

Opdateret version: Er vi søvngængeragtigt på vej til atomar 3. verdenskrig?

Memorandum fra Schiller Instituttet

Læs den opdaterede version på engelsk nedenunder.

Den 24. december. Man lyver overfor dig. Rusland planlægger ikke at indtage Ukraine. Putin er ikke en »ondsindet aktør«, der er ude på at genskabe det sovjetiske imperium. Ukraine er ikke et fremspirende demokrati, som blot fokuserer på sig selv. Som en sammenfatning af de dokumenterede gerninger viser, bliver Ukraine brugt af geopolitiske magter i Vesten, der står til regnskab for det bankerotte, spekulative finanssystem, som er gnisten, der kan udløse et strategisk opgør med Rusland, et opgør som allerede er farligere end Cuba-krisen, og som nemt kunne ende med en atomkrig, som ingen ville hverken vinde eller overleve.

Overvej kendsgerningerne, som vi præsenterer dem her i den forkortede tidslinje nedenfor. Rusland, ligesom Kina, er i stigende grad blevet udsat for truslen om at blive tilintetgjort gennem to særskilte former for "atomkrig" af det krigeriske og bankerotte angloamerikanske finansetablisement: 1) »Et atomart førsteslag«, som udtalt mest direkte af den vanvittige senator Roger Wicker (republikaner fra Mississippi), og 2) den "atomare valgmulighed" i finansiel krigsførelse, tiltag så ekstreme, at de ville svare til en finansiel belejring af Rusland for at prøve at udsulte nationen til at underkaste sig, som dette gøres mod Afghanistan.

Rusland har nu bekendtgjort, så hele verden kunne høre det,

at dets røde streg er ved at blive overskredet, hvorefter Rusland vil blive tvunget til at svare tilbage med »militær-tekniske gengældelsestiltag«. Denne røde streg, gøres det klart, er den yderligere fremfærd af USA's og NATO's militærstyrker helt op til selve Ruslands grænse, herunder opstillingen af defensive og offensive missilsystemer i stand til at bære atomspræghoveder med blot 5 minutters flyvetid fra Moskva. Rusland har fremlagt to forslag til internationale traktater – én med USA, den anden med NATO –som ville give lovbundne garantier om, at NATO's østlige udvidelse ville ophøre, at især Ukraine og Georgien ikke ville blive inviteret til at blive en del af NATO og at avancerede våbensystemer ikke vil blive opstillet på Ruslands dørkam. Disse forslag er hverken mere eller mindre end de verbale garantier, som blev givet til Sovjetunionen i 1990 af de løgnagtige Bush- og Thatcher-regeringer, garantier som er blevet brudt systematisk lige siden. De er hverken mere eller mindre end det, som præsident John F. Kennedy krævede af Khrusjtjov i løbet af Cuba-krisen i 1962, der blev afmonteret med succes af de behændige forhandlinger bag scenen af Kennedy's personlige udsending, hans bror Bobby Kennedy, skjult fra det krigsvillige, militær-industrielle kompleks.

Det er højst nødvendigt, at USA og NATO omgående underskriver de forslåede traktater med Rusland – og tager et skridt tilbage fra den atomare udryddelses afgrund.

Hvad vi skildrer nedenfor har fundet sted, skridt for skridt, imens de fleste mennesker rundt om i verden sov på vagten. Det er på tide at vågne op før vi, søvngængeragtigt, påbegynder en tredje, atomar verdenskrig.

Den militære side

De sidste tredive års strategiske relationer mellem USA og NATO, på den ene side, og Rusland, på den anden, er fulde af brudte løfter, begyndende umiddelbart efter Berlin-murens fald

i november, 1989. Allerede i februar 1990 var den daværende udenrigsminister, James Baker, i Moskva, hvor han, i kølvandet på den påbegyndende tyske genforening, som ville finde sted senere det samme år, lovede den sovjetiske leder, Mikhail Gorbatsjov, og udenrigsminister Eduard Sjevardnadze, at hvis amerikanske tropper blev i Tyskland, ville NATO ikke udvide sig »én tomme mod øst«. Men det tog ikke lang tid før USA's forsvarsministerium planlagde præcist dette, og processen fik fuld fart i løbet af præsident Bill Clintons administration.

Den første runde af NATO-udvidelse, efter Tysklands genforening, fandt sted i 1999 med indeslutningen af Polen, Ungarn og Den tjekkiske Republik, efterfulgt i 2004 af alle tre baltiske lande, Bulgarien, Rumænien, Slovakiet og Slovenien. Endnu fire lande blev medlemmer i de efterfølgende år, hvilket bragte antallet af NATO-medlemmer op på tredive lande. I midten af denne proces, i løbet af George W. Bushs administration, begyndte USA også at afmontere det system af strategisk våbenkontrol, der var blevet opbygget gennem Den kolde Krig, begyndende med USA's tilbagetrækning fra ABM-traktaten fra 1972. Trump-administrationen fremskyndte processen ved at trække USA tilbage fra INF-traktaten og Åben Himmel-traktaten, hvilket betød at kun den Nye START-traktat var tilbage, der blev forlænget af præsident Joe Biden kort efter han påbegyndte sit embede, som værende den eneste traktat om atomvåbenkontrol, der er i kraft mellem USA og Rusland.

Vendepunktet, hvad den nuværende krigsfare angår, kom i 2014. De fortsatte anstrengelser for at indlemme Ukraine i EU's fælles marked, gennem den Ukrainsk-Europæiske Associeringsaftale, blev afvist som værende umulig at acceptere af Ukraines regering under Viktor Janukovitj sent i 2013, da det blev klart, at Ukraine *de facto* ville blive associeret med NATO og give europæiske varer ubegrænset adgang til det russiske marked. Janukovitjs drejning væk fra EU førte til »Euromaidan«-protesterne af dem, som støttede et tættere

fællesskab mellem Ukraine og EU, hvilket i januar eskalerede til dødelige sammenstød, eftersom disse demonstrationer blevet taget over af pro-nazistiske grupperinger, herunder dem associeret med personen Stepan Bandera, den berygtede ukrainske nazist, som arbejdede tæt sammen med Hitler i løbet af 2. Verdenskrig. I februar måned eskalerede volden, og Janukovitj blev drevet ud af sit embede, og den nye regering begyndte at vedtage stærke tiltag mod det russisk-talende mindretal i Ukraine, særligt på Krim og Donetsk- og Lugansk-regionerne i Østukraine. Alt dette blev gjort med den fulde støtte fra London og Washington, hvor USA's udenrigsministeriums embedskvinde, Victoria Nuland, spillede en vigtig rolle. *EIR* udgav et detaljeret »informationspapir« og flere dybdegående rapporter i sin udgave fra den 7. februar. Informationspapiret kan findes via [dette link](#).

