

Putin Shrugs-Off Washington's Provocations and 'Sticks to Business'

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Last week's drone attacks on Russian military bases represent a serious escalation in Washington's proxy war on Russia. One of the attacks involved an airfield that is located less than 200 miles from Moscow.

Naturally, the incident rankled Russian President Vladimir Putin who convened an emergency meeting of his Security Council to explore the options for retaliatory strikes. We have no doubt that Russia's Top Brass recommended tit-for-tat missile strikes beyond Ukraine's borders as a form of equal payback. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed and the military stuck with its current strategy of obliterating critical infrastructure in cities across the country. The attacks on Ukraine's fragile electrical grid are the essential preparation for the launching of a widely-anticipated winter offensive. Here's more from an article at the World Socialist Web Site:

Yesterday's drone attack on an airfield in Kursk marks a major escalation in NATO's war against Russia....The location of the attacks and their implementation points once again to the direct involvement of the United States....The bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines...The explosions in Sevastopol's naval harbour on October 29 (and) The November 15 explosions in a Polish farming village that killed two civilians....Every one of these actions reeks of covert US and NATO involvement, each more reckless and potentially dangerous than the last....**A pattern is emerging—one in which the US and NATO keep pushing against Russia in order to test how far they can go without provoking a response from the Putin regime....The relentless and reckless escalation of the war by the United States carries with it the risk of the Russian government responding with a major escalation of its own, with potentially catastrophic consequences.** (["Drone attacks on Russian airbases: A major escalation in the war authored in Washington"](#), Chris Marsden, World Socialist Web Site)

Just hours after the third attack, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken delivered a statement

denying any responsibility for the incident. He said:

“We have neither encouraged nor enabled the Ukrainians to strike inside of Russia.” Not surprisingly, Blinken’s denial fell well-short of a formal repudiation of the attack itself which one might have expected. More to the point, **it appears that the US was directly involved given that “Both NATO and Russian observers (claim) US satellite involvement in attacks on Russian bases.”** Here’s what they found:

Multiple military sources in NATO countries as well as Russiareport that the reconditioned Russian Tu-141 drones that Ukraine launched at Russian air bases downlinked US satellite GPS data to hit their targets.

The 1970s-vintage Russian recon drones were converted into cruise missiles, fitted with new guidance systems and directed by American satellites, the sources said. Ukraine does not have the capability to guide missiles on its own, they added.

Russia’s Defense Ministry identified one of the weapons as the Tu-141 in a December 6 statement. According to Russian military sources, the Russians identified the Tu-141 from fragments recovered after the missiles struck Russia’s Dyagilevo and Engels air force bases.

If, contrary to Blinken’s denial, the United States provided guidance for the missile attack, then Washington must be well aware that this brings NATO forces to the brink of direct involvement in the Ukraine war and the Biden administration must be prepared to run that risk.” ([“Military sources: Ukraine missiles used US guidance”](#), Asia Times)

So, what does this new incitement mean and how will it affect the conduct of the war?

We think Washington has adopted a new tactical approach that could be called “calculated recklessness”, that is, **the US is launching meticulously planned attacks that are made to look like impulsive acts of aggression by their proxy, Ukraine. The objective of these attacks is to provoke Moscow into an overreaction, that is, retaliatory strikes on targets outside of Ukraine. That, in turn, could be used as a justification for NATO’s entrance into the conflict which, ostensibly, is Washington’s goal.**

It appears, however, that Putin and his advisors have resisted the temptation to expand the war beyond the current battlespace. This is from an article at Southfront:

In response to Kiev’s attempts to disrupt the work of Russian aviation, **Russian forces launched another massive strike at military and energy facilities throughout Ukraine.** The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that all 17 targets in Ukraine were hit. Explosions were reported in more than 10 regions of the country.

Strikes on infrastructure facilities led to another collapse of the entire energy system of Ukraine. Due to the imbalance in the system, a wave of emergency power outages is still rolling across the country, accompanied by massive accidents in the power grid...

