

G-20 summit intensifies threat of war against Russia

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The G-20 summit in Australia marked a further intensification of imperialist provocations and threats, spearheaded by the United States, against both China and Russia, threatening to plunge the entire planet into a nuclear world war.

Diplomatic protocol was tossed aside as Washington issued ultimatums and advanced plans to further isolate and militarily encircle the two countries considered to be its major obstacles to establishing hegemony over the Eurasian continent and the Middle East.

The representatives of the imperialist powers went out of their way to treat Russian President Vladimir Putin like a leper. Prior to the summit, its host, Australian Premier Tony Abbott, declared that he would “shirtfront” Putin. At the meeting, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper reluctantly shook Putin’s hand while telling him, “You have to disappear from Ukraine.”

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* noted cynically, “Few things help better domestically in these days of confrontation than distancing oneself from the pariah Putin.”

US President Barack Obama accused Putin of violating international law. “You do not march into other countries,” Obama declared. This was said by the president of a nation that has invaded or bombed more than a dozen countries over the last 25 years.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel met with Putin for four hours for a confidential discussion only to attack him head-on during a lecture in Sydney one day later. Merkel accused him of thinking in terms of spheres of influence and trampling international law underfoot. “Following the horrors of two world wars and the Cold War, he is placing into question the entire European order of peace,” she said.

The verbal attacks on Putin were accompanied by

stepped-up military pressure on Russia. At a ceremony in Bratislava marking the anniversary of the Czechoslovak “Velvet Revolution,” Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko threatened Russia with total war. “I have no fear of war with Russian troops and we have prepared for such a scenario of total war,” he told the German tabloid *Bild*.

Poroshenko admitted that Kiev had used the ceasefire agreed in Minsk to carry out a military buildup, counting on NATO support. “Our army is currently in a much better state than five months ago and we have support from all over the world,” he said.

On Saturday, Poroshenko ordered a halt to all transfers of public funds to the areas dominated by separatists in eastern Ukraine, including an end to funding for schools, hospitals, government agencies and state enterprises. Far from furthering his stated goal of maintaining the unity of Ukraine, Poroshenko’s measures will force the breakaway regions to align more closely with Russia. This is apparently the intention, with the aim of providing a pretext for ratcheting up the warmongering against Moscow.

The Western media are openly advocating a return to a policy of deterrence as at the height of the Cold War. Stefan Kornelius wrote in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that Putin’s “ideological intransigence” can be countered only “when the old rules of deterrence” are made operative and “a balance of terror is achieved.”

In the same newspaper, Estonian Defence Minister Sven Mikser called on NATO to focus more on deterrence. “When you’re dealing with a regime like Putin’s, weakness is far more provocative than strength,” he wrote. He urged a greater NATO presence on Estonian soil: “Every Allied presence on our soil has a deterrent effect, above and beyond the numbers involved. The Bundeswehr [German army] would also

be very welcome as part of these deterrence efforts.”

The risk of the military moves against Russia erupting into open warfare is growing daily. On Saturday, *Die Welt* published a contribution by the Israeli historian and military expert Martin van Creveld, who said he regarded “a war between the self-proclaimed ‘People’s Republic of Donetsk’ and the government in Kiev as increasingly likely.”

He added that “there is only one possibility for NATO and the EU to prevent a secession of the ‘People’s Republic of Donetsk’ and its annexation to Russia: direct military intervention.” He warned that escalation has “created a powder keg,” noting, “The unauthorized act of a local commander, or a simple misunderstanding, could lead at any time to an explosion.”

This would risk not just a conventional, but a nuclear war. Both the US and Russia have greatly increased military exercises involving nuclear weapons in the past few months and are in the process of modernizing their nuclear arsenals. While Russia is doing so publicly, inside NATO “the debate over how to react to Russia’s threats is largely taking place behind closed doors,” according to a study by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), titled “The Nuclear Dimension of the Ukraine Crisis.”

The study cites several cases—including the transfer of B-2 and B-52 bombers to Britain, and the deployment of F-16 fighter bombs in Poland—in which Washington has brought its nuclear arsenal into play. On Friday, US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced an extensive modernization of America’s armed forces, including its nuclear arsenal.

The SWP study warns of the danger of an uncontrolled outbreak of war: “The greatest danger in the short term is less that of a nuclear escalation triggered by Russia but instead a possible misinterpretation of the intentions of the other side. Twenty five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, there is no effective crisis response mechanism between NATO and Russia.”

The responsibility for the danger of nuclear war, which could mean the end of humanity, lies with the imperialist powers, in particular, the US and Germany. For years they have shifted the boundaries of NATO eastwards, incorporating numerous Eastern European states. Now they are seeking to incorporate Ukraine and

finally Russia itself into their sphere of influence, while reducing Russia to the status of a semicolony.

The driving force behind this process is the crisis of world capitalism. As was the case a hundred years ago with the outbreak of World War I, the imperialist powers are responding to an economic impasse by fighting to redivide the world and struggling for control over raw materials, markets and strategic influence. Now, as then, a deepening social crisis at home is intensifying the war drive abroad, as the ruling classes seek to divert internal conflicts outwards against an external enemy.

Claims that Washington and Berlin are defending self-determination, democracy and other “Western values” in Ukraine are pure propaganda. In those Eastern European countries that have joined the European Union and NATO, the populations are brutally exploited while an authoritarian and corrupt elite wallows in wealth.

In Ukraine, the imperialist powers rely on oligarchs such as President Poroshenko as well as fascists and ultranationalists. The core of Ukraine’s Association Agreement with the European Union is the subordination of the country to the austerity diktats of the EU and the International Monetary Fund.

The military and financial pressure, in the form of economic sanctions, exerted on Russia is designed to destabilize the country and lead to regime-change and the installation of a government completely subordinate to the will of the imperialist powers.

The Putin regime cannot counter this threat. It represents the interests of the oligarchs who made their fortunes in the course of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is fearful of any mass social movement—whether in Russia or internationally. It reacts with a mixture of concessions and military threats, which in turn increase the risk of war.

Only an independent movement of the international working class directed against the cause of war, the capitalist system, can prevent a nuclear disaster.



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