

People for Nuclear Disarmament - John Hallam

SUBMISSION TO IPAN PEOPLES INQUIRY

The greatest threat to Australian security is right now the threat of global thermonuclear war. This is so to a greater extent than it has ever been even in the height of the cold war. The risk of nuclear war is as great, or greater, than it has ever been. The 'Doomsday Clock' is at 100 seconds to 'midnight', which is essentially the end of the world via global thermonuclear war.

<https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/> <https://thebulletin.org/2021/01/press-release-this-is-your-covid-19-wake-up-call-it-is-100-secondsto-midnight/>

The hands of the Doomsday Clock have never been so close to midnight. The 'next closest' to midnight was in 1954, when the hands stood at 2 minutes to midnight, at a time when the US contemplated pre-emptive strikes against the Soviets, and in the immediate aftermath of the first THERMO - nuclear tests.

COVID has if anything worsened the nuclear risk. Prof. Louis Beres notes in *The Atom and the Virus* that: "Americans may too easily forget, in the midst of a biological plague, that assorted "ordinary" geopolitical threats have not thereby gone away. In this regard, multiple risks of nuclear war with several adversarial nations have actually been growing. Here, too, grievously fearful developments are largely attributable to an incompetent and indifferent American president." "Prima facie, the prognoses are plain. Going forward with Donald J. Trump, the United States could only anticipate the utterly worst forms of catastrophic convergence. Without hyperbole, should this president somehow remain in office, America's plausible future could include variously intersecting and steadily escalating existential harms."

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/07/02/the-atom-and-the-virus-a-progressively-lethalconvergence-for-the-united-states/>

Wilfred Wan has noted in a brief for the ELN (European Leadership Network) that: "...Maintaining deterrence postures has emerged as a key security challenge in the era of COVID-19. In recent weeks, officials in more than one nuclear-armed State have reassured their publics about the viability of their nuclear arsenals. A spokesperson for the UK Royal Navy noted "all required outputs are being maintained" at Faslane, home to Britain's deterrent, following reports of personnel self-isolating. French submarine crews may not even be informed of the COVID-19 situation, according to their Naval spokesperson. The US Air Force Chief of Staff claimed in a press briefing no change to their nuclear deterrence operations. Similarly, the head of US Strategic Command stressed the pandemic had "no impact to our ability to accomplish our (deterrence) mission."

<https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/nuclear-risks-are-laid-bare-by-covid-19/>

(Both these quotes from '100 seconds to Midnight', sent to you as a submission)

Nothing in Australian Government policy actually corresponds to that threat – there is not even the 'civil defence' ineffective as that would have been, that we had in the 1950's, 60, thru to the 1980s. Nor does there seem to be the widespread public understanding of the threat, as there was in the 1980s, an understanding that led to the creation of organisations like PND and CICD, and to massive street protests involving hundreds of thousands.

Australian diplomacy, apart from what Australia does on the UN Disarmament Commission where we have supposedly initiated some activity (it never seems possible to discover exactly what if anything that is however) – on nuclear risk reduction, ignores a global threat that also directly threatens targets within Australia and Australian cities. The single most potent threat to Australia remains as it was in the '80s, (only even more so) - global thermonuclear war. Yet it figures relatively little in actual government planning and in diplomatic and indeed military, priorities. Proposals (e.g. by Hugh White) for Australia to manufacture our own nuclear deterrent seem calculated to worsen rather than ameliorate, any nuclear threat to Australia by, in effect, 'painting a target on Australia's backside'.

