

War is Our Business and Business Looks Good

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It is enlightening to see how pugnacious the U.S. establishment, led by the Peace Laureate, has been in dealing with the Ukraine crisis. The crisis arguably began when the Yanukovich government rejected an EU bailout program in favor of one offered by Russia.

The mainstream media (MSM) have virtually suppressed the fact that the EU proposal was not only less generous than the one offered by Russia, but that whereas the Russian plan did not preclude further Ukrainian deals with the EU, the EU plan would have required a cut-off of further Russian arrangements. And whereas the Russian deal had no military clauses, that of the EU required that Ukraine affiliate with NATO. Insofar as the MSM dealt with this set of offers they not only suppressed the exclusionary and militarized character of the EU offer, they tended to view the Russian deal as an improper use of economic leverage, “bludgeoning,” but the EU proposal was “constructive and reasonable” (Ed., NYT, Nov. 20, 2014). Double standards seem to be fully internalized within the U.S. establishment.

The protests that ensued in Ukraine were surely based in part on real grievances against a corrupt government, but they were also pushed along by rightwing groups and by U.S. and allied encouragement and support that increasingly had an anti-Russian and pro-accelerated-regime-change flavor. They also increased in level of violence. The sniper killings of police and protesters in Maidan on February 21, 2014 brought the crisis to a new head. This violence overlapped with and eventually terminated a negotiated settlement of the struggle brokered by EU members that would have ended the violence, created an interim government and required elections by December. The accelerated violence ended this transitional plan, which was replaced by a coup takeover, along with the forced flight of Victor Yanukovich.

There is credible evidence that the sniper shootings of both protesters and police were carried out by a segment of the protesters in a false-flag operation that worked exceedingly well, “government” violence serving as one ground for the ouster of Yanukovich. Most telling was the intercepted phone message between Estonia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet and EU Foreign Policy chief Catherine Upton in which Paet regretfully reported compelling evidence that the shots killing both police and protesters came from a segment of the protesters. This account was almost entirely suppressed in the MSM; for example, the New York Times never mentioned it once through the following two months. It is also enlightening that the protesters at Maidan were never called “militants” in the MSM, although a major and effective segment was armed and violent—that term was reserved for protesters in Eastern Ukraine, who were commonly designated “pro-Russian” as well as militants (for details see the tabulation in Herman and Peterson, “The Ukraine Crisis and the Propaganda System in Overdrive,” in Stephen Lendman, ed., Flashpoint in Ukraine).

There is also every reason to believe that the coup and establishment of a right wing and anti-Russian government were encouraged and actively supported by U.S. officials. Victoria Nuland's intercepted "fuck the EU" words express her hostility to a group that, while generally compliant and subservient, departed from neocon plans for a proper government in Kiev headed by somebody like "Yats." So she would surely have been pleased when the EU-supported February compromise plan was ended by the violence and coup. The U.S. support of the coup government has been enthusiastic and unqualified, and whereas Kerry and company delayed recognition of the elected government of Maduro in Venezuela, and have strongly urged him to dialogue and negotiate with the Venezuelan protesters—in fact, threatening him if he doesn't — Kerry and company have not done the same in Ukraine where the Kiev government forces have slowly escalated their attacks on the Eastern Ukraine, but not on "protesters," only on "militants!"

The Kiev government's military is now using jets and helicopters to bomb targets in the East and heavy artillery and mortars in its ground operations. Its targets have included hospitals and schools, and as of June 8 civilian casualties have been in the hundreds. A dramatic massacre of 40 or more pro-Russian protesters in Odessa on May 2 by a well-organized cadre of neo-Nazi supporters, possibly agents of the Kiev government, was an early high point in this pacification campaign. No investigation of this slaughter has been mounted by the Kiev government or "international community" and it has not interfered in the slightest with Western support of Kiev. In parallel the MSM have treated it in very low key. (The *New York Times* buried this incident in a back page continuation of a story on "Deadly Clashes Erupt in Ukraine," May 5, which succeeds in covering up the affiliation of the killers.) Kerry has been silent, though we may imagine his certain frenzy if Maduro's agents had carried out a similar action in Venezuela. Recall the "Racak massacre," where the deaths of 40 alleged victims of the Serb military created an international frenzy; but in that case the United States needed a *casus belli*, whereas in the Odessa case there is a pacification war already in process by a U.S. client, so MSM silence is in order.

