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## Smoke and mirrors in Ukraine (II)

8 MARCH, 2022

Once again we are shocked by the horror of war. However, what the media show us is not designed to teach us what is happening, but to provoke immediate emotional reactions, such as compassion, fear, anger and hatred. Therefore, if we want to understand the situation we must use reason and make an effort to free ourselves from this emotional manipulation.

[In the first part of this article](#) I tried to analyze the Ukrainian tragedy, of very serious and long-lasting consequences, from a geostrategic perspective. Despite appearances, this is not a war between Russia and Ukraine but between Russia and the USA and, in the global order of things, between East and West. In this second part I will expose the causes of a conflict in which there are more players than it seems: some are main actors (Russia and the US) and others are secondary actors or mere extras (EU and Ukraine).

### The main actors

The first main actor is the US through the obedient NATO, whose members follow American dictates even if they harm their national interests. Let us point out at the outset that when we speak of a country we are not referring to its people but to its government, which is quite different. The interests of the American people need not coincide with the interests of an unpopular president eager to create a smokescreen, nor with those of the military-industrial complex (plus the intelligence agencies), of whose growing threat to freedom former US President Eisenhower warned us in his prescient farewell address<sup>1</sup>. This Deep State has a perverse conflict of interest, for it needs a great enemy to survive and does not like a strong Russia allied with the West. Perhaps this is why Obama was quickly boycotted when he tried to make joint military incursions with Russia in Syria and Trump was lynched with a probably criminal set-up<sup>2</sup> (Russiagate).

The second main actor is Russia, the aggressor. The Greek historian Thucydides used to say that one must distinguish between the pretexts of conflicts

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<sup>1</sup> [President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Farewell Address \(1961\) | National Archives](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Trump Really Was Spied On - WSJ](#)



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and their ultimate causes. The pretext used by Russia to intervene in Ukraine is the "genocide" in the Russophile region of eastern Ukraine, a gross hyperbole of a conflict in which it itself is involved and which has caused thousands of deaths. This artificial trigger has been the argument for the de facto recognition of the independence of Eastern Ukraine and the signing of a mutual protection agreement with the two new "republics" to give a "legal" veneer to its obviously illegal military intervention. But the real objectives of the Russian intervention are others: to ensure that its strategic naval base of Sevastopol in Crimea remains in Russian hands and to get Ukraine to commit to neutrality by renouncing NATO. Some claim that Russia wants to annex Ukraine. However, occupying Ukraine would mean precisely what Russia wants to avoid, i.e., having more common border with NATO and not a neutral buffer state. If the goal was the recovery of the Empire, why not start with Belarus, so close culturally and ruled by a vassal regime? Finally, the interests of the Russian people do not necessarily coincide with the interests of Putin and his government, which, like those of all power junkies, is to perpetuate themselves in power.

### **Secondary actors**

The EU is a secondary actor in the role of the loser. What was exactly the conflict between Europe - Germany or France - and Russia? Remember the good relationship between Merkel and Putin? However, with its reckless weakness, the EU has been dragged by the US into a conflict with its main energy supplier and has abandoned the defense of its own citizens' interests. Germany's radical U-turn from equanimity to belligerence in 24 hours by selling to Ukraine precisely the weapons that can do most damage to Russia, such as the Stinger surface-to-air missiles (of unfortunate memory for the Russians, since they changed the course of the humiliating USSR-Afghanistan war) and anti-tank missiles equivalent to the American Javelin, is not only strange, but will be studied in the future as a paradigm of self-harming behavior equivalent to the abandonment of nuclear energy. Who knows in whose hands these missiles will end up in a semi-failed state like Ukraine, where for some militias they are perhaps the closest thing to a cashier's check.

The second secondary actor is Ukraine itself, the assaulted country, today led by a neophyte surprised that the US first encouraged him to fight and later left him hanging. His decision to arm the population without offering them any training is tantamount to sending them to their deaths against a professional army and shows, at best, little wisdom, and at worst, a determination to sacrifice them in order to damage Russia's image. Will these poor Ukrainians be counted as civilian casualties or as armed fighters? And will these weapons be returned at the end of the conflict? Given their geopolitical situation, it is so obvious that the interest of the Ukrainian people was neutrality and the maintenance of friendly relations with both Russia and the West (as is the case with Finland), that the folly of their leaders is inconceivable. Once again, the interests of the rulers and the ruled do not coincide.



