

Anglo-American war hawks push showdown with Russia

By Rachel Douglas

On 2 January 2022 the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the P5) greeted the New Year with a promising, but stark joint statement. All five of these nations—China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA—are nuclear-weapons powers. They proclaimed:

“We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons—for as long as they continue to exist—should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war. We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented. ...

“We intend to continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and confidence, and prevent an arms race that would benefit none and endanger all. We are resolved to pursue constructive dialogue with mutual respect and acknowledgment of each other’s security interests and concerns.”¹

The language about the unacceptability of ever fighting nuclear war originated with US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov in 1985, and was used again in a Joint Statement on Strategic Stability, issued by Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin after their first summit in June 2021. Russian and Chinese diplomats stated that they have been pushing for its reiteration by the P5 in negotiations over two years. That timeline takes the origin of the declaration back to January 2020, when Putin called for a P5 summit to address the world’s major problems. The pandemic and American political turmoil in 2020 prevented that meeting from taking place around the September 2020 annual UN session, but preparations quietly went forward for declarations and policies it might agree on.

Individual diplomats, especially from China and Russia, voiced hope that the P5 would grapple not only with war-prevention, but also other common problems of mankind. For example Prof. Georgi Toloraya, head of the Russian National Committee for BRICS Research, suggested in November 2020 that a joint summit of the P5 and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) could convene to address the pandemic and launch the kind of cooperation needed on other pressing world problems.² The need for such cooperation is more urgent than ever, as the world witnesses a looming famine of Biblical proportions in Afghanistan and many economic disruptions from the pandemic and pre-existing economic policies.

But the new P5 statement is, above all, welcome in its immediate context: a blistering surge at the end of 2021 of military-strategic tensions and the danger of a large-scale, even nuclear war. This article, the background history that follows it (pp. 9-13) and our Washington Insider (p. 14) report the most important events of this crisis, since the last issue of the AAS on 15 December.

Sen. Roger Wicker, the second-ranking Republican on the US Senate Armed Services Committee, in a 7 December Fox

News interview volunteered the following scenario for action against Russia: “Military action could mean that we stand off with our ships in the Black Sea, and we rain destruction on Russian military capability. ... It could mean that we participate, and I would not rule that out, I would not rule out American troops on the ground [in Ukraine]. *We don’t rule out first use nuclear action.*” (Emphasis added.)

The pretext for such a threat was an allegedly imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine (on which more below). But Russian officials, speaking on various occasions throughout December, posed the showdown more broadly: the “red line” about which Putin has talked many times has been reached. The approach of “threatening weapons systems” to Russia’s borders has come too close and shows no sign of abating.

“Unfortunately, we see that our warnings are ignored and NATO’s military infrastructure is getting as close to us as possible”, said Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov at the Russian Parliament on 9 December. “That’s why Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered our diplomats to seek long-term security guarantees for Russia’s western borders—and they should be based on law and be legally binding. The point is to rule out any further NATO expansion eastward and the deployment of threatening weapons systems in close proximity to Russian territory. We aren’t giving up on this issue and will insist that our demands are met.”

On 13 December Ryabkov warned that if these demands were not taken seriously, Russia would be forced to deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe, in response to its conviction that NATO will soon do the same in Ukraine. “It will be a confrontation, this will be the next round, the appearance of such resources on our side” he told RIA Novosti news agency. Ryabkov cited “indirect indications” that NATO was closing in on re-deployment of intermediate-range missile nukes for the first time since the 1980s, including NATO’s restoration in November of the 56th Artillery Command, which operated nuclear-capable Pershing missiles in Europe during the Cold War.

Following a phone call between Biden and Putin on 7 December, Ryabkov on 15 December handed to State Department official Karen Donfried two draft treaties that would formalise such guarantees (p. 9, Note 1 provides links to the texts). They are the subject of the Russian American talks beginning 10 January (see Washington Insider, p. 14).

