



Russia and the U.S., led by presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, respectively, have produced missiles that can travel up to 27 times the speed of sound and are considered to be unstoppable. *White House photograph by Shealah Craighead*

Public health crisis offers new lens towards nuclear disarmament

The COVID crisis might also serve as a cautionary tale, helping us to appreciate the fragility of life and avoid threats to humanity that are within our control.



Earl Turcotte

Opinion

That COVID-19 has created a new global reality is clear. If there is any positive aspect to this unfolding situation, it could be a deeper understanding of the fact that the well-being of people throughout the world is inextricably linked. The COVID crisis might also serve as a cautionary tale, helping us to appreciate the fragility of life and avoid threats to humanity that are within our control.

In 2019, a team of researchers at Princeton University simulated a limited exchange of low-yield “tactical” nuclear weapons to depict “a plausible escalating war between the United States and Russia, using realistic nuclear force postures, targets, and fatality estimates.” They concluded that more than 90 million people would be killed or injured within a few hours and many more would die in the years following.

This is far from the worst-case scenario. In 1982, the Ronald Reagan administration conducted a war game dubbed “Proud Prophet” that concluded that even a limited nuclear attack on the then-Soviet Union would almost certainly elicit a massive

response, resulting in a half-billion people killed in the initial exchanges and many more from radiation and starvation over following decades.

To be sure, the nuclear threat has been around for a while. Why worry about it now more than usual, when we have so much else to worry about? Because developments of late have made the “unthinkable”—nuclear Armageddon—more probable than ever; factors that led the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists on Jan. 23 of this year to move the hands of the Doomsday Clock up to 100 seconds to midnight, closer than ever before.

Over the past few years, nuclear-armed states have embarked on a new nuclear arms race, precipitated by the U.S. under the banner of “modernization.” Russia and the U.S. have produced missiles that can travel up to 27 times the speed of sound and are considered to be unstoppable. There has been steady deterioration of the nuclear arms control regime with U.S. withdrawal and subsequent unravelling of the nuclear deal with Iran; U.S., then Russian withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty; and U.S. refusal to renew the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia that is set to expire in 2021, to name just a few. Add to the mix rising tension among nuclear-armed states, ongoing testing by North Korea, signs that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea might also pursue nuclear weapons capability, the possibility that one or more terrorist groups will acquire nuclear weapons and the ever-present potential for human miscalculation or accident.

Canada is to be congratulated for recently joining 15 other non-nuclear armed nations in the Stockholm Initiative—led by Sweden—that calls upon nuclear-armed states to “advance nuclear disarmament and ensure in the interest of humanity, nuclear weapons will never be used again.” Does this represent a more forceful posture on nuclear disarmament more generally? We pray it does. Our lives and indeed the future of our planet could depend upon it.

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New foreign policy may grow out of Canada’s COVID-19 crisis

Canada not only needs to develop a new realistic approach to China, but also towards the U.S. Neither country can be counted upon to have Canada’s back in times of crisis.



Bruce Carson

Opinion

There seem to be at least two venues for the fight against COVID-19.

One COVID-19 war is in the hospitals and their intensive care units. The other is being fought by political leaders to ensure sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) is available to the health-care front lines.

This is the part of the war that Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland has described as the “wild west,” because of a global scramble to acquire PPE.

As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau duly noted, “this continues to be an ongoing problem—specifically with the United States.”

The happy ending, at least for now, was that 3M, the company at the centre of the PPE controversy, sparked when U.S. President Donald Trump invoked the Korean War-era Defense Production Act, and announced a deal that would protect the sending of respirator masks to Canada and Latin America.

The company said “the administration is committed to working to address and remove export and regulatory restrictions to enable this plan.”

The plan will enable 3M to continue sending U.S.-made PPE to Canada and Latin America—3M is the primary source of supply for both.

This action by Trump was reminiscent of his mercurial actions during the NAFTA 2.0 negotiations. There, we witnessed name calling, the U.S. working with Mexico to the exclusion of Canada, and the placement of tariffs on aluminum and steel imported from Canada, plus a threat to impose tariffs on autos and auto parts from Canada.

Trump has mastered the black art of tariff weaponization. So it is not a stretch to see

him working once again against the interests of Canada, supposedly America’s closest ally.

Trudeau is using the negotiating approach he used during the NAFTA discussions and is working at numerous levels to protect Canada’s interests.

The Trudeau approach to dealing with Trump may be frustrating for those who advocate retaliation while the PM says things like “I don’t think it’s a good thing to harm your neighbour to succeed. That’s why we will work together to resolve this difference between friends.”

In the end it may be Ontario Premier Doug Ford who has the most appropriate solution: never again be dependent on sources outside Canada for the supply of medical equipment.

Another factor Canada should take into consideration as it moves beyond COVID-19 is that the U.S. has abandoned its position of leadership in times of crisis.

As *National Post* columnist John Ivison noted, “Trump’s abdication of responsibility means when this is all over, 100 countries will think better of China and worse of the U.S.—including, maybe, Canada.”

The U.S. approach to PPE drove Canada into the waiting arms of China, which has given this country millions of masks—so much so that Ottawa needed to rent a warehouse in China to house them before delivery.

The U.S. played a leadership role in the G20 during the recession of 2008-09. It now plays a minor role in the G20 and G7 response to COVID-19. And where there is a power vacuum or abdication of leadership, China is there to insert itself.

More than at any time since the 2016 election, Trump seems intent on making the

U.S. smaller in its world view instead of reaching out to help, taking charge in a leadership role in a time of world-wide crisis. This presents Canada with an interesting dilemma as policy makers look beyond COVID-19. Should Trump get re-elected in November—something increasingly likely—Canada would be closest witness to the end of Pax Americana.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau bids farewell to U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in February 2017. Because of the deep connections between Canada and the U.S., Canada is really not in a position to strike out looking for a new best friend, especially if the choice is China, writes Bruce Carson. *White House photograph by Shealah Craighead*

Because of the deep connections between the two countries, Canada is really not in a position to strike out looking for a new best friend, especially if the choice is China.

What Canada may do, as it re-evaluates foreign policy in the post-COVID-19 world, is look for a number of friends with whom Canada shares trading and other interests.

Canada not only needs to develop a new realistic approach to China, but also towards the U.S. Neither country can be counted upon to have Canada’s back in times of crisis.

A necessary new approach to Canadian foreign policy may be one of the positives that emerge from battling COVID-19. Difficult as that will be.

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