

# The Biden-Putin Meeting and Nuclear Weapons

lundi 21 juin 2021, par [SHEPPARD Barry](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 21 juin 2021).

**At their recent meeting, Biden and Putin agreed to set up discussions about controlling nuclear weapons.**

Before looking at decisions the U.S. took in recent years that have increased the danger of nuclear war, it is useful to recall how the nuclear age began.

It was the U.S. that developed the first atomic bomb at the end of WW II. The research that led to this was led by physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer.

After he saw the horror of the first use of the weapon, a shaken Oppenheimer, with a lower lip trembling, said on film, "I am become death, the destroyer of worlds."

The quote is from the Hindu god Vishnu in the Bhagavad Gita.

That first use of the weapon was the bombing of two cities in Japan, Hiroshima on August 6, and then Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. Oppenheimer's statement came later in August.

President Harry Truman, who ordered the bombings, at first lied, saying that they were military targets.

The targets were the civilians in the two cities. According to the Japanese after the war's end, hundreds of thousands were killed immediately, and many others died over time from radiation poisoning and cancers. The U.S. puts the figures much lower.

The U.S. government then convinced the majority of the American population that the bombings were necessary to save American soldiers' lives, a myth most believe today.

The facts are well known. Japan was already defeated and ready to surrender before the U.S. carried out its war crime.

Why did the U.S. chose Japanese cities to bomb ? Could it be because Japanese are not white, making the killing of ordinary citizens more palatable to Americans, especially to white Americans ? (Many Black soldiers were reluctant to kill other people of color during the war — see "And Then We Heard the Thunder" by John. O Killens).

For most of the war, Japanese Americans were interred in concentration camps, but not German or Italian Americans.

Even if Japan wasn't already defeated, why were cities deliberately chosen to destroy ? Why weren't the bombs exploded in sparsely populated areas, or even out to sea ? Their terrific power would be demonstrated just as well.

Cities were chosen to show the world not only that the U.S. had this weapon, but would have no moral compunctions about using it against the people of any enemy country.

American Trotskyists at the time sounded the alarm that the main intended audience of this demonstration of the destruction of the Japanese cities was the Soviet Union.

The U.S. and Britain launched the Cold War against the USSR in 1947. It would take some time to convince the American people that the USSR was the new enemy — after all most looked favorably on the Soviets for their resistance to the invasion by German imperialism under the Nazis and regarded the USSR as a friend during the war.

The whipping up of anti-Communist and anti-Soviet fervor was intended to prepare the U.S. public for a new war against the previous ally.

This was cut short by the Soviet Union developing the bomb in 1949, the beginning of the nuclear arms race that continues up to the present day.

In the course of the Cold War, there finally were agreements between the US and the USSR to stop testing new bombs, limiting the number of weapons and reaching an equilibrium based on the MAD doctrine — Mutually Assured Destruction in the event of a war.

Of course, with both sides heavily armed with nuclear weapons, now capable of delivery by ICBMs in a short time, the danger that a miscalculation or even a mistake on radar screens by either side, could rapidly escalate into full nuclear war kept the danger alive.

When the USSR was overthrown and capitalism restored by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the party of the ruling bureaucracy, Russia held onto the former Soviet nuclear arms.

Russia is much weaker than the former Soviet Union. The U.S. began to push for nuclear advantage, first under Obama, by launching a program to “modernize” its nuclear arsenal. One trillion dollars was projected to be sent over ten years on the project.

It became known that this program included developing new, smaller nuclear warheads, designed for battlefield use, not against cities. That is, limited nuclear warfare, which is an oxymoron because any use of atomic weapons would invite wider retaliation.

Russia then followed suit with its own program.

This alone creates increased danger of a nuclear war.

In 1987, U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev signed an agreement, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, that limited both nations from fielding both short range and intermediate range land-based ballistic missiles that could house nuclear or conventional warheads.

After the Cold War ended, the agreement continued, now between the U.S. and Russia.

Then Trump withdrew the U.S. from the treaty in 2019. This should be seen as related to Obama’s program for smaller nuclear warheads. Russia then also withdrew.

During his election campaign Biden criticized Trump for doing so and promised to renew the treaty. As with many promises Biden made as candidate to win votes from the gullible left, Biden as president reneged and refused to reverse Trump’s scuttling of the treaty.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons recently issued a report on global spending on nuclear weapons spending in 2020. The total increased by \$1.4 billion. The nine nuclear countries spent a total of \$72.6 billion that year.

The U.S. led the pack with \$37 billion, three time more than the next country, China, which spent \$10 billion. Russia was next with \$8 billion, followed by the UK, France, India, Israel, Pakistan and North Korea.

Biden's proposed new budget ups U.S. spending to \$43 billion next year.

I wouldn't give much hope that U.S.-Russia talks on nuclear weapons will accomplish anything significant.

### **NATO Threat to Russia**

As the Cold War war was ending, Reagan assured Gorbachev that NATO would not expand east. Another promise not kept.

The U.S. led the expansion of NATO into East Europe and former Soviet republics over the next years. In 1999, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were incorporated. In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In 2009, Albania and Croatia were added. In 2017, Montenegro and then North Macedonia.

NATO is not an economic alliance, but a military one, and now it is openly stated in Washington that it is an anti-Russia alliance.

There are three countries now being considered for incorporation into this military alliance : Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia and Ukraine.

"Red lines" were drawn at the Biden-Putin meeting. Two were emphasized. One by Putin threatened war if Ukraine with its large border with Russia became part of NATO. He also made clear that in the event of a Ukrainian offensive against Russian-speaking east Ukraine, Russia will fight.

If Georgia were admitted, that could lead to war with Russia, as there is conflict between Russia and Georgia over two small enclaves of Russians in Georgia, and NATO members are pledged to fight together in any war involving other NATO countries.

The other 'red line", by Biden, concerned ransomware cyber attacks on U.S. firms by criminal organizations the U.S. believes are operating in Russia. Biden made clear that unless Russia stops these groups from targeting some 16 categories of essential industries, the full power of the United States' much superior cyber warfare capabilities will be launched against Russian industries, including its oil and gas pipe lines serving Europe.

Neither the U.S. or Russia wants a nuclear war. But the continued arms race and the vast nuclear arsenals held by both, and potential complications if any of the other nuclear powers should blunder into use of such weapons, means that this Sword of Damocles remains held over the world.

Nuclear weapons should be abolished. The U.S. could begin this process by declaring it wants to do this, and bringing the other nuclear powers together to achieve abolition. The U.S., as the most powerful nuclear power, could do this, but refuses.

It wants to keep its nuclear threat alive as part of its preservation and if possible extension of its world empire.

