

Seeking the Truth about Ukraine

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

February 20, 2015, marks the one-year anniversary of the heinous slaughter of protesters and police by neo-Nazi snipers who transformed a relatively peaceful protest against Ukraine's democratically elected president, Viktor Yanukovich, into a violent anti-Russia coup. To this day, the illegitimate regime ruling in Kiev has done virtually nothing to bring their sniper allies to justice.

Many political actors in the West, including the Obama administration's CIA and State Department, as well as members of the European Union were accomplices in the anti-Russia coup. Foolishly, they supported a coup in Kiev that provoked anti-Kiev mobilizations among Russians living in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Thus they recklessly courted the civil war that ravages Ukraine today, as well as the justly deserved devastating defeats suffered by coup regime forces in Ilovaisk and Debaltseve.

Nevertheless, like thieves caught in broad daylight, the Obama administration, the EU, and NATO have attempted to deflect the blame on to Russia. Russophobes within the West's think tanks and mainstream news media have embraced their lies. Thus, so has Boobus Americanus. Consequently, the civil war that now threatens to dismember Ukraine also threatens to spark World War III.

Why? Because, Russia's TV news has been equally successful in convincing the overwhelming majority of Russians that the U.S. provoked regime change in Kiev in order to weaken Russian influence in the region. Consequently, support for President Putin and anti-American sentiment have grown enormously.



Fortunately — for readers who suspect that the relentless Western demonization of Russia and its leader, President Vladimir Putin, is a crudely hysterical, self-serving cover for the relentless U.S., EU, and NATO expansion that, finally, has met its Waterloo in Ukraine — we now have Richard Sakwa's detailed and thoughtful new book, [Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands](#).

According to Professor Sakwa, the crisis had its origins in: (1) “structural contradictions in

the international system” (p. 5), and (2) “the profound tensions in the Ukrainian nation and state-building processes since Ukraine achieved independence in 1991” (p. 2). Russia has played a secondary role in both, but largely in reaction to steps taken in Washington, Brussels and Kiev.

Professor Sakwa correctly claims, “The groundwork of the Ukrainian conflict has been latent for at least two decades. It was laid by the asymmetrical end of the Cold War, in which one side declared victory while the other was certainly not ready to ‘embrace defeat’” (Ibid). He might have added that America’s declaration of victory, called “triumphalism,” is just another strain of our relentless and obnoxious boasting, called “American Exceptionalism,” which dates back, at least, to the post-Revolutionary War period. Then, victory over the British moved the president of Yale College, Ezra Stiles, to proclaim America to be “God’s New Israel” and to compare George Washington to “Joshua commanding the armies of the Children of Israel and leading them into the Promised Land.” (Richard M. Gamble, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation*, p. 10-11.)

Triumphalism, as politics, reared its ugly head when America’s conservatives, with the support of the military-industrial complex, attempted to credit President Reagan (especially his military buildup) for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The inconvenient fact that Reagan left office in January, 1989, while the collapse did not occur until almost three years later, in late December, 1991, did nothing to temper their claim. More difficult to gloss over, however, was the scathing criticism of Reagan made by conservatives, just as he was leaving office.

It was then that William Safire, Howard Phillips and George Will claimed that Reagan had been duped by Mikhail Gorbachev. Mr. Will, for example, went so far as to assert: “Reagan has accelerated the moral disarmament of the West – actual disarmament will follow – by elevating wishful thinking to the status of political philosophy” (See Francis Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War*, p. 467).

The triumphalists also needed to bury the contrary assertions made by Reagan’s own Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Jack F. Matlock. Ambassador Matlock denied that Reagan sought either the disintegration of Communist rule or the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But, the most fateful failure of the triumphalists, was their refusal to recognize, let alone credit, Mikhail Gorbachev for the conceptual breakthroughs that led to the peaceful conclusion of the Cold War. For example, it was Gorbachev who advanced the concept of “mutual security.” His foreign policy advisor, Anatoly Chernyaev, explained “mutual security” as follows: “We are by no means talking about weakening our security. But at the same time we have to realize that if our proposals imply weakening U.S. security, then there won’t be any agreement.” (See Walter C. Uhler, “Gorbachev’s Revolution,” *The Nation*, Dec. 31, 2001, p. 44)

That conceptual failure had fateful policy implications for post-Cold War Europe. After all, when the West commenced its relentless expansion of the European Union and NATO, it dismissively lectured Russia that such expansion was no threat to Russia – even if the Russian leaders thought otherwise!

