ELIMINATING NUCLEAR WEAPONS
A Survival Guide for the Twenty-first Century
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Paul Keating saw the end of the Cold War, that epiphany at the end of the twentieth century, as an unprecedented and probably unrepeatable opportunity to create a new international strategic environment—one free of nuclear weapons. With the Cold War over, a concrete program of weapons elimination was possible; lacking was the imagination and the will. But no government had ever contemplated yet put its name to a report urging the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The Labor government in Australia was the first to do so. In 1995 Paul Keating established the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The Commission produced the first ever handbook of practical measures to move the world down the path to better nuclear safety and to a point of full nuclear elimination. The Report stressed that there could be no nuclear non-proliferation without de-proliferation—the notion that some states could have nuclear weapons but others not. The Report was a milestone in the international debate. Upon completion it was presented to the Howard government, which refused to promote its recommendations.

In earlier lectures at this university I have spoken mostly about Australia and its place in the world. Tonight I want to discuss a darker and more dangerous subject, one that threatens to cast a long shadow over the twenty-first century.

I am talking about the continuing inability of the international community, and more particularly the great powers, to take the steps necessary to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world.

In some ways, I suppose, I am an unexpected campaigner for nuclear disarmament. I am a realist about international affairs and I don't have great faith in the inherent goodwill of the nation state. I have never seen much point in the politics of symbolism. During the Cold War I thought ideas of unilateral disarmament were naïve and dangerous.

And yet the issue of nuclear weapons worries me more than any other when I think about the sort of world young Australians will inherit.

Over the past decade the world has undergone deep changes. The Cold War, which defined our international system for 50 years, has ended and the information revolution is transforming our lives and societies. But in many ways our institutions, and our ways of thinking, have not adjusted. As a result, we find ourselves on the

verge of the twenty-first century dangerously close to repeating the mistakes of this one.

One reason for this is the human tendency to avert our eyes from problems, to hope that if we do not look directly at them, they will disappear.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, this was what we did. No image in the twentieth century has seared our collective consciousness like that of the mushroom cloud. And in our minds that image of the bomb defined the Cold War. So although nuclear weapons had originally been conceived for a different conflict, we assumed that because the Cold War was over, the weapons that defined it had miraculously disappeared as well.

For most Australians, the realisation that this was not so came with the announcement by President Chirac, on 13 June 1995, that France would conduct a series of eight underground nuclear-weapons tests at Mururoa Atoll in French Polynesia.

In making this decision the newly elected President was following China in breaking an international moratorium on testing that had been in place since January 1993.

The resumption had been foreshadowed during the French election campaign, so it was not unexpected. But the outcry in Australia was immediate and strong.

In response to the tests, the government I led took a series of measures including recalling the Ambassador to France, curtailing defence contacts, and coordinating protest action in the United Nations and other international bodies, including the South Pacific Forum, which Australia was chairing that year.

This did not much diminish the public clamour. The government was being urged to break diplomatic relations with France, cut off all trade, and dispatch Australian warships to stop the tests. Sections of the media, especially commercial radio, were running a campaign that became more anti-French than anti-nuclear. It seemed at times as if the smoke of the Battle of Agincourt had only just cleared. At several points I had to underline publicly that our opposition was to the nuclear tests, not to the people of France.

The selfishness and cynicism of the Chirac decision appalled me and I was deeply concerned by the provocation it provided to some of the threshold nuclear states. But I was not interested in the sort of theatrical and ultimately pointless gestures that were being urged upon us. Trade sanctions would have harmed Australia more than France. I was certainly not prepared to permit Australia's military forces to be used for symbolic reasons. Short of going to war with France, which was absurd, the only option for the warships would have been to steam around in circles while the French exploded their bombs. This would have underlined not Australia's strength but our impotence.

The more I thought about the French tests, the more I came to feel that the understandable public outrage was in a sense directed at a symptom rather than a cause of the problem.

The French had reminded everyone of what we all wanted to forget—the unique, sickening sense of insecurity which comes from knowing that weapons exist in the arsenals of governments which have the capacity to destroy humankind. The problem, in other words, was the continued existence of nuclear weapons in the world.