Den 16. marts 2014 blev et referendum afholdt i Krims autonome Republik og Sevastopols lokale regering, som spurgte befolkningerne om de ønskede at blive en del af Den russiske Føderation eller bevare Krims status som en del af Ukraine. På Krim stemte 97% for at blive integreret med Den russiske Føderation, med en valgdeltagelse på 83%; i Sevastopol var der også 97%, som stemte for at blive integreret med Den russiske Føderation, med en valgdeltagelse på 89%.

Der var hverken en »russisk invasion af Ukraine« eller en tvungen forandring af nogle grænser.

I løbet af denne periode protesterede Rusland hele tiden mod NATO's øststudvidelse, men til ingen nytte. »På trods af vores talrige protester og anmodninger, er den amerikanske maskine sat i bevægelse, og transportbåndet ruller fremad«, sagde den russiske præsident, Vladimir Putin, i sin dramatiske tale den 1. marts til Den føderale Forsamling, hvor han offentliggjorde en ny generation af strategiske våben, som Rusland havde haft under udvikling, hvoraf mindst to af disse, det hypersoniske Avangard-våben beregnet til brug i

interkontinentale ballistiske missiler og Kinzhal-luftaffyrede ballistiske missiler, er siden blevet en del af det russiske militær.

Her er den opdaterede version på engelsk. Der er ændringer i versionen ovenfor, flere kapitler og tidslinjen.

Schiller Institute Memorandum

[Updated]

December 31, 2021

You are being lied to. Russia is not planning to invade Ukraine. Putin is not a “bad actor” out to recreate the Soviet Empire. Ukraine is not a fledgling democracy just minding its own business.

As a summary review of the documented record shows, Ukraine is being used by geopolitical forces in the West that answer to the bankrupt speculative financial system, as the flashpoint to trigger a strategic showdown with Russia, a showdown which is already more dangerous than the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and which could easily end up in a thermonuclear war which no one would win, and none would survive.

Consider the facts as we present them in the abbreviated timeline below. Russia, like China, has been increasingly subjected to the threat of being destroyed by two distinct kinds of “nuclear war” by the bellicose and bankrupt UK-U.S. financial Establishment: (1) “first-use nuclear action,” as stated most explicitly by the demented Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS); and (2) the “nuclear option” in financial warfare—measures so extreme that they would be laying financial siege to Russia to try to starve it into submission, as is being done against Afghanistan.

Russia has now announced, for the whole world to hear, that its red line is about to be crossed, after which it will be forced to respond with "retaliatory military-technical measures." That red line, it has made clear, is the further advance of U.S. and NATO military forces up to the very border with Russia, including the positioning of defensive and offensive nuclear-capable missile systems to within a scarce five minutes' flight time to Moscow.

Russia has presented two draft documents—one, a treaty with the United States, the other, an agreement with NATO—which together would provide legally binding security guarantees that NATO's eastward march will stop, that Ukraine and Georgia in particular will not be invited to join NATO, and that advanced weapons systems will not be placed at Russia's doorstep.

These are neither more nor less than the verbal guarantees the Soviet Union was given in 1990 by the duplicitous Bush and Thatcher governments, guarantees that have been systematically violated ever since. They are neither more nor less than what President John F. Kennedy demanded of Chairman Nikita Khrushchev during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, which was successfully defused by the deft back-channel negotiations of JFK's personal envoy, his brother and Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, out of sight of the pro-war military-industrial complex.

It is urgently necessary that the United States and NATO promptly sign those proposed documents with Russia—and step back from the edge of thermonuclear extinction.

What we chronicle below has been happening, step by step, while most Americans have been asleep at the switch. It is time to wake up, before we sleepwalk into thermonuclear World War III.

The Military Component

The collapse of the socialist states of Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union in 1989-91 was a moment of great hope, for an end of the Cold War and the potential for the parties of the Cold War to cooperate in building a new world order based on peace through development. That moment was lost when the Anglo-American elite chose instead to declare itself “the only superpower” in a unipolar world, looting Russia and the former Soviet states, while seeking to either take Russia over, or to crush it.

Promises were made to the Soviet Union—and thus to Russia as its recognized legal successor as a nuclear-weapons power—at the outset of this period, all of which have been broken over the past thirty years. Already in February of 1990 in Moscow, then Secretary of State James Baker promised Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that, in the wake of German reunification which came about later that year, if U.S. troops remained in Germany there would be no expansion of NATO “one inch to the East.” (This was confirmed in official U.S. files released in 2017.)

At that time, Soviet force structure in East Germany consisted of around 340,000 troops and extensive military infrastructure, weapons, and equipment. The terms of their withdrawal (eventually completed in 1994) and whether or not, under German reunification, NATO forces would replace them in that formerly Soviet-occupied section of Germany, were on the table. Other Eastern European countries, located to the east of East Germany, were still members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (Warsaw Pact), whose dissolution was not then anticipated; that dissolution happened in July 1991, the month before the Soviet Union itself broke up.

But the U.S. Department of Defense was plotting the expansion of NATO eastwards already by October of 1990. Although there

were different policies being debated within the U.S. political leadership, planning for expansion was proceeding behind the scenes.

On the surface, Russian relations with the trans-Atlantic powers remained non-adversarial for most of the 1990s. In the economic sphere, however, the "takeover" proceeded apace, with the adoption of London- and Wall Street-engineered economic reforms that resulted in the large-scale deindustrialization of Russia, and could have led to the annihilation of its military might. There was some planned dismantling of nuclear weapons in both East and West, with U.S. specialists providing on-site assistance in the transfer of nuclear weapons from Ukraine, Belarus and other now independent ex-Soviet areas back to Russia, as well as in the disposal of some of Russia's own weapons.

On May 27, 1997, the NATO-Russia Founding Act¹ was signed, establishing the NATO-Russia Council and other consultation mechanisms. Among other things, the document declared that "NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries." (Sec. 2, Para. 2) NATO described the document as "the expression of an enduring commitment, undertaken at the highest political level, to build, together, a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area." (Sec. 2, Para. 2)

Nonetheless, a shift began to occur in the late 1990s, driven by several events. One was that the imported economic reforms, promoting enormous financial speculation and the looting of Russian resources, led to a blow-out in August 1998 of the Russian government bond market (nearly triggering a meltdown of the global financial system because of bad bets placed on Russian securities by Wall Street and other hedge funds, as ex-Director of the International Monetary Fund Michel Camdessus later acknowledged).