In addition to displaying insufferable arrogance, the West’s dismissive lectures demonstrated that the triumphalists were in no mood to operate according to Gorbachev’s

concept of mutual security. They were still playing by zero-sum Cold War ground rules that, in their closed minds, had won the Cold War. But, by doing so, they virtually guaranteed that Russia eventually would reintroduce such Cold War ground rules as well.

It was President George H.W. Bush's sense of triumph – as will be shown below — that compelled him to persuade West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to renege on his crucial promise to Mikhail Gorbachev: no eastward expansion of NATO. And it was the triumphalism of Bush's Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney, as well as his assistant, Paul Wolfowitz, that led to the promulgation of the infamous Defense Planning Guidance, which became known as the "Wolfowitz Doctrine."

Writing in the September/October 2014 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Mary Elise Sarrote noted that, at their meeting on February 10, 1990, Kohl assured Gorbachev that, in return for Moscow's permission to begin the reunification of Germany, "naturally NATO could not expand its territory to the current territory of [East Germany]." "In parallel talks, [West German foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich] Genscher delivered the same message to his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, saying, 'for us, it stands firm: NATO will not expand itself to the East.'"

According to Professor Sarrote, "After hearing these repeated assurances, Gorbachev gave West Germany what Kohl later called 'the green light.'" Kohl "held a press conference immediately to lock in his gain." However, he did not mention the *quid pro quo* — no eastward expansion of NATO.

(The Soviet Union lost some 27,000,000 men, women and children before defeating Nazi Germany in World War II. By comparison, the U.S. lost some 400,000 during that war. Consequently, permitting the reunification of Germany in return for West Germany's assurance of no NATO expansion eastward was an enormous concession by Gorbachev.)

Professor Sakwa believes, "There was no deal prohibiting NATO's advance since it had appeared utter insanity even to conceive of such a thing" (p.45). But, I'm not so sure. After all, when Kohl met with Bush at Camp David on February 24-25, he was persuaded to back away from his informal agreement with Gorbachev. "Bush made his feelings about compromising with Moscow clear to Kohl: 'To hell with that! We prevailed and they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.'" (See "[A Broken Promise](#)," *Foreign Affairs*, p. 93-94 in print edition)

In May 1990, Gorbachev exposed the bad faith of the Americans and Germans, when he told Secretary of State James Baker: "You say that NATO is not directed against us, that it is simply a security structure that is adapting to new realities. Therefore, we propose to join NATO." Baker refused. (Ibid. p. 95)

The worst consequence of arrogant American triumphalism in the first Bush administration was the "Wolfowitz Doctrine." It came to light in early March 1992, when the *New York Times* reported the details of Paul Wolfowitz's Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), which had been leaked to the newspaper. Mr. Wolfowitz urged that the United States:

"must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role." In a word, Mr. Wolfowitz had drafted a plan for everlasting American global hegemony. According to Professor Sakwa, "this has been the strategy pursued by the U.S. since the fall

of communism” (p. 211).

According to the *Times*, the DPG stipulated that:

“the United States should not contemplate any withdrawal of its nuclear-strike aircraft based in Europe and, in the event of a resurgent threat from Russia, ‘we should plan to defend against such a threat’ farther forward on the territories of Eastern Europe ‘should there be an Alliance decision to do so.’”

As the *Times* correctly notes: “This statement offers an explicit commitment to defend the former Warsaw Pact nations from Russia.” The DPG also suggested:

“that the United States could also consider extending to Eastern and Central European nations security commitments similar to those extended to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Arab states along the Persian Gulf. And to help stabilize the economies and democratic development in Eastern Europe, the draft calls on the European Community to offer memberships to Eastern European countries as soon as possible.” (See “[U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals develop](#),” New York Times.) Thus, the DPG proposed aggressive policies that would keep Russian from “even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

Yet, the reality proved to be much more aggressive than Wolfowitz’s DPG. Taking advantage of a weakened, inward looking Russia, the Clinton administration urged Warsaw Pact nations to apply for membership in NATO. Thus, not only did aggressive NATO expansion occur long before Russia became a “resurgent threat,” aggressive NATO expansion actually provoked Russia into becoming a resurgent threat.

