

# Unveiling the Nuclear Threats: A Reality of Past and Present

Dismantling the Doomsday Machine in the U.S. and other nuclear states is the only viable way to ensure sustained peace – and the survival of our planet.

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*On June 16, 92-year-old Daniel Ellsberg passed away. At RAND, he contributed to a top-secret 47-volume study of classified documents on the Vietnam War. Even though the war had been acknowledged to be "unwinnable" since the 1950s, successive presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon had lied about the conflict.*

As Ellsberg released copies of the classified documents, the 7,000 pages became known as the "Pentagon Papers." However, from 1958 to 1971, his primary job had been as a nuclear war planner for Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations.

In his view, nearly every U.S. president from Truman to Trump has "considered or directed serious preparations for possible imminent U.S. initiation of tactical or strategic nuclear warfare." Most plans focused on the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, North Korea, as well as Iraq, Iran, India, and Libya.

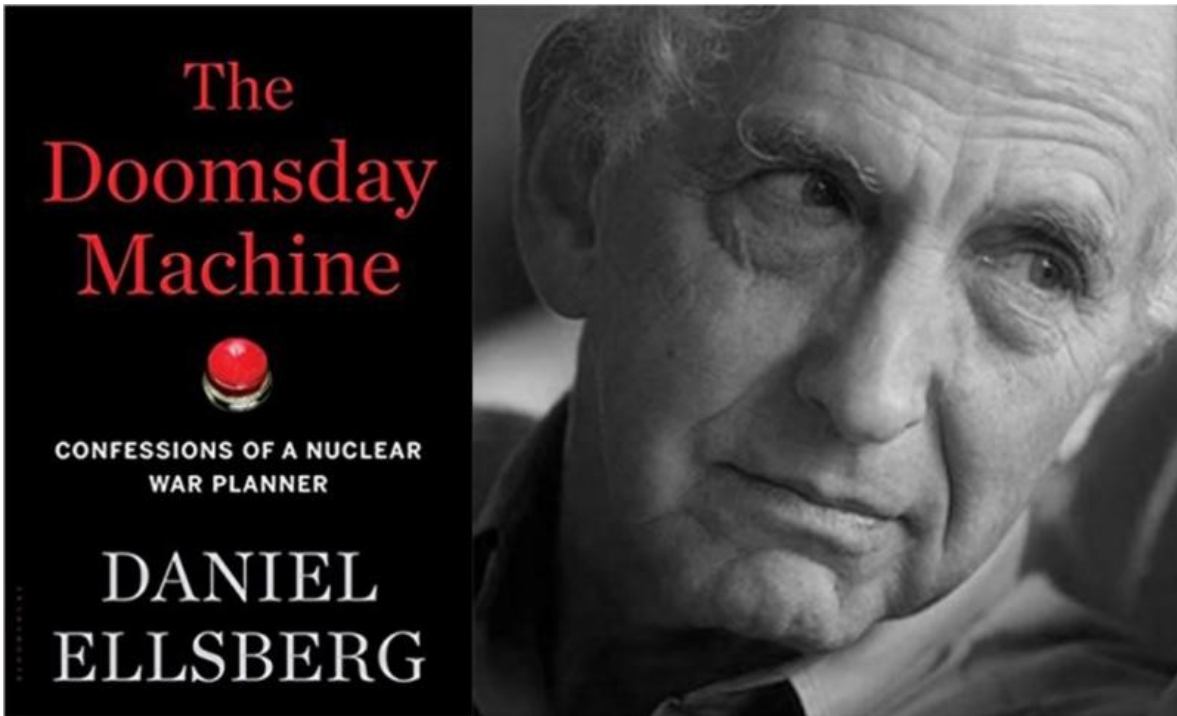
In the case of China, Beijing's role in the Korean War (1950) and the Taiwan Strait crises (1954-55, 1958) triggered U.S. nuclear plans.

Until recently, it was not known that Ellsberg also copied files on the Pentagon's nuclear plans to decapitate Russia, China and our planet.

## China's Auto-pilot Nuclear Decapitation

In May 2021, the New York Times released Ellsberg's classified documents on the proposed nuclear attack on China amid tensions over the Taiwan Strait in 1958. Pentagon's leaders were pushing for a first-strike option, despite their belief that the Soviet Union, China's then-

ally, could retaliate and millions of people would perish.



