

To Avoid Nuclear War, Putin Needs to be a Little Crazier

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President Putin's press conference on Wednesday in Uzbekistan might have been the most unusual and extraordinary event in his 24-year political career.

After addressing the Constitutional issues surrounding Ukrainian President Zelensky's decision to remain in office beyond his four-year term, Putin delivered a brief but disturbing statement on NATO's plan to fire long-range weapons at targets inside Russia.

Putin made it clear that Russia would respond to these attacks and that the countries that provided the weapons systems would be held responsible.

He also gave a very detailed description of how the systems work and how they require contractors from the country-of-origin be directly involved in their operation. What is so remarkable about Putin's comments is not the fact that they bring the world closer to a direct confrontation between nuclear-armed adversaries, but that he had to remind political leaders in the West that Russia is not going to sit back and be their punching bag. Here's part of what Putin said:

With regard to the strikes, frankly, I am not sure what the NATO Secretary General is talking about. When he was the Prime Minister of Norway, (we had good relations) and I am positive he was not suffering from dementia back then. If he is talking about potentially attacking Russia's territory with long-range precision weapons, he, as a person who heads a military-political organisation, even though he is a civilian like me, should be aware of the fact that long-range precision weapons cannot be used without space-based reconnaissance. This is my first point.

My second point is that the final target selection and what is known as launch mission

can only be made by highly skilled specialists who rely on this reconnaissance data, technical reconnaissance data. For some attack systems, such as Storm Shadow, these launch missions can be put in automatically, without the need to use Ukrainian military. Who does it? Those who manufacture and those who allegedly supply these attack systems to Ukraine do. This can and does happen without the participation of the Ukrainian military. Launching other systems, such as ATACMS, for example, also relies on space reconnaissance data, targets are identified and automatically communicated to the relevant crews that may not even realise what exactly they are putting in. A crew, maybe even a Ukrainian crew, then puts in the corresponding launch mission. However, the mission is put together by representatives of NATO countries, not the Ukrainian military. [Putin Presser in Uzbekistan](#), *Kremlin*



[Watch the video here](#)

Let's summarize:

1. The long-range precision weapons (missiles) are provided by NATO countries
2. The long-range precision weapons are manned by experts or contractors from the country of origin
3. The long-range precision weapons must be linked to space reconnaissance data provide by the US or NATO
4. The targets in Russia are also provided by space reconnaissance data provide by the US or NATO

The point that Putin is trying to make is that the long-range missiles are made by NATO, furnished by NATO, operated and launched by NATO contractors, whose targets are selected by NATO experts using space reconnaissance data provided by NATO.

In every respect, the prospective firing of long-range precision weapons at targets in Russia, is a NATO-US operation. Thus, there should be no confusion about who is responsible. NATO is responsible which means that NATO is effectively declaring war

on Russia. Putin's lengthy comments merely underscore this critical point. Here's more from Putin:

So, these officials from NATO countries, especially the ones based in Europe, particularly in small European countries, should be fully aware of what is at stake. They should keep in mind that **theirs are small and densely populated countries, which is a factor to reckon with before they start talking about striking deep into the Russian territory.** It is a serious matter and, without a doubt, we are watching this very carefully. [Putin Presser in Uzbekistan](#), *Kremlin*

Naturally, the western media has focused all its attention on the paragraph above, and for good reason; Putin is stating the obvious: 'If you attack Russia, we will retaliate.' That is the underlying message. Here are a few of Friday's (hysterical) headlines:

- Vladimir Putin Threatens 'All-Out War' if Ukraine Uses Western Weapons to Hit Russia — as Volodymyr Zelensky Asks Allies for Their Permission, *MSN.com*
- Why is Putin again threatening a nuclear war?, *The Interpreter*
- Putin warns the West: Russia is ready for nuclear war, *Reuters*
- TYRANT'S THREAT: Vladimir Putin threatens all-out war if Ukraine uses Western weapons to hit Russia, *The Sun*
- (and the best of all)
Time to Call Putin's Bluff, *CNN*

Is that what this is all about; testing Putin to see if he's bluffing?

If it is, it is a uniquely risky strategy. But there is a grain of truth to what they say. After all, Putin is warning that any attack on Russia will trigger an immediate and ferocious retaliatory strike. And he is advising the leaders of 'small, densely populated NATO countries' to consider how a nuclear attack by Russia might impact their prospects for the future. Would they really put their entire civilization at risk to find out whether Putin is bluffing or not? Here's Putin again:

Look at what your Western colleagues are reporting. No one is talking about shelling Belgorod (in Russia) or other adjacent territories. The only thing they are talking about is Russia opening a new front and attacking Kharkov. Not a word. Why is that? They did it with their own hands. Well, let them reap the fruits of their ingenuity. The same thing can happen in case the long-range precision weapons which you asked about is used.