(The triumphalism of the Clinton administration was best expressed by a proponent of NATO expansion, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: “[I]f we have to use force it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and see further than other countries into the future...” (Sakwa, p. 227)).

In addition to NATO’s relentless territorial expansion came a second type of expansion that was totally consistent with Wolfowitz’s DPG. NATO expanded its strategic concept to include offensive war, not only in self-defense of member states that had been attacked, but also to guarantee European security and uphold democratic values within and beyond its borders. In fact, the new strategic concept was put into practice a month before it was announced, when, for the first time, NATO used military force against a sovereign state (Yugoslavia) that had not attacked a NATO member. Russians of every class and political persuasion were livid, but nobody in the West paid much attention.

Russia’s compassion and support for the U.S after al-Qaeda’s heinous attacks on 9/11 quickly evaporated when President George W. Bush authorized American troops to invade Iraq. Vice President Cheney and Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz — the scoundrels behind the DPG — played critical roles in fostering the worst war crime of the 21st century. According to Professor Sakwa, “after the Iraq war of 2003 Russia became increasingly alienated and developed into what I call a ‘neo-revisionist’ power, setting the stage for the confrontation in Ukraine.” (p.30)

Also setting the stage for the confrontation in Ukraine was the further expansion of NATO. On March 29, 2004, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Romania joined Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic (which had been admitted in 1999) as members of NATO.

In 2005, after a protest against crooked elections in Ukraine resulted in the so-called Orange Revolution, the Bush administration hurriedly dispatched Daniel Fried, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs to the new government in Ukraine. According to WikiLeaks, Mr. Fried not only communicated the U.S. Government's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, but also "emphasized U.S. support for Ukraine's NATO and Euro-Atlantic aspirations" (Sakwa, p.52-53). He emphasized America's support for joining NATO, notwithstanding the fact that Ukrainians overwhelmingly opposed joining NATO.

On February 12, 2007, while the United States was still conducting its criminal assault on Iraq, President Putin aired his grievances about NATO expansion at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy. He said: "I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization 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?"

Clearly, Western aggression and double-dealing were on Putin's mind – just as it had been on the mind of every Russian leader since Gorbachev. As the grievances mounted, yet another threat arose — the eastward expansion of an "Atlanticized" European Union. EU expansion was not an explicit threat to Russia, until the very day that the Treaty of Lisbon was signed, 13 December 2007. Why? Because, under the new treaty, all countries joining the EU must "align their defense and security policies with those of NATO" (Sakwa, p. 30).

Yet, another provocation occurred at the Bucharest NATO summit in April 2008, when the military alliance recognized the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine to become its next members. According to Professor Sakwa, it took protests by Russia, as well as "the combined efforts by the French and Germans to dissuade President George W. Bush from starting the process of Ukrainian and Georgian accession then and there." (p. 54-55)

Then, there was the provocation that began in May 2008, when Poland pressured the EU to develop the Eastern Partnership (EaP) program, which targeted six former Soviet states (including Ukraine) on the EU's borders. Although the EaP "was not considered a step toward EU membership for its participating states, ... [it] sought to create a comfort zone along the EU's borders by tying these countries in to a Western orientation." (Sakwa, p. 39)

According to Professor Sakwa, "The EaP was the brainchild of foreign minister Radoslaw (Radek) Sikorski," – called "another East European fruitcake" by "one perceptive commentator" (Sakwa, p. 40) – but he then drafted in his Swedish counterpart Carl Bildt to give the idea greater heft in intra-EU negotiations." (p. 39)

The EaP became the EU's method of forcing states to choose between the West and Russia. According to Professor Sakwa, "Its partisans insisted on the sovereign right of those states to join the alliance system of their liking. The concept of 'choice' thus became deeply ideological and was used as a weapon against those who suggested that countries have histories and location, and that choices have to take into account the effect that they will have on others." (p. 40)

(The concept of choice was meant to negate Russia's national security claims to a sphere of influence in Ukraine. But, as noted scholar John Mearshreimer recently observed, "the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western hemisphere, much less on its borders" (Sakwa, p. 236, quoting from "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's fault," *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2014, p. 78))

