

NDAA Process Plays Pinball With People's Lives

The Headline

Last week, the [Senate passed](#) its version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that appropriates money for the Pentagon for fiscal year 2024 by an 86-11 margin.

For followers of Win Without War like yourself, you're aware that the NDAA rightfully receives criticism over its [twisted priorities](#). Every year, the bill serves as a giveaway to defense contractors while drawing resources away from addressing crucial threats like climate change and inequality.

This year there is a bright spot we want to share: the Senate version includes an amendment to expand the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), which provides compensation for U.S. victims of nuclear weapons testing and uranium mining. It is not a complete form of justice, but it is a crucial step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, new wins came with new losses. The Senate version missed an initial opportunity to include the Afghan Adjustment Act (AAA) in the NDAA. The AAA creates a path to permanent residency for tens of thousands of Afghans living in the United States — the bare minimum in the aftermath of 20 years of war and occupation of Afghanistan. Without it, these Afghans will be left in limbo.

Despite its issues, the Senate NDAA still stands in sharp contrast to the companion bill passed by the House on a hyper-partisan 219-210 margin earlier this month. MAGA extremists took the NDAA process to a [new low](#), using the process to undermine abortion access, undo gender-affirming care, and attack underprivileged communities by attempting to end both equity programs and efforts to root out extremism from the military's ranks.

What's next: the NDAA now goes through the conference process to reconcile these two bills, where the next round of advocacy – from defending RECA and pushing for the AAA to stripping out the most vile anti-women and anti-LGBTQ+ provisions – will take place. And as these discussions kick off, the White House shouldn't shy away from some needed political hardball – brandishing a veto threat as needed. The livelihood of Afghans and the basic rights of women should not be up for debate.

The Happenings

August 2nd, 9:00-10:00am EDT: "Unraveling China's Strategic Re-engagement in Myanmar," [Stimson Center](#)

August 9th, 7:00-9:00pm EDT: "China: Confrontation or Cooperation," [Quincy Institute](#)

The Spotlight

In today's spotlight, we interview [Anahita Parsa](#), Policy Fellow at Basic International. You can follow her on Twitter [here](#).

1): What was the first moment you realized you were interested in working on nuclear diplomacy and disarmament? What is one thing you wish was better or more widely understood about how diplomacy is key to tackling nuclear threats?

My interest started slightly early. Growing up British-Iranian meant I was always hearing an interesting, conflicting mix of views about Iran and the question of nuclear weapons, especially at the time the JCPOA was being negotiated. I also closely explored armed conflicts during my undergrad and graduate schools, and my interest ended up being drawn to practices of peacebuilding and diplomacy that were involved in bringing some of these conflicts to a close, preventing them, and maintaining varying kinds of security. This overlapped with my involvement in disarmament movements in my personal life and I realized I really wanted to better understand the dynamics, conflicts, and approaches that sit at the heart of how diplomacy is practiced, especially on matters of nuclear weapons and international security.

I think that diplomacy can often be underappreciated, and that's probably because so much of it happens behind the scenes. Some scenarios we seek to avoid aren't happening, and that's often because effective diplomacy is constantly taking place, building trust, transparency, and 'keeping the peace'. It's important we remind ourselves of how fundamental diplomacy has been in maintaining peace and security globally. Certain situations not happening should remind us to continue to prioritize dialogue, diplomatic practice, and peacebuilding measures, over other means when tackling nuclear threats. One thing, however, I wish was more widely talked about, is how important it is that we constantly reflect, question, and transform our approaches to diplomacy as time goes on, particularly on a systemic level. Diplomacy shouldn't be seen as a perfected art-form, but more as a constant work in progress that should be evolving, to be more equipped to address new and emerging threats and risks. I believe this is so important generally, but especially in regards to an existential threat like nuclear weapons. Much of diplomacy is touched by systemic inequity, injustice, and conflict, which shapes the outcomes of the issues we're trying to work on. If the space, and practice by which you're working to build peace or security is in some ways not so peaceful, or secure, it also limits how effective, equitable, and sustainable our outcomes for global peace and security are.

2): Earlier this year, you [wrote a piece](#) describing the need to center women in the conversation around nuclear weapons. Specifically, you wrote “traditional nuclear security efforts have minoritised, and harmed, women,” while “women also sit at the heart of grassroots peace movements.” What can be done to ensure that grassroots women leaders are heard in nuclear weapons policy debates?