The lack of electricity, water and communications throughout the country is accompanied by loud statements from Kiev that the Ukrainian Air Defense allegedly successfully intercepted almost all Russian missiles." ("[Kiev plays dangerous games with Russian long-range aviation](#)", Southfront)

In other words, **Putin has not been baited into the escalation that Washington seeks**, but that doesn't mean he won't call up additional reservists to form territorial defense units in multiple areas along Russia's western flank. We think he will. Moscow can no longer ignore the threat of future attacks or incursions on its own soil. It must bulk up its manpower and prepare for the worst. Gradually, Russia is moving towards a full wartime mobilization.

What is particularly interesting about this new escalation is that contradicts the administration's original commitment to prevent the conflict from spreading beyond Ukraine's borders. This is from the WSWS:

The United States, having instigated and provoked a war that has killed tens of thousands of Ukrainians, has crossed not only Russia's "red lines," but its own.... In May, Biden published an op-ed in the New York Times entitled "**What America Will and Will Not Do in Ukraine,**" in which he stated that **"We are not encouraging or enabling Ukraine to strike beyond its borders."** But Washington has done precisely that, giving targeting information, weapons, and logistics support that have allowed Ukraine to attack deep inside Russian territory."([WSWS](#))

Washington's promises means nothing. US actions are guided by self interest alone and by an insatiable thirst for power. That means we should expect to see similar provocations in the future as Washington pushes the envelope in its effort draw Russia into a wider war that will likely engulf the region. Here's more from the WSWS:

The bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines... The explosions in Sevastopol's naval harbour on October 29 (and) The November 15 explosions in a Polish farming village that killed two civilians.... Every one of these actions reeks of covert US and NATO involvement, each more reckless and potentially dangerous than the last.... **The latest attacks deep inside Russian territory could have been orchestrated by sections of the US military, intelligence and political elite.. no matter how potentially disastrous the outcome of such brinksmanship might be."** ([World Socialist Web Site](#))

The analysts at the WSWS have never accepted the fiction that the US is merely assisting Ukraine in its struggle against the Russian boogiemane. From the very beginning, they have grasped that the conflict was largely a US concoction aimed at using proxies to weaken Russia in order to achieve its broader geopolitical goals. **These latest attacks confirm that the United States is committed to resolving this crisis through the use of military force. That means a negotiated settlement is not only out-of-the-question, but is seen as anathema to Washington's strategic objectives.** As foreign policy analyst John Mearsheimer points out in a recent interview, **there are no longer any "realistic options" for how the war can be brought to an end.** The differences are irreconcilable, there is no willingness to compromise, and the US sees military confrontation as the solution. Bottom line: Escalation is inevitable.

Here's part of a recent interview with Mearsheimer that I transcribed to underscore the

hopelessness of the current situation in Ukraine which is bound to get worse before it gets better. I apologize for any mistakes in transcribing their comments.

Freddie Sayers- What are the realistic options now? (In other words, how can the war in Ukraine be brought to an end?)

John Mearsheimer- (19:40 minutes) **There are no realistic options. We're screwed... The conflict will grind-on and both sides will escalate.** They have been escalating and where it leads is very hard to say. **There's no deal on the table that can be worked out** here. There's all this talk about the need for diplomacy.... but the question you have to ask yourself in this particular case is: **If you do diplomacy can you work out a deal? And, in my opinion, there's no deal to be worked out, and both sides are going to fight this one out.....**

There are two big issues here: "One" is a "neutral Ukraine" and the other is the 'territorial one' The Russians now have annexed 4 oblasts. That's a big chunk of Ukrainian territory and the Russians now believe that territory belongs to them. **Do you think the Russians will be willing to abandon that territory along with Crimea? I don't see that happening.** I don't think the Russians have any intention of abandoning that territory...

