

In a Compromised Media Environment, Western Intelligence Agencies Escalate NATO's Proxy War in Ukraine Unchallenged

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As winter bites, the current NATO proxy war that has raged for almost a year shows no signs of stopping, with November 2022 reports quietly admitting that roughly [100,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed or wounded in action](#). Millions of Ukrainians have fled their homes, and those who remain face conscription, power outages, and a lack of other basic resources. Meanwhile, the conflict has strained supply chains and energy access internationally, leading to sky-high inflation of basic items and slashed living standards, especially in Europe.

But perhaps "proxy war" is now a misnomer: officials are planning for long-term, hot conflict, and US leaders have even said they're ready to "[fight to the last person](#)" in Ukraine. On 25 January, German Foreign Defense Minister Annalena Baerbock [openly stated](#) "We are fighting a war against Russia." And a US official quoted by the *Washington Post* [explained](#) M1 Abrams tanks set aside for Ukraine are "probably not for the near fight," and "are not likely to arrive for many months, if not years." Recent statements from US officials, further, [indicate](#) that the US may help Ukraine strike Crimea, which would effectively constitute an attack on Russian soil, likely triggering significant retaliation.

But a major force carrying the world on a runaway train to war — the western intelligence community — remains little discussed, despite evidence it has sparked much of the ongoing war escalations.

From the Kerch Bridge explosion to the Nord Stream pipelines' sabotage, a growing body of evidence reveals Western intelligence organizations, especially US and British intelligence communities, are playing key roles in sparking and escalating NATO's proxy war in Ukraine.

A corporatized media sphere, including significant intelligence and elite ties to mainstream media institutions, however, mean intelligence actions, and the war's true gravity, are kept

out of public scrutiny at a time when anti-war movements are critically weak. As a result, the intelligence community can continue operations uninhibited, perhaps even sparking a hot war.

Western Meddling and Intelligence Operations in Ukraine Before and During the Current Conflict

Image: Half a million tons of methane rise from the sabotaged Nord Stream pipeline. Photo: Swedish Coast Guard



Recent events indicate western intelligence is behind significant conflict escalations before and during the war in Ukraine, with incidents including, but not limited to, the [Kerch Bridge attack](#), likely the [Nord Stream pipeline explosions](#), and, as recent [reporting](#) from journalist and [former US special operations officer](#) Jack Murphy reveals, the CIA's collaborations with a European NATO ally's intelligence forces to conduct ongoing sabotages within Russia's borders.

Even the [New York Times](#) has acknowledged major intelligence operations throughout the war, reporting in June 2022 that a "secretive operation involving U.S. Special Operations forces hints at the scale of the effort to assist Ukraine's still outgunned military."

But the West has meddled in Ukrainian affairs long before 2022. In fact, CIA documents declassified in 2016 reveal proof of intelligence involvement in Ukraine dating back to at least 1953. The CIA's Codename: AERODYNAMIC, for example, [was established](#) "to provide for the exploitation and expansion of the anti-Soviet Ukrainian resistance for cold war and hot war purposes." And CAPACHO, an AERODYNAMIC affiliate project, is described by author Amit Bagaria as a [psychological warfare operation](#), where CIA operatives organized and participated in Ukrainian study groups and publications, then distributed materials en masse to Ukrainian civilians, libraries, newspapers and cultural institutions to encourage nationalism and strengthen anti-Soviet sentiment and resistance. The intelligence operations, which *TeleSUR English* [reported](#) had been executed to destabilize and "nazify" Ukraine, continued into the 1970s.

Decades later, the United States played a major role in Ukraine's 2014 western-backed coup, which replaced democratically elected Viktor Yanukovich with Petro Poroshenko, whose Washington-influenced government set Russia and Ukraine on a path for collision as Ukraine [subsequently sought out NATO membership](#), one of [Russia's diplomatic "red lines."](#)

Mainstream western media portrayed the Maidan uprisings as a spontaneous mass movement towards alignment with Europe. While some protests arose organically, they posed an opportune time for Washington to facilitate Yanukovich's ousting from power and form a government of their choosing through various covert efforts.

The late Robert Parry observed in late February 2014, for example, that the US intelligence proxy National Endowment of Democracy's (NED) [whopping 65 projects](#) in Ukraine could serve as a "shadow structure" for Americans to influence the country's decisions, or even whip up unrest. And former US Agent Scott Rickard [told Russia Today](#) in 2014 that US foreign aid agencies flooded about 5 billion USD into groups protesting the Ukrainian government during the Maidan protests.

United States Senators Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut) and John McCain (R-Arizona) even went to Ukraine to attend the Maidan protests, with McCain [telling CNN](#) that "What we're trying to do is try to bring about a peaceful transition...This is a grassroots revolution here." Infamously, US Official Victoria Nuland's call revealing plans for a "transition" in Ukraine, and who would be part of a possible new Ukrainian government, was also [leaked](#).

