

The US/NATO Gambit in Ukraine: A Proxy War for World Hegemony

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Introduction

During the weeks before the February 24, 2022 Russian incursion into neighboring Ukraine, Russia massed 190,000 troops along the border. For 30 years Russia has stated what President Vladimir Putin declared were “red lines” that he insists the United States violated repeatedly, and that culminated in Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Chomsky 2022; Rasmus 2022).

The consensus among objective observers as of June 2022 after four months of bloody conflict is that Russia is making headway—especially in the Donbass region in eastern Ukraine. During the first month of combat, according to Russian Federation Colonel-General Sergei Rudskoy, “the main objectives of the first phase of the operation have been achieved. The combat capabilities of Ukraine’s armed forces have been significantly reduced, which allows us, once again, to concentrate our main efforts on achieving the main goal—the liberation of Donbass (Ritter 2022).



Observers are beginning to doubt Ukraine’s ability to quickly pull out a rabbit from a hat and send the Russians back across the border. Henry Kissinger opined in early June that, Ukraine must begin negotiations “in the next two months before it creates upheavals and tensions that will not be easily overcome.... Pursuing the war beyond that point would not be about freedom of Ukraine, but a new war against Russia itself” (Whitney, Kissinger Nails It. For Once 2022; Ritter 2022).

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in an interview with Germany's *Bild am Sonntag* newspaper,

"We must prepare for the fact that it could take years. We must not let up in supporting Ukraine. Even if the costs are high, not only for military support, also because of rising energy and food prices," Stoltenberg said (Bhadrakumar, West at Inflection Point in Ukraine War 2022).

The most alarming threat from the West came as NATO powers are escalating the war in Ukraine. The *Bild* newspaper reported that German Air Force General Ingo Gerhartz stated at the Kiel International Seapower Symposium on June 17,

"For credible deterrence, we need both the means and the political will to implement nuclear deterrence if necessary." Gerhartz added ominously, "Putin, don't mess with us! By 2030, Europeans will have 600 modern fighter jets in the Baltic Sea region. Then there are the American planes," he said (Stern 2022). Emphasis added.

The agenda for the United States, since its 30-year encroachment of NATO eastward, was to encircle Russia with military bases and medium-range missiles.

NATO currently includes 30 nations; there are at least 750 US military bases in 80 countries. The plan for decades has been to draw the Russians into a long, bloody, and expensive slog that would collapse the country. Just as what occurred during the 1980s when the US backed the Mujahideen against the Russians in Afghanistan.

Russia has enormous natural resources that would enable whoever controls them to dominate the world economically and militarily into the twenty-first century. This is precisely why the US endgame regarding Russia calls for regime change to open the door for the US and its allies to balkanize Russia into several exploitable puppet states (Mapping Project (The) 2022; Kuzmarov, Repeating '70s Strategy of Grand Chess-Master Brzezinski 2022; Black 2022; Rolofson 2022).



However, this revival of the "Afghanistan Trap," as outlined by Zbigniew Brzezinski during Jimmy Carter's administration to topple the Russian government, ironically, could be turned on the US and its allies in Ukraine. The US during the past 20 years has run up a national debt of \$30 trillion as President Joseph Biden and the US Congress recklessly have accrued \$54 billion in military expenditures in Ukraine since February 2022. This financial irresponsibility as the nation's wealth inequality, poverty and homelessness continues unabated while the country's infrastructure remains in deplorable conditions could mark the United States' own self-induced collapse (Bhadrakumar, West at Inflection Point in Ukraine War 2022).

NATO Expansion and the Run-up to the Ukraine War

Military forces of the Russian Federation launched a limited "Special Military Operation" that

crossed Ukraine's borders and hit targets within Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The Russians justified the attacks as a "peacekeeping mission" to protect ethnic Russians in the Donbass region in eastern Ukraine after eight years of incessant shelling by Ukrainian forces. The governments aligned under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its de facto member Ukraine voiced outrage at Russia's incursion. United States President Joseph Biden called Russian President Vladimir Putin's orders for military action "premeditated and unprovoked" as he asserted falsely that the Russians rejected repeated "efforts at diplomacy" (Puryear 2022; Bryce Greene 2022).



A closer examination of US and Russian history proves that US and European leaders were aware of the importance to the Soviet Union and its successor, the Russian Federation of a buffer zone against possible foreign aggression. To that end, as early as December 1989 during the Malta summit President George H.W. Bush assured Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that the US would not take advantage of the revolutions in eastern Europe to harm Soviet interests (Savranskaya and Blanton 2017).

The first specific assurance from a Western leader came on January 31, 1990, from West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher during a major speech at Tutzing in Bavaria. The US Embassy in Bonn confirmed to Washington that Genscher made assurances "that the changes in eastern Europe and the German unification process must not lead to an 'impairment of Soviet security interests.'

Therefore, NATO should rule out an 'expansion of its territory towards the east, i.e., moving it closer to the Soviet borders.'" The cable from the US Embassy also noted that Genscher's proposal to leave the East German territory [German Democratic Republic] out of NATO military structures even in a unified Germany in NATO. Genscher's proposal regarding the German Democratic Republic territory became codified in the final unification treaty signed on September 12, 1990.

The assurances regarding "closer to the Soviet borders" was not included in any treaties, but it was confirmed in multiple memoranda among the Soviets and officials at the highest reaches of Western governments: Genscher, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, US Secretary of State James Baker, CIA Director Robert Gates, US President George HW Bush, French

President Francois Mitterrand, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, UK Prime Minister John Major, NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner et al. (Savranskaya and Blanton 2017).



On February 9, 1990, US Secretary of State James Baker mentioned three times the “not one inch forward” formula regarding NATO to Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Baker also concurred with Gorbachev that “NATO expansion is unacceptable.” Baker added, “Neither the President nor I intend to extract any unilateral advantages from the processes that are taking place.”

