GOVT NUKE WEAPONS POLICY "COULD LEAD TO NATIONAL ANNIHILATION".

In a submission to the Australian Government's White Paper on Foreign Policy, People for Nuclear Disarmament and the Human Survival Project (a joint project between PND and the erstwhile Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at Sydney University, now DPACS), have suggested that in a worst-case scenario, current policies by the Australian Government, including Extended Deterrence and our boycott of talks in NY to negotiate a ban on nuclear weapons, "could lead to national annihilation".

If nuclear conflict were to arise between NATO and Russia, or between the US and China, Pine Gap would certainly be a high priority target whose role in nuclear command and control would mean it would be struck in the first minutes of an erupting nuclear conflict. Australia would be highly fortunate if all that happened to it were the loss of Pine Gap (and likely, Alice Springs). Other nuclear targets exist here, and it is all but inconceivable that Australia's main cities would avoid being hit - either because of military installations within them or because they are 'soft targets'. If this took place, Australia would lose most of its population in an hour or so and cease to exist as a nation.

According to PND/HSP UN Nuclear Weapons Campaigner John Hallam:

"There is a simple way to avoid this and that is, obviously, to eliminate nuclear weapons. While there are a number of pathways to eliminate nuclear weapons and all of them can and must be pursued at once, Australia is turning its back on an obvious one that opens up on 27 March at the UN in New York, when negotiations begin to craft a legally binding international instrument to make nuclear weapons illegal."

"Instead of painting a massive target on our backside as we are now doing, Australia should participate enthusiastically and constructively in these negotiations with the clear aim of crafting a ban that will both attract the widest support from governments worldwide and that will make it as difficult, embarrassing, and inconvenient for nuclear weapon states to remain nuclear weapon states."

"Australia's existing policies constitute a clear and present danger to our own security, and expose us, potentially at least, to the possibility of national annihilation."

John Hallam
REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROHIBITION TALKS SERVES NEITHER AUSTRALIA'S SELF INTEREST NOR AUSTRALIAN VALUES AND JEOPARDIZES AUSTRALIAN SECURITY

John Hallam
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Foreign Policy can be pursued along one (or both – it is not mutually exclusive) of two lines: That of so – called 'National Self – Interest', or along the line of attempting to promote in a messy and not necessarily sympathetic wider world, certain core values.

Foreign policy practitioners often state that they are pursuing policies based on 'national self-interest', without grasping that this can involve them in paradoxes.

These paradoxes become evident when the question is asked 'self-interest in order to achieve what ends precisely?'. The answer to that question can only be a statement of values. The other obvious paradox is that policies of naked self – interest can be absolutely counterproductive to self – interest itself: In other words, a policy of self interest may not necessarily be in a Governments self interest, just as an individual who acts only in their own self interest may very soon find themselves without a single friend or supporter.

It is our contention that current Australian Government policies of refusal to support international efforts to negotiate a prohibition or ban on nuclear weapons serve neither Australian core moral values, nor do they serve Australia's enlightened (or not-so-enlightened) self – interest.

The arguments that have been produced thus far for our refusal – that a ban on nuclear weapons will not serve either to actually
eliminate nuclear weapons, or to bring that elimination closer, or to reduce nuclear risks, and that one can only 'engage, not enrage' the nuclear weapon states – entirely lack credibility. They do so to such an extent that one must ask whether those who trot them out even themselves believe them.

Meanwhile, our refusal to participate in the upcoming negotiations scheduled for March 27 and June 15-July 7 in New York erodes both our moral standing amongst other governments, and opens up the prospect of a world in which if present trends are not reversed, actual global thermonuclear war between the US/NATO and Russia/China becomes a real possibility. If that becomes a real possibility, then the survival of civilization itself and even of humans as a species starts to have question – marks attached to it. This clearly has massive implications for Australian Government self – interest and for values. If we value anything at all we must value the continuation of civilization and of humans as a species.

That human species survival itself, and certainly civilization survival really are threatened by large-scale nuclear weapons use has been diplomatic 'boilerplate' language for decades. However, both recent (2006 – no longer so recent) nuclear winter research, and recent developments in nuclear posture have both re-emphasized that large scale use of nuclear weapons would truly mean the death by starvation of at least the majority of humans, and with recent deterioration in the US-Russia relationship, that an apocalypse of this nature is all too possible.

I do not mean of course to say that such a cataclysm is in any way 'inevitable'. Estimates of its actual likelihood range from one in a thousand over the next ten years to fifty-fifty, and even to 100%. Hopefully it is all too 'evitable', and five or ten years down the track I will still be here either warning of its continuing possibility or (hopefully) celebrating that it is no longer possible.

