**[Will an Adlai Stevenson save us?](https://www.dawn.com/news/1715637/will-an-adlai-stevenson-save-us)**

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[JOE Biden](https://www.dawn.com/news/1715159) is only partly right. Pakistan can be a scary place with its nuclear weapons. So is India, which he forgot to mention. The evidence stares us in the face. Almost all the embassies in Delhi had cleared out in May 2002 fearing an imminent nuclear exchange between the two. Such a fear-driven diplomatic exodus was unprecedented. The Vajpayee government was miffed that people were frightened, unmindful of the fact that it had moved most of the army to the western front. Delhi’s UN offices too were deserted, with officials fleeing to safety, a misnomer in the context of a nuclear war.

Yes, India and Pakistan indulge in scary nuclear threats. Mercifully the threats have so far fallen short of their life-exterminating fulfilment. A terrifying example recently was the [landing](https://www.dawn.com/news/1706415) of an Indian missile in Pakistan, accidently. Pakistan could have responded in kind but didn’t though it still wants a full and credible Indian explanation for what could have been a nightmarish event. Earlier, during the ongoing Modi rule, India hit Pakistan from the air. Pakistan [retaliated](https://www.dawn.com/news/1466347) by shooting down an Indian plane. Again, for the sake of sanity, the captured pilot was quickly repatriated. So, indeed, it’s all very scary stuff coming from countries with their inventories of nuclear weapons.

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However, is Pakistan the most dangerous place in the world as President Biden claims it to be? Take a global vote, and the toss-up would be between Russia and the US as posing a truly mortal threat to mankind, with North Korea coming a distant third. For a truer reality, the choice should be specifically between Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden. They are the ones with their thumbs on the nuclear button. Comparisons are being made for the bedlam in Ukraine with the Cuban missile crisis. That crisis abated without a drop of blood being shed, a far cry from the bloodbath unleashed in Ukraine by Nato and Russia.

Between John Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, there was brinkmanship no doubt, and things could have gone horribly wrong. Fortunately, for the world, Kennedy’s instinct together with his closest advisers’ for taking out the missiles pre-emptively was tempered by Adlai Stevenson’s sagacious advice to try out the diplomatic route. Kennedy’s UN envoy remained in bad odour for this advice with the hawks who had the president’s ear. It was Stevenson’s advocacy for restraint, which eventually resulted in US missiles being pulled out from Turkey with Khrushchev removing his from Cuba.

For the moment it all looks ominous after Nato launched its annual nuclear exercise on Monday.

Biden evidently lacks the temperament and perhaps the circumstance to heed less than hawkish advice. He tasted blood in Libya and Syria as Barrack Obama’s vice president and seems to have no difficulty in watching the bloodbath underway in the heart of Europe. This could perhaps change after the November 8 mid-term polls for which the Democrats are lagging behind the Republicans. *A New York Times/Siena College* poll shows that 49 per cent of likely voters plan to vote for a Republican to represent them in Congress next month, compared with 45pc who planned to vote for a Democrat. The result represents an improvement for Republicans since September.

Should Biden lose the House and the Senate his survival plan for 2024 would be best unveiled in Bali on Nov 15 when he attends the G20 summit in the company of two critical invitees, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. There are vague signals that something agreeable is cooking, the most distinct one being the US censure of Ukraine’s alleged involvement in the miscued terror attack on a Putin adviser in Moscow.

For the record, the Doomsday Clock has been reading 100 seconds to midnight, the closest it has come ever in warning of the worst. Do note that it moved to its most precarious moment ever on January 24, 2020, four days after the inaugural of the Biden presidency. Think about that. The clock was moved to two and a half minutes in 2017 then forward to two minutes to midnight in January 2018, and left unchanged in 2019. All the markers belong to the main worrying reality in the world, the Trump presidency. But Democrats are not averse either to playing with fire. Nancy Pelosi was being deceptive when she rushed to meet the US army chief in Trump’s last days as president. “Don’t let him do anything mad,” was reportedly her frantic message. And then she went and poked China in the eye with a fraught visit to Taiwan. Biden’s presidency is a continuation of the Obama presidency in several ways, but most importantly in its readiness to spill human blood. Precisely when Germany and France had put together the Minsk Accords to ease frayed ties between Russia and Ukraine, Biden and Boris Johnson subverted the agreement cynically.

Such cynicism in its acute form has the propensity to become tragically comic. Just look at the trauma being [inflicted](https://www.dawn.com/news/1715337) on Britons by Liz Truss, the established Western hawk on Ukraine when she was Britain’s foreign minister. Her country in a mess, the British system has prepared a doomsday plan nevertheless for the prime minister to have a “continuity government” should a nuclear calamity befall her country. Just marvel at the concept of a continuity government hovering in a secure plane somewhere in the sky when much of the population has literally vaporised. And Jeremy Hunt would probably be pondering the new tax hike.

For the moment it all looks ever more ominous after Nato launched its annual nuclear exercise ‘Steadfast Noon’ on Monday. Russia is planning to hold its Grom annual nuclear exercises around this time of year. They will likely include the test launch of ballistic missiles. Could this not have been postponed? With 60 aircraft taking part over Belgium, the North Sea and Britain to practise the use of US nuclear bombs based in Europe, it’s just the wrong moment to pick on Pakistan.

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