OMNI
RUSSIA NEWSLETTER #1 (RUSSIA AND UKRAINE).
March 21, 2014.

Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and Ecology.

In this newsletter: The US superpower, imperial propaganda system is inciting fear and hatred of Russia, as in Cold War days against the Soviet Union, but alternative views are readily available in numerous independent print or online magazines. If we are to have peace in the world we must be able to see the world as others see it, particularly as “enemies” see it.

Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
jbennet@uark.edu

Blog
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
j.dick.bennett@gmail.com

CONNECTION BETWEEN US ENCIRCLEMENT OF CHINA AND RUSSIA: See OMNI’s newsletters/blogs on US Imperialism Westward Pacific/E. Asia

Contents Russia Newsletter #1, 2014
Dick, US Empire and Corporate Media: Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Patrick Smith, US/New York Times Spin
Stephen Cohen, Anti-Russia Is Old Anti-Soviet

Alternative Analysis
Contact Arkansas Representatives.

The first three articles interrogate the objectivity of US media: *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, NYT*, and in general:

“. . . American media on Russia today are less objective, less balanced, more conformist and scarcely less ideological than when they covered Soviet Russia during the Cold War” (Cohen). The remaining articles give a variety of background and context. Perhaps the most important context is the encirclement of Russia by the West; take a look at a map of the countries that have joined or are in the process of joining NATO, which are military alliances. Add to that a map of other countries around Russia with which the US has military alliances. And then add a map of all US military bases surrounding Russia. A similar, threatening enclosure has also been created against China. See my newsletters/blogs, “US Westward Imperialism, Pacific/E. Asia.”

A perspective we should hold in mind is that of J. William Fulbright, expressed in all of his books, particularly in his final book, *The Price of Empire*. His last chapter is entitled, “Seeing the World as Others See It.” Empathy is one of the foundations underlying Fulbright’s thought, an
attitude extremely difficulty for imperial superpowers. The Afterword of this book is entitled “Changing Our Manner of Thinking.” Cohen suggests that not only have our leaders and their followers not changed their Cold War enmity, they have worsened it.

I have included information about the credentials of several of the authors, which are impressive. --Dick

DICK, ANTI-RUSSIAN, PRO-WAR ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

I have assessed a dozen ADG reports published during the month of March, 2014, with Cohen’s stringent claim in mind, to compare present US mainstream media reporting on Russia to US mainstream media reporting of the Soviet Union, because numerous books and articles have shown the US nationalistic hostility toward the Soviet Union during the “Cold War.” Studies of the continuation of that hostility post-Soviet Union are now appearing.

During the month of March the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported on Russia and the Ukraine in two main ways: 1) news from The New York Times and from the Associated Press and 2) editorial ridicule, fear, and hatred of Russia. The news reports were sometimes summarized by ADG staff. For example, “Russia to Craft Its Own Crimea Proposals” (3-11-14). This article derived from the NYT and AP provided many perspectives, and I felt it tried to give readers a glimpse of a complex history and present politics.

In sharp contrast, the newspaper mounted a sustained, belligerent, warmongering editorial attack on Russia. At least four cartoons showed either the Russian Bear victorious over teddy bear Ukraine (no mention of the coup that overthrew the pro-Russian head of state), or Obama irrelevant while Putin plans “Countries I’m Going to Invade” (no mention of the countries the US has invaded) or Putin breaking through the walls of the US, the EU, and NATO merely my sauntering through in a suit. Glenn Garvin of the Miami Herald urged Obama to defeat Putin by developing US oil and gas. Two columns by Charles Krauthammer presented skilled hatchet jobs against wimp talkers and appeasers Obama and Kerry versus imperial Putin seeking “national power, territory, dominion” (“The Wages of Weakness,” 3-10-14). Two Washington Post guest editorials accused Putin of being out of touch with reality and urged the West to seek Russia’s financial ruin. Mark Champion of Bloomberg News (another guest column, 3-11-14) recounted the sufferings of Crimea’s “Muslim Tatars” through the witness of one victim, to conclude that the West should protect them, and should aid the Ukraine’s integration into the EU. But the most virulent voice is that of the editorial page editor, Paul Greenberg. In “The Cossacks Are Back” (3-5-14) John Kerry is “hapless and hopeless” (not true), Hagel is cutting the Pentagon’s budget (not true), while contemporary
Russia is demeaned as Tsarist “thuggism” and Putin as “Tsar Vladimir.” “The more Russia changes, the more repressive it stays.” The result of US appeasement of Russian aggression? “…chaos, war.”

