

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

23 February 2015 Last updated at 13:56

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31557254>

By Stephen Ennis BBC Monitoring

Some Russians say the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks were not as destructive as the Dresden bombing

Nuclear war is the ultimate, unthinkable catastrophe. But in some sections of the Russian media it is being viewed as a realistic possibility and even something to be embraced.

As the crisis in Ukraine has deepened over recent months and Moscow's relations with the West have become ever more strained, talk of nuclear war has been looming large in the Russian media.

In fact, as liberal journalist Yuriy Saprykin recently noted, it has almost become "commonplace".

Saprykin was struck by how presenters and listeners on independent radio station Ekho Moskvyy now speak about nuclear war "more or less in the same way as if they were discussing increases in parking fines".

On other radio stations, the tone of the nuclear debate can be much more alarming.

"Why are you all so afraid of nuclear war? Why are you afraid of nuclear war?" presenter Aleksey Gudoshnikov asked listeners to the pro-Kremlin station Govorit Moskva last month.

He went on to say that people had survived the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and that these were actually not as destructive as the bombing of Dresden some six months earlier.

"This fear of nuclear war is exaggerated, in my view," the 26-year-old Gudoshnikov concluded.

Radioactive ash

The starting-point of this disturbing trend was the boast made on 16 March last year (the day of the so-called referendum in Crimea) by controversial TV host and media executive Dmitriy Kiselev that Russia had the weapons to turn the United States into "radioactive ash".

In a later interview with the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten,

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

Kiselev said he had merely been making a "technical" observation, and that people should not accuse him of "dreaming" of such a thing.

He has returned to the theme of nuclear war on his weekly show on state channel Rossiya 1 on more than one occasion since.

Well-known TV host Dmitriy Kiselev claimed that Russia could turn the US into "radioactive ash"

On 8 February, he quoted an extract from Russia's military doctrine setting out the criteria for its use of nuclear weapons.

Kiselev stressed that this could happen not just in response to a nuclear attack on Russia, but against any military aggression that "threatens the very existence" of the Russian state.

He also stressed that the decision to push the nuclear button would be taken personally by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who "enjoys the unconditional support of the Russian people".

Once again, a nuclear attack was presented not as something to be shied away from, but as a necessary measure to preserve the nation.

'Existential threat'

Before the current version of Russia's military doctrine was published at the end of last year, there had been talk that the section on nuclear war would be updated to allow for the use of pre-emptive strikes.

In the event, that section was left unchanged. Writing in the Moscow Times, Kremlin critic and military analyst Aleksandr Golts described it as a "wholly reasonable formulation regarding the use of nuclear weapons".

Russian commentators say President Putin has the power and the support to use nuclear weapons

Meanwhile, pro-Kremlin media regularly talk up the idea that Russia is indeed facing an existential threat, of the sort that could potentially permit a nuclear strike.

TV news is full of stories about Nato's military build-up around Russia's borders, while commentators portray the West as being hell-bent on the country's destruction.

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

In a talkshow on Gazprom-Media's NTV on 25 January, pro-Putin pundit Sergey Markov said the West was preparing the ground for the "elimination of the Russian people as an entity in world history". A week later, Kiselev was telling viewers of his weekly show that the "very existence of Russia is not part of America's plan".

### Contrast with USSR

The matter-of-factness or even levity with which the Russian media now discuss nuclear weapons is new.

The Soviet Union took pride in its nuclear arsenal. But it also viewed the actual use of nuclear weapons with abhorrence. Nuclear war was to be avoided at all costs - witness Khrushchev's climb-down in the Cuban missile crisis.

By contrast, says Saprykin, some are losing their fear of nuclear weapons in today's Russia "where talk of when and how they might be used is a standard subject of public debate".

Nuclear war - at least in the rhetoric heard in parts of the Russian media - is no longer unthinkable.

BBC Monitoring reports and analyses news from TV, radio, web and print media around the world. You can follow BBC Monitoring on Twitter and Facebook.

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/continued-fighting-in-ukraine-could-lead-to-nuclear-war/543306>

9

Continued Fighting In Ukraine Could Lead to Nuclear War

The Stakes Are Too High Not to Negotiate Peace

By Washington's Blog

Global Research, February 24, 2015

Washington's Blog

Region: Russia and FSU

In-depth Report: Nuclear War, UKRAINE REPORT

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

Former Soviet leader and Nobel prize winner Mikhail Gorbachev warned that the battle in Ukraine could result in a nuclear war:

“A war of this kind would unavoidably lead to a nuclear war,” the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize winner told Der Spiegel news magazine, according to excerpts released on Friday.

