

## Joe Cirincione is Wrong about Donald Trump

By

James Ragland

Joe Cirincione is a prolific commentator on nuclear issues with a long track record of advocating for nuclear arms reductions and disarmament. His publications play an important role in shaping the thinking of Americans. However, his recent article in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, "[Trump has a Strategic Plan for the Country: Gearing up for Nuclear War](#)" was over the top and disingenuous.

Cirincione begins his article, "President Joe Biden has a terrible nuclear policy. A re-elected President Donald Trump's would be much worse." President Trump, should he win, will likely follow the path of every new president since 1994 and conduct a *Nuclear Posture Review*, and, like the last three presidents, follow a path that reflects the threat facing the United States. Until something concrete takes place, Cirincione is merely speculating by attributing the plan of some conservative organizations, [Project 2025](#), to Donald Trump.

Cirincione also willfully misrepresents the record of the Biden administration when he writes that Biden has "authorized the largest nuclear weapons budgets since the Cold War." This suggests President Biden supports nuclear weapons. The Biden [Nuclear Posture Review](#) called for the retirement of the B-83, the nation's only megaton class nuclear capability. Biden also proposed canceling the sea launched cruise missile-nuclear (SLCM-N) and eliminating the nuclear hedge. Neither of these efforts are the actions of a man who supports the nuclear arsenal. Biden, however, had the misfortune of dealing with a reality that was inconsistent with his ideology, something that is never a problem for disarmament groups because they have no responsibility to protect the country.

Cirincione claims that Trump's nuclear policy is informed by the "new conservative manifesto Project 2025." [When Trump was recently asked about Project 2025](#) he said that he has never heard of it. He even went on Truth Social to write, "I know nothing about Project 2025." This is certainly not something Trump would lie about. Trump is, in fact, relying on a small number of officials from his first administration for advice and guidance. He does not need the Heritage Foundation or any other think tanks to tell him what to think.

Understood for what it says, rather than the conspiratorial insinuations of many progressives, Project 2025's nuclear arsenal related proposals are largely accurate and well-reasoned. An honest assessment of the coming decade clearly indicates a need to expand the American nuclear arsenal to counter a growing Russian, Chinese, and North Korean nuclear capability. When Cirincione writes, "These proposals [from Project 2025] would add unnecessary new weapons to an already expansive nuclear arsenal" he is merely denying the reality facing the United States.

This country is already well behind Russia in the size and capability of its nuclear arsenal and will fall behind China within a decade. The United States will soon face three autocratic regimes with a collective arsenal several times greater than the American arsenal.

Cirincione goes on to criticize every nuclear policy prescription in Project 2025, suggesting that none are necessary. Nothing could be further from the truth. Contrary to his critique, prioritizing nuclear weapons programs over other defense programs is a wise move.

Nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone of American defense policy—ensuring that adversaries think twice before considering aggressive action against the United States.

Interestingly, Cirincione fails to acknowledge that former President Barack Obama made an agreement with the US Senate in 2010 in which the Senate agreed to ratify New START in return for modernization of all three legs of the nuclear triad. Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden all honored this agreement in the main, even if they sought change on the margins.

Cirincione even goes so far as to criticize modernizing the National Nuclear Security Administration’s Manhattan Project-era infrastructure and production complex. This is not a radical move but a sensible effort that was needed decades ago. The desire of Joe Cirincione and other disarmament advocates to allow the nuclear weapons complex to atrophy into obsolescence is a dangerous path that only wealthy idealists with tall fences can contemplate. It is only because of three decades of neglect that Americans are now forced to modernize all three legs of the nuclear triad.

In other words, Joe Cirincione and his fellow travelers in the disarmament community advocated for the actions that led the nation down the path it is now on. Today, both Republican and Democrat administrations recognize the trouble facing the nation, even as disarmament advocates complain about efforts to fix the problems they helped create. It is simply an example of the Dunning-Kruger effect at work.

Tying Donald Trump to Project 2025 and vilifying both is an effort to obfuscate and avoid having a substantive discussion about the nuclear breakout of China, Russia’s nuclear threats, and other meaningful issues that challenge the mantra of the disarmament community.

What is perhaps most disappointing is just how far the *Bulletin* has fallen. Rather than engaging in meaningful discussion on nuclear issues, the journal is increasingly publishing articles that read more like an excerpt from Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* or Herbert Marcuse’s “Repressive Tolerance.” They, like Cirincione’s own article, seem more interested in advancing the radical ideology of modern-day Marxists than having a fact-based debate over the role of nuclear weapons in national security. This penchant for the absurd makes it hard to take a once-conscientious publication and its contributors seriously.

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