

Irish Foreign Affairs

Volume 15, Special Issue

March 2022

“Every nation, if it is to survive as a nation, must study its own history and have a foreign policy”
—C.J. O’Donnell, *The Lordship of the World*, 1924, p.145

SPECIAL ISSUE — THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

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The Crisis in Ukraine

by Pat Walsh

Introduction

It is largely forgotten now – in time of war – that the Ukraine crisis began in 2013/14 and it came about as a result of actions by the European Union. The EU has been hell-bent on expansion eastwards from the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. That expansionism was originally initiated by Britain, which was resolutely opposed to any developments tending towards the formation of a European state. The British worried that the EU was about to cohere around a re-united Germany and go from strength to strength. But the eastern expansionism was taken up by the EU with great enthusiasm and blended with the anti-Russian feeling in the new eastern members, Brussels busied itself with its new project to the detriment of consolidation. Britain discreetly looked on from its island before finally retiring from the European project - its work done - in Brexit. And the road to the east led inevitably to the Ukraine.

In a review of Professor Richard Sakwa's book *Frontline Ukraine*, published in 2015, Professor Geoffrey Roberts of University College, Cork wrote in *The Irish Times*:

“When the first World War broke out Pope Benedict XV declared it the suicide of Europe. But Europe survived and was reborn, albeit after two World Wars and a prolonged cold war that threatened nuclear extinction. At the heart of this rebirth was the European Union and its project both to unify and to pacify Europe.

In this powerful account of the Ukraine crisis Richard Sakwa argues the EU has abandoned that peace project and allowed itself to become an auxiliary of NATO's expansion into central and eastern Europe. Instead of seeking accommodation, compromise and engagement with Russia in relation to Ukraine, the EU leadership in Brussels has turned the issue of Ukraine's “European choice” into an instrument to isolate and destabilise Vladimir Putin's regime. The resultant dangerous confrontation between Russia and the West will divide the continent for at least a generation.

At the forefront of this development have been Russophobes in Poland, the Baltic States and other countries within the “new Europe”, who have imported into the EU their historic antagonisms with neighbouring Russia. Supported by resurgent cold warriors in the United States, the anti-Putin camp in Europe has demonised the Russian president and denied his country's legitimate security interests and concerns. The contention that NATO and EU enlargement is no threat to Russia is belied by NATO's military exercises on Russia's borders and belligerent calls to arm Ukraine and increase western military spending.” (25.4.2015)

It is doubtful if such a plain presentation of the facts of the Ukraine conflict would be either sought, provided or indeed be permissible in the mainstream European media today.

The “*Suicide of Europe*” would be an apt title for how the continent, led by the EU, has put itself at the political and economic behest and mercy of Washington, in the call to arms for Ukraine. Europe is, in effect, allowing the most corrupt state in Europe which has a strong neo-Nazi movement, which routinely intimidates elected representatives, determine its

important relationship with Russia and wreck its economy. The EU leaders have become putty in the hands of a former comedian/clown/actor, who is giving the performance of his life.

President Biden has made it clear that Europe must suffer great pain for the success of the war in Ukraine: “*I know that eliminating Russian gas will have costs for Europe, but it's not only the right thing to do from a moral standpoint, it is going to put us on a much stronger strategic footing.*” His accomplice in Kiev, President Zelensky, with great moral authority, now rates the performance of European states in the war effort. And he does not rate Ireland highly, much to the embarrassment of the Taoiseach, despite its willingness to take in 200,000 Ukrainians and give much humanitarian (non-lethal) support. It is the lethal support that kills Russians that the Ukrainian President desires.

European leaders have only themselves to blame for the predicament they have got their peoples into. They have instigated moral hysteria not seen since August 1914 and the fact that Ukraine is shedding much blood for the geopolitical advance on Russia will not make it easy to shirk from the economic sacrifice required of the European working classes.

Washington looks on with self-satisfaction; It has now simultaneously curtailed the development of European/Russian economic relations and brought the continent firmly back into its sphere of influence, for California to remake in its own image and for US business to profit from.

The course of the EU, once it committed itself to unlimited expansion as the vanguard of NATO, was certain to end in some kind of catastrophe for the continent. And so it has proved.

Back in 2014 James Carden criticised the economic determinism of the EU's “*Democratic Domino Theory*” that US administrations were supporting as an advance guard of liberal order expansion, and which,

“...posits that as Ukraine and the other former (Soviet) states integrate their economies into the larger European markets they will adopt Europe's political and cultural norms. This transformation will, in turn, influence Russia's internal political development and it too (somehow) will Westernise through the power of example. This, it should go without saying, is a remarkably foolish way of seeing the world. Yet the longer American policy makers adhere to this premise, the more they will end up endangering the long-term viability of the EU.” (America's Ukraine Policy Disaster, National Interest, 2.7.2014)

Ukraine had left the USSR on 24 August 1991 and entered its post-Soviet period, which in some respects was not very different from its Soviet period. The Ukraine was a component of the Soviet state, within which it was functional. Its appearance as an independent state was not the result of national struggle. It came into being as a product of internal Soviet disintegration, courtesy of its last General Secretary, Gorbachev. It was actually the Russian Declaration of State Sovereignty which triggered a similar Ukrainian one. In the all-union referendum of March 1991 over 70 per cent of Ukrainians voted to preserve the

Union. It was subsequent events in Russia that pushed Ukraine toward independence with the other republics.

The Ukraine had no long struggle for independence behind it, such as Ireland had when Britain denied it independence in 1919. Independence was more or less conferred on it through a simple vote.

Ukraine had its Western-inspired Orange Revolution and a Russian capitalist oligarch in exile (Berezhovsky), who had fallen out with oligarchs at home, founded a kind of Capitalist International (the Foundation for Civil Liberties, based in New York) and made the Orange Revolution the launching pad for an assault on what remained of the Soviet state. But the Orange Revolution essentially came to nothing. It was a revolution of corruption led by billionaires who had got their billions by plundering the economy of the Soviet state. These economic oligarchs had never functioned as competitive capitalists. They were wealthy through no effort of their own. The corrupt oligarchs fostered an idealism for the masses and used it for their own benefit. But the Ukrainian oligarchs, who did not claw their way to their positions through their own efforts, lacked the necessary skill to politically manage the masses and develop a functional state. The oligarchs failed to develop an oligarchy to follow on the successful British road of capitalist development. A prominent one, Julia Timoshenko, who led the Fatherland party, did not seize her moment of destiny and found herself in jail for embezzlement and corruption.

Eventually something like a normal election was held in the Ukraine, in 2010, which the EU did not declare to be invalid and a government was elected. It engaged in negotiation to fit the Ukraine into a wider economy. The illusions of the Orange Revolution were centred on the EU but the practicalities of the existing Ukrainian industrial economic base, with its requirement of cheap energy, directed it towards Russia. The Yanukovich Government bargained between the EU and Russia about its economic future. If it linked itself with Russia, its economic development could continue without basic alteration. If it went to the EU, its industrial economy would be decimated, and it would be deprived of the favourable trading links it had already established with Russia. It put itself on offer to the EU for a sum that would compensate for the loss of industries that would not be viable in the EU and for the loss of subsidised

energy from Russia. When the EU would not meet its terms, it turned back to Russia and the EU went frantic with the rage of the rejected. Its representatives went to Kiev, made propaganda, and helped to build barricades in the centre of the city, around Maidan.

The fact that the Russian Federation would erect tariff barriers against the Ukraine and charge it world market prices for energy if it joined the EU was presented as Russian intimidation of the Ukraine. But it was simply an expression of the fact that the Russian national economy, which protects itself from the EU/US, would have to extend that protection to its borders with the Ukraine if the Ukraine joined the EU—an EU which was contemplating a free trade agreement with the US, with NATO in the background. With the EU expecting the Ukraine to make sacrifices for the sake of being admitted to the European ideal and Russia making it clear that a Ukraine in a free trade relationship with Europe would encounter tariff barriers at the Russian border the Ukrainian Government accepted a Russian offer, which exceeded what the EU would put up. It was an offer that would enable Ukraine to preserve its industrial economy.

The occupation of the central square in Kiev, Maidan, began immediately. Fortifications were built in it and it became a site of pilgrimage for Western democracy. EU personnel went to Kiev in order to enhance the demonstrations into insurrection. Washington poured money in and took control of the insurrection. Snipers of mysterious origin – which the Maidan leaders were disinterested in discovering the source of – which killed around 50 people, galvanised the movement. They were positioned in Maidan held buildings and almost certainly were members of the right-wing Ukrainian nationalist groups, such as Right Sector.

The elected Government was overthrown by an insurrection in the capital, which was not representative of the country. It was like the action of the Paris mob at various points in the French Revolution – but without a Danton or Robespierre.

The EU leaders had become apprehensive about the consequences of what they were doing. They brokered a deal between the Government and the insurrection for the formation of a Coalition Government. “*Fuck the EU*” said Victoria Nuland, Obama’s Assistant Secretary of State. A leaked telephone call between Nuland and Geoffrey Pyatt revealed the US administration directing the coup and choosing the new Ukrainian government.

The EU compromise was brushed aside overnight. The insurrection was intensified. Government buildings were occupied. Suddenly there was a new Government supported by armed militias of various kinds. This was the February Revolution, instigated by the US, that overthrew the EU deal.

When it became public knowledge that Obama’s administration was directing the insurrection, Yanukovich did not call in the US Ambassador and expel him and his extensive entourage. That fact, more than anything else, demonstrated his unfitness to govern in the situation.

The EU suddenly discovered that it had been mistaken in thinking that the Kiev Government had been democratically elected. The White House declared authoritatively that President Yanukovich had stolen that election, and would steal the next election if left in place. The Maidan Insurrection claimed that it represented the will of the Ukrainian people—but it could not wait to demonstrate this at the General Election a few months ahead because, as an American spokesman explained, Yanukovich would steal that election as he had stolen the last election. And the EU did not repudiate the American assertion that the Government it had been negotiating a deal with was an unelected despotism.

Irish Foreign Affairs is a publication of
the *Irish Political Review* Group.
55 St Peter’s Tce., Howth, Dublin 13

Editor: Philip O’Connor
ISSN 2009-132X

Printers: Athol Books, Belfast
www.atholbooks.org
Price per issue: €4 (Sterling £3)
Annual postal subscription €16 (£14)
Annual electronic subscription €4 (£3)

All correspondence:
Philip@atholbooks.org
Orders to:
atholbooks-sales.org

Even at this stage the underlying cause of the destabilising of Ukraine and the overthrowing of its elected government was clear. The following sentence from a Guardian report let the cat out of the bag:

“The deposed Viktor Yanukovich, for all his incompetence, corruption and abuse of power, was the first president to oppose NATO membership in his election campaign and then persuade parliament to make non-alignment the cornerstone of the country’s security strategy, on the pattern of Finland, Ireland and Sweden. NATO refused to accept it.”

That is from a Guardian article by Jonathan Steele, of 2nd March 2014, ‘The Ukraine Crisis: John Kerry and NATO must calm down and back off.’ Steele pointed out that:

“Underlying the crisis in Crimea and Russia’s fierce resistance to potential changes is NATO’s undisguised ambition to continue two decades of expansion. Both John Kerry’s threats to expel Russia from the G8 and the Ukrainian government’s plea for NATO aid mark a dangerous escalation of a crisis that can easily be contained if cool heads prevail. Hysteria seems to be the mood in Washington and Kiev, with the new Ukrainian prime minister claiming, “We are on the brink of disaster” as he calls up army reserves in response to Russian military movements in Crimea...”

He was over-dramatizing developments in the east, where Russian speakers are understandably alarmed after the new Kiev authorities scrapped a law allowing Russian as an official language in their areas. They see it as proof that the anti-Russian ultra-nationalists from western Ukraine who were the dominant force in last month’s insurrection still control it. Eastern Ukrainians fear similar tactics of storming public buildings could be used against their elected officials.

Kerry’s rush to punish Russia and NATO’s decision to respond to Kiev’s call by holding a meeting of member states’ ambassadors in Brussels today were mistakes. Ukraine is not part of the alliance, so none of the obligations of common defence come into play. NATO should refrain from interfering in Ukraine by word or deed. The fact that it insists on getting engaged reveals the elephant in the room: underlying the crisis in Crimea and Russia’s fierce resistance to potential changes is NATO’s undisguised ambition to continue two decades of expansion into what used to be called “post-Soviet”, led by Bill Clinton and taken up by successive administrations in Washington. At the back of Pentagon minds, no doubt, is the dream that a US navy will one day replace the Russian Black Sea fleet in the Crimean ports of Sevastopol and Balaclava.

Since independence, every poll in Ukraine has shown a majority against NATO membership, yet one after another the elites who ran the country until 2010 and who are now back in charge ignored the popular will. Seduced by NATO’s largesse and the feeling of being part of a hi-tech global club, they took part in joint military exercises and even sent Ukrainian troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is not too late to show some wisdom now. Vladimir Putin’s troop movements in Crimea, which are supported by most Russians, are of questionable legality under the terms of the peace and friendship treaty that Russia signed with Ukraine in 1997. But their illegality is considerably less clear-cut than that of the US-led invasion of Iraq, or of Afghanistan, where the UN security council only authorised the intervention several weeks after it had happened. And Russia’s troop movements can be reversed if the crisis abates. That would require the restoration of the language law in eastern Ukraine and firm action to prevent armed groups of anti-Russian nationalists threatening public buildings there.

The Russian-speaking majority in the region is as angry with elite corruption, unemployment and economic inequality as

people in western Ukraine. But it also feels beleaguered and provoked, with its cultural heritage under existential threat. Responsibility for eliminating those concerns lies not in Washington, Brussels or Moscow, but solely in Kiev.”

The coup d’état, which was managed by Washington, was strongly anti-Russian in sentiment. A process of Ukrainianisation of Russians in the Ukraine was announced with far reaching anti-Russian measures—measures directed against the large body of Russians living in the Ukraine. The Ukraine was a multi-national state while it was part of the Soviet Union and it remained a multi-national state after separating from the Soviet Union. That fact of life was not denied until a government whose personnel were chosen by the White House was installed through the coup in Kiev. Russian was an official language of the state with the Russian language enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine, which declared that the state guaranteed the rights of Russians and other ethnic minorities. The first acts of the coup Government were to abolish the official status of Russian, and to treat what was hitherto regarded as the liberation of the Ukraine from Nazi conquest and tyranny as its subjugation to Russian conquest and tyranny. Ukrainian was declared to be the sole language of the state, and the anti-Nazi symbols were torn down. These acts naturally had consequences.

The American monitors chose to intervene at this point as things threatened to get out of hand and delayed the implementation of those measures for the time being. Moscow, not surprisingly, did not rush to recognise the anti-Russian Government established by coup d’état as legitimate. The EU threatened sanctions against those who did not promptly recognise the new Government in Kiev, without waiting on elections. It is now apparently a principle of International Law of the democratic era that a coup which overthrows an elected Government must be recognised at once as democratically legitimate.

The coup d’état by anti-Russian forces naturally disrupted the tenuous political consensus which had enabled the Ukraine to function as a state since it came into existence, when the Soviet Union was being broken up by Gorbachev and Yeltsin. The naked anti-Russianism of the coup and fear of Banderovtsy set off a process of disintegration in the Ukrainian state in the form of the Novorossiia secession. The US/EU said disintegration is not allowed—not in the Ukraine at any rate: even though the US/EU encouraged the disintegration of Yugoslavia, by fostering extreme nationalist developments.

When the Ukraine was destabilised by the anti-Russian coup, the Russian majority in the Crimean region organised a referendum for seceding from the Ukraine and they opted to transfer to the Russian Federation. EU spokesmen said the referendum was illegal because it was not conducted under the authority of the new anti-Russian Government in Kiev. Such a rule was not applied in Yugoslavia. The referendum was boycotted by Kiev loyalists, who declared that the 97% majority showed that it was rigged as well as illegal. The population balance in the Crimea is about 60% Russian, 40% non-Russian. However, if Kiev thought it could rely on the non-Russians to vote against secession, so that there would be a 60/40 result, the referendum would almost certainly have been contested.

The Crimean referendum was not challenged by force. This warded off the probability of the Russian naval base in the Crimea being surrounded by NATO forces. And that is, of course, ground for serious discontent in the expansionist EU. Instead, the Ukrainians hastily built a dam in the Kherson region that blocked 85 per cent of Crimea’s water supply, destroying its harvest in 2014.

The British Foreign Secretary then condemned Russia for engaging in a “*sponsored war*” in Ukraine. The characterisation of the war between the coup Government in Kiev, instigated

and supported by the West, and the Donetsk and Lugansk Peoples Republics established by referendum, as a “*sponsored war*” depends on acceptance of the Kiev narrative that the Donetsk Republic is a fabrication of the Russian State operated by “*Russians*” rather than the authentic response of an actual Russian population to the anti-Russian action of the Kiev revolution. The people in the Donbas (short for Donetsk Basin and comprising the Donetsk and Lugansk regions) are overwhelmingly Russian-speaking. However, there were no separatist tendencies before 2014. In Donetsk and Lugansk it seems that Russian populations were provoked by the anti-Russian stance of the coup Government into electing their own governments.

When Poroshenko came to power after the coup he aimed to reunite Ukraine by military force, conceding that Crimea could only be recovered through diplomacy with Russia. Over 90 per cent of the Ukrainian army plus reservists were deployed to the south east to break the resistance to the coup government in eastern Ukraine. As Prof. Richard Sakwa noted, it was the Kiev government who began the anti-civilian warfare in the Ukraine in 2014:

“The Ukrainian armed forces had learned to avoid infantry combat, and instead launched air strikes and long-range artillery bombardments against apartment blocks and villages. This rained down indiscriminate fire on heavily populated areas, causing numerous civilian casualties. This was justified by alleging that the rebels placed their own ordnance next to civilian objects.” (Frontline Ukraine, p.164)

In response to the anti-civilian warfare of the Ukrainians, on 2 May 2014, Samantha Power, the great humanitarian US Ambassador at the UN, suspended

“her revered ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine and gave Kiev’s leaders a US license to kill. Lauding their ‘remarkable, almost unimaginable, restraint,’ as Obama himself did after (the massacre of several hundred trade unionists by Ukrainian nationalists in) Odessa, she continued. ‘Their response is reasonable, it is proportional, and frankly it is what any one of our countries would have done’.” (p.164)

A force of 100,000 bore down on eastern Ukraine, who were receiving no help from Moscow at this point. The Kremlin was seeking a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine and Putin and Lavrov were accused of betrayal by the Russian population in what was fast becoming a “humanitarian catastrophe” with tens of thousands of deaths and 100,000 refugees fleeing the region. By August it was reported that 800,000 refugees had entered Russia. Military pressure, designated “the Anti-Terrorist Operation” was applied by the government in Kiev, resulting in a war lasting 7 years and claiming around 15,000 lives. Before the military operation of 2022 there were already 2.2 million internally displaced people in Ukraine and the Russian Federation, according to UN estimates, resulting from the Maidan coup of 2014.

Prof. Richard Sakwa noted back in 2015:

“From the very beginning Russian policy was caught between bad and very bad options. It was clear that ‘Novorossiya’ was not Crimea, where there had long been a powerful irredentist movement calling for reunification with Russia. There was nothing of the sort in Donbas, where the overwhelming majority sought a new settlement within Ukraine. Separatist aspirations only came later, after Yanukovich fled and the new authorities made several ill-judged moves in the absence of effective representation from the east, and then launched an all-out war against ‘terrorists’... Putin was coming under enormous pressure to offer succour to the Donbas insurgents and to stop the killing of civilians... There had been a powerful upwelling of domestic support for the resistance movement in the Donbas, to which Putin’s fate now became effectively tied

– a situation he had devoted his whole presidency to avoiding... There was a full scale war and a massive humanitarian disaster on Russia’s doorstep, but a military intervention threatened to draw Russia into a direct conflict with Ukraine and its Western backers, a conflict that Russia could not hope to win. Like the Afghanistan war in the 1980s, the outcome could in the end be the fall of the government in Moscow. Unlike the Soviet Union, however, Putin faced powerful domestic pressures.” (pp.166-8)

The Ukrainian army was a formidable fighting force by 2022. It could draw on a population of 44 million and was one of the largest in Europe and without doubt the most battle-hardened, having been in the field for 8 years. It was also the best trained and equipped military force, courtesy of NATO. A BBC report on 24 March 2022, which involved interviews with two Ukrainian servicemen, revealed that from 2014:

“The whole Ukrainian army underwent an overhaul – to make it ready for the next war with Russia. Vlad and Mark, and almost every fighting man I have met on the frontline over the past three weeks, have one thing in common - they have all fought in the eastern Donbas region. Some sport combat patches on their body armour with “donbasonia” written on them. In the separatist Donbas enclaves of Donetsk and Luhansk, Ukrainian forces have been combat-tested for the past eight years. Between 250,000 and 400,000 Ukrainian men may have done tours of duty there since 2014. “Ukraine is not the same country it was in 2014,” one front line commander told me - echoing a sentiment that was repeated again and again to me in Kharkiv. This has created a more professional army, and one with common purpose - that a day of reckoning was sure to follow for the country.”

*

The following 6 articles were written for the *Irish Political Review* and *Irish Foreign Affairs* of Athol Books. The first one was written back in October 2014, the next 2 in the month or so before the Russian military operation that began on 24th February 2022, and the final 3 during the first weeks of the war. The dates of their composition are next to the titles of each. The object was to explain what was happening in Ukraine in a situation in which facts and debate were rapidly being shut down across the West, particularly in Europe.

