

Dmitry Polyanskiy: Nuclear Retaliation No Longer Unthinkable

Dmitry Polyanskiy is the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE. Polyanskiy argues that Europe's escalation in the Ukraine proxy war has crossed all red lines, and in Russia the talk about using a tactical nuclear weapon against Europe is no longer taboo. Please like and subscribe! Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Dmitry Polyanskiy, the former permanent representative of the Russian Federation to the UN and now the ambassador and permanent representative of Russia to the OSCE, that is, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. So thank you. It's been a while. Thank you very much. We see that in April, the Russian Defense Ministry released a list of companies and facilities across Europe that are involved in producing drones and other components for the war in Ukraine. Former President Dmitry Medvedev defined these as being legitimate targets. Now, of course, we see these growing drone attacks deep into Russia, and this seems to be a growing risk of a direct war or conflict between Russia and NATO. I was wondering, how are you assessing this development? Are we currently going up the escalation ladder? I have no doubts about it.

#Dmitry Polyanskiy

And I'm trying to be very vocal during the meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council, where we gather every week to discuss the security situation in Europe. The fact is that I don't think there will be a very abrupt change between today we are not in direct war and tomorrow we are in direct war, because this margin is very blurred today. As you rightly said, we have repeatedly indicated that NATO countries, especially the Baltic states and Poland, are becoming more and more involved in military actions, directly or indirectly. How can you, for example, estimate the use of long-range or medium-range missiles provided by the UK and by France, which can be activated only with the direct help of Western specialists? It means that it's not enough for Ukraine to decide which site to strike.

Somebody from these countries has to physically push the button together with them. It makes them absolutely complicit, and of course they share responsibility. How can you evaluate the fact

that we face a situation when the whole of NATO is trying to do its best to provide the Kiev regime with weapons, with artillery, gun shells, artillery munitions, with drones? So we have to face the whole military machine of NATO. To complement what you have said about the production of drone facilities that we indicated recently, opening their coordinates and showing that we know the location of these facilities, I think yesterday there was a communication from our intelligence specifically about Latvia, where it was shown that Latvia is on the verge of launching or helping Ukrainians to launch drones directly from its territory.

So it's not... It's not now about providing airspace, which was already proven for Ukrainian drones trying to strike northwest of Russia, but now it's launching drones from Latvian territory to destinations in Russia. Where will be this moment when somebody will say, yes, now we're in direct war? Where will be this moment when the military will take the decision which they have to take in accordance with all the protocols, in accordance with all the military routine documents? So I don't think it will be such a big, big development. It might come absolutely unexpectedly when people in Europe will find out, yes, we are in direct confrontation with NATO. I don't think it will be a surprise for anybody in Russia to see this development, given the actions that our neighbors are undertaking.

#Glenn

Again, it's a good point, not just about the weapons, but also the territory. We've seen a lot of drones going through the Baltic states and Finland, if not even originating from there. And, well, the NATO Secretary General, Mark Rutte, said that while there were Ukrainian drones, they wouldn't have been there if it wasn't for Russian aggression. So essentially, they're holding Russia accountable for there being Ukrainian drones in their airspace. How are you assessing this? Because if they're not holding Ukraine accountable, telling them not to do this, if it's Russia's fault that Ukraine sends drones into EU airspace or NATO airspace, what... I mean, when does this sound like consent or permission, or is this more diplomatic language, you think?

#Dmitry Polyanskiy

Well, I think that the diplomatic language is almost exhausted on these occasions. And such a perverted logic that you mentioned is a true extension of the Western perception of this crisis, when Ukraine can't be responsible for anything. So they want to start history from 2022. They claim that nothing that happened before this date ever existed. So they try to deny our arguments that the war was ongoing there from 2014, that we came there to stop the war when all the means were exhausted, when these agreements were sabotaged — the agreements that gave a very good chance for Ukraine to regain its territorial integrity as far as Donbass was concerned, to become a normal, friendly country towards Russia.

All this was absolutely dashed, and now it comes to a very, I would say—what is the right English word—strange situation, when our ambassadors, our chargés d'affaires, are being summoned to the ministries of these countries, and they are being given protests because of the fact that Ukrainian

drones entered the territories of these states. This happened, for example, in Latvia. And when my colleague there asked, "So what have we to do with the fact that Ukrainian drones, sent by the Ukrainian command, entered Latvian airspace and made a strike at a certain location in Latvia?" they said exactly what you said right now—that this wouldn't have happened if not for Russian aggression against Ukraine. That's their logic.