Additionally, the US acknowledged that “not only for the Soviet Union but for other European countries as well it is important to have guarantees that is the United States keeps its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, not one inch of NATO’s present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction.”

Gorbachev remained confident that when the Soviet Union ceased to exist in December 1991, the West and NATO were not a threat to the USSR. Instead, he believed that the Soviet Union’s collapse was engineered by Boris Yeltsin and his adviser Gennady Burbulis along with former party bosses of the Soviet republics, especially Ukraine. Notwithstanding, the Western nation leaders repeated assurances to not expand NATO, released documents show that numerous national leaders were considering and rejecting NATO membership of central and eastern European nations beginning in early 1990 and continuing through 1991. (Savranskaya and Blanton 2017).

As the Warsaw Pact, the counterpart to the West’s NATO, dissolved and the Soviet Union crumbled, US National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft wrote to President George HW Bush that these events posed both “risks and opportunities.” Scowcroft asserted that the opportunities for the US required that NATO remained “vital in these new circumstances.” The National Security Advisor also intoned that the US could leverage a more “robust” role in central Europe—particularly by getting “between Germany and the USSR.” US policymakers feared that a Germany-led western European axis could rise to dominate the region, including the Soviet Union and nascent Russian Federation (Puryear 2022).

Russia would be an enormous prize for imperialist nations like the United States, Germany, and other Western countries. Russia is the largest country in the world; its landmass contains 6.6 million square miles spreading across two continents. The next three countries in size are: Canada—3.8 million square miles; China—3.7 million square miles; the US—3.6 million square miles. Russia claims 11 percent of the planet’s landmass (Black 2022).

Russia produces about 40 percent of the European Union’s natural gas, and nearly 12 percent of the world’s oil. Russia has abundant stores of basic metals: iron, gold, silver, nickel, platinum, rare earth minerals, niobium, cobalt, graphite, lithium, among others. It is a major producer of diamonds. But perhaps most important is Russia’s so-called critical

metals that are expected to be in great demand during the next two decades; these metals will be crucial to global and political hegemony in the twenty-first century. The metals will be central to the expected explosion of high-tech gadgetry, and the development of renewable energy sources (Black 2022).

Throughout 1990 in the wake of the German reunification, high-level discussions occurred at the National Security Council and the State Department, as potential for NATO expansion increased among policymakers. The US balked after considering the ramifications of such an aggressive move on the Soviet Union that could impede its dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The HW Bush administration chose a more cautious approach and began to downplay discussions of such a move by early 1991 that might heighten anxieties in Moscow and derail the end of the Soviet Union. However, after the Soviet Union collapsed, memories of verbal assurances and written confirmations that NATO member states promulgated were quickly ignored as the US through its junior partners in NATO began its policies for seizing total dominance subsequent the end of the Cold War (Puryear 2022).

In the wake of the Soviet Union collapse, the US became alarmed at the actions of France and the newly minted German Democratic Republic to obtain stronger European alliances to the detriment of the US's ability to impose its authority on the Continent. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft counseled President H.W. Bush in a memorandum that the US must avoid "an independent European security identity" that would "reduce our influence in Europe and weaken domestic support for our European presence."

Scowcroft's comments were emblematic of the US Defense Department's "Defense Strategy for the 1990s" that was the public version of the infamous "Wolfowitz Doctrine." This instrument written in 1992 by undersecretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz proposed that the engagement of the Russian Federation and the former Soviet states was to "reduce their [military] forces" through "military budget cuts" and "conversion...[of] military industries," and, more precisely, "demilitarization." This policy would ensure that no post-Soviet eastern European alliance might emerge to threaten US hegemony (Puryear 2022).

With the Bill Clinton administration that began in 1992, the US continued more earnestly the expansion of NATO, that had taken a more circumspect approach during the H.W. Bush administration. During the first two years of his administration, Clinton couched NATO's expansion as a framework for a "Partnership of Peace" with Russia.

By 1994, Clinton began waffling on his predecessor's clear assurances by giving Russian President Boris Yeltsin flimsy excuses about his evident policy changes regarding NATO. This disingenuous ploy stalled when the Russians made it plain that they were unwilling to play a junior position to the United States or its European allies. Meanwhile, Russian President Boris Yeltsin who was instrumental in ushering in the Soviet Union's demise was selling off the former USSR's assets for pennies on the dollar.

Yeltsin naively believed that selling his own country's assets at fire-sale prices to kleptocratic oligarchs would persuade the US to allow Russia to cooperate as "superpowers" in shaping the post-Soviet era. In 1994, Yeltsin confided in writing to Clinton, "There should exist a basic understanding that Russian-American partnership constitutes the central factor in world politics," and that he felt the relationship must exist "on the basis of equality."

Of course, this notion was a nonstarter for the Clinton administration as it contradicted the 1992 Defense Strategy penned by Wolfowitz. The Wolfowitz Doctrine called for the

extirpation of the Russian military and allowed no provision for Russian participation in looting the treasure of the former Soviet Union. In the bluntest terms, if the Russian Federation desired involvement with the United States, it would accept a subordinate position (Puryear 2022; Chomsky 2022).

On May 10, 1995, in a meeting at the Kremlin, Yeltsin told Clinton that a NATO expansion would result “in nothing but humiliation for Russia,” and could provoke another Cold War. “How do you think it looks to us,” Yeltsin continued, “if one bloc [from the Cold War] continued to exist when the Warsaw Pact has been abolished? It’s a new form of encirclement if one surviving Cold War bloc expands right up to the borders of Russia.” (Emphasis added.)