As I reflected on this, I thought we had an unprecedented and possibly unrepeatable opportunity to begin to move to a new strategic environment which offered not just a reduction in the number of nuclear weapons, but their elimination. The Gulf War had shown that new, accurate, conventional weapons could accomplish the military purposes for which nuclear weapons had once been intended, but without such appalling, indiscriminate consequences. The Cold War had ended, all the declared nuclear powers were at least on speaking terms, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons had, for the time being, been reasonably contained. There was no prospect, however, that this situation would continue into the indefinite future.

The goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world was not new. It had been a long-term aim of the Labor Party and a goal that had been articulated forcefully by others.

But as long as the Cold War raged, the ambition was unachievable. Now, however, we had an opportunity to develop a concrete program to achieve a nuclear weapons-free world.

The successful negotiation of the chemical weapons convention in which Australia had played an important diplomatic role had shown that it was possible to put the genie back in the bottle; that a whole class of weapons of mass destruction could be abolished. And Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which had only recently been indefinitely extended, committed the nuclear-weapons states to ‘pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament’.

But of course the task of ridding the world of nuclear weapons was not something Australia could accomplish unilaterally. We had none of our own to eliminate and we were committed not to get them. We were well respected internationally for our arms control expertise. But we were now entering a domain where the deepest national security interests of the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France were involved.

Every country was directly affected by the nuclear threat, but nothing could happen without the five nuclear powers.

We decided, therefore, that the most useful thing we could do was to try to shape the international debate. Anti-nuclear groups had written many reports about the problems of nuclear weapons but, until that time, no government had ever put its name behind a report committed to their elimination. I wanted to put the authority of a sovereign government behind the push to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

So in October 1995 we announced the formation of a commission comprising a group of eminent scientists, disarmament experts, military strategists and statesmen

and asked them to develop ‘concrete and realistic steps for achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world’.

The emphasis was to be on ‘concrete and realistic’. I saw no point in another rhetorical statement that nuclear weapons were evil and should be abolished. Any report which was to have a chance of convincing the hard-headed defence establishments of North America and Europe to change their positions had to be grounded in a deep understanding of what elimination meant, both technically and strategically.

These are matters of the greatest complexity and profundity. They are not easily resolved. The problems include verification—that is, how you can be sure everyone abides by an agreement; dealing with break-outs—situations in which one country tries to snatch strategic advantage by breaking the agreement; and the broader implications of such a major change in the global-security environment for issues such as the deterrence of chemical and biological weapons and of conventional war.

We were very lucky to get together an outstanding group of commissioners. The members included Joseph Rotblat, who had won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the Pugwash Foundation; General Lee Butler, who had been responsible until 1994 for all United States strategic nuclear forces; Field Marshal Lord Carver, the former chief of the British Defence Staff; Robert McNamara, the former US Secretary of Defense and President of the World Bank; and a number of internationally regarded disarmament experts. The distinguished Australian strategic thinker, Professor Robert O’Neill, was a member, as was Richard Butler, then the Australian Ambassador to the United Nations, now the UN’s Chief Weapons Inspector. I believed the group should also include someone with direct political experience, so I invited Michel Rocard, the former French Prime Minister, to participate.

These were not people who had come down in the last shower. They had very different backgrounds and brought different assumptions about nuclear weapons to their work. Some were long-time peace activists; some had had nuclear weapons directly in their control. If this diverse and distinguished group could agree on the road ahead, we hoped they would be able to persuade others.

We provided resources to permit the group to commission more detailed papers from expert advisers on specific dimensions of the move to a nuclear-weapons-free world. This brought a range of international scholars into the project. Their work has provided a rich resource lode for further debate about this issue.

By the time the commission reported in August 1996, it was made to the conservative Howard government which replaced mine in March 1996.

The recommendations were based on the fundamental assumption that ‘the proposition that large numbers of nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used—accidentally or by decision— defies credibility. The only complete defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again’.