Alexander Grushko, another deputy foreign minister and Russia’s former permanent representative to NATO, said on the 18 December Solovyov Live program via YouTube, “The moment of truth has come. ... We have reached a red line and our proposals aim to pull us away from this red line and start a normal dialogue”. If NATO turns down Russia’s proposals for mutual security guarantees, however, “We will also move over to creating counter threats, but it will then be too late to ask us why we made these decisions and why we deployed these systems.” He said that NATO has been living in a fantasy world, with its continual talk about a threat from the East, and urged that Europeans must think about whether they mean to turn the continent into a field of military confrontation.

Putin speaks

Not only diplomats from the Foreign Ministry, but top military brass and Putin himself spoke bluntly last month.

1. “[Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races](#)”, online at [whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov).

2. “BRICS helps forge new paradigm for world in crisis”, AAS, 11 Nov. 2020.



Russian military leaders Gen. Sergei Shoygu and Gen. Valery Gerasimov with President Putin (centre) at an expanded 21 Dec. Defence Ministry Board meeting. Photo: Kremlin

Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian Defence Ministry's General Staff, detailed to foreign military

attachés in Moscow on 9 December the drastic increase of NATO activity near Russia's borders in recent years, increased strategic aircraft flights along the borders, and an upsurge of US Navy activity on the Black Sea.

On 21 December Putin presided over an expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry Board, during which he reported on the strategic situation facing Russia. He particularly warned against the NATO exercises and the further development of NATO infrastructure, including missile defences, near Russia's borders. "If this infrastructure continues to move forward, and if US and NATO missile systems are deployed in Ukraine, their flight time to Moscow will be only 7 to 10 minutes, or even five minutes for hypersonic systems. This is a huge challenge for us, for our security", said Putin.

The reason for Russia's demanding legally binding guarantees, Putin explained, is that the United States has reneged on verbal assurances for three decades. He reviewed this history (related in greater detail, beginning on p. 9) as follows: "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? ... 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? US 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 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty?"

In a 13 December phone call with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Putin said that that NATO was directly threatening Russia with potential war by expanding military activity in Ukraine.

What about Ukraine?

From a superficial look, without any sources but the major Anglo-American media, one would think that the only cause for the hot exchanges of words reported above were an impending "Russian invasion" of Ukraine. A frenzy over that scenario was touched off on 3 December, when the *Washington Post* breathlessly reported that US intelligence had discovered a Kremlin plan for a multi-front offensive into Ukraine in early 2022. The alleged plan would involve "100 battalion tactical groups with an estimated 175,000 personnel, along with armour, artillery and equipment."

As we reported last month, however, there were serious signs in November that a mega-provocation by the Kiev government is possible. This might be an attempt to retake the

Donbass region in eastern Ukraine, which declared independence in 2014 (see "Ukraine" section of the next article) by force. President Volodymyr Zelensky, whose popularity has sunk through the floor under worsening economic conditions and continued civil strife around the Donbass, talked in ever more militant terms about "taking back" the region, and even Crimea.

Russian Defence Minister Gen. Sergei Shoygu, at the same 21 December Defence Ministry Board meeting Putin addressed, suggested that a specific type of provocation could be in the works: a chemical weapons attack that would be blamed on Russia or the anti-Kiev Donbass militias. He claimed that American private military companies were stockpiling "reservoirs of an unknown substance" near the Donbass border with the rest of Ukraine, possibly "preparing the way for Ukrainian Special Ops forces and armed units of radicals".

Shoygu's report was immediately pooh-poohed in Western media as grasping for an excuse to "invade" Ukraine, but anyone familiar with the faked chemical weapons attacks used by the UK-based White Helmets group for provocations in Syria knows not to dismiss such a possibility. If a chemical provocation occurred as part of a Ukrainian offensive into the Donbass or Crimea, then it is by no means excluded that Russian troops would deploy in response. In that context, some Russian commentators have called the buildup of Russia's forces on its side of the border a deterrent action against such an adventure by Kiev.

For US Secretary of State Blinken and UK Foreign Secretary Truss, the only reason for Russia's troop movements on its own territory is to "invade Ukraine". Their posture is that Russia must "de-escalate" *vis a vis* Ukraine, before any progress is made in talks on the overall security concerns Russia has raised.

