

Targeting North Korea: Can a Nuclear War be Averted? Conversations with Michel Chossudovsky and Carla Stea

Global Research News Hour episode 203

By [Michael Welch](#), [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#), and [Carla Stea](#)

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"Anybody who has a minimal understanding of nuclear radiation knows that this would not be a war against North Korea. It would be a war against China, Russia, South Korea and Japan."

– Professor Michel Chossudovsky (From this week's interview.)

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NOTE: Michel Chossudovsky will be [speaking in Hamilton and Toronto on the 18th, 19th December, click here for details](#)

For months, the US Government and its Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley have been [messaging their impatience with the North Korean government](#) and its determination to continue test firing its missiles and threaten the use of nuclear weapons.

In November, [three aircraft carriers armed with tomahawk missiles](#) converged in the western Pacific within striking distance of the Asian nation struggling under years of crippling sanctions.

[Belligerent talk from President Trump](#), calling the nation's leader 'Rocket Man' and broadcasting his willingness 'to totally destroy North Korea' does little to assuage concerns that a nuclear confrontation is on the horizon.

Then on Tuesday Dec 12th, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson sent a hopeful signal when he commented on his government's willingness to engage Pyongyang in dialogue without preconditions, [only to be corrected the next day](#) by the White House and State department. The U.S. is sticking to its resolve and demanding North Korea's unconditional abandonment of its nuclear capacity before talks could begin.

It's hard to avoid the impression that the U.S. is in the early stages of yet another military

conflict, the consequences of which could lead to the annihilation of all human life on Earth.

This week's episode of the Global Research News Hour attempts to evaluate the trajectory of the Trump Administration's bellicose actions toward the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea and the urgency of a renewed anti-war movement at this time in history.

In the first part of the program, we hear from Professor Michel Chossudovsky of the [Centre for Research on Globalization](#). Professor Chossudovsky is convinced that the world is facing a crisis on par with that of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, though without the leadership that succeeded in turning the world away from catastrophe. He unpacks some of the history of America's nuclear policy, assesses the U.S. government's true motives for badgering North Korea, and the normalization of nuclear weapons as applicable in conventional warfare.

Later in the show, Carla Stea, Global Research's correspondent at the United Nations, examines the campaign to demonize the North Korean government and the North Korean people, subterfuge at the U.N. and a proposal with the prospect of defusing the crisis and finally securing peace on the Korean peninsula.

[Professor Michel Chossudovsky](#) is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal, Editor of Global Research. He is the author of eleven books including [The Globalization of Poverty and The New World Order \(1997, 2003\)](#), [America's "War on Terrorism" \(2005\)](#), [Towards a World War III Scenario: The Dangers of Nuclear War \(2011\)](#), and [The Globalization of War, America's Long War against Humanity \(2015\)](#).

[Carla Stea](#) is an American journalist and Global Research's Correspondent at United Nations headquarters, New York. Her articles have been published in the US, UK, Russia, Latin America, and have appeared in Latin American Perspectives, Covert Action Quarterly, War and Peace Digest, Rock Creek Free Press, Komsomolskaya Pravda, Rabochaya Tribuna, Sovetskaya Rossia, Novosti Press and Tapol, Report on Human Rights, Indonesia.

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Transcript- Michel Chossudovsky Interview, December 12, 2017

Part One

Introduction

Michel Chossudovsky's latest book entitled the [Globalization of War, America's Long War against Humanity](#) includes a detailed analysis of the Korean crisis and the looming dangers of a nuclear war.

Professor Chossudovsky [will be speaking in Hamilton and Toronto](#) the week of December 18th . He has plans for speaking engagements in Winnipeg and Vancouver in mid-January 2018.

Global Research: We are joined now by Michel Chossudovsky. He is Professor of Economics (Emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, and Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization in Montreal. He is the Editor of Global Research, and he is an award-winning

author of eleven books including *The Globalization of Poverty* and *The New World Order, Towards a World War III Scenario: The Dangers of Nuclear War*, and *The Globalization of War, America's Long War against Humanity*. And he is preparing talks in Hamilton and Toronto and potentially other cities across Canada. So he joins us right now. How are you doing today Professor Chossudovsky?

