

**PRESENTATION ON NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION NGO PLENARY**  
**WED 1 MAY**

**PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

**HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT**

**ABOLITION 2000 WORKING GROUP ON NUCLEAR RISK  
REDUCTION**

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**Action Points:**

**Nuclear armed & allied States, the UN General Assembly and the 2020 NPT final document, should affirm the historical practice of the non-use of nuclear weapons and the interests of all humanity that nuclear weapons are never used under any circumstances;**

1) Nuclear armed States should affirm that they will never initiate a nuclear war, in particular by adopting policies never to use nuclear weapons first. They should also affirm that international humanitarian law prohibits any use of nuclear weapons that would be disproportionate to the provoking act, or cause indiscriminate harm, unnecessary suffering or long-term and severe damage to the environment regardless of the provoking act.

2) Nuclear armed States should relinquish launch-on-warning policies and stand down all nuclear forces from high operational readiness for use;

3) Russia and the USA should implement their 1998 agreement to create a joint data exchange centre on missile launches;

4) Russia, the USA, and other nuclear-armed states should institute or re-institute habits of military to military communication that would avoid lethal miscalculations

5) Nuclear armed states should refrain from provocative military exercises close to borders of nuclear-armed adversaries, and should exclude planning and preparation for the deployment or use of nuclear weapons use in conventional military exercises. Nuclear weapons states should refrain from the use of menacing language ('fire and fury') that might lead others to feel they are being threatened.

6) The US and Russia should reaffirm the 1972 agreement on the prevention of nuclear war. Mutual nonaggression pacts with the DPRK, Russia, and other states would be helpful.

7) New START should be renewed and a successor agreement negotiated.

8) The dialogue on 'Strategic Stability' agreed at the last Putin/Trump summit should be initiated. An open-ended arms race does not constitute strategic stability.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, Izumi Nakamitsu, remarked to the Security Council on 2 April, that the likelihood of nuclear war is 'greater than it has been for a generation'.

Schultz, Perry and Nunn remark in an April 10 editorial in the WSJ that:

“The U.S., its allies and Russia are caught in a dangerous policy paralysis that could lead—most likely by mistake or miscalculation—to a military confrontation and potentially the use of nuclear weapons for the first time in nearly 74 years. A bold policy shift is needed to support a strategic re-engagement with Russia and walk back from this perilous precipice. Otherwise, our nations may soon be entrenched in a nuclear standoff more precarious, disorienting and economically costly than the Cold War.”

Every year for the past 7 years or so I have said this is the most dangerous year so far, because every year has been the most dangerous year so far.

### **This year is once more the most dangerous year so far.**

The Doomsday Clock was set at two minutes to midnight in January 2018. If you have a device like the Doomsday Clock, you set it close to midnight at what already seems an extremely risky time – and then the situation gets even worse. It's still nominally at two minutes to midnight, Yet in the intervening period the situation has gotten worse. Should it be at 90 or 60, seconds to midnight? Is it already past midnight, and in some parallel reality the world is cold and dark?

We have all but run out of minutes. We are living on borrowed time.

The awe and horror that nuclear war has always evoked has melted away. We've become desensitized, or retreated into denial. Nuclear threats are now made much more casually by people of extraordinary ignorance.

There's been Donald Trump's 'fire and fury', (see the note on menacing language at the beginning) and more recently Putin's excursion into the theology of the Apocalypse, in which he suggested that in the event of a full-scale US-Russia nuclear conflict, Russians would all go to heaven while the Americans and NATO 'would just die' ('Kark it' was the term used) because 'they would not have time to repent'.

Think what we may of the theology – it shows a worrying willingness to think the unthinkable, to take it seriously as a possibility, and to use it as an existential threat, that ought to chill the bones. If this kind of rhetoric was dangerous when Ronald Reagan said it, it is just as dangerous now.

Most recently of all there has been the India-Pakistan crisis, which had seemed to have ended with the return of the Indian airman. However, the situation between the two remains ever simmering, and another terrorist attack that India believes emanates from Pakistani support, and which Pakistan denies, would nevertheless create another crisis. Possibilities of escalation remain a given in such situations, since both sides have up to 120-130 nuclear warheads each = 240-250 warheads. Even if a fraction of them were to come into use, they would create a 'prompt' body count that would certainly be a humanitarian disaster beyond the capacities of the two countries to manage, (some estimates as high as 100-300 million) followed by a 'nuclear winter lite' that might cause the death from famine, according to some estimates, of as many as 2 billion people over a decade. These facts cannot be taken lightly.

Reports continue to circulate to the effect that India may be planning another attack on Pakistan. It is hard to know whether or not there is truth in these, and there is certainly political posturing, but the very fact that they circulate at all adds to insecurity.

India-Pakistan has been called the worlds most likely flashpoint for nuclear war.

The other major flashpoint is of course, NATO-US/Russia. The ultimate 'nightmare scenario' is enacted beautifully by the BBC in its documentary of a UK foreign affairs/defense departments war-game, entitled 'Inside the War Room', dated 2014, in which trouble in a Baltic state leads via a '1914 style escalation sequence' inevitably to a nuclear exchange.