Thus in Arkansas at least we receive the full White House/mainstream media pro-war blast. Fortunately, if we seek, we can find alternative views by people who try to see as Russians see it or who try to gather the full past and present reality.

WEDNESDAY, MAR 12, 2014 05:59 PM CDT

Propaganda, lies and the *New York Times*: Everything you really need to know about Ukraine

The media keeps buying the American spin on what's happening in Ukraine. Let's cut through the fog

PATRICK L. SMITH

TOPICS: CRIMEA, UKRAINE, PUTIN, JOHN KERRY, F THE EU, VICTORIA NULAND, NEW YORK TIMES, MEDIA CRITICISM, NEWS, POLITICS NEWS
You need a machete these days to whack through the thicket of misinformation, disinformation, spin, propaganda and straight-out lying that daily envelopes the Ukraine crisis like kudzu on an Alabama telephone pole. But an outline of an outcome is now faintly discernible.

Here is my early call: We witness an American intervention in the process of failing, and the adventure’s only yields will be much pointless suffering among Ukrainians and life for years to come in the smothering embrace of a justifiably suspicious Russian bear.

Nice going, Victoria Nuland, you of the famous “F the E.U. tape,” and your sidekick, Geoffrey Pyatt, ambassador in Kiev. Nice going, Secretary of State Kerry. For this caper, Nuland and Pyatt should be reassigned to post offices in the bleak reaches of Kansas, Khrushchev-style. Kerry is too big to fail, I suppose, but at least we now know more about what caliber of subterfuge lies behind all those plane trips, one mess following another in his jet wash.

On the ground, Vladimir Putin continues to extend the Russian presence in Crimea, and we await signs as to whether he will go further into Ukraine. This is very regrettable. Viewed as cause-and-effect, however, it is first a measure of how miscalculated the American intervention plot was from the first.

Pretending innocent horror now is a waste of time. The Ukraine tragedy is real estate with many names on the deed. This must not get lost in the sauce.

On the diplomatic side, the big charge now is intransigence. Washington calls Moscow intransigent because Vladimir Putin and his foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, decline to talk to the self-appointed government in Kiev, which Putin refuses to recognize. Moscow calls Washington intransigent because Kerry declines to meet Lavrov unless the latter agrees first to meet the Kiev provisionals.

The American line: The provisionals are legitimate, they are democrats worthy of support, and there was no coup when they hounded President Viktor Yanukovych from office Feb. 21. The protesters behind them with clubs, pistols and bottle bombs are democrats, too.

The Russian line: The provisionals are illegitimate, they took power in a coup driven in considerable part by nationalist fanatics with a fascist streak evident in their ranks, they are now dependent on same, and they merit neither support nor recognition.

This is it as of now, simplified but not simplistic, story and counter-story.

It is difficult but not impossible to interpret these narratives. The first step, admittedly hard for many Americans, is to drop all Cold War baggage and see beyond the West’s century-and-a-half habit of demonizing Russia as the emblematic power of the inherently autocratic East. “Oriental despotism” was a passing fad conjured by a scholar-stooge named Karl Wittfogel in the late 1950s. It died a
deserved death — around the time of hula hoops, I think — but the prejudice lingers, remarkably, in many Western minds.