Professor Michel Chossudovsky: Good afternoon. Pleasure to be on the program.

GR: So, tell us a little bit about these talks. What in particular is your concern as you go to these different events?

MC: Well, the danger of nuclear annihilation, which appears to be very abstract, is a reality and it becomes a reality once it happens. People are incapable of conceptualizing.

We have a lot of scientific evidence. We have – well, of course we also have Hiroshima and Nagasaki where a hundred thousand people died – in Hiroshima in the first seven seconds. Today's bombs are at least one hundred times more powerful – the strategic nuclear bombs.

The tactical nuclear weapons, which are – have been re-categorized by the U.S. Senate as 'conventional weapons' can go from one-third to six times a Hiroshima bomb and the latest version, the B61-12 could go up to twelve times a Hiroshima bomb. But they call them 'mini-nukes' and scientific opinion on contract to the Pentagon says, "that they are harmless to the surrounding civilian population because the explosion is underground." These are 'bunker-buster bombs. They have a different delivery system to the so-called 'strategic' nuclear weapons, but they're thermonuclear bombs and they're pretty much the same nuclear bombs with different yields that – yields mean explosive capacity. So, the situation is tremendously dangerous.

Now, there's another thing which people do not know, and it's of extreme importance. The Manhattan Project started up in 1939. It was initially a U.S. project. And then Britain and also Canada joined the Manhattan Project. And Canadian science and technology was applied to the Manhattan Project. I won't get into the details but Canada is deeply integrated into the nuclear weapons project right from the outset, and in fact, we might be described as a 'de-facto' nuclear power because there was exchange of information. There were agreements. There was a Quebec agreement, I believe it was in 1942-1943. And so on, so forth.

But what's very important is that in 1942, the United States had already designed a project to bomb the Soviet Union. And that happened when the Soviet Union and the allies were fighting Nazi Germany. They were allies! And in 1945 – September 15 1945, barely one month after Hiroshima. Hiroshima was on the 6th of August, Nagasaki was on the 9th of August – and less than a month later, they released a secret document which essentially reads as follows: "Two hundred and four atomic bombs against sixty-six major cities of the Soviet Union." It was a U.S. nuclear attack against the U.S.S.R. which was formulated during World War II.

Now, what is the significance of this plan? If the United States had not had the intent of blowing up the Soviet Union – of wiping the Soviet Union off the map – we would not have had an arms race, 'kay? We would not have had an arms race and the world would be much safer today. So that's one very important dimension.

Now when we turn to looking at North Korea and China, I think it's important to stress that

North Korea and China had been threatened for 67 years. In fact, the first threat was formulated shortly after China declared its liberation or the foundation of the Peoples' Republic of China, which was in October 1949... And so, in early 1950 – I think it was mid-1950 – the United States had already plans to attack China and also to attack North Korea with nuclear weapons.

And then we have to say North Korea is a nuclear weapon state, but so is Israel. North Korea is a nuclear weapons state, but so is – so is Turkey! It has tactical nuclear weapons under national command in its Incirlik Air Force Base. And there are other countries. And there we have a small country in East Asia which now has been tagged by the media as a threat to global security.

GR: I think that one of the reasons the public has a lot of concern about the threat posed by North Korea, is the portrayal of the president as being unstable, insane. Here he is with all these tests that every time some concern is expressed they're conducting one more test. Firing missiles into the sea, intercontinental ballistic missile testing, and so we're seeing this response on the part of the U.S. president. Granted a lot of the public messaging is that both Trump and Kim Jong-Un are insane and essentially holding the world hostage. But, can you address that? I mean, do you believe the North Korean president is behaving rationally?

