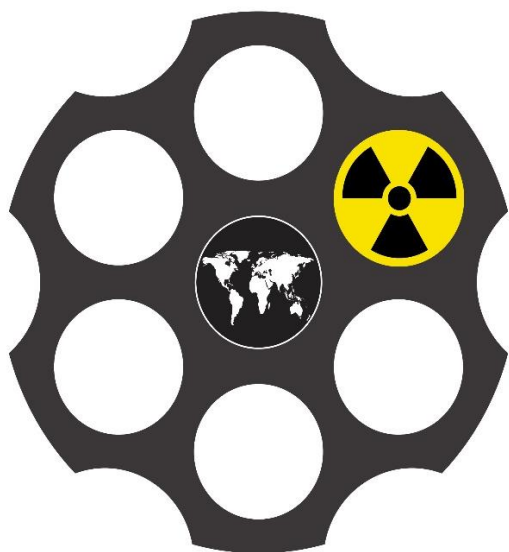


WHITE PAPER



GLOBAL SECURITY REFORM INITIATIVE

TOWARD A NEW GLOBAL SECURITY PARADIGM

globalsecurityreform.org

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GSRI OVERVIEW

➤ **The Objective:** *Reform Global Security Order to Mitigate Risks & Costs of Militarism*

The objective of the Global Security Reform Initiative (GSRI) is to reform the reigning global security paradigm by i) *mitigating the role of national militarism in international security relations*; and ii) *replacing it with strengthened, internationalized security maintenance and dispute resolution mechanisms*. GSRI seeks an international protocol to codify and implement these goals.

➤ **The Problem:** *Reigning Militarized Global Security Order*

Militarism – or *the reliance upon strong military capacity in the pursuit of national interest and security* – is an old phenomenon. Its basic might-makes-right logic has been the centerpiece of realist conceptions of international relations¹ (casting superior force as the ultimate guarantor of security in an anarchic global environment of self-interested states) and military strategy² (emphasizing the utility of superior force as the key to battlefield success and the foundation of force-based coercion). This thinking developed alongside a millennia-spanning quest to increase the violence capacity of weaponry, from the simple stone shot to the awesome hydrogen bomb.³

However, the practical utility of this trajectory – and militarism's underlying logic propelling it – reached an apex with the dawn of the nuclear era and the onset of mutually assured destruction. Decisive military victory at acceptable cost between military powers became impossible. Thus, no longer able to use superior force in actual battle, militarists were forced to develop a new brand of militarism based on assertions of superior force potential in hypothetical battle, accompanied by indecisive proxy fighting and recourse to alternative means of coercion, including grey zone tactics⁴ and economic warfare.⁵ This bombastic iteration, embodied by militarized national security (MNS) policy, amounts to a *continued commitment to zero-sum national security through risk creation for others, over positive-sum common security through risk reduction for all*.

Since its entrenchment following World War II, the MNS model has fueled an incessant security dilemma, characterized by repeated waves of arms racing, ongoing low-level fighting and division of the international community into hostile power blocs with attendant tension and risk, which compound over time with perpetual arms advancement and proliferation – all with no end in sight. This pugnacious model is argued by its proponents to be necessary for security.⁶ GSRI emphatically rejects this claim. At the national level, societies have managed to replace primitive might-makes-right principles with cooperative law and order. The international society of states can and must do the same.⁷

➤ **The Thesis:** *Pragmatic Argument Against Carbon Economy Applies to MNS Model*

GSRI draws inspiration from the climate movement's efforts to make a holistic transition away from the carbon-based economy to a sustainable energy model. Its agenda has been driven by objective, evidence-based arguments that the present carbon-intensive model i) has immediate deleterious effects on human life and planetary systems; and ii) is unsustainable and will lead to catastrophe if unchecked (*runaway climate change is a ticking time bomb*). GSRI contends that these same core arguments apply to the MNS model – namely, that it i) is having immediate deleterious effects on human life and international relations; and ii) is unsustainable and will lead to catastrophe if unchecked (*militarism is a repeated game of nuclear Russian roulette*). GSRI

asserts that, just as international efforts are being undertaken to counteract climate change, intensive efforts are needed to counteract militarism.