But the obvious was beginning to dawn on the Russians that the Clinton administration was misrepresenting US intentions for expanding NATO—even as Washington continued to send vague signals that no expansion would occur. Meanwhile, despite Clinton’s tepid assurances to Yeltsin to the contrary, Vice President Al Gore told Secretary of Defense William Perry that the president was “committed to a rapid expansion of NATO right after 1996, rather than taking the much slower route through the Partnership for Peace” (Puryear 2022; (Kuzmarov, “Clinton Attempts to Justify NATO) Expansion,” 2022).

Acting in contrast to the H.W. Bush administration’s reluctance to alarm the Soviet Union regarding NATO expansion, Clinton was eager to move forward, despite his predecessor’s explicit promises to expand NATO “not one inch forward” past the German Democratic Republic’s eastern boundary.

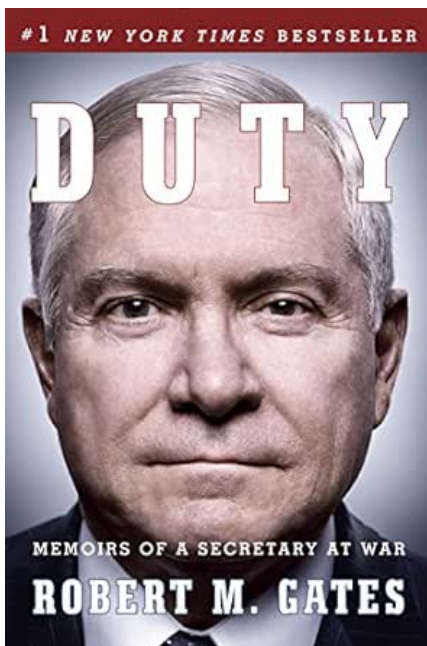
Nevertheless, in 1997, even as voices began to advise against the NATO expansion, Clinton invited the so-called Visegrád countries—Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania—to join NATO.

The Russians made weak protests but acquiesced to this blatant change in US posture. Likewise, when the Baltic nations—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—joined, the Russians passively accepted this encroachment. After the Baltic states joined NATO, military forces were fewer than 400 miles from Moscow. When George W. Bush in 2008 sought the admittance of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO, Russia bristled. It was common knowledge among US diplomats that Georgia and Ukraine were red lines for Russia. Georgia and Ukraine are in Russia’s geostrategic heartland and Russia would not tolerate expansion into these states, as Noam Chomsky said in a May 12, 2022 interview (Chomsky 2022; Rasmus 2022).

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, former US Ambassador to Soviet Russia from 1987 to 1991 Jack Matlock told the committee that the NATO expansion “would go down in history as the most profound strategic blunder made since the end of the Cold War,” and “could produce the most serious security threat to this nation since the Soviet Union collapsed.” Later, Matlock added that he feared the possibility of a nuclear standoff (Puryear 2022).

Secretary of Defense Perry during Clinton’s drive to expand NATO recalled years later that during internal meetings that he voiced his opposition to the expansion. Perry said that he considered resigning “in the strength of his conviction... [and] I regret I didn’t fight more effectively.” On February 5, 1997, George F. Kennan, who was among the chief policymakers and author of the “Containment Doctrine” policy of Communism during the Cold War wrote in an op-ed that appeared in *The New York Times* that NATO expansion

would amount to a “strategic blunder of epic proportions” and the “most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era. (Puryear 2022; Kuzmarov, “Clinton Attempts to Justify NATO Expansion,” 2022).



Robert M. Gates, who served in high-level positions in the H.W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama administrations wrote in *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (2015) recalled a meeting in 2007 with President George W. Bush after the Munich Security Conference that Russian President Vladimir Putin said the NATO expansion “represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have a 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?” (Puryear 2022).

In 2008, US Ambassador to Moscow William J. Burns presciently wrote in a cable to Washington:

“Russia would view further eastward expansion as a potential military threat. NATO enlargement, particularly to Ukraine, remains an emotional and neuralgic issue for Russia, but strategic policy considerations also underlie strong opposition to NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia. In Ukraine, these include fears that the issue could potentially split the country in two, leading to violence, or even, some claim civil war, which would force Russia to decide whether to intervene.”

Later, Burns wrote in a memorandum that Ukrainian entry into NATO as the “brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite” (Puryear 2022).

In a March 5, 2014, *Washington Post* op-ed titled “To Settle the Ukraine Crisis, Start at the End,” Henry Kissinger noted, “Ukraine should not join NATO....” He continued, “But if Ukraine is going to survive and thrive, it should not be either side’s [US or Russia] outpost against the other—it should function as a bridge between them” (Flood 2022).

Eight years later, Kissinger on March 21, 2022, spoke via a video link to the planet’s financial elites at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The 99-year-old veteran US policymaker delivered an ominous warning about the conflagration ongoing in Ukraine: “Negotiations need to begin in the next two months, before it creates upheavals and

tensions that will not be easily overcome. Ideally, the dividing line should be a return to the status quo ante.... Pursuing this war beyond that point would not be about the freedom of Ukraine, but a new war against Russia itself” (Whitney 2022) (Rolofson 2022).

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky retorted by blasting Kissinger as living in 1938 and not 2022. Zelensky compared making peace with Russia as the same as making peace with Nazi Germany. Zelensky’s adviser Alexey Arestovich was more stentorian and profane in his criticism of Kissinger’s admonishment that Ukraine yield lands to Russia: “Go fuck yourselves with such proposals, you dumb fucks, to trade Ukrainian territory a little bit!” Arestovich continued, “... Our children are dying, soldiers are stopping shells with their own bodies, and they are telling us how to sacrifice our territories. This will never happen,” he vowed (Rolofson 2022).