The report recommended a number of immediate steps to reduce the dangers of nuclear war as well as longer-term moves towards the larger goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The immediate steps proposed included taking nuclear forces off alert; removing warheads from delivery vehicles; ending the deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons; ending nuclear testing; initiating another round of negotiations between the US and Russia to reduce their arsenals; and a joint agreement by nuclear-weapons states not to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

The commissioners also recommended a series of reinforcing steps to build on these foundations. These included measures to prevent further horizontal proliferation, not only by countries but by terrorist groups, the development of verification arrangements for a nuclear-weapons-free world, and the cessation of the production of fissile materials for nuclear explosive purposes.

As we hoped, the recommendations were realistic and practical. The commissioners did not ask for unilateral disarmament or suggest any measure that might threaten security during the process. However, they did make the fundamentally important point that, in the end, the decisions that need to be taken are not technical decisions but political ones.

It was a good start. But many excellent reports lie languishing on shelves in ministries around the world. The next step was the diplomatic one of trying to persuade others to embrace the ideas and adopt the policies.

One of my regrets about losing the 1996 election—and I have several—is the opportunity I lost to pursue the report's recommendations as Prime Minister. I would have taken the report to the United Nations General Assembly to launch it myself. It would have been high on my agenda for discussions with President Clinton and the leaders of the other nuclear states.

But beyond receiving the report in August and lodging it at the United Nations, the Howard government did not endorse its recommendations or try to sell them more widely. The Canberra Commission was associated with the government I led, and it had been labelled a 'stunt' by the foreign minister, Alexander Downer, in the political atmosphere of the time. So the political momentum—at least on Australia's part—lapsed.

This is a great pity, and not just for Australia. But other governments, I am glad to say, have taken up the cause.

In June this year the foreign ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden formed a new international coalition—called the New Agenda Coalition—to push for the elimination of nuclear weapons. They explicitly drew inspiration from the Canberra Commission.

In August, in another parallel with the Canberra Commission, Japan convened the Tokyo Forum, a meeting of eighteen prominent diplomatic and strategic experts from sixteen countries to discuss the impact of nuclear testing and issues of nuclear

disarmament and non-proliferation. I think I can reasonably say that the Canberra Commission Report brought a new atmosphere to the debate, an optimism that something better was possible.

Three years after we convened the Canberra Commission report, what is the international environment for such initiatives? I want to turn now to the current situation and the prospects for the future.

On the positive side, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was finally adopted in 1996 and some progress has been made in opening the way for negotiations on a treaty to limit the production of fissile material for weapons.

But almost all other news on the nuclear front has been bad. Twenty thousand nuclear warheads still have the capacity to destroy the world many times. Two of the states on the nuclear threshold, India and Pakistan, have now stepped over it. Another regime with a known nuclear program, North Korea, tested a medium-range ballistic missile in August. Meanwhile, Russia's capacity to control and store its existing nuclear arsenal is atrophying. And the strategic arms negotiations between the major nuclear powers are not going anywhere. Russia has still not ratified START II. Russia, China and the United States have still not ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Across the board, in other words, the impetus for change has stalled.

After years of developing its nuclear capability yet never declaring itself a nuclear power, the new Indian government openly tested weapons on 11 and 13 May this year. India can undoubtedly deploy reliable fission weapons on a wide range of delivery systems including ballistic missiles. It probably has 60 to 80 weapons.

Pakistan, India's long-standing rival, responded with its own tests on 28 and 30 May. Pakistan's nuclear arms are not as sophisticated or numerous as India's, but it has technical capacities which at some time it may be tempted to share with its Middle Eastern neighbours.

Then in August we saw the successful test by North Korea of a three-stage missile capable of carrying conventional or nuclear warheads over 5500 kilometres. The test suggested North Korea has also made progress on a longer-range missile that would enable it to strike targets throughout Asia.

The 1994 Framework Agreement, under which North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for heavy fuel oil, help in building two light-water nuclear reactors and an eventual end to the economic embargo, is now under pressure again. North Korea has reportedly continued to work on missile launch facilities, and just this week we have seen Pyongyang deny the United States access to an underground facility that Americans believe to be a nuclear installation.