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-nuclear-weapons-and-americas-umbrella-business/>
[<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/nuclear-arsenal-must-be-on-australia-s-agenda-arguesdefence-expert-20190701-p52306.html>]

I have commented both to Hugh in person and publicly to that effect. The bottom-lines globally are:

1) At 100 seconds to Midnight, the world is actually closer to the apocalypse than it has ever been, ever, including during the most frightening parts of the cold war. The probability of a nuclear war that could destroy civilisation is thus, greater now, right now, than it has ever been, ever. The recent Ukraine crisis underlines this. 2) Such an event sequence could take place via a number of mechanisms: --A confrontation in the Taiwan straits in which China sends a US carrier to the bottom either with a conventionally-armed hypersonic missile or with a tactical nuke. --Escalation of a conflict in Ukraine or elsewhere in Eastern Europe (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania e.g.) (BBC did a wonderful but utterly terrifying doco on this a while back entitled 'Inside the war Room' showing how a '1914 style escalation sequence' (i.e. an escalation sequence similar to the 'sleepwalking into war' that led to WW-I), led inexorably but oh so avoidably into WW-III. The doco concludes with Russian missiles inbound to London.

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4bso9n>

Any such event sequence would also have them inbound to Pine Gap. --Provocative exercises (such as the Defender '21 exercises happening in Eastern Europe right now), that, like the Able Archer exercises, are mistaken for the real thing, or that escalate by mistake into the real thing. Particularly hazardous are exercises with nuclear-capable forces. --'Tabletop' exercises (such as Able Archer in 1983), in which WW-III really is war-gamed (inside the War Room was also a 'tabletop' or computerised, exercise or a war-game done by the UK departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence, into which the BBC bought a camera). These too can also be mistaken for the real thing as Able Archer in 1983 nearly was. We may owe our survival to the double-agent within NATO who transmitted NATO's war plans to Moscow. (thereby convincing Moscow that Able Archer was indeed, just an exercise). --'Madness, malice, malfunction, miscalculation, and malware'. The world has nearly ended on quite a number of occasions because of: ---A 40 cent chip in a switching station in Colorado that caused the main command computer at NORAD to report hundreds, then thousands, of incoming Soviet missiles in 1979.

[<https://youtu.be/FU3NOtNFXgs>] (there are a number of accounts of this incident – this is just the youtube)

President Carter was woken up at 3am, minuteman missiles were readied for launch, B-52 bombers were put on runways ready for takeoff with engines running, submarine crews readied for

launch....all because of a malfunction in a 40 cent chip. The alert was called off because the missile numbers kept changing randomly, and because ground based and plane based radars couldn't see any missiles. But the same thing took place THREE TIMES before the fault was fixed. ---In 1980, someone managed to put a realistic simulation for WW-III onto what he thought was the backup computer at NORAD. But seconds after he'd done that, the backup and the operational computers swapped ...and a similar sequence to the 40 cent chip one took place. Once again it happened more than once. ---Sometime in 1974, a quite junior officer managed to send the 'go codes' to the entire US arsenal and DID NOT KNOW HE'D DONE IT. The world was saved when the general at the other end of the room noticed the 'Big Board' light up and countermanded the launch order. (The officer was later fired) ---A similar thing took place in Okinawa during the Cuban Missile Crisis and we were saved by a senior officer in charge of the base who informed his immediate subordinate (who wanted to launch) that 'I'm sending round a bunch of guys who are armed and they're ordered to shoot you if you try to launch'. He then reportedly had a phone conversation that went something like: "...Order to launch?...what order to launch?...OH SHIT!"

<https://thebulletin.org/2015/10/the-okinawa-missiles-of-october/> <https://apjif.org/-Steve-Rabson/4825/article.html>

<https://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/features/cold-war-missileers-refute-okinawanear-launch-1.385439>

In any exchange of nuclear weapons, 'joint' installations at Pine Gap and Northwest Cape would be targeted by Russian, DPRK, or Chinese missiles in essentially the first seconds of a nuclear war. Australian cities would be categorised as 'soft' 'counter-value' targets and would likewise be likely to be hit. When in 2017, Colonel Valery Yarynich, who had bought Russia's Perimeter system into operation, visited Sydney with the author, he was questioned by media on whether or not Pine Gap was 'still' targeted and reaffirmed that indeed it was. [Pers. memory] A few years later, a Russian analyst speaking to an Australian analyst affirmed that during a nuclear exchange 'missiles will fly everywhere', with specific reference to both Pine Gap and to Australian cities.