MC: Well listen, uh, you know, we can always, um, look at narratives, uh, and um, the narrative of the North Korean leader may appear eclectic, at moments threatening, but in effect, all they have done is to test their missiles and test their nuclear weapons.

But on the other hand, if you want to look at concrete occurrences, for the last 67 years the United States has been threatening to obliterate North Korea. And that 'Fire and Fury' was not invented by Donald Trump. It goes back to the Truman doctrine, and I can quote from tonnes of documents. And the, and the, and the – you know – killed 30 percent of the population and then say North Korea is threatening America. There's not a single family in North Korea that hasn't lost a loved one in the course of the Korean War! Those are the realities!

And then another thing. This 'eclectic nut-head' in North Korea actually instructed – he's Head of State, or the Head of the Party, the leader – his government actually signed and gave a 'yes' vote to a motion in the United Nations General Assembly, to eliminate nuclear weapons! To prohibit nuclear weapons! To make them illegal! And then there were 38 countries that voted against it. Of course Canada was one of them. As a Canadian I say while most Canadians are against nuclear weapons, yet our government did not sign the motion which is now the object of a Nobel Prize to prohibit nuclear weapons!

But the guy in – you know – Pyongyang, he gave the green light to signing that resolution! Now, there's something wrong there!

I think we have to distinguish between political rhetoric on the one hand, and – I concur that his rhetoric is not encouraging, 'kay? He makes statements which are a little bit off. But I don't think that really makes – it's ammunition for the media. Not a single media has actually acknowledged the fact that North Korea, uh, endorsed the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Something like a hundred and twenty countries said 'yes'. All the NATO member states said 'no'. Some of them abstained. But, and Canada also...Canada said 'no'... We have to understand a bit the history of the Korean peninsula.

I should mention another thing. South Korea was for ten years, and that was official, a nuclear weapons state.

GR: What makes North Korea such a – a focus of attention, at least in the media, and apparently in terms of U.S. foreign policy. It doesn't obviously have any resources like oil that would be coveted by the U.S. and its partners. Why this fuss over North Korea? Just because they've got the nuclear bomb?

MC: I think there are two important issues pertaining to that question. One is that North Korea has a societal project which departs from the diktats of global capitalism. Okay? Whether we like it or not, they're a socialist country. They have a – they have their own way of organizing economic activity, social programs and so on. And any country which departs from the norm of neoliberalism which exercises its sovereignty is immediately a target. And we saw that ...

GR: Yugoslavia.

MC: We saw that in Syria and Iraq. We see it in many different countries. I think that's the first.

But the second has to do with the fact that North Korea is a buffer state, and it is – it has borders with China and it has borders with Russia. The city of Vladivostok is about a hundred kilometres from the North Korean border. And uh, both Russia and China are the target of the United States.

The war on North Korea is a stepping stone – is a possible stepping stone to a broader war. And it's also a war of consolidation in East Asia where the United States has established its spheres of influence, well in East Asia but also in Southeast Asia.

GR: If they're looking for a way of de-escalating things vis-a-vis the United States, what options realistically do they have?

MC: Well, first of all, there is the option of signing a peace treaty which the North Koreans have been insisting upon for many, many years. But the United States have always refused to sign a peace agreement. In other words, a peace agreement would be signed by the three parties of the armistice agreement of 1953. Now that armistice agreement was signed by the United States, the DPRK, and China, because China had what they called the Chinese volunteers army. So those are the three signatories of the armistice agreement.

But there seems to be a dead-end there because systematically Washington said "we're not entering into any kind of peace negotiations," or that they set conditions on that. And they've even intimated that they would have to have troops stationed in North Korea if there's a re-unification of the two Koreas.

So, from my stand-point, and I've discussed this a lot with people in South Korea, and it's a project which emanates also from South Korean civil society – for North Korea and South Korea to enter into an agreement, which in a sense nullifies the armistice agreement – would be a peace agreement – but at the same time it would be a means to the – to demilitarize the Korean peninsula. Because at this moment – and that's very, very important – at this moment the Republic of Korea, namely South Korea, has, um, a bi-lateral agreement with the United States. It's called the ROK-US Combined Forces Command – the CFC.