In the wake of that collapse, Russia's London- and Chicago-trained liberal "young reformers" were replaced by a

government under the leadership of former Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and military-industrial planner Yuri Maslyukov, who acted swiftly to stem the collapse of the remainder of Russia's industry.

A second factor in Russia's troubles at that time was the escalation of terrorist separatist movements in Russia's North Caucasus region, which Russian intelligence services had solidly identified as being backed and egged on not only by Wahhabite Islamic fundamentalists from Saudi Arabia, but also by U.S. and UK intelligence agencies directly. In summer 1999, these networks attempted to split the entire North Caucasus out of Russia.

Also in the late 1990s, NATO boosted its involvement in the Bosnian War and other Balkan Peninsula conflicts among the former components of Yugoslavia, which had broken up. This meddling peaked with NATO's bombing of Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, in March-June 1999 without authorization of the United Nations Security Council. This action shocked Moscow with the realization that NATO was prepared to act unilaterally, as it wished, without international consensus.

In July 1997, at a NATO Summit in Madrid, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were invited to join NATO, which they formally did in 1999. This was the first of five rounds of NATO expansion. In 2004, all three Baltic countries (formerly republics within the Soviet Union proper), and Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia were admitted. Four more Balkan countries joined in the years following, bringing NATO's membership up to its current level of 30 countries.

Vladimir Putin, in his Dec. 21, 2021 address to an expanded meeting of the Defense Ministry Board, expressed Moscow's view of the importance of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and its subsequent betrayal by NATO:

Take the recent past, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when

we were told that our concerns about NATO's potential expansion eastwards were absolutely groundless. And then we saw five waves of the bloc's eastward expansion. Do you remember how it happened? All of you are adults. It happened at a time when Russia's relations with the United States and main member states of NATO were cloudless, if not completely allied.

I have already said this in public and will remind you of this again: American specialists were permanently present at the nuclear arms facilities of the Russian Federation. They went to their office there every day, had desks and an American flag. Wasn't this enough? What else is required? U.S. advisors worked in the Russian government—career CIA officers, [who] gave their advice. What else did they want? What was the point of supporting separatism in the North Caucasus, with the help of even ISIS—well, if not ISIS, there were other terrorist groups. They obviously supported terrorists. What for? What was the point of expanding NATO and withdrawing from the ABM Treaty?

As Putin noted, the United States, under the George W. Bush Administration, began to dismantle the system of strategic arms control assembled during the Cold War, beginning in 2002 with the U.S. withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, just a few months after Putin had extended an offer of strategic cooperation with the United States following the 9/11 attacks.

The U.S. administration quickly began planning for a global ballistic missile defense system (BMDS) in Europe and Asia, which in Europe led to the first sailing of an American guided missile destroyer equipped with the Aegis anti-missile missiles (the USS *Arleigh Burke*) into the Black Sea in the spring of 2012. In 2016 would come the inauguration of an "Aegis Ashore" installation—the same system, but land-based—in

Romania, and the start of construction of a similar site in Poland.

At a conference in Moscow in May of 2012, then Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov provided extensive documentation, with video animations, of the fact that the BMDS was not aimed primarily at Iran, but did, in its intended later phases, represent a threat to Russia's strategic deterrent. Putin and other Russian officials have also emphasized the possibility of the defensive (anti-missile) systems being quickly reconfigured as missile launchers for direct attack.

An increasingly sharper Russian response to the U.S./NATO pursuit of these programs and to the rejection of Russia's offers of cooperation was also evident in the contrast between two speeches President Putin gave in Germany: before the Bundestag (Parliament) on September 25, 2001, and at the Munich Security Conference in 2007.

Putin spoke to the Bundestag, in German, just two weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the U.S. in 2001. He had called President Bush within hours of that attack—he was the first foreign leader to call—offering full Russian support for the U.S. in the moment of crisis. He told the Germans: “The Cold War is over,” and posed a vision of global collaboration in building a new paradigm based on collaboration of the nations of the world.

Then on February 10, 2007, Putin delivered a landmark speech at the annual Munich Security Conference. The Western media and some people who were present, including the war-monger U.S. Senator John McCain, denounced it as belligerent, and it became a point of departure for the subsequent demonization of Putin. But it was not an aggressive speech. Putin simply made clear that Russia was not going to be trampled underfoot, as a subjugated nation in a unipolar imperial world.

Almost all international media ignored how he opened the speech, with a carefully chosen quotation from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Fireside Chat of September 3, 1939, two days after the Nazi invasion of Poland that had marked the outbreak of World War II. FDR said, and Putin quoted, "When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger." This speech was the signal that, speaking in strategic terms, Russia was "back."

In July 2007, Putin attempted to avert the crossing of a line that Moscow defined as a fundamental threat to Russian security, namely the installation of the American BMDS directly at Russia's borders. Visiting President George W. Bush in Kennebunkport, Maine, he proposed joint Russian-American development and deployment of anti-missile systems, including an offer to the U.S. administration to use the Russian early-warning radar in Gabala, Azerbaijan as part of a mutual Russian-American missile defense system for Europe, instead of the American BMDS planned for installation in Poland and the Czech Republic (the latter was changed to Romania). Putin also offered to give the U.S. access to a radar facility in southern Russia, and to place coordination of the process with the NATO-Russia Council.

Sergei Ivanov, then a deputy prime minister, said that the Russian proposals signified a fundamental change in international relations, and could mean an end to talk about a new Cold War:

If our proposals are accepted, Russia will no longer need to place new weapons, including missiles, in the European part of the country, including Kaliningrad.

Negotiations between Russian and American officials over the Russian proposal were conducted throughout 2008, before petering out. Key to their failure was the vehemence of Washington's refusal to abandon construction of the BMDS. In

the words of then Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs Stephen Mull:

What we do not accept is that Gabala is a substitute for the plans that we're already pursuing with our Czech and Polish allies. We believe that those installations are necessary for the security of our interests in Europe.

Clearly, the target was not Iran, but Russia, and the opportunity for a new paradigm was lost.

