

Flashpoint in Ukraine. How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks World War III

Review of Stephen Lendman's Book

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The Ukrainian national elections have produced the expected results. The West-oriented parties won. Surprisingly, President Poroshenko's party and the party of the radical anti-Russian Yatsenyuk, the U.S. favorite, who carried a head-to-head-race, both ended up with 22 percent of the vote. They wish to lead Ukraine into the European Union and NATO as fast as possible. According to Western propaganda, this was a victory for freedom, democracy and free enterprise. The costs of this political mirage will have to be paid by ordinary folks. These elections won't stabilize the country because Russia's security concerns are still unmet. Although the book under review was published a few months ago, its contributions have not lost their topicality. The problems that the US created, are still unresolved.

Stephen Lendman is a writer, syndicated columnist, and activist. He has been hosting since 2007 a regular newshour at The Progressive Radio Network. For his book, Lendman gathered former government officials, journalists, activists and academics known for their radical and competent critique of US foreign policy. These include Paul Craig Roberts, James Petras, Michael Parenti, Cynthia McKinney, Mahdi Nazemroaya, Michel Chossudovsky, John McMurtry, Matthew Witt, Jeffrey Sommers and others. Most contributions focus on the geopolitical aspects and the consequences of the takeover of Ukraine by the Western Alliance and its anti-Russian thrust.

In his introductory remarks, Lendman called the Ukraine conflict "the most significant post-WW II geopolitical crisis." He warned that "escalating it risks global conflict." To emphasize the historical significance of the US coup in Ukraine, he compares it with Mussolini's 1922 march on Rome. In Washington's expansionist strategy, the "17 Euro-zone countries represent its weakest links". If Ukraine is to join the European Union (EU) it would have to undergo severe structural economic changes that will be dictated by the EU, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the IMF troika. This will inevitably affect dramatically the living standards of the population, writes Lendman. He underlines the geostrategic importance of Ukraine with a quotation by Zbigniew Brzezinski, who once said: "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire." Lendman argues that Ukrainian Jews are threatened and that some have left the country: "Anti-Semitism is rife. Radical ultra-nationalism is virulent."

According to Paul Craig Roberts, former Assistant Treasury Secretary under President Reagan, Washington does not only set the world on a path of war but also endangers world peace by its recklessness. He lists contractual breaches by the Western Alliance compared to the agreements with the former Soviet Union: The US administration – with the consent of its NATO partners – expanded the Alliance into Eastern Europe, placed anti-ballistic missiles

at the Russian border in Poland and withdrew from the ABM treaty. Beyond that, the West unleashed a propaganda war, blaming Putin for the entire crisis. But so far, the Russian government has not had to do anything except acquiesce to the self-determination of the people in the Russian areas of Ukraine, writes Roberts. "Without the cover provided by Europe, Washington's acts of aggression would result in war crime charges against the US government."

Just after Putin protected the Russian population in Crimea and the Eastern part of Ukraine from the putschists in Kiev, Washington imposed sanctions on Russia. "The Obama regime cites the 'success' of the financial and economic sanctions against Iran as a 'model' of what can be achieved with Russia", writes James Petras, also the author of the book "The Politics of Empire". The West calculates on a weak Russian response or even hopes for a capitulation. If neither materializes and Putin remains tough, the "polarized world will witness new class, national and regional conflicts", writes Petras.

Michel Chossudovsky, who runs the Global Research Centre in Montreal, argues that the union of Crimea with Russia redefines both the geography and the geopolitical chessboard in the Black Sea basin: "It constitutes a major setback for US-NATO whose longstanding objective has been to integrate Ukraine into NATO with a view to undermining Russia, while extending Western military presence in the Black sea basin." And Rick Rozoff, an anti-war activist, hints at the total encirclement of Russia by NATO, should Ukraine become a member state of the European Union. With a US-NATO client regime in place in Kiev, Ukraine will very likely become a gargantuan NATO forward base, writes Rozoff.

Perhaps President Putin's speech at the annual conference of the Valdai club in Sochi may offer a way out of the impasse. Although he criticized the West sharply and called for a dialogue on an equal basis, he demanded of the West more respect of Russia's legitimate interests. According to Putin, the strategic interests of Russia and the United States overlap in many aspects. Putin called on the US to abandon the pursuit of dominance and imperial ambitions. The "pseudo-supremacy" of the United States results only in "chaos and blood. Interference and dictates of the United States do no good, but let conflicts escalate only further." In his speech, Putin clearly rejected a return to totalitarianism in Russia. This would only lead to a "dead end", he said.

With this speech, Putin played the ball into the opponent's box. Now, the West and the newly elected Ukrainian parliament can choose between cooperation and confrontation. As the book shows, Western leaders are spoiling for a fight because they strive to extend the sphere of Western influence until the Russian border. The book's contributions illuminate not only the background of the Ukraine conflict, but also the expansionist goals of the US-NATO alliance. "Flashpoint Ukraine" can therefore be highly recommended.

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