After the Indian nuclear tests, President Clinton said forcefully and accurately that 'to think that you have to manifest your greatness by behaviour that recalls the worst events of the twentieth century on the edge of the twenty-first, when everybody else is trying to leave the nuclear age behind, is just wrong'.

But the problem, of course, is that no one else does seem to be trying to leave the nuclear age behind, or not at least with any noticeable degree of urgency. And this, the non-nuclear powers note, is despite the fact that in order to secure the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995, the five declared nuclear weapons states recommitted themselves to pursue measures of complete and general nuclear disarmament.

The essential issue here is that you can't have non-proliferation without de-proliferation.

It is not just states that we need to worry about as a source of new nuclear threats, but terrorists and other groups as well.

Nuclear weapons are not hard to make. You can get instructions for a workable device off the Internet. Graham Allison, Director of the Centre for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, put it this way: if a state or a terrorist group obtained as little as 30 pounds of highly enriched uranium, or less than half that weight in plutonium, they could produce a nuclear device in a matter of a month or two with design information that is publicly available, equipment that is readily available in the commercial market, and modest levels of technical competence represented in graduates of any respectable engineering program.

The only difficulty is access to fissile material. That is why we need to address much more comprehensively the problems of 'nuclear over-hang'—essentially the security of stored nuclear weapons and excess fissile material in Russia. This is a second area that has become more dangerous since the Canberra Commission report.

At more than 90 sites across Russia, 715 tons of nuclear material are stored. This is enough to fuel 40,000 weapons.

Guarding this deadly treasure are military officers and soldiers whose morale is low and who have sometimes not been paid for months. In 1996 the then Director of Central Intelligence, John Deutch, told the U.S. Congress that of the tons of weapons-useable nuclear material distributed to various centres around Russia over the past 40 years, none had what would be regarded in the United States as sufficient accountability.

Last July, thousands of scientists at the nuclear city of Arzamas-16 went on strike after months without pay. The Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy MINATOM has told its personnel that they can no longer rely on government funds to support them and that they need to market their goods and services.

The dangers are real. In November 1993, a Russian naval officer walked out of a shipyard in Murmansk with about 10 pounds of highly enriched uranium and went looking for a buyer while it was stored in his garage. In August 1994, almost a pound of weapons-useable plutonium was seized by German police in Munich.

It is not just in Russia: the reported theft of approximately 130 barrels of enriched uranium waste from storage in South Africa was reported in the press in August 1994.

Through the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program of 1991— named the Nunn–Lugar program after the senators who co-sponsored the bill—the United States provides about $400 million a year to help secure poorly guarded Russian nuclear facilities and to help destroy weapons earmarked for destruction under current arms-control negotiations. But this accounts for only one-sixth of 1 per cent of the US defence budget. The Nunn–Lugar program is a solid investment, producing lasting security dividends. It could easily be doubled or tripled. And if the build-down is to continue, it will have to be.

Some people willingly concede the dangers that nuclear material could be diverted to rogue states or terrorists. But that just proves we need nuclear weapons, they say, in order to protect ourselves against these very prospects.

But the argument is circular. It is the argument that we need nuclear weapons because we have nuclear weapons. It is not an argument we think persuasive when applied to biological or chemical weapons.

In an outstanding article in a new collection of essays called *The Force of Reason* to be published shortly in honour of Joseph Rotblat, a leading member of the Canberra Commission, Professor John Holdren of Harvard University, says that such criminal threats ‘could well be the dominant nuclear threat in the next century’. He argues that the threat is not only ‘greatly aggravated by the continued existence of national nuclear arsenals, but nuclear deterrence is likely to be useless against it (because terrorists and other criminals may not be locatable, or if locatable, could not responsibly be attacked with nuclear weapons)’.

The state of the Russian nuclear arsenal has other dangerous consequences. Thousands of Russian nuclear systems are on hair-trigger alert, ready to launch at the United States in fifteen minutes. The deteriorating condition of Russian early-warning systems and the erosion of military command and control heightens the danger of an accidental or unauthorised launch. It increases the incentive for the Russians to adopt a ‘use them or lose them’ strategy for their strategic arsenal. We reportedly came very close to such a situation in 1995 when a Norwegian research rocket was mistaken for a United States missile attack and the whole Russian system went on alert.