Prelude to US Proxy War in Ukraine 2000 to 2014

The controversial 2000 presidential election in the United States with the assistance of five of the nine justices of the US Supreme Court ushered into the Oval Office the George W. Bush administration. Bush, the son of former president George HW Bush, claimed during his campaign that he was a “compassionate conservative” who was not interested in nation building. Bush’s Democratic Party opponent was Bill Clinton’s vice president, Al Gore who conducted a lackluster campaign that showed little variation from the candidacy of the politically conservative Republican George W. Bush. Bush along with Vice President Richard Cheney and a large cabal of neoconservatives would alter and expand US foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Specifically, Bush and Cheney along with their political allies would lead the US into a dark era of “forever wars” and opened the door to almost one million of military and civilian deaths, torture, rendition, enemy detention, drone assassination, and domestic surveillance that forever altered civil liberties in the US and besmirched the nation’s reputation globally (Sjursen 2021, 613-614, 622).



As the Bush administration stumbled through its first year in the White House, a prominent neoconservative think tank called the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), whose principals contained many of the high-level members of the Bush administration including Cheney, future Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and future undersecretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz, published a 90-page report in September 2000 titled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses.” The report concluded that in the absence of a “catastrophic and catalyzing event”... like a “new Pearl Harbor”... it would be difficult to implement the organization’s proposals for military modernization and “transformation.”

One year later, the “Pearl Harbor” event materialized in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC. Fueled by inflammatory rhetoric from the White House and Congress, these assaults on US territory,

that were the result of decades of ill-advised foreign policies, had an enormous impact on the psyches of the American public (Sjursen 2021, 618-619).

Within three days the Bush administration with acquiescence of a cowed and fearful Congress rammed through the poorly written and open-ended Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF). This document greenlighted the president to wage war on any nation, organization, or individual that Bush (and his successors) in his sole discretion deemed complicit in the September 11 attacks. The AUMF would be applied not only in the Bush administration, but in the subsequent administrations of Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden. The AUMF is a cornerstone in the “forever wars” that the US has engaged for more than two decades in central Asia, the Greater Middle East, Africa, and the numerous and unreported proxy wars including the latest bonanza for the military-industrial-congressional complex, Ukraine (Sjursen 2021, 619-620; Turse 2022).

Since World War II, US imperialism has resulted in at least 36 million dead globally in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, the Congo, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Columbia, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Chad, Libya, East Timor, Grenada, Honduras, Iran, Pakistan, Panama, the Philippines, Sudan, Greece, Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Somalia, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Palestine (Mapping Project (The) 2022).

More recently, US wars have resulted in between 1,168,540 and 1,199,948 dead in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. But this number woefully undercounts the “true toll these wars have taken on human life” in those countries, according to co-author of the Costs of War project Neta Crawford.

The tally does not incorporate indirect deaths due to the consequences of war through the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Moreover, the number does not account for the loss of life caused by disease, displacement, and the loss of food or clean drinking water caused by the ravages of war, Crawford acknowledged. Co-author of the Costs of War project Catherine Lutz explained, “One has to multiply that direct death number... by an estimated two to four times to get to the total number of people—in the millions—who are dead today who would not have been dead if the wars had not been fought.”

A report issued by the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and co-signed by 113 countries declared that in “majority of conflicts since the early 1990s, for which good data is available, the burden of indirect deaths was between three and 15 times the number of direct deaths.” The Geneva Declaration report concluded that “a reasonable average estimate would be a ratio of four indirect deaths to one direct death (4:1) in contemporary conflicts.” By applying the implied ratio 4:1 to the number of direct deaths to the number of indirect deaths, that is concluded to by the Geneva Declaration and supported by Catherine Lutz in the Costs of War project, a reasonable estimate of the deaths resulting from the post-911 United States’ wars would be around 5.9 million. (Ahmed 2021; Crawford and Lutz 2021).



The Bush administration, using the September 11 attacks as a pretext, ordered the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, a debacle that ended 20 years later with the humiliating withdrawal of US troops in defeat. During his first State of the Union address, Bush proclaimed his doctrine of preemptive war that called for unilateral US attacks on countries the Bush administration deemed “potential” threats. Preemptive war was ruled illegal under the precedents established during the post-World War II Nuremberg Tribunals. The first targets that Bush identified were the “Axis of Evil” nations including Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Later the Bush administration would add Syria and Libya. All these nations had close relations with Russia (Martin 2022).

In March 2003, The US launched a flurry of cruise missiles and bunker-buster bombs followed by a ground assault based on the lie that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The Iraq war that Bush declared “made our country more secure” did nothing of the sort. The Iraq War proved a distraction to the US military and intelligence agencies from their prime directive to kill Osama bin Laden and extirpate al Qaeda. The outcome of the Iraq War proved to be another defeat for the US military, but the war created enormous profits for the military industrial-congressional complex (Ricks 2006, 116-117, 431).

The number of people displaced by the post-9/11 wars waged by the United States is very conservatively estimated at 37 million; this number could reasonably reach a range of 48 million to 59 million. While the numbers reported are staggering, they cannot convey how it feels for the victims who lost their home, belongings, community, and more. Displacement caused incalculable harm to families, towns, cities, regions, and entire countries physically, socially, emotionally, and economically. While 25.3 million have returned after their displacement, this does not erase the emotional and physical trauma of displacement. There is no guarantee that their original homes exist, or that they have returned to a secure life (Vine, et al. 2021).

The monetary cost of the wars post 9/11 in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater from FY 2001 to FY 2022 tallied \$2.313 trillion; the Iraq-Syria theater reached \$2.058 trillion during the same period. The total cost of the US post-9/11 wars topped \$5.843 trillion between FY 2001 and 2022; when the estimated care for veterans’ medical and disability obligations through FY 2050 are added, the cost leaps to \$8.043 trillion (Crawford and Lutz 2021).

The George W. Bush administration via the War on Terror accelerated US imperialism at the dawn of the twenty-first century with each subsequent administration continuing the US drive for complete world hegemony. The proxy war in Ukraine threatened outright war with a nuclear-armed Russia. But the events that the Biden administration claimed began in February 2022, as discussed above, have roots dating to the collapse of Soviet Russia in

1991.

