

HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO WAR IN EUROPE? HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO NUCLEAR WAR?

Written by John Hallam

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PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO WAR IN EUROPE?

HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO NUCLEAR WAR?

Global thermonuclear war is far from inevitable but its now a real risk

Widespread war in Europe is not inevitable but its also a real risk

Local war with Ukraine is not inevitable but a real risk.

The 'non-starters' have to be starters.

A limited invasion of Ukraine, a more widespread invasion of Ukraine, conventional war in Eastern Europe, and finally global thermonuclear war are all real risks but none of them are inevitable. (However the final one happens to be about the potential end of civilisation, which ought to give us pause).

The range of likely event sequences in eastern Europe over the next few weeks and months ranges from a continued tense stalemate between Ukraine and Russia, via limited military action by Russia (e.g., occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk), to an attempted invasion and occupation of the whole Ukraine (likely to lead to the most intense fighting seen in Europe since WW-II), and on up the escalation ladder to a more widespread war involving say, Poland, Baltic States and the Czech Republic and/or wider NATO forces. The extreme risk posed by the last step on the escalation ladder is that the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad is bordered by Poland and is said to contain (and presumably DOES contain) Iskander tactical nuclear missiles with a range of 500Km. A NATO attack on Kaliningrad will assuredly lead to the actual USE of those missiles with devastating effects on Poland, Czech Republic, Germany and Austria.

Nuclear war, general conventional war, and even a localised invasion of just part of Ukraine are NONE of them inevitable.

Avoiding them however, **will** mean that diplomats have to cease talking past each other and take seriously what drives the other side.

That surely is what diplomacy is all about. It is precisely NOT 'war by other means'.

It is a fact that from 1990 through to 1997, western leaders promised Russia that NATO would expand 'not one inch eastward'. Since 1997, this promise has been

entirely disregarded. Russia is unsurprisingly not impressed.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>

Russia's sense that it has been led up the garden path, and that NATO routinely disregards its security interests and concerns is entirely to be expected.

A 'negotiated settlement' that thinks it can get away with setting aside Russia's core security concerns – whatever we may think of Putins actions in other areas – is, to use US negotiators terminology, a 'non-starter'.

Yet the potential
consequences of
complete failure to
negotiate – possible
widespread
conventional war and

possible escalation to nuclear war, with the possibility of THAT being civilisation-ending – surely also should be a non-starter.

A recent essay in the Carnegie Institute website gave a horrifying sample of just how NATO should NOT be thinking. It gives a clue to precisely the mindset that **PREVENTS** solution of

these problems:

“To deter Russia, we need to confront it with what it fears: the

creation tomorrow of the very threats we are accused of posing today. Are we capable of that? If so, the scope for diplomacy will grow. If not, the risks of war will probably increase.”

https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/86187?utm_source=ctw&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=buttonlink&mkt_tok=MDk1LVBQVi04MTMAAAGB9MCnMCEdp_kAZpls9y6jit_nwSvUgVY_blaHCA0GP6by3pZYvPq5KzILc-rRSO1EGAgSi8CJ8ruh6_C

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This is precisely the
mindset that allows

pleas by Russia to return to 1997 – not the first time such pleas have been made by any means, they have been made regularly over the last couple of decades – to be ignored, to be set aside as 'non – starters' when for Russia, they are

core to what drives its current behaviour. It is precisely because we already have been doing this for the past 25 years that we are where we are.

We do not have to approve Vladimir Putins brand of politics to see this.

To avoid at least the
RISK of potentially
catastrophic outcomes
ranging from major
conflict in Europe to the
apocalypse, Russian
narratives must be
taken seriously and
never ever dismissed

as 'non-starters'.

If we think that a
'nuclear war cannot be
won and must never be

fought' we must ensure
one never gets going.
To ensure that we must
ensure that the
immediate precursor to
nuclear war- major
conventional war in
Europe – also never
takes place.

Flexibility on both sides is of course desirable. But if one side as now, believes it has been doing all the flexing and now no longer wishes to bend, that must be addressed.

To do otherwise is
indeed to risk the worst
outcomes conceivable.

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