“We won’t survive the coming years if someone loses their nerve in this overheated situation,” added Gorbachev, 83. “This is not something I’m saying thoughtlessly. I am extremely concerned.”

One of America’s top experts on Russia – Steven Cohen – has warned that failure to negotiate a peace treaty in Ukraine could lead to nuclear war.

Steven Starr – a nuclear arms expert and senior scientist for Physicians for Social Responsibility – warns that proposed U.S. legislation would be a direct path towards nuclear war with Russia.

Former Russian advisor to Margaret Thatcher John Bowne said yesterday:

I think it is dire particularly because President Obama has had the wrong end of the stick, and he follows a strategic mistake. When President Reagan and Secretary of State Gorbachev, with the assistance of Margret Thatcher, achieved an end to the cold war, in other words, the colder part of Second World War in the mid 1980’s, it was agreed, if not in writing but tacitly, that neither side would try to poach on the old buffer states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. From the Russian point of view, they see a number of countries have voted quite democratically, like Poland, to go into the European Union and be associated with NATO and things like that. They have also seen activity by the secret services of the West, most notably the CIA in the Ukraine, to persuade them to go. This has angered the Russians, and when you come to the Ukraine and Crimea, you are treading on vital interests of Russia. It is very similar to the situation in October of 1962, when Khrushchev of the Soviet Union decided to put intercontinental ballistic missiles in Cuba, right in the soft underbelly of the United States, threatening the vital interests of the United States. In that confrontation, President Kennedy had to win even if it meant nuclear war. He had to win that battle. In this case, we have the West interfering in the soft underbelly of Russia, notably the Ukraine and in Crimea. This threatens the vital interest of Russia like a warm water port with access to the Eastern Mediterranean, which they have sought for 200 years. Putin, who enjoys 80 percent domestic support, has to win even if it means going to war.

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

\*\*\*

This would have a very high risk of slipping into nuclear war. Russia has enormous ground forces, and they are very up to date. Putin has updated the Russian armed forces tremendously. They have very sophisticated rocket weapons, and if we saw massive numbers of our troops being slaughtered, maybe we would be the first to press the nuclear button. . . . So, this is a desperate situation.

Former Polish president – and famed anti-communist activist – Lech Walesa also warned that the U.S. and Nato’s arming of Ukraine could lead to a nuclear war.

Leading American political activist Noam Chomsky agrees.

Australian doctor and Nobel prize winner Helen Caldicott warns:

The expansion of NATO to Russia’s borders is “very, very dangerous,” Caldicott said. “There is no way a war between the United States and Russia could start and not go nuclear. . . . The United States and Russia have enormous stockpiles of these weapons. Together they have 94 percent of all the 16,300 nuclear weapons in the world.”

“We are in a very fallible, very dangerous situation operated by mere mortals,” she warned. “The nuclear weapons, are sitting there, thousands of them. They are ready to be used.”

\*\*\*

Caldicott strongly criticized Obama administration policymakers for their actions in forward positioning U.S. and NATO military units in countries of Eastern Europe in response to Russian support of breakaway separatists in the provinces of eastern Ukraine. On —, the U.S. government announced the deployment of the Ironhorse Brigade, an elite armored cavalry unit of the U.S. Army to the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, along the historic invasion route from the West to St. Petersburg.

“Do they really want a nuclear war with Russia?” she asked “The only war that you can have with Russia is a nuclear war. . . . You don’t provoke paranoid countries armed with nuclear weapons.”

And see this, this, this, this, this and this.

Indeed, Eric Zuesse says that the risks are so high – and the American

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

leaders so reckless – that Russia is preparing for an expected nuclear attack by the U.S.

Postscript: In the 1987 book *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans*, one of the world's leading physicists – Michio Kaku – revealed declassified plans for the U.S. to launch a first-strike nuclear war against Russia. The forward was written by the former Attorney General of the United States, Ramsey Clarke.

In *Towards a World War III Scenario*, Michel Chossudovsky documents that the U.S. is so enamored with nuclear weapons that it has authorized low-level field commanders to use them in the heat of battle in their sole discretion ... without any approval from civilian leaders.

May cooler heads prevail

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/commentary/2015/02/23/commentary-nuclear-dangers-myth-reality-responses/23885837/>

Commentary: Nuclear Dangers: Myth, Reality, Responses

By Daryl Kimball and Matthew McKinzie 1:49 p.m. EST February 23, 2015

(Photo: Staff Illustration)

CONNECT 23 TWEET 7 LINKEDINCOMMENTEMAILMORE

Since the 2014 ouster of Ukraine's pro-Russian president, Russia's destabilization of Ukraine has undermined European security and the rules-based international order.