Now, what that joint command signifies is that in case of war, uh, the United States uh, would take over the entire military apparatus of South Korea. In other words, all the forces of South Korea would be under U.S. command. That is called Operational Control (OPCON). It's the OPCON of both the Republic of Korea and U.S. military forces and uh they've signed an agreement which essentially says okay, if there's war, well, President Moon, the president of South Korea, uh, has absolutely no power. He's not commander-in-chief. He's only commander-in-chief when there's peace, so that's a non-sequitur! And then Washington dictates its conditions.

And, ultimately, through OPCON, it controls the whole military operations in East Asia, so that even if, let's say, the United States wanted to attack China, it could then mobilize Korean forces and they would be under the command of a four-star general appointed by the Pentagon. So that what has to be achieved is that for this north-south peace agreement, coupled with cooperation, cultural exchange and so on, some of which has been ongoing, but it started with Kim Dae-Jung in 1998, and then it was interrupted – well I don't want to go into the details of the history, but the thing is that, um, if North and South Korea, through dialogue, establish a peace agreement whereby they agree that the OPCON, the ROK and U.S. agreement is nullified – that's something that they can do – so that Operational Control of the United States over the Republic of Korea forces is nullified, combined, let's say, with the withdrawal of some 27,000 troops – U.S. troops – in South Korea, and what this could signify is that, um, the armistice agreement would in a sense be side-tracked by a bi-lateral north-south peace agreement. In other words, which would de-facto lead to rescinding the 1953 armistice. That is Plan B.

And in effect, that Plan B is much more realistic than Plan A, because the United States has refused to enter into any kind of peace negotiations with North Korea and China, which would then – so that the armistice agreement is still there. And the armistice agreement we know, doesn't necessarily lead to the end of the war. It simply means it's a, you know, you stop fighting but the war is still there...

GR: Ceasefire...

MC: Legally, the war is still there...

GR: Yeah...

MC: ...because there was never a peace agreement.

Intermission

Part Two

GR: Right now, the United States seems to be facing a major economic crisis. They've pretty much out-sourced a lot of their infrastructure, huge debts that they're not likely to ever pay back. They're over-strained. And on top of that – that's something that's prevailed for years – now you've got a president who's not only somehow, you know, unpredictable and untamed, but he seems to be under assault from within the governing – the military industrial complex, the Deep State, whatever you want to call it. How do you see those factors working together to potentially increase the threat of a nuclear holocaust, be it deliberate or accidental?

MC: Well, I think what is – disturbs me most is that uh, today we have a situation where, um,

competing nuclear powers are not communicating in the same way, let's say, as they were communicating during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

President Kennedy and, uh, Nicolai Sergeyevich Khrushchev, the Russian leader, were, uh, were communicating at that time. They were, you know, they had means of communicating. Uh, they were both acutely aware, uh, of the fact that a nuclear – the use of nuclear weapons would lead to the unthinkable. That was, um, under the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction. That doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (M-A-D) prevailed during the Cold War era and was an element of stability, because both sides knew that if they used nuclear weapons, this would be the end of humanity! They knew it! And they had the scientists who were analyzing it, and their policy -makers. But today we don't have that...

GR: Are you sure? You don't think Putin understands the, uh, the potential hazards and that he isn't reaching out to Mr. Trump?

MC: Putin understands them, and there's no first strike pre-emptive nuclear war doctrine as far as the Soviet – the Russian Federation is concerned. Putin understands it. And he has – his whole background enabled him to understand it. I don't think that Trump understands it. I don't think that James 'Mad Dog' Mattis, who runs the Pentagon, understands it! And one of the reasons why they don't understand it, is that they have created an ideology which upholds nuclear weapons, or tactical nuclear weapons, as 'peace-making' bombs, because what they have done is a little bit like removing the sticker from a cigarette pack and saying, you know, smoking is good for your health...

