

Authors' Note

The term “nuclear winter” has been applied in some previous analyses of the environmental consequences of a nuclear exchange to describe the multitude of possible effects. In its original usage, this term envisaged the combination of darkened skies, subfreezing temperatures, and extensive toxic and radioactive pollution that, to a more or less severe degree, might follow a nuclear war. The phrase has since, however, come to be associated primarily with the most severe possibilities. Although it is a convenient metaphor for use in describing the generic consequences, we have chosen to avoid use of the term “nuclear winter” in this study because it does not, in a strict scientific sense, properly portray the range, complexity, and dependencies of the potential global scale environmental consequences of a nuclear war. By this choice, we are not suggesting that the environmental effects of a major nuclear exchange would be inconsequential; to the contrary, we find that they would be substantial and significant.