Everything is being kind of explained by Russian aggression against Ukraine. Now, fewer and fewer people, almost nobody, is using the expression "unprovoked," because before it was the case. I remember my time at the UN when it was like a mantra — "unprovoked Russian aggression," blah, blah, blah, all these things. But after the U.S. administration showed openness to the idea that the root causes of this crisis should also be addressed, if we speak about a long-term sustainable solution, then at least European countries a little bit changed their rhetoric, and they now do not use this word "unprovoked," because this is ridiculous. Everybody understands that there were events before 2022 which led to the situation where we are today. So,

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Again, this is a perverted logic. They do not see anything that is happening in Ukraine. Of course, they speak about corruption, but not to the extent that they should have spoken about it, because corruption is everywhere. Apparently, they have already written the word "Zelensky" in block letters, but nobody dares to pronounce it publicly. They try to kind of maneuver in order to avoid this true reality—the sad reality that the head of the Kiev regime is also the head of this corruption network. And nothing bad can be said about Ukraine. They ignore the fact that Ukraine commits terrible abuses of human rights, of the right to freedom of religion, of political freedoms, of the rights of minorities, and so on and so forth. For them, it doesn't exist. Ukraine is always white and fluffy, and Russia is always bad. That's their perception of the world that they don't want to change.

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Well, besides the drones and the use of NATO territory, we're also seeing some other problems emerging in the Baltic region—well, essentially in the Baltic Sea. There's talk about putting greater pressure on Kaliningrad, and the UK will now also lead a naval bloc, which is set up to confront Russia. And there are continuous references to what they have labeled Russia's shadow fleet. How do you see this? How close are we to having some red lines crossed here? Because, again, a lot of this would have been unthinkable during the Cold War, but now it hardly makes the headlines, which is a bit concerning.

#Dmitry Polyanskiy

I think that the European countries are trying to test the limits of our patience, and they will quite easily find themselves in the situation I mentioned at the beginning of our discussion, when we are already in direct confrontation. And the Baltic Sea seems to be a very likely platform, a region for

such confrontation, because there are a lot of actions being taken by NATO countries against Russia. Some openly speak about possibly making the Baltic Sea an internal NATO sea, which is, of course, a casus belli, as you understand.

Some crazy people, like this Lithuanian Minister of Defense, if I'm not mistaken, are saying that NATO should show Russia that it is possible, that it has the capacity to strike Kaliningrad in order to kind of cool down spirits in Moscow. I can't imagine more irresponsible statements at all. So all these belligerent moves again bring us to the situation when a direct conflict will already be a fact of life and not something that some analysts warn about. And again, this is a very blurred line, and, well, it can happen any moment today, unfortunately, because of the actions that NATO countries are undertaking and all of their provocations and rhetoric. It doesn't go unnoticed in my country, of course.

#Glenn

Well, I spoke a few days ago on this program with Sergei Karaganov, who, as you know, has been quite influential in terms of changing Russia's nuclear doctrine and also, of course, advising everyone from Gorbachev to Yeltsin and Putin. He was making the point that in the past he was pushing for essentially restoring Russia's deterrent by striking Europe, and he said that he was leading a small minority. He argues that now it has shifted to him representing the large majority. Do you feel a sense of a shifting mood in terms of how Russia should approach the Europeans on this issue?

#Dmitry Polyanskiy

Well, I can tell you that the expert community in Russia, which is very vibrant and which encompasses a lot of different opinions, including Sergei Karaganov, who is a very respected scholar, the idea of using tactical nuclear weapons is no longer a taboo, I would say, and many people share these ideas. This is visible. But it still doesn't come from the circles that make decisions on certain issues. This is a big difference between the expert community and the decision-making circles.

But the change is visible because many people are really frustrated. Many people say that they are already waging war against Russia directly. They are already killing Russian soldiers. They are already participating in hitting Russian civilian infrastructure. So what are we waiting for? This question is open, and it is pronounced louder and louder. So this is, again, one of the reasons why I wouldn't exclude any scenarios today, and, well, unless there is sobering on the part of our European neighbors, I think things can get worse at any moment.

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Putin recently said, though, that the war will likely come to an end, or something along those lines. And it kind of begs the question: do you see any pathway to a political solution or a settlement? Is there any room for compromise, or is there any talk at all at the moment? How is it possible to

resolve this issue now? Because I hear often the slogans coming out of NATO countries, like “the war will be over when Russia leaves.” But again, the Europeans—sorry, the NATO countries—you know, more or less have stated very openly that when Russia leaves, NATO will move in. So it makes it... But again, we don't have any debates beyond this. I was just wondering, beyond the, I guess, the media headlines, do you have any indications that your colleagues on the European side are willing to look for some kind of compromise where the mutual security concerns are accommodated, or is there not much at all going on?

