

# **Letter to Biden, Putin, Zelensky re Ukraine, Nuclear War**

Written by John Hallam  
Thursday, 15 July 2021 14:27 -

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## **WAR IN UKRAINE**

## **GLOBAL THERMONUCLEAR WAR**

## **NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION**

## **NO FIRST USE**

## **PRESIDENT JOSEPH BIDEN**

## **PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN**

## **CC**

## **PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY**

## **PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON**

## **NATO**

## **CONGRESSIONAL, PARLIAMENTARY, AND DUMA SUBCOMMITTEES ON STRATEGIC FORCES**

**Dear Presidents Putin and Biden,**

**Prime Minister Boris Johnson,**

**Parliamentary/Congressional/Duma Committees and NATO Governments,**

We are writing to you because last April, the world seems to have dodged a potentially lethal bullet. During the last few weeks, alleviated somewhat with the recent partial withdrawal of Russian forces, it has seemed as if the world might face not merely war between Russia and NATO (including the US), but possibly, via an uncontrolled escalation process, actual nuclear war. While this crisis did attract worldwide attention, it did not get nearly the focus it deserved.

The erstwhile crisis with Ukraine has not for now led to WW-III, for which we are mightily relieved. But it **could** have easily done so. Madness, malice, malfunction, malware, misinformation, or miscalculation, could even now bring about that result. Commonsense measures can be taken between the two of you, that make such an outcome less probable.

**A mutually respectful dialogue that recognizes that all parties have legitimate concerns and points of view would do much to remove the sources of tensions that could so easily become catastrophic.**

Notwithstanding the existence of apocalyptic theologies in both the United States and in Russia, surely, neither of you would wish to take decisions (like launching minutemen or equivalent Russian ground-based missiles at strategic targets), that would result in, or even risk, making the world uninhabitable, and ending what we call 'civilization'.

[https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/nuclear-war-putin-orthodox-approval-by-dina-khapaeva-2019-01?barrier=accesspaylo\\_g](https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/nuclear-war-putin-orthodox-approval-by-dina-khapaeva-2019-01?barrier=accesspaylo_g)

If uncontrolled escalation was never on the agenda, then forgive us for being alarmist. However, for some weeks in April, it did seem as if it could have been! A series of sufficiently escalatory decisions ***could*** have bought the world to that place of peril. A number of statements by senior officials and respected analysts, both Russian and from the west - did seem to suggest that the ultimate escalation – a global thermonuclear exchange – might be on the agenda. (See the many urls below)

Perhaps each of you (Presidents Putin and Biden) feels secure that you have the situation somehow under control and that uncontrolled escalation would never take place. Perhaps you both believe it will always be possible to draw back from the brink, and that a plunge into the abyss is not credible. The experience of 1914 suggests otherwise. Such confidence is **never** soundly based. Events have a way of spinning out of control. We hope and pray that the catastrophe we

worry about will never take place, but the risk that it could, should never be taken, and even the appearance of risk should not be tolerated.

We understand that the two of you are due to meet sometime in June. It would be highly desirable for the entire world if you could find it possible:

--to conduct a mutually respectful dialogue on the issues that led up to the recent crisis,

**--and to discuss/adopt measures that might make it less likely that crises such as this could escalate into, potentially, a nuclear exchange.**

Please pardon us if we are telling you something you surely already know. But it is vital that your June meeting addresses this, and is held in an atmosphere of mutual respect and real listening to each others point of view. Rhetorical flourishes to appease nationalist constituencies at home (or bruised egos) have no place in such a conversation.

In December 2020, Abolition 2000's Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group wrote to President Biden urging that he adopt a series of nuclear risk reduction measures including **No First Use**:

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

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 offices things seemed under control. To outside observers it did not seem so.

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

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

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

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

While some of these warnings may have been hyped, the existence of so many of them, and the fact that there are so many ways in which large-scale conventional hostilities in eastern Europe could 'go nuclear' (eg by a

NATO attack on Kaliningrad, where tactical Iskander missiles are situated, or use of tactical nukes in otherwise conventional warfare in Ukraine itself) should give rise to deep concern, if not alarm.

The fact that there ARE short range and perhaps intermediate range nuclear missiles in Kaliningrad is cause for concern. The fact that NATO has plans to attack Kaliningrad should hostilities ensue is cause for yet greater concern. The fact that Russian forces in Kaliningrad are likely to respond by actually launching said missiles, is cause for the very deepest concern.

Equally concerning however, must be the presence of NATO tactical nuclear weapons (B-61 gravity bombs) In Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy

and Turkey. These too are likely to see use in the early stages of a conflict.

The use of tactical nuclear weapons in Eastern Europe would commence by devastating Poland, Czech Republic and Germany as well as Ukraine itself. It would quickly escalate to the use of strategic weapons, with catastrophic global consequences.

We would emphasize at this point that there is **no conceivable national security interest that could be served by risking making the world largely**



## **uninhabitable for humans**

,  
though it is highly probable that this is what would be done by any large scale (or not so large scale) strategic exchange.