At the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, Georgia and Ukraine were promised future NATO membership, although they were not offered formal Membership Action Plans (MAP). Their bids, nonetheless, were welcomed by many and they were left with hopes of MAPs in the future, maybe the near future—enough so that the Georgians declared:

The decision to accept that we are going forward to an admission to NATO was taken and we consider this is a historic success.

In August 2008, while President Dmitri Medvedev was on vacation and then Prime Minister Putin was at the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing, Mikheil Saakashvili's Georgia attacked Russian peacekeepers in the breakaway Georgian province of South Ossetia, leading to a short but ferocious war, which Georgia lost. The fact that Saakashvili acted on the assumption he would have full NATO backing, although it proved wrong in the event, was not lost on Moscow and has influenced subsequent Russian thinking about what would happen with Georgia or Ukraine becoming full NATO members.

Ukraine

In December 2008, in the wake of Georgia's military showdown with Russia, Carl Bildt and Radek Sikorski, the foreign

ministers of Sweden and Poland, respectively, initiated the European Union's "Eastern Partnership." It targeted six countries that were formerly republics within the Soviet Union: three in the Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and three in East Central Europe (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine). They were not to be invited to full EU membership, but were nevertheless drawn into a vise through so-called EU Association Agreements (EUAA), each one centered on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

The prime target of the effort was Ukraine. Under the EUAA negotiated with Ukraine, but not immediately signed, the country's industrial economy would be dismantled, trade with Russia savaged (with Russia ending its free-trade regime with Ukraine to prevent its own markets from being flooded via Ukraine), and EU-based market players would grab Ukraine's agricultural and raw materials exports.

Furthermore, the EUAA mandated "convergence" on security issues, with integration into European defense systems. Under such an arrangement, the long-term treaty agreements on the Russian Navy's use of its crucial Black Sea ports on the Crimean Peninsula—a Russian area since the 18th Century, but administratively assigned to Ukraine within the USSR in the early 1950s—would be terminated, ultimately giving NATO forward-basing on Russia's immediate border.

Turning Ukraine against Russia had been a long-term goal of Cold War Anglo-American strategic planners, as it was earlier of Austro-Hungarian imperial intelligence agencies during World War I. After World War II, up until the mid-1950s, the U.S.A. and UK supported an insurgency against the Soviet Union, a civil war that continued on the ground long after peace had been signed in 1945.

The insurgents were from the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and remnants of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The OUN had been founded in 1929 from a template

similar to that which produced the Italian and other European fascist movements. Its leader, Stepan Bandera, was an on-again/off-again ally of the Nazis, and the OUN-UPA, under an ethnic-purist ideology, committed mass slaughter of ethnic Poles and Jews in western Ukraine towards the end of World War II. In Europe after the War, Bandera was sponsored by British MI6 (intelligence), while CIA founder Allen Dulles shepherded Gen. Mykola Lebed, another OUN leader, into the U.S.A., despite strong opposition from U.S. Army Intelligence, based on Lebed's record of collaboration with the Nazis and war crimes.

Next-generation followers of Lebed, whose base of operations—the Prolog Research Corporation in New York City—was funded by Dulles's CIA for intelligence-gathering and the distribution of nationalist and other literature inside the U.S.S.R., staffed the U.S. Radio Liberty facility in Munich, Germany for broadcasting into Ukraine, up into the 1980s.²

When the U.S.S.R. broke up in August 1991, key Banderite leaders dashed into Lviv, far western Ukraine—a mere 1,240 km from Munich, 12 hours by car—and began to rebuild their movement. Lviv Region, which for many years had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, not the Russian, was the stronghold of the OUN's heirs.

The Banderites' influence got a boost after the 2004 Orange Revolution in Kiev. Backed by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy and the private foundations of financier George Soros, this was a so-called "color revolution," which overturned the results of a Presidential election and, in a second vote, installed banker Victor Yushchenko as President. He was voted out in 2010 because of popular opposition to his brutal austerity policies (generated by IMF-dictated formulae for privatization and deregulation), but not before overseeing a revision of the official history of Ukraine's relations with

Russia in favor of a radical, anti-Russian nationalism (whereas, historically, there had been a strong tendency among Ukrainian patriots and advocates of independence to prefer a long-term alliance with Russia).

The Lviv-based Banderites, meanwhile, recruited and strengthened their movement, and held paramilitary summer camps for young people in the Ukrainian countryside and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. At times, the instructors included off-duty military officers from NATO countries. In 2008, Yushchenko first applied for NATO to grant Ukraine a Membership Action Plan.

The turning point for Ukraine's status as a potential trigger in the current war danger came in 2014. Ongoing efforts to get Ukraine to finalize its EUAA were rejected as untenable by the Viktor Yanukovich government in November 2013, when it became clear that free-trade provisions giving European goods unlimited access to the Russian market through Ukraine would bring retaliatory measures by Ukraine's biggest trade partner, Russia, to counter this assault on Russia's own producers, and thus would backfire against the Ukrainian economy. When Yanukovich on November 21 announced postponement of the EU deal, long-laid Banderite plans to turn Ukraine into a tool for isolating and demonizing Russia were activated.

Protesters against Yanukovich's EUAA postponement decision immediately began to assemble in Kiev's Maidan (central square). Large numbers of ordinary people turned out, waving EU flags, because of the destruction of the Ukrainian economy under "shock" deregulation in the 1990s and the IMF-dictated policies of privatization and austerity throughout the Orange Revolution years. Many had desperately believed, as Ukrainian economist Natalia Vitrenko once put it, that the EUAA would bring them "wages like in Germany and benefits packages like in France." A disproportionately high number of the demonstrators hailed from far western Ukraine, and pre-planned violence by the Banderite paramilitary group Right Sector was

then used for systematic escalation of the Maidan.

Bloodshed and victims, all blamed on the regime, were then used to keep Maidan fervor and outrage going through to February 2014.³ Neo-Nazi and other fascist symbols defaced building walls and placards in the Maidan, but they did not deter public U.S. support of this process. Sen. John McCain addressed the mob in December 2013, while Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland passed out cupcakes and negotiated with the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt regarding whom to place in office once Yanukovych was ousted. A Nuland-Pyatt phone discussion of this was caught on tape and circulated worldwide.