More broadly, this unending escalation can lead to serious consequences. If Europe were to face those serious consequences, what will the United States do, considering our strategic arms parity? It is hard to tell. [Putin Presser in Uzbekistan](#), *Kremlin*

Putin seems genuinely mystified by the West's behavior. Do US and NATO leaders really think they can attack Russia with long-range missiles and Russia won't respond? Do they really think their ridiculous propaganda can impact the outcome of a clash between two nuclear-armed superpowers? What are they thinking or ARE they thinking? We don't know. We seem to have entered 'uncharted stupidity' where desperation and ignorance converge to create a foreign policy that is utter madness. This is from an article at *Tass News Service*:

NATO countries that have approved strikes with their weapons on Russian territory should be aware that their equipment and specialists will be

destroyed not only in Ukraine, but also at any point from where Russian territory is attacked, the Russian Security Council's Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev said on his Telegram channel, noting that the participation of NATO specialists could be seen as a casus belli.

"All their military equipment and specialists fighting against us will be destroyed both on the territory of former Ukraine and on the territory of other countries, should strikes be carried out from there against Russian territory," Medvedev warned.

He added that Moscow proceeded from the fact that all long-range weapons supplied to Ukraine were already "directly operated by servicemen from NATO countries", which is tantamount to participation in the war against Russia and a reason to start combat operations. [NATO weapons to be hit in any country from where Russia may be attacked — Medvedev, Tass](#)

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NATO weapons to be hit in any country from where Russia may be attacked — Medvedev

The senior Russian official added that Moscow proceeded from the fact that all long-range weapons supplied to Ukraine were already "directly operated by servicemen from NATO countries"



[Source](#)

There it is in black and white.

Where Putin chose to take the diplomatic approach, Medvedev opted for the hammer-blow.

‘If you attack Russia, we will bomb you back to the Stone Age.’

Not much wiggle-room there. But perhaps clarity is what’s needed for people who do not understand the potential consequences of their actions. In any event, no one in Washington or Brussels can say they weren’t warned.

We cannot exclude the possibility that Washington actually wants to expand the war despite the fact that cities across Eastern Europe could be incinerated in the process. It could be that beltway warhawks see a broader conflict as the only way to achieve their geopolitical ambitions.

Putin knows that this is a real possibility, just as he knows that there is a sizable constituency in Washington that support the use of nuclear weapons. This might explain why he is proceeding so cautiously, because he knows there are crazies within the US establishment who look forward to a clash with their old rival Russia so they can implement their pet-theories about “usable” nukes for tactical advantage. Here’s Putin:

The United States has a theory of a ‘preventive strike’...Now they are developing a system for a ‘disarming strike’. What does that mean? It means striking at control centres with modern high-tech weapons to destroy the opponent’s ability to counterattack.

Putin has devoted a considerable amount of time studying US Nuclear Doctrine, and it has him deeply concerned. After all, didn’t the Biden administration launch [an unprecedented attack on “a key element of Russia’s nuclear umbrella”](#) just last week?

Indeed, they did.

And hasn’t the US (via its Nuclear Posture Review) rebranded the offensive use of nuclear weapons as a justifiable act of defense?

It has.

And doesn’t this revision provide US warhawks with the institutional framework needed to launch a nuclear attack without fear of legal prosecution?

It does.

And haven’t these same warhawks developed their respective theories on “first-strike”, “preemption” and “disarming strike” in order to lay the groundwork for a first-strike nuclear attack on a geopolitical rival of Washington?

They have.

And doesn’t US Nuclear Doctrine state that nuclear weapons can be used “in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners.”

It does.

And does that definition include economic rivals like China?

Yes.

And is that a defense of a “first strike” nuclear weapon attack?

It is.

And does that mean that the United States no longer regards its nuclear arsenal as purely defensive but as an essential instrument for preserving the “rules-based order”?

Yes, it does.

And does Putin know that there are powerful actors in the political establishment and deep state who would like to see the taboo on nuclear weapons lifted so they can be used in more situations and with greater frequency?

He does.

And does he know that Washington regards Russia and China as the primary threats to US global hegemony and the “rules-based order”?

Yes.

And does he realize that if the US implements its first-strike policy Russia may not have the time to retaliate?

He does.

And does Putin realize that foreign policy analysts regard him as a restrained and reasonable man who may not pull the trigger or respond promptly when Russia faces a preemptive attack that will inflict the strategic defeat on Moscow the West seeks?

No, he doesn't. He still thinks that possessing a large cache of nuclear weapons will deter US aggression. But **a large cache of nuclear weapons is no deterrent when your opponent is convinced you won't use them.**

Sometimes being reasonable is not the best way to fend off an adversary. Sometimes you have to be a little crazy.

That's a lesson Putin needs to learn. Fast.

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