

How the Nukes Were Queered: A Case Study in DEI as a Political and Bureaucratic Weapon

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

DEI is a tool for siphoning resources and a means of subverting and capturing the mission of institutions in favor of an alternative agenda.

DEI presents a significant danger to national security, risking deterrence and raising questions about insider threats and the role of foreign influence.

Fortunately, the incoming Trump Administration has an opportunity to break up this ideological infrastructure and clean out the American nuclear field.

In 2024 a Biden Administration appointee at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) briefly went viral online for co-authoring an article, published by the influential *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, titled “Queering Nuclear Weapons: How LGBTQ+ Inclusion Strengthens Security and Reshapes Disarmament.”¹ The article, which attacked “the common belief that queer identity has no relevance for nuclear policy” and argued that “queer theory informs the struggle for nuclear justice and disarmament,” became the subject of incredulous mockery by conservative media.²

The article, and the broader proliferation of far-left ideological dogmas within the nuclear policy field that it helped to illuminate, deserve significantly more serious scrutiny, however. Doubtless, few areas demand more level-headed and responsible governance than nuclear security and deterrence, subjects of literally

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existential importance. Yet investigation reveals that the ideology of “woke” identity politics (the sacralization of victimhood; extreme obsession with racial, gender, and sexual identity categories; and the idealization of revolutionary liberation from society’s alleged “structural oppression”) has become widespread in the field—particularly within an influential complex of related think tanks and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but even inside government agencies like the NNSA.

To outsiders not inducted into the language of this ideology, talk of “queering nuclear weapons” likely appears profoundly disconnected from reality, and therefore something rather silly and easily dismissible. This response misunderstands the true nature, purpose, and threat of identity politics, however. As detailed below, the ideology—and, in particular, its manifestation in demands for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)—functions simultaneously as a powerful bureaucratic and political weapon, a tool for siphoning resources, and a means of subverting and capturing the mission of institutions in favor of an alternative agenda. In fact, the nuclear policy field represents a potent and timely case study in how far-left forces often work to hollow out institutions and secure material and political advantages, as well as an example of a nearly ideal bureaucratic ecosystem for identity politics to take root and flourish.

Overall, the advance of DEI and woke ideology in the nuclear field presents a potentially significant danger to U.S. national security, risking the undermining of deterrence and raising troubling questions about both insider threats and the possible role of foreign influence in sponsoring ideological activism meant to encourage American disarmament. As the Trump Administration takes office in 2025, the case of DEI ideology in the nuclear field offers lessons on ongoing threats to investigate and address inside the broader policy establishment—as well as implications for how to reform vital institutions and fortify them against ideological subversion.

What “Queering Nuclear Weapons” Really Means

It is worthwhile here to examine and unpack the intended messages of the “Queering Nuclear Weapons” article in detail, including tracing the citations and similar work of its authors, as doing so helps shed light on the deeper purposes of those advancing woke ideology in nuclear security. Written by Sneha Nair, a special assistant and policy advisor at NNSA, along with Louis Reitmann, a researcher at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, the article aims to establish specific narratives for specific political ends.

These ends can be broken down into three primary objectives:

1. Redefining domestic political enemies as urgent national security threats;
2. Accumulating budgetary resources, job positions, and bureaucratic power for ideological allies and political client groups; and
3. Inverting the core mission of the broader American nuclear security policy apparatus from deterrence to disarmament.

At a surface level, the article focuses on arguing for the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the nuclear policy field, which the authors describe as “male-dominated and unwelcoming” to women, LGBTQ people, and racial minorities. They write that increasing the percentage of such identity groups working in the field is “essential for creating effective nuclear policy” because, they claim, increasing diversity will improve organizational performance. To support this argument, they cite a discredited McKinsey study that alleged to demonstrate this outcome.³