On February 18, 2014, Maidan leaders announced a “peaceful march” on the Supreme Rada (parliament), which turned into an attack and touched off three days of street fighting. Peaking on February 20—a day of sniper fire from high buildings that killed both demonstrators and police—these clashes killed more than 100. Scrupulous research by Ukraine-born Prof. Ivan Katchanovski at the University of Ottawa, using video recordings and other direct evidence of these events, has convincingly shown that the majority of the sniper fire came from the Maidan’s paramilitary positions, not the government’s Berkut special police forces.⁴

On February 21, 2014, a trio of Maidan leaders, including Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the man hand-picked by Nuland to be Ukraine’s next prime minister, signed an agreement with President Yanukovych, committing both sides to a peaceful transition of power: constitutional reform by September, presidential elections late in the year, and the turning in of weapons. The foreign ministers of France, Germany and Russia helped negotiate it, with a representative from Moscow as an observer. When this document was taken to the Maidan, a young Banderite militant seized the onstage microphone to lead its rejection by the mob, and threatened Yanukovych’s life if he

didn't step down by morning. Yanukovich left Kiev that night. The Rada unconstitutionally installed an acting president.

Among the new government's first measures was for the Rada to strip Russian and other "minority" languages of their status as regional official languages. (As of the 2001 census, Russian was spoken throughout the country and considered "native" by one-third of the population.) This, with other measures announced from Kiev, fanned major opposition to the coup, centered in eastern Ukraine—the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (the Donbas) and Crimea. Civil conflict erupted in both areas, with local groups seizing government buildings.

In Crimea, the insurgency against the coup-installed Kiev regime prevailed. A referendum held March 16, 2014 in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (a separate jurisdiction on the peninsula), asked voters whether they wanted to join the Russian Federation or retain Crimea's status as a part of Ukraine. In Crimea, 97% of the 83% of eligible voters who turned out, voted for integration into the Russian Federation; in Sevastopol, the result was likewise 97% for integration, while the turnout was even higher, at 89%.

There was no "Russian military invasion of Ukraine." On March 1 President Putin sought and received authorization from the Federal Assembly (the legislature) to deploy Russian forces on Ukrainian territory, citing threats to the lives of Russian citizens and Russian-ethnic residents of Crimea; these were troops from the Russian Black Sea Fleet facilities in and around Sevastopol, already stationed in Crimea.

The fate of two Donbas self-declared republics in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (Regions), was not settled so quickly. Support from within Russia for these insurgents was unofficial, including the involvement of Russian military veterans on a volunteer basis. The Donbas conflict turned into heavy fighting in 2014-15, continuing at a lower level until now; more than 13,000 people have been killed in the past seven

years. Defeats of Kiev's forces by the Donbas militia, including their gaining full control of the Donetsk International Airport in January 2015, set the stage for Kiev's agreement to a ceasefire.

After one false start—the so-called Minsk Protocol in September 2014—an interim state of affairs in the Donbas was agreed to in the February 2015 “Minsk II” accord between the regime in Kiev, then under President Peter Poroshenko, and representatives of the self-declared Donbas republics, which was negotiated by Kiev, France, Germany and Russia with support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). It provided for a ceasefire, pullback of weapons, prisoner exchanges, and humanitarian relief, as well as a political settlement within Ukraine. This envisaged a special status for the Donbas, with extensive regional autonomy including the “right of linguistic self-determination.” Re-establishment of Ukraine's “full control” over its border with Russia in the Donbas was to occur following provisional granting of the special status and after local elections. The special status was to be enshrined in the Ukrainian Constitution by the end of 2015.

The UN Security Council endorsed Minsk II on February 17, 2015. It remains unimplemented, because Kiev almost immediately refused to conduct the elections or fully legalize the special status, until first being given control over the Donbas-Russia border. Today, President Volodymyr Zelensky's government in Kiev refuses even to meet with Donbas leaders for negotiations, and continues to claim that the Donbas is under Russian “occupation,” and therefore Kiev should talk only with Russia, not the Donbas leaders. Sporadic fighting has continued, with a new escalation of shelling across the “line of contact” between the Donbas entities and the rest of Ukraine.

A New U.S. War Posture

The Trump Administration accelerated the take-down of the entire architecture of international arms-control agreements by withdrawing the U.S. from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed by President Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachov in 1987, and the Open Skies Treaty, negotiated by NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations in 1992. This left the New START Treaty (Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, signed by the U.S. and the Russian Federation in 2010) as the last of the existing arms control agreements—the one covering heavy intercontinental missiles. Upon taking office this year, President Joe Biden extended the New START Treaty for five years, a decision welcomed by Moscow.

On January 19, 2018, the U.S. Department of Defense released its new *National Defense Strategy*. “Great power competition—not terrorism—is now the primary focus of U.S. national security,” said the then Secretary of Defense James Mattis in a speech describing the document:

We face growing threats from revisionist powers as different as China and Russia, nations that seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models—pursuing veto authority over other nations’ economic, diplomatic, and security decisions.

Hours later, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, in response to the release of the new Pentagon strategy:

We regret that, instead of conducting a normal dialogue, instead of relying on international law, the United States seeks to prove its leadership through confrontational concepts and strategies.

All throughout this time period, Moscow has protested these

confrontational actions, but to no avail. "Despite our numerous protests and pleas, the American machine has been set into motion, the conveyor belt is moving forward," Russian President Vladimir Putin said in his dramatic March 1, 2018 address to the Federal Assembly, in which he publicly announced the new generation of strategic weapons that Russia had under development, at least two of which, the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle for ICBMs and the Kinzhal aeroballistic missile, have since been introduced into service.

The Economic Component

Beginning in March 2014, right after the February 2014 coup in Kiev, the United States imposed financial and economic sanctions on Russia, purportedly over Crimea and the Donbas republics. These sanctions have included five Acts of Congress, six Presidential Executive Orders, ten "Directives pursuant to Executive Orders" and two additional Presidential "Determinations." This, according to the Treasury Department's sanctions list. There have of course been other sanctions, property seizures, diplomatic expulsions for other alleged reasons, as well as other forms of economic warfare. All of the Ukraine/Crimea-related sanctions remain in effect; none have been lifted. The last major new round of sanctions was imposed in 2018 (the CAATSA Act), coinciding with new sanctions over the Sergei Skripal poisoning case.

According to various estimates, the resultant cost to Russia's economy of all of these sanctions (in GDP accounting) has been in the range of \$250-400 billion, with comparable losses imposed on European economies.

In addition, in 2016 and 2017, President Putin accused the Barack Obama Administration of having conspired with Saudi Arabia to lower the price of oil and thereby damage the Russian economy. During the Trump Administration, that

appeared not to continue, as Russia and Saudi Arabia made two significant production-pricing agreements on oil, the second in 2019 with Trump Administration participation of some kind.