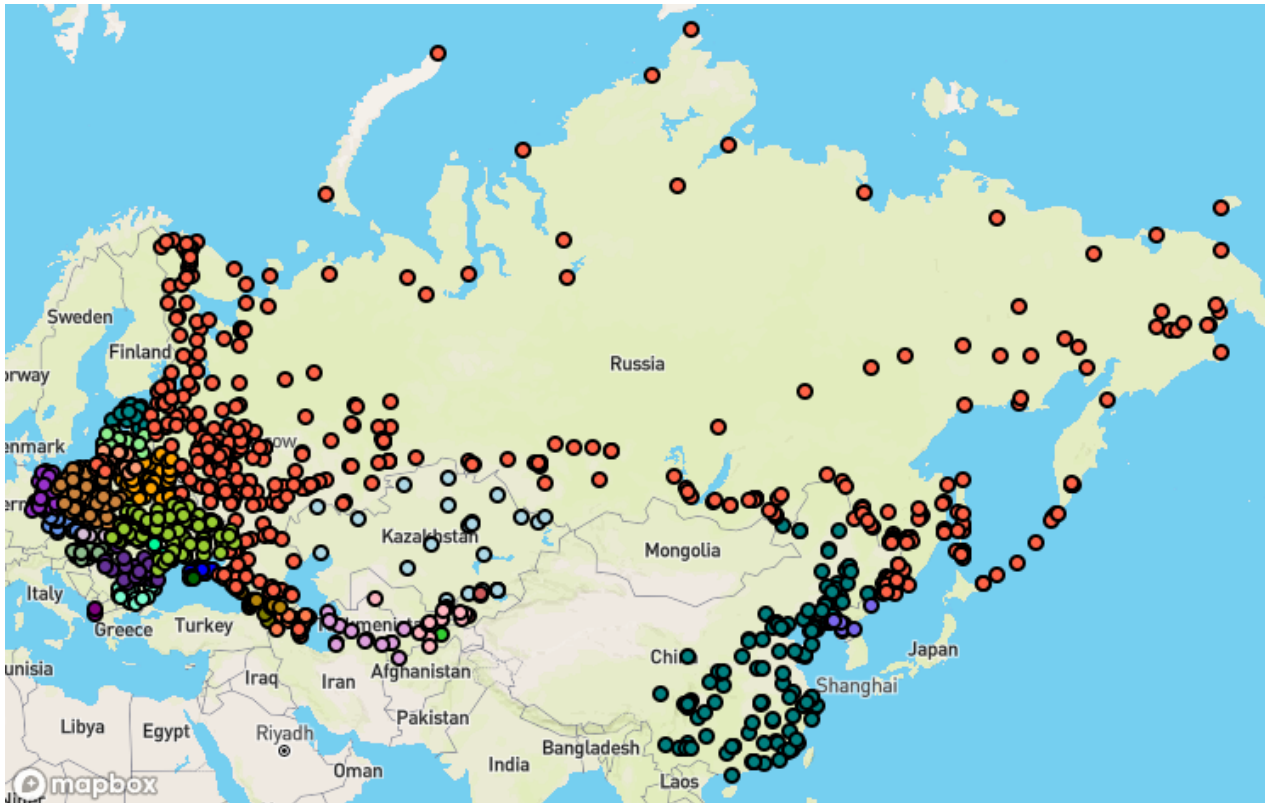
Urging President Biden and the Congress to take notice, Ellsberg was also weary of media apathy after his book *The Doomsday Machine* (2017).

Since the Ukraine conflict, the U.S. and NATO have associated Russia with China, which had no role in the invasion. By October 2022, the Biden administration unveiled a Cold War strategy for “[nuclear threats from China and Russia](#).” In the process, historical realities were turned upside down.

According to *The Doomsday Machine*, Ellsberg first learned about those realities reading a top-secret document based on President Kennedy’s question to the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

“If your plans for general [nuclear] war are carried out as planned, how many people will be killed in the Soviet Union and China?”

The total varied around 275 million to 325 million deaths. In fact, the U.S. nuclear war plan sought the “[destruction of China and the Soviet Union as ‘viable’ societies](#).”



1,100 US Nuclear Targets in 1956. In 2016, The National Security Archives published a declassified list of US nuclear targets from 1956, which spanned 1,100 locations across Eastern Europe, Russia, China, and North Korea. (Source: Screen capture close-up of “Nukemap” by Future of Life Institute)

Worse, the nuclear strategy linked a “general war,” which would legitimize a first-strike against the Soviet Union (and today Russia), and China, even if Beijing would have nothing to do with such conflict. So, Ellsberg asked the Chiefs, over the president’s signature, for a total breakdown of global deaths from U.S. attacks.

Another 100 million deaths, roughly, were predicted in Eastern Europe, from direct attacks on Warsaw Pact bases and air defenses and from fallout. Perhaps 100 million more from fallout in Western Europe and still another 100 million in the mainly neutral countries adjacent to the Soviet bloc and China, including Finland, Sweden, Austria, Afghanistan, India, and Japan.

The total death toll would be roughly 600 million dead. That’s a hundred Holocausts.

### A Truly “Final Solution”

As Ellsberg discovered, deterring a surprise Soviet nuclear attack or responding to such an attack has never been the only or primary purpose of U.S. nuclear plans and preparations. The real purpose is to limit the damage to the U.S. from Soviet or Russian retaliation to a U.S. first strike against the USSR or Russia.