Thus, "the EaP represented a qualitatively different level of interaction that effectively precluded closer integration in Eurasian projects, and indeed had a profound security dynamic that effectively rendered the EU as much of a threat in Russian perceptions as NATO." (p. 41)

Many pundits in the West, including Tom Friedman and Trudy Rubin, have decried Russia's decision to upset the world's peaceful "end of history" liberal economic world order by resorting to such revolting twentieth-century geopolitical tactics as invading another country. Their views deserve contempt, not only because NATO's expansion has been geopolitical from the start – as was the U.S. invasion of Iraq — but also because the EaP "had a profound geopolitical logic from the first" (Sakwa, p. 40). It is worth adding that, by precluding "closer integration in Eurasian projects," the EaP violated the very principles of the liberal economic world order that advocates like Friedman and Rubin supposedly hold dear.

On top of all of these provocations came the provocation that finally incited a Russian military response – Georgia's military invasion of the South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali, in August 2008. Russia responded to Georgia's attack by sending troops into South Ossetia, bombing Gori, occupying part of Georgia and recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It was a well-deserved humbling of Georgia's reckless ruler, Mikheil Saakashvili, and a well-deserved smack across the collective faces of the U.S., the EU, and NATO.

Clearly, asserts Professor Sakwa, Russia's counterattack in Georgia "was a response to the threat of NATO enlargement" (p. 40). Unfortunately, the Georgia crisis failed to make clear to everyone that Russia "is prepared to use force when its national interests are at stake" (Mikhail Margelov, quoted by Sakwa, p.5). Now, the world faces a possible World War III over Ukraine, because triumphalists in the West ignored Russia's growing outrage over relentless and provocative eastward expansion by the EU and NATO.

In 1991, the U.S. commenced its investment in a democracy promotion program in Ukraine, which, according to obnoxious neocon Victoria Nuland, cost American taxpayers \$5 billion by 2013. In 1992, as we have seen, Paul Wolfowitz drafted a Defense Planning Guidance that aimed at perpetual U.S. hegemony over the world.

In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski — who later became a foreign policy advisor to the Obama administration – had published a book titled *The Grand Chessboard*, which was:

“translated into Russian and is part of everyday political discussion” (Sakwa, p.215). According to Mr. Brzezinski, “Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.”

“However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia” (See Chris Ernesto, [“Brzezinski Mapped Out the Battle for Ukraine in 1997,”](#) March 15, 2014, anti-war.com.)

Between 2004 and 2013, the EU spent 496 million euros, in order to subsidize Ukrainian “front groups” (Sakwa, p. 90). In September 2013, Carl Gershman, the president of the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, declared that Ukraine represented “the biggest prize,” because it not only would cause Putin to lose the “near abroad,” but also might lead to the overthrow of Putin himself (Ibid, 74-75). In a word, the EU and the US had been waging a war against Russia by other than military means.

As Professor Sakwa put it, “The Ukrainian border at its closest is a mere 480 kilometers from Moscow and thus the whole issue assumed an existential character. Ukraine matters to Russia as an issue of survival, quite apart from a thousand years of shared history and civilization, whereas for Brussels or Washington it is just another country in the onward march of ‘the West’” (p. 75)

As should be clear, from the evidence presented above, Professor Sakwa devotes much attention to the “structural contradictions in the international system” that led to the “Ukraine crisis.” But, he also closely examines the role that the “Ukrainian crisis” played in the “Ukraine crisis.” The “Ukrainian crisis” is Professor Sakwa’s term for “the profound tensions in the Ukrainian nation and state-building processes since Ukraine achieved independence in 1991, which now threaten the unity of the state itself” (p. ix).

He notes three distinct and irreconcilable social and political tendencies that have undermined the state-building processes in Ukraine — the Orange, Blue and Gold. The first, which he calls Orange and “monist,” is largely based in Galicia and western Ukraine. It is ultra-nationalistic and wallows in its victimization at the hands of Russians. It fosters support for nation-building by focusing its attention on an external evil that has kept Ukrainians down. Thus, it is virulently Russophobic. But, “externalization means that inadequate attention is devoted to finding negotiated domestic solutions to domestic problems” (p. 70).