In 2021, the crisis came to a head.

2021 Timeline

February 2: The U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* published an article by Adm. Charles A. Richard, Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, in which he claimed that the risk of nuclear war with Russia or China was increasing and called for action.

There is a real possibility that a regional crisis with Russia or China could escalate quickly to a conflict involving nuclear weapons, if they perceived a conventional loss would threaten the regime or state. Consequently, the U.S. military must shift its principal assumption from “nuclear employment is not possible” to “nuclear employment is a very real possibility,” and act to meet and deter that reality.

March 15: The U.S. Army-led DEFENDER-Europe 21 exercise began and ran through the month of June, involving 28,000 troops from 27 different countries. The exercise included “nearly simultaneous operations across more than 30 training areas” in a dozen countries, reported *Army Times*.

March 16: The UK Government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson released its Integrated Review of security, defense, development, and foreign policy. The report, among other things, announced that the UK nuclear warhead stockpile would be increased from 180 to 260 warheads. This was decided “in recognition of the evolving security environment, including the developing range of technological and doctrinal threats...”

April 1: U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin called Ukrainian Defense Minister Andriy Taran “to discuss the regional security situation,” the Pentagon reported, condemning the supposed “escalations of Russian aggressive and provocative actions in eastern Ukraine.” Austin assured Taran:

Washington will not give up on Ukraine in case Russia escalates aggression. [And] in the event of an escalation of Russian aggression, the United States will not leave Ukraine to its own devices, and neither will it allow Russia’s aggressive aspirations toward Ukraine to be realized.

April 13: Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited Northern Fleet headquarters in Severomorsk, where he said that the United States and its NATO allies were building up naval and land forces in the Arctic, increasing the intensity of combat training, and expanding and modernizing military infrastructure.

This activity is typical not only for the Arctic region. Over the past three years, the North Atlantic bloc has increased its military activity near the Russian borders.

Shoigu then commented on the DEFENDER-Europe 21 exercise:

Now American troops are being transferred from the continental part of North America across the Atlantic to Europe. There is a movement of troops in Europe to the Russian borders. The main forces are concentrated in the Black Sea region and the Baltic region... In total, 40,000 military personnel and 15,000 units of weapons and military equipment, including strategic aviation, will be concentrated near our territory... In response to the Alliance’s military activities threatening Russia, we have taken appropriate measures.

Within three weeks, two Russian armies and three formations

of the airborne troops were successfully transferred to the western borders of the Russian Federation performing combat training tasks.

The troops have shown full readiness and ability to perform tasks to ensure the military security of the country.

April 15: The Biden White House issued an Executive Order (EO 14024) proclaiming that Russia's various so-called malign actions "constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States."

That EO contained a series of new sanctions against Russia, including expelling ten diplomats, blacklisting six Russian technology companies, sanctioning 32 entities and individuals, and—most importantly—prohibiting U.S. financial institutions from participating in the primary market for ruble or non-ruble denominated bonds issued after June 14, 2021, by the Russian government and its financial institutions.

The explicitly stated purpose of the measures was to trigger voluminous capital flight and a "negative feedback loop" that would wreak havoc on the Russian economy. A background briefing by an unnamed senior administration official elaborated:

There are elements of this new EO that give us additional authorities that we are not exercising today ... We are prepared, going forward, to impose substantial and lasting costs if this [Russian] behavior continues or escalates ... We're also delivering a clear signal that the President has maximum flexibility to expand the sovereign debt prohibitions if Russia's maligned [sic] activities continue or escalate.

The latter was widely understood as a threat that further sanctions could follow barring participation in the far more

important secondary bond market, and even escalate to the so-called “nuclear option” of expelling Russia from SWIFT.⁵

June 14: The E0 announced on April 15, 2021 officially went into effect—two days before the June 16, 2021 summit between presidents Biden and Putin.

June 23: The Russian Defense Ministry announced that a Russian warship fired warning shots at the Royal Navy destroyer *HMS Defender*, which it said had violated Russia’s maritime border around Crimea in the Black Sea. *HMS Defender* had entered waters in the vicinity of Crimea’s Cape Fiolent that are within Russian sovereign territory, and it had ignored warnings to depart the area. Not mentioned in the press coverage but visible on flight tracking websites was an U.S. Air Force RC-135V electronic intelligence aircraft, which was rounding the west coast of Crimea at the time of the Russian naval encounter with the *Defender*.

The BBC, which had one of its own reporters on board the British warship, confirmed that the *HMS Defender* deliberately entered waters claimed by Russia in order to provoke a response from Russian forces:

This would be a deliberate move to make a point to Russia. HMS Defender was going to sail within the 19 km (12 mile) limit of Crimea’s territorial waters.

June 23: Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu again warned of the strategic danger facing Europe in an address to the Moscow Conference on International Security:

As a whole, the situation in Europe is explosive and requires specific steps to de-escalate it. The Russian side has proposed a number of measures. For example, it put forward a proposal to move the areas of drills away from the contact line.

Shoigu also pointed to Russia's proposal for a moratorium on the deployment of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles in Europe, calling them "a special danger" for Europe because their deployment in Europe "will return to the situation, when the Europeans were hostage to the confrontation between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A."

Speaking at the same conference, Gen. Valeriy Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian General Staff, pointed to NATO as a destabilizing factor:

NATO's naval activity near our borders has grown considerably. Warships outfitted with long-range precision weapons are operating in the Black and Baltic Seas constantly, while reconnaissance, patrol and attack aircraft and also unmanned aerial vehicles are performing their flights. The operations by the warships of the United States and its allies are clearly of a provocative nature... Preconditions are being created for the emergence of incidents, which does not contribute to reducing military tensions.

September 20: NATO kicked off Exercise Rapid Trident 21 at the Yavoriv training range in western Ukraine, with 6,000 troops from 15 countries, including 300 from the U.S. The drills are "an important step towards Ukraine's European integration," said Brigadier General Vladyslav Klochkov, co-director of the exercises.

October 6: NATO ordered the expulsion of eight diplomats from the Russian mission at NATO headquarters in Brussels, alleging that they were "undeclared Russian intelligence officers." Moscow retaliated Oct 18 by announcing that Russia's mission to NATO would shut down and the NATO information office in Moscow would be closed and its staff stripped of their accreditation.

"If anyone ever believed in the sincerity of those statements

[from NATO], there are none left today. Their true price is clear for everyone," said Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Grushko, in response to the NATO action.