<http://www.pndnsw.org.au/component/content/article/48-pnd-newsflash/416-australiangovernment-endangers-australians-with-talk-of-missiles.html>

<http://www.pndnsw.org.au/component/content/article/48-pnd-newsflash/415-us-nuclearmissiles-in-australia-a-threat-to-australian-security-uke-here-please.html>

'Civilisation' will in fact disappear in the first seconds of any nuclear war even if nothing further takes place, because our entire electronic and electrical infrastructure will disappear via Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP). An EMP strike (explosion of an EMP-optimised weapon in space over a continental landmass such as the US or Australia) aimed at the destruction of nuclear command and control systems (much more vulnerable now so much as been contracted out to Bell and AT&T, whose systems are not EMP protected), done over the Continental USA, will cause not only nationwide electrical blackout, but will e.g., cause the entire global financial system literally to disappear. A DPRK EMP strike over Australia would obviously do same thing. No need then to incinerate large cities. According to US Congressional studies, up to 90% of the US population would then starve to death in the chaos after the nanosecond transition to the 18th century. We'd likely fare the same way.(A mass of documentation exists on EMP. The disarmament movement has tended to ignore much of it because it has been used as an excuse to prioritise 'Bomb North Korea

Now' narratives. Nonetheless the science behind EMP is sound.) (See PND's presentation to the UN on EMP, of 29 April 2019)

<http://www.pndnsw.org.au/articles/features/409-presentation-on-electromagnetic-pulse-toun-29-april-2019.html>

Of course if nuclear war does take place, then it's at least 50% likely that there would be a massive nuclear exchange in which to use the words of a Russian analyst, 'missiles would fly everywhere'. Cities would be targeted, including in all likelihood Australian cities. Up to or maybe more than, 50% of the worlds population would then die in appx 90 minutes, and the cities would burn uncontrolled for between a week and a month - till nothing was left to burn. The world would then be blanketed with a layer of dark smoke, causing temperature drops to below the temperatures of the last ice-age, and this drop would last for decades. (A series of new Nuclear Winter studies were done by Professors Robock, Toon and Mills and others from 2007 and are ongoing.)

http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/robock/robock_nwpapers.html

<http://people.envsci.rutgers.edu/robock/>

Agriculture would cease, and most humans would then starve and freeze in the dark. Australia would not be spared. All this is of course not new, but we do need to be reminded. We came kinda close to an event sequence in which nuclear weapons might have been used back when Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un were sparring over who had the biggest 'button'. Trump's rendezvous with Kim had the immense merit that they put a stop to that. Had those 'love ins' never taken place it's even money that the two of them would have engineered a 'mini-apocalypse' in which millions would have died, and in which Australia could have been especially badly hit, though Kim would likely have done or tried to do an EMP strike on the US. IF the US had been able to strike back they'd have made Kim's rubble bounce, but that is a bigger 'if' than commonly acknowledged, as Kim would have aimed to use a 'super-EMP' that would paralyse the US nuclear command and control system. When ridiculing Trumps handling of Kim and his face to face meetings it is good to bear this in mind. At the time I issued releases saying it didn't matter if all they talked about was baseball, as long as they kept talking.

3) It is my view that we came as close as we would want to to a nuclear apocalypse in midApril, (See the press-releases and memos I forwarded to the Inquiry) (see many urls below) with the massive Russian mobilisation (itself a response to both NATO exercises and to a Ukrainian mobilisation, as well as to stated Ukrainian policy to take back Donbass and Crimea by force). Had the Russian mobilisation gone on to actual hostilities and to confrontation with NATO, we would have been in WW-III (via the classic 'WW-I escalation sequence') - at some point, within hours. Once more the inimitable BBC has a doco on how that would play out.(Below) Pine Gap would have been vaporised probably before most Australians knew we were at war. Cities might have been next.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWqWAi_H_9o

The letter to Biden and Putin,(sent to you as a submission) copied to Ukraine, Boris Johnson, and all of NATO and the UNGA, urges de-escalation to make just such a scenario less likely. I am heartened that Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov has urged (18May) talks on 'strategic stability' with Biden and Blinken. None too soon.

