

The NATO-Russia conflict threatens nuclear war

Andre Damon
25 March 2022

On Thursday, NATO held a summit without precedent. In total secrecy, with not only cameras and phones prohibited but even aides, the leaders of the Western powers met to plan out the unthinkable: A full-scale war between nuclear-armed states.

As the proxy war between NATO and Russia over Ukraine spirals out of control, the use of nuclear weapons that could kill hundreds of millions of people or more is being actively contemplated.

Nuclear war has become part of the daily vocabulary of the US media. In an article published Wednesday, “How the Ukraine war could go nuclear,” *Politico* wrote, “Not since the Cold War has the specter of nuclear war hung so heavily over a president’s crisis diplomacy.” *Politico* cited Izumi Nakamitsu, United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who warned Tuesday about the risk of “mushroom clouds appearing on the battlefield.”

Last week, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, founded by former Senator Sam Nunn, outlined a “hypothetical scenario illustrating just one possible pathway to a global, catastrophic nuclear war” that could be triggered by the Ukraine crisis. After a Russian missile crew inadvertently shoots down an American reconnaissance aircraft, a series of escalatory measures lead to an American president ordering a nuclear strike on Russia, followed by a retaliatory strike by Russia:

Over the course of the next hour, 82 million Americans are killed with allied countries faring similarly. Most die instantly, while more will die of radiation poisoning over the coming days and weeks. Those who survive will have chronic health problems for the rest of their shortened lives, and their children will likely be born with genetic defects.

In the *New York Times*, David Sanger wrote an article yesterday under the headline “U.S. Makes Contingency Plans in Case Russia Uses Its Most Powerful Weapons.” The article revealed the existence of a so-called “Tiger Team” within the White House dedicated to planning a full-scale war with Russia. According to Sanger:

A senior administration official said any use of a “small” tactical nuclear bomb by Russia—even inside Ukraine and not directed at a NATO member—would mean that “all bets are off” on the United States and NATO staying out of the war.

In a raving editorial, the *Wall Street Journal* accused unnamed political figures of preferring peace to war. The United States must go all in. “If the nuclear threat works to stop NATO support now,” the *Journal* declared, “the Russians will use it in the future against NATO proper. The essence of deterrence is credibility, which means persuading Mr. Putin that his resort to nuclear weapons in Ukraine will be met with a requisite response.”

As the media talks about the possibility of nuclear war, not a single word is being spoken about diplomacy, deescalation or peace talks. Rather, the watchword is, in the parlance of US President Joe Biden, “increasing the pain.”

As the NATO summit in Brussels concluded yesterday with a plan to double NATO’s troop presence along Russia’s borders, Biden raised, for the first time, the prospect of the deployment of NATO troops into Ukraine and offensive operations against Russia.

Speaking at a press conference following the summit, Biden was asked whether, if Russia used chemical weapons, this could “trigger a military response from NATO.”

Biden replied, “We’d make that decision at the time.”

In other words, Biden said that sending US troops into Ukraine and firing on Russian forces would be considered as a response to the alleged use of chemical weapons, which could be manufactured by US proxies in Ukraine, as was done in Syria.

The summit was dedicated to discussing and implementing a series of measures aimed at involving NATO more directly in the conflict. Speaking at the conclusion of the summit, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg outlined what he absurdly claimed were “non-escalatory” measures:

We have activated NATO’s defense plans, deployed elements of the NATO Response Force, and placed 40,000 troops on our eastern flank, along with significant air and naval assets, under direct NATO command supported by Allies’ national deployments. We are also establishing four additional multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. We are taking all measures and decisions to ensure the security and defense of all Allies across all domains and with a 360-degree approach.

Stoltenberg concluded:

We will now accelerate NATO’s transformation for a more dangerous strategic reality... In light of the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades, we will also significantly strengthen our longer term deterrence and defense posture and will further develop the full range of ready forces and capabilities necessary to maintain credible deterrence and defense.

If these are the “non-escalatory” measures being taken, what would escalation look like?

In reality, NATO is being transformed into a fully weaponized fighting force on Russia’s border.

Following the summit, NATO tweeted a war map outlining the troops deployed on its “Eastern Flank,” pointing to hundreds of thousands of troops, including 40,000 under NATO command and 100,000 under US command, along with 130 aircraft at high alert and 140

ships at sea.

The preparations for world war, waged with nuclear weapons, are being accompanied by an unrelenting wave of propaganda in the corporate media.

Attempting to manufacture support for war, the *New York Times* published an article yesterday headlined: “Most Americans say Biden is ‘not tough enough’ on Russia, a new poll finds,” which purports to describe the state of public opinion in the United States.

Does the *New York Times* really think that if the American population were honestly asked whether millions of American civilians should be incinerated in a nuclear war to defend the right of Ukraine to join NATO, they would agree? Both the motivations behind US policy and the implications are being systematically covered up.

This media propaganda campaign, aimed at whipping up a right-wing, pro-war hysteria in the affluent upper-middle class, is itself a factor driving military escalation.

The US and NATO imperialist powers, driven by intractable internal crises, are proceeding with utter recklessness, bringing the entire world to the brink of World War III.

The Russian government of Vladimir Putin, for its part, under threat from NATO’s relentless expansion, launched the offensive in Ukraine with the aim of reaching some sort of accommodation with imperialism. It clearly underestimated the extent to which the US and NATO were prepared for war, and it is seeking to offset its initial setbacks with nuclear saber-rattling.

The mad drive to nuclear war must be stopped! In this extremely dangerous situation, it is urgent that the working class intervene independently, through protests, demonstrations and industrial action, fusing the fight against war with the fight against inequality, exploitation, the criminal pandemic policy, and, underlying everything, the capitalist profit system.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact