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Editor

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Abstract: The article discusses three of the many psychological problematics about nuclear weapons, weapons employment, and war underlying the language of policies, programs, plans, treaties, and one's support or rejection of them.

The week of April 5th has been big for things nuclear. There's been a formal agreement between Russia and the United States (US) to limit the number of deployed warheads and the number and types of delivery systems that constitute strategic weaponry. This agreement also details appropriate procedures for verification. As well, Russia and the US have agreed not to employ missile-defense launchers together with strategic offensive ballistic-missiles and not to employ strategic offensive ballistic-missile launchers with defensive missiles. Yet another change entails modifications of counting rules for strategic warheads allowing professed reduction of weapons capability without, in some cases, any weapons having to be destroyed. There also may be further agreements to limit the number of warheads and delivery systems whether deployed or available for deployment—not only constituting strategic but also tactical nuclear weaponry.

In addition, President Obama has publicly announced changes in policy for the projected US use of nuclear weapons based on his Nuclear Posture Review. According to President Obama, nuclear weapons remain and will remain a deterrent of war. They may not be employed or threatened to be employed against states that are party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and are compliant with the nuclear nonproliferation responsibilities of the Treaty—e. g., what materiel may be produced, purchased, processed and possessed; what associated technologies (such as centrifuges) may be developed, purchased, and possessed; what the uses are or are intended to be for materiel and associated technologies; and what relevant activities must be reported before they occur or after they occur. Nuclear weapons may be employed against nuclear states that are party to the Treaty and that attack the US with nuclear, chemical, and/or biological weapons and/or launch a cyber attack. They may be employed against non-state actors seeking to obtain and/or employ nuclear weapons. They may be employed against states that are not a party to the Treaty and who attack us. And they may be employed against states that are parties to the Treaty but who are otherwise not in compliance.

Also, the Nuclear Security Summit involving leaders of over 40 countries is occurring this week (of April 12) to identify better procedures to counter global proliferation of fissile material.

So, what does all this—and the allegedly objective as well as frankly partisan commentary on all of this—mean? Does one get more security, if one is now below limits but can build up to limits or, if one is now above limits and needs to reduce capability? Can the numbers and types of warheads and delivery systems be parsed through the magic of Sophistry with resulting hosannas about Eternal Peace or dire threats about the impending Armageddon? (Some religious figures match the hosannas with Armageddon and some business titans in the nuclear weapons complex at least think about matching the dire threats with Eternal Peace—the latter depending on the amount of revenue projected for building down and deactivating nuclear capabilities and compensatory revenue increases for conventional weapons.) How does one factor in the comparative values of deployed warheads and

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delivery systems versus those that are not deployed but can become deployed based on various time, process, and structural requirements? How does one engage in comparative valuations of uranium versus plutonium, counter force versus counter value targets, varieties of centrifuges and of plans for weaponization, the presence and absence of various strategic and tactical defense systems, the loosening or tightening of verification procedures, and the allowance or rejection of testing nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, underground, under water, or via various simulations? In a world with suicidal terrorism founded on life as nihilism, egoistic and altruistic sacrifice, or a date with eternal Heaven or Hell, can one make appropriate calculations ultimately based on maintaining a desired way of life in the material world?

There are many psychological problematics about nuclear weapons, weapons employment, and war underlying the language of policies, programs, plans, treaties, and one's support or rejection of them. Let's look at three of these.

[1] Do a greater number of warheads, a greater number of launchers and delivery systems, a greater amount of delivered force per warhead, a quicker time from launch to detonation, a greater number of weapons tests, and a greater superiority in any or all of these compared to adversaries deliver more or less security? There's certainly a the more the better group of experts when it comes to all the above—i.e., it's all good. Another group largely agrees with them but believes that there's some value above which there's no additional benefit for security. A smaller group tries to parse the possibilities of more or less in any or all of the above bringing more or less security depending on situations that vary with time. Yet another group believes that nuclear weapons intrinsically take away from one's security and should be abolished—along with all nuclear-related memes and their enabling neurobiological foundations—as quickly as possible. To this last group, unlike the first, it's all bad.