[<https://tass.com/politics/1290491>]

PND's '100 seconds to Midnight', written PRE the Ukraine crisis, already took, obviously, a decidedly pessimistic view of so-called 'strategic stability - the inverse of the doomsday clock hands, arguing that we've never been so close to 'midnight'. The position of the clock hands really don't allow for argument on this point. It might be arguable whether we were closer to the apocalypse during the Cuban Missile Crisis, during the half-hour from 12.30am Moscow time 26 Sept 1983 when our fate rested with the decision of colonel Petrov, during the Able Archer exercise a month later, in 1995 as Yeltsin and his aides flipped open the nuclear briefcase, or in April 2021. However, the following quote and urls from our recent letter to Biden and Putin (the one you've been sent as a submission) gives a feel for how close we may have been barely a month ago. "A number of analysts and senior officials have suggested that if the mobilization next to the Ukraine Border had proceeded to actual hostilities, and if nothing had happened to break or reverse the escalatory trend, then an escalation to nuclear war would have been quite possible. The below are just some of the reports in which the possibility of escalation to a potential WW-III has been canvassed: Media report after media report in April seemed to suggest that we could be on the brink of the apocalypse, and that our situation was at least as perilous as during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Perhaps from your [Biden and Putin's] offices things seemed under control. To outside observers it did not seem so" The below urls contain statements from a number of analysts suggesting the world was indeed in significant danger that receded only when Putin took the (wise) decision to move his forces back just a bit from the Ukrainian border. The world could all too easily go back there. Our letter to Putin and Biden urged discussion of risk reduction measures. Once again, Lavrov's call for discussion of 'strategic stability', while still couched in the language of deference is thus most welcome. It would be nice to think Lavrov had in fact read our letter.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/28042021-sleepwalking-into-nuclear-war-oped/>

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1424687/world-war-3-Russia-Vladimir-Putin-invasionEmmanuel-macron-France-eu>

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1422353/WW3-Ukraine-Russia-NATO-Border- World-WarThree-American-Conflict-Europe-Latest-VN/>

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/04/14/ukra-a14.html>

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1422986/Russia-warning-military-WW3-nuclear-weaponPutin-latest-Ukraine-invasion-vn/>

<https://thenewamerican.com/tulsi-gabbard-biden-is-moving-us-toward-nuclear-war-with- russia/>

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1422353/WW3-Ukraine-Russia-NATO-Border- World-WarThree-American-Conflict-Europe-Latest-VN/>

<https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/world-news/russia-ukraine-war-bring-excruciating- 23909696/>

4) This exacerbated risk of global thermonuclear war (before and even more so after Ukraine) has to be a major factor in Australian diplomacy and security policy, as it makes global thermonuclear war (as it was in the 70s and 80's) the greatest single threat to Australian security. This being so, avoidance of it should surely be the single greatest factor driving our diplomacy. Yet arms control is far from the centrepiece of our diplomacy, which centres on the maintenance of the US alliance and extended deference - which if anything places Australia in greater peril than otherwise would be the case.

5) A menu of nuclear risk reduction measures are outlined in the letter on nuke risk reduction to Biden, copied to US Congress Strategic Forces subcommittees.

<https://www.abolition2000.org/en/news/2020/12/25/usa-president-elect-biden-urged-to-take-actionon-nuclear-risk-reduction-and-disarmament/>

These measures include: --No First Use. Legislation has been submitted to Congress (in fact two separate bills) urging in different ways that No First Use (NFU) become US policy. Biden has a history of sympathy to NFU.

<https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-smith-colleagues-introduce-nofirst-use-bill-for-nuclear-weapons>

A global NFU campaign has been set up by Alyn Ware (who should be asked to make a submission to this inquiry). I am on its steering committee. --De-alerting - I have been banging the drum for de-alerting for over a decade at the UN, though the idea first came from former launch control officer and second in command at Offutt Airforce Base, Bruce Blair, and his Russian counterpart Colonel Valery Yarynich. Steve Starr, Colonel Valery and I made a large number of presentations on it to the UN. A regular UN resolution, 'Operational Readiness of Nuclear Weapon Systems' has gone up in the UN since 2007, in part as a result of my lobbying. Australia votes for it. It is supported by an overwhelming majority of the worlds governments.

