

MONDAY 22 NOV 2021

**URGENT NEED OF RESTRAINT: UKRAINE MUST NOT BECOME A TRIGGER FOR WW-11**

**'A NUCLEAR WAR CANNOT BE WON AND MUST NEVER BE FOUGHT'**

**NATO TACTICAL NUKES IN EASTERN EUROPE A POTENTIAL TRIPWIRE FOR THE APOCALYPSE**

As Russian troops and tanks seemingly mass at striking distance to the borders of Ukraine, and speculation mounts as to whether or not Russia intends to mount an attack on that country, increasingly alarming statements are circulated, with some suggesting an attack on Ukraine might come as early as next week.

Jens Stoltenberg seems to have suggested that tactical nuclear weapons currently located in Germany might be shifted into eastern Europe.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/540774-stoltenberg-statement-potential-conflict/>

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<https://tass.com/defense/1363759>

<https://www.rt.com/russia/540732-nato-us-eastern-eu/>

Reactions to this from Russia have been predictably strong.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/540774-stoltenberg-statement-potential-conflict/>

More importantly, by this foolish suggestion, the potential for conflict between Russia and Ukraine has at the same time been both increased, and the ultimate stakes of such conflict – escalation to global thermonuclear war- have been raised. It was/is

**precisely**

the potential stationing of NATO nuclear weapons close to Russian borders that Russia most objects to, and such stationing provides a potential

tripwire via their use, to wider use of nuclear weapons.

In this context, the presence of Russian tactical Iskander nuclear weapons in the exclave of Kaliningrad with a 500Km range is particularly pertinent. Such weapons are the most likely to be used early in a conflict and would devastate Poland, Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic.

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Germany is quite right in the current situation, in which potentially nuclear conflict could take place, to look askance at the stationing of 'tactical' nuclear weapons on its own territory. So it should. Their very presence even in Germany itself, makes a tripwire for wider nuclear conflict possible. Shifting those weapons to Poland, The Baltic States, or God forbid, Ukraine itself would worsen not improve the situation, and drive the risk of a potentially civilisation-ending nuclear exchange sky-high.

When Vladimir Putin and Joseph Biden last met in Geneva last June, they reaffirmed the Reagan-Gorbachev dictum that '**A Nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought**'. That must be firmly held to as if it is life and death because it is exactly that.

In our last letter to Putin and NATO, sent on the previous occasion on which war with Ukraine had seemed possible, we urged them to reaffirm Reagan-Gorbachev.

<http://www.pndnsw.org.au/articles/flashpoints/453-letter-to-biden-putin-zelensky-re-ukraine-nuclear-war.html>

We further note the reaffirmation by the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network of this.

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<https://www.apln.network/analysis/statements/a-nuclear-war-cannot-be-won-and-must-never-be-fought>

ANY Russia-Ukraine conflict would be likely to involve NATO if not directly, then indirectly, and would be likely to escalate from conventional ground war fought with tanks and troops, potentially at least, to tactical nuclear war. This is not saying that this is what will definitely happen: merely that the risk of such an escalation is unacceptably high. Such an escalation must not be allowed to happen.

We do not know for sure what Putin intends to do with the large number of troops and tanks massed uncomfortably close to the borders of Ukraine. Russia should be more transparent about its intentions, or western intelligence may draw their own pessimistic conclusions.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/politics/russia-ukraine-biden-administration.html>

Maybe over the next days and weeks absolutely nothing will happen. The tension will gradually wind down. We will wipe tears of perspiration from ourselves and ask how the situation might be defused on a more long term basis, without the very steps we take to make ourselves 'safer' actually having the opposite effect, making conflict more, not less, likely.

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Or maybe there really will be an attack on Ukraine, perhaps in the coming week, in which case things are likely to become very messy. Even if NATO does not formally intervene, it is clear that various NATO countries are going to offer assistance to Ukraine.

There are suggestions that Russia believes military action against Ukraine will be a walkover. In fact this seems most unlikely, and there will be fighting of a kind last seen in the region in the 1940s. It will be WW-II with the option to escalate to WW-III. The question is, just how credible will it be for escalation to nuclear weapons use, starting with Kaliningrad's Iskanders, not to take place?

Even if Russian intervention were to be a walkover, the long term consequences for Russian-NATO relationships are nothing less than catastrophic.

We urge everyone to 'take a deep breath' and step back from the brink.

One way to ensure that a war in eastern Europe will NOT escalate into WW-III with large scale use first of tactical and then of strategic nuclear weapons would of course, be for the US, NATO, and Russia to sign an agreement for **No First Use** of nuclear weapons.

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An Open Letter sent to Biden and Putin in advance of their summit last June urged just that.

[http://baselpeaceoffice.org/sites/default/files/imce/articles/2021/open\\_letter\\_on\\_no\\_first\\_use\\_to\\_presidents\\_putin\\_biden\\_for\\_the\\_june\\_16\\_summit.pdf](http://baselpeaceoffice.org/sites/default/files/imce/articles/2021/open_letter_on_no_first_use_to_presidents_putin_biden_for_the_june_16_summit.pdf)

Prevention of a potential Russia-Ukraine conflict from becoming a (tactical then strategic) nuclear conflict is of existential importance for civilisation as a whole. The stakes are – at least potentially – that high.

The same applies to the prevention of a China-Taiwan conflict from going in the same uncontrollable direction. No First Use might be just what is required to prevent both conflicts from maybe going nuclear and ending civilisation.

Once either of these conflicts get going, escalation control might be difficult or even impossible. Events have a way of getting out of control.

It is worth repeating that the stakes, once conflict is under way, really are, potentially, that high. This does **not** mean that global thermonuclear war or local tactical nuclear war is what **WILL**

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happen, but it does mean that the risk of such an escalation is very high.

Is it worth risking the world for a conviction that 'Ukraine is part of Russia' ?

Is it worth risking all out of a conviction that somehow 'Crimea or Donetsk is part of Ukraine' ?

Borders and even national identities are contested. Perhaps those who live there should be the ones who decide what they wish to be.

No-one is talking to anyone, and both sides imagine that the only language understood by the other is force.

The following suggestions might be helpful, but are by no means meant to constitute a blueprint to be rigidly followed:

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- 1) Cessation of hostilities in Donbas by both sides.
- 2) The implementation of the Minsk accords but not on the threat of violence by either side.
- 3) Return of Russian military troops and equipment to their normal bases.
- 4) Restoration of the Normandy talks.

Progress can only take place once each concedes that force too, leads only to the abyss, and that listening to one another and really taking seriously each others concerns is central to getting on, and this is a two way process.

John Hallam

People for Nuclear Disarmament

Human Survival Project

Co-Convenor, Abolition 2000 Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group,

[johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au](mailto:johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au)

[jhjohnhallam@gmail.com](mailto:jhjohnhallam@gmail.com)

[johnh@pnnd.org](mailto:johnh@pnnd.org)



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