The Orangists seek to create a culturally autonomous state for Ukrainians, largely by constructing myths about its history and by purging itself of the Russian language. For example, they demand that Holodomor be recognized as genocide, notwithstanding the fact that Stalin’s viciously engineered famine of 1932-33 “was not restricted to Ukraine alone, with millions dying in the Kuban and the lower Volga.” (p. 19) Worse, in 2010, the Orangists outraged much of the civilized world when it awarded the notorious Nazi collaborator, Stepan Bandera, the title of “Hero of Ukraine” (p. 19).

The Orange tendency also can be credited for ensuring that the 1996 constitution recognized Ukrainian as the sole national language and described Russian as the language of a national minority — notwithstanding the fact that 80% of Ukraine’s population uses Russian as its language of daily communication, and notwithstanding the fact that,

according to 2012 data, “60 percent of newspapers, 83 percent of journals, 87 percent of books and 72 percent of television programs in Ukraine are in Russian” (p. 59) As one correspondent put it: “Is there any other country on earth where a language understood by 100% of the population is not a language of state?” (Sakwa, p. 149) Clearly, it was a move made by a people with a huge inferiority complex when it comes to Russian culture.

The Blue and “pluralist” tendency, like the Orange, has been “committed to the idea of a free and united Ukraine” (p. x). But, it “recognizes that the country’s various regions have different historical and cultural experiences, and that the modern Ukrainian state needs to acknowledge this diversity in a more capacious constitutional settlement” Unlike the Orange tendency, the Blue tendency insists that “Russian is recognized as the second state language and economic, social and even security links with Russia are maintained” (p. x)

Finally, Professor Sakwa describes the Gold tendency; the tendency of powerful and corrupt oligarchs to use their dominant political and economic power to create chaos, suck the lifeblood out of its people, and make a joke of Ukrainian democracy ever since the state achieved independence. As Professor Sakwa puts it, “While the two models of Ukrainian state development, the monist and pluralist, quarreled, the bureaucratic-oligarchic-plutocracy ran off with the cream” (p.60). In reality, Ukraine has been a basket-case since its independence.

“One hundred people control some 80-85 percent of Ukraine’s wealth” (p. 61). Name the oligarch. Whether it has been Kuchma, Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, Akhmetov, Taruta, Firtash, Poroshenko, Kolomoisky, Yanukovych or others, the oligarchs have alternately competed or cooperated with one another, through bribes and political favors, to make Ukraine one of the most corrupt countries in the world (See [“Welcome to Ukraine: One of the ‘Biggest Kleptocracies in the World’.”](#)).

As a consequence, Ukraine is one of two post-Soviet countries whose GDP has yet to reach its 1991 level. One person in three lives below the poverty line and, in 2014, inflation reached 20 percent. Unemployment in the first quarter of 2014 was 9.3 percent – and that was after millions of Ukrainians had left the country to seek work on the EU and Russia (Sakwa, p.72-73).

Professor Sakwa is correct to note that “endless oligarch war and self-enrichment of the elite” was accompanied by “declining living standards” and the “onset of ‘stealth authoritarianism’” (p. 73). He also is correct when he concludes that the rule of Viktor Yanukovych was the most corrupt, self-enriching and authoritarian of all of. “Crude methods of physical coercion were applied, of the sort that Yanukovych had long practiced in Donetsk but which were new to Ukraine as a whole, and exceeded anything in Putin’s Russia” (p. 74)

The fact that the EU and Russia found Yanukovych an acceptable partner with whom to do business, did not prevent “the growing gulf between an irresponsible elite and the mass of the people,” which “was the crucial precipitating factor for the protest movement from November 2013. The ‘European choice’” – made by the protesters after Yanukovych backed away from signing the Association Agreement on November 21st — “acted as the proxy for blocked domestic change” (Sakwa, p. 67).

Professor Sakwa credits neo-Nazi Right Sector (Pravy Sektor) for taking the lead in organizing the defense of Kiev’s Independence Square (known as Maidan) during the protest against Yanukovych’s decision to accept aid from Russia. He also credits Right Sector and

neo-Nazi Svoboda for preventing the collapse of the revolt on the Maidan.