<https://vimeo.com/154370371>

The Doomsday Clock folk were quite clear that the election of Donald Trump had influenced their decision to set the hands at 2 minutes. Their 2019 statement, even though they did not actually move the hands (where to?), was even grimmer.

<https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/>

BAS/Doomsday Clock might have noted that the russophobia that permeates much of the US elite is as, or more dangerous than, Trumps much too casual approach to an arms race, nuclear weapons, and nuclear war.

A number of things have gone even more wrong since Trump became President and since the Jan 2018 announcement.

--Both the US and Russia have proceeded with ambitious and costly modernization programs. In addition, Trump has made statements (mirrored by Putin who has followed up with action), to the effect that he'd quite welcome a nuclear arms race. These statements have yet to bear fruit in real nuclear weapons acquisition programs other than that to equip some submarines with 'mini' SLBMs in place of the 100-400Kt devices that are standard. They have however, opened up the possibility of actually reversing decades of reductions in nuclear weapons numbers and usability – and remember they the whole idea of 'mini nukes' is supposedly that they are more 'usable'.

--The demise of the INF, while it has not led to immediate changes to nuclear posture and the placing of nuclear weapons, could well do so down the track. In the more immediate term, INF-prohibited systems of 500-1500Km range will be tested and developed by both Russia and the US.

**The demise of the INF opens up the possibility that destabilizing systems within the INF-prohibited ranges could at some future date be installed in Europe.**

If such systems were to be installed in say, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, or the Baltic States, (Germany would probably refuse them) their flight times to Moscow and Petersburg will be measured in minutes, not the half hour usually used to plan the apocalypse. This makes rational decision-making on such matters virtually impossible and creates the temptation to do that decision-making by AI.(Or makes fingers poised above buttons more itchy). For its part, Russia already has the 480Km system installed in Kaliningrad and doubtless will install more obviously non-INF compliant systems there.

Beyond the INF however, lies the New START Treaty of 2010, which will lapse in 2021. There is an option to extend it by 5 years to 2026. Putin has made it clear that he would prefer to do this. (And a recent report on New START compliance has concluded, however reluctantly, that Russia is in compliance.) Trump, and even more so John Bolton, make it clear they are not interested in extending New START nor in negotiating a replacement for it. Putin does not want to negotiate a replacement.

(For more detail on New START and the INF, you are referred to the item on that from Daryl Kimball of the ACA.)

If, as seems likely, New START lapses, there will be NO treaty-based nuclear arms-control agreements in place between US-NATO and Russia. Trump will be free to pursue his desired nuclear arms race. Putin has indicated he's already starting HIS race with various exotic weapons systems.

**An unrestrained arms race can only increase the risks of actual use of nuclear weapons.**

Could a full-scale nuclear exchange ever really take place between the US and Russia?

We would of course want the answer to that to be 'NO', but the BBC documentary referred to shows at least one way such an event sequence could well take place. Furthermore, the rhetoric – the 'atmospherics', critically important to the likelihood of such sequences, - what is sayable and actually being said by both parties, coupled with on-the-ground postures of armed forces – suggests that if enough things go wrong enough, if enough foolish things are said and done, the 'unthinkable', the 'impossible', could indeed take place. This doesn't mean it WILL take place. But the odds become more and more unfavourable.

Such an event sequence would devastate not just the US, Russia and Europe – the industrialized heartland of the world – but also most likely China. It would end what we now call 'civilization'. Australia, home to critically important nuclear command and control posts at Pine Gap and Northwest Cape, would not be spared – in the worlds of a senior Russian officer to an Australian security analyst 'missiles will fly everywhere'.

All this is without factoring in the impacts of new monster ICBMs, (in China's arsenal as well as Russia's), nuclear powered multi-megaton cruise missiles (if Russia can get them to work at all), maneuverable hypersonic glide missiles (designed to make nonsense of missile defense, and compress decision-making timelines), and monster 'doomsday' torpedoes, all of them profoundly destabilizing. None of these nightmares have actually been deployed yet, some of them may not work at all, but all act to compress decision-making times and to introduce uncertainty.

Talk of a 'Super-EMP' weapon (if such exists – some deny there is a threat from 'Super-EMP' and the physics may be contestable) that would incapacitate even hardened military command and control systems would be even more destabilizing. What would be destabilizing in a strategic stability sense is that such a weapon would depend on being fired FIRST, and making retaliation impossible. It thus makes nonsense of deterrence which depends on assured retaliation. It gives 'victory' (maybe) to s/he who draws first.

There is, thus, an immediate necessity to take temperatures down and to take immediate-term measures to step back from the brink.

We know what kind of measures will do this. A detailed list of measures that would make an (accidental or otherwise) apocalypse less likely is to be found on the website of the Abolition 2000 working group on nuclear risk reduction.

<http://www.abolition2000.org/en/working-groups/nuclear-risk-reduction/>

Of particular importance would be a formal recognition, both at the level of the UN General Assembly and/or the NPT prepcom that:

“a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought.”