October 19: U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin landed in Kiev and, speaking at a press conference at the Defense Ministry, promised the regime's leaders that the U.S. will back it in its conflict with Russia:

Let me underscore what President Biden said during President Zelensky's recent visit to Washington. U.S. support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is unwavering. So, we again call on Russia to end its occupation of Crimea ... to stop perpetuating the war in eastern Ukraine ... to end its destabilizing activities in the Black Sea and along Ukraine's borders ... and to halt its persistent cyber-attacks and other malign activities against the United States, and our Allies and partners.

He noted that the U.S. has spent \$2.5 billion in support of Ukraine's military forces "so that they can preserve their country's territorial integrity and secure its borders and territorial waters."

"I think our posture in the region continues to present a credible threat against Russia and it enables NATO forces to operate more effectively should deterrence fail," Austin said the following day in Romania. "And I think this is borne out of our commitment to sustaining a rotational U.S. force presence."

October 21: The NATO defense ministers, on the first day of their meeting in Brussels, endorsed "a new overarching plan to defend our Alliance...." The new plan includes: "significant improvements to our air and missile defenses, strengthening our conventional capabilities with fifth generation jets, adapting our exercises and intelligence, and improving the readiness and effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent." NATO

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the alliance has been increasing its presence on the Black Sea, “because the Black Sea is of strategic importance for NATO.”

October 21: Putin warned in a speech to the Valdai Discussion Club in Sochi that Ukraine doesn't even have to be formally brought into the NATO alliance to pose a strategic threat to Russia:

Formal membership in NATO ultimately may not happen, but the military development of the territory is already underway. And this really poses a threat to the Russian Federation ... Tomorrow, rockets could appear near Kharkov, what are we going to do about it? It's not us placing our missiles there, it's them shoving theirs under our nose.

Putin cited NATO's promise not to move its infrastructure eastwards after the reunification of Germany, a promise which it did not keep:

Everyone from all sides said that after the unification, in no circumstances would NATO infrastructure move toward the East. Russia should have been able to at least rely on that. That's what they said, there were public statements. But in practice? They lied ... and then they expanded it once, and then they expanded it again.

October 30: *The Washington Post*, citing unnamed officials, reported that the Russians were engaged in another buildup of troops along the border with Ukraine. The article's authors said the troop movements have reignited concerns that arose in April.

“The point is: It is not a drill. It doesn't appear to be a training exercise. Something is happening. What is it?” said Michael Kofman, Program Director of the Russia Studies Program at the Virginia-based nonprofit analysis group CNA.

November 1: *Politico* published satellite imagery purporting to show a Russian troop buildup near the Ukrainian border, including armored units, tanks, and self-propelled artillery, along with ground troops massing near the Russian town of Yelnya close to the border with Belarus. Elements of the 1st Guards Tank Army were spotted in the area. The army “has been designed to conduct operations at every level of combat from counterinsurgency to mechanized warfare,” *Jane’s* analysis reported.

Even the Ukrainian Defense Ministry denied the reported Russian military buildup, stating officially: “As of November 1, 2021, an additional transfer of Russian units, weapons and military equipment to the state border of Ukraine was not recorded.”

November 2: The Russian Security Council announced that CIA Director William Burns was in Moscow for two days of talks with Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council. According to leaks reported by CNN on November Nov. 5, Biden sent Burns to Moscow to tell the Russians to stop their troop buildup near Ukraine’s border, which the U.S. was monitoring closely.

November 8: For the first time, a Resolution passed by both Houses of Congress voiced the demand for “crushing sanctions” on Russia’s economy, purportedly to stop the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, because, in the words of Sen. James Risch, “Russia is creating and weaponizing this energy crisis.” Sen. Ron Johnson said the U.S should “use crushing sanctions to stop the pipeline.” Sen. Tom Cotton added: “The Nord Stream 2 pipeline will expand Russian influence and threaten energy security throughout Europe. Since the Biden administration won’t hold Putin accountable, Congress must take action to ensure our NATO allies aren’t hostage to Russian energy.”

November 11: Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned that Russia is prepared to act against any NATO provocations:

If necessary, we will take measures to ensure our security if there are provocative actions by our opponents near our borders. I'm referring to NATO and NATO forces that are taking rather active and assertive actions in close proximity to our borders, be it in the air, on water, or on land.

November 16: British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace met in Kiev with Ukrainian President Zelensky, and signed a joint statement with Ukraine Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov. Zelensky “thanked Ben Wallace for the unwavering support of the UK for the independence and territorial integrity of our country within its internationally recognized borders,” according to a statement issued by his office. Zelensky “also praised the signing of the Ukrainian-British Bilateral Framework Agreement on official credit support for the development of the Ukrainian fleet’s capabilities:

The United Kingdom has become our key partner in building the Ukrainian fleet. I expect that future security projects planned under this agreement will be effectively implemented.

November 18: During an address to a meeting of the Russian Foreign Policy Board, President Putin protested the repeated flights of U.S. bombers close to Russia’s borders:

Indeed, we constantly express our concerns about these matters and talk about red lines, but of course, we understand that our partners are peculiar in the sense that they have a very-how to put it mildly-superficial approach to our warnings about red lines.

Putin repeated that Russian concerns about NATO’s eastward expansion “have been totally ignored.”

November 19: U.S. Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines landed in Brussels to brief NATO ambassadors on U.S. intelligence on the situation and the possibility of a Russian

military intervention in Ukraine.

NATO's Stoltenberg suggested that if the new German government (which was still the subject of coalition negotiations) were to pull out of the NATO nuclear sharing arrangement, the B61 nuclear bombs currently stored in Germany could be moved eastwards:

Of course, it's up to Germany to decide whether the nuclear arms will be deployed in this country, but there's an alternative to this; the nuclear arms may easily end up in other European countries, including these to the east of Germany.

That is, even closer to Russia's border.

November 20: Ukrainian military intelligence chief Brig. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov told *Military Times*, on the sidelines of the Halifax International Security Conference, that Russia has more than 92,000 troops massed near Russia's border with Ukraine and is preparing for an attack by the end of January or beginning of February 2022.

November 21: Bloomberg published a report citing unnamed sources saying that the U.S. had shared intelligence including maps with European allies that shows a buildup of 100,000 Russian troops and artillery to prepare for a rapid, large-scale push into Ukraine from multiple locations, should Putin decide to invade.

