

‘Bringing Humankind Closer to Annihilation’: World Leaders Denounce Trump’s New Nuclear Posture

"The public is right to distrust Trump with nuclear weapons, and we all need to speak up and oppose these new, dangerous policies."

By [Jon Queally](#)

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As the Chinese government on Sunday urged the U.S. government to drop its “Cold War mentality” and criticized the Trump administration’s new nuclear weapons posture, released Friday, other world leaders also expressed alarm that the new policy for expanded development of “smaller” atomic weapons and reduced restrictions on their use was leading “humankind closer to annihilation.”

Beijing expressed alarm over how the U.S. characterized the Chinese military buildup as it reminded the world that nuclear weapons should not be considered “first strike” weapons.

“China has always exercised the utmost restraint in the development of nuclear weapons and limited its nuclear capabilities to the minimum level required for national security,” said Ren Guoqiang, a spokesperson of the Chinese defense ministry, in a statement.

“We hope the US side will discard its ‘cold-war mentality,’ shoulder its own special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament, understand correctly China’s strategic intentions and take a fair view of China’s national defense and military development,” Guoqiang added.

When the Pentagon on Friday released its new [Nuclear Posture Review \(NPR\)](#) (pdf), as [Common Dreams](#) [reported](#), peace and disarmament groups in the U.S. and around the world expressed immediate alarm at the document and its implications.

“Who in their right mind thinks we should expand the list of scenarios in which we might launch nuclear weapons?” asked Peace Action in a [statement](#). “Who let Dr. Strangelove write the Nuclear Posture Review?”

In a column for *CNN*—titled “[Give Trump more nuclear weapons and more ways to use them? Not a good idea](#)”—Tom Collina, policy director of the anti-nuclear Ploughshares Fund, noted [a recent poll showing](#) that 60 percent of Americans do not trust Trump with nuclear weapons and argued:

The public is right to distrust Trump with nuclear weapons, and we all need to speak up and oppose these new, dangerous policies. People don’t tend to think

of nuclear war as a policy choice, but it is, just like health care or immigration.

The Trump administration's policies are increasing the risk of nuclear war. Sure, you could build a bomb shelter and hide, but that does not lower the risk of war, and it is highly unlikely to save you. Instead, we need to prevent nuclear war in the first place by changing government policy.

In a televised speech on Sunday, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani cited the Trump administration's new posture and [accused](#) the U.S. of "shamelessly threatening Russia with a new atomic weapon."

"The same people who supposedly believe that using weapons of mass destruction is a crime against humanity," he added, "are talking about new weapons to threaten or use against rivals."

Separately, in a tweet, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif accused Trump of moving in a "dangerous" direction that was bringing "humankind closer to annihilation":

The US Nuclear Posture Review reflects greater reliance on nukes in violation of the [#NPT](#), bringing humankind closer to annihilation. No wonder the Doomsday Clock is at its most dangerous since 1953. Trump's obduracy in killing the [#JCPOA](#) stems from the same dangerous imprudence.

— Javad Zarif (@JZarif) [February 3, 2018](#)

On Saturday, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergie Lavrov also expressed alarm over the new NPR.

"While just having a flick through the document, one can notice that its confrontational charge and anti-Russian focus stare in the face," Lavrov, [quoted](#) by the TASS News Agency, stated. "We state with regret that the US justifies its policy for a massive buildup of nuclear forces and an alleged increasing role of nuclear weapons in Russia's doctrines. We are accused of lowering a threshold of nuclear weapon use and of some 'aggressive strategies'."

He disputed that characterization, but said Moscow would have no choice but to reassess, and possibly alter, its military and nuclear calculations accordingly.

Like China, Lavrov said the change of nuclear posture by the U.S. under Trump contrasts sharply with its own, in which atomic weapons are considered a strictly defensive deterrent, not a weapon they would consider using against a non-nuclear state or in a "first-strike" capacity.

"Russia's military policy has unambiguously limited the threshold of use of nuclear weapons to two—let us put it bluntly—hypothetical, entirely defensive scenarios," Lavrov stated. "They are as follows: in response to an act of aggression against Russia and (or) against our allies if nuclear or other types of mass destruction weapons are used, and also—that is the second scenario—with use of conventional arms but only in case our state's very

existence would be in danger.”

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