The article quickly transitions to a very different reason for expanding DEI programs, however, to counter the threat allegedly posed by domestic political extremists. “Including a wider range of perspectives in nuclear decision making creates a more comprehensive definition of who or what constitutes a ‘threat’ to nuclear security,” they write, specifying the danger of “white supremacist groups.” Such a threat is liable, they posit, to “go undetected when a white-majority workforce does not perceive these groups and their ideological motivation as a relevant threat to their nuclear security mission,” while “women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community” are “more likely to identify these types of behaviors and attitudes as security risks and can play a crucial role in identifying a potential insider threat.”⁴

The article here links to another paper authored by Nair, titled, “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Nuclear Security Culture: Insider Threat Assessments at Nuclear Facilities.”⁵ The abstract of this paper explains that existing threat assessments are “based off of problematic and antiquated conceptualizations of who or what constitutes a threat,” and that “nuclear security frameworks must adapt to new risk factors and challenges, both internal and external.” It argues that “by implementing [DEI] into personnel reliability programs and nuclear security culture, nuclear facilities can improve insider threat assessments to screen for domestic violent

extremists.” It concludes: “For nuclear facilities to more effectively screen their personnel for insider threats, a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DE&I) security culture must be the norm.”⁶

As an example of an insider threat the paper names Ashli Babbitt, the Air Force veteran who worked as an employee at the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant from 2015 to 2017 before being killed by a Capitol Hill police officer on January 6, 2021. Nair writes that although “once an avid supporter of Barack Obama, Babbit [Sic] was radicalized on social media, subscribing to far-right mass delusions” and “conspiracy theories,” including about politics and the COVID-19 pandemic. To Nair, the fact that Babbitt was employed despite holding what are relatively common right-wing views is “an indication of the need for thorough social media analysis by personnel reliability programs” in the nuclear field.

Overall, she argues, the field ought to adopt “a more expansive view and assessment of who or what could pose as an insider threat.”⁷ “Maintaining disproportionate focus on foreign or externally influenced threats, when domestic actors pose a much larger concern in the domestic threat environment, has institutionalized biases and exclusionary behavior that can exacerbate the risks posed by insider threats,” Nair writes. Having identified the primary “nuclear security threat of far-right extremists,” she concludes by recommending “insider threat prevention programs with a DE&I lens.”⁸

It is important to be clear what is being suggested here—screening out and purging right-wing Americans from the nuclear field’s institutions by redefining these people as the most urgent security threats, while using a “DEI lens” as a mechanism to do this by specifically targeting for exclusion the demographics seen as most likely to be political enemies of the Left (white male citizens). This method aims to establish some legal and political cover by emphasizing the abstract importance of “diversity and inclusion” rather than being explicitly political. Meanwhile the power to filter individuals deemed “secure” to work in the field would move from an external and relatively objective security clearance process to DEI bureaucrats in personnel departments, who would effectively function as political officers, surveilling employees’ beliefs and providing an ideological gatekeeping and enforcement function.

This goal of establishing political control is further elaborated in a longer report, authored by Nair and three other researchers, titled, “Bias in Nuclear Security Implementation: Solutions to Identify Threats and Strengthen Security Culture in the United States.”⁹ The report, published in 2023 by the Stimson Center, a left-wing think tank, also identifies “white

supremacists” as “the greatest domestic threat facing the United States” and urges the nuclear field to use DEI “to start addressing largely homogenous [white, male, heterosexual] workforces” as a key security challenge to be solved. Notably, it is the homogenous whiteness itself that is positioned as threatening, as if any collected critical mass of white males is sufficient to generate far-right extremism.

The report then explicitly suggests “framing DEI principles as a security asset,” because doing so “legitimizes these ideas as values that have long-term benefits to a nuclear organization’s performance,” rather than as the values of an ideological movement. It recommends affirmative-action style hiring measures to reduce the white proportion of the workforce, changing the security-clearance process to base it on racial and sexual identity, expanding surveillance of employees’ politics, implementing mandatory DEI trainings, and integrating conformity to DEI into employee performance assessments.¹⁰