GR: Health food!

MC: ...and that's exactly what they've done!

GR: Hm...

MC: They redefined those bombs, saying that they're harmless to civilians. And that's in the military manuals...

GR: So one thing that's changed...

MC: ...pardon?

GR: One thing that seems to have changed is that back in the '80s there was the talk about Mutually Assured Destruction, and that was the – THE application of nuclear weapons, and today it's become a part of conventional warfare.

MC: Well, precisely! Well not all of them but the – they're now arguing this thing, 'oh well, we should use the – these small nuclear bombs because ... they could insert themselves into a conventional war theatre context. Let's go ahead and use them.'

In fact we don't even have to ask President Trump's permission because the commander, the three-star general in the regional commands can actually call the shots um, and uh, that's a point that Daniel Ellesberg brought out in a recent interview, the fact that even the commanders in the field have much greater authority to use nuclear weapons than they did previously. It's an extremely dangerous situation, because even the use of a tactical nuclear weapon against North Korea could unleash a third world war.

And the reason for that is also the fact that North Korea has borders with China and Russia. Anybody who has a minimal understanding of nuclear radiation knows that this would not be a war against North Korea. It would be a war against China, Russia, South Korea and Japan. I mean, as I said, you know, uh, for people in Toronto going from Toronto to Hamilton is about the same thing as going from Seoul to the border with North Korea! Everything is very, very close, and densely populated! So that...we're at the very dangerous crossroads.

And one of the purposes of the meetings in Hamilton and Toronto is to build a resurgence of the Canadian anti-war movement which has been defunct since the Iraq War, 2003. Nobody moves. Here we're not talking about one war. We have the War in Yemen, it's a crimes against humanity. We have the War in Syria. The War in Iraq. But the use of nuclear weapons is the destruction of humanity.

Fidel Castro said, and I actually recorded that statement when I was with him a few years back. He said, "In the case of a nuclear war, the collateral damage is humanity in its entirety."

GR: Okay, so Professor Chossudovsky, those dates for your lectures again are December 18th in Hamilton and then another one in Toronto on December 19th. Just one more question before I let you go. Just a quick comment on the media's role in exacerbating or mitigating this new nuclear threat.

MC: Well, you know, what is exacerbating this – the nuclear threat is the act of omission. Here we have something which is absolutely crucial, whatever your views. Um, but it's not front page news. And we don't talk about it. And when we do talk about it, we look at the folklore of the North Korean leader, and his hairstyle, and so on. Um, the public attention today...public opinion is misinformed. They don't know what these bombs can do. They literally will destroy people's lives and destroy the planet. That's not an understatement – that's not an overstatement. It's in fact an understatement because you can blow up the planet several times.

Um, the lie has become the truth. We are led to believe that nuclear weapons are harmless to civilians, and the media is simply mum on the subject. And uh, and then when – when this 'crazy' North Korean leader – well they say he's crazy and so on and so forth, why, if he's so crazy, why did he actually say 'yes' to a U.N. resolution to prohibit and outlaw nuclear weapons, when none of the other nuclear weapons states actually, um, supported that resolution? It was the only nuclear weapons state which actually supported that resolution.

GR: Professor Choss...

MC: And whether we like the North Koreans or not, that statement should have been – should have been heralded by – by the mainstream media. And I can tell you because I reviewed it. You know what they did? They just lumped them together! Said the nine nuclear weapons states, including North Korea, turned down the motion. Not true! They didn't check the original United Nations Assembly document. Or maybe they just decided that they were going to lie and then...you can look at it in the Ottawa Citizen. And – and – and, in fact – very little coverage of it.

On the whole very little coverage of the nuclear weapons, um, the implications of nuclear weapons, and the importance for humanity to, uh, to abolish nuclear weapons.

GR: Professor Chossudovsky, thank you very much for your time. I wish you all the best in your upcoming speaking events and a happy holiday season and all the best in the new year!

MC: All the best to you and everybody in Winnipeg!

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