But, he blames Right Sector and Svoboda, among other protesters, for the sniper fire on February 20th that proved decisive in achieving the coup that took place two days later. He also blames the “high degree of U.S. meddling in Ukrainian affairs,” and notes that Victoria Nuland’s infamous “fuck the EU” actually referred to “the hesitancy of the EU to go along with American militancy on the Ukraine crisis” (p. 87).

Professor Sakwa makes mincemeat of the claims, made by members of the coup regime and its supporters in the West, that by fleeing from Kiev, President Yanukovich had, in effect, abdicated. In fact, at least four attempts to assassinate Yanukovich occurred after his security service deserted him. (p. 89)

Finding the counter-mobilizations in Crimea and eastern Ukraine to be as justified (or unjustified) as the one that occurred in Kiev, Professor Sakwa observes:

“The forcible seizure of power by radical nationalists represented a breakdown of the constitutional order in Kiev; and if the constitutional order had been repudiated in the center, then on what basis could it be defended in the regions?” (p. 109)

Professor Sakwa also believes that Putin’s decision to annex Crimea was not part of a long-term plan to reconstitute the Soviet Union – as many fools in the West believe – but a “counter-coup” in response to the coup in Kiev. It proved to be enormously popular in Russia.

When attempting to assess what happened in eastern Ukraine, Sakwa concludes that:

“two elements developed in parallel: a genuine regional revolt adopting the tactics of the Maidan against the ‘Ukrainizing’ and anti-Russian policies pursued by the Kiev authorities; and the strategic political considerations of Moscow, which exploited the insurgency to exercise leverage against the Kiev government to achieve defined goals – above all a degree of regional devolution, initially called federalization – as well as to ensure that the strategic neutrality of the country was maintained” (p. 156). He adds that these goals might actually be in the best interests of Ukraine itself.

He reaches two conclusions about events in eastern Ukraine that this reviewer would dispute: (1) Russia probably supplied the SA-11 Buk missile-launcher that unintentionally shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 and (2) Russia’s military had little to do with the devastating defeat that separatist forces inflicted on Kiev’s army at Ilovaisk. But, I’m in no better position to defend my conclusions than he.

In seeking to explain the accord in U.S. politics that unites liberals and conservatives, Sakwa goes beyond kneejerk U.S. Russophobia, which he dates to the failed Polish uprising of 1830, and quotes David Bromwich, who observed:

“The state apparatus which supports wars and the weapons industry for Republican yields welfare and expanded entitlements for Democrats” (p.226). Thus, for liberal universalists and geopolitical realists alike, the Ukrainian crisis of 2013 offered an opportunity to complete the ‘unfinished revolution’ of the

Orange administration from 2004, pushing aside more cautious Europeans to consolidate U.S. hegemony ('leadership') and to punish Russia – for its temerity in upstaging the U. S. over the Syrian chemical weapons crisis in mid-2013, for giving refuge to the whistle-blower Edward Snowden..., and in general for its refusal to kowtow in the appropriate manner.”

When it all blew up in America’s face, the U.S. imposed sanctions, “the hubristic application of the instruments of hegemonic power” (p. 183). Noting Vice President Biden’s admission that the U.S. forced EU members to impose sanctions, he concludes that Europe demonstrated “it was incapable of mastering the very basic principle of modern statecraft – the independent solution of problems” (p. 204).

Professor Sakwa approvingly quotes Seumas Milne, who asserted:

“It’s not necessary to have any sympathy for Putin’s oligarchic authoritarianism to recognize that Nato and the EU, not Russia, sparked this crisis – and that it’s the Western powers that are resisting a negotiated settlement that is the only way out, for fear of appearing weak” (p. 222 from “Far from keeping the peace, Nato is a constant threat to it,” The Guardian, 4 September 2014).

Unfortunately, that was not Professor Sakwa’s final word on the matter. On the penultimate page of his exceptionally judicious and comprehensive book, he proceeds to undermine virtually everything he said about the Wolfowitz Doctrine, America’s hegemonic war party, and the threat NATO posed to Russia by asserting: “Russia’s stance of resentment and self-exclusion... needs to be modified to encompass the fact that neither NATO nor the EU is systematically hostile to Russian’s interests” (p. 255). Say what?

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