This means of course that a nuclear war must never be started. Since however, those who originally endorsed this phrase continue to retain the option of starting nuclear war, it is important to articulate this explicitly, as in:

'Therefore the option of starting nuclear war must be explicitly renounced'.

Ideally, such wording ought to be adopted by an NPT outcome document, by a GA/First Committee resolution, and if possible also by both the US Congress and the Russian Duma, and indeed all nuclear – armed states and their allies.

The WSJ suggests that the US and Russia issue a joint declaration. Such a declaration should however be joined by at least India and Pakistan also. Indeed most of the measures that are being suggested below for US-Russia relations could also be adapted to the India-Pakistan conflict, particularly those calling for temperature-lowering and confidence-building.

Another useful step would be for the US and Russia to reaffirm their 1972 Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War : <https://www.state.gov/t/isn/5186.htm>

In the US, a number of organizations are working on No First Use.(NFU). These include the Arms Control Association and Union of Concerned Scientists. (UCS). Clearly if no one fires first, no-one fires. (There might be a glitch if someones radar or satellite surveillance system indicates incorrectly, incoming missiles (this has happened a number of times, due to sunlight reflecting off high clouds over North Dakota and defective chips).) 'Retaliatory' action based on incorrect information can still start WW-III.

China and India both have official 'No First Use' doctrines. In China's case this is deeply incorporated into its nuclear posture and force structure. Both also have constituencies that seek to overturn or nullify those doctrines and postures. And US scepticism about those doctrines perversely strengthens the hand of those constituencies.

NFU could nonetheless significantly reduce the risks of nuclear war. (and has **no** implication that 'second use' is somehow OK). My congratulations to Senator Markey and Representative Lieu for having introduced legislation restricting first use of nuclear weapons, and to the No First Use bill introduced by House Armed Services chair Adam Smith and Elizabeth Warren.

<https://www.markey.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senator-markey-and-rep-lieu-introduce-the-restricting-first-use-of-nuclear-weapons-act>

We congratulate US congresspeople Jim Mc Govern and Earl Blumenauer for introducing into the House of Representatives H. Res. 302 which calls on national leaders to step back from the brink of nuclear war by taking concrete actions, including:

- Renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first;
- Ending the president's sole authority to launch a nuclear attack;
- Taking the nuclear weapons of the United States off hair-trigger alert;
- Cancelling the plan to replace the nuclear arsenal of the United States with modernized, enhanced weapons; and
- Actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to mutually eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

Another very important measure that will reduce risks is of course, the lowering of the alert status of nuclear weapons, and an increase in decision-making time for Presidents and senior military. The Operational Readiness Resolution, together with India's Reducing Nuclear Dangers, and a number of other resolutions in UNGA cover exactly this change in nuclear posture. The speaker has worked on this issue now for over a decade.

Better, or resumed, military-to-military communication would also be of immense help in avoiding potentially lethal miscalculation. Over the last 10 years, existing mil-to-mil communications have been deliberately cut by both Russia and NATO. They should be restored.

Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Scaparrotti, has met only twice with Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian general staff, but has spoken to him by phone a number of other times.

"I personally think communication is a very important part of deterrence," Scaparrotti said, referring to the idea that adversaries who know each other's capabilities and intentions are less likely to fall into conflict. "So, I think we should have more communication with Russia. It would ensure that we understand each other and why we are doing what we're doing."

According to retired admiral Stavridis, formerly NATO military chief:

"We are in danger of stumbling backward into a Cold War that is to no one's advantage," he said in an email exchange. "Without steady, political-level engagement between the defense establishments, the risk of a true new Cold War rises steadily."

Also very helpful would be the actual implementation of a five-times reaffirmed 1998 agreement to create a 'joint data exchange centre' (JDEC) on missile launches in Moscow.

A cessation of large-scale (especially 'snap') exercises involving nuclear-capable forces close to the Russia-NATO border (even 'mirror-imaged' exercises took place at one point), would also be of immense help. The WSJ article by Perry, Nunn, and Schultz notes that:

"....Since the crises broke out in Ukraine and Syria in the past few years, U.S. and Russian forces have again been operating in proximity, increasing the risk that an act of aggression, followed by an accident or miscalculation, will lead to catastrophe."

A US General, during the 'mirror-imaged' exercises, was asked 'what if something goes wrong?'. He replied 'I don't even want to think about that'.

All these measures and many others outlined in the website of the Abolition2000 working group on nuclear risk reduction – any one of these measures in fact – would be helpful. All have been the subject of discussion within and between Governments, or within legislatures.

None have yet been implemented. All that is required for this is the political will to do it, and the belief that it is of existential importance (as it undoubtedly is), and the commitment to do it.

Will it take an actual apocalypse (from which civilization might never recover), or at least a very close and very obvious close – call, to produce that political will?

Or is so-called 'modern civilization' really doomed?

The answer to that depends, to a large extent, on people in this room.

Regarding not starting nuclear war and no first use, please read the announcement on your desk of a new network to advance that cause. Your participation in this network would be greatly appreciated.

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