Specific to the proxy war in Ukraine in 2022, this war can be traced to the “Orange Revolution” of November and December 2004. During a national election in Ukraine drenched in fraud, pro-Russian candidate, Viktor Yanukovych and the anti-Russian candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, who was backed by a growing fascist element, each received 39 percent of the vote. Support for Yanukovych was heavily concentrated in east and south Ukraine that was heavily populated by ethnic Russians. Yushchenko supporters were in western Ukraine that has an extensive Nazi history that dates to before World War II. While voting still continued, Yushchenko called for mass street demonstrations. As the Yushchenko demonstrators threatened an assault on the Ukraine Parliament, Yushchenko illegally declared himself president before a large crowd of his supporters in Kyiv the next day, even as no quorum was on hand to legitimize the voting results. He immediately called for widespread strikes, protests, and sit-ins to give substance and force acceptance of his illegitimate “victory” (Rasmus 2022).

To thwart growing political conflict in the streets, the Ukraine Supreme Court intervened to void the election that showed Yanukovych won with a one percent margin in early December. The Court declared a runoff election for late December 2004. Meanwhile, Yushchenko assembled a coalition of minority parties that included one led by Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko to garner 52 percent of the vote to Yanukovych’s 44 percent in the runoff.

Since his loss in the 2004 election, Yanukovych curried favor and burnished his image in the eyes of the Western powers, especially the US. Previously, the US considered Yanukovych unacceptably friendly to Moscow. Later he sought to mend relations with Russia as he voiced support for ties with the European Union. By 2006, Yanukovych had benefited from a slumping economy and falling prices for Ukraine’s industrial products, compounded by rising energy costs and fuel shortages. President Yushchenko said that post-election talks would help “solve all the issues in Ukraine.” This was considered to be an olive branch offered to Yanukovych’s party (Rasmus 2022; Niall Green 2006).

In the election held in 2010, Yanukovych prevailed in a vote that international observers declared was fair. Fascist elements refused to accept the election results. Then four years later in 2014 during the Obama administration, the fascists staged another uprising in Kyiv that was far more violent than in January 2005. In February 2014, fascists murdered at least 100 in the streets. The US and its subordinate allies organized and funded the insurrection that would be known as the Maidan Coup d’état, named for the Kyiv square where most of the demonstrations occurred. In a public speech, Victoria Nuland, undersecretary of state for Eastern Europe openly boasted the US since 1991 had spent \$5 billion funding grassroots organizations in promoting “democracy” that continued until the toppling of Yanukovych, the “fairly elected” pro-Russian leader of Ukraine who subsequently fled Ukraine in fear for his life. The self-identified fascist organizations that had appeared on the scene in 2005 applied terrorism including assassinations, widespread murder of police and government officials in Kyiv and Odessa. The fascist elements in Ukraine took control of the government in February 2014 (Rasmus 2022; Bryce Greene 2022).

During the runup to the Maidan Coup the US launched a propaganda campaign to sow antigovernment sentiments through CIA cutouts like USAID and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) that began as early as 2004. The NED is a major player in the US government’s cabal of “soft power” operations that pours \$170 million a year into

organizations that work to support or install regimes that kowtow to US dictates.

Reporter David Ignatius of *The Washington Post* observed that NED functions by “doing in public what the CIA used to do in private.” NED’s board of directors include the notorious Elliot Abrams whose brutality and sadism came to light during Iran/Contra affair and the hideous US incursions in Central America during Ronald Reagan’s administration. During Donald Trump’s administration, Abrams was central in failed attempts to overthrow the democratically elected government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela. Nuland was also a member of NED’s board of directors before she joined the Joseph Biden administration in May 2021 as undersecretary of State for Political Affairs (Bryce Greene 2022).



On February 6, 2014, as antigovernment demonstrations intensified, an anonymous party leaked a recording of a telephone call between Nuland and US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt. Nuland and Pyatt discussed which officials would assume positions in the proposed new US-friendly government in Ukraine. The two conspirators agreed that Arseniy Yatsenyuk, whom Nuland nicknamed “Yats” should be in charge with close supervision from Nuland’s team. Then Vice President Joseph Biden was to be brought in to ramrod the program (Bryce Greene 2022).

On February 22, in what appeared to be a false-flag operation snipers massacred police and civilians in Kyiv increased tensions in the Ukrainian Parliament. The Parliament blamed Yanukovych, whom they ejected in a constitutionally questionable procedure. Yanukovych called the overthrow a coup, and he fled the country. On February 27, Nuland’s pick Arseniy “Yats” Yatsenyuk became Ukraine’s prime minister under President Petro Poroshenko. When the Nuland-Pyatt call was leaked, media quickly picked up Nuland’s off-hand comment, “Fuck the EU,” that she uttered during the conversation that showcased her and the rest of the Obama/Biden administration’s arrogance and self-entitlement (Bryce Greene 2022).

Post-Maidan Ukraine until the Russian Invasion (2014-2022)

As the smoke cleared after the right-wing takeover of the Ukraine government, undersecretary of state for Eastern Europe Victoria Nuland was appointed “economic czar” for Ukraine. Nuland’s business experience included owner of a prominent US Chicago financial firm. The floodgates opened in Ukraine for US investors as they poured in to exploit the nation’s booty. Figures like Vice President Joseph Biden used their political positions to establish lucrative financial posts for their friends and family members. In 2014, Biden’s son Hunter would receive a high six-figure salaried position in one of Ukraine’s largest natural gas companies Burisma Holdings. Others landed positions as a member of

the board of directors for notable Ukrainian companies. US imperialism rapidly became entrenched in the economic infrastructure of Ukraine (Rasmus 2022).