Blinken has brandished dire economic warfare threats against Russia, in the event of an "invasion". "There would be high impact economic consequences", Blinken told Euronews on 4 December. On 6 December, 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. CNN elaborated, "Officials have also been weighing disconnecting Russia from the SWIFT international payment system, upon which Russia remains heavily reliant".

Against the backdrop of such threats, Putin on 15 December held a virtual summit with President Xi Jinping of China, discussing "the development of Russian-Chinese comprehensive strategic partnership". Putin's foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov briefed the press that the two Presidents paid special attention to "the need to intensify efforts to form an independent financial infrastructure to service trade operations between Russia and China. We mean creating an infrastructure that cannot be influenced by third countries".

A new hot spot of concern to both China and Russia emerged in the first week of January when Kazakhstan, the large country in the middle of Eurasia, was swept by violent demonstrations that forced the government to resign. There are signs of an attempted Western-backed "colour revolution" to push Kazakhstan out of its economic cooperation with both its big neighbours, but there also are other factors in the crisis, on which we will report in a future issue. For now, it is important to know that the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation has sent troops to Kazakhstan at President Tokayev's request—the first live deployment of the CSTO in any of its member states.

Sleepwalking into nuclear World War III, 1990-2021

This background article is an edited excerpt from a memorandum issued by the international Schiller Institute on 31 December 2021 for urgent circulation. We have provided additional subheads, as well as links and reference notes citing original sources and additional in-depth material from the Australian Alert Service.

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.

The record shows that Ukraine is being used in a geo-political game by forces in the trans-Atlantic area who answer to the bankrupt speculative financial system, as a flashpoint to trigger a strategic showdown with Russia. The standoff is already more dangerous than the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and could easily end up in a thermonuclear war that no one would win and none would survive.

The two draft treaties¹ handed by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov to US Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried on 15 December 2021 are neither more nor less than the verbal guarantees the George H.W. Bush Administration gave the Soviet Union in 1990, that NATO would not expand towards Russia. Regarding the unacceptability of the placement of offensive or potentially offensive weapons systems close to the other power’s borders, they mirror what President John F. Kennedy demanded of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchov during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, when the issue was Soviet missiles in Cuba.

Below we chronicle how the promises of 1990 were undone, step by step. It is time to wake up and understand how the military confrontation built up, before you sleepwalk into thermonuclear World War III.

Promises, and their undoing

The collapse of the socialist states of Eastern Europe, and then the Soviet Union, in 1989-91 was a moment of hope, for an end to the Cold War and the potential for the great powers to cooperate in building a new world order based on peace through economic development. That moment was lost and new dangers began to emerge, when the Anglo-American elite chose instead to declare itself the sole superpower.

The Anglo-American neoconservative movement and war party pushed a concept sometimes called the Wolfowitz Doctrine. It is named after Paul Wolfowitz, a Defence Department official who was an ideologue of neo-conservatism, a set of beliefs imported to the USA from the UK through people like Bernard Lewis, the strategist who wanted to recarve the Middle East into many pieces, and is rightly considered a godfather of the ISIS terrorists. The confrontationist war party said that with the Soviet Union gone, there was now a one-Empire, or “unipolar” world, and no country should ever again be allowed to rise to the USSR’s former level of power.

The Anglo-American imperialists sought either to take Russia over, or to crush it. The takeover attempt began with the installation of agents of the worst possible economic policies, the same kind of free trade and privatisation under way in the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zealand with “Thatcherism”, deregulation, and unbridled financial speculation.

