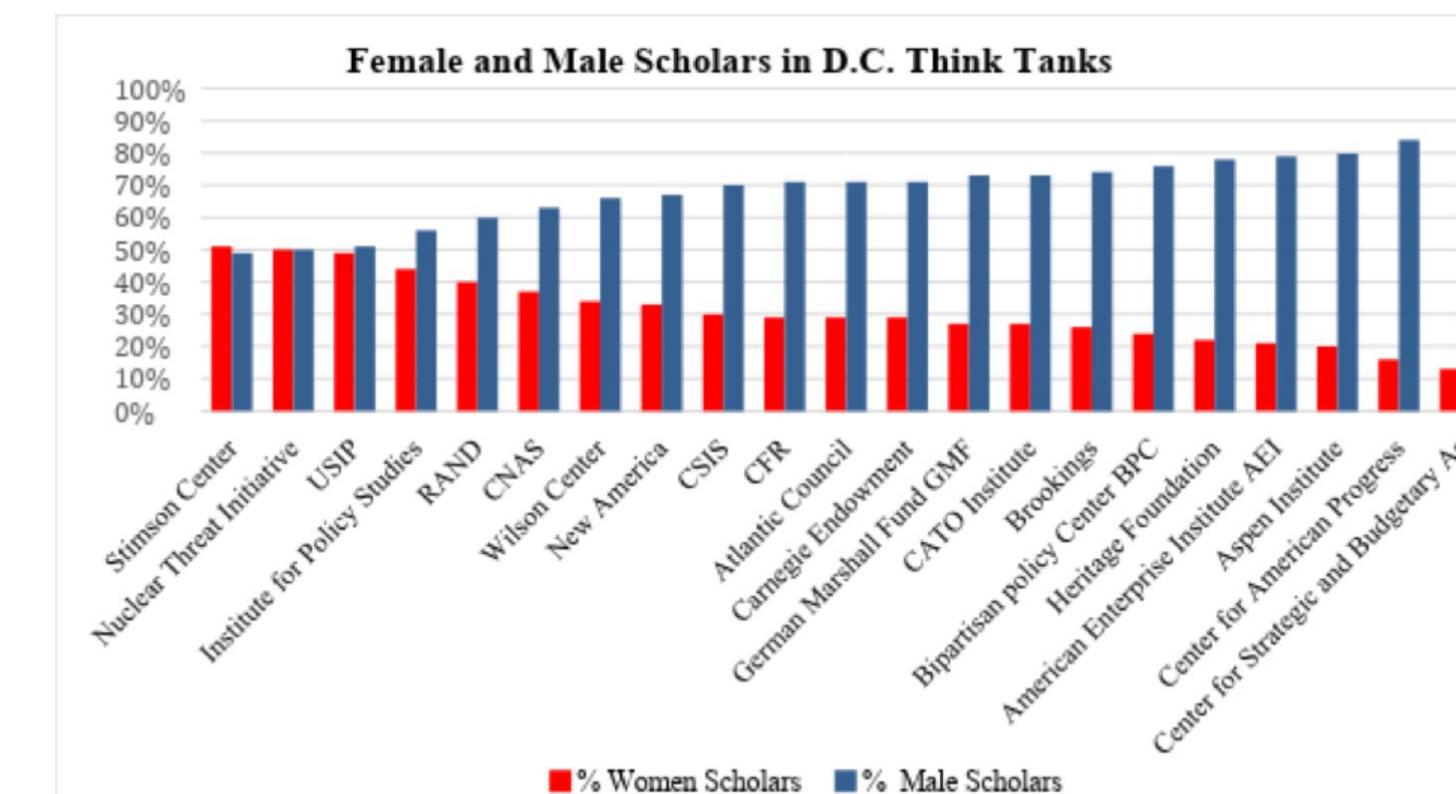
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The 2018 NPR offers a fundamentally realist perspective of global politics, describing a future beset by uncertainty and distrust and one where international institutions are ineffective at constraining state action. The strong emphasis on "hedg[ing] against an uncertain future"<sup>8</sup> show a fundamental distrust in the capacity of treaties such as the CTBT or NPT to curb derelict behaviour, in spite of statements to the contrary. While the document identifies foreign threats and military build-ups, it prescribes a US military build-up in lieu of arms reduction treaties or further confidence building measures. Further military and conventional build-ups have at times led to arms races and is a classic example of a security dilemma; in reassuring their own security, the US is reasserting itself as a threat to other states with nuclear modernization. While realists disagree on the details of a security dilemma, they serve to undermine global security further which have often proceeded large conflicts.