Beginning 2014, the US and its junior partners in NATO began shipping war matériel into the country, including advanced weaponry, military training, joint military exercises, moves to incorporate Ukraine into the NATO military command as a de facto member. US policymakers knew that these aggressive actions in Ukraine, at the doorstep of Russia, would be correctly perceived as highly provocative in the Kremlin (Chomsky 2022).

Russia's response to the overthrow of the democratically elected President Viktor Yanukovich was to provide military support to the ethnic pro-Russian regions in the Donbass of eastern Ukraine. As the fascist elements began to occupy major positions in Parliament and the government, Russia sent military forces to take over the strategic Crimean Peninsula that was home to the Russian's Black Sea naval force. The Crimean Peninsula provides Russia with access to the Black and the Mediterranean seas—a historically important maritime theater. Control of the Crimea by a US-backed Ukraine posed an existential threat. Historically, Crimea was part of Russia until the Soviet Union “gave” it to Ukraine in 1954 in a government provincial reorganization. In 2022, 82 percent of Crimea's population was comprised of Russian-speaking households; two percent of the population spoke Ukrainian. In March 2014, the peninsula held a plebiscite to determine whether or not Crimea should join Russia. The pro-Russian faction won 95 percent of the vote. The US-dominated UN General Assembly voted to ignore the referendum results, claiming it violated the Ukrainian constitution. The very constitution that was ignored when the fascists ousted President Yanukovich (Rasmus 2022; Bryce Greene 2022).

Nazis Involved in the US-backed Overthrow

Extremist right-wing groups together with openly declared Nazi elements fueled the Washington-supported overthrow of the democratically elected Yanukovich government in Ukraine. Nazi groups like the Right Sector and the Azov Battalion, a paramilitary militia comprised of neo-Nazi extremists were the tip of the spear for the anti-Yanukovich demonstrations. Members of these groups appeared at political rallies at Maidan square alongside of US regime-change champions like Republican US Senator John McCain and Victoria Nuland. After the bloody coup d'état in Kyiv, groups like the Right Sector and the Azov Battalion were later incorporated into the Ukrainian armed forces. By February 2022, the US would have funded the Ukrainian government's war machine with \$2.5 billion. The US largess to the bloody proxy war in Ukraine with Russia would balloon to \$54 billion by June (Bryce Greene 2022; Ritter 2022; Damon 2022).

The Azov Battalion and other extremist groups proudly acknowledges their Nazi heritage and are the beneficiaries of US weapons and training. The Azov Battalion, an extremely violent paramilitary force has a cult-like hero worship for Stepan Bandera a Nazi collaborator during World War II. Bandera was chief of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists-Section B (OUN-B) who is now honored as a national hero in Ukraine.

Bandera led the slaughter of one million Jews, ethnic Russians, and Poles. The Azov Battalion was formed in 2014 and later that year Azov was absorbed into the Ukrainian National Guard. Along with other self-identified fascist groups, members of the Azov Battalion reached influential positions in the Ukrainian military. Since the 2014 US-backed coup d'état in Kyiv, neo-Nazi organizations, like the Azov Battalion and others have merged into the mainstream political scene in Ukraine.

These groups killed thousands of ethnic Russians in the Donbass as the Ukrainian government sought to crush the Donbass region in eastern Ukraine.. Azov and other neo-Nazi factions gained notoriety for their bellicose language and as an important part of Ukraine's war against Russia supported breakaway republics of Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic. Azov's first leader was Andriy Biletsky who led the paramilitary national socialist group Patriots of Ukraine. In 2008, Biletsky also founded the neo-Nazi organization called the Social-National Assembly (SNA). Biletsky reportedly stated that Ukraine was meant to "lead the white races of the world in a final crusade... against the Semite-led *Untermenschen* [subhumans]" (Whitney, Uncle Sam's Nazi Warriors 2022; Ridenour 2022; Rolofson 2022).

In June 2015 the US House of Representatives approved a bi-partisan amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act that would block US training of the Azov Battalion and prevent transfer of shoulder-fired missiles to fighters in Ukraine. The Azov Battalion was slated to be among the first units that would be trained by 300 US military advisers under a training mission called "Fearless Guardian." The trainers on the ground ignored the amendment, claiming that the legislation failed to include mechanisms to enforce it. Since the coup d'état the Ukrainian nationalist forces have been implicated in a wide variety of atrocities (Parry 2015; Greene 2022).

The most extreme right-wing layers of Ukrainian society have expanded their influence since the 2014 influx of US support. The UN Human Rights council observed, "fundamental freedoms in Ukraine have been squeezed," further repudiating the claims of US advocacy for liberal values in Ukraine. Neo-Nazis in the US created a movement to encourage their brethren to join the Azov Battalion to "gain actual combat experience" for the potential coming war within US shores. A UN measure, that only the US and Ukraine voted against, on "combatting glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fueling contemporary forms of racism" highlights the wide acceptance by US policymakers of Nazis in Ukraine (Bryce Greene 2022).

Poroshenko's successor and the current Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky received an overwhelming 73 percent mandate to make peace with Russia in April 2019. The US chose to back the extreme right wing and fuel war. Zelensky ran on the promise of ending the Donbass conflict that began in 2014. To end the war in Donbass required Zelensky to negotiate with US nemesis Russian President Vladimir Putin. The neo-Nazis in Ukraine would not have that; they threatened Zelensky with removal and death, according to historian Stephen F. Cohen in an interview in October 2019 with journalist Aaron Maté (Cohen 2019). Cohen observed that negotiations with Putin to end the conflict could have gone forward despite the neo-Nazi's threats if the US supported this diplomacy. "Zelensky has no chance of negotiating an end to the war," Cohen said. "So, the stakes are enormously high." Instead, the US had zero interest in supporting Zelensky's peace agenda. For the US fueling the war in Donbass was what Congress adamantly delivered to the corporate media with hardly any opposition. The large population of ethnic Russians who live in the Donbass was expendable collateral damage (Cohen 2019).