1. [“Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees”, “Agreement on measures to ensure the security of The Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation”, online at mid.ru.](#)



President George H.W. Bush (r.) shakes hands with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov in Washington, May 1990. Photo: Bush Presidential Library

Promises were made to the Soviet Union—and thus to Russia as its recognised 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 1990, then-Secretary of State James Baker promised Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that after German reunification, which came about later that year, even if US troops remained in Germany “NATO’s jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position”. This was confirmed in official US files released in 2017.²

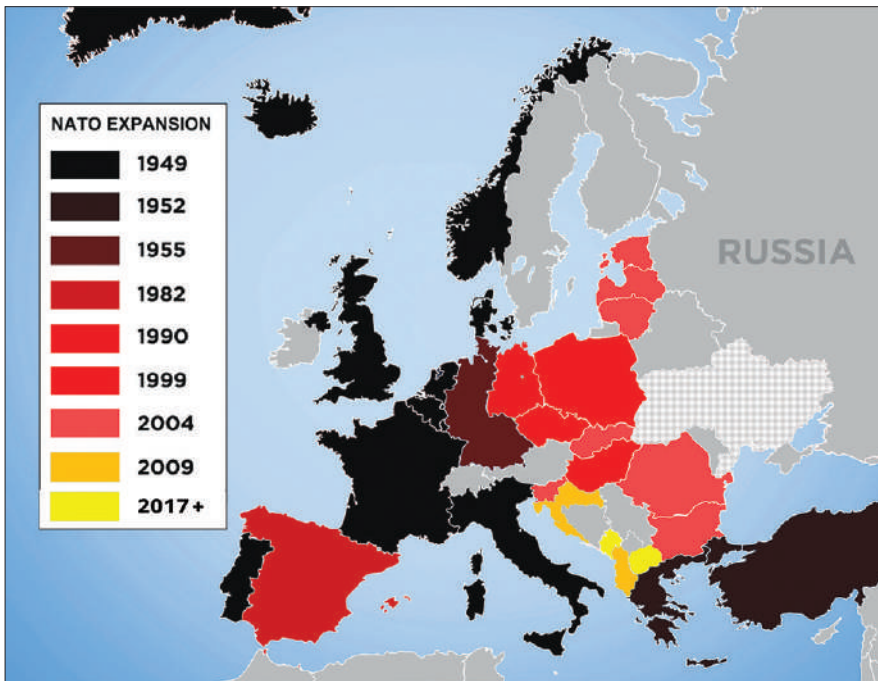
At that time, the Soviet force structure in East Germany consisted of around 340,000 troops and extensive military infrastructure, weapons, and equipment. The terms of their withdrawal (eventually completed in 1994) and whether or not, under German reunification, NATO forces would replace them in that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

By October 1990, however, the US Department of Defence was already plotting the expansion of NATO eastwards. Although different policies were debated within the US political leadership, planning for expansion was going ahead 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 the London- and Wall Street-engineered economic reforms that resulted in the large-scale deindustrialisation 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 US specialists providing on-site assistance in the transfer of nuclear weapons from Ukraine, Belarus and other now independent ex-Soviet areas to Russia, as well as in the disposal of some of Russia’s own weapons.

On 27 May 1997, the [NATO-Russia Founding Act](#) was signed, establishing the NATO-Russia Council and other consultative mechanisms. The document declared that

2. [“NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard”, National Security Archive, 12 Dec. 2017, online at nsarchive.gwu.edu.](#) Richard Bardon, [“‘Not one inch eastward’: Declassified docs expose broken promises to Russia on NATO”, AAS, 24 Jan. 2018.](#)



The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) had 12 member countries at its founding in 1949. Despite 1990 promises to Soviet leaders by West German and US officials that NATO forces would not extend even into the eastern part of a reunified Germany (let alone Soviet then-allies in Eastern Europe), NATO has relentlessly expanded eastward since 1999. Cross-hatching shows Ukraine, a NATO “partner” that aspires to membership.

“NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries”. Its opening paragraph stated that the two sides, “based on an enduring political commitment undertaken at the highest political level, will build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security.”

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 Yevgeni 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 appearance of terrorist separatist movements in Russia’s North Caucasus region, which Russian intelligence services had identified as being backed and egged on not only by Saudi-funded Wahhabite Islamic fundamentalists, but also by US 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 in 1992. This meddling peaked with NATO’s bombing of Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, in March-June 1999 without authorisation from the United Nations Security Council. This action shocked Moscow with the realisation 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. They formally did so in 1999, marking 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.