Even a threat to the very existence of a country cannot justify rendering the rest of the world uninhabitable for possibly decades, and ending what we currently call or miscall 'civilization', with the deaths not of millions but billions. Not even a threat to the very existence of Russia, nor of NATO nor of Ukraine nor of the USA nor of any other country can justify actions that stand a fair chance of destroying the rest of the world. Yet this

is the inexorable logic of unchecked escalation.

A pre-Ukraine-Crisis assessment of the likelihood of nuclear war by Abolition 2000's Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group was already alarming enough:

<https://www.abolition2000.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/100-Seconds-to-Midnight-Nuclear-risk-reduction-in-light-of-COVID-19.pdf>

Current estimates of the risk of a nuclear war, mostly dating from before the Ukraine crisis, emphasize that the likelihood of a civilization-ending nuclear exchange is as great now as it has ever been. The 'Doomsday Clock' remains for the second year running, at 100 seconds to 'midnight'. Turning the hands back again must be the aim of anyone who wishes to be a true statesman, or who truly values the security of their own (Russian or American or Ukrainian) as well as the worlds, people.

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

To that end, for the safety of the world, we urge you, when you meet, to discuss not only the issues that relate to the Ukraine, Crimea, and Donbass, but also a range of nuclear risk reduction measures including particularly both **No First Use** and measures to refrain from

potentially provocative military exercises close to national borders – by either Russia or by NATO.

Both exercises such as those regularly conducted by NATO (and the 'Steadfast Defender' being conducted now) and a massive mobilization such as that which took place not so long ago, cannot but be seen by the 'other side' as

potentially, or actually, threatening, with upward escalatory potential. Maneuvers seen by one side as inoffensive and purely defensive are inevitably seen – really seen – by the other as offensive and threatening. In such a situation, it will take only a small miscalculation – technical malfunction in sensors, or in STRATCOM or Kosvinsky Mt – to unleash catastrophe.

**The 'Steadfast Defender 2021' must in this light, be viewed with as much concern as recent Russian military activity.** Whatever NATO's protestations as to its defensive nature, paratroop drops in Estonia cannot feel anything but threatening to Russia.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/05/13/nato-m13.html>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/11/politics/romania-nato-exercises-russia/index.html>

<https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/exercise-steadfast->



# defender-2021-to-test-n atos-new-command-str ucture

***Your June discussion***

**could profitably**  
**revolve round two**  
**themes:**

--Setting up a dialogue

on Ukraine, based on the assumptions that both sides have legitimate concerns and that inhabitants of disputed regions ought to have some say if not the definitive say, in whether they wish to be Ukrainian, Russian, or Independent. In the

absence of a long term settlement, the status quo should not be disturbed by either side, and every effort should be made even without a final settlement acceptable to all, for relationships to be restored. This would mean that by all sides,

posturing, or playing to domestic constituencies to look 'tough' must be avoided. We do not pretend to have a complete solution to the Ukraine problem, but solutions will be more likely to emerge if there is willingness to engage in dialogue.

--Setting up a dialogue on nuclear risk reduction, which while initially focussed primarily on NFU (which would take the apocalypse off the immediate agenda) could also embrace

enhanced or restored  
mil to mil  
communication, and  
above all the avoidance  
of potentially  
provocative exercises  
with nuclear – armed or  
nuclear-capable forces.  
NATO exercises  
currently taking place  
(see above) and the

recent Russian mobilization fall into that category. Both NATO and Russia have now carried out a number of such exercises. They should cease. While we have picked out NFU anything substantive you can agree on in this



area will diminish the risk of catastrophe.

Lack of success in one area (especially in the area of territorial disputes) must not be allowed to imperil success in another

area. The fatal motto of 'nothing is agreed till everything is agreed' must be replaced by agreement to agree on whatever **CAN** be agreed, square-bracketing and isolating what cannot be agreed in the immediate term.

We repeat that mutual respect and willingness to listen is essential for an ongoing dialogue that might find solutions, and lower the risks of a catastrophic conflict.

The world took a small step back from the brink in late April. But we are still perilously close to it. The clock still stands at 100 seconds to midnight, closer than its ever been. Fuzes to a

number of possible  
powder-kegs are still  
smoldering.

**No First Use** can  
drastically lower the risk  
that a conventional  
confrontation such as  
that which just took

place, might escalate uncontrollably into nuclear confrontation, by providing a final firebreak before nuclear use. Avoidance of provocative exercises can lower the likelihood of fatal miscalculations. We note the inclusion of **No**

# First Use

at the top of measures advocated by leading scientists and leaders of the Catholic faith in a recent letter to President Biden.

<https://ucs-document>

[s.s3.amazonaws.com  
/global-security/leading-scientists-catholic-leaders-biden.pdf](https://s.s3.amazonaws.com/global-security/leading-scientists-catholic-leaders-biden.pdf)

The apocalypse  
truly needs to be  
removed from the



global strategic  
agenda.

But it can only be  
removed from the  
agenda if it is ON  
the agenda in June.

**Signed**

**John Hallam,**

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