The devastating impact of “nuclear winter” and “nuclear famine,” both of which have been known since the early ’80s, are systematically ignored by nuclear planners.

If U.S. plans for thermonuclear war will be carried out, that means “smoke and soot lofted by fierce firestorms in hundreds of burning cities into the stratosphere, where it would not rain out and would remain for a decade or more.” It would envelope the globe and block most

sunlight. It would lower annual global temperatures to the level of the last Ice Age and kill all harvests worldwide, thereby “causing near-universal starvation within a year or two.”

In his memoir *Doomsday Delayed* (2008), John H. Rubel, who later served as McNamara’s assistant Secretary of Defense, recalls the first high-level presentation of such a scenario in spring 1960. It showed how over half the Soviet population would perish from radioactive fallout alone, and half of all 600 million Chinese. It horrified Rubel, who was of German-Jewish descent. He thought of the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, when mainly SS bureaucrats, including Adolf Eichmann, agreed on a program to exterminate every last Jew they could find in Europe, deploying technologically-efficient methods of mass extermination:

I felt as if I were witnessing a comparable descent into the deep heart of darkness, twilight underworld governed by disciplined, meticulous and energetically mindless groupthink aimed at wiping out half the people living on nearly one third of the earth’s surface.

In turn, public discussion of American plans for the decapitation of the Soviet command and control led to a “Dead Hand” system of delegation that would assure retaliation to U.S. attack destroying Moscow and other command centers. And the rest of the nuclear states have followed in the footprints.

## The Doomsday Profiteers

Nuclear preparedness doesn’t come cheap. The projected costs of the [U.S. nuclear forces from 2021 to 2030](#) are expected to total \$634 billion. Two-thirds of those costs will be incurred by the Department of Defense (DoD), with the largest expenditure for ballistic missile submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Department of Energy’s (DOE) costs will be for nuclear weapons laboratories and supporting activities.

The key beneficiaries of these expenditures are the major contractors for new nuclear delivery vehicles and the operators of the national nuclear weapons complex. A small oligopoly of global contractors and operators – the Big Defense – will reap the profits. Northrop Grumman has identified major suppliers for its new ICBM in 32 states. Its 12 largest subcontractors include some of the nation’s most prominent defense companies, including Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, L3Harris, Aerojet Rocketdyne, Honeywell, Bechtel, and the aerospace division of Raytheon.

From 2012 to 2020, these Big Defense conglomerates spent over \$119 million in campaign contributions employing 380 lobbyists among them in 2020 alone. Over two-thirds of the monies passed through the “revolving door” from top positions in Congress, the Pentagon, and the Department of Energy to work for nuclear weapons contractors as executives or board members, and vice versa. Typically, secretaries of defense – including James Mattis (General Dynamics); Mark Esper (Raytheon); and Lloyd Austin (Raytheon) – have served as lobbyists or board members of major nuclear weapons contractors before the Pentagon.

Additionally, the Big Defense spends millions of dollars in supporting think-tanks for “independent analysis” on nuclear weapons. Licking the hand that feeds them, the think-tanks, in return, push for increasing nuclear investment in Russia’s near-abroad and Asia via the trilateral U.S.-UK-Australia security pact AUKUS.

## Dismantling the Machine

So, where are we today? The Doomsday Machine plan, officially known as the [Single Integrated Operational Plan \(SIOP\)](#), was updated annually until 2003, when it was replaced until revised in 2012 with [OPLAN 8010-12](#), Strategic Deterrence and Force Employment. Its base plan is thought still to be directed against “Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Syria, and WMD attacks by non-state actors.”

Even against Russia and increasingly China, which now dominates U.S. nuclear planning, the Pentagon and the Intelligence Community think that “a disarming first strike [against the U.S.] will most likely not occur.” Yet, as over six decades ago, such assessments are subject to perceptions, which have resulted in several false alarms since the 1960s; some of them potentially fatal.

As evidenced by the [Doomsday Clock](#), the likelihood of a human-made global catastrophe is today the highest since World War II. Dismantling the Doomsday Machine in the U.S. and other nuclear states is the only viable way to ensure sustained peace – and the survival of our planet.

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[Dan Steinbock](#) is Founder of Difference Group.

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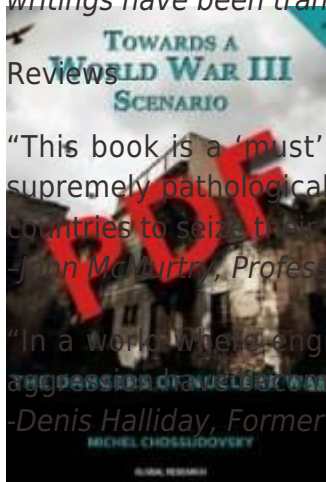
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[Michel Chossudovsky](#) is Professor of Economics at the University of Ottawa and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), which hosts the critically acclaimed website [www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca). He is a contributor to the Encyclopedia Britannica. His writings have been translated into more than 20 languages.



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 are 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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