President Vladimir Putin, in his 21 Dec. 2021 [address](#) to an expanded meeting of the Russian Defence Ministry Board, stressed the importance for Moscow of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and its subsequent betrayal by NATO.

The George W. Bush years

The United States under the George W. Bush Administration began to dismantle the system of strategic arms control assembled during the Cold War. In 2002 the USA withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, just a few months after Putin had offered strategic cooperation with the United States following the 9/11 attacks. The USA then quickly began unfolding plans for a global ballistic missile defence system (BMDS) in Europe and Asia, which in Europe led to the first sailing of an American guided missile destroyer equipped with 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 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.³ Putin and other Russian officials have also emphasised the possibility of the defensive (anti-missile) systems being quickly reconfigured as missile launchers for direct attack.

An increasingly sharper Russian response to the US/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 25 September 2001, and at the [Munich Security Conference](#) in 2007.

Putin addressed the Bundestag just two weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the USA in 2001. He had been the first foreign leader to call President Bush after the event, offering Russia’s support in the moment of crisis. Speaking in German—a powerful act, in view of the Nazi invasion of Russia just 60 years earlier, in which 27 million Soviet citizens lost their lives—he told the Germans, “The Cold War is done with”, and posed a vision of global collaboration among the nations of the world.

The Russian President’s landmark speech six years

3. “British Crown’s End-game: Financial Crash and Nuclear War”, *New Citizen*, June/July 2012 reported in detail on Gerasimov’s presentation. A “deterrent” under “mutual assured destruction” (MAD) nuclear weapons doctrine refers to missiles capable of inflicting a devastating retaliatory strike against an attacker.

later, on 10 February 2007 at the annual Munich Security Conference, shocked the audience. The Western media and some people who were present, including the war-monger American Sen. John Mc-



President Vladimir Putin greets Members of Parliament in Germany, after his speech of 25 September 2001 that hailed the end of the Cold War. Photo: screenshot

Cain, denounced it as belligerent. The Munich speech became a point of departure for the subsequent demonisation 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 his opening quotation from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Fireside Chat of 3 September 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 a signal that, in strategic terms, Russia was "back".

In July 2007 Putin attempted to avert what Moscow defined as a fundamental security threat, namely installation of the American BMDS directly at Russia's borders. On a visit to President George W. Bush in Kennebunkport, Maine, he proposed joint Russian-American development and deployment of anti-missile systems, including an offer for the Americans to use Russia's early-warning radar in Gabala, Azerbaijan as part of a jointly run missile defence system for Europe, instead of the BMDS planned for installation in Poland and the Czech Republic (the latter was changed to Romania). Putin also offered to give the USA access to a radar facility in southern Russia, and to place coordination of the process with the NATO-Russia Council. Then-Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov said that Russia wanted to put 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".

Russian-American negotiations over the proposals were conducted throughout 2008, before petering out. Key to their failure was the vehemence of Washington's refusal to abandon construction of the BMDS. Statements like then-Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs Stephen Mull's, that the BMDS installations in the new East European NATO member countries were "necessary for the security of our interests in Europe", made it clear that the target was not Iran, but Russia. The opportunity for a new, non-confrontational paradigm was lost.

At the April 2008 Bucharest summit of NATO, Georgia and Ukraine were promised future membership, although they were not offered formal Membership Action Plans (MAP). They were left with hopes of receiving 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 if Georgia or Ukraine became 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 vice through so-called EU Association Agreements (EUAA), each one centred on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

The primary 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 (it was a foregone conclusion that Russia would end its free-trade regime with Ukraine, to prevent its own markets from being flooded with EU goods 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 defence 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 would be terminated, ultimately giving NATO forward-basing on Russia's immediate border. Crimea had been a Russian area since the 18th Century, but was administratively assigned to Ukraine within the USSR in the early 1950s; upon the break-up of the USSR in 1991 Crimea remained with Ukraine, but Russia and Ukraine initially kept the ex-Soviet Black Sea Fleet under joint command. In 1997 the two countries signed a Partition Treaty, under which each of them had a Black Sea Fleet headquartered in Crimea.