GSRI PRAGMATIC APPROACH

The logic of the GSRI pragmatic approach is simple – *inaction in the face of a great and growing global threat is irresponsible*. This basic insight has found consensus in the context of the carbon-based economy. GSRI asserts a parallel conclusion with regard to the MNS model based on a three-pillar pragmatic approach:

➤ **Pillar I: Evaluate Empirical Evidence**

Critical evaluation of the MNS model requires objective review of its characteristics, policy manifestations and global effects. While moral reservations surrounding militarism are a significant consideration, GSRI's argumentation is based upon pragmatic appraisal of MNS policy and its empirical track record.

Characteristics of MNS Model

The MNS model is built on the premise of a combative relationship among nations in which zero-sum thinking guides struggles over resources, influence and ideology. In keeping with this perspective, the geopolitical landscape is viewed in terms of threats and potential avenues to neutralize them. Central to this conception is the embrace of military force and its threatened employment as a primary tool for securing and defending national interests. The combative nature of the MNS model engenders competition, mistrust and antagonism, frustrating international cooperation and undermining democracy and transparency at the national level.

Empirically Observable Characteristics of MNS Model

- Model is inherently combative
 - Relies on force to coerce action (compellence) and/or inaction (deterrence)
- Model engenders competition and frustrates international cooperation
 - Creates and sustains adversarial international relations
 - Views cooperation as a sign of weakness and appeasement
- Model undermines national democracy and transparency
 - Requires high levels of classification⁸
 - Necessitates key policy decisions on the prioritization of and approach to security issues be made undemocratically without public input
- Model is acutely susceptible to corruption
 - Yields perverse incentives among public and private sector elites to create and amplify national security threats, which classification then prevents the public from verifying
 - Evinces a track record of documentable corruption⁹

National Policy Manifestations of MNS Policy

Implementation of MNS policy in major nations has resulted in a steady stream of low-level conflict, continual arms advancement, rising defense spending, and increasing reliance on a range of grey zone tactics. These trends go hand in hand with aggressive propaganda campaigns to sustain public support for militaristic policy.

Empirically Observable National Policy Manifestations of MNS Model

- Succession of low-level wars and proxy conflicts since 1945¹⁰
- Continual arms advancement¹¹
- Rising defense spending¹²
- Increasing recourse to grey zone tactics and economic warfare
- Rampant propaganda dissemination

Global Effects of MNS Policy

Far from achieving widespread global security, MNS policy has produced a litany of low-level conflicts and proxy clashes that have left extensive human suffering, regional devastation, population displacement, and environmental harm in their wake. Over the past 75 years, the MNS model has been characterized by near constant tension between nuclear-armed states and an attendant state of catastrophic conflict escalation risk, exacerbated by relentless advancement of destabilizing weapons capabilities. This combination of tension and risk, coupled with recurrent crises, creates instability and international insecurity.

The 2022 crisis over Ukraine exemplifies the danger of MNS policy. Instead of pursuing measures to deescalate tension, mutual brinkmanship has ratcheted up the tensivity into a new major power Cold War with nuclear saber-rattling, hostile power bloc expansion, increasing defense spending, accelerating arms racing, collapsing arms control, and provocative posturing. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock constitutes an approximate measure for the state of global security. Its post-1990 trend¹³ toward midnight is indicative of the failure of the MNS model. Instead of a promised post-Cold War peace dividend, MNS policy has delivered a complex of regionally devastating wars and steadily rising military competition among major powers.

Empirically Observable Global Effects of MNS Policy

- Constant international tension with recurrent escalation peaks
- Constant conflict escalation risk with arms advancement and proliferation
- Disastrous human impact¹⁴
- Counterproductive economic impact¹⁵
- Deleterious environmental impact¹⁶

➤ **Pillar II: Identify Core Problem**

GSRI identifies MNS policy as the core problem and articulates the following thesis:

- Premise I → *MNS model is having immediate deleterious impacts on human life and planetary wellbeing*

Low-level and proxy conflicts persist, devastating affected regions (e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Ukraine) and precipitating unprecedented refugee crises. In addition to the direct casualties of these wars, vast numbers of people suffer from displacement, poverty and psychological trauma. Militaristic policy and the divisive propaganda campaigns that accompany it frustrate international cooperation, jeopardize the global economy, consume enormous resources, and exacerbate the climate crisis.