Pat Walsh 24.3.2022

The West to Blame for the Ukraine Crisis (19.10.2014)

This is now being admitted even in the influential organs of the US political establishment. In the Council for Foreign Relations’ magazine, *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2014) an article, ‘*Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault*’ written by John J. Mearsheimer explains why US/UK policy since the ending of the Cold War has produced crisis after crisis:

“According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. Russian President Vladimir Putin, the argument goes, annexed Crimea out of a long-standing desire to resuscitate the Soviet empire, and he may eventually go after the rest of Ukraine, as well as other countries in eastern Europe. In this view, the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 merely provided a pretext for Putin’s decision to order Russian forces to seize part of Ukraine.

But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia’s orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU’s expansion

eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine — beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 — were critical elements, too. Since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed NATO enlargement, and in recent years, they have made it clear that they would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor turned into a Western bastion. For Putin, the illegal overthrow of Ukraine's democratically elected and pro-Russian president — which he rightly labelled a “coup” — was the final straw. He responded by taking Crimea, a peninsula he feared would host a NATO naval base, and working to destabilize Ukraine until it abandoned its efforts to join the West.”

The Road to Ukraine

Mearsheimer locates the origin of the Ukraine problem in US behaviour at the end of the Cold War:

“As the Cold War came to a close, Soviet leaders preferred that U.S. forces remain in Europe and NATO stay intact, an arrangement they thought would keep a reunified Germany pacified. But they and their Russian successors did not want NATO to grow any larger and assumed that Western diplomats understood their concerns. The Clinton administration evidently thought otherwise, and in the mid-1990s, it began pushing for NATO to expand.”

NATO's 1995 bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs was the first sign of aggressive intent. NATO enlargement toward Russia took place from 1999, bringing in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The second wave took place in 2004 including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Moscow complained about this aggressive expansionism from the beginning but were too weak or unwilling to do anything about it during the Yeltsin period.

In his book *‘Putin vs. Putin’* Alexander Dugin, philosopher and sometime adviser to the Russian leader, suggests that it would be a mistake to see the Cold War as ending in 1991. What actually happened was that the Soviet Union unilaterally withdrew from it. It did not concede defeat, negotiate terms or sign any document of surrender but simply said “I'm out.”

On 7 December 1988, Gorbachev addressed the General Assembly on the UN and there announced the withdrawal of 500,000 Soviet troops from Eastern Europe. Gorbachev proposed a new world order based on “all human interests” and declared his desire for the Soviet Union to join international partners for peace. Essentially this was a unilateral withdrawal from the Cold War and an abandonment of Communist objectives and the international class struggle. The General Secretary declared his belief in the principle of renunciation of violence and force in international affairs. In essence, this was not only a proposal to the West to end the Cold War it was a signal that the USSR was prepared to abandon its status as a global superpower. The West took it, understandably, as a Soviet surrender from the leader of the Communist world.

The presumption in Russia was that having withdrawn from the Cold War its opponents would do likewise. The US/UK had always proclaimed they were fighting the Cold War for mainly defensive purposes so it was reasonable to assume that once the threat from the ‘Evil Empire’ of Communism was removed they would stand down their armies and dissolve their ‘defensive’ force of NATO. It was, however, naive in the extreme for Gorbachev to have believed that the West would reciprocate in kind. Instead, the US ramped up the pressure on Gorbachev, militarily and economically, by preventing Western companies like Toshiba doing business in Moscow.

This was very different from the position relating to Communist China, where Western investment and Chinese participation in the global market was being greatly encouraged

by Washington. The aim of US policy, since the Nixon years, had been to drive a wedge between Communist China and Communist Russia. It seems to have been believed that encouraging Chinese collaboration in the capitalist world market would undermine the Communist Party, since politics follows from economics, doesn't it? However, at the same time as the Russian enemy was being subverted the Chinese instrument was being built as a formidable force (the new enemy?) because the Communist Party of China had no Gorbachev and conducted its statecraft very shrewdly indeed.

The USSR had tested the West's pretensions a few years into the Cold War. In 1952 Stalin made a proposal to the West of a Soviet withdrawal from eastern Germany. Stalin's preconditions were that the Allies withdraw troops from western Germany and that Germany remain militarily neutral as a buffer-state following reunification. Distrusting Stalin's motivations, the Allies countered with the condition that Germany be free to join the “European Defence Community” (which ultimately failed to appear) and to rearm accordingly. Stalin rejected this manoeuvre and Germany remained divided for a generation.

On 31 March 1954 a note was sent to the governments of France, the United States and Great Britain offering to discuss a possibility of the Soviet Union joining NATO:

“... inasmuch as the Soviet Union of all the big powers that belonged to the anti-Hitler coalition is the only one that is not a signatory to this treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty cannot but be regarded as an aggressive pact directed against the Soviet Union. Given the proper conditions, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization could lose its aggressive character, that is, if all the big powers that belonged to the anti-Hitler coalition became its participants.”

“In view of this the Soviet Government, guided by the unchanged principles of its foreign policy of peace and desirous of relaxing the tension in international relations, states its readiness to join with the interested governments in examining the matter of having the Soviet Union participate in the North Atlantic Treaty.”

The Secretary General of NATO Lord Ismay, however, on a piece of paper torn out from a note pad at a Milan hotel, where he was staying, concluded that the Soviet application amounted to “*an unrepentant burglar requesting to join the police force.*” He decided not to bother to find out if Russia would subscribe to the NATO principles, which could only be ascertained by the accession process. And NATO's response did not even represent a polite refusal. It came 3 weeks after the USSR's request and said that “*the unrealistic nature of the proposal does not warrant discussion.*”

The Russians maintain that the U.S. secured Soviet troop withdrawal from East Germany in 1990 through promising there would be no expansion of NATO. However, since then NATO has absorbed 12 more countries.

An article by Jack F. Matlock, Ambassador to the USSR from 1987-91, in *The Washington Post* of 14 March 2014 confirms that the Russians were duped by the US, who treated the end of the Cold War as a Soviet surrender. Matlock saw the events at first hand and wrote:

“The common assumption that the West forced the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus won the Cold War is wrong. The fact is that the Cold War ended by negotiation to the advantage of both sides.

At the December 1989 Malta summit, Mikhail Gorbachev and President George H.W. Bush confirmed that the ideological basis for the war was gone, stating that the two nations no longer regarded each other as enemies. Over the next two years, we worked more closely with the Soviets than with even some of our allies. Together, we halted the arms race, banned

chemical weapons and agreed to drastically reduce nuclear weapons. I also witnessed the raising of the Iron Curtain, the liberation of Eastern Europe and the voluntary abandonment of communist ideology by the Soviet leader. Without an arms race ruining the Soviet economy and perpetuating totalitarianism, Gorbachev was freed to focus on internal reforms.

Because the collapse of the Soviet Union happened so soon afterward, people often confuse it with the end of the Cold War. But they were separate events, and the former was not an inevitable outcome of the latter...

Even after the U.S.S.R. ceased to exist, Gorbachev maintained that "*the end of the Cold War is our common victory.*" Yet the United States insisted on treating Russia as the loser.

"*By the grace of God, America won the Cold War,*" Bush said during his 1992 State of the Union address. That rhetoric would not have been particularly damaging on its own. But it was reinforced by actions taken under the next three presidents.

President Bill Clinton supported NATO's bombing of Serbia without U.N. Security Council approval and the expansion of NATO to include former Warsaw Pact countries. Those moves seemed to violate the understanding that the United States would not take advantage of the Soviet retreat from Eastern Europe. The effect on Russians' trust in the United States was devastating. In 1991, polls indicated that about 80 percent of Russian citizens had a favorable view of the United States; in 1999, nearly the same percentage had an unfavorable view."

It is on the record that Gorbachev was given assurances by both the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker, and German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, that if the Russians consented to the re-unification of Germany, NATO would make no movement eastward. But shortly afterwards, at Camp David, President Bush told Kohl there would be no accommodation with the Russians: "*To Hell with that! We prevailed they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.*"

The U.S. determined to ease Gorbachev out of Germany with cash bribes rather than a deal on NATO. In May 1990 Gorbachev believing he had ended the Cold War, asked to join NATO – but the Americans refused to even consider the possibility. In the end no written assurance was given to Gorbachev that NATO would not enlarge into the eastern part of Germany, despite the Soviet leader's agreement over German unity.

When the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union were dissolved in 1991 Moscow immediately made another approach to NATO. Yeltsin, seeing Eastern European nations being admitted to an organisation that was obviously something else since it had no longer its former enemy, wrote to NATO in December 1991 saying Russia hoped to join the alliance sometime in the future. The letter was timed to the first ever meeting between NATO foreign ministers and their counterparts from the former Warsaw Pact countries: the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

The Communist bloc wound up its army of the Warsaw Pact, dismantled its bases both in Eastern Europe and Russia and the Soviet Union began to concern itself with its internal affairs. It believed the war to be finished and it did not consider itself defeated. However, this was not just a military withdrawal from the battlefield. The Soviet Union began to dissolve itself as well, so there could be no doubt that the basis of the division in the world since 1945 was over.

However, the US/UK then revealed that the aggressor in the Cold War was not, in fact, the Soviet Union. The US/UK proceeded to continue to wage its Cold War, albeit in a different fashion, appropriate to the changed situation. But it waged it nonetheless by keeping on the advance toward Moscow in the territory Gorbachev signalled he would not defend, and

expanding NATO – an organisation that was presumed to be redundant with the removal of its enemy from the battlefield.

The UK/US also attempted to impose an Energy Charter, from 1991, on its new territories involving the integration of the energy resources of the former Eastern bloc into a global marketplace. This involved gaining access to Russia's energy resources whilst excluding it from availing of the European ones which clearly signalled a Cold War defeat and occupation of the defeated enemy, as what happened to Germany in 1918/19.

Jeremy Rosner came up with the term "democratic enlargement" to describe the new American policy espoused by President Clinton's National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake in his speech at the John Hopkins School in September 1993. Democratic enlargement became the theme for the Clinton administration's 1994 National Security Strategy, and over the years the prospect of membership in NATO was meant to encourage political and economic reform to US liking in Eastern Europe. But for NATO to persist it required an enemy and so Russia had to remain curiously outside the Pale of "democratic enlargement."

Russia, despite its rejection of the ideology which the West was at war with remained an enemy of the West in a continuation of the Cold War. It seems that Russia was an enemy not because it was, or had been, Communist, but because it was Russia. And it had to cease to be Russia to be treated as something other than an enemy.

That suggests that the basis of the US/UK antagonism with Russia was geopolitical rather than ideological, with it being carried on in the hand-over of global primacy between the Anglo-Saxon Atlanticist Powers. The history of British relations with Russia seems to confirm this, as in two centuries, between 1815 and 2014, Britain has only ceased to be an enemy of Russia in the two periods when Russia was required in other geopolitical work, to do down Germany. And the Great Game goes on.

That is not to say that ideology is unimportant. Russia can still be the ideological enemy of the West and is. Liberalism needs an enemy and in Putin and traditional, collective Russia they have found it. All the various individualising forces in the US/UK that have broken up collective identities – whether social class, gender, or cultural – have been mobilised ideologically against Putin. What else could prevent implosion and disintegration of society when it is fragmenting into individuals at such a rate?

Russia remained in a kind of fool's paradise for a number of years – particularly under Boris Yeltsin – until it realised what was really happening. Russia was initially duped by the NATO General Secretary who informed Moscow that it could rest assured his organisation would not expand beyond its borders of 1990 now that the Cold War was over. It was a lie, of course, and Russia had to get used to this form of cheating politics.

Putin's Munich Speech (2007)

The U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War confirms in *The Washington Post* that Vladimir Putin was originally benevolent toward the US and inclined to work with it until he too saw the reality of NATO expansionism:

"Vladimir Putin was elected in 2000 and initially followed a pro-Western orientation. When terrorists attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, he was the first foreign leader to call and offer support. He cooperated with the United States when it invaded Afghanistan, and he voluntarily removed Russian bases from Cuba and Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

What did he get in return? Some meaningless praise from President George W. Bush, who then delivered the diplomatic equivalent of swift kicks to the groin: further expansion of NATO in the Baltics and the Balkans, and plans for American

bases there; withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; invasion of Iraq without U.N. Security Council approval; overt participation in the “color revolutions” in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan; and then, probing some of the firmest red lines any Russian leader would draw, talk of taking Georgia and Ukraine into NATO. Americans, inheritors of the Monroe Doctrine, should have understood that Russia would be hypersensitive to foreign-dominated military alliances approaching or touching its borders.”

Vladimir Putin made his Munich speech on 12 February 2007, which, as Alexander Dugin suggests, represented something of “a turning point in contemporary Russian history”. Putin said:

“The unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place... However, what is a unipolar world? However one might embellish this term, at the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one centre of authority, one centre of force, one centre of decision-making.

It is world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within...

I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today’s world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today’s – and precisely in today’s – world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilisation...

Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.

We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. And independent legal norms are, as a matter of fact, coming increasingly closer to one state’s legal system. One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies...

And of course this is extremely dangerous. It results in the fact that no one feels safe. I want to emphasise this – no one feels safe! Because no one can feel that international law is like a stone wall that will protect them. Of course such a policy stimulates an arms race.

The force’s dominance inevitably encourages a number of countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, significantly new threats – though they were also well-known before – have appeared, and today threats such as terrorism have taken on a global character.”

Putin’s Munich speech declared to his people and the world that the Cold War against Russia had never ended and his country was still in a state of war. He said that he would rebuild and strengthen Russia’s sovereignty and he would not tolerate American’s attempt to construct a unipolar world around itself. He declared that this geopolitical objective of the U.S. was doomed to fail. Putin was determined to preserve/re-instate the multipolar world that benefited humanity and its diversity.

This speech had the effect of bringing Russia to its senses, as Dugin says, and the Russian people began to see things as they really were. And it marked Putin off as an enemy of the US/UK which wanted the world for itself, to do with it what it willed, as it was going about such business in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

Instead, Putin laid down a marker that Russia could not be written off by the West in its attempt to create a New World Order.

In the speech Putin criticised NATO expansionism:

“It turns out that NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders, and we continue to strictly fulfil the treaty obligations and do not react to these actions at all.

I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: “the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee”. Where are these guarantees?

The stones and concrete blocks of the Berlin Wall have long been distributed as souvenirs. But we should not forget that the fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice – one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia – a choice in favour of democracy, freedom, openness and a sincere partnership with all the members of the big European family.

And now they are trying to impose new dividing lines and walls on us; these walls may be virtual but they are nevertheless dividing, ones that cut through our continent. And is it possible that we will once again require many years and decades, as well as several generations of politicians, to disassemble and dismantle these new walls?”

Dugin suggests that it was the Western advance into Ukraine that crystallised things for Putin. “Russia 2” painted in Orange on the tents in Independence Square, Kiev, in 2004 signalled that what was taking place in Ukraine was something of a trial run for the return of Russia to helplessness of Yeltsin’s time.

NATO Expansion to Russia’s Borders

At its April 2008 summit in Bucharest, NATO considered admitting Georgia and Ukraine. but hesitated in expanding right up to Russia’s borders. Instead a warning shot was fired by endorsing the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine and it was declared: “*These countries will become members of NATO.*”

This prompted Russia’s intervention in Georgia in August 2008 when Putin showed his determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO. The Georgian President Saakashvili, who was committed to joining NATO decided in the summer of 2008 to attempt to incorporate two separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia into his state. Russian forces took control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, making a point that it would not stand for NATO interference in its backyard. But despite this clear warning, NATO did not abandon its objective of bringing Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance. And NATO expansion continued with Albania and Croatia becoming enlisted as members in 2009.

Mearsheimer also notes the European Union’s important role in the Ukraine crisis:

“The EU, too, has been marching eastward. In May 2008, it unveiled its Eastern Partnership initiative, a program to foster prosperity in such countries as Ukraine and integrate them into the EU economy. Not surprisingly, Russian leaders view the plan as hostile to their country’s interests. This past February, before Yanukovych was forced from office, Russian Foreign

Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the EU of trying to create a “sphere of influence” in eastern Europe. In the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion.”

Mearsheimer also draws attention to the other method the West has employed to expand into Ukraine – the funding of pro-Western individuals and organizations in the country. Victoria Nuland, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, estimated in December 2013 that the US had invested more than \$5 billion since 1991. The U.S. government has also bankrolled the National Endowment for Democracy and funded more than 60 projects in Ukraine, with the NED’s president, Carl Gershman, calling the country “the biggest prize” to be had by the West. After Yanukovich won Ukraine’s presidential election in February 2010, the NED decided he was undermining its goals, so it stepped up efforts to support the opposition.

Direct threats were made by those penetrating and interfering in Ukraine. In September 2013, Gershman wrote in *The Washington Post*,

“Ukraine’s choice to join Europe will accelerate the demise of the ideology of Russian imperialism that Putin represents... Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself.”

Prof. Mearsheimer relates:

“The West’s triple package of policies — NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion — added fuel to a fire waiting to ignite. The spark came in November 2013, when Yanukovich rejected a major economic deal he had been negotiating with the EU and decided to accept a \$15 billion Russian counteroffer instead. That decision gave rise to anti-government demonstrations that escalated over the following three months and that by mid-February had led to the deaths of some one hundred protesters. Western emissaries hurriedly flew to Kiev to resolve the crisis. On February 21, the government and the opposition struck a deal that allowed Yanukovich to stay in power until new elections were held. But it immediately fell apart, and Yanukovich fled to Russia the next day. The new government in Kiev was pro-Western and anti-Russian to the core, and it contained four high-ranking members who could legitimately be labelled neofascists.”

Mearsheimer is clear about Washington’s role in all this:

“Although the full extent of U.S. involvement has not yet come to light, it is clear that Washington backed the coup. Nuland and Republican Senator John McCain participated in anti-government demonstrations, and Geoffrey Pyatt, the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, proclaimed after Yanukovich’s toppling that it was “a day for the history books.” As a leaked telephone recording revealed, Nuland had advocated regime change and wanted the Ukrainian politician Arseniy Yatsenyuk to become prime minister in the new government, which he did. No wonder Russians of all persuasions think the West played a role in Yanukovich’s ouster.”

This prompted Putin to secure the important strategic region of Crimea (that had been attached to Ukraine by Khrushchev) before it was subject to NATO absorption.

Prof. Mearsheimer argues that Putin’s actions were entirely understandable and justifiable:

“Putin’s actions should be easy to comprehend. A huge expanse of flat land that Napoleonic France, imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all crossed to strike at Russia itself, Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia. No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow’s mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine. Nor would any Russian leader stand idly by while the West helped install a government there that was determined to integrate Ukraine into the West.

Washington may not like Moscow’s position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory. After all, the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it. Logic aside, Russian leaders have told their Western counterparts on many occasions that they consider NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine unacceptable, along with any effort to turn those countries against Russia — a message that the 2008 Russian-Georgian war also made crystal clear.”

Mearsheimer notes that the great U.S. diplomat and historian George Kennan had warned against US policy at the end of the Cold War in a 1998 interview, shortly after the U.S. Senate approved the first round of NATO expansion:

“I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies... I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anyone else.”

In that same interview, Kennan, the Cold War warrior, predicted that NATO expansion would provoke a crisis, after which the proponents of expansion would “say that we always told you that is how the Russians are.”

In an earlier piece, ‘*A Fateful Error*,’ published in *The New York Times* of 5th February 1997, Kennan had been very explicit as to what he saw as the consequences of NATO expansion toward Russia:

“Why, with all the hopeful possibilities engendered by the end of the Cold War, should East-West relations become centred on the question of who would be allied with whom and, by implication, against whom in some fanciful, totally unforeseeable and most improbable future military conflict?... Bluntly stated...expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era. Such a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations, and to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking...”

President Biden’s CIA director, William J. Burns, has been warning about the provocative effect of NATO expansion on Russia since 1995, when he was a political officer in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. In 2008, Burns, then American Ambassador to Moscow, wrote to President Obama’s Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice:

“Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite (not just Putin). In more than two and a half years of conversations with key Russian players, from knuckle-draggers in the dark recesses of the Kremlin to Putin’s sharpest liberal critics, I have yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests.”

Prof. Mearsheimer puts the blame on the Liberal side of the US Imperialism coin for the irrepressible desire to confront Russia:

“Most liberals... favored enlargement, including many key members of the Clinton administration. They believed that the end of the Cold War had fundamentally transformed international politics and that a new, post-national order had replaced the realist logic that used to govern Europe.”

Putin in the Right!

The analogies being made with Hitler do not impress Mearsheimer in relation to Putin. This Liberal anti-appeasement view that is periodically trotted out when the US/UK wishes to destroy functional states goes like this in relation to the Russian leader, according to Prof. Mearsheimer:

“Putin, having taken Crimea, is now testing the waters to see if the time is right to conquer Ukraine, or at least its eastern part, and he will eventually behave aggressively toward other countries in Russia’s neighborhood. For some in this camp, Putin represents a modern-day Adolf Hitler, and striking any kind of deal with him would repeat the mistake of Munich. Thus, NATO must admit Georgia and Ukraine to contain Russia before it dominates its neighbours and threatens western Europe.”

But,

“This argument falls apart on close inspection. If Putin were committed to creating a greater Russia, signs of his intentions would almost certainly have arisen before February 22. But there is virtually no evidence that he was bent on taking Crimea, much less any other territory in Ukraine, before that date. Even Western leaders who supported NATO expansion were not doing so out of a fear that Russia was about to use military force. Putin’s actions in Crimea took them by complete surprise and appear to have been a spontaneous reaction to Yanukovich’s ouster. Right afterward, even Putin said he opposed Crimean secession, before quickly changing his mind.