The economic collapse and the decline in conventional military capabilities tempts Russia to place extra weight on its nuclear forces to compensate. This is the reason Moscow has abandoned its long-standing declaratory policy of ‘No First Use’ of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, the strategic nuclear negotiations are stalled. The burst of activity from the conclusion of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty of 1987, through START I in 1991, which halved long-range missiles, to START II in January 1993, which imposed a further 50 per cent cut in strategic nuclear forces, has run into the sand. And Russian hardliners are pointing to the expansion of NATO to the borders of the

old Soviet Union as a reason for Russia to maintain its nuclear capabilities. The Russian Parliament has refused to ratify the START II treaty, which it believes advantages the United States. Russia cannot afford to modernise and replace ageing and decaying nuclear forces and it is slipping inexorably further behind the United States' numbers and capabilities. It simply cannot afford its vast nuclear arsenal and is seeking much larger cuts.

In the United States political pressure is growing for a National Missile Defense System to respond to a perceived evolving ballistic missile threat. This would certainly mean abrogating the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty and would cause the Russians to walk away from START I and II, fearing that the United States could quickly upgrade a missile defence system into a shield behind which it could launch a first strike.

In this depressing landscape—a period in arms control negotiations that some have called 'the great frustration'—the agenda for action set out in the Canberra Commission report remains highly relevant.

First we need to urge the steps recommended by the Canberra Commission to de-alert the nuclear arsenals—to lengthen the fuse by extending real launch preparation time. This means removing vital parts of the systems. An agreement between the Russians and the Americans in 1994 to de-target missiles was essentially meaningless.

Original targets can be fed back into the computer in seconds. But de-alerting—in other words, standing the missiles down—will require an effective and intrusive inspection system.

Second, we need to press speedily ahead with negotiation of the fission material cut-off treaty which will halt the production of fissile material (that is, weapons-grade plutonium and uranium) for nuclear weapons. This treaty will begin negotiations next January in the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, but the scale and scope of the negotiations are still not agreed.

The fissile cut-off treaty will be a companion to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Banning tests constrains technological improvements. The fission treaty will constrain the production of the material that goes in them.

Third, we need to urge Russia and the United States to move as quickly as possible to leap-frog START II with a new and radical START III which rectifies the emerging numerical inequality in favour of the United States and gets nuclear numbers down so low that the other nuclear weapons states are brought into the negotiations.

For my part, however, I do not think such measures will be enough.

I don't believe that any objective short of zero will be able to generate the political consensus necessary to stop an eventual break-out. Even if only a handful of weapons are held by Washington and Moscow and Beijing, even if they are held in 'strategic escrow' under some form of international supervision as General Stansfield Turner and others have suggested, I find it impossible to imagine why a future South

American government, or some future African leader, convinced that Africa has been abused and marginalised, will not understand the disproportionate strategic advantages that accrue to states with even crude nuclear weapons and will not ask: why not us?

And there is no defensible answer to that question. That is why I believe only a full commitment to, and an active program to secure, the elimination of nuclear weapons will ever be sufficient to secure our safety.

Even so, the goal of elimination can't be accomplished by the arms control route alone.

It is also—even essentially—a debate about global power and influence and I believe it will only be resolved in that context. We have come to see nuclear weapons as the ultimate global status symbol. Membership of the United Nations Security Council remains coterminous with the possession of nuclear weapons. And United Nations reform, so high on everyone's agenda when the Cold War ended, has faltered.

The senior adviser to the Indian Prime Minister on security issues defended India's decision to declare itself a nuclear state by writing that his country was 'assigned a particular place in the world order and not treated as a subject responding to our own interests'. That frustration lies at the heart of India's decision to test. I'm not arguing that countries should be rewarded for flouting international norms. But I do not think we can create an adequate architecture for the world without finding a place in it for the democratic government that speaks for the one billion people of India.

More broadly, a larger and more sustainable role has to be found for China, India and Japan. And with the EU's expansion, and the creation of the euro, Europe urgently needs to address the fundamentals of its own structure to see how it can act more effectively beyond its own continent.