Remarkably, however, the report also openly acknowledges that the U.S. Constitution stands in the way of its ambitions, listing constitutional protections under a section titled, “Key Challenges for the United States.” Constitutional protections on free speech and civil liberties may “complicate the quest for a DEI nuclear security culture, especially in the government sector,” the authors write, given that “[a]s a DEI nuclear security culture potentially helps broaden the focus of who and what constitutes a threat, to include not just the foreign-origin risks of past decades but also domestic threats, U.S. citizens may increasingly be the focus of scrutiny.” The authors suggest that “the balance between privacy, civil liberties, and government interest in countering domestic threats...bears re-examining and careful calibration.”¹¹

Nonetheless, the report’s authors do not seem to consider such protections a serious obstacle. The implication of the report is that institutional power within the nuclear field can in any case eventually become a *fait accompli* by leveraging DEI to hire a sufficient number of ideological allies into organizations. Capturing hiring policy and processes can shift the balance of power within institutions even if no one can be forced out. This is a form of what has been described as the “non-electoral politics of institutional capture” common to the political left.¹² More broadly, using DEI to justify creating new job positions (both DEI-related and not), expanding budgets, and implementing new layers of managerial bureaucracy (thus transferring institutional power to DEI bureaucrats and those they hire) appears to be a key objective in itself—not only of DEI advocates in the nuclear field, but of the entire DEI apparatus economy-wide.

As in many DEI initiatives, most calls to action in the three papers cited above appear to boil down to appeals for redistribution of material resources within an internally competitive bureaucracy. Nair concludes “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Nuclear Security Culture,” for example, by asserting, “Creating pipelines to include marginalized perspectives in the decision-making process and considering equity opportunities [i.e., promotions] for individuals currently in the field are important steps for diversifying the field.” Indeed, many demands for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion can be most straightforwardly explained as appeals for more money, opportunity, status, and power—made using an opportunistic form of moral bullying.¹³

The “Queering Nuclear Weapons” article also illustrates another, larger objective more particular to DEI advocates in the nuclear field, however: advancing an agenda of disarmament. This agenda is in fact implicit in the use of the word “queering” in the title, although this may require some explanation.

The explicit intention of the article is to apply queer theory to nuclear weapons and nuclear security. In queer theory (a branch of academic neo-Marxist critical theory), “queer” also functions as a verb: to queer something is to deliberately challenge, antagonize, and overturn what is considered normative and normal by society, as queer theory views the idea of “normal” as always being a social construct imposed by oppressive power dynamics. As an example, Nair and Louis decry “the idea that being heterosexual and cisgender is normal and natural, whereas being queer or trans is a deviation.” The method of queer activist praxis is to attempt to undermine and then invert dominant discourse, narratives, and definitions so as to make the abnormal appear normal (to queer it).¹⁴

To “queer nuclear weapons” means to invert established norms about nuclear weapons, what they are for, and how they should be used. Nair and Louis are explicit about this goal in their article, writing that queer theory is “relevant for the nuclear field because it informs theories that aim to change how officials, experts, and the public think about nuclear weapons.” The “queer lens” rejects “the abstract idea of national security” and “challenges the mainstream understanding of nuclear weapons—questioning whether they truly deter nuclear war, stabilize geopolitics, and reduce the likelihood of conventional war.” For the authors, “[q]ueer theory helps to shift the perception of nuclear weapons as instruments for security” and is “about rejecting binary choices and zero-sum thinking, such as the tenet that nuclear deterrence creates security and disarmament creates vulnerability.”¹⁵ To queer nuclear weapons is to attempt to make deterrence abnormal and disarmament normal.

Conservatives who mocked the “Queering Nuclear Weapons” paper as an example of nonsensical jargon therefore missed the point: It seeks to advance a distinct agenda of policy change on ideological lines, advocating leveraging DEI as a weapon to subvert and overturn long-standing norms and force change within the nuclear policy space by capturing institutional power over personnel decisions. A more fruitful question to ask would be how such ideas have become widespread and influential enough that the NNSA—an agency established to produce and protect America’s deterrent nuclear arsenal—would come to employ someone diametrically opposed to its core institutional mission.