Besides, even if it wanted to, Russia lacks the capability to easily conquer and annex eastern Ukraine, much less the entire country. Roughly 15 million people — one-third of Ukraine’s population — live between the Dnieper River, which bisects the country, and the Russian border. An overwhelming majority of those people want to remain part of Ukraine and would surely resist a Russian occupation. Furthermore, Russia’s mediocre army, which shows few signs of turning into a modern Wehrmacht, would have little chance of pacifying all of Ukraine. Moscow is also poorly positioned to pay for a costly occupation; its weak economy would suffer even more in the face of the resulting sanctions.

But even if Russia did boast a powerful military machine and an impressive economy, it would still probably prove unable to successfully occupy Ukraine. One need only consider the Soviet and U.S. experiences in Afghanistan, the U.S. experiences in Vietnam and Iraq, and the Russian experience in Chechnya to be reminded that military occupations usually end badly. Putin surely understands that trying to subdue Ukraine would be like swallowing a porcupine. His response to events there has been defensive, not offensive.”

It is pretty certain that Putin neither wants or needs the Ukraine. What Russia requires is a stable, and non-threatening neighbour with which it can do business — something like Azerbaijan. The Novorussians in the Ukraine may desire full independence, but Putin does not seem interested. Moscow would prefer a neutral Ukrainian buffer-state with autonomy for its regions.

It is the West that is obsessed with controlling the Ukraine, and it is like when Britain looked at Germany in 1914 — it had to imagine its enemy as being of the same nature as itself. But Russia does not want the Ukraine — if it can help it. It can do without a dysfunctional, failure of a state with ethnic divisions that can attract unwelcome elements, and which will require massive subventions to repair. If it is drawn into that then there would be ample opportunity for the US/UK to stir the pot.

Prof. Mearsheimer proposes that the US and West should now adopt a different policy toward the Ukraine and Russia that would ensure peaceful co-existence:

“There is a solution to the crisis in Ukraine, however — although it would require the West to think about the country in a fundamentally new way. The United States and its allies should abandon their plan to westernize Ukraine and instead aim to make it a neutral buffer between NATO and Russia, akin to Austria’s position during the Cold War. Western leaders should acknowledge that Ukraine matters so much to Putin that they cannot support an anti-Russian regime there. This would not mean that a future Ukrainian government would have to be pro-Russian or anti-NATO. On the contrary, the goal should be a sovereign Ukraine that falls in neither the Russian nor the Western camp.

To achieve this end, the United States and its allies should publicly rule out NATO’s expansion into both Georgia and Ukraine. The West should also help fashion an economic rescue plan for Ukraine funded jointly by the EU, the International Monetary Fund, Russia, and the United States — a proposal that Moscow should welcome, given its interest in having a prosperous and stable Ukraine on its western flank. And the West should considerably limit its social-engineering efforts inside Ukraine. It is time to put an end to Western support for another Orange Revolution. Nevertheless, U.S. and European leaders should encourage Ukraine to respect minority rights, especially the language rights of its Russian speakers.”

It must be of significance that this view graces the pages of Foreign Affairs. It is perhaps the case that the US may be having a rethink over its aggressive post-Cold War policy after Vladimir Putin has checked their expansion and its limits have been reached. And perhaps the same is true because of the mess that they have seen themselves create in Iraq and Syria.

We shall see...

Red Lines Bring High Noon to Ukraine (29.01.2022)

“*I don’t accept anybody’s red lines!*” U.S. President Joe Biden, December 4, 2021, Washington.

“*As a citizen of Russia and the head of the Russian state I have to ask myself: Why would we want a world without Russia?*” Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The foreign policy of the United States has lately consisted of the assertion of red lines — US red lines — across the world. These red lines are boundaries which the current US President has decided other states should not cross — or else! In asserting these red lines it was naturally assumed in the White House that other powers did not have red lines and that such things only applied to states other than the United States. It came as something of a surprise, therefore, when Russia suddenly declared that it too had red lines, that the US and associated states should also not cross. And that is how the High Noon situation in Ukraine has come about.

Biden’s Red Lines

The US has blundered into the current situation. The blundering is a result of America having lost its bearings in the world after it became the sole superpower around 1991. During the Cold War the US acted, on the whole, realistically and effectively. It was presented with victory when, quite unexpectedly, “the General Secretary of the Communist Party did what the CIA had dreamed about but could never accomplish: he destroyed that system” (Stephen Kotkin, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2019, p.68.) Gorbachev capitulated to the West and dismantled the enemy state, facilitating the unipolar world presided over by the US. But the unexpected victory and sudden collapse of the enemy left the US unprepared for the position

it suddenly assumed through Gorbachev's inexplicable policy. The Soviet demise left no enemy for the US to orientate against and it began to lose its way in the world, recklessly destroying states, mostly in the Muslim world, for no particular reason other than to show what power it had.

The post-Cold War didn't work out as it was hoped by the United States. Since President Biden came to power the US has been conducting a more minimalist expansionary strategy in the world than it did in the 1992-2016 period. In many ways this is the same policy as was practiced by his predecessor, President Trump, but that, of course, cannot be said. Trump cannot, under any circumstance, be credited with anything good whatsoever. It should not be said, for example, that he was pretty unique among recent presidents in that he started no new wars, and even ended a few, started by his predecessors.

After the US had rid itself of its rogue President, an "America Returns" foreign policy was being demanded in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* by the vast army of political analysts in America looking for renewed US action in the world following the Trump interregnum of inactivity. Many of these were "Russian Studies" academics who help define US Russian policy, but have reduced Russia to a mere caricature for their Western audience.

The titles of articles in the *Foreign Affairs* periodical describe the revival agenda of the US after it had seen the back of Trump displaying a huge appetite for a reassertion of American power in the world. Here is just a sample of article titles from *Foreign Affairs* as Biden came to power: 'How Trump Unmade American Foreign Policy'; 'The Democratic Renewal'; 'Why American Can't Withdraw from the World'; 'The Price of Primacy'; 'Why America Must Lead Again'; 'Saving America's Alliances'; 'Democracy Demotion'; 'The Last War and the Next'; 'A Superpower: Like it or Not!'; 'Turning Back the Authoritarian Tide' etc. etc.

The US had been chastened by the disasters of the Neocons in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the disasters of the liberal imperialists in Syria and Libya. In these adventures the US had squandered much of the goodwill it had accumulated in defending the democratic world against Communism during the Cold War. It attempted to reorder the world and failed and its public had its fill of "forever wars" – wars that had to be fought on the ground with US forces, and involving body bags coming home. But the US was still "the indispensable nation" with a mission in the world, which had a duty to project US democratic values across the globe, whether they were wanted or not.

So what was to be done?

President Biden's policy involved a reassertion of the democratic mission of the US, tarnished by the Trump Presidency. It was based on the notion of red lines around a kind of US organised retreat from attempting to remake the world by military power. The historian Stephen Kotkin (biographer of Stalin) outlined what a more modest and functional US foreign policy would be after the forever wars the US had brought on. The idea was to declare to the world that America was back as the champion of expansionary democracy and make it clear to geopolitical opponents (Russia, China, Iran) what the US demanded of them through red lines they should not cross. This amounted to a US policy of "encirclement" and "containment" toward Russia.

During the high point of the "American Century" (1991-2016) the US exerted military force as the first option of foreign policy and asserted that the basic determinant of the relationship between states rested on military power and the willingness to use it. But whilst the US may have scaled back its military ambitions after the chastening experiences of Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, it has not retreated from its political ambition

to maintain the predominance of its sphere of influence in the world. That sphere of influence is all-embracing in relation to the globe and universal in relation to humanity. International issues are still seen in black-and-white terms, in absolute moral categories. America alone is seen as holding the moral authority of the world and any reluctance within the US to exert that is viewed as defeatism. There remains a belief derived from fundamentalist Protestantism that the human condition is defined as a choice between good and evil and that there should be no shirking in the willingness of the good (US and the forces of democracy) to confront the evil (all others and alternative systems).

Henry Kissinger once said: "*Moral purpose was the key element of motivation behind every American policy and every war in the twentieth century.*" That is why it was inconceivable that someone openly without moral compass should be commander-in-chief in the White House, disabling the moral impulse that motivates a war-fighting expansionary state.

After the Afghanistan debacle, when good beat a retreat from evil, having failed to impose itself on evil, Biden sent out several emissaries to Moscow, including the pragmatic CIA Director, William Burns. These emissaries seem to have spent time pleading with the Kremlin to behave, be a good boy, and accept the US red lines. In public President Biden was laying down the law to show who was still boss of the world, of course. It was communicated to the Kremlin that if the Russians did not invade Ukraine there would be no conflict with the US. This was the US "red line" Russia was requested to not cross while it was expected to accept that NATO and its military forces could continue the advance to its borders, up to the red line, with colour revolutions promoted to produce regimes hostile to Moscow.

After the US had declared "*the end of history*" and stated that the 21st Century would be "*the American Century*" this request was, not unreasonably, seen by the Kremlin as a sign of weakness, and an opportunity was understood to be appearing to roll back the advance of US power and challenge the unipolar world.

Putin's Red Lines

Shortly after President Biden showed his hand, and stated that only the US had red lines, Putin called his bluff and dramatically raised the stakes.

On December 17, the Russian Foreign Ministry put its cards on the table in the shape of two draft texts — a "*Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation on Security Guarantees*" and an "*Agreement on Measures to Ensure the Security of the Russian Federation and the Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]*". Moscow stated its intention of obtaining "*legal security guarantees from the United States and NATO*" and requested the United States and its NATO allies to meet its demands without delay.

Vladimir Putin, completely breaking with Russian diplomatic practice, issued what was a public ultimatum to Washington. And the Russian leader did this presumably knowing full well that his ultimatum would be completely unacceptable to the US, "*the indispensable nation*" of the world.

In essence, Putin was inviting the United States to reduce itself to the status of just another element of humanity – still a superpower, of course, but just one superpower among others, rather than the predominant power which dictates to the world. After only two and a half decades the curtain would fall on the "*American Century*".

The Russian ultimatum demanded that

"the following be legally established: the renunciation of any enlargement of NATO, the cessation of military cooperation

with post-Soviet countries, the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from Europe and the withdrawal of NATO armed forces to the borders of 1997”.

It was also suggested that Russia and the United States commit to not deploy nuclear weapons abroad and to withdraw those already deployed, as well as to eliminate nuclear weapons deployment infrastructure outside their respective territory. Article 4 of the Russian communique stated that

“the Russian Federation and all participants which were, as of 27 May 1997, member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, shall not deploy their armed forces and armaments on the territory of any other European state in addition to the forces stationed on that territory as of 27 May 1997.”

And Article 7 specified that

“the participants, which are Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, shall refrain from conducting any military activities on the territory of Ukraine, as well as of the other States of Eastern Europe, Transcaucasia and Central Asia.”

The area stipulated by Moscow includes the fourteen Eastern European and Balkan states that have become members of NATO during the last two decades, including those where additional forces of the North Atlantic Alliance have been deployed since the NATO summit in Warsaw in 2016. The US is also invited to leave the Russian Seas – the Black Sea, the Baltic, Barents etc., and to stop the flights of American bombers over the whole of Europe and most of Asia.

The Russian ultimatum also proposed that

“the parties exclude the deployment of nuclear weapons outside the national territory and return to the national territory the weapons already deployed outside the national territory at the time of the entry into force of this Treaty.”

President Putin had described the collapse of the Soviet Union as “*the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.*” He was now signalling that Russia had arisen from the ashes and was acting as the heir to the USSR, a superpower that had made a comeback and which was now entitled to negotiate with the West on an equal footing. That was a severe shock to Washington: What presumption! What impudence!

The Russian think tank Russtrat reflected the new air of confidence that was pervading Putin’s Russia, which was now “*putting it up*” to the West in a new multipolar world:

“In the next year and a half, Russia will considerably change the balance of global power... Russia’s current historical situation is unique. The state has prepared itself for the major challenges that may arise under critical pressure. Huge reserves have been accumulated, including gold. National financial and information infrastructure plans have been created and launched. Digitization has begun to encompass the entire economy, bringing it to a new level of competitiveness. The expansion of our own industrial base, including in highly sensitive high-tech areas, is proceeding in leaps and bounds, the ‘technology gap’ is closing. We have overcome critical dependence in the area of food security... For the past five years, the army has been the world’s leader. In this area, the ‘technological gap’ is in our favour and is only widening... Moreover, the explosion of planetary inflation is causing an energy crisis, which makes the Europeans, for the most part, much more accommodating and rules out a blockade of our energy supplies, whatever we do... Working with China everything will become much easier for us. And for China too, from which we will divert attention, which will free our hands even more... Russia has restored its weight in the international arena to the point that it is able to dictate its own terms in the shaping of international security....

The decrepit empire of the Stars and Stripes, weakened by LGBT, BLM, etc.... will not survive a two-front war.”

This was not idle boasting, it seems. Adam Tooze, British economic historian and columnist with the *Financial Times*, noted that Russia had been preparing its economic defences for a number of years for the moment when bit came to bit against the West. He explained that if the West thought it could easily disable Russia through sanctions it was mistaken:

“Russia is too big a part of global energy markets to permit Iran-style sanctions against Russian energy sales. Russia accounts for about 40 percent of Europe’s gas imports. Comprehensive sanctions would be too destabilizing to global energy markets and that would blow back on the United States in a significant way. China could not stand by and allow it to happen. Furthermore, Moscow, unlike some major oil and gas exporters, has proven capable of accumulating a substantial share of the fossil fuel proceeds. Since the struggles of the early 2000s, the Kremlin has asserted its control. In the alliance with the oligarchs it calls the shots and has brokered a deal that provides strategic resources for the state and stability and an acceptable standard of living for the bulk of the population... Putin’s regime has managed this whilst operating a conservative fiscal and monetary policy. Currently, the Russian budget is set to balance at an oil price of only \$44. That enables the accumulation of considerable reserves.

If you want a single variable that sums up Russia’s position as a strategic petrostate, it is Russia’s foreign exchange reserve. Hovering between \$400 and \$600 billion they are amongst the largest in the world, after those of China, Japan and Switzerland. This is what gives Putin his freedom of strategic manoeuvre. Crucially, foreign exchange reserves give the regime the capacity to withstand sanctions on the rest of the economy. They can be used to slow a run on the rouble. They can also be used to offset any currency mismatch on private sector balance sheets. As large as a government’s foreign exchange reserves may be, it will be of little help if private debts are in foreign currency. Russia’s private dollar liabilities were painfully exposed in 2008 and 2014, but have since been restructured and restrained... This strong financial balance means that Putin’s Russia will never experience the kind of comprehensive financial and political crisis that shook the state in 1998. Nor was it by accident that it was as those foreign exchange reserves approached their first peak in 2008 that Putin began to articulate his determination to end the period of Russia’s geopolitical retreat.”

The West had already attempted to subdue Putin’s Russia through sanctions and to isolate Russia internationally. It failed. Domestically, Putin is strong, if not stronger than ever. The economic crisis caused by collapsing oil prices that beset Russia a few years ago has passed and now it holds all the energy card against Europe, which has foolishly surrendered its energy security at the behest of Green hysteria. Putin has successfully constructing new relationships with China, Turkey and a number of other states, including governments within the EU itself, who have fallen foul of the European liberal assault on the traditional structures of life that hold these societies together.

The Russian collapse, began by the political idiot, Gorbachev, and continued by the personally ambitious drunkard, Yeltsin, was arrested by Vladimir Putin. The West, however, refuses to accommodate a stable Russia within its world, under the man who saved it. The West will only accommodate a weak “democratic” Russia which can be plundered of its substantial resources by international capital and local opportunists.

However, it should not be forgotten that Russia, despite the best efforts of Vladimir Putin, is a shadow of its former Soviet self. The Russian sphere of influence in Europe has been reduced to Transnistria, two Russian pieces of the former Ukraine SSR, two slivers of the former Georgian SSR, the failed state that replaced the Armenian SSR, and a small military presence in the rump of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast of the Azerbaijan SSR. The Russian economy is today only 1/15th of the size of the US economy, when the USSR was 1/3rd of the size of its Cold War adversary. The Eurasian Economic Union is inconsequential aside from Russia and Kazakhstan. Use of Russian language is in decline in all the ex-Soviet space, aside from Belarus. Half the Russian middle class (the high earning part) live abroad where it acts as an asset to the West, with London particularly facilitating the plunder of Russia by its emigre oligarchs, to the increasing distaste of Washington.

These developments have, on the other hand, had the consequence of making the present slimmed down Russia a leaner and meaner fighting machine. It is a premier land power with enormous energy resources, situated in the geopolitical heartland of the world. Its military is fit for purpose and its military technology is more advanced than that of the US in many important areas. The expertise acquired in this sphere during Soviet times cannot be liquidated like the system that produced it. While US military technology is primarily a commodity to be sold to customers abroad its Russian equivalent is designed and focussed on one aspect – defensive war-fighting. Russia has an immense ability to sustain casualties in war and hardship without breaking under intense pressure. It can always destroy the world with a push of a button if the world threatens the existence of Russia and no doubt the button pushers in Moscow are much less likely to blink than their counterparts in Washington on the day of Armageddon.

The US bombs Muslim states because it can without fear of response (aside from that of a few enraged Muslims who make their own small bombs). The US puts sanctions on Russia because it cannot bomb it, without a fearsome response. Russian economic power is not substantial enough to harm the US in reply, although it can harm Europe if it chooses to by reducing energy supply. The US neither bombs nor sanctions China. It cannot afford to. That, hopefully puts US foreign policy and the geopolitical balance of power in the world in context.

Good generals choose battles at the place of their own choosing and at the most opportune moment. Heads of states, as commanders in chiefs of their nations' armed forces, bear this ultimate responsibility. Whatever, one thinks of Vladimir Putin it should be clear by now that he is an exceptional statesman. Joe Biden, on the other hand, is a mediocre and transient product of liberal democracy.

Where Red Lines Meet – Battlefield Ukraine

As Pepe Escobar has noted of Ukraine: "*Maidan 2014 was an operation supervised by Obama/Biden*". It is not clear, therefore, whether Biden has learnt his lesson from the 2014 debacle or whether he views Ukraine as unfinished business for the US.

The Russophobe Zbigniew Brzezinski (of Geopolitical Chessboard fame) once stated that Russia's revival was dependent upon reintegrating independent Ukraine into Russia. He conceptualised Maidan 2014 when he was presented with a secret report on the development of Russian advanced missiles. He determined to make Ukraine another Afghanistan for Russia from that moment. That was meant to be a trap for Russia. But becoming another Afghanistan should be a much more frightening prospect for Ukraine.

The desire in the US to unleash a war – any kind of war – in Ukraine seems to be aimed at producing a calamity for Russia

in order to bleed her of resources. The British Foreign Secretary, who apparently fancies herself as a second Iron Lady, recently warned Russia that it faced a quagmire like Afghanistan if it invaded Ukraine. One suspects that it is the US/UK who would most like a Russian invasion of Ukraine and that Biden's mysterious comment about a Russian incursion being acceptable was meant to lure Russian forces into Ukrainian territory as the Germans were lured into Belgium in 1914 in the belief that Britain would not make war on it. A similar trick was played on Saddam Hussein in 1990 when the US Ambassador assured him that America had no position on his dispute with Kuwait, encouraging his army into the turkey shoot on the Basra Highway.

It has become a mantra within the US elite that Russia wishes to reabsorb Ukraine. But the reality is precisely the opposite. Ukraine is presently a failed state, a basket case politically and economically. Even the Donbass, the supposed object of Russian annexation is largely a rust belt. Russia's only interest in it is to do with the welfare of its substantial Russian population who were endangered by those who were taking power in Kiev in the coup in 2014. In 2014 Russia could have intervened militarily to support the legitimate, elected government in Kiev and protect it from the coup. The Kremlin chose not to do so, probably mindful of the burden that would have been placed on both Russia's military and economic resources. Instead it moved swiftly to guard its key strategic interests in Crimea and support the defence of the predominantly Russian population in eastern Ukraine through various forms of assistance.

Ukraine, until it was fashioned into a state by the Soviet Union, was a patchwork of territories belonging to different empires and populated by a range of peoples, many of whom were Russian. Both Donbass and Crimea were part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine but were not Ukrainian. They were gifted to the Communist Party of Ukraine by the Russian Communists under Khrushchev. Khrushchev seems to have wished to alter the demographic composition of Ukraine in favour of the Russian element through this act of kindness. When Yeltsin issued his invite to self-determination in August 1991, as part of his political manoeuvring against his General Secretary, he insisted that Ukraine should return the Russian lands, if it was leaving the Union. He was backed vociferously by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. But Yeltsin and Gorbachev, with the USSR in meltdown and US assistance a priority, did not push the issue after Ukraine voted to leave the Union. The US looked on, encouraging both Gorbachev and Yeltsin to self-inflicted destruction.

This did not mean that the problem of the predominantly Russian areas of the former Russian territories of Ukraine went away. They became a national problem for the newly independent Ukraine to handle wisely not only for the sake of internal coherence of their state but for future good relations with their Russian neighbour.

According to the rules of NATO membership a member country cannot have foreign, non-NATO military forces present on its territory. So Ukraine, presumably, would need to redraw its boundaries, without Crimea and the DOR and LPR to gain admittance. Such a partition of Ukraine would clearly be detrimental to Moscow's strategic interests since it would make Ukraine a more likely member of NATO. Donbass as an autonomous part of Ukraine, with protection for its substantial Russian element, would undoubtedly be the best result for Putin.