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 USA 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 Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and remnants of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The OUN had been founded in 1929 on 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 its own ethnic-purist ideology, slaughtered scores of thousands of ethnic Poles and Jews in western Ukraine towards the end of World War II. Based in Europe after the War, Bandera was sponsored by British MI6 (intelligence), while Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) founder Allen Dulles shepherded Gen. Mykola Lebed, another OUN leader, into the United States, despite strong opposition from US

Army Intelligence because of Lebed's record of collaboration with the Nazis and war crimes.

Lebed's base of operations, the Prolog Research Corporation in New York City, was funded for decades by Dulles's CIA for intelligence-gathering and the distribution of nationalist and other literature inside the USSR. His next-generation followers staffed the US Radio Liberty facility in Munich, Germany for broadcasting into Ukraine, up into the 1980s.⁴

When the USSR broke up in August 1991, key Banderite leaders dashed to Lviv, in 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 US National Endowment for Democracy⁵ and the private foundations of financier George Soros, this was a so-called "colour 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 International Monetary Fund [IMF]-dictated formulae for privatisation and deregulation), but not before overseeing a revision of the official history of Ukraine's relations with Russia in favour of a radical, anti-Russian nationalism. Historically, there had been a strong tendency among Ukrainian patriots and advocates of independence, opposite to the OUN's ethnic purity beliefs, 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 finalise its EUAA were rejected as untenable by the Victor Yanukovich government in November 2013, when it became clear that its 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. This assault on Russia's own producers would make the EUAA backfire against the Ukrainian economy. When Yanukovich on 21 November 2013 announced postponement of the EU deal, long-laid Banderite plans to turn Ukraine into a tool for isolating and demonising Russia were activated.

Protesters against Yanukovich's EUAA postponement decision 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 IMF-dictated austerity throughout the Orange Revolution years. Many desperately believed, as Ukrainian economist Natalia Vitrenko once put it, that the EUAA would bring them "wages like in Germany and benefits packages

4. "British Imperial Project in Ukraine: Violent Coup, Fascist Axioms, Neo-Nazis", *EIR*, 16 May 2014, documents this background, as well as the events leading up to the February 2014 coup in Kiev.

5. *Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia*, AAS special report, March 2021, p. 25-6 reviews the creation and activity of the NED.



Natalia Vitrenko, former MP and leader of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, toured Europe days after the February 2014 coup in Kiev. She warned officials in France, Italy, Germany and at the European Parliament, that the new leadership was rife with fascists. Here, at a 1 March 2014 press conference in Frankfurt, she shows photos of "Maidan" placards with white supremacist and Nazi symbols and slogans. Photo: Schiller Institute YouTube

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 used for systematic escalation of the Maidan.

Bloodshed and victims, all blamed on the regime, were used to keep Maidan fervour and outrage going through to February 2014. Neo-Nazi and other fascist symbols defaced building walls and placards in the Maidan, but did not deter public support of this process by Washington. Sen. McCain addressed the mob in December 2013, while Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland passed out cookies in the Maidan and her phone call with US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt to discuss whom to place in office once Yanukovich was ousted caught on tape and circulated worldwide.

On 18 February 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 20 February, 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 of 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.⁶

On 21 February 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 Yanukovich, committing both sides to a peaceful transition of power: constitutional reform by September, presidential elections late in the year, and the surrender of weapons. The foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland helped negotiate it, with a representative from

6. Ivan Katchanovski, "The Maidan Massacre in Ukraine: Revelations from Trials and Investigations", online at JordanRussiaCenter.org, 8 Dec. 2021.

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 crowd, and threatened Yanukovich'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, centred in eastern Ukraine—the Donetsk and Lugansk regions (the Donbass) 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. There was no "Russian military invasion of Ukraine". On 1 March President Putin sought and received authorisation 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. A referendum held 16 March 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 per cent of the 83 per cent of eligible voters who turned out voted for integration into the Russian Federation; in Sevastopol, the result was likewise 97 per cent for integration, while the turnout was even higher, at 89 per cent.