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## **NATO stirs up a hornet's nest**

The elders used to say that before judging a situation both sides should be heard. However, Europe, that pays so much lip service to freedom and yet hardly practices it, has censored the Russian media (it is not known under what legal authority), imposing de facto a single narrative that feeds the current xenophobic persecution of all things Russian. Since censorship is always an attempt to hide the truth, what is being hidden?

Russia has been claiming that, after the fall of the Soviet Union, NATO informally promised it would not expand eastward. The US denied this, but the German newspaper Der Spiegel has recently documented it in a way that proves the Russians right<sup>3</sup>. So does Jack Matlock, former US ambassador to the USSR (1987-1991) and a key diplomat in the negotiations that ended the Cold War. A few weeks ago he confirmed in an article that Russia was assured "that NATO would not move eastward one inch"<sup>4</sup>. However, in the following years NATO expanded to the very Russian border with the addition of 14 new member states. George Kennan, America's most respected 20th century strategist and an expert on Russia, called this NATO expansion "the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era"<sup>5</sup>, adding: "There was no reason to do this. No one was threatening anyone"<sup>6</sup>. Since then, Russia has voiced its concerns about feeling "encircled" by military infrastructure so close to its borders, but has been permanently ignored and the "parity" it claimed (a mutual recognition of legitimate security concerns) has been met with a wall of contempt. In the map below you can see NATO's extension towards the Russian border since the fall of the Wall, that is, just when the risk of Russian aggression had disappeared. Note that the latest proposed additions have been Ukraine and Georgia.

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<sup>3</sup> [NATO's Eastward Expansion: Is Vladimir Putin Right? - DER SPIEGEL](#) and [NATO's eastward expansion: 1991 file finds support Russia's version - DER SPIEGEL](#)

<sup>4</sup> [I was there: NATO and the origins of the Ukraine crisis - Responsible Statecraft](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO: How, When, Why, and What Next? \(brookings.edu\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in *The Great Delusion*, by J. Mearsheimer, Yale University Press, 2018.

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European NATO members    ● Joined pre Cold War (before 1991)    ● Joined post Cold War (after 1991)



Note: United States and Canada are also NATO members. The former East Germany became part of NATO when Germany reunified in 1990.

Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)  
Graphic: Natalie Croker, CNN

According to the well-known American Russologist Stephen Cohen, "since the 1990s, the US has treated post-Soviet Russia as a defeated nation with inferior legitimate rights<sup>7</sup>". The double standard was obvious: the Americans could invoke national security reasons to intervene on the other side of the planet but the Russians had no right to do so within a stone's throw of their borders. Moreover, since the fall of the Wall, NATO has abandoned its deterrent and defensive nature (so effective when it played its extraordinary role in the Cold War) to become just another battering ram of US foreign policy, engaging in military offensives without UN endorsement as when it bombed Serbia, a Russian ally, for three months in 1999. In fact, what is NATO's *raison d'être* after the fall of Soviet communism? What enemy threatens it? And if the answer is Russia, then does its survival depend on Russia always being the enemy? At the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Putin bluntly expressed his concern to the leaders of the Western world: "We must seriously think

<sup>7</sup> War with Russia? By Stephen Cohen, Hot Books, 2019.



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about the architecture of global security and search for a reasonable balance between the interests of all<sup>8</sup>". His words were ignored and a year later, at its Bucharest Summit, NATO again stirred up the hornet's nest by agreeing to the future incorporation of Georgia (situated between Turkey and Russia) and Ukraine<sup>9</sup>, which led a few months later to Russia's intervention when an emboldened Georgia attacked the separatist province of South Ossetia.

### **The proximate causes of the invasion**

In 2014 the Ukrainian president, democratically elected in an OSCE-monitored election<sup>10</sup>, decided not to sign a trade agreement with the EU whose fine print committed to adhere to EU "military and security" policies<sup>11</sup>. He did so under pressure from Russia, whose counteroffer included a large economic aid package. Overnight the "Maidan Revolution" emerged, a coup d'état probably instigated and supported by the US, as even the *Cato Institute* acknowledges<sup>12</sup>. The Ukrainian president was forced to flee the country and new elections were called, resulting in a new government, of course, pro-American. This made the civil conflict in Eastern Ukraine chronic and the bloodless Russian annexation of Crimea (site of the Russian naval base in Sevastopol), which gave rise to Western economic sanctions that still persist despite the fact that, according to Prof. Mearsheimer, of the University of Chicago and a world reference in International Relations, "it was the US that provoked this crisis<sup>13</sup>". It should not be forgotten that Crimea is Russophile, since it belonged to Russia from the end of the 18th century until 1954, when the Soviet leader Khrushchev decided to transfer it to Ukraine. And let us remember that, despite being the largest nation on the planet, Russia's only access to warm seas - its other two accesses to the sea are a narrow access to the Baltic and another to the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk - is through the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and that Sebastopol has been a very important Russian naval base for 250 years, an enclave which, due to its strategic importance, was already the object of a war in the mid-19th century (novelized, by the way, by the great Tolstoj).