Russia has therefore no intention or need to invade Ukraine. It would probably take such a step only through extreme provocation. It is only the West which can embolden the Ukrainian into such a provocation.

Where Russia is threatened by Ukraine is through the presence of Western military forces being stationed there

through joining NATO. The threat to Russian national security would be severe in such an eventuality. NATO military aircraft deployed in Ukraine would be capable of reaching Moscow in 20 minutes; US warships sailing out of Odessa would menace the Russian navy in the Black Sea; soldiers and equipment stationed on Ukrainian soil would be a direct threat to Russia, as similar forces are in Poland and the Baltic, stretching the Russian defensive line.

It has been suggested that Russia is not really worried about NATO military expansion to its border. It is, in fact, afraid of democracy. This is the line pedalled by Anne Applebaum who the BBC recently employed to ward off the notion that Russia was understandably concerned at been ringed by hostile and advancing military forces which had been gaining traction among the Western public. Applebaum (whose ethnic origins and connections make her an archetype US Russophobe) put forward the line that a successful and democratic Ukraine on Russia's borders would be fatal to Putin's Russia.

The Ukrainian Regime

Geoffrey Roberts, the British historian, in a review of Prof. Sakwa's *Frontline Ukraine* for the Irish Times on 25 April 2015, noted the following about the character of the Ukrainian regime that makes it a force for instability and a very unlikely cause of "democratic" concern for Russia:

"The ultranationalist tendencies of the Kiev regime sit ill with the liberal democratic values of the EU, and they are likely to become increasingly uncomfortable bedfellows. Kiev may succeed in realigning Ukraine with the West, but, as its defeat on the battlefield shows, it does not have the power to impose its will on the Russian-backed separatists. Within Ukraine are millions of Russian-speaking citizens who share neither Kiev's mono-nationalism nor its Russophobia.

Ukraine is one of the most corrupt and inefficient states in the world, much worse than even Russia. During the civil war its oligarchs have gained even more power and riches, protected now by private armed militias. In practice the alternative to the federalised Ukrainian state proposed by Russia is not some idealised western liberal democracy but a feudal Ukraine based on an opportunistic alliance of oligarchs and ultranationalists.

Before the (2014) crisis Russia was Ukraine's biggest and most important trading partner. Ukraine depends on Russian energy supplies. Millions of Ukrainian citizens live and work in Russia and send vital resources back home. Without Russian participation there is no viable solution or alternative to the economic collapse suffered by disintegrating Ukraine.

... The nationalist genie is out of the bottle in Russia as well as Ukraine, and the EU has been exposed as incapable of transcending hackneyed cold-war perspectives. Cold warriors on both sides are having a field day while those Ukrainian citizens who see their country as a bridge between Europe and the EU have been marginalised by a civil war in which thousands have died. The disintegration of Ukraine will likely continue and may lead to further violent uprisings.

The one hope is that it is in Russia's vital interest to stabilise Ukraine. For that to happen, Sakwa writes, "Moscow needs to show the courage of compassion towards Ukraine. It is a country that in many respects is another part of Russia itself, while Russia is inevitably part of Ukrainian identity. The crisis will only be resolved when 'normal' relations are established between the two countries."

The Ukrainian leaders have failed to curb rampant corruption and tackle economic inefficiency, leaving the state with massive budgetary and trade deficits. Ukraine, a country of 45 million people with rich agricultural land and a large industrial base,

is now Eastern Europe's poorest country, apart from Moldova. The country has squandered a massive amount of foreign aid, including €13.8 billion in grants and loans from the EU, the International Monetary Fund, and U.S. administrations totally over \$30 billion. On top of that, Ukraine has received massive aid from Russia in the form of discounted natural gas—a subsidy totalling up to \$300 billion since 1991.

In the bygone era of objective meaning "*democracy*" used to be understood merely as a particular way of forming a government – government for the people by the people. But what is meant these days in the West by "*democracy*" is entirely different. What is required today of a "*democratic state*" by the US/UK/EU is uniformity with the current policies of the West. The outcome is now what constitutes "*democracy*" not the process. There is no democratic right to be wrong, as Poland, Hungary and Turkey among others are finding out.

Unfortunately, the EU and US/UK have been determined to frustrate any efforts at stabilising the Ukrainian state due to their determination to weaponize it against Russia in the cause of "*democracy*".

Prof. Richard Sakwa argues that the European Union has become an auxiliary of US/NATO's expansion into central and eastern Europe. It has ruled out what it supposedly stands for in the world – the seeking of accommodation, compromise and engagement – when it comes to Russia, and the EU leadership in Brussels has turned the issue of Ukraine's "*free democratic choice*" into an instrument to isolate and destabilise Putin's Russia. Russophobes in Poland, the Baltic States and other countries have brought into the EU their historic antagonisms with Russia and this anti-Putin camp in Europe has combined with the virulent Russophobes in the US (many, like Anne Applebaum, with ethnic origins and family connections in Eastern Europe) to demonise the Russian President and deny his country's legitimate security interests and concerns.

The contention that NATO and EU enlargement is no threat to Russia is belied by NATO's increasing military exercises on Russia's borders and its belligerent calls to arm Ukraine and increase its military forces.

Russia needs to do business with the states around it but cannot in relation to Ukraine, at present. Ukraine has been pulled in different directions by the EU, US/UK and its social and economic ties to Russia. The Ukraine gets more than half its natural gas from Russia and the EU couldn't help much if Moscow turned down the taps. Nor can the EU absorb the \$15 billion in iron, steel, grain, and other products that Ukraine annually sells to its biggest trade partner. The two countries have deep historical and cultural ties. Over 8 million Ukrainians, almost one-fifth of the population, describe themselves in the last census, as ethnic Russians, while some 2 millions of Russia's citizens say they are ethnic Ukrainians.

President Viktor Yanukovich was deposed in a Western organised coup in 2014 and Ukraine began to tear itself apart. Ukrainian sovereignty and cohesiveness is all about maintaining a delicate balancing act between Russia and Europe in which Russia is not threatened by foreign military forces. That position, which was maintained between 1991 and 2014, was disrupted by Western ambition to detach Ukraine completely from the Russian sphere. It was Brussels that decided to force the Ukrainians to choose between Europe and Russia but in doing so it bungled the operation, much to the chagrin of the US (in the immortal words of Victoria Nuland: "Fuck the EU!").

Paul Craig Roberts summarises this sequence of events in the following passages he wrote in 2014:

"Western pressure was applied to the democratically elected government of President Victor Yanukovich to join the EU. The Ukrainian government considered the proposal and

decided rationally that the Ukraine economy was integrated with the Russian economy and that the trade, subsidy, and loan advantages of its association with Russia were worth more than EU membership, which would likely bring an IMF adjustment program that would result in the looting of the Ukraine economy. When Ukraine declined EU membership, Washington set in motion its NGO fifth columns. Protests began in Kiev demanding that the elected government change its mind and join the EU.

The protests were nonviolent until well-organized ultra-nationalist organizations, such as the Right Sector introduced violence and took over the protests, changing the demands from joining the EU to overthrowing the democratic government. President Yanukovich had reached an agreement with EU representatives to implement constitutional changes that could result in Ukraine being voted into the EU, but this agreement fell by the wayside with the rise of the Right Sector's takeover of the protests

It is unclear whether Washington worked with the Right Sector or overlooked it. The ultra-nationalists and Washington's stooges are at odds. It is unclear how the differences will be resolved...

The Ukrainian government confronted the orchestrated protests with unarmed police and followed up this mistake with another — the police were disbanded. Lacking protection, Yanukovich and his party fled or went into hiding. A Washington stooge, Yatseniuk, was appointed, not elected, prime minister. Yatseniuk is the person selected by Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the U.S. Ambassador in Ukraine in their telephone conversation in which they choose the members of the stooge government. Transcripts and recordings of the leaked conversation are abundant...

Washington's stooge government, once installed, either lacked all judgment or went straight to work setting up confrontations with the Russian provinces in Ukraine. The stooge government passed a law outlawing the official use of the Russian language. Proposals were introduced to arrest residents who retained dual Russian/Ukrainian citizenship. Many Russophobic statements were issued. For example, former prime minister Tymoshenko, released by the coup from prison where she was serving time for corruption, declared in an intercepted telephone conversation that "it's about time we grab our guns and go kill those damn Russians together with their leader."

The Right Sector destroyed Soviet war memorials dedicated to the memory of the Russian troops who liberated Ukraine from Hitler's armies. Videos are available online of Right Sector thugs attacking Russians on the streets in cities in eastern Ukraine.

The violent words and deeds issuing from the Washington-installed government alarmed the Russian speaking populations in Crimea and southern and eastern Ukraine. The elected government in Crimea voted to separate from Ukraine, and the Crimean population in a high voter turnout of 84% voted 97% to re-join Russia."

If Russia or China attempted to overturn the Monroe Doctrine and detach Mexico or Canada from the US sphere it is pretty clear that there would be stubborn resistance from Washington. That, after all, was what the Cuban missile crisis was all about. And yet the West assumes that Russia should tolerate such a thing on its borders.

Ukraine has the potential to be a glaxis, which is the medieval term for the area beyond a castle where fighting and killing takes place. The British described Afghanistan as the glaxis of India in the past.

There are people in the US and Ukraine who are only too willing to fight Russia on Ukrainian territory to the last

Ukrainian. But there is no general will to fight for Ukraine in the US and even less will to fight for it in the EU. Some of the US's European allies are already in retreat as talking gets tougher from Washington and thoughts turn to the energy and cost of living crisis that already confronts Europe, even without a war with Russia.

The EU is currently being pressurised by Washington to commit to further sanctions to enhance the economic encirclement of Russia. President Biden's National Security advisor, Jake Sullivan, made what the US expects from Europe very clear in November, 2021, when he said: "We want the terms of the system to be favourable to American interests and values... a favourable disposition in which the US and its allies can shape the international rules of the road on the sorts of issues that are fundamentally going to matter to the people of America". The new German administration is being warned to expect the scrapping of Nord Stream II and its consequent loss to Europe's energy supply. This eventuality, hastened by a conflict in Ukraine, would certainly make Europe's economy more dependent on the United States. It would become a much more pliable instrument of US policy, in particular in relation to a future isolation of China.

There is some will to supply Ukraine with the military equipment that might encourage an incursion into the separatist area that could draw in Russian forces e.g. an attack on the city of Donetsk. The size of the Russian force suggests that this is the limit of Moscow's contingency planning at present. In such an eventuality Russian air power will make short work of Ukrainian forces. The Ukrainians are very likely to abandon their new weaponry and run for it, as the US armed and trained Georgians did in 2008, leaving territory behind for the Russian forces to simply walk into. But perhaps that is Washington's plan!

This thought may have been responsible for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky publicly disagreeing with Washington about the imminence of a Russian invasion. It has suddenly dawned on him that if war is coming it is Washington that is pushing for it, with the Russians willing to fight it. That has placed Zelensky in an awkward position in which he is likely to be requested to do his duty by Washington or be hung out to dry.

Even if there is an escalation that provokes a swift Russian military strike on Kiev there will be not a bullet fired in defence of Ukraine by the West. Ukraine will play the role Poland played in 1939. It will be merely be a battlefield with Ukrainians providing the casualties for Western moral propaganda.

It appears that Russia holds all the cards in the current situation. It is well prepared to defend itself and has determined to stand and fight on the Ukraine line. Its red line is a real line — the last ditch, if you like. President Biden's red line, on the other hand, is an arbitrary assertion from which retreat is both possible and, indeed, highly advisable.

If Russia is not provoked into a militarily intervene in Ukraine this will, of course, be presented as Western resolution in the face of Russian aggression which deterred Putin. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. But the Western objective is to always control the narrative, despite the truth of the matter. That is what "soft power" is all about.

However, if the Ukrainian nationalist elite persists with its attempts to join NATO, against the desire of a substantial part of the Ukrainian people, there is a real danger that Ukraine will cease to exist in the form that it has previously existed.

At the time of writing the U.S. has responded to the security demands Russia laid out in its two draft treaties by rejecting all the major proposals and says it is only willing to negotiate on secondary issues. Russia will surely respond to that within

a few weeks and Putin is usually a man with a surprise up his sleeve.

Postscript: Putin's Position

Below is Putin's position on Ukraine as issued by the Kremlin. It should be clear from this that Russia has no interest in invading Ukraine or engaging in conflict there. It seems to be the West which has all the interest in provoking a war in Ukraine, luring Russia in, and encouraging gullible Ukrainians into fighting it for them:

"... it is important to energetically continue the mediation efforts in the Contact Group and the Normandy format, since there are no other international mechanisms to promote an internal Ukrainian settlement, and there is no alternative to implementing the Minsk agreements in full.

Importantly, our Western partners are exacerbating the situation by supplying Kiev with modern lethal weapons, conducting provocative military exercises in the Black Sea and other regions close to our borders. With regard to the Black Sea, this even goes beyond certain limits since strategic bombers, which carry very serious weapons, fly at a distance of only 20 kilometres from our state border ...

There have been several waves of expansion, and let's look at where the military infrastructure of the NATO bloc is now – anti-missile defence systems have been deployed right next to our borders in Romania and Poland. These can easily be put to offensive use with the Mk-41 launchers there; replacing the software takes only minutes. Nevertheless, our recent warnings have had a certain effect: tensions have arisen there anyway.

In this regard, I have two points to make. First, it is important for them to remain in this state for as long as possible, so that it does not occur to them to stage some kind of conflict on our western borders which we do not need, we do not need a new conflict."

China and Russia Checkmate the West and Bury the Nixon Policy (26.02.2022)

The momentous Putin/Xi Summit and subsequent joint declaration issued by the two leaders represents a checkmating of the West and a burying of the US divide and conquer manoeuvre began half a century ago by President Nixon, in February 1972.

The joint Chinese/Russian statement that emerged from the summit is over 5000 words long and is in rather clunky diplomatic language, but it can be roughly summarised in plain English in the following way:

"The US and its numerous vassal states wish to retain world hegemony and ignore international law along with the treaties and agreements they have made with others. This represents a threat to the peace and security of the world and is opposed by both Russia and China. The US has no right to judge other states as to the standard of their "democracy" and other countries have every right themselves, to decide on how they wish to live and organise themselves socially, economically and politically – that is democracy! We intend to build a Eurasian community which will encompass most of its land mass, which will be sovereignly ruled by those nations and peoples who compose it. There cannot be security for some without meaningful security for all – collective security in which states take into account the security of others in making provision for their own security. We will stand together to defeat those forces who threaten our sovereignty and collective security. Russia will support China

in its efforts to reintegrate its national territory (Taiwan). China, in turn, will fully support Russia in opposing the expansion of NATO and the Russian ultimatum to the West to halt its advance into its borderlands. The West is attempting, through colour revolutions, to destabilise, control or destroy any state which is unwilling to become a US vassal state. The two states have a common interest in opposing the West's imperialistic policies and will institute full-spectrum security co-operation in doing so, in common friendship, in the future."

This momentous development which is of real historical significance has emerged 50 years to the month after President Nixon's visit to China which, in the West's narrative, helped to win the Cold War. Is a reassessment of history now in order?

Nixon proclaimed in his Beijing toast that it was "*the week that changed the world.*" The Nixon-Kissinger visit to China 50 years ago was primarily an anti-Russian manoeuvre aimed at driving a wedge through the Communist world and isolating Moscow. It was a startling manoeuvre because the US did not formally recognise the People's Republic of China at the time and Nixon was a fierce anti-communist.

Nixon had written in an article, penned for *Foreign Affairs* in 1967, well before his election as President, in which he said "*that we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside of the family of nations*":

"The world cannot be safe until China changes. Thus our aim, to the extent that we can influence events, should be to induce change. The way to do this is to persuade China that it must change: that it cannot satisfy its imperial ambitions."

In the early 19th Century China was a self-contained civilisation going about its own business when it was made war on by the British Empire because it attempted to prevent English merchants smuggling opium into the country. China demanded Britain have regular terms of trade with it. The British Opium Wars waged on China resulted in territorial concessions and unequal treaties with the Chinese which imposed fines in compensation for interference with British Opium traders. Other European Powers followed the British precedent and gained their own concessions. The United States, not to be left out in the scramble for plunder, declared its Open Door China policy. This US Open Door policy differed from the European plundering which involved the taking of territorial enclaves within the disintegrating Chinese state by treating China as being open to everybody in a kind of capitalist exploitation free for all.

American power in the world was much about economic penetration and dominance in East Asia which was facilitated by the disintegration of the Chinese State as a result of the Opium Wars. The rise of US power was dependent on a weak and declining China.

It took the Chinese State over a century to recover from these Opium Wars and foreign exploitation and to reassemble itself as a functional state, from 1948. In 1945, after its Second World War victory, the US regarded Kuomintang China as a client society which it could cultivate on capitalist lines. However, within a decade China had escaped from its embrace and constructed itself into an absolutely sovereign state with its economy serving its own purposes for development. By 1967 this new Chinese substance confronted the US and Nixon found a new use for it in the geopolitical struggle against Moscow.

After the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s the US sought to develop a more powerful China integrated in the Western world order.

To show American good faith prior to his trip to China, President Nixon gave Mao Zedong most of what he wanted on Taiwan. Nixon ordered the US 7th Fleet out of the Taiwan Strait and the withdrawal of US forces from Taiwan, where they

had been stationed since the US-Taiwan Mutual Defence Treaty of 1954 (when Nixon served as President Eisenhower's vice president).

For a generation after the change of government in Peking in 1948 and the retreat of Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang army to Formosa, Washington had recognised the Kuomintang regime as the legitimate Government of China and employed its UN veto to prevent the actual, de facto, Government in Peking from taking China's seat in the UN. In essence it treated China as "one and indivisible" with mainland China being in rebellion against the legitimate Government in Formosa (later renamed Taiwan). Nixon's geopolitical manoeuvre against Russia resulted in the actual Chinese Government joining the UN and deposing the Kuomintang.

The Nixon policy paved the way for the 1972 Shanghai Communique, in which Beijing stated its one-China principle, that Taiwan is part of China and would eventually be reunified with it by either peaceful or non-peaceful means. Washington used the communique to state its own one-China policy, which implicitly accepted Taiwan's future merger with China (as long as it was accomplished more or less peacefully). The current US President, Joe Biden, recently excluded China from his "Democracy Summit" and has warned Beijing against re-incorporating Taiwan into the national territory. He treats Taiwan, in effect, as a foreign state from China, while Taiwan itself has never revoked its claim as being the legitimate Government of China!

While the primary aim of US policy had been to drive a wedge between Communist China and Communist Russia, Nixon's manoeuvre appears to have been also part of a broader US strategy aimed at promoting liberal democracy in China and bringing it into the Western orbit. But Nixon later, in an interview with New York Times columnist William Safire, one of his former speech-writers, feared that he had created a "*Frankenstein's monster*" in what he had done. In his 1978 memoir he had revealed the impending potential danger:

"We must cultivate China during the next few decades while it is still learning to develop its national strength and potential. Otherwise we will one day be confronted with the most formidable enemy that has ever existed in the history of the world."

It had become the US objective to intentionally promote the development of the Chinese economy and expansion of its middle class with the understanding that greater prosperity would inevitably bring about a demand for political pluralism and democracy, destroying the rule of the Communist Party of China.

Western investment and Chinese participation in the global market was greatly encouraged by Washington. Following Nixon's visit and the gradual opening of China's economy, capital and technological know-how, encouraged by the US, poured in. The US encouraged the growth of China believing in the inevitable expansion of liberal democracy. Washington promoted investment and welcomed the country into the global market.

In January 1979 Deng Xiaoping visited the US. The following year the US granted Communist China "most favoured nation" status giving it the best possible trade terms with the US and full access to the American market. China's manufacturing was reorientated for export to the US market where extravagant American middle class consumption stimulated a massive growth in its economy, impossible without this free access. The granting of this free access to a Communist Power was an extraordinary thing for Cold War America to do given the strength of anti-Communist attitudes in the US.

Even after the events of Tiananmen Square, when the Chinese successfully headed off the kind of disintegration promoted in Russia, the policy was continued and China was granted favoured status annually until it was made permanent in 2000. John Mearsheimer warned the US in 2001:

"It is clear that the most dangerous scenario the United States might face in the early twenty-first century is one in which China becomes a potential hegemon in Northeast Asia... What makes a future Chinese threat so worrisome is that it might be far more powerful and dangerous than any of the potential hegemony that the United States confronted in the twentieth century... The United States has a profound interest in seeing Chinese economic growth slow considerably in the years ahead. For much of the past decade, however, the United States has pursued a strategy intended to have the opposite effect. The United States has been committed to 'engaging' China, not 'containing' it. Engagement is predicated on the liberal belief that if China could be made both democratic and prosperous, it would become a status quo power... As a result, American policy has sought to integrate China into the world economy and facilitate its rapid economic development... This US policy on China is misguided." (The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, pp. 399-400)

In 2001 China was permitted to join the WTO, opening the global market to the Chinese economy, making it more competitive and powerful. George W. Bush, while smashing up the Muslim world and attempting to remake it in the US image, was saying that "China is on a rising path, and America welcomes the emergence of a strong and peaceful and prosperous China." (February 2002) And to get its wish Washington continued to let its technology flow unhindered into China allowing the Chinese to build a remarkable capacity for innovation. All, it seems, in the continuing geopolitical battle against Russia, long after, it appeared, the Cold War had been won and victory proclaimed.