The link between nuclear weapons and the broad strategic environment is particularly important to Australia and its region.

In North Asia, more than any other part of the world—more, even, than the Middle East—a combination of historical animosities, unresolved relationships, territorial disputes and technologically sophisticated economies makes it distressingly plausible to envisage conditions emerging which might induce Japan or South Korea or Taiwan to seek nuclear weapons. The further introduction of nuclear weapons into the North Asian strategic equation would be catastrophic.

A very senior Chinese leader once told me—decisively and with great passion—that China would never permit Japan to possess nuclear weapons. It would act to pre-empt such a situation arising.

This raises again the urgent need for a more structured defence and security framework in the Asia Pacific, one which can provide transparency and reassurance at a time of growing uncertainty. The ASEAN Regional Forum has been a good first step, but it can't carry us through pressures ahead. I had hoped the APEC Leaders' Meeting might be able to develop as an umbrella on top of a regional security forum,

but that hope is dimming as APEC membership expands and its energy diminishes. This is an issue of the highest priority for the region, and a program to eliminate nuclear weapons globally must also comprehend the more general problem of regional security.

People might well say this is an argument about which Australians can do little. Our capacity to influence the world is limited.

But Australia has shown it can play an active part in the global debate. We have an internationally regarded body of officials working on arms control issues. They form a national—in fact, an international—asset whose expertise should be preserved.

We can raise our voice. Both major Australian political parties are committed to the alliance relationship with the United States. This allows us at least the privilege of having our arguments heard. We should be using our voice as powerfully and persuasively as we can, and not just with the administration but with Congress as well.

I believe the government should seriously consider suggestions that have been made to reconvene the Canberra Commission, probably with a different membership, to re-examine in current circumstances its practical and realistic program for moving to a world without nuclear weapons. As a firm ally of the United States, with a high reputation in international arms control negotiations, Australia has a better chance than any other country to refocus international debate on the final goal of abolishing nuclear weapons. The government would have my enthusiastic support for such an initiative.

But this is not just a matter for governments. Increasingly, the international agenda can be shaped from outside. We have seen this with the success of the international campaign against landmines.

We face a long struggle to get rid of nuclear weapons and we might not succeed. But you can be absolutely sure that if the pressure is not kept on governments, if the issues and alternatives are not debated, if the voice of public opinion is not raised, then the line of least resistance will be taken.

And that line will always be to let things slide—to hope that in the next hundred years some new, more ruthless or more able Saddam Hussein or Kim Jong-Il won't emerge, that somehow the skills of Russian nuclear scientists now on the market will not be made available to some terrorist group, and that we will get through it all unscathed.

I want to end this lecture by quoting not a politician or an anti-nuclear activist but a man from the heart of the nuclear establishment. General Lee Butler was the former head of United States Strategic Nuclear Command, and a key member of the Canberra Commission panel.

Accepting the prestigious Henry L Stimson award for distinguished public service last year, General Butler said he was dismayed that:

‘even among more serious commentators, the lessons of fifty years at the nuclear brink can be so grievously misread, that the assertions and assumptions underpinning an era of desperate threats and risks prevail unchallenged, that a handful of nations cling to the impossible notion that the power of nuclear weapons is so immense their use can be threatened with impunity, yet their proliferation contained. Albert Einstein recognised this hazardous but very human tendency many years ago, when he warned that ‘the power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.’

I hope that is wrong. But drifting is the right word to describe what all of us—nuclear and non-nuclear powers alike—have been doing over the past few years.

And those who think there are no risks, who believe we are sure to glide safely past the rocks and shoals because we have done so before, should at least reflect on the history of the last issue I spoke of in this auditorium—the Asian economic crisis. The economic, social and political uncertainty we are seeing around us seemed unimaginable in 1997, to even the most informed and sober observers. Just so, ten years earlier, would the disappearance of the Soviet Union have seemed unimaginable.

And however unlikely nuclear catastrophe may seem to us now, here in Sydney on this peaceful November evening, if our judgements are wrong, the consequences will be terrible and ineradicable.

Our challenge—as always, in everything—is one of imagination.