How Nuclear Security Went “Woke”

Speaking at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s annual International Nuclear Policy Conference in 2022, Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, then Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the Department of State, described how the department had constructed a system of ideological loyalty tests for hiring and promotion in order to circumvent anti-discrimination law. “We cannot set [racial and gender] quotas,” she noted, lamenting that this was “because in this country, it is against the law to do anything that is useful and sensible.”¹⁶

Instead, she had ensured that “[i]f you want to be promoted, you must be able to write about what you’re doing in support [of] diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Not only must you be able to write about it or [if] you’re a supervisor, you’ve got to talk about the impact of what you’re doing.” These de facto ideological requirements and incentive structures functioned as a backdoor method of scaling “our numbers,” she added.¹⁷ Speaking on the same panel, Richard Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Policy, admitted that informal hiring practices had allowed him to shape the demographic profile of his employees to advance DEI, declaring that “10% of my staff now is LGBTQ.”¹⁸

These officials’ candid comments provide a glimpse into how DEI has been used as a method to capture and transform institutions, including inside government. They are, however, only the tip of an iceberg: a vast complex of interlinked government appointees, NGOs, foundations, international bodies, and Democratic Party figures that have effectively fused themselves around a shared objective of advancing DEI and disarmament within the nuclear field as two sides of the same ideological coin. The panel mentioned here can itself serve as a useful example to help illustrate broader trends within the nuclear policy community.

Chairing the panel on “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Nuclear Policy” hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a prominent think tank, was Emma Belcher, president of the Ploughshares Fund, a foundation that finances disarmament activism. Belcher declared that DEI was essential for the field, because it was “as important, if not more important than the substance and what comes out of the discussions that we all have on solving nuclear problems.” She also praised the fact that “[g]overnmental institutions play a critically important role in advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the nuclear policy field because of the sheer size of their workforces, the agenda-setting function they have, their ability to adapt policy processes.”¹⁹

The Ploughshares Fund began to dedicate itself to DEI advocacy around 2020, and by 2022 it had notably launched a program to offer grants of up to \$75,000 for individuals and projects engaged in:

- “Challenging racism and white supremacy in nuclear policies and institutions”;
- “Building actionable connections between nuclear weapons issues and other issue areas (such as climate, labor, immigration) to address militarism’s influence on foreign and domestic policies”; and
- “Examining and dismantling the military-industrial complex.”

“People of color, disabled people, women, and those that identify as LGBTQAI+” were particularly encouraged to apply for grants, as were people who had “never led on a nuclear-specific project before.”²⁰

Ploughshares is a partner with the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), an NGO co-chaired by former U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz and former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA). Together the organizations are today engaged in a “Changing the Nuclear Narrative” campaign, the purpose of which “is to reshape the public’s perception of nuclear weapons and popularize the narrative that nuclear weapons do not keep us safe.”²¹ The NTI, which also engages in such dubious projects as working “with key leaders and organizations in China...to promote nonproliferation and disarmament,”²² additionally runs with Ploughshares a program called Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy (GCNP). GCNP is a “leadership network” whose members sign a pledge devoting themselves to promoting “gender equity” in the nuclear space. It is an offshoot of the Gender Champions initiative conceived by the United Nations. The network now includes an

array of government nuclear institutions, such as Los Alamos National Laboratory, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and Sandia National Laboratories.²³ It was founded by then-NTI Vice President Laura Holgate, who was a senior advisor to President Barack Obama on weapons of mass destruction and who is currently U.S. Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The NTI is also a member of Organizations in Solidarity, a project of Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation, an identitarian advocacy group. The more than 250 institutions and individuals in the Organizations in Solidarity partnership signed a pledge in 2020 to “share the burden of dismantling white supremacy,” promote “equity and inclusion,” and “provide support, including financial support and resources,” to minority groups and DEI initiatives.²⁴

Among its signatories are a swathe of influential NGOs, think tanks, and individuals, including William Burns, current Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Kathleen Hicks, Deputy Secretary of Defense. Institutional members include the Carnegie Endowment, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Arms Control Association, Global Zero, the United States Institute of Peace, the Atlantic Council, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Center for American Progress, the Stimson Center, the Quincy Institute, and the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.²⁵

