

NO MORE NUKES

The Sensibility of No Nukes

by the Rev. John Buttrick, published in the Concord Monitor August 9, 2025

Today in our schools, children experience “active shooter” drills. These practices not only prepare the children for a statistically unlikely possibility, but unfortunately make the possibility seem more real and more frightening. However, there is another threat to our children and the whole population that is statistically possible but most of the time chosen to be ignored. It lacks any significant public debate or congressional discussion. And yet it is much more dangerous than terrorism, climate change, or AI. It is the threat of nuclear war that has been with us for the last eighty years.

The likelihood of a nuclear catastrophe is closer than ever, according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a nonprofit organization. The danger is illustrated by the ominous metaphor “Doomsday Clock.” The Clock now stands just 89 seconds away from midnight, the closest the Clock has come in its nearly eight-decade history. “The 2025 Clock time signals that the world is on a course of unprecedented disaster, and that continuing on the current path is a form of madness.”¹

“Today, of the world’s 193 countries, nine have nuclear weapons.” Some 9,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world’s arsenals—with over 90% owned by the United States and Russia. Each maintains roughly 900 nuclear weapons on prompt-launch status—commonly called high alert or hair-trigger alert—so they can be launched in minutes. Prompt-launch status, however, increases the risk that weapons could be launched by accident, without authorization, or by mistake in response to a false warning of an incoming attack. Also, both countries are actively planning to build new weapons, initiating a 21st century arms race and increasing the risk of nuclear war. Ross Andersen writes in the August issue of the Atlantic, “A new turn toward rapid nuclear armament makes the possibility of a full-blown nuclear war more likely.... Every moment that humanity spends with these weapons

spread across the Earth pointed at one another, is a foolish gamble with the highest-possible stakes.”²

Jeffrey Goldberg, writing in the same August issue of the Atlantic, uses the metaphor, “Nuclear roulette.” He suggests, “the only way to win is to stop playing.” The United States initiated the game by dropping two of its newly developed atomic bombs on Japan eighty years ago. As long as nuclear weapons are possessed by a country, they are there to be used. For example, during a February 24 address in Moscow, Putin warned other countries that any attempt to intervene in the war with Ukraine would lead to “consequences you have never seen,” which has been interpreted as a veiled threat of nuclear warfare. What spin of circumstances will lead to the next threat of nuclear weapon use?

As difficult as it is, it is time to comprehend the incomprehensible and use those 89 seconds on the 2025 Doomsday Clock to end production of new nuclear weapons, stop the upgrading of nuclear weapons, and take all nuclear weapons off hair-trigger status. With these actions accomplished, it will then free up the possibility of eliminating the possession of nuclear weapons altogether. It is the only way to end this deadly game of roulette that gambles with the use of 900+ hair trigger nuclear weapons. Risking our own deaths along with massive death and destruction worldwide, and at the same time believing we shall survive, is a definition of insanity. A sound mind would recognize nuclear war is unwinnable.

Therefore, the right thing to do is for our country to take the initiative to stop building and upgrading nuclear weapons. Also, taking all weapons off high alert would be a powerful demonstration of leadership and wisdom for a country in possession of more than 4000 nuclear weapons. Abandoning the aggressive posture would make room for negotiations instead of bombs. The U.S. could lead the way from insanity to a more sound-minded foreign policy. And the Doomsday Clock would reset from a countdown of 89 seconds before midnight to perhaps counting hours before midnight! That would give the world the space to give up possession

of nuclear weapons altogether. That could be the end of a nuclear century of mindless insanity.

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1. <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/29/nx-s1-5279204/doomsday-clock-2025-history>
2. The Atlantic, August 2025

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