#Dmitry Polyanskiy

Well, from my contacts here on the margins of OSCE meetings, I can tell you that there are a large number of my counterparts who are really very preoccupied with what is happening and who are asking questions to me, who are engaging with me, which is not something one would imagine in other contexts, including the UN context where we are dealing mostly with the Security Council members. The circle of those whom I can speak to in the kuluar is much wider, but at the same time there are a number of countries who absolutely exclude any change in the common efforts towards Russia, the common position towards Russia. And for, if I may use this word, they are holding their colleagues hostage. They don't want to allow any leeway for collective efforts towards Russia.

And you see, this is now absolutely clearly manifested in this narrative, which has become more and more distinct about starting negotiations with Russia, designating a person who will be able to speak on behalf of everybody. The problem is that the European Union, the body which was created for the economic benefit of the whole European continent, is now to a large extent—I mean, those functionaries of the European Union, top functionaries—they are to a large extent calling the shots, and they are kind of keeping everybody in a stock, like shepherds, and looking at every attempt to leave this stock and to act in an open-minded way. So people are afraid, really afraid, of repercussions from the European Commission, from some kind of unfriendly signals to this or that capital which is too friendly towards Russia, too open to Russia.

So this is a very strange situation. It's absolutely against common sense. As for the peace efforts, I can tell you that... well, the path for peace is absolutely clear right now. And it's absolutely clear that there is a group of countries or individuals—let's put it this way, elites—who absolutely don't want to follow this path of peace. They have absolutely different plans. Is it because of the fact that they have no true reckoning of reality, or for some other reasons? I don't know. But the fact is that there is a group of elites, a group of people, who have bet everything on the continuation of this situation. Of course, on top of them is Zelensky. By the way, today, as you might know, it is the seventh anniversary of his inauguration, and two years that he has spent on top of Ukrainian power without any legitimate reasons so far.

So he just usurped power, and it's a sad day for the Ukrainians who are now deprived of the possibility to elect anybody else. So this person and his henchmen, of course, they are not interested

in any change because they understand that the end of the war will mean the end of the warfare. Warfare will mean that they will have to be held responsible for what they did to their country. They don't want this change. They want their country to fight to the very end, even if it means that everybody will be sacrificed in Ukraine. There are others in Europe who are behind this corrupt Ukrainian elite and who also have, I guess, certain reasons to keep it on top of everything and to keep the situation around corruption scandals at a very, very low heating level. And these groups together, they are doing everything to convince everybody of this very perverted, I would say, wishful thinking that everything is good for Ukraine on the battlefield, that everything is bad for Russia, that Russia is on the brink of losing all the strategic advantages.

I think they are very close to the moment, and I said it openly at the last meeting of the Security Council, we're back to the moment when they will again say that Russia has only a handful of missiles to launch, and that in order to create new missiles we have to get chips from microwaves and washing machines. I think we saw it before. So these people, they absolutely don't care about how weird their statements sound. They can do, and they will do, everything to keep it as it is and to keep Ukrainians fighting and inflicting as much harm to Russia as possible, even if it means that there will be no Ukraine afterwards, that the whole of Ukraine will be sacrificed—all its, all its, not only men but women as well. I think they are very close to this moment, and the path to peace is absolutely clear. We want normal labor on our borders. There are regions that made their desire to unite with Russia their wish, and we accepted them in accordance with their constitution, with our constitution. It implies that the territories of these regions should be liberated either by military means or by consent of the Ukrainians. And also, a big question is how the rest of Ukraine will look like.

We will not tolerate the same regime in the remainder of Ukraine, a regime that absolutely is not doing its duties in terms of respecting the rights of Russian speakers. Ukraine is the only country in the world that has officially banned the Russian language—any language, in fact. And it does so in absolute contradiction to its constitutional provisions. It tramples on its constitution. So we want a normal neighbor. We want a normal country on our borders that will not threaten Russia. We want the country with which we signed a treaty on good neighborliness the moment when Russia and Ukraine emerged as independent states.

A lot of things have been done in Ukraine in contradiction to this treaty. So we want this situation in order to be sure that there will be no more problems coming for us from the territory of Ukraine. It's as simple as this. So this part is clear. Everybody understands this. But some people prefer to ignore this sad reality that either it's this scenario, or we will have to continue to fight with all possible means, with predictable negative implications for Ukraine as a country, and also with increasing risk of a direct military clash between Russia and NATO, with all the predictable consequences for the European continent. It's as simple as that.