It is an interesting feature of media coverage of the Ukraine crisis that there is a regular focus on alleged or possible Russian aid, control of and participation in the actions of the protesters/militants/insurgents in Eastern Ukraine. This was evident in the Times's gullible acceptance of a claim that photos of insurgents included a Russian pictured in Russia, later acknowledged to be problematic (Andrew Higgins, Michael Gordon and Andrew Kramer, "Photos Link Masked Men in East Ukraine to Russia," NYT, April 20, 2014); and in another lead article which was almost entirely speculation (Sabrina Tavernise, "In Ukraine Kremlin Leaves No Fingerprints," NYT, June 1, 2014.). But this interest in foreign intrusion in Ukraine affairs, with the implication of wrong-doing, does not extend to evidence of U.S. and other NATO power aid and control. Visits by Biden, Cain, Nuland and intelligence and Pentagon figures are sometimes mentioned, but the scope and character of aid and advice, of U.S. "fingerprints," is not discussed and seems to be of little interest. It is, in fact, normalized, so that as with the aid plans in which Russian proposals are "bludgeons" but U.S.-EU plans are "constructive and reasonable" the double standard is in good working order here as well.

Isn't there a danger that Russia will enter this war on behalf of the pro-Russian majority of the eastern part of Ukraine now under assault? Possibly, but not likely, as Putin is well aware that the Obama-neocon-military-industrial complex crowd would welcome this and would use it, at minimum, as a means of further dividing Russia from the EU powers, further militarizing U.S. clients and allies, and firming up the MIC's command of the U.S. national budget. Certainly there are important forces in this country that would love to see a war

with Russia, and it is notable how common are political comments, criticisms and regrets at Obama's weak response to Russian "aggression" (e.g., David Sanger, "Obama Policy Is put to Test: Global Crises Challenge a Strategy of Caution," NYT, March 17, 2014). But so far Putin refuses to bite.

In response to this pressure from the powerful war-loving and war-making U.S. constituencies, Obama has been furiously denouncing Russia and has hastened to exclude it from the G-8, impose sanctions and penalties on the villain state, increase U.S. troops and press military aid on the near-Russia states allegedly terrified at the Russian threat, carry out training exercises and maneuvers with these allies and clients, assure them of the sacredness of our commitment to their security, and press these states and major allies to increase their military budgets. One thing he hasn't done is to restrain his Kiev client in dealing with the insurgents in eastern Ukraine. Another is engaging Putin in an attempt at a settlement. Putin has stressed the importance of a constitutional formation of a Ukraine federation in which a still intact Ukraine would allow significant autonomy to the Eastern provinces. There was a Geneva meeting and joint statement on April 17 in which all sides pledged a de-escalation effort, disarming irregulars, and constitutional reform. But it was weak, without enforcement mechanisms, and had no effect. The most important requirement for de-escalation would be the termination of what is clearly a Kiev pacification program for Eastern Ukraine. That is not happening, because Obama doesn't want it to happen. In fact, he takes the position that it is up to Russia to curb the separatists in East Ukraine, and he has gotten his G-7 puppies to agree to give Russia one month to do this, or face more severe penalties..

This situation calls to mind Gareth Porter's analysis of the "perils of dominance," where he argued that the Vietnam war occurred and became a very large one because U.S. officials thought that with their overwhelming military superiority North Vietnam and its allies in the south would surrender and accept U.S. terms—most importantly a U.S. controlled South Vietnam—as military escalation took place and a growing toll was imposed on the Vietnamese (see his *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam*). It didn't work. In the Ukraine context the United States once again has a militarily dominant position. On its own and through its NATO arm it has encircled Russia with satellites established in violation of the 1990 promise of James Baker and Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Mikhail Gorbachev to not move eastward "one inch," and it has placed anti-missile weapons right on Russia's borders.

And now it has engineered a coup in Ukraine that empowered a government openly hostile to Russia and threatening both the well-being of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and the control of the major Russian naval base in Crimea. Putin's action in reincorporating Crimea into Russia was an inevitable defensive reaction to a serious threat to Russian national security. But it may have surprised the Obama team, just as the Vietnamese refusal to accept surrender terms may have surprised the Johnson administration. Continuing to push the Vietnamese by escalation didn't work, although it did kill and injure millions and ended the Vietnamese alternative way. Continuing and escalating actions against Russia in 2014 may involve a higher risk for the real aggressor and for the world, but there are real spinoff benefits to Lockheed and other members of the MIC.

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