The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, which published Nair’s paper on queering nuclear weapons, is—or was—among the most venerable publications in the nuclear field, having been founded after World War II by some of the world’s foremost nuclear scientists, many of whom had worked on the Manhattan Project, including Albert Einstein. Since at least 2020, however, it has taken a sharp left turn into political advocacy, declaring itself “committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” and publishing such hot takes as “A Call for Antiracist Action and Accountability in the U.S. Nuclear Community,” “Advice for Thanksgiving 2024: How to Deal with the Climate Change-Denier at the Table,” and “Transforming Our Nuclear Future with Ridiculous Ideas” (this latter written by Ploughshares’ Emma Blecher). Its major funders include Ploughshares, the Carnegie Endowment, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.²⁶

The *Bulletin* is hardly the only publication in the nuclear field to have turned its focus from science and strategy to activism. The *International Journal of Nuclear Security*, for instance, has for three consecutive years published its annual special issue on the topic of “Women in National Security.” The issue accepts papers “from all disciplines” that promote the objective of “amplifying the accomplishments of women working in

national security,” although the first author on all papers “must be a woman or gender-diverse person.” This special issue exists because it is directly funded by NNSA through the agency’s Nuclear Security Women (NSW) initiative.²⁷

The stated purpose of the NSW initiative is to promote “a diverse and inclusive nuclear security workforce, which will lead to greater effectiveness in meeting today’s nuclear security challenges,” as well as to “raise awareness” about “intersectional approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion,” and “build relationships with organizations and individuals who share common goals.”²⁸ It pursues such activities as using taxpayer money to fund gender workshops in Argentina.²⁹ Notably it also funded both of Nair’s papers on using DEI to identify insider threats.³⁰

The examples described here help outline the extensive complex of government and nongovernment organizations—of which this brief exploration can but scratch the surface—that have aligned themselves together to cooperate on shared goals, including imposing DEI and pro-disarmament narratives on the nuclear field. These organizations have established an incestuous network relationship with each other, passing back and forth funding, personnel, projects, and essentially identical opinions.

Experts in the field interviewed in the course of research for this *Backgrounders* describe this self-reinforcing network as an ideological “cartel” that seeks to effectively impose a left-wing, pro-disarmament “orthodoxy” on policy discussions, including by mobilizing online mobs to harass and tarnish the careers of dissenters by painting them as bigoted. These experts report that although this cartel’s impact within the more technical and hard-headed policymaking areas of the national security state still remains limited, its encroaching influence is increasingly felt through the channel of DEI bureaucracies and their initiatives. Meanwhile, beyond government, the discourse on nuclear policy has become almost entirely uniform and one-sided, creating an environment of constant pressure to keep one’s head down and not challenge even the most ridiculous policy proposals and project ideas.³¹

How did this happen? The period from 2020–2021 emerges in analysis as a critical turning point for the nuclear field, the moment when many of its institutions went woke at the same time. This was likely, in part, due to social and cultural pressure produced by the broader “racial reckoning” that swept the country in 2020, including mass riots and demonstrations in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Widespread activism—including internal activism by employees, especially younger employees—led many organizations and corporations to capitulate to activist demands and signal

their support for radical DEI measures at this time. The collective statement on “anti-racism” in national security arranged by Organizations in Solidarity, for example, reflects the moral mania of the moment in 2020.