<https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/RES/73/60>

--Data Sharing - Following an incident in 1995 in which a Norwegian research rocket was mistaken for a US First Strike aimed either at exploding over Russia and paralysing everything with EMP or at vaporising the Kremlin, - it was decided in 1998, between Yeltsin and Clinton to create a 'Joint Data Centre' in which bilingual US and Russian officers would watch each others radar screens and there would be hotlines and data-links (presumably EMP protected) to everywhere. The idea was deemed so good the two governments reaffirmed their intent to do it five times. It never happened.

<https://fas.org/nuke/control/jdec/index.html>

--Improved or resumed mil to mil communication. Related to the above. Most routine mil to mil communication that took place during and immediately after the cold war has ceased and hotlines have been cut. The result is increased likelihood of fatal miscalculations, and another 'Able Archer'. With Defender-21 taking place right now in Europe this is not good. --Avoidance of provocative exercises in close proximity to borders especially with nuclearcapable forces. Commonsense, surely. Yet right now, NATO paratroop exercises are happening in Estonia, hardly a hundred kms from Petersburg. NATO and Russian planes and ships regularly buzz each other often in close proximity to the Baltic States, or in the Black sea. Biden was wise not to 'send a gunboat' to the Black sea. The UK has been less wise and sent a carrier.

6) Australia would be deeply affected if things go off the rails, or went mushroom-shaped over Ukraine or Defender-21. As previously stated we'll at least lose Pine Gap and NW Cape, as critical US/NATO command and control nodes, literally within seconds of a decision by anyone to use nukes. Russia would try to 'pre-pre-empt' the US by knocking out crucial nuclear command infrastructure, and we are it. (along with Menwith Hill in the UK and of course, STRATCOM and NORAD). Of course this has been well known since the 1980s, and all that has changed is that the likelihood of nuclear war is greater now than it has ever been - greater than it was even in the darkest

period of the '80s. A notable mathematical analyst of nuclear war risks, Professor Martin Hellman of Princeton University, estimates that a baby born yesterday has a greater than 50% chance of dying prematurely - being vaporised - in a nuclear strike.

7) What does an Australian Peoples Inquiry gain from this? --If nothing else, that the likelihood of nuclear war is greater now than it has ever been, ever - apart maybe from the depths of the CMC.(Cuban Missile Crisis) --That Australia is right in the firing line and that our connection with US nuclear command and control also puts Australian cities and thus much of Australia's population at risk of being vaporised. --That a series of commonsense, 'not-the-revolution', nuclear risk reduction measures exists. Australia should forcefully give them diplomatic backing. Right in the foreground of those is No First Use, but its by no means the only one - it just happens to be the front runner right now. Note that in all of this I have not mentioned the TPNW thus far. That isn't because it is not important. Of course it's important. Australia should sign it, ratify it instantly, and urge others to do likewise.

Australia should be prepared to spend much political capital urging both NATO and its 'great and powerful' friend (and others who are less 'friendly') to do so. However, the issue of nuclear risk reduction in a time when nuclear risks are skyrocketing and nobody seems to have noticed - has to receive appropriate priority. Immediate-term measures to reduce nuclear risk are, literally, life-and-death. Of course, Australia can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can sign ratify and promote the TPNW while vigorously promoting nuclear risk reduction and that's exactly what we ought be to doing. DFAT have repeatedly told me over the last few years that they are themselves deeply concerned over the rise in the risk of nuclear war. They are, bluntly, more prepared to act on nuclear risks than on the TPNW. Of course that ought to change but not by de-emphasising nuclear risk reduction. Risk Reduction can be and ought to be a 'front n' centre' concern of any Australian Government. Finally, risk reduction concerns the entire world. It is indeed, 'merely' the end of the world. John Hallam Nuclear Weapons Campaigner People for Nuclear Disarmament Human Survival Project Co-Convenor, Abolition 2000 Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group

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