Here comes the bitter bit. The Russian take in the Ukraine crisis is more truthful than the artful dodge Washington attempts. The above forecast of the outcome rests on the thought that the dodge is simply too flimsy to last.

You cannot make a call such as this without looking closely. So let’s.

Putin and Lavrov are open to negotiations with the U.S. and the European Union. Putin commits to supporting Ukrainian elections set for May and backs the agreement struck between Yanukovych and his opponents just before the latter abandoned it and deposed him, even as Putin did not like it at the time. No, Moscow does not recognize the provisionals in Kiev, with sound reasons, but it does not require that Washington drop its support before getting to the mahogany table.

In the climate our media have generated, I almost feel the need to apologize for this but will refuse: I cannot locate the intransigence in this.

Now to Kerry and President Obama. Last week Lavrov invited Kerry to Sochi for face time with Putin, and Kerry considered it. Then he abruptly declined on the argument that the Russians must first commit to talks with the new crowd in Kiev. Here is the problem: Kerry’s demand does not hold up as a precondition; it is logically a point of negotiation. Set it as a precondition and you have, so far as I can make out, intransigence.

What is the preoccupation with a Moscow-Kiev gathering, anyway? This gets interesting, and you have to recall the dramatis personae in the Nuland tape of Feb. 7.

Insisting on direct talks between Russia and the provisional government in Kiev is to insist the former recognize the latter, a trap Putin cannot possibly be stupid enough to fall into. Recognition, in turn, would complete the Nuland-Pyatt project to gift Ukrainians with a post–Yanukovych puppet government. This is Kerry’s unstated intent.

It is remarkable what a good road map the Nuland tape has proven. She mentioned three names in her exchange with Pyatt: Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Oleh Tyahnybok and Vitali Klitschko. The first, Nuland’s favorite, is now prime minister; Tyahnybok was running ahead of Yanukovych in polls at the time Nuland was taped and remains the vigorously anti-Russian head of Svoboda, a power-balancing party of rightists; Klitschko is not in the government but plans to run for president in the May elections.

This is precisely the constellation Nuland described as her work in progress: Yatsenyuk in, the others more useful outside for now. As a measure of Washington’s unseemly haste to lend legitimacy, Obama
meets Yatsenyuk in Washington as I write — an unelected leader of who knows whom sitting in the White House.

Just for good measure, Nuland also mentioned one Robert Serry, a U.N. official Washington arm-twisted Ban Ki-moon into sending to Kiev to give a veneer of multi-sided consensus. And there was Serry in the news last week — when Crimeans chased him across their border at gunpoint. They must be reading the papers carefully, those Crimeans.

At writing, the Obama scrum is debating whether to impose swift, cutting sanctions on the Russians (the political people) or ease off for fear of self-inflicted damage (the trade and business people). Leading the charge for tough stuff are none other than Nuland and Pyatt.

Maybe they are scared of getting sent to Kansas if the project does not come good.

The more I scrutinize it, the more the American case on Ukraine is held together with spit and baling wire. Were I Obama or Kerry, I would be looking for an out by now, cutting losses on a commitment to intervention that was sheer hubris from the first.

Significantly in this connection, the contorted logic of just who is running things in Kiev is soon to fail, in my view. Washington is all out in denying the character of the protest movement and the provisionals, casting Putin as a paranoid in his characterizations. It is wishful thinking. Incessantly repeated untruths never transform into truths.

The decisive influence of ultra-right extremists, some openly committed to an ideology of violence, some whose political ancestors sided with the Nazis to oppose the Soviets, is a matter of record. Svoboda and Right Sector, the two most organized of these groups, now propose to rise into national politics. Right Sector’s leader, Dmytro Yarosh, intends to run for president. The New York Times just described him as “an expert with firebombs” during the street protest period.

These people are thugs by any other name. One cannot see how this can be in question — or why the Times suggests that Russia’s descriptions of them as such amount to “a fun house mirror.”

