

# The Doomsday Machine - Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner: Ten Seconds to Midnight.

## A Book Review

By [Jim Miles](#)

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In-depth Report: [Nuclear War](#)

*After reading **Daniel Ellsberg's** history of his impact on the global nuclear war posture of the U.S., *The Doomsday Machine*, I would think that the the Doomsday Clock as maintained by the members of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists are being conservative with their two minute graphic. The situation as described by Ellsberg is real - and there is no doubt that it is as he had a hand in creating it - then again by his writing we are assuredly much closer to humanities midnight than two minutes.*

I have lived my whole life under the threat of nuclear annihilation[1] as have most of the world's current population. At times it seriously frightened me, especially when raising my own family; at other times, even most recently, I had managed to stand apart from those actual fears. For whatever reason, *The Doomsday Machine* brought back all those primitive yet morally and physically healthy fears. Ellsberg's writing is clear and forceful, not academic, but written in an anecdotal manner that increases the intensity of the feeling that the institutions but mostly the individual personalities that control all this are deeply flawed. He does not portray them as flawed, but anyone who can conceive of actions that would destroy the world, and then proceed with acting on that course of actions, should be considered as murderously evil.

The book is divided essentially into three parts, although it is listed as two parts. The first part covers his work with the RAND corporation in devising scenarios around nuclear wars. Within that is an admission on his part that some of his recommendations, rather than alleviating what he thought was suicidal (omnicidal), actually worsened the situation. The second part, describes the relatively unknown details of what conspired behind the public face of the Cuban missile crisis, and that indeed, we were one man's restraining decision away from nuclear winter.

I mention the latter aspect as it was thought by the nuclear war planners that even though their weapons could destroy hundreds of millions if not billions of lives, there would be something left over to have 'won'. It was not until later years that the understanding of nuclear winter came into the picture such that, not only is there massive nuclear overkill, massive global radiation kill, there would also be a prolonged decade or so of much colder weather due to atmospheric smoke and dust from the explosions.

The third part of the book, "Part II: The Road to Doomsday", interweaves this idea with the plans of all nuclear states to have a 'deadman's switch' i.e. a system whereby if the leading controllers were "decapitated" in a first strike, the ability to strike back was delegated down a long line of authority until it reached the level of individual pilots/launchers already primed to go. While there are nine nuclear powers today only the two big ones, Russia and the U.S.

are considered to have the firepower to create a full nuclear winter, although it is indicated that a war between India and Pakistan, in limited, could result in at least a stretch of much cooler global temperatures. What was not mentioned was the probability that if one of the lesser powers started using nuclear weapons, chances of limiting are probably near zero as communications are destroyed and threat obligations rise.

### **The Madman theory**

Another creepy idea, one that borders on true madness, is Nixon's madman theory. It says that for threats to be effective, the idea that the leader is a bit mad would bolster those threats. As described by Ellsberg, it apparently has had its effect in several situations where the U.S. has considered using nuclear weapons. Considering the perhaps not mad but definitely egotistical, narcissistic, highly ignorant current leadership of Trump (do all those add up to madness?) the Nixon madness theory becomes even more significant.

Trump has surrounded himself with military advisors and warhawks. That is not terribly unusual in U.S. politics, but the current brand really do seem to like killing and torturing some contrived other. This attitude is now bearing down within the Russophobia running rampant through western corporate media/propaganda.

At the same time, Russia has strengthened its defensive position and if his recent speech is based on actual developments, Russia has negated any superiority that the U.S. may have considered it had. Other hotspots, created in the main by U.S. belligerence, include Ukraine, North Korea, and the U.S./Israeli stance against a signatory, non-nuclear Iran.

So now we have two Doomsday Machines facing off against each other, with the U.S. side still expressing its ability and apparent desire to resort to first strike nuclear weapons if somehow they can contrive a situation in which that would work – all the time while they should be aware that once started chances of it being stopped would be near zero. There appear to be a good number of people who would willingly destroy the whole world rather than concede that nuclear war is not an option and retire from the situation (as Krushchev did in the Cuban missile crisis).

One can only hope that the Madman theory never goes beyond theory.

### **Humanity's end**

As he ends the section on the Doomsday machine Ellsberg postulates several steps that need to be taken in order to defuse the confrontation. They are essentially common sense and plain simple ideas although they will be ignored by those in power who continually tell the public that these things are complex and not easy. While ten seconds to midnight may be wrong – it is after all only a metaphor for how close we are to planetary destruction – Ellsberg's personal history in *The Doomsday Machine* disturbs that part of me, the emotional, moral aspects, that say we are ever so close to being doomed by the stupidity, the ignorance, indeed the madness of our political/military/corporate leaders.

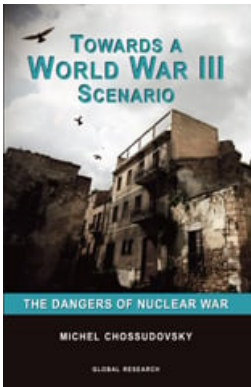
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### **Note**

[1] I use "nuclear" rather than "atomic" as all modern weapons are significantly more powerful than the

original kind used on Japan. It takes one of those to even ignite the more powerful nuclear weapons. Unfortunately most people remain ignorant of the real effects of nuclear weapons/nuclear war.

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**[“Towards a World War III Scenario: The Dangers of Nuclear War”](#)**

**by Michel Chossudovsky**

***Available to order from Global Research!***

ISBN Number: 978-0-9737147-5-3

Year: 2012

Pages: 102

**Print Edition:** \$10.25 (+ shipping and handling)

**PDF Edition:** \$6.50 (sent directly to your email account!)

**Reviews**

“This book is a ‘must’ resource – a richly documented and systematic diagnosis of the supremely pathological geo-strategic planning of US wars since ‘9-11’ against non-nuclear countries to seize their oil fields and resources under cover of ‘freedom and democracy’.”

***-John McMurtry, Professor of Philosophy, Guelph University***

“In a world where engineered, pre-emptive, or more fashionably “humanitarian” wars of aggression have become the norm, this challenging book may be our final wake-up call.”

***-Denis Halliday, Former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations***

Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world’s only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

***-Ellen Brown, author of ‘Web of Debt’ and president of the Public Banking Institute***



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