

Written by John Hallam  
Sunday, 09 August 2020 15:51 -

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Â **HIROSHIMA DAY 6 AUG 2020**

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**PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

**HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT**

Â Â **DESPITE COVID-19, NUKE WEAPONS (NOW MORE THAN EVER) NUMBER ONE THREAT TO HUMAN SURVIVAL**

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Despite the devastation wrought by COVID-19 to the global economy, despite the remorselessly growing body count, despite the lunacy emanating from the Trump and Bolsonaro administrations, COVID-19 most probably cannot threaten actual human survival.

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**The nuclear arsenals of the US, Russia, China, the UK, France, India, Pakistan and the DPRK, can. Now.**

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The numbers are what count. Assuming (pessimistically) a 1% death rate (COVID has a death rate somewhere between 1% and 0.1%), and assuming (pessimistically) no vaccine and no treatment, and assuming everyone on earth is infected, then we would have 70million casualties. This is not a surprising number, as the Spanish flu of 1918-19 killed 50 million of a significantly smaller global population. The medieval Black Death of 1348 killed up to 50% of those it infected and a third of Europe's population died. Interestingly, those who survived enjoyed better wages and higher living standards.

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There will be no better wages and higher living standards in the nuclear winter that follows a nuclear exchange, and a large 'central nuclear exchange' involving US, Russian and Chinese arsenals, could, depending on targeting, kill as many as a billion people in roughly 90 minutes. This assumes a mere 1000 weapons of standard size (100-800Kt, between 5 and 40 times as powerful as those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki), dropped on cities each with a million population.

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The firestorms that each blast sets off in each city, which release up to 1000 times as much energy as the bomb itself, loft roughly 150 million tonnes of very black soot into the upper stratosphere, with catastrophic global climatic effects, producing a nuclear winter with temperatures lower than the most recent ice-age.

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And it really could happen. The Doomsday Clock, advised by board of nuclear weapons, climate change, and strategic stability experts as well as experts in AI, Pandemics, and large incoming space objects, now stands at 100 seconds to 'midnight' where midnight is basically, the end of the world. It has never been that close, even during the height of the cold war.

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One of the Bulletins advisers is former US Defence Secretary William Perry. Just a few days ago he and Governor Jerry Brown (also on the doomsday clock board) issued their own warning of impending apocalypse.

<https://www.kcrw.com/news/shows/to-the-point/william-perry-jerry-brown-nuclear-weapons>

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There have been a series of recent webinars on nuclear dangers in recent days â amongst others, one by the global antinuclear coalition Abolition 2000

<http://www.abolition2000.org/event/100-seconds-to-midnight-what-does-this-mean-what-can-we-do/>

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And one by the Imperial College in London, entitled 'Escalation by Tweet', exploring the role of cyberspace, AI, nuclear command and control, and Social media in creating inadvertent nuclear escalation.

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/csss/assets/10957%E2%80%A2twitterconflictreport-15july.pdf>

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Even as nuclear peril looms, the movement, both in the US and in Russia, as well as the 'other' strategic pair, India and Pakistan, is all in the wrong direction, with Trump in the US

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having the sole authority to determine whether or not a number of thousands of US warheads get to be launched. There have already been a number of frightening false alarms any one of which could have terminated civilisation. What will Trump do if he is woken at 3am with reports of incoming warheads that could well, as they have been on a number of previous occasions, be a mere glitch in cyberspace?

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On this anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the need to get rid of nuclear weapons has never been clearer. Yet a number of misguided governments (including Australia) wilfully refuse to sign the Ban Treaty.

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And the need to implement commonsense risk reduction measures, and in particular to reaffirm the Reagan-Gorbachev declaration that **A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought** has never been more plain. These measures include No First Use declarations, de-alerting, changes to command and control so that just one person cannot initiate a global apocalypse, creation/re-activation of military-to-military hotlines, avoidance of provocative military exercises and statements and other sometimes mid-glazing but commonsense measures designed to ensure that an untimely end to everything does not take place.

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Will governments do what is necessary to ensure the survival of civilisation and of humans as a species?

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Or will we, like Trump and Bolsonaro with COVID-19, simply deny there is a problem and career blindly toward the abyss?

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