In 2019, the Ukrainian government (i.e., the US) took a new step towards provocation when its Parliament amended the Constitution without prior referendum to include the goal of joining NATO.

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<sup>8</sup> [DP Fillinger Speeches.pdf \(muni.cz\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [NATO - Official text: Bucharest Summit Declaration - Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008, 03-Apr.-2008](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Early Parliamentary Elections, 26 October 2014 | OSCE](#)

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. War with Russia?...

<sup>12</sup> [America's Ukraine Hypocrisy | Cato Institute](#)

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. The Great Delusion...



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At the end of 2021, Russia's latest proposal to avoid a confrontation predictably failed as the US, once again, ignored all of its "red lines"; it was probably nothing more than a formality when military action was already planned.

For Ukraine, the real probability of accession to the EU (because of its poverty and corruption) and NATO (because of its territorial problems and because it would require the unanimous decision of its members) seems to be low. Thus, some dismiss as paranoid the Russian fear that an emboldened, rearmed and NATO-bound Ukraine might try to retake Crimea (and Sevastopol), risking a conflict between nuclear powers. Others dismiss Russia's motives as a mere alibi for achieving other, unspecified, objectives. However, it would have been easy to accept a decade-long moratorium on new NATO accessions to test Russian good faith. This was not done.

Finally, it is worth asking whether the incorporation of an unstable Ukraine would improve or worsen the security of current NATO members. Would it increase or decrease the risk of conflict? How would the incorporation of Ukraine improve the security of Spain - a country, by the way, for which NATO does not cover the defense of its Northern African border cities of Ceuta and Melilla, precisely where it is most exposed to external aggression? International relations are never based on friendship or the defense of high ideals, but on a quid pro quo, that is, on reciprocal interest, except, of course, when the relationship is one of submission. It is evident that this is the case of Spain vs Europe and of Europe vs the US.

### **A perfectly avoidable conflict**

When the king of Assyria conquered Israel, he reproached the Jewish people for having deludedly trusted in the support of Egypt, "that broken reed that pierces the hand that rests on it" (Is 36:6). Similarly, the Ukrainian government has relied on the broken reed that is the US when the obvious interest of its country was neutrality in exchange for reciprocal security guarantees. Meanwhile, the sad and twilight role of the EU as a lackey of the US is summed up in a phrase of the former US Deputy Secretary of State during a 2014 conversation with its ambassador to Ukraine, surely recorded and leaked by the Russian secret services: "Fuck the EU" (sic)<sup>14</sup>. Americans live on the other side of the Atlantic and have hardly any trade dealings with Russia, but Europe has confronted its neighbor and main energy supplier (with whom it had no disputes) to defend US interests, and has done so with a frivolous warlike ardor contrary to the interests of its citizens, who will pay a high price. Moreover, by arming Ukraine and giving it hope in a conflict where it suffers from a clear inferiority of military capabilities, Europe has only prolonged the agony of the poor Ukrainian people, the innocent victim of American

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<sup>14</sup> [Ukraine crisis: Transcript of leaked Nuland-Pyatt call - BBC News](#)

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machinations and Russian brutality, for Putin has crossed the Rubicon and cannot turn back, and China will not allow the West to win this battle.

Russian demands for Ukraine's neutrality were, in the words of a distinguished former US ambassador to Russia, "eminently reasonable", and this crisis has been, according to him, "avoidable, predictable and willfully precipitated<sup>15</sup>". Undoubtedly. The US has been provoking Russia for years to draw it into what it hopes will be a costly war of attrition and Putin has taken the bait with his merciless jaws of steel. Thus, any judgment of this war must distinguish between the unspeakable American provocation, which sought this conflict, and the disproportionate and brutal Russian reaction.

"If you blow on embers, you light a fire, and if you spit on them, you put them out, and both come out of your mouth" (Sir 28:12), wrote the wise man 2,200 years ago. Was it really so hard?

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<sup>15</sup> [I was there: NATO and the origins of the Ukraine crisis - Responsible Statecraft](#)