- Premise II → *MNS model is unsustainable in the long term and will lead to catastrophe if unchecked*

Since World War II, the confluence of militarism's persistent international tensions, constant escalation risk and perpetual arms advancement have led to a series of near catastrophes,¹⁷ averted, according to the former commander of United States nuclear forces, General George Lee Butler, "by some combination of skill, luck and divine intervention – probably the latter in the greatest proportion."¹⁸ However, "miracles don't persist."¹⁹ If Russian roulette is played repeatedly, eventually the revolver will discharge. Similarly, if MNS policy continues to fuel tension, destabilizing arms advancement and provocative military brinkmanship, eventually intended or unintended escalation will follow. Resurgent major power military tensions, coupled with intense arms racing in new high-tech weapons capabilities, compound the risk of catastrophic escalation.

- Premise III → *MNS model is anachronistic and dysfunctional:*

The primitive might-makes-right logic of militarism no longer applies in the era of mutually catastrophic modern warfare. Accordingly, recourse to force has become an ineffective means of international dispute resolution and its threatened employment a recipe for perpetual, risk-elevating competition. The maintenance of large military establishments and associated competitive development of unusable arms is an anachronism, reflecting dogma that has become self-defeating. MNS policy today serves to protract and aggravate disputes, not resolve them, driving a ceaseless security dilemma and counter-productive conflict.²⁰ In short, the MNS security model has the direct practical effect of generating insecurity.

- Conclusion → *Just as the international community has recognized the untenability of the carbon-based economy and is taking steps to replace it with a more sustainable framework, the international community must recognize the untenability of the MNS model and take steps to replace it with a more effective and sustainable framework!*

➤ **Pillar III: Advocate Remedial Action**

Since World War II and the entrenchment of the MNS model among the major military powers, peace advocacy has been downgraded from challenging militarism as a security framework to attempting to restrict its most perilous manifestations. The modest achievements of these efforts are unraveling as renewed military rivalry intensifies. Adversarial power blocs expand, competitive arms racing accelerates, existing arms control agreements collapse, propaganda campaigns flare, and economic warfare expands, as the major powers race toward a new Cold – and potentially *hot* – War.

GSRI argues that to mitigate the grave risks of the prevailing militarized security paradigm, a reorientation of focus back on the institution of militarism itself is necessary. GSRI advocates remedying the malady and not simply treating its symptoms. This translates to foundational reform of the present global security order; it means more than just placing restraints on the MNS model, but phasing it out and replacing it with a more effective and sustainable security framework, better tailored to modern realities.

Toward this end, GSRI proposes a foundational two-part plan:

❖ ***Demilitarize international relations through network of reconceptualized arms control regimes and tension reduction measures***

GSRI proposes working toward conclusion and implementation of an international protocol on reversing military competition and reducing the role of MNS policy in international security relations. Important measures to be included in this protocol might include:

- Instituting tension reduction measures and dismantling hostile military blocs
- Generating new arms control regimes which unite novel technological capabilities with innovative institutional design features
- Creating centralized international body to facilitate compliance with common arms control and tension reduction measures through provision of objective, third-party oversight and verification

❖ ***Construct alternative security paradigm rooted in internationalized security management and non-violent, rule of law-based dispute resolution***

GSRI proposes working toward strengthening and expanding existing international infrastructure and mechanisms for global security management and non-violent inter-state dispute resolution. Important steps toward this end might include:

- Reinforcing and improving foundational United Nations framework
- Introducing new mechanisms for conflict monitoring and management, utilizing novel technological capabilities and innovative institutional design concepts
- Expanding and buttressing internationalized arbitration and dispute resolution fora

