

US Counting on Putin to Signal Before Using Nukes

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*Hats off to Director of National Intelligence **Avril Haines** for her Senate May 10 testimony on the likelihood of nuclear war with Russia, even though parts of it were surreal, as we discuss below.*

From an intelligence perspective, she told it like it is. Not only that; she took the quintessential nuclear-use question a step beyond what [CIA Director William Burns had told the *Financial Times* on May 7](#). Burns pointed out that Russian **President Vladimir Putin** “doesn’t believe he can afford to lose” in Ukraine. Burns added:

“I don’t think this means Putin is deterred at this point because he staked so much on the choice that he made to launch this invasion that I think he’s convinced right now that doubling down still will enable him to make progress.”

Whether or not Burns read [our brief VIPS Memo of May 1](#), it was, frankly, good to see that he and we were on the same page regarding the key judgment that the Ukraine conflict is a must-win for Putin.

Ms. Haines took VIPS’ warning (about an “existential threat” to Russia) a step further. Swallowing hard and, uncharacteristically, stammering a little, [she answered THE big question when asked by Sen. Mark Warner \(D, VA\)](#):

“We’re supporting Ukraine but also we don’t want to ultimately end up in World War III and we don’t want to end up in a situation where actors are using nuclear weapons. Our

view is, as General Berrier indicated, there's not a sort of an imminent potential for Putin to use nuclear weapons. We perceive that ... as something that he is unlikely to do unless there is effectively an existential threat to his regime and to Russia from his perspective.

"We do think that that could be the case in the event he perceives that he is losing the war in Ukraine, and that NATO is sort of, in effect, either intervening or about to intervene in that context, which would obviously contribute to a perception that he is about to lose the war in Ukraine.

"But that there are a lot of things that he would do in the context of escalation before he would get to a nuclear weapon, and also that he would be likely to engage in some signaling beyond what he has done thus far before doing so."

Do You Dare Follow the Logic in this Syllogism?

Major Premise: We don't want to end up in WWII, using nuclear weapons.

Minor Premise: Putin may use them if he perceives that he is losing the war in Ukraine.

Conclusion: Thus the U.S. will do what it takes to make Putin "perceive" he is losing in Ukraine.

See what I mean about surreal? Oh, but not to worry; Putin will probably first signal "beyond what he has done thus far" before using nukes. Right!

Putin Need Not Be Paranoid

It did not take a tirade by Sen. Lindsey Graham, or the outspoken "Victory Over Russia in Ukraine" pledges of Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate leader Chuck Schumer, or the "weakening Russia" objective advertised by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to give President Putin a complex. Nor is it some kind of surprise to him that he is atop the list of those to be removed by "regime change." What causes wonderment is the nonchalant way that prominent US policy officials proceed willy nilly, apparently without really comprehending the dangers at hand - even when those dangers are laid out before them by top intelligence officials like Haines and Burns.

Putin, of course, is under no illusions. He is only too well aware that this is what the U.S.-arranged *coup d'état* in Kyiv in 2014 (rightly labeled the "most blatant coup in history"), was all about. That coup sharpened the Kremlin's understanding of the existential threat Russia faced. If confirmation were needed, it came - surprisingly - from the US Defense Intelligence Agency. In DIA's Dec. 2015 "National Security Strategy Report," DIA Director Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart asserted:

"The Kremlin is convinced the US is laying the groundwork for regime change in Russia, a conviction further reinforced by the events in Ukraine. Moscow views the US as the critical driver behind the crisis in Ukraine and believes that the overthrow of Yanukovich is the latest move in a long-established pattern of U.S.-orchestrated regime change efforts."

So, you don't have to be paranoid ... Paranoia or not, the likelihood that nuclear weapons might be used if Putin "perceives" he is losing in Ukraine is NOT something to be treated

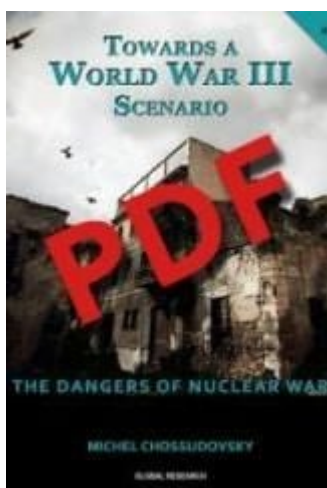
with such nonchalance. Reasonable policy makers would be well advised to change the **Conclusion** resting beneath those premises in the fateful syllogism depicted above.

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by Michel Chossudovsky

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[Michel Chossudovsky](#) is Professor of Economics at the University of Ottawa and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), which hosts the critically acclaimed website www.globalresearch.ca. He is a contributor to the Encyclopedia Britannica. His writings have been translated into more than 20 languages.

Reviews

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–**John McMurtry**, Professor of Philosophy, Guelph University

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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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