

US presses for military action against Russia

Joseph Kishore
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As German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande prepare another round of talks with Russia and Ukraine on Wednesday on the war crisis in Eastern Europe, the United States is ratcheting up the pressure for military action.

Over the past several days, American political and military officials have issued a series of bellicose statements, all premised on the lie that the US must move rapidly to counter “Russian aggression” in Ukraine.

On Sunday, US Secretary of State John Kerry said in an interview on “Meet the Press” that the US would be providing the pro-Western regime in Kiev with “additional assistance of [an] economic kind and other kinds,” a reference to bipartisan demands that the Obama administration directly arm Ukraine. On Saturday, US Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove, who serves as the head of both the US European Command and NATO in Europe, insisted that it was impossible to “preclude out of hand the possibility of the military option” in Ukraine.

At the Munich Security Conference over the weekend, Republican senators John McCain and Lindsay Graham poured scorn on European negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin. McCain summed up Merkel’s speech at Munich, which included a statement of opposition to arming Ukraine, with one word: “foolishness.” He added, “I can assure you that [Putin] will not stop until he has to pay a much higher price.”

Washington is mobilizing its allies within Europe, including former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt, a member of the US-based RAND Corporation and other think tanks close to the American military. Bildt declared last week that, “war with Russia is conceivable.”

The Obama administration is expected to announce a final decision on whether to arm Ukraine some time

this week, following meetings today with Merkel in Washington. Whatever the immediate outcome of these talks, the statements of US civilian and military figures and American-allied officials in Europe make clear that the United States is preparing a massive escalation of its intervention in Ukraine and Eastern Europe as a whole.

The prospect of a continent-wide war has produced nervousness in European capitals, expressed in the tactical divisions that have emerged between Germany and France on one side and the US on the other over a possible decision by Washington to provide advanced weapons to Ukraine.

Yet the European powers, whatever their misgivings, are themselves deeply implicated in the operations in Ukraine, set off by the fascist-led coup last February that installed a right-wing, pro-NATO government in Kiev. The putsch was followed by sanctions, threats and the militarization of Eastern Europe. Rather than arming Ukraine, European leaders have called for a tightening of economic sanctions against Russia aimed at strangling the country and forcing it into submission.

The provocative stance of the imperialist powers has been evident throughout the proceedings at Munich, characterized by a series of denunciations of Russia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made the entirely correct point that at every step in the Ukraine crisis, the US and the EU “have tried to escalate the situation.” His remarks were met with boos and catcalls from the assembled representatives of imperialism.

Whatever the divisions between the major imperialist powers, it is clear that the Obama administration will not accept any agreement that undermines the outcome of the putsch that was launched a year ago.

The United States is pursuing a strategy that follows the playbook outlined several months ago by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national security adviser under President Jimmy Carter. At a conference sponsored by

the Wilson Center, Brzezinski, a leading figure in the US foreign policy establishment, made clear that the aim of the US is to draw Russia into prolonged combat in Ukraine. Arming Ukraine would allow it to engage in “urban short-range fighting” in the major cities of Kiev and Kharkiv, Brzezinski said, ensuring a “prolonged and costly” war for Russia.

Brzezinski pioneered just such a strategy in the 1980s, when he initiated the arming of Islamic fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan as part of a proxy war against the Soviet Union. The US is seeking to do to Russia, via Ukraine, what it did to the Soviet Union via Afghanistan. In the process, Ukraine is to be turned into a wasteland of death and destruction, with the very real prospect of a wider conflagration involving nuclear weapons and the deaths of hundreds of thousands if not millions of people. There is an extraordinary disconnect between the policies that are being planned and carried out and what is being told to the American people. Foreign and military policy takes on the character of a vast conspiracy, organized by a cabal of state officials, generals, intelligence chiefs and foreign policy strategists.

All of this is being carried out without any discussion of the implications. Most Americans have little or no idea what the criminal gang in Washington is plotting and the immense consequences of these actions for the entire world. Amidst talk of imminent war in Europe, the American people are led to believe that the greatest danger they face is the latest winter storm. The weather once again topped the evening news reports on Sunday.

Not a single media figure has posed to Kerry, Obama, McCain, Brzezinski or any of the other plotters such basic questions as: How many millions of deaths are they prepared to accept to force Russia to “pay a higher price?” If the United States arms Ukraine and Russia responds with an offensive against Kiev or operations in one of the Baltic states, is NATO planning to declare war on Russia? At what point in the “military option” will the use of nuclear weapons be considered? How many hundreds of billions of dollars is the US government prepared to spend in pursuit of global slaughter?

The crisis in Ukraine is bound up with the overall strategy of American imperialism. The United States has been engaged in virtually continuous warfare for over a quarter century. The US ruling class concluded

from the dissolution of the Soviet Union that it could establish a “new world order” based on America’s military supremacy. This would be leveraged to counter the protracted decline in the economic position of American capitalism. Whether under Democrats or Republicans, the ruling class has pursued this strategy systematically, seeking to conquer and control Central Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Now these actions have placed the question of a global conflict involving nuclear-armed powers on the agenda of world capitalism. However the latest crisis over Ukraine is resolved, imperialism is set on a course that, without the independent intervention of the working class, leads inexorably to world war.



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