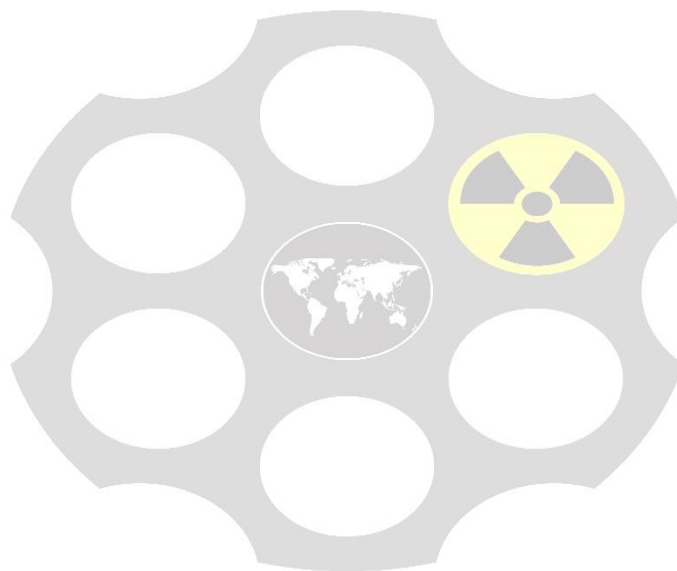
GSRI CONFERENCE AGENDA

As an initial step toward reform of the present global security order, GSRI is planning a series of conferences and workshops. The first – *Unsustainable Instability: The Danger of the Militarized Global Security Order* – will take place in Bonn, Germany in Fall 2023. The workshop seeks to define the post-World War II MNS security model, assess its practical effects on security – global and human – and, ultimately, consider its sustainability as a paradigm in light of its track record and future implications. The workshop will lead to publication of an edited volume and feature presentations from contributing authors. It will serve to advance Pillars I and II of GSRI's pragmatic approach – evidence evaluation and core problem identification.

Subsequent conferences will then build on this first workshop and advance Pillar III – formulation of solution concepts. These will focus on i) reducing the influence of MNS policy in international security relations; and ii) strengthening internationalized security preservation mechanisms as an MNS replacement. An important focus of these future events will be utilizing new technologies to promote peace and enhance non-militarized security. Emerging technological capabilities, currently being applied by MNS-driven states to advancement of military ends, also hold great promise for revolutionizing international security management, non-violent dispute resolution and arms control and reduction regimes. Collaboration between policy and technical experts is needed to realize this potential. Cultivating this synergy is a GSRI priority.

CONTACT GSRI

Information on GSRI and its program is available at the GSRI website: globalsecurityreform.org. For additional information and/or inquiries relating to GSRI or its planned conferences, please contact GSRI co-founder and conference coordinator, Ryan Swan, at ryan@globalsecurityreform.org.



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- ⁴ For an overview, see Center for Strategic and International Studies report: <https://www.csis.org/features/competing-gray-zone>
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- ⁶ E.g.: “A more lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovating Joint Force... will sustain [national] influence and ensure favorable balances of power that safeguard the free and open international order.” 2018 *United States National Defense Strategy*, pg. 1, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>
- ⁷ Efforts to order international relations around principles of law began in the early 20th century, climaxing during the inter-war period. Since World War II, however, such initiative has all but been abandoned, as the major power-dominated MNS security model became firmly entrenched. Interestingly though, the conditions for realizing a genuine law-based order in which national military might-makes-right-based tendencies yield to ordered internationalized dispute resolution are riper than ever. Unlike the pre-nuclear era, militarism today is incapable of resolving major power disputes – instead, just creating enormous risk for all. Furthermore, new technologies provide novel tools for mitigating uncertainty and other theoretical drivers of national militarism.
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- ¹⁰ For a list of wars and conflicts involving the United States since World War II, see <https://www.infoplease.com/history/us/major-military-operations-since-world-war-ii>
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- ¹⁸ See <https://www.wagingpeace.org/general-lee-butler/>
- ¹⁹ See GSRI’s interview with Professor Noam Chomsky, <https://globalsecurityreform.org/>
- ²⁰ A clarion example of the security-undermining effect of the MNS model is the United States’ “war on terror.” For a brief overview, see <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210826-total-failure-the-war-on-terror-20-years-on>