It seems to have been believed that encouraging Chinese collaboration in the capitalist world market would undermine the Communist Party, since politics follows from economics, doesn't it? However, at the same time as the Russian enemy was being effectively subverted China was being built into a formidable force (the new enemy?) because the Communist Party of China had no Gorbachev, who liquidated the Party in the name of aimless reform, and instead has conducted its statecraft very shrewdly indeed. Both Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger, Cold War warriors from both wings of US democracy/imperialism, enthusiastically supported the policy.

In 1995 China accounted for 3 per cent of global trade but now it accounts for over 12 per cent, the largest share of any country, and it has displaced the US as the EU's largest trading partner. More dangerously China has shown that a Communist Party can run the world's most successful capitalist economy and democracy is not essential to success. In fact, while the US attempts to export democracy have met with dismal failure, chaos and state collapse "authoritarian" China has just gone from strength to strength. That is very bad when there was supposed to be an "end of history" as liberal democracy annexed the world, creating a utopian paradise. Paradise Lost?

The People's Republic of China, or the Chinese Communist Party to be precise, presiding over the world's most successful capitalist economy, is a provocative affront to the accepted wisdom that liberal democracy won the Cold War

Is this why Cathay Delenda Est?

Xi Jinping gave a speech after he became General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, on January 5th, 2013, to the Party's then-newly elected Central Committee. It was made behind closed doors. An abbreviated version of it was published in Xi Jinping's first book, The Governance of China. The

Party's premier ideological journal, *Qiushi*, published a much larger version later. The speech and subsequent events appear to have badly shaken the sense of triumphalism in the West. It has not been made available to the general public in the West, perhaps in fear of it disrupting the accepted victory narrative. War is said to be won in the mind of the enemy command. If it is then the war in which victory was proclaimed, was not won. Here is the significant part:

“There are people who believe that communism is an unattainable hope, or even that it is beyond hoping for—that communism is an illusion...

Facts have repeatedly told us that Marx and Engels' analysis of the basic contradictions in capitalist society is not outdated, nor is the historical materialist view that capitalism is bound to die out and socialism is bound to win. This is an inevitable trend in social and historical development. But the road is tortuous. The eventual demise of capitalism and the ultimate victory of socialism will require a long historical process to reach completion. In the meantime, we must have a deep appreciation for capitalism's ability to self-correct, and a full, objective assessment of the real long-term advantages that the developed Western nations have in the economic, technological, and military spheres. Then we must diligently prepare for a long period of cooperation and of conflict between these two social systems in each of these domains.

For a fairly long time yet, socialism in its primary stage will exist alongside a more productive and developed capitalist system. In this long period of cooperation and conflict, socialism must learn from the boons that capitalism has brought to civilization. We must face the reality that people will use the strengths of developed, Western countries to denounce our country's socialist development. Here we must have a great strategic determination, resolutely rejecting all false arguments that we should abandon socialism. We must consciously correct the various ideas that do not accord with our current stage. Most importantly, we must concentrate our efforts on bettering our own affairs, continually broadening our comprehensive national power, improving the lives of our people, building a socialism that is superior to capitalism, and laying the foundation for a future where we will win the initiative and have the dominant position.”

Stephen Kotkin, a thoughtful US Professor, historian and observer of Russia was recently asked what he thought of this. He remarked about the Chinese Communist Party:

“We all thought they were cynics... they just wanted the Leninist structures to stay in place politically and therefore they tried to legitimate themselves with the verbiage and rhetoric of Communism. And so we were dismayed that the Communist ideology was still there. We just could not believe it. Smart people could not believe that. Not after what happened in the Soviet Union, not after what happened with the triumph of the markets globally. But some of them actually believe it!”

It appears that old Communists never die. Was there really a Cold War victory at all?

Perhaps this is what spurred President Trump to draw some conclusions and call a halt to the US policy begun by Nixon and declare a trade war in 2018. President Biden has continued the Trump policy, but without giving his predecessor the credit for having put a stop to (dare we say it?) this “appeasement”. The US Innovation and Competition Act of 2021 passed by Congress labels China the greatest political and geo-economic challenge for United States foreign policy and has defined Taiwan as a sovereign state of vital strategic importance for the US.

It appears, however, that the Nixon manoeuvre was not an American stroke of genius after all. The Chinese, we were always told, are “*an inscrutable people*”. They have a

civilisation much older and wiser than the West and they take history very seriously. They are not taken with superficialities and fads and fashions as is the way in the West.

The 1972 opening wasn't just Nixon's idea, or that of his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger. It was also Mao's—or, to be more precise, it was a product of a select group of Chinese military men working for Mao. Nixon and Kissinger are widely credited with playing China against the Soviet Union but Mao's China was a strategic actor as well with its own political agenda. This information is contained in Michael Pillsbury's sensationally titled 2015 book, *The Hundred Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace the United States as the Global Superpower*.

Before the Great War of 1914 it was said that Germany was out for world domination. Before that it was the French and the Russians, who, in the decade prior to 1914 were acquired as allies to prevent imminent German world domination. History seems to suggest that people who write books about enemies seeking world domination speak on behalf of the actual dominators of the world.

Pillsbury served in a number of high-ranking positions within the U.S. government and its accompanying think tanks, including RAND. He is currently senior fellow and director for Chinese strategy at the Hudson Institute in Washington. In the late 1960s and 1970s, he was well-situated to observe the first steps in America's partnership with China. Indeed, Pillsbury was an early advocate for a Sino-American alliance, arguing that the U.S. should provide more economic and military assistance to China to fight the USSR. Pillsbury, while working at the United Nations in 1969 and 1970, collected intelligence from the Soviets that played a minor role in the Nixon administration's decision-making. During the 1980s, he rose to the position of assistant Under Secretary of Defense for policy planning at the Pentagon, during the Reagan administration.

Pillsbury makes his view clear that even though Nixon did propose an engagement with China in 1967, Chairman Mao was actually the more proactive agent: “*Nixon did not first reach out to China; instead, China in the person of Mao, first reached out to Nixon.*” Pillsbury points to Mao's overtures, including his unprecedented public appearance, on October 1st, 1970, alongside the American journalist Edgar Snow on the Tiananmen review stage. Mao “*gave his guest a message: President Nixon was welcome to visit China.*”

In 1969 Mao had had discussions with his generals concerned at the threat from Soviet Russia since the split in the Communist world. The fear Mao had was that the US would provoke a major conflict between the 2 great Communist states. During mid-1969 there had been a number of battles on the Sino-Soviet border that resulted in hundreds of casualties on both sides. Mao feared that Washington would sit on top of a mountain watching 2 tigers fight. It was decided to study the Russian-German pact of 1939, concluded by Stalin. The US was viewed by the Chinese in the Hitler role, as the ruthless hegemon aggressor.

The Chinese had carefully studied the period of the Warring States (475 BC-221 BC) in Chinese history. They examined how the less powerful states had unseated the hegemon. The Chinese even mentioned this in their talks with Nixon. A diplomatic translator referred to the US as the “*ba*” translating the word as “*leader*” but which more accurately means “*tyrant*” in Chinese.

Mao successfully turned the tables on the US, according to Pillsbury.

It is now universally accepted in the US that it bungled in relation to assisting the growth of Chinese power. At the very least it is understood that this policy was continued for too long. But what should have been done? Foreign Affairs is at a loss

for an answer. But all that needs asking is what its predecessor, Britain would have done in its position. Britain's great success was built around its Balance of Power policy which meant great reorientations in foreign policy following the cutting down to size of former enemies and the employment of these old enemies against new rivals that appeared on the scene. Sure, Britain catastrophically miscalculated in 1914 in relation to Germany but for two centuries this policy made Britain, a small island people, master of the globe.

Taking a leaf out of Britain's book, the US should have concluded, around the year 2000, that Russia was done as a serious rival and employed it as an ally against a rising China. Putin, who was open to friendship with the West would probably have co-operated in return for Western benevolence toward Russia. China, potentially a much more significant geopolitical rival with its vast population and economic potential, could have been encircled and effectively curtailed, at least for a generation. But the US lacked the immorality of Britain which had enabled it to ignore the character of its allies. True, during the Cold War the US had managed to suspend its morality in assisting dictators and authoritarians all over the world to do down opposition in ferocious ways. But that was to vanquish the greatest evil of all – Communism. Now there is internal evil in the US as well as external and it can never let go of its hatred of Russia. This has left the US with the worst of all results as the Cold War enemy reunites for purposes of mutual defence against the US, 50 years after Nixon prised them apart.

President Xi Jinping in his Summit with President Putin and joint declaration has left no doubt that the Nixon/Kissinger policy has been a failure and the West has been checkmated in its move on the East by the cohering of a powerful bloc of resistance. Russia has arisen from the ashes and is ready to stand and fight for the revision of the humiliating settlement being relentlessly imposed on the country by the US and associated powers. The victory of the market and the death of Communism has also apparently been greatly exaggerated in relation to China.

What happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object? Perhaps we should consult von Clausewitz:

"If one side uses force without compunction, that side will force the other to follow suit. Even the most civilised of peoples can be fired with passionate hatred of each other. The thesis must be repeated: war is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the application of that force." (Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Book One, Chapter One)

Perhaps President Biden should now realise that if he chooses the path of confrontation with the parts of the world that wish to remain outside of US hegemony and want to exercise self-determination he may be choosing Armageddon for us all.

Holy War in Ukraine (05.03.2022)

"War means delusion... and no humane person, or group of persons, can believe themselves or their country to have had a share in bringing war about. From this universal assumption of innocence, unquestioned as soon as war starts, arise all the conceptions of the enemy as the guilty party; then follows naturally, in the minds of sensitive and liberally inclined people, the immense myth of the Holy War. The logic of the feelings supplants the logic of fact and reason. Loss, risk, sacrifice... consecrate and sanctify the cause. The greater the sacrifice, the holier the war, the more Satanic the enemy... War plays the devil not only with bodies but with minds, and the ensuing intellectual deterioration being less obvious than the physical deterioration is so much the more dangerous." (Irene Cooper Willis, *England's Holy War*, Introduction, 1927)

Truth is the first casualty of war. Ukraine has not disappointed on that score. Churchill noted that truth in wartime needs to be surrounded by a bodyguard of lies.

Debate about the conflict in Ukraine has been largely shut down right across Europe and a single demonising of Russia narrative has been established. The idea that the conflict might have come about through NATO expansionism, which was gaining purchase in the West, has been successfully closed off in almost universal moral hysteria. The instituting of a single narrative can only be described as totalitarian in its character, despite taking place in the Western liberal democracies. No dissent has been permissible without fear of sanction. Social media and its effect on the masses has played a large part in the spread of moral poison and disinformation.

Alone in the West, it is in the US that some sense of proportion, truth and facts are still presented. But only by the few who have kept an eye on things for a decade or more.

The Cancel Russia Campaign

It is noteworthy how Western Governments have sprung into action with unprecedented, rapid and co-ordinated force to launch an economic war on Russia. What has been truly amazing has been how corporations and civil society have behaved like a lynch mob on cue. Across the "free world" that has been marshalled in the "Get Russia" campaign, private companies have gone beyond the call of duty in sanctioning all aspects of things Russian, following their governments and superseding them in zeal.

Nothing of this kind has happened perhaps since 1914. A popular witch hunt has been inaugurated that gathers greater and greater momentum and power by the day. Anything Russian or associated with Russia is fair game. Russian vodka has been cleared from the shelves, Russians cats barred from cat shows, Tchaikovsky and Dostoevsky banned. Politicians, media, churches, charities, schools and private individuals are all enthusiastically engaged in cancelling Russia and treating anyone associated with it as lepers. Those who dissent from this vast display of moral intimidation are with the Devil Himself, and we all know WHO that is.

The unprecedented Covid virus controls that governments in the West have instituted over their own populations – much greater than those that existed in totalitarian states – have been a magnificent preparation for this situation. The pandemic has magically disappeared but the management of the populace, trained in self-management, has stuck. Populations have fallen into line instantly and there are no anti-war protests of any kind. If protest is a sign of democracy Russia has suddenly reversed positions with the West.

The economic linkages developed since Russia became capitalist have been cut down to only energy and a few other commodities and chemicals that Europe is dependent upon Russia for. Political, social, sporting and cultural ties are being severed to a high degree. Bruno Le Maire, French Finance Minister, told a Radio show this week:

"We will provoke the collapse of the Russian economy. We are waging total economic and financial war against Russia, Putin and his government, and let's be clear, the Russian people will also pay the consequences." (Financial Times 5.3.22)

The main plank of this, to go with the widespread sanctions, is the freezing of the Russian central bank's overseas assets to prevent it supporting the economy with its \$600 billion of accumulated reserves.

This is the economic, political and social war front against Russia. The Ukrainians provide the military front.

Before the First World War, the British Admiralty conceived a plan to win rapid victory in the event of war with Germany,

involving economic warfare on an unprecedented scale. This secret strategy called for the state to exploit Britain's effective monopolies in banking, communications, and shipping—the essential infrastructure of the global market—to create a controlled implosion of the world economic system. The British political leadership believed that the systematic disruption of the global economy could bring about German military paralysis. After the outbreak of hostilities, the British government shied away from full implementation of the plan upon realising the extent of likely collateral damage—political, social, economic, and diplomatic—to both Britain and its allies. Nicholas Lambert has written a fascinating book, 'Planning Armageddon', about the plan. It is evident that the US political establishment has not read it.

While Russia has made certain contingencies for what might have been unleashed against it, in the event of a military operation in Ukraine, it is clear that it may not have been prepared enough for the total economic war that has now confronted it. One question is where the Russian gold reserves are being stored? Are they in foreign bank vaults? After the confiscation of Venezuela's and Afghanistan's reserves that would not have been a good idea. Perhaps, it is also not a good idea to have a pro-Westerner in charge of the Russian Central Bank.

If this economic warfare and piracy is persisted with, Russia, to avoid financial collapse, will have to become economically and financially independent from the West, like Iran has made itself. The Central Bank will have to stop thinking that the fate of the Russian economy depends on foreign exchange and investment. Once Russia is sealed off from foreign capital, the Russian Central Bank will have to take the job in hand and finance Russia's internal development. It should have learned by now that there is a price to pay when a state is dependent on the capitalist market controlled by the enemy dollar hegemon. It is the same price that Germany paid with its overseas trade in a world market policed by the Royal Navy.

Whilst Russia saw its energy resources, which Europe has depended upon, as security against economic sanction, China has infiltrated the global market to the extent that an economic attack on it is more risky. However, it is evident that the same weaponised economic and cultural war could also be turned on China and the other holdouts from US-led Western hegemony if the campaign against Russia is successful. China, which has stayed on top of its hill, while the tigers fight below, may have to come onto the plain before it had planned to.

So, there is also the possibility, if the game is played out to the full by Washington as in Britain's economic Armageddon in August 1914, that the globalised market that came about as a result of the US victory over the USSR will be endangered. There may be the formation of a powerful defensive bloc organised around China and Russia, behind an Iron Curtain imposed by the West, for the purposes of survival and independence. Neutrality, of course, will be difficult to maintain in such a world. But it is clear now that national banks and reserves are no longer safe from the prying eyes and grasping hands of the US.

The globalised financial world, under US dollar hegemony, will have to be broken up by those who are serious about national independence. If not, battles will always be fought on a battlefield controlled by America and within the rules of the game written by those who can bend them to their interest.

It is possible that the globalised world announced in 1991 may have hit the buffers and a new geopolitical shift could be occurring out of the economic war waged on Russia. A new bi-polar world may come about, instead of the multi-polar one that threatened to emerge briefly out of the uni-polar one, after 1991.

A Conflict Made in America?

What should be first understood is that the crisis in Ukraine is very much rooted in the internal politics of the US and the "stolen election" that brought Donald Trump to power in 2016. The businessman Trump had commercial links to Russia and it was clear he admired strong men as leaders, even if the US wanted to disable their countries. He wanted to end the phase of US expansionism, invade no new countries and start no new wars. He even wanted to end the US wars of his predecessors. President Trump expressed open contempt for the Liberal order when campaigning for President in 2016 and after taking office pursued policies that seemed designed to undermine it. He was highly amoral and even disgracefully immoral in character. This was really an affront to US democracy and its universalistic mission to bring the US and its "progressive values" to the rest of the world – whether it liked it or not. US expansionism and war fighting is highly moralistic and even if Trump had been prepared to continue the mission of the "indispensable nation" across the world and its Manifest Destiny, he was unfitted to do so.

President Trump effectively disabled America and gave the rest of the world a break, much to the chagrin of the US political establishment and those in Europe who had made a habit of taking their orders from Washington and could not conceive of life outside of America's coat tails.

So when Joe Biden saw off Trump in the 2020 election and ended the peace interlude there was great appetite for the US to resume its interventions in the World and to do further Good in it again. America was back and it was time for the US to lead again – as Foreign Affairs said in an avalanche of articles. And it was also time to tackle the authoritarians again and flex the muscles of democracy. But then came the debacle in Afghanistan that didn't get Biden off to a great start.

President Trump had realised that America's future geopolitical rival was China and he had begun a re-orientation in US foreign policy. He had pivoted East and took some economic measures against the rising giant that the US itself had helped grow. But Biden wanted to make an impact for democracy after the failure in Afghanistan and chose to target Russia in Ukraine where there was unfinished business from 2014 and his time in the Obama administration.

President Biden upped the ante with increased arms and training for the Ukrainians from late 2021. In the 7 years from 2014 to 2021 Ukraine received \$2.5 billion in military aid from the US. Over the past 2 months it has received a massive \$1.6 billion. The British foolishly sailed a destroyer up to the Russian base on the Black Sea and the US flew bombers over the same area to test the Russian will. All these provocations were aimed at ratcheting up the pressure on Putin, hoping to goad him into military action.

Russophobia is extensive in the US for a number of reasons. LGBT assertiveness cannot be underestimated in this regard. But the main driving force has been Trump and the "stolen election" which connects Biden/Democratic Party to Putin/Russia and Ukraine.

The British have been consistent US lackeys since the Cold War but the EU/European conversion to the line of duty has been the most staggering development. The British have been put in the shade by the Europeans with the outbreak of hostilities. With Mama Merkel out of the game, and the feminist Ursula von der Leyen in charge, hysteria has replaced realism in Europe and concerns for economic self-destruction waved aside in the cause of a good moral and progressive war.

Ironically, President Trump has achieved one of his main goals after he has left office. Trump was annoyed at the US shouldering the burden of NATO for its allies – mainly the

Europeans. NATO had lost momentum and as it had done so it became less relevant to Europeans. The EU started taking up its own expansionary work to the East. Now the Europeans are willing and eager to bear their share of the NATO burden from the US and they have been brought back into line by Washington.

NATO's persistence after the Cold War and its expansion into Eastern Europe is not just about geopolitics, of course. It is also about the US and its allies working to expand the Western order into a global Liberal International order. It might be imagined that advancing NATO eastward was a simple deterrence strategy aimed at containing a geopolitical enemy, that though vanquished might rise again. But it was much more than that, because it is a fundamental part of US strategy to make the world secure for its dominance by universalising Liberal Democracy. That was what the "end of history" was all about, after all – a utopia in which traditional societies and their cultures were eradicated and right-thinking "humanity" adjusted to progressing along lines determined in East Coast United States and California.

Reckless Ukraine

It is often said in the West that Ukraine has every right to do what it wishes as an independent state. It should be allowed to join NATO and/or locate any weaponry it chooses on its territory, directed at whomsoever it wishes. That, of course, is nonsense. All states have also a duty of maintaining good relations with their neighbours and not posing as a threat their security. Failure to do so results in war.

The relations between Britain and Ireland is a case in point, and in particular how Eamon deValera managed these after he came to power in the Irish Free State during the 1930s.

From "*Document No. 2*" onwards deValera never tired of saying that Ireland must be sovereign but that this would be exercised with a "*certain consideration*" for Britain. He insisted that Ireland would not join any alliance with a hostile intent towards Britain or allow any attack on Britain from its territory, whilst constantly striving to enhance Irish independence within the Treaty. Dev ruthlessly repressed any attempts at this from sections of the Republican movement who wanted to avail of "*England's difficulty*". The British wouldn't conclude a treaty to this effect, but in 1938 it did hand back the Irish ports "*unconditionally*" as a result of the good faith established by deValera. Britain wanted to keep a free hand, and simultaneously made statements stressing that Britain might repossess the ports any time it considered, if they were needed for its own security. Dev acted with great statesmanship in balancing the cause of Irish independence with the security needs of its much larger and more powerful neighbour. Now, if Mr Zelensky had been a Dev...

The US, if it were to return to duty in leading humanity with a bang, required a willing accomplice and a battlefield on which to do battle against the forces of evil/authoritarianism. It struck gold with the simple-minded Ukrainians and their actor/comedian leader Volodymyr Zelensky, who came to power under the tutelage of the mysterious oligarch, Igor Kolomoisky. As Brendan Clifford has noted:

"President Zelensky... seems to have lived in an American cultural bubble of the most superficial kind until he was chosen to be President." (Irish Political Review, March 2020, p.22)

Zelensky is the perfect modern man – all Facebook/Twitter style and little substance. All emotion and no thought. A walking catastrophe in the making. He may have had his own ideas at the outset, and was full of good intentions to bring peace and stability, but he has become a prisoner of other interests while acting the part of a free man.

Upon entering office, Zelensky apparently took with him people from the TV and media world as officials and advisers. Matt Frei in the BBC programme '*Zelensky: The Man who took on Putin*' enthused about his subject: "*Over the past few weeks he has given the performance of his life.*" That seems to have been the sum total of his achievements as President of Ukraine since May 2019. Everything else he has attempted has been botched. Before the war there were suggestions of replacing him when he made suggestions of resolving the conflict in the East through negotiations with Russia.

