

Munich Conference: “For the First Time in Decades We Are Facing Threat of Nuclear Conflict”

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Over the past fifty years, the Munich Security Conference (MSC) has traditionally reflected the current state of world military affairs. Each February, more than 450 senior decision-makers from around the globe descend into Munich, Germany, to discuss current and future security challenges.

And while there have been times in recent years when the MSC demonstrated signs of hope and optimism, none of that was evident this year. This year's motto “To the Brink – and Back?”- which seems to be an accurate portrayal of the current geopolitical situations in most regions. After several days of senior decision-makers bickering back and forth, the negativity in the atmosphere only means one thing: A global conflict between nuclear superpowers is lingering.

“I was hoping when I opened this conference on Friday that, in concluding the conference, I would be able to say we can delete the question mark. In other words: ‘We are back from the brink,’” former German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger said in closing remarks of the MSC. “I’m actually not sure we can say that,” he added.

The dangers of nuclear proliferation and talk of a “dire” global security situation dominated the security conference: from the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine, to U.S. allegations of Russia's election-meddling, to territorial disputes between ex-Soviet republics, and even discussions about the escalating tensions between Israel and Iran: geopolitical doom and gloom was not short in all conversations during the meeting.

And, in the latest escalation, [Bloomberg](#) reports that the most fiery subject of the conference were the tensions surrounding Russia and the U.S over nuclear arms controls.

Addressing a conference hall in Munich packed with dignitaries, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of the risks emanating from North Korea's nuclear activities, which have ratcheted up tensions between Pyongyang and Washington.

“For the first time since the end of the Cold War, we are now facing a nuclear threat, a threat of a nuclear conflict,” Guterres told the gathering in the southern Bavarian city.



Conference Chairman Wolfgang Ischinger opened the event by warning that the world has

moved too close to a “major interstate conflict” and faces a “dire reality.”

“We have too many unresolved crises, instabilities, and conflicts,” Ischinger warned.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov fired a shot at President Trump’s new 74-page nuclear doctrine calling for a modernization of America’s nuclear arsenal.

[#Russia](#)’s Foreign Minister speaks at the Munich Security conference in Germany. <https://t.co/kvuJP0nCyC>

— Rudaw English (@RudawEnglish) [February 17, 2018](#)

U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster shot back at Lavrov’s statements defending the U.S. nuclear posture, which calls for more low-yield atomic bombs and outlines explicitly Russia and China are the primary sources of security concern for the Pentagon.

A great speech “Munich Security Conference 2018. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster” <https://t.co/ksFXRfgCWj>

— Ali Mohammad Ali (@Ali_CRPA) [February 18, 2018](#)

“We will not allow Russia any of the power to hold the populations of Europe hostage,” he declared Saturday in Munich, appearing on stage minutes after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sounded the alarm on the U.S. military-industrial complex expansion since the collapse of Communism.

While the two countries have fulfilled the terms of another landmark nuclear weapons reduction treaty, New START, that accord expires in 2021 and there’s political pressure on President Donald Trump to let it expire because of the alleged Russian non-compliance with the INF treaty. Moscow in turn accuses Washington of itself breaking the intermediate-range pact. So far, no formal negotiations are taking place on either issue.

And as the world devolves to another potential nuclear arms race, Javier Solana, NATO’s former secretary-general, and Sigmar Gabriel, Germany’s acting foreign minister, expressed alarm:

“The most likely theater for nuclear conflicts would once again be here, in the center of Europe,” Gabriel told the conference.

Meanwhile Graham Allison, a Pentagon adviser under former U.S. President Ronald Reagan when the two superpowers were negotiating arms control, said he’s skeptical momentum will be found to revive START and the INF.

Arms control was developed primarily to prevent the “insane” possibility that Russia and the

U.S. would annihilate each other due to miscalculation or accident, despite not even wanting to go to war, said Allison, now a professor of government at Harvard University. “Those risks remain today.”

Needless to say, a return to the nuclear arms race is the worst possible outcome: “according to Sergei Karaganov, a former Kremlin foreign policy adviser, the situation could get “much more dangerous” than during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, when the world was on the brink of nuclear war.”

Under New START, which followed from the 1991 START treaty and was signed in 2010, the Russian and U.S. arsenals are restricted to no more than 1,550 deployed strategic warheads on no more than 700 deployed strategic missiles and bombers.



And, if that long-range missile pact isn’t prolonged and the INF collapses, “you have a situation where there are no limits on Russian and American nuclear forces,” said Steven Pifer, a former top State Department official and arms control expert, quoted by Bloomberg. In addition, Russia and the U.S. would stop exchanging data on each other’s nuclear arsenals and permitting regular inspections. “It would be less predictable, less secure, less stable,” Pifer said.

Russia would then likely respond to any U.S. move to station land-based intermediate-range missiles in Europe by deploying similar missiles to target “all the bases where these weapons will be,” said Igor Korotchenko, director of the Center for Analysis of World Arms Trade in Moscow.

“And the U.S. can’t stay safe over the ocean – we’ll create the same risk for the U.S. as they do for us in Europe,” he said.

In short: a full blown nuclear arms race coupled with Cold War 2.0.

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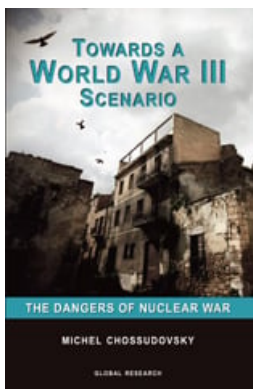
Some experts, such as Thomas Graham, ex-White House adviser under George W. Bush, remain optimistic, and believe Russia and the U.S. will blink when faced with the prospect of stepping into a void without the security of arms control.

Russia has proposed a 5-year extension to New START, to 2026, though it’s tying that to fixing complaints about the way the U.S. has complied with the treaty, the Interfax news service reported Feb. 16.

Others are not: “The chances are diminishing every day,” said Konstantin Kosachyov, head of the foreign affairs committee of the Russian upper house of parliament.

Ian Bremmer, the founder of the Eurasia Group told Handelsblatt that,

“We’re in trouble, because, you know, pretty much every geopolitical conflict out there is escalating, none of them are getting fixed, and no one has any solutions. This was not a good meeting.”



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

by Michel Chossudovsky

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–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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