

Deterrence Calculus

General Instructions

Atros and Brisa are two countries with a history of conflict and each possessing nuclear weapons. Currently, both maintain a nuclear arsenal of 650 warheads. As long as they keep their arsenals at the same level, a balance of power is maintained. If one country increases its arsenal, it could gain a strategic advantage over the other, but at the cost of increased tensions and greater risk of accidental escalation.

You are a member of the National Strategic Security Council of Atros or Brisa, having been appointed by the President. Due to upcoming national elections however, members of both Councils have only eight months remaining in their current term. Each month, your Council will decide whether to maintain, increase, or decrease your country's nuclear arsenal. Your goal is to maximise your country's strategic advantage and to secure the survivability of your nuclear forces, which are an important part of your country's defence. You are entirely indifferent to the security calculation of the other country.

Due to production capacities and national political realities, each country can only choose to maintain their arsenal, increase or decrease it by 50 deployed warheads each month. The strategic stability between Atros and Brisa will depend on the decisions made by both countries. Historically, despite occasional short-term swings, the strategic balance between Atros and Brisa has been relatively stable.

Each country's national intelligence agency has been tasked with tracking the other side's arsenal. Taking into account various factors, including for example nuclear warfighting simulations, economic costs of expanding arsenals, political commitments, and first strike risks created by imbalances, they have generated a point system. This simplified strategic calculus is captured in the following chart.

Atros and Brisa have a history of hostility and recently suspended diplomatic relations. Hence, each Council will have to make its decision without knowing what the other country will do. In the current volatile political climate (remember, national elections are only eight months away), any attempt to confer with the other country would certainly result in your dismissal from the National Strategic Security Council and might result in your prosecution for treason.