In the aftermath of the US withdrawal from the INF and the US does proceed with nuclear modernization, it potentially may influence other countries to also modernize their nuclear arsenals. The oft-utilized realist lens is problematic for the arms control community and as the NPR demonstrates, issues of arms control become mired in discussions of security. Every question about disarmament or arms control becomes an uncertain exchange where a state gives up security in pursuit of a nebulous utopian goal. This trade-off allows for the US to justify their temporary move away from supporting the goal of disarmament. The US military shift towards a great power struggle away from (non-state insurgencies) also represents a stronger tacit acceptance of the realist lens. (Because deterrence theory is more focussed on deterring state action and is wholly ineffective at deterring non-state actor action). The assertions made by Cohn and other feminist theorists work against the norms and ideals of the Realist ideology which many countries adhere to on nuclear issues. Realist norms view countries set adrift in a sea of anarchy only able to rely on themselves for protection and security.



A graph illustrating the ratio of scholars of DC Think Tanks in 2018. Source: Bindi, Federiga and Mimosa Giamanco. April 10, 2019. "Missing in Action: The Absence of Women Scholars on Foreign Policy Panels." Women in International Security.

Compared to the alternative, voluntarily disarming and surrendering your weapons in an effort to foster cooperation is considered as a passive more feminine act. Realism as masculinity through the use of this gendered language and imagery which strongly underpin Realist ideology in which 'masculine' states fight for independence and security in a state of anarchy is a notion which Cohn supports. These tendencies are present even amongst 'good' nuclear countries such as the UK, who has voluntarily reduced its arsenals and generally been a compliant member of the international arms control regime. An example of this is the 2006 release of the UK's White Paper, *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent* which reaffirmed the British Government's stance on the use of nuclear weapons. What stands out in this example is the consistent invocation of Realist norms and ideas how a country with a small arsenal such as the UK still strongly relies on Realist norms to justify their acts of aggression and to maintain global security. The UK's White Paper utilizes sterile realist language remarking that "[a]ny state that we can hold responsible for assisting a nuclear attack on our vital interests can expect that this would lead to a proportionate response"<sup>9</sup> coldly claiming the necessity of a potential massive retaliation in the case of an attack. Duncanson and Eschle note how rational the concept of a 'proportionate response' seems to be the result of a complex series of calculations rather than the result of a simple brutal realist analysis.

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a proponent on disarmament and nuclear safety, called attention to the increased risks of nuclear conflict in his speech on peace and conflict resolution to the UN Security Council on June 12, 2019. He cautioned that nuclear proliferation poses a severe existential threat as "the risks of nuclear conflict are higher than they have been in several decades."<sup>10</sup> The current arms control and nuclear non-proliferation structure is under threat by a combination of neglect and flawed threat analysis, and this may lead to its collapse. This peril is highlighted by two current issues, the denuclearization of North Korea and the Iranian nuclear development programmes. He urged the P5 States to pursue progress on their disarmament obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and stressed the imperativeness to support and protect the NPT with the upcoming review conference in 2020 and the consequence of failure is unthinkable. The review conference occurs every five years and the purpose is to review the treaty's implementation and to consider any revisions. The NPT, came into force in 1970, is the only legally binding multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty and includes every nation except India, Pakistan, Israel, and South Sudan. The NPT has three main components: non-proliferation: states not possessing nuclear weapons to commit not to acquire them; disarmament: nuclear weapon states agree to pursue negotiations aimed at nuclear disarmament; peaceful uses: all NPT states to promote and endorse in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in accordance with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003 and since it longer considers itself to be bound by it, North Korea has conducted nuclear testing with an escalation in 2017. There was renewed hope for the denuclearization of North Korea when the first meeting between the US and North Korea took place in Singapore in 2018 and a second meeting in Hanoi in February 2019, but the Hanoi meeting ended abruptly and no further talks are planned. There is a fundamental difference between the two states in trying to achieve greater security, the US forcing unilateral disarmament on North Korea and North Korea using nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