During his inaugural address in May, Zelensky declared that that he was "not afraid to lose my own popularity, my ratings," and was "prepared to give up my own position—as long as peace arrives." But the neo-Nazis threatened Zelensky's life, "No, he would lose his life," Dmytro Anatoliyovych Yarosh proclaimed. "He will hang on some tree on Khreshchatyk—if he betrays Ukraine and those people who died in the Revolution and the War." Yarosh was the neo-Nazi group Right Sector's co-founder and then commander of the Volunteer Army

(Maté 2022).

Leader of the neo-Nazi group Democratic Ax, Yuri Hudymenko threatened Zelensky with a coup d'état. "If anybody from the Ukrainian government tries to sign such a [peace] document, a million people will take to the streets and that government will cease being the government (Maté 2022).

Doubtless, the neo-Nazi threats and the lack of backing from the US thwarted a peace agreement that might have prevented the Russian invasion in February 2022. Zelensky abandoned his calls for peace that he promised during his presidential campaign. Instead, Zelensky has moved to the extreme right politically in lockstep with the neo-Nazis. John Mearsheimer the University of Chicago professor who has warned for years that US policies in Ukraine were moving the country toward war with Russia. "... Zelensky understands that he cannot take the Ukrainian right on by himself. So, basically we have a situation where Zelensky is stymied," Mearsheimer said (Maté 2022).

Russian Military Advances in Ukraine Foreshadow the US/NATO Proxy War Failure

On February 24, 2022, Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin delivered a major televised address to announce the beginning of a "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine.

Putin opened his remarks to reiterate his earlier comments about "irresponsible Western politicians created for Russia... from year to year. I am referring to the eastward expansion of NATO... ever closer to the Russian border." Putin charged that for the "past 30 years" Russia has attempted to reach "agreement with leading NATO countries...." Putin continued, "... we invariably faced either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure or blackmail (Putin 2022).

"We can see that the forces that staged the coup in Ukraine in 2014... have abandoned the path of peaceful conflict settlement," Putin said. "Focused on their own goals, the leading NATO countries are supporting the far-right nationalists and neo-Nazis. They will... bring war to Crimea just as they have done on Donbass.... [T]he showdown between Russia and these forces cannot be avoided..." (Putin 2022).

During a February 21 speech, Putin said that one of the Special Military Option's goals was to bring to justice certain people in Ukraine. This reference likely pertains to Right Sector neo-Nazis who burned alive at least 48 unarmed pro-Russian sympathizers after the fascists locked them in the trade-union hall in Odessa on May 2, 2014. Putin said that Moscow knows who these perpetrators are. Russia aims to destroy neo-Nazi brigades such as the Right Sector and the Azov Battalion. These neo-Nazi groups that revere the World War II Nazi Germany collaborator Stepan Bandera figured prominently in the violent overthrow of Viktor Yanukovych. Russia's goals do not include the occupation of Ukraine, but Putin did not set a date for Russia's withdrawal (Lauria 2022; Goss 2022; Rolofson 2022).

In his speech, Putin said he would send Russian "peacekeepers" into the breakaway republics Donetsk and Lugansk that Russia recognized as independent of Ukraine. Both Donetsk and Lugansk voted for independence from Ukraine during the 2014 coup d'état in Kyiv that ousted democratically elected Viktor Yanukovych in favor of the US-backed Viktor Yanochenko. The Yanochenko fascist government launched a war to crush the bids for independence in Donetsk and Lugansk. Ukraine shelled the breakaway republics daily for the eight years killing at least 14,000 prior to Russia's intervention (Lauria, Why Putin Went

to War 2022).

President Joseph Biden said, “President Putin has chosen a premeditated war that will bring catastrophic loss of life and human suffering.” Biden continued, “Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction this attack will bring, and the United States and its allies and partners will respond in a united and decisive way. The world will hold Russia accountable (Lauria, Why Putin Went to War 2022).

Putin referred in his February 24 speech to NATO’s incessant expansion since the late 1990s that finally spurred the military operation that he ordered was a “question of life or death” for Russia.” The policy of the US and its allies for “containing Russia” had “obvious geopolitical dividends. For our country it is a matter of life and death, a matter of historical future as a nation... It is not only a very real threat to our interests but to the very existence of our state and to its sovereignty. It is the red line we have spoken about on numerous occasions. They have crossed it” (Lauria, Why Putin Went to War 2022).

Putin linked the World War II Nazi attack of June 22, 1941 in Soviet Russia that claimed 27 million Russian lives to the threat NATO posed to Russia in the twenty-first century. Putin vowed that this time there would be no appeasement. Putin called the NATO expansion an existential threat and the main reason for military action. While applying Biblical terms, Putin summed up the Western bloc by castigating the US’s European allies for not having the strength of principle or the moral fiber to reject the dictates issued from Washington (Lauria, Why Putin Went to War 2022):

“The United States is still a great country and a system-forming power. All its satellites not only humbly and obediently say yes to and parrot it at the slightest pretext but also imitate its behavior and enthusiastically accept the rules it is offering them. Therefore, one can say with good reason and confidence that the whole so-called Western bloc formed by the United States in its own image and likeness is, in its entirety, the very same ‘empire of lies.’”

The motivation of the US for goading Russia into the war in Ukraine dates to the beginnings of the Cold War that emerged in the post-World War II era. The unending expansion of NATO into eastern Europe along with the most recent threat of allowing Ukraine membership brought an aggressive posture from the US that compares to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Only now it is the US that is delivering the threat of missiles at Russia’s doorstep. The war in Ukraine is the reprise of the decades old strategy that Zbigniew Brzezinski conjured up during the late 1970s to bleed Russia dry in Afghanistan by destroying its economy, while demonizing Russia as an imperialist on the world stage. As in Afghanistan, the lives of Ukrainians squandered in the bloodletting in Ukraine is of little importance to US policymakers. These Machiavellian actions would serve US purposes, but its prime directive is to overthrow the government of Vladimir Putin (Lauria, Biden Confirms Why the US Needed this War 2022; Sterling 2022; Kuzmarov, Repeating ’70s Strategy of Grand Chess-Master Brzezinski 2022).