I think civil society, in general, is fundamental to the field's progress in tackling nuclear threats, and it's especially important that we're intentional about integrating minoritised voices, such as

women, people of color, and queer folk, into this space. I think some new, structured, broadly accessible civil society funding mechanisms (not just those that are easily accessible by more well-known/established larger organizations), would be really beneficial in enabling grassroots leaders, including women leaders, to be present, involved, and heard in diplomatic and policymaking spaces, such as international conferences and dialogues. Similarly, we need to rethink and push for an explicit system to facilitate and support visa applications (not to mention avoid consistently convening these meetings in Europe and North America) for people facing barriers when seeking to participate in these spaces. States, and even larger NGOs, could reflect on how to make space for grassroots leaders, for example, on their delegations at such events. I also hope for more Track 2 dialogues aiming to engage specifically grassroots leaders, with intersectional representation, to consult and build dialogue on nuclear issues.

On a broader scale, a gender-sensitive approach to policymaking is really useful in making the field more inherently intersectional, accessible, and equitable, over time. Some resources, such as those from Women of Colour Advancing Peace and Security, and recommendations by the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, and BASIC's [Gender, Think-Tanks, and International Affairs Toolkit](#), offer tangible measures to make nuclear policy debates, and practice, more gender-sensitive, and in turn, hopefully a space more receptive to the contributions and participation of grassroots women leaders, among others, beyond classic cases of tokenism, or explicit exclusion.

Within the field, as members of these spaces and structures, I think it's really important we should individually be making an intentional effort to check in with ourselves, stay informed, and question whether we're doing what we can, and all we can, to uplift and integrate women, and other minoritised voices who are our colleagues alongside us in the field. Independently seeking resources to educate ourselves to act beyond symbolic allyship to engage, empower, and enable everyone into nuclear policymaking debates, to share opportunities, using our resources to bring others into the room (metaphorically, and literally), is always going to be necessary.

Buried Ledes

The U.S. Department of Justice has [filed a lawsuit](#) against the state of Texas for its installation of a 1,000-foot floating barrier across the Rio Grande consisting of orange buoys and razor wire, claiming the barrier was installed illegally, will cause environmental and humanitarian harm, and restrict the flow of shipping. This comes after Texas Governor Greg Abbott claimed he would fight in court to keep the barrier in place, refusing the DOJ's request to remove it. Migrant injuries since the installation of the floating border have already increased, with reports of the wire lacerating people's skin. State troopers patrolling the barrier have been ordered to push migrants into the river and deny them water.

As Israel strives to enter the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, the country began a month-long trial program to ensure Israeli authorities [offer unfettered passage](#) to Iranian, Palestinian, and other Arab Americans traveling to or through Israel — the main unsatisfied criteria for

the program since some American citizens and nationals of Arab and Middle Eastern origin continue to endure discrimination at Israeli-controlled ports of entry. After this review period, the U.S. will decide whether Israel is eligible to enter the waiver program. Notably, the Memorandum signed by the U.S. and Israel concerning the conditions for Israel's entry says that if Israel stops implementing its commitments at any point, the U.S. can trigger a "snap back" mechanism to block Israelis from entering the U.S. without a visa. A [U.S. State Department and Home Security Department delegation](#) will watch operations throughout the trial.

Japan Airlines is trialing its [new clothing rental program](#) "Any Wear, Anywhere," which allows passengers going to Japan to reserve clothing and have it delivered to their accommodations upon arrival. The goal is to create a "travel experience with minimal luggage" while also lighting the load of planes. The airlines will monitor the changes to people's checked baggage weights and their impact on carbon emissions from the aircraft. This trial is one of many recent airline initiatives to "green" their images. For example, Air New Zealand has been offering passengers edible coffee cups to reduce waste.

Almost half of the [U.S.'s honeybee colonies](#) died last year, marking the second-highest annual death rate on record. Government bee scientist Jeff Pettis calls this a "very troubling loss number when we barely manage sufficient colonies to meet pollination demands in the U.S.," especially considering that more than a third of foods in the human diet comes from insect-pollinated plants and that honeybees are responsible for 80% of that pollination. Still, a survey from the University of Maryland and Auburn University found that despite the colossal loss in bee populations, honeybee colonies "remained relatively stable," with beekeepers resorting to splitting and restocking their hives, as well as acquiring new queen bees.

The Women's World Cup has begun in New Zealand and Australia, and the US women's national football team (USWNT) is trying to become the [first side in the sport's history](#) (among the men's or women's teams) to win the World Cup three times in a row. Having won four of the total eight Women's World Cups, the USWNT has set various records over the years. In 2019, for example, in France, it didn't lose a single game. So far this round, the USWNT has won 3-0 against Vietnam and drawn 1-1 with The Netherlands. In the latter game, USWNT coach Vlatko Andonovski used only one of the five substitutions available to him, for reasons that we at Win Without War cannot begin to fathom. Thankfully, there is still an opportunity to make needed adjustments for tomorrow's game against Portugal.