

Is Russian Restraint Averting the Risk of Nuclear War - or Inviting It?

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Among realists who don't accept the Kiev siegt an allen Fronten! narrative it is widely assumed that Russia will soon begin, perhaps in dramatic and decisive fashion, a winter offensive. This would come just as Kiev is hitting "empty" on all key manpower and materiel indicators, exacerbated by the Zelensky regime's continued insistence on squandering them on strategically meaningless attacks on hardened Russian positions.

The assumption of a bold Russian shift to the offensive may not be valid, though, as it's clear that among Moscow's primary intentions is to avoid triggering a direct clash with NATO forces, which, they reasonably believe, could escalate uncontrollably to the strategic nuclear level. (That's why it appears Moscow has abandoned its longstanding no-first-use nuclear doctrine for launch-on-warning See: Paul Craig Roberts: [A Hair Trigger on Endgame - LewRockwell](#))

So instead of taking decisive action, Moscow may prefer to incrementally escalate the "slow grind" chewing up Kiev's forces, while continuing to dismantle Ukraine's infrastructure, which also contributes to accelerating depopulation of Ukraine as cities and towns become uninhabitable. (As Moon of Alabama suggests: "It does not look like an imminent all out attack on the Ukrainian front lines is in the cards. The expected large winter attack may not be coming at all. Instead the new forces will rotate through the frontline and only attack locally whenever they see an opportunity." [MoA - Ukraine SitRep - Catastrophic Losses, Failing Wonder Weapons, NATO Escalation \(moonofalabama.org\)](#))

The key question, though, is this: Is the slow grind (versus dramatic and decisive knockout) less likely to cause uncontrollable escalation, or does it invite it?

Mike Whitney suggests that NATO (i.e., the US) wants to bait Moscow into an action that would justify direct introduction of NATO (or "Coalition of the Willing") forces. (See Whitney: [Putin Shrugs-Off Washington's Provocations and 'Sticks to Business', by Mike](#)

[Whitney - The Unz Review](#)) Accordingly, Moscow wisely (in Whitney's view) is avoiding anything that could be a tripwire. (It's fair to ask, though: if NATO/CotW is so keen on getting in, why do they need a pretext from Moscow? One can always be invented from whole cloth. Ask Iraq, Serbia, Syria...)

Paul Craig Roberts, on the other hand, suggests that Russian restraint sends the exact opposite message: that Moscow will tolerate provocation after provocation, escalation after escalation, which itself invites the very outcome Moscow seeks to avoid. (See Roberts: [The Prospect of Nuclear War Is Getting too Close for Comfort - LewRockwell](#)):

A Russian official has charged that the CIA and NSA were involved in the attack by drones deep inside Russia. So here we see the total validity of my warnings that Putin's Goody Two Shoes behavior invites more and more reckless provocations. It is the inability of Putin to understand that Russia is at war with Ukraine and the US/NATO and that his "limited military operation" is nothing but his own delusion that is leading to nuclear war.

The United States government has now attacked Russia twice, not counting the attacks on the former Russian territory Russia has reincorporated, such as [this](#). The attack on the Nord Stream pipelines and now [drone attacks deep inside Russia](#) are beyond Ukraine's unassisted capability. Washington feels comfortable in these reckless acts, because Washington has dismissed Putin's declared, but never defended, 'red lines' as meaningless.

One wonders what is wrong with Putin and with the Kremlin in general that Russia forever complains but never acts. It should be self evident to the Kremlin that the longer the conflict and anti-Russian propaganda continue, the harder for the West to bow out. Prestige and predictions are at risk. a network of relationships develops. Powerful interest groups such as armaments corporations acquire stake in the conflict. With Ukraine facing defeat, there will be agitation for committing US and European soldiers. At first the claim will be that only one division is needed to bolster Ukraine at this or that point. Then to save that division another will be needed. We saw it all in Vietnam.

Will Putin finally realize that Russia is at war when Moscow goes up in smoke?

That would be a bit too late. Putin now admits that he waited too late to intervene in Ukraine, thus giving Washington time to build a Ukrainian military force. So why wait too late again? Can Putin learn from his mistakes? My fear is that Putin is unrealistic and does not comprehend the likely consequences of his Goody Two Shoes behavior. Putin's restrained behavior gives the green light to greater provocations from Washington. These provocations are accelerating. Russia needs to use the force necessary to quickly end the war before it spins out of control.

Such concerns are bolstered by Putin's recent comments on former German Chancellor Angela Merkel's recent confession that she deliberately deceived the Russians over Minsk 2. Putin just now figured that out? One has to ask: if he still harbored illusions regarding his western "partners," has he even now woken up and smelled the kvass? Does he still, even now, think he's dealing with people who can be reasoned with? (Regarding Putin's admission that more decisive action in 2014 might have been appropriate, militarily, the

advantage would have been very much in Moscow's favor. Whether Russia could at that time have withstood the sanctions she is weathering in good form now is another question.)

Indeed, it has been suggested to me (in a private email) that Moscow is still entertaining illusions, despite all the evidence to the contrary:

I completely agree with your argument. I said the same thing a couple of years ago when I wrote that Putin should have taken a page from Khrushchev's playbook and threatened 'We will bury you,' pounded his shoe on a desk, etc.

This civilized, decent Putin is an open invitation to NATO/US to escalate straight to and across the nuclear red line. But is anyone listening in the Kremlin?

Conversely, another correspondent suggests that Russian restraint is deliberate, focused on a long game toward Europe, especially Germany (lightly edited):

I too agree that the slow grind will persist. Russia needs to demonstrate to the EU (Germany specifically) that despite having incredible military strength Russia is judicious in the application of that military strength and respects international law - all of this in contrast to the USA. The reason for this is that Russia is waiting for the ongoing economic troubles in the EU to create regime change in EU states, to regimes which reconcile with Russia and distance themselves from the US. Russia's larger strategic goal is to facilitate the liberation of Europe from US control, and that can only come by indigenous regime change. Russia's displays of its military technology also signals to Europe that only Russia, not the US, can provide strategic defense for them. The slow grind, as Colonel Doug Macgregor stated in his interview by Michael Vlahos, is an excellent way to de-militarize Ukraine without having long supply-lines or maneuvering outside Anti-Access/Area Denial operational zones.

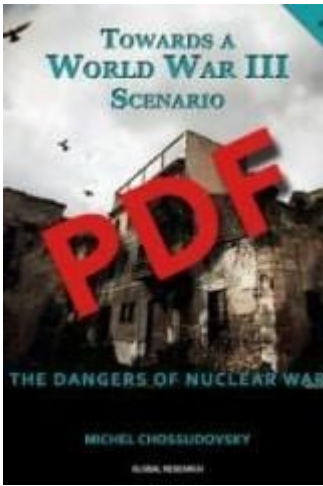
Bottom line: what Moscow does next will not only determine the course of the war in Ukraine but whether the world goes up in radioactive smoke. Does restraint and non-response to provocation make the apocalyptic scenario more likely, or less? Conversely, would a rapid, decisive move by Moscow widen that window or help close it?

Finally, which course is Moscow likely to take? (My guess: the slow grind, nothing dramatic.) Whether that's the right move, we will soon find out.

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by Michel Chossudovsky

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Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world’s only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

-**Ellen Brown**, author of ‘Web of Debt’ and president of the Public Banking Institute

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