



Facing conflict with NATO, Russia revises nuclear doctrine

1 Oct.—Amid escalations of combat and crisis in both the Middle East and Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed on 25 September that Russia is updating its Basic Principles of State Policy on Nuclear Deterrence, the document that “sets forth the basic principle of using nuclear weapons: the use of nuclear forces is the last-resort measure to protect the country’s sovereignty.”

The chief new elements to be formalised in the updated document are that an attack on Russia by a non-nuclear country with the participation of a nuclear power (for example, by Ukraine with weapons and targeting assistance provided by the UK and/or USA) will be treated as a joint attack by the two; that Belarus, as part of the Russia-Belarus Union State, comes under Russia’s nuclear umbrella so that an attack on Belarus is considered an attack on both; and that Russia may use nuclear weapons upon reliable detection not only of a ballistic missile attack on Russia, as the document currently states, but also a “massive launch” of other “air and space attack weapons and their crossing our state border”, such as “strategic and tactical aircraft, cruise missiles, UAVs [drones], hypersonic and other aircraft.”

Prominent figures in NATO countries, from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to UK ex-PM Boris Johnson, promptly dismissed Putin’s statement as “bluster”, “sabre-rattling”, and “bluff”. In reality, it reflects decisions reached over months of deliberation, during which US politicians continued to talk about the need for “strategic defeat” of Russia. Russian officials had indicated several times this year, that a revision of the nuclear doctrine would be required, for stronger deterrence of a full-scale attack on Russia.

The announced revisions significantly lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, at exactly the moment that new military action by the United States and NATO, acting through Ukraine, is set to cross that threshold. Unless Washington’s policy of seeking the strategic destruction of Russia is changed, the world stands at the brink of global thermonuclear warfare.

Putin revealed the new elements to the Russian Federation Security Council’s Standing Conference on Nuclear Deterrence, which meets twice a year but normally behind closed doors. This time, the text of Putin’s opening remarks was posted on the Kremlin website (<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75182>). The publicised meeting was timed to occur on the eve of US President Joe Biden’s meeting with President (although his term has expired) Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine. Zelensky sought a green light for launching sophisticated-guidance, long-range missiles supplied by NATO countries (such as Britain’s Storm Shadow cruise missiles) against undisputedly Russian territory.

Even before Putin’s remarks, former UN weapons inspector and US Marines intelligence officer Scott Ritter explained the implications of such long-range missile strikes into Russia, telling the 20 September meeting of the Schiller Institute-initiated International Peace Coalition (IPC), “When a Storm Shadow is fired against a target inside Russia, it is literally being targeted by NATO. NATO is approving the target, and facilitating the use of this weapons system against the target through sophisticated guidance systems which use real-time encrypted GPS signals from US and other NATO satellites. Launching such weapons would now clearly fall within

Russia’s guidelines for permitted nuclear response. That decision, if it is made, will very likely mean the outbreak of direct warfare between the United States-NATO and Russia—a war that would have a high probability of quickly going nuclear.”

On a razor’s edge

On 27 September more than a thousand scientists, academics, medical professionals and activists from around the world continued the urgent discussion of these dangers, at the 69th weekly online meeting of the IPC, under the headline “[Putin Announces Revised Nuclear Doctrine; World on Razor’s Edge of Nuclear War](#)” (live-streamed on the Schiller Institute YouTube channel).

Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche, addressing the meeting, linked Russia’s policy change to the escalating open threats from the USA and NATO to give Ukraine permission to begin attacking sites on Russian territory with Western-guided weapons, which Ukraine has no capability of deploying by itself. She pointed to a brawl behind the scenes in Washington, in which US military leaders have reportedly urged restraint, which appears to have temporarily persuaded President Biden from signing on to the “target list” allowing Russia to be attacked with US weapons despite the pressure from Zelensky and from British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who had visited the White House on 13 September. No announcement of “permission” was made, but the issue remains on the table.

The dangerous escalation towards open confrontation with the world’s largest nuclear power by the politically unstable US and European nations, Zepp-LaRouche said, is now joined by the escalation of Israel’s effort to spread the genocidal war on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank into Lebanon, with the ultimate target being Iran. She was speaking before Israel’s 27 September assassination of Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement, which is allied with Iran.

Zepp-LaRouche also excoriated the geopolitical madness of US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, who in testimony before Congress called China the greatest threat to the US ever, not only militarily, but also technologically and through its relations with the Global South. “This is a lie, which must not be allowed to stand”, she exclaimed, since China is not an aggressive country, is not imperialistic, but has developed its economy and its people and is now doing the same across the Global South, with the intention of ending the 600-year legacy of colonialism, through building infrastructure, education, health, industry and agriculture—and is succeeding. “If the West would drop its unipolar sense of world dominance, and offer cooperation in development, Russia and China would join immediately and the world would move to peace”, she insisted.

At the same IPC meeting, nuclear weapons expert Prof. Steven Starr warned that the fear of nuclear weapons has been lost in the United States. He demonstrated the [scenario of a nuclear exchange](#) between nuclear powers, leading rapidly—in only 72 minutes total—to the deaths of 85 million people, followed by “nuclear winter” from the explosions filling the stratosphere with soot, which would block out the sunlight, resulting in a prolonged global cooling effect that would kill most life on Earth.