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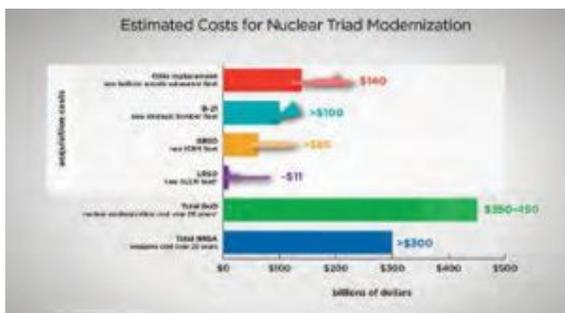
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## No New Nukes

Simon Rosenblum

Welcome to the next nuclear arms race. Not all that long ago, there was some hope that the New START strategic weapons treaty of 2010 might be followed up with more reductions. Just in case one still harboured such hopes, they came crashing down when Vladimir Putin snubbed Barack Obama's Nuclear Security Summit earlier this year. But in reality, the 2010 START treaty came with a heavy price tag. In order to gain congressional (Republican) support, Obama had to commit to building a new generation of nuclear weapons.

Over the next thirty years, the United States plans to spend a trillion dollars on nuclear weapons 'modernization' and the Russians are busy too, unveiling new nuclear weapons systems. I won't bore readers with a list of the new weapons involved, but rest assured they go far beyond simply maintaining the reliability of their respective nuclear deterrents, i.e. keeping them safe, secure and effective. I have my 'favourite' on both sides. As an author of a book on cruise missiles, I can't help but be 'impressed' with the U.S. plans to build a fleet of one thousand air-launched cruise missiles with both nuclear and conventional capability. Nice way to blur the nuclear threshold! No less than William Perry (American Defence Secretary, 1994-1997) has called for their cancellation, as they are a "uniquely destabilizing type of weapon," since adversaries would not be able to detect whether they are being attacked with a missile carrying a conventional warhead or a nuclear one. Not to be upstaged, Russia has recently introduced a new intercontinental nuclear missile that is said to be capable of wiping out parts of the Earth the size of Texas or France. This charming weapon has been dubbed 'Satan 2.' And there are more.



Source: U.S. Arms Control Association, October 2016

Nor are the Americans and Russians the only ones getting in on the act. As the Federation of American Scientists nicely sum up, "all the nuclear arms states have ambitious nuclear weapons modernization programs that appear intended to prolong the nuclear era indefinitely."

But let's not forget about the newbies. Developments in Iran's nuclear weapons program are on hold for the time being. But your guess is as good as mine whether that will be the case in another decade when the current agreement begins to run out. What is not in doubt is North Korea's move to nuclear weapons capability. While still not able to miniaturize it's nuclear weapons to fit them onto missiles,

this would seem to be only a matter of time. And time is running short. The threat posed by North

Korea as it nears possessing the means of delivering nuclear warheads is hard to exaggerate. If the international community is not able to react to or prevent a dangerous and unpredictable regime such as this from becoming a nuclear weapons state, then the future of nuclear arms control in general is seriously thrown into question and the world will face a threat of unknown, but highly dangerous, proportions. In my opinion, the global nuclear disarmament movement is not sufficiently up in arms about this rather imminent danger. It is no doubt tempting to put most of one's eggs in the nuclear weapons abolition basket. Many, perhaps most of Mondial readers might well disagree with me, but I am quite sceptical about the prospects of abolition on both substantive grounds – the troubling issues of monitoring and verification – and for more mundane concerns like the lack of appetite for it among the powers that be – or likely to be – in the nuclear weapons states.

So how does the current momentum to nuclear weapons modernization get stopped in its tracks? For quite some time I have been convinced that by far the best [bet](#) to do so lies in an international campaign calling upon all nuclear weapons states to agree to a no first use policy for their nuclear weapons arsenals.

Prominent nuclear disarmament activist Bruce Blair and General James E. Cartwright (retired vice-chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff) have recently stated in a New York Times op-ed that “nuclear weapons today no longer serve any purpose beyond deterring the first use of such weapons by our adversaries.” Can anything be more obvious than the proposition that insofar as nuclear weapons remain, their only justifiable purpose is to deter a nuclear attack from other nuclear weapons states? Surveys continually show that the vast majority of the world's citizens agree with this proposition, but that is not the stated policy of the United States. Nor is it the policy of Putin's Russia, which for a number of reasons has adopted a much more muscular nuclear posture.

The military, the arms industry, and those too immersed in nuclear weapons theology in these two primary nuclear weapons states have bamboozled politicians into thinking that the adoption of a nuclear no first use policy would embolden enemies and undermine allies. This is so much dangerous nonsense and I very much doubt that it would pass muster if placed under rigorous scrutiny by the larger publics. The underlying public lack of support for nuclear first use is, I strongly believe, the soft underbelly of the nuclear weapons industry and the best weapon the nuclear disarmament movement has in its arsenal. It is our responsibility to seize upon this and prioritize no nuclear first use, which is not only so important in its own right, but a policy that would invite and facilitate making dramatic changes to the nuclear arsenals of all nuclear weapons states – changes such as dramatically reducing nuclear arsenals to minimal deterrent levels and removing nuclear weapons from launch on warning status. That plus a renewed commitment to nuclear nonproliferation, has the clear and present possibility of making the world a much safer place.

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