Even more consequential in this case, however, was President Biden’s issuing, shortly after taking office in 2021, of Executive Order 14035, “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce.”³² The order declared advancing DEI to be a “whole of government” priority and demanded that “the head of each agency shall make advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility a priority component of the agency’s management agenda and agency strategic planning.” It mandated that every agency of the federal government develop and regularly report to the White House on its progress in implementing “workforce policies and practices designed to advance diversity, equity, inclusion” in every aspect of their operations and culture. It also ordered every agency to “establish a position of chief diversity officer or diversity and inclusion officer.”³³

The practical effect of Executive Order 14035 was to immediately establish inside each department an agency that amounted to a new bureaucratic interest group (the DEI office) with powerful leverage over all personnel and activities and with direct support from the President—and a material incentive to push relentlessly to further increase the scope of its mandate. Each of these offices then served as a cell and a channel for radical ideology to rapidly enter and suffuse the agencies—the more radical the better, in fact, as the more all-encompassing the ideology, the more institutional urgency and the larger a bureaucratic mandate it could justify. Other groups within the agencies then also acquired an incentive to ride the ideological wave of DEI so as to gain institutional favor and resources, as did outside groups such as think tanks and contractors who hoped to influence and/or subvert off government.

Hence why the Department of Energy today has a large Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, itself a part of an even larger Office of Energy Justice and Equity—because its stated job is that it “ensures DOE alignment with Executive Order 14035 and DEIA-related Presidential directives.”³⁴ This is also why NNSA, as an agency of the Department of Energy, has its own DEI office that declares that “a diverse workforce is paramount to NNSA’s success,” and why Los Alamos National Laboratory, in turn, feels it necessary to trumpet that it believes “diversity equals national security.”³⁵

Suddenly disarmament advocates, who had traditionally only found a foothold in the nuclear field’s complex of nongovernment institutions and had limited influence inside the policy apparatus, also had a strong incentive to begin couching their arguments in the moral language of DEI. Moreover,

many had an unprecedented opportunity to begin entering government themselves on the basis of adding “diversity” to the agencies.

For their part, DEI offices had an incentive to bring in such outsiders as new hires to serve as loyal ideological allies within the policy side of the bureaucracy. The fusion of disarmament and DEI can therefore be seen as a cynical maneuver to take advantage of an opportunity for power and influence. (Though it is impossible to say how many involved were not also true believers, given human nature’s age-old tendency to backwards-rationalize interests ideologically.) Thus, how we ended up with NNSA policy advisors who write about “queering nuclear weapons.”

Unfortunately, certain aspects of the field may have also made it particularly susceptible to this outcome: Nuclear policy is an important issue area, critical to national security, and therefore allowed a relatively substantial budget. However, because nuclear weapons have not been used in combat since 1945 and ideally will never have to be used, the details of what is happening in the field are also not regularly front-of-mind for policymakers or congressional investigators. This has created nearly the ideal conditions for institutional corruption and ideological parasitism: an out-of-the-way corner of the bureaucracy with access to substantial resources but without significant oversight.

There is one final potential factor that we ought to consider, however: the possible role of foreign influence in advancing these ideas. It is not just that the nuclear policy field has uniquely strong ties to international institutions like the United Nations (an organization so taken by anti-rational DEI victimology that its 2020 review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons bizarrely demanded that the world “[r]ecognize the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls.”)³⁶ Rather, it seems likely that U.S. geopolitical rivals may also be seeking to exert influence in the field, including through the efforts of disarmament and DEI activist groups.

The logic here is straightforward: America’s adversaries, such as China and Russia, have an incentive to see U.S. nuclear deterrent capability weakened by any means available. They therefore have a strong incentive to see disarmament advocates succeed, and hence have an incentive to encourage and support the efforts of such groups. That they might do so covertly is not idle speculation; the history of the Soviet Union’s extensive support for Western anti-nuclear “peace movements” during the Cold War is well documented.

More recently, there is evidence Russia played a role in financing German and other European anti-nuclear activist groups in a successful effort to undermine European energy security and increase reliance on Russian natural gas.³⁷ And, as detailed in a recent Heritage report, there is significant

reason to believe China may be actively working to help foment woke ideology in the West.³⁸ It is by no means a stretch to conceive that either country could seek to do the same in the nuclear policy field in the United States.