Zelensky has been embarrassingly called "*the Ukrainian Churchill*". There are some parallels: Churchill was a ham-actor during World War Two, presenting a fantasy war. He had earlier described Bolshevism as "*the world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation*" led by the "*international Jews*". As a fierce anti-Bolshevist, who had previously invaded Russia, Churchill became a dependent ally of Soviet Russia in a world war against Germany. In "*winning*" that war he collaborated in the expansion of Bolshevism across half of Europe. Without US assistance it would have reached Calais. And then Churchill wrote history that has become the accepted standard narrative, although bearing little resemblance to the truth of the matter. Outside the land of make believe it is clear that it was Russia that won World War II in Europe and rescued Britain from defeat.

President Zelensky may emerge a victorious hero of the Ukrainian liberation war/war to rid the West of Putin, or he may die in a bunker, having destroyed his nation and made Kiev into Berlin 1945. War is a catastrophic activity and the margins of success or failure are often slim. But whatever the outcome he will have served his purpose for the West.

It is evident, but cannot be said at present, that the Ukrainian leadership, particularly its frontman, Zelensky, have behaved with utter recklessness in this crisis. First and foremost, they have offered up their country's territory as a battlefield, and their people as cannon fodder, for the West's geopolitical advance against Russia. They have known the consequences of this from day one, unless it is pleaded that in calling the Russians inhuman monsters, they were doing so in jest. They were told repeatedly by the West that it would not fight a wider war for them, but they persisted in goading the Bear nevertheless. Now they are constantly calling for military action from the West that would produce a European war, at the very least, and a World war, and nuclear Armageddon, in all likelihood, if things are played out to the full.

The Ukrainian leadership has also taken the grossly irresponsible step of randomly arming untrained and undisciplined volunteers with thousands of sub-machine guns. A BBC report described how these volunteers "*mingle with the Ukrainian military*". In doing this the Ukrainians have blurred the distinction between combatants and non-combatants and between soldiers and civilians. This is effectively turning Ukrainian cities into armed camps. Under such circumstances they have legitimised the bombing of cities by the Russians and have increased the possibility of civilian deaths in fighting.

During the 1980s the Irish Republican Army received large shipments of arms from Libya. A discussion was had as to whether the Catholic population, which was under pressure from assassination squads run by the British military, should be turned into an armed militia. The IRA wisely decided that such a thing would be grossly irresponsible. No political control would be possible over a general population that was armed and it would lead to the general targeting of civilians on a mass scale. With the conclusion of the war and a peace settlement, the arms now lie in bunkers, safe for a rainy day.

Have the weapons been distributed among the civilian populace to make a negotiated settlement impossible? Certainly any Ukrainian government will find it very difficult now to come to terms without fighting a civil war against diehards, even if the US permits such a thing.

The handing out of weapons to the general public has the famous precedent of the Nazis in Berlin 1945. Hitler ordered this move not just to defend Berlin but due to his exasperation with the German people, who he believed had failed him, and who now could perish with him in the final battle against the Russian liberators.

The Ukrainians, one must presume, are either recklessly irresponsible or are happy to sacrifice as many of their people to help demonise the Russians through making an assault on Kiev like that on Berlin in 1945.

Whereas the war may make Ukraine a more coherent nation it may not be so good for the Ukrainian state, its people or territorial integrity.

What triggered the Conflict?

While it has been the Ukrainian intention to recklessly expand the war it cannot be denied that the Russians have been careful to confine and limit it as much as is possible.

It was clear that prior to the Russian intervention in Ukraine the West was attempting to lure Russian forces into the breakaway provinces in the east by arming Ukrainian forces and encouraging them to mount a new offensive. They duly obliged. The Western calculation was that Putin could not afford to stand idly by while the Ukrainians rolled into the Russian populated regions and massacred its population as they had done to the trade unionists in Odessa and ethnic Russians in Donetsk in 2014.

Putin had no intention of invading Ukraine despite the Western provocations and the self-fulfilling prophecies of the White House announcing the imminence of Russian invasion. Putin would have known the great military, political and economic cost Russia would have to bear if it launched its forces across the border. It would have known about the quagmire that awaited it if it was drawn in and swallowed up by prolonged Ukrainian resistance. The British Foreign Secretary warned about that. It seems fairly obvious that the US aimed to do to the Russians in Ukraine what they did to the USSR in Afghanistan.

Even if quickly successful the cost of running an occupation would be immense and sanctions would be severe and long-lasting. The Russians don't have the means to occupy and control the whole country and the US would continue to pour in advisors, money, weapons and mercenaries into it. A simple cost/benefit analysis told Putin that he was winning if he stayed out and avoided being provoked into Ukraine. The existing narrative favoured Russia but if a war started it would instantly change and Russia's good case would be buried by moral hysteria and the closing down of argument.

It was widely believed that Russia was just interested in defending or enlarging the two republics it was forced to recognise in the east. But Putin had a big surprise up his sleeve. His forces launched a much more extensive military operation that aimed at demilitarising Ukraine to the East of the Dnieper and perhaps aimed holding this area as a buffer against NATO expansion to the Russian border, if the Ukrainians did not come to their senses. This area, one could speculate, could then be held until the Ukrainians were prepared to enter into a peace settlement in which sovereignty is returned to Kiev in exchange for neutrality and friendly neighbourliness. The Minsk agreements would therefore be implemented through military persuasion where diplomacy had failed (as was the case in

the Karabakh war recently, which Putin helped to manage a controlled conclusion to).

The new Russian strategic objective in the "Special Military Operation" is evidently the coastal strip to the South along the Black Sea. This area is referred to as Novorossiia (New Russia). Between 1764 and 1917 Novorossiia was a distinct administrative unit of the Russian Empire along the entire Black Sea coast from Mariupol in the east to Transnistria in the west. It is predominantly Russian speaking.

However, if things are played out to the full the Ukrainian state as a whole could even come into the balance.

Putin was placed in a dilemma over the past few months. Russia had been insistent even before the time of the 2008 Bucharest Conference, announcing the future ascension of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO that Russia would never permit such a thing. Putin made that clear in his famous Munich speech of 2007. From that point the West began seeing him as an ogre. They had wanted Putin to be a kind of sober Yeltsin who they could do business with as Russia was plundered. They realised that Russia had begun to resurrect itself and behave like a normal state again, protecting a sphere of influence around it, so that a hostile sphere of influence would not surround it, as normal powers do.

Russia drew a line in the sand over Georgia and Ukraine and made its position to the World clear. It had swallowed two earlier NATO expansions toward, and up to its borders, but enough was enough. A NATO expansion into Ukraine would more than triple the NATO/Russian line of contact making Russian territory much more difficult and expensive to defend. It would put Moscow within range of NATO bombers in less than 30 minutes.

In 2008 Georgia tested Putin with its NATO trained forces by assaulting South Ossetia. Russia defeated it in a week and could have done much worse as Tbilisi was wide open to Russian forces. But Russia made its point to Georgia and the World.

However, the lesson the West seemed to draw from this debacle was that in future a more serious force would be cultivated to produce a stronger test for Putin. And that led to battlefield Ukraine, once the right regime was installed.

According to Russia Today:

"Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that he chose to attack Ukraine beyond the borders of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR) to prevent the West from 'endlessly' supplying 'nationalists and radicals' with various resources, such as weapons and money. He added that the Russian forces were 'practically done' destroying Ukrainian military sites, such as air defences and weapons depots.

"The president stated that he had ordered Russian troops to invade Ukraine last week in order to neutralise the 'real threat' coming from Kiev and NATO. Moscow has long protested the Western military infrastructure along its borders and Ukraine's aspirations to join the US-led bloc.

"They began to say more actively that they will admit [Ukraine] to NATO. What will this lead to? All other members of the alliance must back Ukraine in the case of a military conflict,' Putin said. 'They will [attack] Crimea, and we will be forced to go to war with NATO. Do you understand the consequences?' The president stated that he wanted Ukraine to become a neutral country."

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov later revealed that the decision for military intervention was taken after,

"...the West's stonewalling of Russia's initiative to reach an agreement on an equal and indivisible security architecture in Europe. President Vladimir Putin put forward this initiative in November 2021, we drafted the necessary documents and relayed them to the US and NATO in December 2021. They

responded that they were willing to negotiate certain issues, including where missiles could not be deployed, but that Ukraine and NATO was none of our business. Ukraine was said to have reserved its right to appeal to join NATO, which would then deliberate whether to admit it, and all this without asking anyone else (likely ending up granting Ukraine's membership). This was the essence of what they told us."

Along with this, Zelensky's rejection of the Minsk agreement was probably the straw that broke the camel's back for Russia. Russian officials had worked for 8 years on Minsk, hammering out terms that would be agreeable to all parties concerned. Zelensky, who had come to power on the promise of easing tensions with Russia and finding an accommodation on the breakaway republics in east Ukraine, inexplicably rejected the agreement which was the only chance of achieving this. He then proceeded to deploy 60,000 troops to the line of contact in East Ukraine where they were poised for action against the ethnic Russians. On January 22, Russian intelligence intercepted the order of General Balan emphasizing the need to complete preparations for offensive actions before February 28, so that the Ukrainian forces could go on the offensive in early March.

All these factors suggested to the Russians that an intransigent position had been arranged between Washington and Kiev which negotiation could not overcome, so the time for talking was over.

The Ukrainian leadership signalling their intention of arming themselves with nuclear weapons presumably also pushed Putin over the edge. The US, Russia and Ukraine had signed a Trilateral Statement in January 1994. Ukraine committed to full disarmament, including strategic weapons, in exchange for economic support and security assurances from the United States and Russia. The Budapest Memorandum, signed in December 1994, by the US, Britain, Russia and Ukraine confirmed the deal by which guarantees of Ukraine's security and territorial integrity were made in exchange for Kiev transferring its nuclear warheads to Russia and accepting US assistance in dismantling missiles, bombers, and nuclear infrastructure and receiving compensation for the value of its enriched uranium. About 5,000 nuclear munitions were moved to Russia in almost 100 trains between 1994 and 1996.

President Zelensky in his speech of 19 February, at the Munich Security Conference, questioned whether Ukraine was obligated to retain its non-nuclear status. Zelensky argued, that the whole "*package of decisions*" in the Budapest deal, including Ukraine's non-nuclear status, were "*in doubt*." Zelensky said that "*Ukraine received security guarantees for abandoning the world's third nuclear capability... We don't have that weapon. We now have no security.*" He added:

"The Minister of Foreign Affairs has been instructed to convene consultations. If they do not take place again or their results do not bring security guarantees for our country, Ukraine will have every right to believe that the Budapest Memorandum does not work, and all 1994 commitments will be called into question." He previously stated in September 2019, in front of the UN, that he regretted that Ukraine had given up "its nuclear potential, which at that time was larger than that of the UK, France and China all put together."

The statement of the President and the statements of other Ukrainians on arming his country with nuclear weapons was "crossing a red line" for Russia. Sergei Lavrov stated at the Conference of Disarmament in Geneva that Zelensky's government threatened their neighbours' and international security through embarking on "dangerous games related to plans to acquire their own nuclear weapons," noting that Ukraine still had access to Soviet nuclear technologies and the means to deliver those weapons.

Ukraine did not have to join NATO for NATO to enter Ukraine. The US and its allies had transformed the country into a de facto member of NATO. As Prof. Mearsheimer has noted, Ukraine has already become in every sense a NATO country, but without the obligation for NATO to defend it, under Article V. And that is the best position for the NATO countries since they have strategic flexibility, as Britain had in 1914, to join a war, or not, on behalf of Ukraine, and determining its course. The West has not given a blank check to Ukraine, as Britain gave to Poland in 1939. It is not tied down by treaty obligations and retains the ability to act where and when it chooses against Russia without the unstable Ukrainians dictating the course of events.

The Russian Military Operation

The intervention in the Ukraine was called a "*Special Military Operation*" by Moscow. One assumes that this is to signify its limited character – both in substance and in ambition. The fact that it was greater in scope than a simple defence of the Russian areas in eastern Ukraine should not blur the fact that this was not an invasion with the intention of long-term conquest.

Col. Douglas Macgregor was interviewed by Tucker Carlson on Fox News on 1 March about the situation with Russia and Ukraine. Military people seem to be the most realistic and truthful people where war is concerned. Below is a part of the interview:

Col. Macgregor: "Well, the first 5 days, we saw a very slow methodical movement of Russian forces entering Ukraine.... They moved slowly and cautiously and tried to reduce casualties among the civilian population, trying to give the Ukrainian forces the opportunity to surrender. That is over. And in the phase which we find ourselves now, Russian forces have manoeuvred to encircle and surround the remaining Ukrainian forces and destroy them through a series of massive rocket artillery strikes, air strikes with Russian armour, slowly but surely, closing the distance and annihilating what's left. So, this is the beginning of the end of the Ukrainian resistance.

Tucker Carlson: What is Putin's goal here?"

Col. Macgregor: "Putin set out to honour his word from 2007 at the Munich Security Conference where he said 'We will not allow the expansion of NATO to a point where NATO is touching our border – specifically, Ukraine and Georgia. We see these as Trojan Horses for NATO's military power and US influence... He repeated that over and over and over again, in the hope that he could avoid taking action to effectively clean out eastern Ukraine of any opposition forces whatever, and to put his forces in a position vis-a-vis NATO to deter us from any further attempts to influence or change Ukraine into a platform for the projection of US and western power into Russia.

Now his goal – as of today – is to seize this whole area of eastern Ukraine (east of the Dnieper River) and he has crossed the river where he is preparing to go in and capture the city (of Kiev) entirely. At that point, Putin has to decide what else he wants to do. I don't think he wants to go any further west. But he would like to know that whatever emerges from this as Ukraine... is "neutral" non-aligned and, preferably, friendly to Moscow. That he will accept. Anything short of that, and his war has been a waste of time."

The Russian military operation in the first week of war was more kid gloves than iron fist. Around 120,000 soldiers faced each other along the line of contact. The Russians matched or only just exceeded the Ukrainian front line forces in number. A 10 days military operation was aimed at degrading Ukrainian military capacity, supplied to it by NATO. Then an evaluation was planned as to the situation. After a week of the operation up

to 200,000 soldiers on both sides faced each other on the line of contact which had been expanded to 3000 km by the Russian operation. Ukrainian defences were forced into being thinned out and spread. The surrounding of large cities by the Russian force ensured the pinning down of enemy forces preventing the Ukrainian command from transferring reinforcements to the Donbass where the main Russian operation was taking place. This is where the fighting core of the Ukrainian armed forces are situated, around 60,000 men.

The Russian operation seems to have been about locating where the Ukrainian forces were, surrounding them, destroying their headquarters, air and naval bases, along with supplies and ammunition depots. Russia gave every indication of hoping to avoid urban warfare for humanitarian, political and economic reasons. Russia, said Putin, was not going to conduct war indiscriminately as the US/NATO did in Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.

Western analysts have suggested that the Russian forces have underperformed because of little training, preparation or intelligence work. They have argued that that this has produced poor coordination between Russian air power and ground forces. They quote figures suggesting high Russian casualties and very few Ukrainian deaths. If this is to be believed it suggests that the Russian operation was improvised to a large degree, rather than long-intended, and that the Russians were keen to minimise Ukrainian losses, particularly civilian ones, even if it meant incurring more military casualties themselves. Observing the level of Russian casualties, Chechnya's leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, reportedly told Putin take off the restraints and let the armed forces conduct a full war. It made no sense, he said, to save Ukrainian lives at the expense of Russian ones.

During the first week the Russian air force was not used extensively after air superiority was achieved. It was employed in limited and targeted strikes against military targets. However, it would have been known in the West that if Russia did not attain its goals through the use of kid gloves the gloves would surely come off and the Ukrainians would increasingly suffer the consequences of a more intensive campaign. That is what appears to be happening now.

The Russians have created three cauldrons of encirclement. The principle one is around Mariupol where the main concentration of the Azov battalion, the fascist force, is located. Another is being established around the main concentration of the Ukrainian Armed Forces facing the LDPR. And there is another developing to the east of the city of Kiev.

Putin may, or may not, have underestimated the substance of Ukraine, the nation. He may have thought, because the Soviet Union made the Ukrainian state, that Ukrainians were merely deluded Russians (as Irish nationalists underestimate the Ulster Protestant) who, given the shock treatment, would come to their senses. Alexander Powell in *'Thunder Over Europe'* (1931) described the Ukrainians as having a "*highly developed national consciousness, a language, a literature and a church of their own.*" He compared them with the Irish, another oppressed people. However, Powell made it clear that the oppressors of the Ukrainians were not the Russians, but the Poles:

"the Ukrainians of Galicia have had no sympathy with Communism, but in case the Soviets should launch an attack against Poland it would be surprising if they did not side with the Reds." (pp.107-8)

A decade later the four and a half million Poles of Eastern Galicia were indeed joined with the twenty million Russian Ukrainians to form the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Putin is not a Communist after all. The Soviets had a sounder grasp in handling the national and nationalities question. Even Khrushchev understood that Ukrainian nationalism was

substantial and set out to undermine it through incorporating Russian populations within the Ukrainian SSR. Unfortunately for Ukraine its own nationalism has been found wanting and inadequate in incorporating them. It drove them back into Moscow's arms for reasons of self-protection, assisting the Russian strategic interest.

The positive aspect to the Russians seeing the Ukrainians as brother Russians is that they are far more likely to be squeamish about killing them. The corollary to this is that the more Ukrainian resistance is seen as nationalist and anti-Russian the more Russians will cease to hold this view. But military activity against the Ukrainians will remain unpopular with the Russian people.

K.W.B. Middleton, writing about the 1918-21 period, when Poles and Germans thought of making something of the Ukraine, noted in his informative *Britain and Russia: An Historical Essay*:

"No Russian government, Red, White or other, could possibly tolerate a Poland extending to the Donetz Basin and cutting Russia off from the Black Sea, any more than a nominally independent Ukraine under German domination. It would mean the end of Russia." (p.122)

Putin knows his geopolitics but Britain has evidently or conveniently forgotten its former understandings in cheering on the US in extending NATO into an area that would "mean the end of Russia". Does anyone really know what Russia is anymore in the West beyond the caricatures?

Conclusion

Let us sum up the implications of all this: US policy is to remove Putin, the man who has resurrected Russia as a functional Power; it has succeeded in luring Russia into Ukraine so that a vast array of punitive measures can be instituted against it; these can be ratcheted up if the Ukrainians continue to fight and do not make a settlement; this will lead to an intensification of the Russian campaign, producing many more casualties and destruction; this will all be good for propaganda against Russia; Russia will have to get rid of Putin or go down with him; Ukrainians and Ukrainian territory can be sacrificed in increasing amounts to the greater good of vanquishing the Devil. That is the Holy war in Ukraine.

As has been said before, by the present writer, Russia has chosen to stand and fight in Ukraine. The Ukrainians have obliged the West, who as yet have declined to fight themselves, by providing the battlefield and human resources for that fight. Russia cannot afford to lose this fight, having taken up the gauntlet and there is no retreat. Ukraine is likely to pay a heavy price in blood, treasure and territory in such circumstances. And that will make great media against Russia.

In its own terms, the US has been greatly successful in what it has achieved so far: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya etc. have been forgotten in a heartbeat. US intelligence, which harmed its reputation by inventing the Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction story has seemingly recovered its reputation by predicting a Russian invasion (after all, the only true prophets are those who carve out the future they, themselves, predict). Washington has wiped out the Trumpian peace-mongering, democratic dereliction of duty, aberration in an instant. War and the Russian Devil have shepherded the European flock back into the fold and the US leads "*the world*" again. Everyone understands who's boss and what the difference is between Good and Evil. The "*Free World*" has been successfully mustered behind the US in the fight against Evil, where it belongs.

Whether this situation persists, of course, is a different thing entirely. There is always the chance, if the Ukrainians get their way, that nothing will persist because nothing will exist.

A rather striking Ukrainian female MP, when advised by the Channel 4 News interviewer that the calls for the West to directly intervene would lead to a third world war, told him that “*Ukraine is already fighting World War Three.*”

Perhaps in attempting to destroy the Devil the delusions of war may mean we all come to meet our Maker before the allotted time.

Glacis Ukraine: Putin versus Stalin? (12.03.2022)

“Beyond those walls... extends a glacis of varying breadth and dimension. We do not want to occupy it, but we also cannot afford to see it occupied by our foes. We are quite content to let it remain in the hands of our friends; but if rival and unfriendly influences creep up to it and lodge themselves right under our walls, we are compelled to intervene, because a danger would thereby grow up that might one day menace our security... He would be a short-sighted commander who merely manned his ramparts... and did not look beyond; and the whole of our policy... has been directed towards maintaining our influence, and to preventing the expansion of hostile agencies on this area...”

That was Lord Curzon, Viceroy of Britain’s Indian Empire, and later British Foreign Secretary, addressing the Legislative Council in Calcutta on 30 March 1904. He was explaining why Britain could never permit “*hostile agencies*” arriving at the frontiers of its territories and assembling there. Before that happened Britain “*was compelled to intervene*” to disperse anyone who thought of doing such a thing. He was thinking mainly of Russia, and the expanding Tsarist Empire.

Lord Curzon would surely have appreciated Russia’s position in relation to the US and its allies which have been relentlessly advancing over the previous quarter century up to its borders with the objective of lodging NATO and its ordnance right under its walls.

Curzon was talking about the glacis of India. A glacis is the killing ground on the approaches to a fortress, where fighting takes place before it is too late and it occurs on the ramparts of the fortress itself. It would not be inaccurate to describe Ukraine, today, as the glacis of Russia.