There are concerns as the effect that this may have on the next NPT review in 2020, whether the traditional view of nuclear deterrence still apply, that the threat of mutual assured destruction would prevent war. The continued reliance of non nuclear weapon states on the overall nuclear policies of nuclear weapon states: France, the UK and the US. The U.S. has moved years ago toward "flexible response" a pre-emptive strategy that promises to strike first with nuclear weapons, even in the event of a limited chemical or biological attack.

The recent US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is also a cause for concern not only to the Middle East stability, but sending the wrong message to North Korea about the handling of nuclear discussion. It took many years of intense negotiations and sanctions to achieve the JCPOA with the P5+1 states (US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) in July 2015. JCOPA is a comprehensive 25-year nuclear accord restricting Iran's nuclear capacity including reduction in uranium stockpiles, reduction of operational centrifuges, and continuous monitoring and verification in exchange for relief of sanctions. In January 2016, all sanctions were lifted in accordance with Iran's progress in meeting key metrics of the accord.

On May 8, 2018, the US announced that it would unilaterally cease implementing the JCPOA and commence to reimpose sanctions on Iran because the accord does not fully restrict Iran's capability in developing nuclear weapons or stop its support for terrorism that destabilize the Middle East. The other P5+1 states have continued to uphold the JCPOA as Iran has complied with the implementation of the accord. In November 2018, the US reimposed all economic sanctions removed under the JCPOA, targeting both Iran and states that they trade with, affecting core industries including oil exports, shipping, and banks. The governments of UK, Germany, and France issued a joint statement of their continued support for the accord and emphasizes its importance. They opposed the sanctions and have arranged an alternative payment system to assist European firms which trade with Iran. The special purpose vehicle (SPV) is to assist companies avoid facing US penalties. However, the US Treasury Secretary has stated that the US would target any firm or organization avoiding the sanctions. In May 2019, Iran reduced its commitments under the JCPOA and announced a 60 day deadline for the other members (Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, and Germany) to protect it from US sanctions, otherwise it would resume production of enriched uranium. The IAEA has confirmed that Iran has increased production of enriched uranium, but has not exceeded the ceiling set by the accord. The Tasnim News Agency reported that Iran will announce on June 17, 2019 of its intention to withdraw from the accord.

### Conclusion

Nuclear weapons are an existential threat to human civilization and represent an unparalleled risk of catastrophic destruction. With the current political climate, where states breathlessly withdraw from arms control treaties, organizations such as CTBT play an even more vital role. Most agree with the notion of the destructive nature of nuclear weapons and they should be banned, and yet there appears to be an invisible barrier to achieve the goal of comprehensive ban of nuclear tests. Perhaps the pervasiveness and entrenchment of the realist concept in security studies has hindered the discourse from being more transparent with a larger, more diverse cast of voices within it. Cohn had critique about the way language which has developed pertaining to security studies and the effects on the perception of the issue. The classical modes of thinking about technology, modernity, and rationality would be disrupted and if Cohn's "language revolution" ever began, it would be the beginning of a transformative discourse. Perhaps this underscores the established and complexity of the situation surrounding nuclear weapons, while it represents an exceptional threat to our continued existence on earth it is tied with other deeply entrenched views.