And it is no good pretending their influence does not continue. They remain in the street and maintain the barricades, and they are happy to tell you (as one told a network correspondent last week) that they could take down the new government, too, if they so chose. You can stop wondering why the provisionals show zero interest in conducting promised investigations into the origins of the violence that toppled Yanukovych. Washington seems to have lost track of that idea, too.

On the other side of the piles of tires, ultra-rightists hold three portfolios in the 18–member provisional cabinet. Yarosh is deputy director of the security council. (I suppose he would be assigned to
investigate the violence were anyone to get the job.) It is near to preposterous that Kerry would insist
that Moscow officials meet with this man or others like him.

I read Ukraine as a case of what happens when so much of policy, in all kinds of spheres, is conducted
in secret. Ordinary citizens cannot see events and are left to judge them blind. And the media are not
going to help you. However, there have been notable exceptions to the media’s cooperation in keeping
things from us instead of informing.

Earlier this week, Leslie Gelb let loose with a **vigorous blast** in the Daily Beast, calling on the
Americans (and others) to “stop their lies and self-destructive posturing or pay costs they’re loath to
admit.” Gelb is a longtime presence in foreign policy cliques — former Times columnist, former State
Department official, now president emeritus at the Council on Foreign Relations. The critique reveals a
significant breach in the orthodoxy.
Not to root for the home team, but Nicholas Davies just published in Salon an inventory of 35 cases
wherein Washington has split the sheets with fascists in the interest of intervention. **Read it.** Splendidly
timed, it demolishes all argument that what is in front of our eyes is somehow not. History so often
does the job, I find.

Elsewhere, things go from bad to execrable. Here I have to single out Timothy Snyder, a Yale historian,
who froths at the mouth in a three-part blog series published by the New York Review of Books. This
guy should be brought up on charges under toxic waste laws.

You get lies: Yanukovych refused to sign the February compromise with his opposition. (It was signed
in his office so far as I understand.) You get bent logic: The new cabinet includes three Jews, proving
(somehow) it is legitimate. The ultra-right has only three cabinet posts. (Only? That is 16 percent of it.
Why any?)

And you get radical miscalculations. Snyder compares Putin with Hitler — unwise given the
composition of the government and the barricades people he wants to say are fine. In trying to persuade
us that the extremist bit is Moscow’s propaganda, he produces lengths of propaganda, some of it — no
other word — extremist.

I carry no hatchet for Snyder, though the Yale professorship causes me to wonder. But in bravely
defending every aspect of the Washington orthodoxy, Snyder gives a faithful map of all its fault lines.
So it is useful reading, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), providing you know what you are getting.

Next Sunday Crimeans will vote in a referendum as to whether they wish to break with the rest of
Ukraine and join the Russian Federation. The semi-autonomous region’s parliament has already voted
to do so, and good enough that they put the thought to a popular vote.

But no. Self-determination was the guiding principle when demonstrators and pols with records as
election losers pushed Yanukovych out and got done via a coup (I insist on the word) what they could
not manage in polling booths. But it cannot apply in Crimea’s case. The Crimeans are illegitimate and
have no right to such a vote.
Simply too shabby. I cannot see how it can hold much longer.

Patrick Smith is the author of “Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century” was the International Herald Tribune’s bureau chief in Hong Kong and then Tokyo from 1985 to 1992. During this time he also wrote “Letter from Tokyo” for the New Yorker. He is the author of four previous books and has contributed frequently to the New York Times, the Nation, the Washington Quarterly, and other publications.

BASHING PUTIN


Distorting Russia

How the American media misrepresent Putin, Sochi and Ukraine.

Stephen F. Cohen


(Reuters/Mikhail Klimentyev/RIA Novosti/Pool)

The degradation of mainstream American press coverage of Russia, a country still vital to US national security, has been under way for many years. If the recent tsunami of shamefully unprofessional and politically inflammatory articles in leading newspapers and magazines—particularly about the Sochi Olympics, Ukraine and, unfailingly, President Vladimir Putin—is an indication, this media malpractice is now pervasive and the new norm.