#Glenn

My last question is just, do you see any future for the OSCE in terms of managing European security? Because, again, throughout the Cold War, we tried to find a way of overcoming this bloc politics. And since the Helsinki Accords in 1975, we began to work on some formulas. And by 1990, we had this Charter of Paris for a New Europe. There should be no more dividing lines, no more bloc politics. We should have indivisible security. And also this foundation that we established, the OSCE, where you are, of course, the ambassador and the permanent representative of the Russian Federation.

But by the mid-90s, it became evident that this essentially inclusive European security architecture, where we would seek security with each other instead of security against each other, was essentially abandoned in favor of NATO expansion. But now we see that there's more talk about NATO fragmenting. The US doesn't have the same commitment; it's simply adjusting to a new international distribution of power. Do you think, given these changes, there are some opportunities to revive the idea of an inclusive security architecture again, where we not only focus on deterring each other with as many weapons as possible but instead pursue what was the goal for so many years?

#Dmitry Polyanskiy

Well, the OSCE is unfortunately now on artificial breathing, if I can use this expression, very close to a coma, because the way this organization was created, the way it was seen by our predecessors, is totally contrary to the way it functions right now. This organization was never meant for bloc mentality. It was created exactly as an alternative to bloc mentality. It was created as an organization which could have provided security for everybody. And it created a lot of very important documents, a lot of very important, I would say, tools, which are still there. Nobody is saying that this or that tool is obsolete and we will never use it. It's still in the OSCE toolbox.

But the NATO countries, instead of using this opportunity and building this security architecture for everybody—indivisible security, including Russia, including the others—they chose another way, and they sacrificed everything for the sake of this enlargement of NATO without any borders, without any reasons. And NATO is an aggressive bloc, as we all see right now. It has to designate an adversary, and it was only a question of time before they clearly designated Russia as a foe and as an adversary. They can't live in a situation where there is no adversary. The question is, what is the sense of keeping NATO? And it's absolutely detrimental to the profile of the OSCE, to its founding principles.

And step by step, all the treaties, all the arrangements, all the transparency and confidence-building measures became undermined by this behavior of NATO countries. The OSCE represents a very sad picture because instead of discussing these concepts of common security, instead of addressing the common challenges that we have, that we could face efficiently by joining forces, this platform is monopolized by NATO countries, and they try to use it as an instrument in a hybrid war against Russia. Everything is about Ukraine. Everything is poisoned by this wrong perception of what happened in Ukraine and why it happened. They don't want to hear anything.

So it's like a trench, and we are in different trenches there, of course. Well, there is no dialogue, that's the problem. The dialogue is only kind of a dialogue in corridors where we can discuss things, but it's not at a decision-making level. It raises a certain awareness, I hope, on behalf of my counterparts with whom I speak. But if you look at the formal side of the OSCE, you will see that it's just empty talk and empty threats towards Russia. Everything is blamed on Russia, every event is used by Ukraine and its sponsors to promote this anti-Russian, Russophobic narrative. So it's a very sad picture, and of course it raises a lot of questions about the future of this organization and its added value. It can't be another tool for criticizing and lashing at Russia or Western countries. They have now the Council of Europe, which we withdrew from.

They have, of course, the EU. They can spend hours there lashing at Russia and kind of, you know, cheering themselves up with Russophobic rhymes and other things. But this is a serious organization that is supposed to deal with the issues of European security. And we are there exactly for dealing with this issue. We're still there. We're not withdrawing. We still try to use this platform to kind of make our approaches, make our assessments known to our European neighbors. But if it continues like this, I wouldn't bet very much on the future of this organization. And unfortunately, there are a lot of countries that simply are ready to do everything to keep it in the same situation on artificial breathing, ignoring the fact that it can come to a certain coma and to the complete disappearance of the OSCE as a tool. That would be, of course, a pity, but this is the scenario which they are bringing about very quickly.

#Glenn

This is widely recognized as being the problem of a return to bloc politics. That is, the alliance system depends on continuous conflict. Indeed, when peace breaks out, alliance systems tend to begin to break up, which is why in the 90s this was the main discussion in NATO — either out of area or out of business — because a new mission had to be found to keep the power structures together. Anyway, I've taken enough of your time already, so I just want to thank you again, Ambassador, for your time.

#Dmitry Polyanskiy

Thank you. You're welcome.