Experts interviewed for this paper note in particular the “odd coincidence” that while international bodies and pro-disarmament organizations routinely criticize U.S. nuclear modernization efforts and other limited measures to enhance deterrence, the efforts of U.S. rivals, such as China’s comparatively massive ongoing expansion of its nuclear stockpiles and strike capacity, receive almost no criticism from these groups.³⁹ So although little direct evidence that foreign countries are financing disarmament or DEI efforts in the nuclear field has yet been uncovered, the issue remains largely uninvestigated and deserves further scrutiny.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The nuclear field is in the process of succumbing to the woke identity politics of DEI, which has in this case merged with an existing group of ideologues pressing a radical agenda of unilateral disarmament. This alliance has made rapid advances in capturing relevant institutions, including within the federal government. It has done so by using DEI as a political and bureaucratic weapon, leveraging control over personnel management and creating a self-reinforcing cycle of incentives to conform to its ideological tenets. In this effort it has received critical top-level support from the Biden Administration, which has effectively mandated the implementation of the ideology inside the administrative state and the extensive federal contracting apparatus. So far this assault on America’s nuclear security has received little serious attention and faced little resistance.

This must change. As an ideology, DEI is incompatible with the merit, competence, and reason demanded by the existential seriousness of the nuclear field, while the simultaneous advance of a disarmament agenda risks undermining America’s capacity for deterrence at the same moment the nation faces escalating nuclear threats from geopolitical rivals. Moreover, the infiltration of far-left, grievance-obsessed ideologues into nuclear security institutions *in itself* presents a direct security risk to the United States, both from domestic extremist insider threats and from the opportunity presented to foreign rivals to cultivate intelligence assets and help advance an agenda that degrades America’s nuclear deterrent.

Fortunately, the incoming Trump Administration has an opportunity to break up this ideological infrastructure and clean out the American nuclear field. It can do so via four relatively straightforward steps:

1. **Reverse Biden's Executive Orders on DEI.** Repeal Executive Order 14035 and other directives mandating DEI's presence in federal agencies, and then implement an executive order restricting DEI similar to the Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping issued by President Trump during the final days of his first term. Doing so would undermine the most fundamental cause for the advance of DEI ideology in the nuclear field. Affirmative action hiring should be ended, and any remaining DEI bureaucrats should be terminated.
2. **Scrutinize and streamline funding.** Although funding the modernization of a robust nuclear deterrent is important for maintaining America's national security, care should be taken in overseeing how that money is spent. DEI bureaucracies and many ideological activities, including outside government, exist parasitically on the diversion of taxpayer money. Working with the Department of Government Efficiency to identify excess and ill-spent funding flowing to the nuclear field would also serve as an ideal means to cut off the proliferation of ideological radicalism.
3. **Investigate foreign influence in the nuclear field.** No comprehensive investigation into the funding and organization of NGOs, activist organizations, think tanks, foundations, and international institutions operating in the nuclear field has yet been conducted. Both the White House and Congress should make a concerted effort to do so, with the purpose of identifying whether or to what degree foreign influence networks may be operating through such institutions to influence U.S. nuclear policy or undermine national security.
4. **Constrain the influence of NGOs and international institutions.** Regardless of whether they are conduits of foreign influence, many international institutions and other NGOs in the nuclear policy field have become hotbeds of ideological radicalism, adopting an orthodoxy on DEI and disarmament almost in lockstep, exercising undue influence within government, and undermining American democratic national sovereignty. Their influence can be constrained, however, by issuing new rules restricting the executive branch's interaction and cooperation with NGOs and international bodies and by cutting off any government funding flowing to such institutions.

The United States—and the world—cannot afford to allow its nuclear security and policymaking apparatus to fall into the hands of ideologues and political extremists, including those who advance the tenets of DEI. The stakes are simply too high. Nor can it allow the foundation of its deterrence to be subverted from within by those more committed to an ideological project of disarmament than to reasoned dedication to American security. Taking the steps listed above would begin to address these threats.

The nuclear policy field is, of course, only one small corner of the American institutional landscape that has been subverted and weakened by the ideology of woke identity politics, if an especially concerning one. Lessons learned from the case may, however, prove applicable well beyond its niche; with some attention and effort it could even help serve as an example of how to identify, isolate, and root out this ideological corruption nationwide.

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Endnotes

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