

Reflections on the actions and achievements of the Abolition 2000 nuclear-risk reduction working group

By John Hallam, Co-convenor of the working group

The below is a **partial** report (i.e. there are whole areas I have not covered) on the activities of the Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group over the last year or so. Others (Marc, Aaron, Alyn) will have to make up for areas (such as legislative action) that I have not touched. I have concentrated on letters, memos, to governments and the UNGA, on risk reduction measures and reaffirmation of the Reagan-Gorbachev joint statement.

The last 12 months has been a busy, and some would say a terrifying, time.

With the clock at 100 seconds to Midnight, the need for immediate-term risk reduction, as well as abolition, has never been more urgent. The Risk Reduction Working Group has never been more necessary, or more busy.

The most recent developments consist, obviously, of the sending of a letter to Putin and Biden (with copies to much of the rest of the planet), and signed by over 1,100 individuals including Australia's former foreign minister and ICNND chair Gareth Evans, two former UN under-secretary for Disarmament, Deepak Chopra, former US secy of defence Bill Perry, Daniel Ellsberg, a large number of retired military including former commanders of nuclear submarines and generals, an array of former prime ministers, foreign, and defence ministers, and many sitting parliamentarians. Also over 500 NGOs and think tanks and prominent individuals.

<https://nofirstuse.global/2021/06/10/presidents-biden-and-putin-urged-to-consider-nuclear-no-first-use-policy-at-upcoming-geneva-summit/>

That letter had the reaffirmation of the Reagan-Gorbachev joint statement (initially made in Reykjavik and then Geneva in 1985) that 'A Nuclear War cannot be Won and Must never be Fought'.

The Putin-Biden joint statement reaffirms Reagan-Gorbachev.

<http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5658>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/16/u-s-russia-presidential-joint-statement-on-strategic-stability/>

By my own estimation we've recently (as of mid-late May, when Russia pulled back from the brink) - come as close as you'd want to come to global thermonuclear war (i.e. large scale war between NATO and Russia, which would quickly pull in China, giving us global thermonuclear war).

There has been a frenzy of press-releases and memo's largely over April, directed not so much at the media themselves, as at the **GOVERNMENTS** concerned - the US, Russia, Ukraine, and NATO. These press-releases-cum-memos have also

gone to the entire UN General Assembly, and legislatures. Many of them can be found on the PND website.

[Http://www.pndnsw.org.au](http://www.pndnsw.org.au)

More recently, Aaron Tovish and I have put together a letter to Biden and Putin (copied to Ukraine and all of NATO plus strategic forces committees in the US, and the Australian Parliament), urging restraint and a way forward, and urging them to talk about how to minimise the risk of an apocalypse. This letter signed by just the two of us (we are both co-convenors of the Risk Reduction Working Group), led on to the current much simpler letter, now signed by 1,100 people(above). **Both letters strongly prioritised Reagan-Gorbachev.**

This first letter bore fruit in a statement by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, that sounds just as if he'd just read our letter.(it came two days after he'd have received it).

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

This call by Lavrov for dialogue on 'strategic stability' echoed our call for immediate-term risk reduction measures, and is reassuring. In the perspective of current reaffirmation by Putin and Biden yesterday of Reagan-Gorbachev, and commitment to talks on strategic stability, it has added significance.

The year began with another, similar letter to Joe Biden, then merely president-elect, outlining nuclear risk reduction measures that would make it less likely that, with the Doomsday clock at 100 seconds to midnight, we will incinerate ourselves. This is on the Abolition-2000 website.

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

Risk Reduction measures seem to have become 'flavour of the month', umm, year. The year also began with a big zoom webinar that attracted record numbers on Nuclear Risk Reduction sponsored by Abolition 2000.

A more recent one had Gareth Evans as a key speaker. The organising team has included Alyn Ware, Marc Finaud, Aaron Tovish (once of Mayors for Peace), and some wonderful bright energetic younger people - Vanda Proskova of Prague Vision, Jessica of US Global Zero, Marzhan of PNND-Kazakhstan/CIS, and various others.

It is worth pointing out that the risk as measured by the Doomsday Clock in the '80s was just three minutes to Midnight - and that was thought to be completely unacceptable (which indeed it was/is), and we marched in our hundreds of thousands (and in Washington up to a million marched).

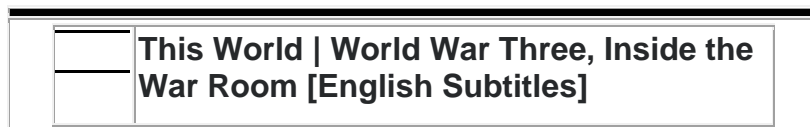
It had been briefly at 2 mins to midnight in 1954 when pre-emptive strikes on the Soviet Union were contemplated.

It is now at 100 seconds to midnight. It's never been that close. Last Jan the clock decided to remain at 100 seconds, with a grim prognosis if nothing changes.

Then Ukraine happened. It crept up on us, but before we knew it viral videos of massive Russian (and Ukrainian) troop and tank movements were proliferating - with videos of Russian tanks on trains and on the roads rolling toward the Ukrainian border with a backing soundtrack of the Russian national anthem in heavy metal.

For how developments in Eastern Europe can turn into WW-III via a '1914 style escalation sequence', the good old BBC is a creative genius. They did one doco in 2016 simply by placing a camera in the bunker underneath Whitehall in which the UK's DoD and MFA played a war-game based on said 1914 sequence. The ensuing video is terrifying and ends with the participants walking out into deserted London streets at 4am or something, after the game has ended with Russian missiles incoming. (url below) The other url below is of a fictionalised BBC account of the outbreak of WW-III, also decidedly -WW-I - ish.

[This World | World War Three, Inside the War Room \[English Subtitles\]](#)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWqWAI_H_9o

Let us hope these event sequences from the BBC (which I urge you all to watch) remain within the realm of docos of warGAMES, and fictionalised BBC news-coverage. Otherwise we're all toast.

It is my privilege/burden, and my life's work, as one of three co-convenors of the Risk Reduction Working Group to ensure these never do become real.

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