November 30: Radio Free Europe reported that U.S. Republicans had blocked voting on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) until Nord Stream 2 sanctions were added to it, objecting that the Russia-to-Germany Baltic Sea pipeline will deny billions in annual revenue to "ally" Ukraine. (The overland pipeline from Yamal in Siberia to Europe traverses Ukraine, which collects transit fees.)

December 5: Neo-con Democrat Michèle Flournoy, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy under President Barack Obama, appeared on “Fox News Sunday” and declared that President Biden, in his upcoming December 7 video-conference summit with Putin, was going to threaten “much more severe” financial/economic sanctions on Russia than anything previously done:

[What] the administration is actively considering with our allies, is an escalating set of sanctions that go beyond what's been done before. I'm sure they are looking at sanctioning the banking system, sanctioning the energy sector, possibly cutting off Russia from the SWIFT system, which enables all of their international financial transactions. So, they're looking at much more serious means ... much greater level of pain than anything [that Russia has faced to date].

December 6: The day before the Biden-Putin video conference, an anonymous senior White House official briefed the press that all NATO allies had agreed on a package of “financial sanctions that would impose significant and severe economic harm on the Russian economy” should Russia invade Ukraine:

We believe that there is a way forward here that will allow us to send a clear message to Russia there will be genuine and meaningful and enduring costs to choosing to go forward—should they choose to go forward—with a military escalation... We have had intensive discussions with our European partners about what we would do collectively in the event of a major Russian military escalation in Ukraine, and we believe that we have a path forward that would involve substantial economic countermeasures by both the Europeans and the United States, We have put together a pretty damn aggressive package.

In its coverage, CNN raised the “nuclear option” directly:

Officials have also been weighing disconnecting Russia from the SWIFT international payment system, upon which Russia remains heavily reliant, according to two sources familiar with the discussions. This is being considered a “nuclear” option. The European Parliament passed a nonbinding resolution in the spring calling for such a move should Russia invade Ukraine, and the U.S. has been discussing it with EU counterparts.

Later the same day, after Biden had personally spoken with European leaders, the White House issued a statement which did not mention financial sanctions or significant economic damage to Russia. It said, “diplomacy is the only way forward to resolve the conflict in Donbas through the implementation of the Minsk Agreements.”

December 7: Presidents Biden and Putin held a video conference summit, after which National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan assured the media that Biden—

told President Putin directly that if Russia further invades Ukraine, the United States and our European allies would respond with strong economic measures, and would provide additional defensive material to the Ukrainians, above and beyond that which we are already providing, [and that the United States] would fortify our NATO allies on the eastern flank, with additional capabilities in response to such an escalation.

Biden himself emphasized later that he was considering Putin’s demand for security guarantees, which later resulted in Russia’s proposals (see below).

December 12: The new German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, declared on a national television interview that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline could not become operational because, according to the German government coalition agreements, the

pipeline was not consistent with European energy law.

The previous government of Chancellor Angela Merkel had found the opposite. Baerbock, a war-hawk Green Party leader, did not explain the reversal. *The Hill* pointed out that the Greens want Ukraine in NATO.

December 17: The Russian Foreign Ministry released two draft treaties specifying guarantees for Russia's security, one, an agreement between Russia and NATO, and the other, a treaty between Russia and the United States.

Both documents call for recognizing a principle of "non-interference in the internal affairs" of each other, acknowledge that a "direct military clash between them could result in the use of nuclear weapons that would have far-reaching consequences," reaffirm "that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought," and recognize "the need to make every effort to prevent the risk of outbreak of such war among States that possess nuclear weapons."

The operative part of the U.S.-Russia treaty calls for refraining from taking actions "that could undermine core security interests of the other Party." Cognizant of the drive for NATO-ization of Ukraine, Article 4 states:

The United States of America shall undertake to prevent further eastward expansion of NATO and deny accession to the Alliance to the States of the former U.S.S.R.

And,

The United States of America shall not establish military bases in the territory of the States of the former U.S.S.R. that are not members of NATO, use their infrastructure for any military activities or develop bilateral military cooperation with them.

It goes on to state that the Parties (the U.S. and Russia) will not take military actions outside their own borders that threaten each other's national security, or fly bombers or sail warships outside of their territorial waters in ways that would threaten each other. On the U.S.' expansion of its nuclear weapons to include those stored in such locations of Germany, the treaty states,

The Parties shall refrain from deploying nuclear weapons outside their national territories and return such weapons already deployed ... to their national territories.

December 19: An anonymous senior White House official told CNN and other media that there was "only about a four-week window" to compel Russia to de-escalate and that U.S.-planned sanctions "would be overwhelming, immediate, and inflict significant costs on the Russian economy and their financial system."

December 21: In an extensive report delivered to an expanded meeting of the Defense Ministry Board, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated:

Tensions are growing on the western and eastern borders of Russia. The United States is intensifying its military presence at Russian borders.

The United States and NATO are purposefully increasing the scale and intensity of military training activities near Russia. Increasingly, they involve strategic aviation, carrying out simulated launches of nuclear missiles at our facilities. The number of their flights near the Russian borders has more than doubled.

NATO pays special attention to the issues of the transfer of troops to the eastern flank of the alliance, including from the continental part of the United States. The exercises are

practicing various options for using coalition groups against Russia with the use of non-aligned states—Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The presence of more than 120 employees of American PMCs [private military companies] in Avdeevka and Priazovskoe settlements in Donetsk region has been reliably established. They equip firing positions in residential buildings and at socially significant facilities, prepare Ukrainian special operations forces and radical armed groups for active hostilities. To commit provocations, tanks with unidentified chemical components were delivered to Avdeevka and Krasny Liman cities.

Speaking at that same meeting of the Defense Ministry Board, Russian President Putin himself sounded the alarm:

What they [the United States] are doing on the territory of Ukraine now—or trying to do and going to do—this is not thousands of kilometers away from our national border. This is at the doorstep of our home. They must understand that we simply have nowhere to retreat further... Do they think we don't see these threats? Or do they think that we are so weak-willed to simply look blankly at the threats posed to Russia?

As I have already noted, in the event of the continuation of the obviously aggressive line of our Western colleagues, we will take adequate retaliatory military-technical measures, and react toughly to unfriendly steps. And, I want to emphasize, we have every right to do so, we have every right to take actions designed to ensure the security and sovereignty of Russia... We are extremely concerned about the deployment of elements of the U.S. global missile defense system near Russia.