The shifting of the hands of the 'Doomsday Clock' from 3 mins to midnight, to 2 and a half mins to 'midnight', does indicate that a group of nobel prizewinners who spend their lives thinking about
civilisation-ending issues think it just got significantly more likely and think it is more likely than it was in 1983, when with the hands at 3 mins, the world nearly ended twice in a six week period.

The possibility, even the remote possibility (and I submit that it is frighteningly far from 'remote'), of complete global catastrophe, in which civilization as we know it perishes and in which the survival of humans itself becomes problematic (not to mention that the overwhelming majority of non-human species will also perish) – ought to focus the minds of DFAT. It has in fact already focussed the minds of those worthy governments who organized the Nayarit/Oslo/Vienna meetings, and who sponsored L41.

This is because the possibility of complete global nuclear catastrophe has obvious practical as well as more abstract 'moral' implications. In the end both moral and practical aspects merge in some very concrete realities.

Looked at from the point of view of pure national self-interest, it can never be in Australia's self – interest if all or much of the rest of the world including our allies, are incinerated. The literal disappearance of Australia's strategic and trading partners, as well as the global trading framework on which we depend for our prosperity can never be in our national self interest and can only be contrary to it.

Yet by failing to adequately prioritize the elimination of nuclear weapons we increase rather than decrease the probability of such an event, just exactly when global trends seem to be pushing in a direction that puts it back on the agenda.

What is more likely to happen to Australia if buttons get pushed, is much more dire. By engaging in 'extended deterrence' relationships with the US, and by hosting the largest CIA installation outside Langley VA as well as a critical nuclear surveillance and warning centre, at Pine Gap, we have 'painted a target on our backsides'. This means that the LEAST damage we can expect is to have Alice Springs vaporized. In fact it is quite likely that one or more of our larger cities would also be
targeted, meaning that in the worst possible outcome, Australia would stand to lose most of its population in just under an hour.

Even assuming that no Australian city was targeted (not a credible assumption), Australia would of course be blanketed by the stratospheric smog from the burning of cites in the northern hemisphere that is nuclear winter, making agriculture impossible or much much more difficult.

Policies that do less than the most that can be done to eliminate nuclear weapons, and in particular that do not do the most that can be done to eliminate the still swollen arsenals of the US and Russia (nothing new here) – place Australia's security at risk in the worst, grossest possible, way. They literally expose us to possible national annihilation.

Failure to support the negotiation of an internationally binding legal instrument does in fact mean failure to adequately prioritize the elimination of nuclear weapons. And that jeopardizes Australia's security as nothing else could possibly do.

DFAT has argued that this is not so, because in their view, a nuclear weapons 'ban' (prohibition, framework agreement, convention, whatever), will not in reality further the actual elimination of nuclear weapons.

This is true only inasmuch as those who plot a ban or prohibition or legal instrument, need to be mindful of just how to ensure that being outside it even for a powerful nuclear weapons state, is made as disagreeable, inconvenient, and embarrassing as possible. Governments that support a ban are rightly focussed on just that.

It is simply not the case that, in some mysterious and incomprehensible way, a universally recognized ban or prohibition would, in some perverse way those dynamics escape the wisest of us, make nuclear weapons use MORE likely, or be in some way 'destabilizing'.

After all, the very core purpose of the exercise is to make such use LESS likely and to be stabilizing. Thats why we do this in
the first place. And if the presence of nuclear weapons is in and of itself DE-stabilizing (and it is), and if nuclear weapons that don't exist can't be used (hardly a proposition one can argue with), then not only will their absence be stabilizing, but the very attempt to bring about that absence will be stabilizing not de-stabilising.

Furthermore, any legal regime that marginalizes and stigmatizes them is going to make their actual use LESS likely – and will make their elimination MORE likely.

It may sometimes be best to put up with evils that we know. But if the evils that we know seem likely to take us to worse and yet worse evils and seem likely to kill us, then it is better – almost with no further examination – to 'flee to those we know not of'. And if examination suggests that the evils we know not of are less likely to be lethal than those we know, the case is closed.

It bears repeating of course, that every other weapon that has been successfully removed from global arsenals has been prohibited before it has been eliminated – but has then proceeded to elimination.

Nuclear weapons alone of all weapons (well, maybe some potent bioweapons) hold out the prospect of the complete destruction of civilization and even of humans as a species.

Australia has nothing to gain and everything to lose (including the prospect of our actual annihilation), by a dependence on nuclear weapons via extended deterrence.

We have everything to lose, including our very existence, by a failure to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We have nothing to lose, and much to gain, by participating in the negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons and by doing so as if our very existence depends on it.

Because it does.

John Hallam