The Ukrainians for their part, insist on getting that territory back, and **the Americans, will not be willing to concede that territory to the Russians because it would appear that would be a defeat for the West. The United States and its allies are 'in this one' to win. We are deeply committed. For us to back-off and give the Russians any major concessions is just unacceptable at this point....**

That's the territorial issue. Then there's the question of whether or not Ukraine will be neutral. The Russians insist that Ukraine be neutral.**The Ukrainians are saying, we are willing to be neutral but we need a guarantee for our security from someone. Well, the only one who can guarantee Ukrainian security is NATO and specifically, the United States.... but that would make Ukraine a de facto member of NATO and that's unacceptable to the Russians.** So, there's no way you're going to get a truly neutral Ukraine that is not affiliated with the west. That's not going to happen and the Russians are not going to accept that.

So, what the Russians are going to do instead is create a dysfunctional rump state. and that's what they're doing now. That's why they've taken all that territory, and that's why they're wrecking Ukraine.....

The two outcomes that we have to worry greatly about are, 1-where the Russians use nuclear weapons and, 2- where the United States comes into the fight ... Because then, you have a great power war where the United States and Russia are actually fighting each other. And as Avril Haines, the Director of National Intelligence told the senate this past spring, the most likely scenario for the Russians to use nuclear weapons is if the NATO comes into the war. So, this is very dangerous....

There is a non-trivial chance that nuclear weapons will be used in Ukraine. If the Russians were to use nuclear weapons it would be most likely that they would use

them in Ukraine. And Ukraine does not have nuclear weapons of its own so Ukraine would not be able to retaliate. against the Russians...

Furthermore, if Russia uses nuclear weapons in Ukraine, the US is not going to use nuclear weapons against Russia because that would lead to a general thermonuclear war... **The great danger is that if the Russians use nuclear weapons in Ukraine that the west would retaliate with a massive conventional attack against Russian forces,** General David Petraeus has said that if Russia uses nukes in Ukraine, the US should slam Russian conventional forces inside Ukraine and Russian naval forces in the Black Sea. **If we were to do that, we would then have a great power war. NATO would be at war against Russia and as Avril Haines said, that is likely to lead to a nuclear war because the Russians would not be able to stand up to the Americans and their allies.**

(If Russia does use nuclear weapons in Ukraine) then the wise response, and I think, the likely response would be that we would go to great lengths to shut-down the conflict. I think the use of nuclear weapons would shut down the conflict (because) it would become so clear at that point in time that we were in danger of creating a nuclear war between the superpowers that we would go to great lengths to shut-down. That would focus the mind in ways that are hard to imagine in the current context.

(Unfortunately) we are making it (the use of nukes) more and more likely. It's important to realize that the more successful NATO and the Ukrainians are at defeating the Russians inside Ukraine and wrecking the Russian economy, the more likely it is that they will use nuclear weapons. And, again, you do not want to underestimate what great powers will do when they are desperate.(["John Mearsheimer: We're playing Russian Roulette"](#), Unherd; 39:25 minutes)

Mearsheimer not only explains the irreconcilable differences between the two adversaries (Russia and the US), but also presents a very credible scenario in which the conflict could lead to a nuclear war. The fact that the Biden administration has rejected diplomacy outright, makes that scenario all the more likely and, perhaps, unavoidable. Here's more from Mearsheimer:

You know the **Americans have the Monroe Doctrine...which says the western hemisphere is our 'back yard' and no distant great power is allowed to put military forces in the western hemisphere.** No great power is allowed to form a military alliance with another country in the western hemisphere because -from the American perspective- it is intolerable to have a distant great power (from Europe or Asia) on our doorstep. **Well, the same logic applies to the Russians. From the Russian perspective, the idea that you are going to have NATO right on your doorstepis unacceptable to them.** The Russians couldn't stop NATO from expanding in 1999 and they couldn't stop it in 2004 because they were too weak... This is what America did to Russia when the Soviet Union broke apart. We shoved NATO expansion down their throat, but the fact is, the Russians viewed this as an existential threat. **Ukraine in NATO was the brightest of all red lines for Russia. And if you look at the Monroe Doctrine you should not be surprised at how the Russians are reacting to what is going on in Ukraine."** (["John Mearsheimer: We're playing Russian Roulette"](#), Unherd)

He's right, isn't he?

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