The fate of two Donbass self-declared republics in Donetsk and Lugansk 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 Donbass 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 Donbass 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 of September 2014—an interim state of affairs in the Donbass 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 Donbass republics. Negotiated also by France, Germany and Russia with support from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation 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 Donbass, 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 Donbass 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 17 February 2015. It remains unimplemented, because Kiev almost immediately refused to conduct the elections or fully legalise the special status, until first being given control

over the Donbass-Russia border. Today, President Volodymyr Zelensky's government in Kiev refuses even to meet with Donbass leaders for negotiations, and continues to claim that the Donbass is under Russian "occupation", and therefore Kiev should talk only with Russia, not the Donbass leaders. Sporadic fighting has continued, with a new escalation of shelling across the "line of contact" between the Donbass entities and the rest of Ukraine.

A new US war posture

The Trump Administration accelerated the take-down of the entire architecture of international arms-control agreements by withdrawing the USA from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader 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 US and the Russian Federation in 2010) as the last major existing arms control agreement, covering heavy intercontinental missiles. Upon taking office this year, President Joe Biden extended New START for five years, a decision welcomed by Moscow.

On 19 January 2018, the US Department of Defence declared in a new *National Defence Strategy*, "Great power competition—not terrorism—is now the primary focus of US national security". Then-Secretary of Defence James Mattis specified that this referred to "growing threats from revisionist powers as different as China and Russia", meaning nations that reject the type of "democracy" the Anglo-Americans promote, under which people are free to choose their leaders—unless they or the leaders choose to reject the global "rules" imposed by the international banking oligarchy.

Moscow has consistently protested these confrontational actions, to no avail. "Despite our numerous protests and pleas, the American machine has been set into motion, the conveyer belt is moving forward", Putin said in his 1 March 2018 [address](#) to the Federal Assembly, in which he announced a new generation of strategic weapons under development. At least two of those, the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle for ICBMs and the Kinzhal aeroballistic missile, have since been introduced into service.⁷

7. Rachel Douglas, "Russian President delivers strategic reality shock", AAS, 7 March 2018.

The strategic tensions whose history is reviewed above escalated throughout 2021. The Australian Alert Service kept readers informed through the articles listed below, with links for online readers.

["Escalation in Ukraine threatens East-West conflagration"](#), 14 April, p. 12.

["Russia's 'red lines': Don't dismiss as bluff or bluster"](#), 5 May, p. 9.

["UK-led Black Sea provocations: 'Global Britain' in action"](#), 28 July, p. 13.

["AUSMIN and AUKUS make Australia the staging point for WWII"](#), 21 September, p. 11.

["US and Ukrainian military actions raise Black Sea tension"](#), 10 November, p. 13

["Eurasian powers act against headlong war agenda"](#), 8 December, p. 8.



Biden is not in lock-step with war party

Special to the AAS

Meetings among the United States, NATO, Russia, and the member states of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) during the week of 10 January 2022 may determine whether the world enters a period of heightened thermonuclear war danger, or begins a process of finding common ground for stability.

The success or failure of attempts by US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin to walk back from the brink of war will be decisive. Their outcome, in turn, lies with Biden's ability to ignore the pressure he is under from the Anglo-American war party, including people in the upper echelons of his own Administration.

Since taking office in January 2021, Biden personally has pursued strategic stability dialogues both with Putin and with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Russian officials have described Biden as an "old-time" politician and foreign policy pragmatist—someone they can talk to. At the same time, Biden's foreign policy and national security team is staffed with people who view Russia and China as mortal enemies of the USA. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, and Indo-Pacific policy chief Kurt Campbell pay lip service to Biden's commitment to diplomatic dialogue, but do everything they can to set the terms of dialogue in such a way as to make Moscow and Beijing capitulate to US and NATO demands.

The major US media and the Washington military-industrial-think tank complex are constantly beating the war drums, with every encouragement from London. In recent weeks, both the UK Royal Institute for International Affairs (RIIA, or Chatham House) and the London Economist have accused Biden of appeasement vis a vis Russia, outrageously drawing a parallel to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler at Munich in 1939.