All the various beliefs described above may well be founded on varying epistemological tools including logic, probability theory, statistical theory, faith, empirical and experimental activity, intuition, and compelling anecdotal salience. Each belief may say much more about the believer than the belief itself. Small comfort to war planner and peace activist alike. Small comfort to the philosopher of science who might point out that each of these beliefs might be evaluated much more in terms of inner coherence and/or seeming utility for the believer than in terms of correspondence to some putative objective or natural world. Small comfort to the psychodynamic psychologist who may correctly ascribe very primitive intrapsychic phenomena, such as the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions of Melanie Klein or the imaginary, pre-symbolic space of Jacques Lacan to nuclear-weapons deliberations within, between, and among the participants.

[2] Language seems remarkably unstable when applied to nuclear-weapons characteristics and the characteristics of their possessors. Here are a few examples I label Nuclear Knots and adapted from a text by the late Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing (see *Knots* (1970)) focused on the non-adaptive thinking of people labeled with various psychopathologies and/or social dysfunction, perhaps, of all of us.

#1. Heavy land-based nuclear missiles are destabilizing. They are destabilizing, because they are a high-priority target of an adversary. Because they are a high priority target, they will not survive an adversary's first strike. Therefore, to survive, they must be used preemptively. Therefore, they are destabilizing.

Heavy land-based nuclear missiles are not destabilizing. They are not destabilizing, because they are a high-priority target of an adversary. Because they are a high-priority target, they will not survive an adversary's first strike. If one does not act in a manner to elicit an adversary's first strike, an adversary will not strike. Therefore, these missiles are not destabilizing.

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#2. Government B's stabilizing weapons decrease the probability of war. The probability of war decreases, because Government A believes Government B will not attack it. A believes B will not attack it, because B's weapons make A believe it. Because A believes B will not attack it, A also believes it can better launch a surprise attack on B. Therefore, B's stabilizing weapons increase the probability of war.
#3. The more Government A is afraid of Government B, the more frightened is A that B will think that A is afraid...

The more B is afraid of A the more frightened is B that A will think that B is afraid...

The more afraid A is of B the more frightened A is not to be frightened of B because it is very dangerous not to be afraid when faced with one so dangerous...

A is afraid because B is dangerous and B appears dangerous because A is frightened...

The more afraid B is of A the more frightened B is not to be frightened of A.

[3] A third psychological problematic is well illustrated by the seminal text *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (1982) edited by Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky. In reading the text, one can quickly appreciate the many less than optimal cognitive phenomena that bear on judging (a) information to be representative of some situation or not; (b) causal relationships between and among people and events; (c) attributions corresponding to people and situations or not; (d) threat, vulnerability, and risk; (e) any discrepancy between what seems available to awareness and what is available irrespective of awareness; (f) confidence and uncertainty in opinions and beliefs; and (g) the quality of the complex of statistical, probabilistic, and hermeneutic thinking applied to problem identification, management, and solution. Data supporting the notion that these phenomena do not affect the developers of nuclear weapons employment plans, treaties, and policies and programs are not yet available. Just one consequence is that the choice of nuclear-weapons employment scenarios may be significantly dependent on how consequences are phrased in terms of casualties, survivors, probabilities, and certainties—even if all differently worded consequences express the same quantitative relationships. Another consequence is the differential valuation of contextual variables—e.g., conventional weapons, political dynamics of allies and adversaries, and regional and global economic events.

To go nuclear, one thinks nuclear. In thinking lies the going. And even the greatest peace monger and war monger might think the thinking of going is—to borrow from the early 1950s vernacular of the beats—gone, real gone. (See *Real Gone* (2004 album by Tom Waits) or *Real Gone Woody* (1954 animated film directed by Paul Smith).

References. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists should be the first stop for readers seeking familiarization with nuclear weapons issues. The Federation of American Scientists at <http://www.fas.org> contains many relevant documents. Some classics on the psychology of nuclear weapons issues include James Dougherty's 1976 *Nuclear Weapons, Psychology, and International Relations*, Steven Kull's 1988 *Minds at War: Nuclear Reality and the Inner Conflicts of Defense Policymakers*, and the 1989 *Psychology and Deterrence* by Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein. More recent work includes the 2006 *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity Emotions and Foreign Policy* by Jacques Hymans. I recommend one read Sherry Turkle's (1992) *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud's French Revolution* (2nd. Ed.) before reading primary source Lacan. And I recommend Hanna Segal's *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* before reading primary source Klein. [Comments may be sent to bloomr@erau.edu].

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