There are notable exceptions, but a general pattern has developed. Even in the venerable New York Times and Washington Post, news reports, editorials and commentaries no longer adhere rigorously to traditional journalistic standards, often failing to provide essential facts and context; to make a clear distinction between reporting and analysis; to require at least two different political or “expert” views on major developments; or to publish opposing opinions on their op-ed pages. As a result, American media on Russia today are less objective, less balanced, more conformist and scarcely less ideological than when they covered Soviet Russia during the Cold War.

The history of this degradation is also clear. It began in the early 1990s, following the end of the Soviet Union, when the US media adopted Washington’s narrative that almost everything President Boris Yeltsin did was a “transition from communism to democracy” and thus in
America’s best interests. This included his economic “shock therapy” and oligarchic looting of essential state assets, which destroyed tens of millions of Russian lives; armed destruction of a popularly elected Parliament and imposition of a “presidential” Constitution, which dealt a crippling blow to democratization and now empowers Putin; brutal war in tiny Chechnya, which gave rise to terrorists in Russia’s North Caucasus; rigging of his own re-election in 1996; and leaving behind, in 1999, his approval ratings in single digits, a disintegrating country laden with weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, most American journalists still give the impression that Yeltsin was an ideal Russian leader.

Since the early 2000s, the media have followed a different leader-centric narrative, also consistent with US policy, that devalues multifaceted analysis for a relentless demonization of Putin, with little regard for facts. (Was any Soviet Communist leader after Stalin ever so personally villainized?) If Russia under Yeltsin was presented as having legitimate politics and national interests, we are now made to believe that Putin’s Russia has none at all, at home or abroad—even on its own borders, as in Ukraine.

Russia today has serious problems and many repugnant Kremlin policies. But anyone relying on mainstream American media will not find there any of their origins or influences in Yeltsin’s Russia or in provocative US policies since the 1990s—only in the “autocrat” Putin who, however authoritarian, in reality lacks such power. Nor is he credited with stabilizing a disintegrating nuclear-armed country, assisting US security pursuits from Afghanistan and Syria to Iran or even with granting amnesty, in December, to more than 1,000 jailed prisoners, including mothers of young children.

Not surprisingly, in January The Wall Street Journal featured the widely discredited former president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, branding Putin’s government as one of “deceit, violence and cynicism,” with the Kremlin a “nerve center of the troubles that bedevil the West.” But wanton Putin-bashing is also the dominant narrative in centrist, liberal and progressive media, from the Post, Times and The New Republic to CNN, MSNBC and HBO’s Real Time With Bill Maher, where Howard Dean, not previously known for his Russia expertise, recently declared, to the panel’s approval, “Vladimir Putin is a thug.”

The media therefore eagerly await Putin’s downfall—due to his “failing economy” (some of its indicators are better than US ones), the valor of street protesters and other right-minded oppositionists (whose policies are rarely examined), the defection of his electorate (his approval ratings remain around 65 percent) or some welcomed “cataclysm.” Evidently believing, as does the Times, for example, that democrats and a “much better future” will succeed Putin (not zealous ultranationalists growing in the streets and corridors of power), US commentators remain indifferent to what the hoped-for “destabilization of his regime” might mean in the world’s largest
nuclear country.

Certainly, *The New Republic*'s lead writer on Russia, Julia Ioffe, does not explore the question, or much else of real consequence, in her nearly 10,000-word February 17 cover story. Ioffe's bannered theme is devously Putin-phobic: “He Crushed His Opposition and Has Nothing to Show for It But a Country That Is Falling Apart.” Neither sweeping assertion is spelled out or documented. A compilation of chats with Russian-born Ioffe’s disaffected (but seemingly not “crushed”) Moscow acquaintances and titillating personal gossip long circulating on the Internet, the article seems better suited (apart from some factual errors) for the Russian tabloids, as does Ioffe’s disdain for objectivity. Protest shouts of “Russia without Putin!” and “Putin is a thief!” were “one of the most exhilarating moments I’d ever experienced.” So was tweeting “Putin’s fucked, y’all.” Nor does she forget the hopeful mantra “cataclysm seems closer than ever now.”

