



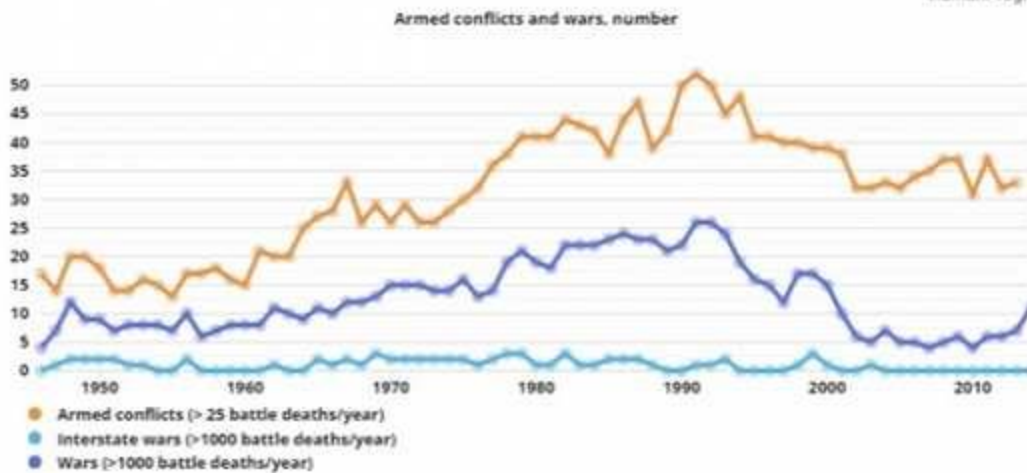
## **World Getting Safer, No Daily Threat of Armageddon**

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With the Russians occupying Crimea and eastern Ukraine, ISIS beheading innocents in Iraq and Syria, and Taliban resurgent in Afghanistan, it sure feels like the world is, to quote Donald Trump, "a mess." Indeed, many politicians and military leaders have stated that the world has never been as dangerous as it is today.

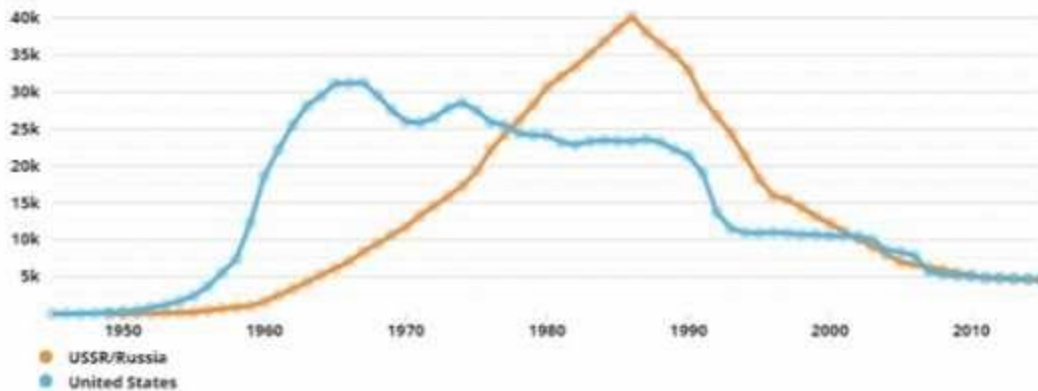
As my Cato colleague Christopher Preble [chronicled](#), "In February 2012 Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declared, 'I can't impress upon you [enough] that in my personal military judgment, formed over 38 years, we are living in the most dangerous time in my lifetime, right now.' One year later, he upped the ante: 'I will personally attest to the fact that [the world is] more dangerous than it has ever been.' ...Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified in early 2014 that he had 'not experienced a time when we've been beset by more crises and threats around the globe.' ...Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), born before World War II, explained in July 2014 that the world is 'in greater turmoil than at any time in my lifetime.'"



Source: Steven Pinker

True enough, there are many troubles in the world and far too many lives are lost due to senseless violence. But, let's keep matters in a proper perspective. Since the end of the Cold War, wars have become rarer. International conflicts are way down, though civil wars and armed conflicts have been on the uptick. Moreover humanity's destructive potential—while still considerable—has been declining. Consider that in 1986, the Soviet Union had over 40,000 nuclear warheads, while the United States' nuclear arsenal peaked in 1967 at over 31,000 warheads. Last year, both countries' nuclear arsenal contained less than 5,000 warheads each.

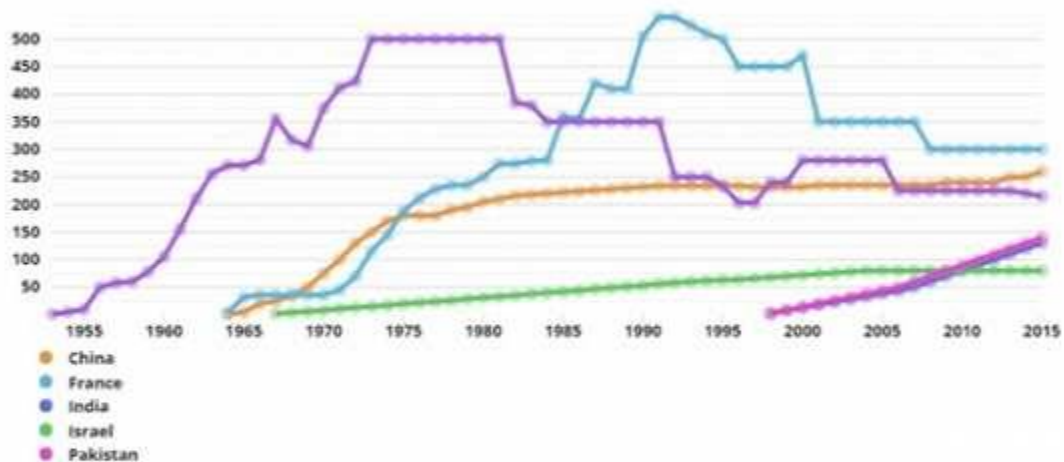
Nuclear weapons stockpiles, United States and USSR/Russia, number of warheads



Source: Hans Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists

British, French and Israeli stockpiles are lower than they used to be, though Chinese, Pakistani and Indian stockpiles are increasing. And while today it is still possible for a terrorist group to detonate a dirty bomb in a Western metropolis, a world-ending nuclear Armageddon is no longer a daily threat.

Nuclear weapons stockpiles, other countries, number of warheads



Source: Hans Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists

Truth is that by yesteryear's standards, Americans are safer. Even ISIS—that most brutal of terrorist organizations—does not pose a serious, let alone existential, threat to the United States. The fact that we do not feel safe may well be a result of the world becoming "smaller" due largely to the revolution in communication technology, rather than deterioration of America's security.

*Explore more data like this at [HumanProgress.org](http://HumanProgress.org).*

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