The problem was to know when to sally forth beyond the fortress walls to engage any forces which were about to muster on the glacis. If this was done too early it might well end in disaster. If it were done too late, when the forces were firmly lodged with plentiful supplies of men and siege equipment it might end in catastrophe.

Britain met disaster in Afghanistan, the main site of the glacis of India, on a couple of occasions it sallied forth to Kabul. But Curzon maintained, decades later, that the policy was sound and nobody should expect anything other of Britain, if it were to remain a great power. The maintenance of spheres of influence, after all, are essential to the existence of great powers. The US’s Monroe Doctrine, and the Cuba Missile Crisis, are testament to the continued relevance of that.

Putin’s Intervention on the Glacis

With regard to the decision to invade the present writer is reminded of de Valera’s reaction to the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson: “*I do not approve but I must not pretend to misunderstand...*”

The Russian President took the momentous decision to militarily intervene in Ukraine, and sally forth to the glacis, because the US had made Ukraine into a de facto NATO

state, minus the Article V guarantee. The Western media has taken care not to broadcast the fact that Ukraine’s constitution commits the state to joining NATO, making it a legal imperative for its politicians to support this.

Evidence confirming this emerged when an enormous 360 sq. km NATO training facility that had been constructed in Western Ukraine was duly bombed by the Russians on 12 March, inflicting hundreds of casualties on foreign fighters being trained there.

The US and its allies had already been training and supplying Ukrainian forces with massive amounts of weaponry and financial assistance for 7 years. The Ukrainian President had also announced that he was prepared to abrogate the December 1994 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on 21 February making Ukraine a base for nuclear weapons aimed at Russia. Russia launched its Special Military Operation 3 days later. And then there was the presence of US biological warfare laboratories in the Ukraine in violation of Article I of the UN Biological Weapons Convention (which the Americans failed to destroy evidence of before the Russian invasion forcing an admittance by Victoria Nuland at a Congressional hearing). The US intelligence reports of WMD in Iraq constituted the justification for war and now actual WMD development laboratories have been found in Ukraine.

Ukrainian forces were also massing on the peripheries of the Russian-populated break away areas poised for an imminent revanchist attack scheduled for late February/early March which would force Moscow to intervene to prevent massacre. The evidence for this is in documents captured by Russian forces. A British General, when asked on Radio 4 Today programme why NATO had not helped the Ukrainians more stated that one more month of supplies would have been sufficient to deal a blow to Russia but Putin had moved too quick (or in the nick of time, perhaps).

Alexander Dugin, wrote back in 2014:

“Putin cannot let the radically anti-Russian government in Ukraine dominate a country that has a population that is half-Russian and which contains many pro-Russian regions. If he allows this, he will be finished on the international and domestic levels. So, reluctantly he accepts war. And once he begins on this course, there will be no other solution for Russia but to win it.” (Putin vs. Putin, p. 302)

If Dugin understood that, Washington, which read Dugin carefully, understood it too.

Putin presumably calculated he had to someday fight on the ramparts or on the glacis. He threw a surprise by not just coming to the defence of the Donbas but in launching a much more extensive offensive aimed at disabling and disintegrating the Ukrainian State, at least temporarily, so that it would be incapable of hosting an enemy beneath Russia’s walls.

The Western media has been engaged in extensive misinformation with regard to the course and progress of the Russian military campaign and its objectives. First, it was asserted that the campaign was expected by the Russians to defeat the Ukrainians in a matter of days. At this point the BBC journalists sitting on top of their 5 star hotels in Kiev were reporting that the Russian forces were going to enter the city imminently. When they didn’t it was said that the Ukrainians had offered great resistance and the Russian forces were inept.

There was a 40 mile long military column that was stuck in the mud, or run out of petrol, or had broken down or something. It was a sitting duck for the Ukrainians but they couldn’t destroy it, even with the much famed Bayraktars, which had proved so deadly against Armenian armoured vehicles during the Karabakh war. The column parked at its leisure in a war zone for a week and then systematically fanned out around Kiev

into carefully selected positions as if the Russians had a plan! It was almost certainly a feint, designed to tie Ukrainian forces into “defending” the capital when no defence was actually necessary. This has been borne out by the fact that Kiev has been so quiet most days with BBC journalists finding nothing to report. Casualties in the capital have been minimal and the armed citizens patrol and take selfies with their Kalashnikovs.

Where were the Ukrainians? Perhaps they were being occupied by advancing Russian forces elsewhere, which were steadily surrounding them in pre-determined cauldrons. The main military focus of the Russian operation has been in the East and it has been particularly effective here. Operations around Kiev have more of a political character, aimed at forcing the Ukrainians to settle at the conference table. They are a feint in military terms.

The Russians are sensibly avoiding rushed direct assaults on urban centres like the one Yeltsin disastrously attempted in Grozny on New Year’s Eve 1994, in favour of Putin’s successful two month long siege of the city in 1999-2000. It should be noted, however, that the fall of Grozny was not the end of the matter in Chechnya. It took a number of years of Russian counter-insurgency operations and political initiatives to quell Chechen resistance and develop a friendly administration. So the Russians are no strangers to longer campaigns involving holding ground over long periods. But Ukraine is not Chechnya so there is unlikely to be a Grozny done on Kiev. That would demand much greater forces than are at present committed to the “*Special Military Operation*”.

Anyone who has studied these events could have predicted what course the Russian campaign would have taken, but Western politicians, media, military analysts etc. have issued a tissue of lies to deceive the general public. The Ukrainian leadership have enthusiastically offered their territory as a glacis and been willing accomplices in the destruction of their country.

By the day 6 of Operation Z Russian forces had surrounded all the major Ukrainian cities East of the Dnieper, including Mariupol, Kharkov and Kiev, and had cut off Ukrainian forces from the sea of Azov. Western Ukraine was left as an evacuation corridor to ensure the safe passage of those not wishing to be combatants in the battle area. The Ukrainians have press-ganged the male population into remaining in the urban centres, whether they wished to or not.

In point of fact, the military campaign Putin has set in motion, to destroy the heavily armed, sophisticatedly equipped, highly trained (by NATO), well-motivated and battle-hardened 200,000 Ukrainian forces (with 200,000+ reserves), extensively assisted by Western intelligence and surveillance services, will be no mean feat. Defeating a country of 44 million, one and a half times the size of the UK, should not be underestimated. No Western country would be capable of such a thing, outside of the US – which would obliterate everything from the air, regardless of civilian casualties, before it committed any soldiers to the ground.

It took the Azerbaijani army 44 days to defeat much inferior, poorly organised and trained Armenian forces, with Soviet era equipment and no outside assistance, and to take an area the size of an Irish county. The Armenian forces were at least four times smaller than the Ukrainian army and were often made up of volunteers who had never fought in a war. That campaign was regarded as a great military success by Western analysts. But the same analysts lead us to believe that the Russians should have steamrollered the best forces NATO could have put in the field of battle, with 7 years of preparation, defending the existence of their country, in a week or two! In truth, a Russian victory in Ukraine in the first half of 2022 would be a remarkable military accomplishment.

One US military analyst has estimated that to secure the perimeter of a new Russian Ukraine from infiltration, the major urban areas and communications networks, control the population and conduct civil-military and counter-insurgency operations,

“the Russians would need to deploy 168,000 occupation troops and keep another 168,000 in constant rotation for a total of 336,000 troops. That constitutes over 95% of the entire Russian Ground Force of approximately 350,000 personnel, not including available Russian airborne, special operations, or National Guard troops.”

That is not the Russian plan. It is the actual plan from Washington: to absorb the Russians into a destroyed Ukraine and bleed them dry in blood and treasure over an extended period in order to topple the functional government in Moscow and return Russia to the days of Yeltsin. This is a scenario in which US and Ukrainian interests sharply diverge.

The geopolitical war on Russia was launched 8 years ago in Ukraine by the EU/US Maidan coup, and not by Putin last month. It can only be stopped, short of a Ukrainian surrender, by the US calling it off. In fact, the probability is that Washington would not recognise any Ukrainian government coming to terms with Moscow and would promote a resistance movement to keep the war going. That was the quagmire strategy in Afghanistan and look at that country now.

All that is very bad news for the Ukrainian people. A glacis is not the best place on which to live because the expectation is that you continue to do the fighting and dying.

Putin, Stalin and the Ukraine

Putin has departed from Stalin’s preferred mode of defensive warfare, which helped preserve the Soviet Union and enhance its power to a considerable degree. Stalin’s successful defensive warfare took the Red Army to Berlin and helped create a defensive buffer for Russia that encompassed the whole of Eastern Europe in a bloc of socialist states. The last General Secretary of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, voluntarily surrendered that defensive buffer in 1989, with the best of intentions, but found that he had facilitated NATO’s rapid expansion up to Russia’s walls. He believed that the West had the best of intentions toward Russia and its people but found it was duplicitous and had not.

Why therefore should Russia believe anything the West says about its honest intentions today about only being interested in Ukraine’s security, as it marches its forces onto the glacis of Russia?

Back in 2014 I wrote an article entitled ‘The Putin Problem’. In it I noted:

“It seems that De Gaulle was right all along. The Cold War was just a passing phase. The eternal struggle was the Anglo-Saxon world preventing Russia from emerging onto the stage of history. Britain began it and conducted its Great Game for half a century against Russia. Two interludes happened when Russia was required as an ally to do down Germany. But the US took over from its Anglo-Saxon cousin after 1945 and has continued the doing-down of Russia long after Communism ceased to contest the world.”

It is all about geopolitics and nothing about communism.

As Andrei Martyanov has written:

“... if the Czars still reigned in Russia, if Lenin had died of the measles at an early age, if Stalin had never been heard of... the problem of Russia would be for us by and large what it is today... and we would be... confronted with the same problems which confront us today.” (Losing Military Supremacy: The Myopia of American Strategic Planning)

The problem for Russia is the West's insistence that it cannot remain a functional state, behaving as a Great Power.

Both Stalin and Putin have contributed in their own way to Ukrainian nation-building. But there is a substantial difference between Soviet Russia and Putin's Capitalist nationalist Russia in relation to Ukraine.

Prof. Stephen Kotkin of Princeton University, a supporter of NATO expansion and the curbing of Russia, has, in the New York Times of 27 November 2014, described Stalin as the "*father of the Ukrainian State*":

"Stalin's rule saw the formation of a land with strong Ukrainian national consciousness. Yes, he was a murderous tyrant, but he was also a father of today's Ukraine... Against the wishes of other early Soviet officials, who wanted to suppress nationalism, Stalin strongly advocated recognising — and using — it. "Clearly, the Ukrainian nation exists and the development of its culture is a duty of Communists," Stalin told the 10th Party Congress in March 1921. "One cannot go against history.

Stalin knew from his Georgian homeland that national sentiment was too strong to suppress. He also knew that the Communists could use it to win loyalty and achieve economic modernisation."

Ukrainian nationalism, though having "*a highly developed national consciousness*" proved incapable of cohering the Ukrainian people into a nation state in the early 20th Century. And the Western Powers actively obstructed the development of Ukraine (which means "*of the frontier*") into a state for the Ukrainians.

The American, Alexander Powell, noted in 1931:

"It is extremely unlikely that anything will be done through outside influence to right the wrongs of the Ukrainians, for Galicia is far away — the average American has only the haziest idea where it is located; the voice of the Ukrainians is feeble; the League of Nations will continue to listen to the Poles and their French allies..." (Thunder Over Europe, p.107)

The Western Powers, through the Supreme Council of the League of Nations at Paris, authorised the Polish occupation of Eastern Galicia/Western Ukraine and granted to the Poles a protectorate of 25 years over the four and a half million Ukrainians there. In June 1919 Britain and France had promised the people of Eastern Galicia, who were overwhelmingly Ukrainian, a plebiscite to decide their future in accordance with President Wilson's doctrine of self-determination.

But the promise was broken and in 1923 the Allies awarded Western Ukraine to Poland in perpetuity. The Poles ruthlessly repressed Ukrainian resistance, burning homes and churches on a large scale and ruling with "an iron hand". Many of the Ukrainian nationalist leaders fled into Russian Ukraine for protection. There, 20 million Ukrainians were being organised into a state by the Soviets, who had established a government in Kharkov in November 1918.

Prof. Kotkin also notes:

"In 1991... the Soviet Union dissolved. Ukraine, having avoided absorption into Russia thanks to Lenin, became independent. But the new nation encompassed as much land as it did thanks to Stalin.

When it was first formed, Soviet Ukraine had no natural border in the east with Soviet Russia. The demarcation disappointed all sides — and it is the site of today's separatist rebellion. In the west, as a result of his 1939 pact with Hitler, Stalin seized eastern Poland and joined it to Ukraine. The city today known as Lviv was then a largely Polish and Yiddish-speaking community, surrounded by a Ukrainian-speaking countryside; under Stalin and his successors the city would

become predominantly Ukrainian-speaking — and the centre of western Ukrainian nationalism.

With the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, Stalin annexed Transcarpathia, formerly part of Czechoslovakia, and now the southwest corner of Ukraine. Finally, Crimea, at the time a predominantly ethnic Russian territory, was transferred to Ukraine from Russia in a decision taken under Stalin but implemented only after he had died, in 1954, on the 300th anniversary of the Cossack request for imperial Russia's protection against the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth.

Except for Crimea, today's nationalist Ukraine is a bequeathal of Stalin...

Of course, in helping to enlarge and consolidate Soviet Ukraine, Stalin never imagined that the Soviet Union would someday disappear. And so Mr. Putin faces a formidable obstacle."

It was the Soviet Union which created the Ukrainian State and united the Ukrainian people. What was called Novorossiia in Tsarist Russia (Kharkov, Lugansk, Kherson, Nikolaev and Odessa) was attached to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922. Stalin actively built the Ukrainian nation and then extended its territory into Eastern Galicia/Western Ukraine, uniting all Ukrainians within a Ukrainian state, in September 1939. When Soviet forces united Ukraine the British Government "*issued a declaration sharply attacking the USSR and affirming that Poland must be restored*" (The Maisky Diaries, p.226). In September 1941 the bulk of Marshal Timoshenko's Soviet army was caught in Guderian's and von Kleist's great pincer movement and annihilated in the defence of Kiev.

Why Denazification?

During the crisis of September 1941 Stalin made a request to Churchill that he open a second front in Western Europe as a matter of urgency to relieve the tremendous German pressure on the USSR. When Churchill refused to fight on the continent Stalin asked for 25 British divisions to be sent to Ukraine for its defence. Churchill refused, leaving the Soviets to defend the country alone (John Lukacs, *The Last European War*, p. 149).

Lukacs notes the following about the German entry into Western Ukraine:

"In many of the villages and towns of... the western Ukraine etc., the people greeted the Germans with flowers, sometimes resuscitating ancient ceremonies such as the presentation of bread and salt, the kind of folklore show that would impress these powerful... invaders. There was more to the pro-German feeling among these peoples than the gratitude for having been liberated from Russian Bolshevism. At best, these people saw in the Germans the harbingers of European culture... At worst, some of these people... admired not only the efficiency but also the very brutality of the Germans, who were popular not despite but because of their cold cruelty: They knew what to do with the Jews." (p.396)

The anti-Jewish excesses replicated those in 1918 under Hetmat Skoropadski during the previous German occupation of the Ukraine, and in 1919 after the German withdrawal when between 50,000 and 200,000 Jews were massacred in Ukraine. '*The Slaughter of the Jews in the Ukraine in 1919*' issued by the People's Relief Committee for Jewish War Sufferers U.S. (1921) contained detailed and comprehensive information of the pogroms/genocide of Jews by the Ukrainians within an extensive 400 page book. It related:

"The pogroms of the tsarist period were almost exclusively confined to the cities. There were none in the Ukrainian villages. Insurrection, robbery and violence were done by the city hoodlums in the larger centres. Not so the massacres in

the year 1919. Here the Ukrainian village played the main role, the Ukrainian peasants, the bands of military insurgents as well as the more or less organized bands of insurrectionists. The wave rolled from the village to the city and in concentric circles embraced the whole land. But the village occupied the centre. The impulse and the radii proceeded from the village. The urban crowd played a subordinate role, and merely participated, actively to be sure, in the events. Large cities like Odessa and Kiev (before the invasion of Denikin) were over-whelmed by this wave, which spread over about 700 localities and almost annihilated the entire Jewish population in the Ukrainian villages and districts.” (p.3)

General Denikin, the White Russian commander in the region, struggled to control these attacks on the Jews by Ukrainians. They were a huge embarrassment for the Whiteguard because of their anti-Bolshevik character. The Ukrainians believed that the Jews were behind Russian Bolshevism (a not unusual view at the time amongst British and European anti-Semites, even before Hitler).

The highly regarded US Jewish historian, Professor Richard Pipes, who details these events in ‘Russia under the Bolshevik Regime, 1919-24’, suggests that:

“In every respect except for the absence of a central organisation to direct the slaughter, the pogroms of 1919 were a prelude to and a rehearsal for the Holocaust. The spontaneous lootings and killings left a legacy that two decades later was to lead to the systematic mass murder of Jews at the hands of the Nazis...” (p. 112)

The Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) led by Stepan Bandera in Eastern Galicia/Western Ukraine welcomed the German invasion of June 1941 and announced the formation of a new fascist Ukrainian state in Lviv. Although OUN fought with the Germans “*committing atrocities against the Jews, Poles and Russians*” Bandera was arrested and detained by the Nazis as an extremist. However:

“Even without him the Banderites (Banderovtsy) organised the Waffen SS Nachtigall and Roland divisions that together with the Galicia division by some estimates were responsible for the deaths of some half a million people.” (Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, pp.16-7)

After Ukraine was liberated by Soviet forces in the summer of 1944 “*the Ukrainian nationalist resistance movement (OUN-B and UPA) continued a partisan war with British intelligence (MI6) service support until 1949.*” (p.17) The KGB assassinated Bandera in Munich in October 1959. Statues of him have been erected in Lviv and many other cities since Ukrainian independence and a 15,000 strong Nazi-style torchlit procession celebrated his 150th birthday on 1st January 2014 in Maidan at the height of the insurrection.

The Ukrainians are predominantly nationalist in orientation, rather than national socialist. However, it is the historical memory of these events that has produced the de-Nazification idea in Moscow, that is ridiculed in the West, particularly in the most anti-Russian countries where the Jews were extensively done to death.

The Red Army secured Ukraine’s territory during the Great Patriotic War against the Nazis and their Ukrainian fascist allies, at great loss. In March 1943 the Soviet Ambassador and Anthony Eden discussed the post-war future of Western Ukraine in London. Eden told Ambassador Maisky that the Polish government in exile expected to take back Ukrainian territory, including Lvov, after the war for the Polish state. The Soviet Ambassador reminded Eden of the Curzon line and insisted that Poland stay within its “*ethnographic boundaries*”. He stated that Lvov was Ukrainian and would be part of the Ukrainian state and nation after the war (p. 496).

The Soviet leader Khrushchev gifted the Crimea Oblast to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine in February 1954, adding nearly 1 million Russians to the population of the Ukrainian State, and extending its territory again, to what the Ukrainians claim today.

Putin versus Stalin?

Prof. Kotkin, in discussing the current Russian leader, Vladimir Putin wrote:

“He is said by diplomats to have told President George W. Bush, at a NATO summit meeting in Bucharest, Romania, in 2008 that “Ukraine is not even a state.” And in claiming territory from Ukraine, Mr. Putin has cited Catherine the Great’s Black Sea conquests and creation of “New Russia” in the late 18th century. But Mr. Putin cannot escape more recent history.

... whether Mr. Putin does or does not have clear strategic goals, he cannot wipe out the fruits of the Soviet period. Mr. Putin cannot simply swallow Ukraine — it is no longer “New Russia.” And unlike Stalin — indeed, because of Stalin... Mr. Putin cannot entice Ukraine back into a new “Eurasian” union with Russia either. Ukrainians’... struggle for statehood owes much to Stalin’s legacy — a legacy that, for different reasons, neither they nor Mr. Putin like to think about.”

Stalin provided the state formation and development that Ukrainians proved incapable of historically, and the ability to sustain a state, that had always eluded Ukrainian nationalists. He also expanded the territory of the Ukrainian state in a way that Ukrainian nationalism could never have achieved if left to its own devices. However, the Soviet achievement disguised the fact that Russia could never have held the Ukraine if a substantial body of Ukrainians had the capacity for state formation similar to Russia’s.

Putin, on the other hand, is a continuation of Boris Yeltsin’s nationalist Russia in the post-Soviet era. Yeltsin objected to independent Ukraine taking the territories within it that it had acquired in the Soviet period and which were considered Russian. He argued for national self-determination in the new era of separate nations. But Yeltsin did not have the power to enforce his argument against the Ukrainians. He prioritised recovering the Soviet nuclear arsenal in Ukraine over the territory that was considered historically Russian. And the West was insistent that this should be the case.

Putin showed in 2014 that he had the power to do what Yeltsin could not in the 1990s. The present Russian leader, however, seems to have reverted to a Tsarist notion of nationality with regard to Ukraine in the post-Soviet era of nationalisms. His military operation, therefore, is likely to have the effect of facilitating the cohering of the divided Ukrainians into a nation, although it may be within a smaller Ukrainian state. Oh, the ironies of history!

It is the Soviet Ukrainian territory established by Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev that the government in Ukraine now fights for against Putin’s Russia. It is tragic that two peoples – Russians and Ukrainians – whose history is so intertwined have come to this as a result of Western geopolitics.

It is Putin versus Stalin!