Setting the stage for today's war, the 2014 coup and its aftermath gave the US ample opportunities to expand influence in Ukraine while boosting the Eastern European country's military capacities. As TJ Coles [reported for The Grayzone](#), the Ukraine component of the US State Department and Pentagon Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF), founded in the coup's wake, provided "tens of millions of dollars-worth" towards the Ukraine Ministry of Defense, National Guard, and especially the Ukrainian Special Operations Forces "in developing tactical and institutional capabilities that are compatible with Western models," [according](#) to the US State Department.

Paving the way for greater conflict, President Barack Obama also [authorized covert measures](#) to plant "cyber weapons" in Russia that could be "detonated" in case of conflict escalation. While the Obama Administration could only authorize the measures, which were up to the Trump Administration to [subsequently execute](#), ongoing sabotages as per Jack Murphy's reporting suggest their likely success.

Since the war's beginning, moreover, major intelligence operations are ongoing. As *The Grayzone* reported in October 2022, documents obtained [showed](#) British intelligence plans to blow up the Kerch Bridge, the bridge connecting Russia and Crimea, about six months before Ukraine did so in a suicide bombing apparently overseen by Ukraine's SBU intelligence services. Kit Klarenberg later reported in *The Grayzone* that, according to documents obtained in 2022, UK intelligence is training Ukrainian soldiers to form a "partisan" army with plans to attack premeditated targets in Crimea.

And now, veteran journalist Seymour Hersh's [bombshell scoop](#) claims US Navy divers, in a covert operation carried out by the US in collaboration with Norway's Secret Service and Navy, planted remotely triggered explosives at the Nord Stream pipelines under the cover of [NATO BALTOPS 22 exercises](#).

Hersh's reports came out after months of media radio silence on Nord Stream. But even before his scoop dropped, it was clear the US had incentives to carry out the pipeline attacks. United States Secretary of State Anthony Blinken [said](#) Nord Stream's end was "a tremendous opportunity to once and for all remove the dependence on Russian energy, and thus to take away from Vladimir Putin the weaponization of energy as a means of advancing his imperial designs," which "offers tremendous strategic opportunity for the years to come." And President Biden even [suggested](#) in early 2022 that "If Russia invades ... then there will no longer be a Nord Stream 2 We will bring an end to it."

Further, Jack Murphy's [reporting](#) on intelligence-backed sabotage networks in Russia elucidates the depth of pre-planning against Russia. According to Murphy, the intelligence-established sabotage framework in Russia is "years in the making" and inhibits the country's supply lines. A former CIA officer he interviewed, moreover, said the sabotages are especially damaging because they create a perceived Russian inability to control the country's basic matters. As Murphy [reports](#), the sabotages apparently explain or otherwise contribute to recent and mysterious incidents in Russia, such as damages to fuel depots, bridges and power plants, all ongoing since Russia's Special Operation began early last year.

Finally, the AP missile story in November 2022, which [incorrectly reported](#) a Russian missile hit Poland, was based on incorrect information from anonymous US intelligence. The moment that led Zelensky to call for further conflict escalation forces skepticism about whether intelligence was looking to stir the pot.

While certainly incomplete, the breadth of known intelligence participation in Ukrainian affairs before and during the current war paints a picture of significant involvement able to drive both public opinion and the course of the war.

The Revolving Door Between Media, Intelligence, and the Elite

Western intelligence communities have carried out significant operations in and around Ukraine for years. Due to the lack of mainstream reporting on the subject, however, few are aware of the phenomenon even as dangerous conflict escalates, meaning the organizations can work without scrutiny.

While striking, the lack of media interest in western intelligence operations, in Ukraine and in general, is unsurprising considering the relationship media and intelligence communities enjoy. The relationship's full extent remains unknown to the public, but hints at deep ties between the two entities frequently emerge.

Of course, [the revolving door between the US media, elite and government](#) is a visible phenomenon, with Jen Psaki, Kayleigh McEnany, and now Arkansas governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders all receiving high-tier cable news positions after stints as White House Press Secretary. The same goes for prominent US intelligence community members, [where](#) former CIA director John Brennan is now an NBC senior national security and intelligence analyst, and Former Director of National Intelligence of the United States James Clapper is a CNN national security analyst.

On an international level, as journalist Jordan Schachtel [revealed](#) early this year, heads and higher-ups of major publications and media corporations, including the *New York Times*, NBC Universal and *TIME Magazine* were slated to attend the elite, invite-only Davos forum that took place earlier this winter. They did not attend to cover the event, but rather as participants.

Further, the recently-released Twitter files show how US government and intelligence have extensively curated the public's understanding of major current events, such as the coronavirus crisis, Russiagate, and the current conflict in Ukraine, through social media content. In the case of Russiagate, for example, the files [reveal](#) US government officials fabricated and pressured Twitter to accept phony Russiagate narratives, including the lie that Russian bots propagated the #ReleaseTheMemo hashtag in 2018. Twitter's public silence on the matter allowed Russiagate narratives to circulate throughout mainstream

media, priming the public for the anti-Russian hysteria that now dominates coverage of the current war.