On March 26, 2022, at the Royal Castle in Warsaw President Joseph Biden blurted out in a fleeting moment of candor, “For God’s sake, this man [Putin] cannot remain in power.” Biden’s remark sent the White House and the State Department scurrying to explain away the president’s statement. “The president’s point was that Putin cannot be allowed to exercise power over his neighbors in the region,” a White House spokesperson said. “He was not discussing Putin’s power in Russia, or regime change.” The next day, US Secretary

of State Antony Blinken said, “As you know, and as you have heard us say repeatedly, we do not have a strategy of regime change in Russia, or anywhere else, for that matter” (Lauria, Biden Confirms Why the US Needed this War 2022).

The Ukraine War’s End Game

On May 31, 2022, the Council on Foreign Relations in New York held a videoconference titled *Russia’s War in Ukraine: How Does it End?* Richard N. Haas, president of the Council on Foreign Relations led panelists: Stephen J. Hadley, former national security adviser to George W. Bush; Charles A. Kupchan, professor of international affairs at Georgetown University; Alina Polyakova, an expert on European politics; and Stephen M. Twitty, former US Army deputy commander of US-European Command based in Stuttgart. The discussion was dominated by the liberal internationalism that fosters the notion that NATO is the cornerstone of US national security. This policy is the hallmark of President Joseph Biden’s actions in Ukraine (Bhadrakumar, Next 100 Days of Ukraine War 2022).

What was of a particularly striking note was that former US Army General Stephen M. Twitty who has war combat experience stated without equivocation that there was no way Russia can be defeated in Ukraine. Therefore, it is necessary to bring some clarity as to the stated endgame to “weaken” Russia. Twitty’s observation was that the European unity pursuant to the Ukraine War was not holding together (Bhadrakumar, Next 100 Days of Ukraine War 2022).

There appears to be an awakening in Washington to the cold facts that Russia is dominating in the battles to control Donbass. Moreover, an outright victory for Russia over Ukraine is well within a reasonable conclusion. Georgetown Professor Kupchan set forth a heavy dose of realism (Bhadrakumar, Next 100 Days of Ukraine War 2022):

“The longer this [war] goes on the more the negative knock-on effects economically and politically. Including here in the United States, where inflation is... putting Biden in a difficult position. We need to change the narrative [that anybody who talks about a territorial settlement is an appeaser] and begin a conversation with Ukraine and, ultimately, with Russia about how to end this war sooner rather than later.

“Where the front ends, how much territory the Ukrainians are able to take back remains to be seen. I do think that the hot war aspect of this is more dangerous than many people perceive not just because of escalation but because of the blowback effects.

“I think we are starting to see cracks in the West... there will be a resurgence of “America-first Republicanism as we get near the midterms. This all leads me to believe that we should push for war termination and have a serious conversation after that about a territorial disposition.”

None of the panelists posited any argument that the war must be won—or that winning is even possible. Twitty observed that the Ukrainian army might be close to military exhaustion; Russia established naval dominance in the Black Sea, and “as you look at the DIME—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic—we’re woefully lacking on the diplomatic piece of this. If you notice, there is not diplomacy going on at all to try to get to some type of negotiations,” Twitty said. Intransigence from either US or Ukrainian policymakers in entering peace talks with the Russians will result in a greater loss of territory for Ukraine if the Russians prevail (Bhadrakumar, Next 100 Days of Ukraine War

2022).

Whether or not the trend to Russia's victory continues to its conclusion, Ukraine will be left in the tatters of a failed state. One need only to look at the remnants of the 20-year US occupation of Afghanistan to judge the future for Ukraine. The purpose of Afghanistan's occupation was for expanding US hegemony into central Asia. Additionally, it was an enormous money grab by the military-industrial-congressional complex at the expense of not only the Afghan people, but also the American taxpayers. As concluded by the Costs of War project, the tab for the US occupation in Afghanistan tops \$2.313 trillion. For the Afghan people, it left a failed state with the theocratic Taliban government reinstating its seventh-century religious doctrine. A similar fate awaits the people of Ukraine if the US succeeds in its plan to string Russia out in a long-term, expensive slog. The US is willing to fight a proxy war there until the last Ukrainian is dead. Both of these US interventions were motivated to weaken Russia to the point that the US and its junior partners in NATO could sweep in to carve up Russia into several new puppet states for a wholesale exploitation of Russian natural resources and industry. The fall of Russia would then be the catalyst for the US to turn its guns against China in the US vision for a unipolar world (Shaoul 2022; Crawford and Lutz 2021; Rolofson 2022).

As the late Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State under Bill Clinton between 1997 and 2001 threatened in a *New York Times* piece on February 23, 2022, that if Russia invaded Ukraine,

"It would be far from a repeat of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014; it would be a scenario reminiscent of the Soviet Union's ill-fated occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s."

Albright was referring the proxy war that the US initiated when it along with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan funded, trained Mujahideen fighters against the Soviet Union. The US occupation in Afghanistan ended ignominiously in August 2022 with the US fleeing the country with the Taliban in hot pursuit (Shaoul 2022).

Albright represents the amorality of the cabal that rules in Washington as she callously told CBS correspondent Lesley Stahl on May 12, 1996 on *60 Minutes* regarding the 500,000 children who died in Iraq because of US sanctions: "We think the price is worth it" (Shaoul 2022).

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Featured image: Ukrainian neo-Nazis from Azov receiving NATO weapons and training (Source: Multipolarista)

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