Francis Fukuyama, who proclaimed the end of history with the victory of Western liberal democracy 30 years ago has been in Ukraine since 2013 operating his Stanford University democracy training programmes. It is now his view that neo-liberals “*mishandled*” the 1990s Russian “*transition*” and of course Iraq was a tangential “*mistake*” of US foreign policy (Al Jazeera, 25.3.2022). But he’s now for taking the war to the enemy: liberalism must triumph over authoritarianism, and this is the “*bigger picture*”. He predicts that nationalists, populists

and authoritarians will now decline in the West as liberal democracy takes back the lost ground. Identity politics was a leftist luxury of the post-Cold War and will now melt away. The battle lines are drawn!

But Fukuyama has also noted how Putin is prepared to take risks that no Soviet leader was ever prepared to do. Does that mean that capitalist Russia was a mistaken project of the West which may bring about a different end of history than was anticipated?

The U.S. Geopolitical War on Russia: Quagmire Ukraine (17.03.2022)

President Zelensky's mentor, the Ukrainian billionaire, Ihor Kolomoisky, who spent millions of dollars forming a military force which saved Ukraine in 2014 by halting the advance of the separatists, stated some facts to the New York Times:

"It has become clear that the European Union and NATO will never take in Ukraine, so it would be better to accept reality and not even try... The United States is simply using Ukraine to try to weaken its geopolitical rival: "War against Russia" he said, "to the last Ukrainian"..." (New York Times, 4.6.20)

Kolomoisky, the man who made Zelensky President of Ukraine, is, of course, correct. The war in Ukraine is fundamentally a US geopolitical war on Russia, waged since it became apparent that Vladimir Putin was managing to resurrect Russia into a functional state again during the first decade of the 21st Century – a century that was supposed to have belonged to America. That is why the war's chief object is the demonisation of the Russian President and aims at his overthrowing and replacement with a regime more palatable to Western interests.

Its secondary objective, in the event of its primary aim being unachievable, is the disabling of Russia, particularly economically, so that it is "*turned into a Third World country.*" The punishment of being reduced to the level of the Third World, after Russians tasted the benefits of capitalism, is what is then to be applied to the Russian people until they acquiesce in the "*American Century,*" the globalised liberal world order and the "*end of history.*"

The US has undoubtedly already succeeded in three of its primary objectives with regard to Ukraine: Firstly, it managed to cultivate a Ukrainian leadership that was prepared to lend its country to the US and its allies as a battlefield/glacis, and its people as cannon-fodder, for America's geopolitical war on Russia; Secondly, it managed to provoke Putin and corner him into deciding to launch a military intervention in Ukraine that would inevitably cost Russia dear, in blood and treasure, at least in the short-term. Thirdly, it has effectively warded off the understanding that NATO expansionism was a direct cause of the conflict in Ukraine.

There is a very self-satisfied look across in Washington among the US political class at what has been so far achieved, after the recent disasters it produced in the Muslim world, that had left a bad taste among its allies. The well-armed heroic Ukrainians fight on, drawing Russia into greater and greater military involvement and producing more and more horrendous scenes of civilian suffering for the Western media to feast upon. Western Europe has been shaken out of its lethargy and been subsumed by a vast exodus of refugees who look just like Europeans and for whom things must be sacrificed and, at the same time, supported in war.

NATO, which was increasingly seen as a dangerous and redundant residue of the Cold War, by growing sections of both Americans and Europeans, is suddenly back in business with a *raison d'être*. The vast US arms industry, an indispensable part of the economy of the indispensable nation, is looking

forward to growth projections again. Europe has been blocked off from cheap Russian energy supplies and will be dependent now on oil and gas from sources which the US controls, in one way or another. Biden made a point when he scolded Bundestag members about Germany's recent good economic relations with Russia, particularly its construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. That sort of thing is intolerable now.

Ukraine is a bad business, but a very good business at the same time for Washington. The US suffers least of all in the war in Ukraine. Without troops on the ground, it faces no casualties, and no body bags returning home. The Ukrainians take the casualties and the Europeans take the economic hit from energy sanctions and supporting the refugees. Washington stands to gain so much by it – as long as the war is not played out to the full, in one way or another.

Many people would now perish at the thought of the US ever having anything but good intentions for Ukraine. How quickly wars affect the senses and promote forgetfulness in the population. How speedily is even recent history forgotten.

Inducing Russian Intervention in the Quagmire

Retired US Army Colonel and Professor of History at Boston University, Andrew J. Bacevich wrote the following account of how that most liberal of US Presidents, Jimmy Carter, lured Russia into Afghanistan in order to make it a battlefield and quagmire in the Cold War. The intention, like in Ukraine a generation later, was to get its people to fight America's geopolitical battle, with US supplied arms and training, to cause maximum casualties to the Russians, while Washington stood back watching the ensuing devastation of the country:

"On July 3, 1979... President Carter... signed off on a memo committing the United States to assist Afghan insurgents who were warring against the Soviet-supported regime in Kabul. The amount involved was small... but the scope of the initial investment belied the magnitude of the mayhem the United States was seeking to promote.

Three months earlier (May 1979), a mid-level Pentagon official attending a White House meeting called to consider Afghanistan's growing political instability suggested that the situation there offered the possibility of "sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese quagmire". The idea caught on. Considered in a Cold War context, the prospect of inducing conflict on the scale of Vietnam exerted great appeal. That such a conflict might, however inadvertently, yield adverse consequences for the United States (never mind the Afghan people) simply did not occur.

From our distant vantage point we may wonder how a war comparable to Vietnam could prove beneficial for anyone. At that time, such considerations had no purchase. In the dichotomous logic of the Cold War, whatever discomfited the Soviets automatically qualified as desirable and was presumed to be strategically advantageous...

So the explicit purpose of aiding Afghan insurgents, Brzezinski subsequently acknowledged, was to "induce a Soviet military intervention," which the United States intended to exploit for its own purposes." (America's War for the Greater Middle East, pp. 22-3)

It should be noted that the jihadi insurgents had taken up arms in reaction to the Afghan government in Kabul attempting to educate Afghan women and girls. The US support for the Islamic fundamentalists' objection to the educating of females came 6 months before the Soviet military intervention in December 1979, which was designed to stabilise the situation and push through a modernisation reform programme.

It is interesting that one of the first words used by the current British Foreign Secretary, even prior to the Russian military

intervention, was “*quagmire*”. Did she discover this for herself one wonders, or was she briefed by a well-read American?

The interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish-American hawk, and Carter’s National Security advisor, published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on 15 January 1988, is very interesting indeed and worth recalling:

“Question: The former director of the CIA, Robert Gates, stated in his memoirs that the American intelligence services began to aid the Mujaheddin in Afghanistan six months before the Soviet intervention. In this period, you were the national security advisor to President Carter. You therefore played a key role in this affair. Is this correct?

Brzezinski: Yes. According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the Mujahiddin began during 1980, that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. But the reality, closely guarded until now, is completely otherwise: Indeed, it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.

Q: Despite this risk, you were an advocate of this covert action. But perhaps you yourself desired this Soviet entry into the war and looked for a way to provoke it?

B: It wasn’t quite like that. We didn’t push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.

Q: When the Soviets justified their intervention by asserting that they intended to fight against secret US involvement in Afghanistan, nobody believed them. However, there was an element of truth in this. You don’t regret any of this today?

B: Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter, essentially: “We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war.” Indeed, for almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war that was unsustainable for the regime, a conflict that bought about the demoralization and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.

Q: And neither do you regret having supported Islamic fundamentalism, which has given arms and advice to future terrorists?

B: What is more important in world history? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?”

I wonder will the role of the US in provoking the war in Ukraine in 2022 be written about with as much candour, in the future, as Brzezinski did in this interview a decade after events in Afghanistan. The answer to that probably lies in how successful this war turns out to be for the US.

According to his New York publisher, Random House, Prof. Bacevich’s book is about how, having won the Cold War in 1990,

“a great transition occurred. As the Cold War wound down, the United States initiated a new conflict – a War for the Greater Middle East... From the Balkans and East Africa to the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, US forces embarked upon a seemingly endless series of campaigns across the Islamic world.” (America’s War for the Greater Middle East, Dust jacket)

Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke in a Cambridge University book, published in 2004, summed up what the US was prepared to produce in the world in pursuit of its geopolitical objectives:

“The year 1979 was an important one in the development of today’s terror phenomenon... The crucible for the pan-Islamic movement... was the jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 – where, it is well known, US and British intelligence services were working hand-in-glove with the jihadists, all the while being well aware of the latter’s extremist tendencies. By the time that the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, a whole generation of religiously inspired terrorists had been produced and subsequently dispersed across the globe.” (America Alone, p.275)

But we know from Zbigniew Brzezinski that this did not come about from “*the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*” but from the geopolitical strategy of the US government aimed at luring the Russians into the quagmire and helping to develop and amplify the jihad, and harnessing it in its own interests. And it was hugely worth it even after producing “*some agitated Moslems*” and the Taliban! (Although it was said before “*some agitated Moslems*” paid the US a visit on 9/11)

Prof. Bacevich’s book was published in 2016 as President Trump began to bring this phase of US warfare, against the Islamic world, to a close, having failed to get it to submit to the liberal world order and the “*end of history*”.

Two years prior to this, in 2014, President Obama and his Vice President, Joe Biden, through Victoria Nuland, had begun to open a new phase in US warfare by overthrowing the Ukrainian government in Kiev in a coup after some EU bungling in the matter. President Trump chose to keep the pot simmering in Ukraine by shipping material to the post-Maidan regime in Kiev, whilst bringing US involvement in Afghanistan to a close. President Biden completed the US military withdrawal from Kabul in 2021 in a rather embarrassing way. With that he sanctioned and froze the Afghan government’s assets abroad, bringing on starvation in Afghanistan, and turned his attention to his unfinished business in Ukraine.

The US, therefore, can be seen to have repeated the trick it played on the Afghans and Russians back in 1979 in creating a quagmire of Ukraine. Putin, having taken his military gamble, far from wanting to conquer Ukraine, occupy it, or invade Europe, as Western propaganda suggests, is most probably now trying to work out how to escape the quagmire with the semblance of a military victory and security for the future. That might require reducing the territory of the Ukraine established by the Soviets, of course. But we must presume that the US will attempt to close off Putin’s exits to keep the war going in Ukraine for as long as it can.

The Ukrainians, for their part, seem to have been oblivious to what has happened, and is still happening to the Afghans as reward for their services to US geopolitical interests. Perhaps they believe that their Christianity, blonde hair and blue eyes will ultimately save them from the fate of the darker skinned Muslims. But we should I feel remind them of what happened to the Armenians, Greeks and Poles for services rendered to the Anglosphere in the last century. Fairy tales do not always end in “*happy ever after*”.

Kissinger’s Warning

It seems that the greatest sense about Ukraine was talked after the events of 2014 when the EU, US and Kiev had plainly over-reached and Russia deprived Ukraine of the Crimea and Donbas as a result of the Maidan coup. Then the Trump Presidency put things into suspended animation after the shock to Washington and Kiev brought about by the Obama/Biden scheming. However, the return of Biden and the expectations he raised in liberal America about leading America back to universalising itself has had the effect of propelling things toward a final reckoning in Ukraine.

The US and its allies today are certainly closer to the hawk, Brzezinski, than they are to the tricky diplomat, Henry Kissinger, who in 2014 wrote:

“In my life, I have seen four wars begun with great enthusiasm and public support, all of which we did not know how to end and from three of which we withdrew unilaterally. The test of policy is how it ends, not how it begins.

Far too often the Ukrainian issue is posed as a showdown: whether Ukraine joins the East or the West. But if Ukraine is to survive and thrive, it must not be either side’s outpost against the other — it should function as a bridge between them.

Russia must accept that to try to force Ukraine into a satellite status, and thereby move Russia’s borders again, would doom Moscow to repeat its history of self-fulfilling cycles of reciprocal pressures with Europe and the United States.

The West must understand that, to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country. Russian history began in what was called Kievan-Rus. The Russian religion spread from there. Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before then. Some of the most important battles for Russian freedom, starting with the Battle of Poltava in 1709, were fought on Ukrainian soil. The Black Sea Fleet — Russia’s means of projecting power in the Mediterranean — is based by long-term lease in Sevastopol, in Crimea. Even such famed dissidents as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky insisted that Ukraine was an integral part of Russian history and, indeed, of Russia.

The European Union must recognise that its bureaucratic dilatoriness and subordination of the strategic element to domestic politics in negotiating Ukraine’s relationship to Europe contributed to turning a negotiation into a crisis. Foreign policy is the art of establishing priorities.

The Ukrainians are the decisive element. They live in a country with a complex history and a polyglot composition. The Western part was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939, when Stalin and Hitler divided up the spoils. Crimea, 60 per cent of whose population is Russian became part of Ukraine only in 1954, when Nikita Khrushchev, a Ukrainian by birth, awarded it as part of the 300th-year celebration of a Russian agreement with the Cossacks. The west is largely Catholic; the east largely Russian Orthodox. The west speaks Ukrainian; the east speaks mostly Russian. Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other — as has been the pattern — would lead eventually to civil war or break up. To treat Ukraine as part of an East-West confrontation would scuttle for decades any prospect to bring Russia and the West — especially Russia and Europe — into a cooperative international system.

Ukraine has been independent for only 23 years; it had previously been under some kind of foreign rule since the 14th Century. Not surprisingly, its leaders have not learned the art of compromise, even less of historical perspective. The politics of post-independence Ukraine clearly demonstrates that the root of the problem lies in efforts by Ukrainian politicians to impose their will on recalcitrant parts of the country, first by one faction, then by the other. That is the essence of the conflict between Viktor Yanukovich and his principal political rival, Yulia Tymoshenko. They represent the two wings of Ukraine and have not been willing to share power. A wise U.S. policy toward Ukraine would seek a way for the two parts of the country to cooperate with each other. We should seek reconciliation, not the domination of a faction.

Russia and the West, and least of all the various factions in Ukraine, have not acted on this principle. Each has made the situation worse. Russia would not be able to impose a military solution without isolating itself at a time when many of its borders are already precarious. For the West, the demonisation

of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one.

Putin should come to realise that, whatever his grievances, a policy of military impositions would produce another Cold War. For its part, the United States needs to avoid treating Russia as an aberrant to be patiently taught rules of conduct established by Washington. Putin is a serious strategist — on the premises of Russian history. Understanding U.S. values and psychology are not his strong suits. Nor has understanding Russian history and psychology been a strong point of U.S. policymakers.”

The old Cold Warrior Kissinger now sounds like the voice of reason amongst the war hysteria today in the West. His words show how extreme both Washington and Europe have become as the Cold War understandings have disappeared and “*the logic of the feelings supplants the logic of fact and reason.*”

The False Western Narrative

The control of the narrative has been the most important aspect of the war in the West. The BBC established a “*fact check Ukraine*” Department to deal with the situation. Its job was not to hold the BBC accountable for the objectivity of its coverage but to make sure the “*lies and misinformation*” coming from Russia and outside the official narrative were excluded. It was conceded by a spokeswoman that the Ukrainians might be also guilty of “*lies and misinformation*” but that was said to be “*understandable in time of war*”. The idea that the BBC might not be always telling the truth and be engaged in misinformation itself was obviously considered just too preposterous to consider.

Meanwhile we have a completely false narrative presented to the Western public about Russian actions and intentions in the Ukraine. Central to the current US/NATO spin of “*Russian failure*” is the premise that a core objective of the Russian strategy was the taking of Kiev. That was, obviously, never the case but sustaining that false premise has become a central plank to the US/NATO propaganda strategy. Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine has even been presented as the first stage in a grandiose scheme to restore the territorial integrity of the imperial or Soviet eras. The NATO states of Poland and the Baltic states were pumped into a frenzy of nationalistic anti-Russian anxiety that fed the media’s depiction of events which in turn was designed to provide credibility to the US/NATO depiction of what was supposed to constitute Russian objectives.

It has not been explained how any of the assumed Russian objectives could have been achieved by 150,000-200,000 Russian troops confronting forces that were double that number - much of which was equipped and trained to NATO standard - defending its own territory. It is not usual for offensive operations to be conducted against defences that are numerically stronger. Usually a 3:1 or higher ratio of attack/defence is desired.

We were expected to believe that the Russians aimed to defeat the Ukrainians in a matter of days, capture the capital and install a puppet regime. All with an army of 150,000 stretched out across a large country, in which defence of the eastern areas was a priority against a large Ukrainian attacking force! When the Russians “*failed*” in this military miracle the US/NATO explanation had to find reasons to support this ludicrous narrative. So, we were then treated to the various accounts of what was supposed to explain the “*failure*” of Russian military activity to comply with what we had been told was the Russian objective in entering Ukraine. But none of these various accounts made any sense when a modicum of critical thinking was applied to them. All of these accounts revolved around either a failure of equipment, a failure of military leadership, or a failure of organisation.

But again, just as it never managed to address the question as to how 150,000 Russian troops was supposed to take, let alone hold, any significant part of Ukrainian territory, all subsequent US/NATO explanations of the “failure” of Russian military behaviour to act in a way consistent with that supposed objective, did not make sense. These explanations never made sense because they could never stand up to any critical reasoning. Such critical reasoning, of course, has been entirely absent in hysterical Europe and can only be found among a few Americans who have not lost their sense of reasoning and are brave enough to challenge the fairy story of the official narrative. Meanwhile “*military analysts*” interviewed by the BBC every morning clearly try to get their “*analysis*” to fit the established fable, presumably to safeguard their career progression.

As Goethe once remarked:

“Whoever wants to deceive people must first of all make absurdity plausible”.

That the actual and real Russian objective might be nothing like the one sold by the US/NATO was something that could not be tolerated and so there was never a modicum of dissent among the European leaders who must have known what the real Russian objectives might be.

An article by William Arkin in Newsweek (22.3.2022) compiled using US military sources, who spoke candidly, gives a truer picture of the military situation in Ukraine and what was really understood about Russian intentions. It reveals that the Russian “*Special Military Operation*” is much more precision-guided and limited than the US wars of “*shock and awe*” in Serbia, Afghanistan, and Iraq:

“Russia’s conduct in the... war tells a different story than the widely accepted view that Vladimir Putin is intent on demolishing Ukraine and inflicting maximum civilian damage—and it reveals the Russian leader’s strategic balancing act. If Russia were more intentionally destructive, the clamouring for U.S. and NATO intervention would be louder. And if Russia were all-in, Putin might find himself with no way out. Instead, his goal is to take enough territory on the ground to have something to negotiate with, while putting the government of Ukraine in a position where they have to negotiate...”

“The destruction is massive,” a senior analyst working at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) tells Newsweek, “especially when compared with what Europeans and Americans are used to seeing.” But, the analyst says, the damage... shouldn’t blind people to what is really happening. (The analyst requested anonymity in order to speak about classified matters.) “The heart of Kyiv has barely been touched. And almost all of the long-range strikes have been aimed at military targets.”...

“We need to understand Russia’s actual conduct,” says a retired Air Force officer, a lawyer by training who has been involved in approving targets for U.S. fights in Iraq and Afghanistan. The officer currently works as an analyst with a large military contractor advising the Pentagon and was granted anonymity in order to speak candidly: “If we merely convince ourselves that Russia is bombing indiscriminately, or [that] it is failing to inflict more harm because its personnel are not up to the task or because it is technically inept, then we are not seeing the real conflict.” In the analyst’s view, though the war has led to unprecedented destruction in the south and east, the Russian military has actually been showing restraint in its long-range attacks.

As of the past weekend, in 24 days of conflict, Russia has flown some 1,400 strike sorties and delivered almost 1,000 missiles (by contrast, the United States flew more sorties and delivered more weapons in the first day of the 2003 Iraq war). The vast majority of the airstrikes are over the battlefield, with Russian aircraft providing “close air support” to ground

forces. The remainder—less than 20 percent, according to U.S. experts—has been aimed at military airfields, barracks and supporting depots. A proportion of those strikes have damaged and destroyed civilian structures and killed and injured innocent civilians, but the level of death and destruction is low compared to Russia’s capacity.

“I know it’s hard ... to swallow that the carnage and destruction could be much worse than it is,” says the DIA analyst. “But that’s what the facts show. This suggests to me, at least, that Putin is not intentionally attacking civilians, that perhaps he is mindful that he needs to limit damage in order to leave an out for negotiations.”...

“People are talking about Grozny and Aleppo, and the razing of Ukrainian cities” a second retired U.S. Air Force senior officer tells Newsweek. “But even in the case of southern cities, where artillery and rockets are within range of populated centres, the strikes seem to be trying to target Ukrainian military units, many of which by necessity operating from inside urban areas.”

“I know that the news keeps repeating that Putin is targeting civilians, but there is no evidence that Russia is intentionally doing so,” says the DIA analyst. “In fact, I’d say that Russian could be killing thousands more civilians if it wanted to.”

The complete absence of dissent from the false, official narrative can only be explained, as Eamon Dyas has remarked because

“it was important for US/NATO to avoid it if the Russian actions were to continue to be depicted as evidence of Russian aggression rather than Russian defence. In the same way the Russian actions in now redeploying its limited troop resources has to be seen as the result of a frustration of its aggressive ambition to take Kiev rather than ever having been a defensive containment exercise protecting its more modest objectives in the east.”

We can expect, therefore, to hear, when the Russians scale down their “*Special Military Operation*” with objectives largely achieved, that heroic Ukrainian resistance prevented a complete Russian conquest of the country ordered by a megalomaniac bent on world domination.

And then, Ukraine and Europe can start picking up the pieces of this geopolitical war on Russia.

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