While the Twitter files come with significant limitations due to the opaque, limited purview of their release and the corporate nature of and defense contractor ties twitter and its current CEO, Elon Musk, embody and enjoy, the released materials elucidate significant government and intelligence interference with the news feeds that millions scroll through every-day.

The United States government- and intelligence-adjacent organizations, further, have played significant roles in funding and shaping media institutions in the US and internationally. As Alan MacLeod [notes in Mintpress News](#), the United States Embassy and CIA front group National Endowment for Democracy (NED) have funded a multitude of media organizations in the United States and elsewhere, including fact-checking organizations like VoxCheck, the Poynter Institute, and StopFake. Billionaire oligarch and Ebay founder Pierre Omidyar, furthermore, is known for funding a number of media publications and organizations, such as *The Intercept* [until early 2023](#), as well as, as Alex Rubinstein and Max Blumenthal report for *Mintpress News*, funding [a number](#) of pro-regime change networks and fostering partnerships with CIA front-groups.

As Kit Klarenberg reports in his [2022 Substack piece](#) “Anatomy of a Coup: How CIA Front Laid Foundations for Ukraine War,” similar phenomena are ongoing in Ukraine’s media sphere. For example, Omidyar, the NED, the US Embassy in Ukraine, in addition to [USAID](#), have all funded Ukrainian media network Hromadske, which Klarenberg emphasizes played a key role in the coup’s success due to its fast growth and adept ability to [disingenuously](#) depict the Maidan protests as organic and representative of the larger populations’ political sentiments. The network was founded in late 2013 as the Maidan demonstrations began.

And attempts to report on intelligence operations only reveal more about the intelligence community-media relationship. In his article outlining intelligence-executed sabotages in Russia, for example, Jack Murphy [admits](#) he had to self-publish his work, explaining that other publication attempts entailed unethical work practices and even intelligence sabotage, where a senior CIA official “leaked a story to the New York Times to undermine his piece.”

At the end of his article, Murphy opines that the current state of journalist-intelligence relationships has hampered critical reporting, leaving the public completely unaware of ongoing intelligence activities contributing to escalating hostilities. Here, he criticizes the media industry for prioritizing its intelligence community relationships over the public’s need to know:

“....Journalists can lack the circumspection to examine how their organizations come to mimic the institutions of power that they claim to speak truth to. At some point the equities they build with the intelligence community and military commands become more important than informing the public.

Indeed, the Russian government knows perfectly well who is sponsoring these sabotage strikes. Moreover, the intelligence community wants them to know. The only party left in the dark is the public at large, left unaware of the shadow war taking place behind the scenes.”

The Impact

Unfortunately, intelligence ties to our media and major institutions leave major aspects of the current conflict opaque, just as they have obstructed the public's understanding of previous conflicts they've contributed to. As a result, the anti-war movement remains critically weak despite today's acute crisis.

Even as the world teeters towards possible nuclear war, the mass demonstrations and resistance present against the [Iraq war](#) two decades ago, which brought out the largest coordinated protests in history, are now almost nowhere to be found. Meanwhile, European anti-war and anti-NATO protests, when they do take place, occur with little media coverage.

No prominent US politician in office currently supports an anti-war position, and Congress almost unilaterally [voted in favor of sending 40 billion USD in assistance to Ukraine](#) in May 2022, with those opposing it largely doing so in order to investigate whether it was a reasonable use of taxpayer funds. And Democrats [quickly withdrew](#) a lackluster letter calling to prioritize diplomatic efforts in the Ukraine conflict in late 2022 after significant establishment blowback.

The moment is ripe for abuse from American officials, who openly admit to meddling in other countries' affairs. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the United States Victoria Nuland, for example, even [boasted](#) recently that "we are working closely with the Belarusian opposition." Recent *Financial Times* pieces, moreover, [highlighted](#) the United States' efforts to prepare for war with China, including a [leaked memo](#) where General Mike Minihan, head of US Air Mobility Command, admitted, "My gut tells me we will fight in 2025."

Without change, the current conflict could easily escalate into a hot war amongst the superpowers — some, including French historian Emmanuel Todd, [argue](#) we've already entered World War III. In the meantime, millions of Ukrainians, who have been reduced to cannon fodder in the West's deadly war against Russia, are suffering with little recourse or chance at diplomacy.

Although poor media coverage of the war and mass censorship has hindered an anti-war movement thus far, previous roadblocks cannot get in the way of calls for diplomacy before it's too late. The West's hunger for conflict is insatiable: without mass public resistance, it seems little short of inevitable that the world could be submerged in a large-scale and deadly war.

The time for an anti-war movement, and an anti-war movement that recognizes and condemns the reckless actions of western intelligence agencies, is now.

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