Biden initiated a phone talk with Putin on 7 December. One week later, Russia presented the United States and NATO with written draft treaties to secure a de-escalation of the crisis along its western borders (p. 9). Biden, meanwhile, openly stated his readiness to discuss with Russia its concern over NATO expansion. His response opened the door to scheduling bilateral talks for 10 January in Geneva. Putin then requested a second phone call with Biden, which took place 30 December. Washington sources close to the Administration indicated that the 50-minute discussion confirmed there are areas for discussion in the Russian proposals.

Since then, reports in the media have hinted that Washington may offer assurances of not deploying offensive weapons in Ukraine or to anti-ballistic missile sites in Romania and Poland, limits on US troop deployments in NATO countries along Russia's western borders, and a reduction in military exercises, with reciprocal Russian steps such as pulling back its forces from the border with Ukraine. The leaks suggest a desire on Biden's part to de-escalate the crisis.

Others in the Administration continue to insist loudly, that a supposedly threatened Russian invasion of Ukraine is the central issue. Secretary of State Blinken, in an angry press conference after a 7 January virtual summit of NATO foreign ministers held in anticipation of the 10 and 12 January talks, blamed Russia for creating a crisis along the Russia-Ukraine border. Blinken pre-emptively rejected Russia's core proposals

as "non-starters". He warned in ominous tones, "No one should be surprised if Russia instigates a provocation or incident—then tries to use it to justify military intervention, hoping that by the time the world realises the ruse, it'll be too late."

Blinken went down a laundry-list of false or debatable claims about Ukraine's actions and Russia's, asserting that it is "absurd" to think Ukraine would be an aggressor; that Russia is "occupying" Crimea; that Russia has "taken aim ... at Ukraine's democracy"; and that Russia's troop movements on its own territory, near Ukraine, are "an immediate and urgent challenge to peace and stability in Europe." He dismissed as a "false narrative" the well-documented fact that NATO broke promises by placing military infrastructure close to Russia (the facts presented in the article on p. 9 of this AAS refute Blinken's tirade).

Such inflammatory rhetoric as Blinken's on the eve of diplomatic engagement is nothing short of sabotage.

Ray McGovern, the veteran CIA analyst of Soviet affairs who later co-founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), wrote 7 January for antiwar.com that the mainstream media has blacked out the elements of the December Biden-Putin phone calls that opened the door for diplomacy. McGovern pointed to the Kremlin read-out of the 30 December call, which said Biden had assured Putin that "Washington had no intention of deploying offensive strike weapons in Ukraine", which he said offers Moscow an opportunity to respond by further withdrawal of troops from Russian regions bordering Ukraine. "You would not know it amid the gloom and doom about 'another Russian invasion' of Ukraine" wrote McGovern, "but diplomacy—not war—is about to break out this month."

On 8 January a coalition of 15 organisations, led by the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and the American Committee for US-Russian Accord, issued an open letter to the White House, urging that the USA agree to oppose NATO membership for Ukraine and to take other steps to de-escalate the danger in line with President Putin's proposals: "Diplomacy is the only reasonable path forward for US-Russia relations" they said. "[W]e must engage in a serious and sustained strategic dialogue with Russia 'that addresses the deeper sources of mistrust and hostility' while deterring Russian military aggression. These dialogues must engage with President Putin's explicit pursuit of 'reliable and long-term security guarantees' that would 'exclude any further NATO moves eastward and the deployment of weapons systems that threaten us in close vicinity to Russian territory.'"

Biden's pursuit of diplomacy with Russia and China has placed him, ironically enough, in a position like that of President Donald Trump, who was assailed in Congress and the media and undercut by warmongers in his own Administration for declaring it would be good to "get along" with Russia and China. Trump ultimately capitulated. The jury is still out on whether Biden has the vision and the spine to buck the military-industrial-think tank complex and walk back from confrontation and war.



Biden on the phone with Putin, 30 DEC. Photo: AFP/White House