Even before the crisis in Ukraine, bilateral cooperation in the nuclear weapons arena had deteriorated, including US claims of Russian testing of a ground-launched cruise missile in violation of the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and highly visible patrols by Russian strategic forces.

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

Moscow's actions have prompted calls from some to halt implementation of nuclear arms control agreements, including the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which verifiably limits Russian nuclear potential to no more than 1,550 strategic deployed warheads.

Some members of Congress have suggested the US accelerate nuclear weapons modernization, develop new nuclear systems and pursue deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in NATO states on Russia's border.

But rather than helping to protect Ukraine or NATO, these proposals would undermine strategic stability and increase nuclear dangers. Moscow's actions in Ukraine require a tough and unified US and European response involving diplomacy, economic sanctions and NATO conventional deterrence, but the challenge can't be effectively resolved with nuclear weapons or a US nuclear buildup.

As President Barack Obama declared in 2012, "[t]he massive nuclear arsenal we inherited from the Cold War is poorly suited for today's threats." The Pentagon and Joint Chiefs' 2013 review of US nuclear deterrence requirements determined the US could reduce its deployed strategic arsenal by up to one-third.

In a joint statement delivered at the Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna in December, the Arms Control Association along with four other US groups cited that Pentagon assessment and said Moscow and Washington could do more to reduce their nuclear excess and should pursue a further one-third cut in their strategic stockpiles. With New START verification tools in place, additional nuclear reductions can be readily achieved without a new treaty.

We noted that use of just a few hundred nuclear weapons, let alone more than 3,000, would have catastrophic global consequences. We cited a 2001 Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) study that shows that a "precision" attack against Russia's nuclear forces would kill at least 8 million to 12 million people and injure millions more. In a "countervalue" attack on population centers, the United States could kill or injure up to 50 million Russians with a mere fraction of its arsenal.

In a Feb. 9 Defense News oped, Matthew Costlow claimed that our Vienna statement calling for reducing Russian and US nuclear excess is "immoral" because it would require targeting cities. The implication he makes, that "counterforce" targeting somehow avoids damage to civilians and civilian objects, is postposterous. The effects of such

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

attacks would cause widespread death and damage across either country — and beyond.

These findings were made public in the NRDC analysis but military planners and political leaders have been aware of the collateral effects of nuclear war since the early years of the Cold War. As President Ronald Reagan concluded in 1984, "a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought."

Furthermore, a purely hypothetical situation in which the US targets Russian nuclear forces and risks only counterforce retaliation is nonsense. After a nuclear war starts all bets are off. Holding Russian nuclear force targets at risk means US (and Russian) cities are at risk in a retaliatory strike. If deterrence fails and there is a counterforce exchange, both sides are then left in the situation of city targeting by the remaining nuclear forces.

In our Vienna statement, we questioned whether it is possible, given the indiscriminate effects of nuclear weapons, that US claims it "will not intentionally target civilian populations or civilian objects" with nuclear weapons would have any practical effect in avoiding the "collateral" damage prohibited by the Law of Armed Conflict.

Costlow is also dead wrong when he says we are proposing "unilateral" US disarmament. In fact, we specifically criticized Russia for saying "nyet" to Obama's 2013 proposal for a one-third cut in both countries strategic arsenals.

What's more, in our Vienna statement, we also criticized other nuclear-armed states for pursuing unnecessary and destabilizing nuclear buildups.

We proposed "making nuclear disarmament" a global enterprise. We called on all states to press China, India and Pakistan, in particular, not to increase their fissile material or weapons stocks. A unified push for further US-Russian arms cuts combined with a nuclear weapons freeze by other nuclear-armed states could create the conditions for meaningful nuclear risk reduction.

The situation can and must be made safer, beginning with a clear understanding of the risks and the elimination of excess nuclear forces. Doing nothing is not a responsible, or morally acceptable, option.



Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

Daryl Kimball is executive director of the Arms Control Association, and Matthew McKinzie is senior scientist and director of the nuclear program at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

<http://lasvegas.informermg.com/2015/02/22/u-s-russian-governments-nuclear-warpath/>

Are the U.S. and Russian Governments Once Again on the Nuclear Warpath?

February 22, 2015 | Filed under: Opinion/Columns | Posted by: PeaceTalk

By Lawrence S. Wittner

A quarter century after the end of the Cold War and decades after the signing of landmark nuclear arms control and disarmament agreements, are the U.S. and Russian governments once more engaged in a potentially disastrous nuclear arms race with one another? It certainly looks like it.

With approximately 15,000 nuclear weapons between them, the United States and Russia already possess about 93 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal, making them the world's nuclear hegemons. But, apparently, like great powers throughout history, they do not consider their vast military might sufficient, especially in the context of their growing international rivalry.

Although, in early 2009, President Barack Obama announced his "commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," the U.S. government today has moved well along toward implementing an administration plan for U.S. nuclear "modernization." This entails spending \$355 billion over a 10-year period for a massive renovation of U.S. nuclear weapons plants and laboratories. Moreover, the cost is scheduled to soar after this renovation, when an array of new nuclear weapons will be produced. "That's where all the big money is," noted Ashton Carter, recently nominated as U.S. Secretary of Defense. "By comparison, everything that we're doing now is cheap." The Obama administration has asked the Pentagon to plan for 12 new nuclear missile-firing submarines, up to 100 new nuclear bombers, and 400 land-based nuclear missiles. According to outside experts and a

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

bipartisan, independent panel commissioned by Congress and the Defense Department, that will bring the total price tag for the U.S. nuclear weapons buildup to approximately \$1 trillion.

For its part, the Russian government seems determined to match or surpass that record. With President Vladimir Putin eager to use nuclear weapons as a symbol of Russian influence, Moscow is building, at great expense, new generations of giant ballistic missile submarines, as well as nuclear attack submarines that are reportedly equal or superior to their U.S. counterparts in performance and stealth. Armed with nuclear-capable cruise missiles, they periodically make forays across the Atlantic, heading for the U.S. coast. Deeply concerned about the potential of these missiles to level a surprise attack, the U.S. military has already launched the first of two experimental “blimps” over Washington, DC, designed to help detect them. The Obama administration also charges that Russian testing of a new medium-range cruise missile is a violation of the 1987 INF treaty. Although the Russian government denies the existence of the offending missile, its rhetoric has been less than diplomatic. As the Ukraine crisis developed, Putin told a public audience that “Russia is one of the leading nuclear powers,” and foreign nations “should understand it’s best not to mess with us.” Pravda was even more inflammatory. In an article published in November titled “Russia prepares a nuclear surprise for NATO,” it bragged about Russia’s alleged superiority over the United States in nuclear weaponry.

Not surprisingly, the one nuclear disarmament agreement signed between the U.S. and Russian governments since 2003—the New START treaty of 2010—is being implemented remarkably slowly. New START, designed to reduce the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons (the most powerful ones) in each country by 30 percent by 2018, has not led to substantial reductions in either nation’s deployed nuclear arsenal. Indeed, between March and October 2014, the two nations each increased their deployed nuclear forces. Also, they maintain large arsenals of nuclear weapons targeting one another, with about 1,800 of them on high alert—ready to be launched within minutes against the populations of both nations.

The souring of relations between the U.S. and Russian governments has been going on for years, but it has reached a very dangerous level during the current confrontation over Ukraine. In their dealings with this conflict-torn nation, there’s plenty of fault on both sides. U.S. officials should have recognized that any Russian government would have been angered by NATO’s steady recruitment of East European countries—especially Ukraine, which had been united with Russia in the same nation until recently, was sharing a common border with Russia,

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 14:55

---

and was housing one of Russia's most important naval bases (in Crimea). For their part, Russian officials had no legal basis for seizing and annexing Crimea or aiding heavily-armed separatists in the eastern portion of Ukraine.

But however reckless the two nuclear behemoths have been, this does not mean that they have to continue this behavior. Plenty of compromise formulas exist—for example, leaving Ukraine out of NATO, altering that country's structure to allow for a high degree of self-government in the war-torn east, and organizing a UN-sponsored referendum in Crimea. And possibilities for compromise also exist in other areas of U.S.-Russian relations.

Failing to agree to a diplomatic settlement of these and other issues will do more than continue violent turmoil in Ukraine. Indeed, the disastrous, downhill slide of both the United States and Russia into a vastly expensive nuclear arms race will bankrupt them and, also, by providing an example of dependence on nuclear might, encourage the proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional nations. After all, how can they succeed in getting other countries to forswear developing nuclear weapons when—47 years after the U.S. and Soviet governments signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in which they pledged their own nuclear disarmament—their successors are engaged in yet another nuclear arms race? Finally, of course, this new arms race, unless checked, seems likely to lead, sooner or later, to a nuclear catastrophe of immense proportions.

Can the U.S. and Russian governments calm down, settle their quarrels peacefully, and return to a policy of nuclear disarmament? Let's hope so.

Lawrence Wittner ([lawrencewittner.com](http://lawrencewittner.com)), syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor of History emeritus at SUNY/Albany. His latest book is "What's Going On at UAardvark?" (Solidarity Press), a satirical novel about campus life.