* * *

For weeks, this toxic coverage has focused on the Sochi Olympics and the deepening crisis in Ukraine. Even before the Games began, the *Times* declared the newly built complex a “Soviet-style dystopia” and warned in a headline, TERRORISM AND TENSION, NOT SPORTS AND JOY. On opening day, the paper found space for three anti-Putin articles and a lead editorial, a feat rivaled by the *Post*. Facts hardly mattered. Virtually every US report insisted that a record $51 billion “squandered” by Putin on the Sochi Games proved they were “corrupt.” But as Ben Aris of *Business New Europe* pointed out, as much as $44 billion may have been spent “to develop the infrastructure of the entire region,” investment “the entire country needs.”

Overall pre-Sochi coverage was even worse, exploiting the threat of terrorism so licentiously it seemed pornographic. The *Post*, long known among critical-minded Russia-watchers as *Pravda* on the Potomac, exemplified the media ethos. A sports columnist and an editorial page editor turned the Olympics into “a contest of wills” between the despised Putin’s “thugocracy” and terrorist “insurgents.” The “two warring parties” were so equated that readers might have wondered which to cheer for. If nothing else, American journalists gave terrorists an early victory, tainting “Putin’s Games” and frightening away many foreign spectators, including some relatives of the athletes.

The Sochi Games will soon pass, triumphantly or tragically, but the potentially fateful Ukrainian crisis will not. A new Cold War divide between West and East may now be unfolding, not in Berlin but in the heart of Russia’s historical civilization. The result could be a permanent confrontation fraught with instability and the threat of a hot war far worse than the one in Georgia in 2008. These dangers have been all but ignored in highly selective, partisan and inflammatory US media accounts, which portray the European Union’s “Partnership” proposal benignly as Ukraine’s
chance for democracy, prosperity and escape from Russia, thwarted only by a “bullying” Putin and his “cronies” in Kiev.

Not long ago, committed readers could count on The New York Review of Books for factually trustworthy alternative perspectives on important historical and contemporary subjects. But when it comes to Russia and Ukraine, the NYRB has succumbed to the general media mania. In a January 21 blog post, Amy Knight, a regular contributor and inveterate Putin-basher, warned the US government against cooperating with the Kremlin on Sochi security, even suggesting that Putin’s secret services “might have had an interest in allowing or even facilitating such attacks” as killed or wounded dozens of Russians in Volgograd in December.

Knight’s innuendo prefigured a purported report on Ukraine by Yale professor Timothy Snyder in the February 20 issue. Omissions of facts, by journalists or scholars, are no less an untruth than misstatements of fact. Snyder’s article was full of both, which are widespread in the popular media, but these are in the esteemed NYRB and by an acclaimed academic. Consider a few of Snyder’s assertions:

§ “On paper, Ukraine is now a dictatorship.” In fact, the “paper” legislation he’s referring to hardly constituted dictatorship, and in any event was soon repealed. Ukraine is in a state nearly the opposite of dictatorship—political chaos uncontrolled by President Viktor Yanukovych, the Parliament, the police or any other government institution.

§ “The [parliamentary] deputies…have all but voted themselves out of existence.” Again, Snyder is alluding to the nullified “paper.” Moreover, serious discussions have been under way in Kiev about reverting to provisions in the 2004 Constitution that would return substantial presidential powers to the legislature, hardly “the end of parliamentary checks on presidential power,” as Snyder claims. (Does he dislike the prospect of a compromise outcome?)

§ “Through remarkably large and peaceful public protests…Ukrainians have set a positive example for Europeans.” This astonishing statement may have been true in November, but it now raises questions about the “example” Snyder is advocating. The occupation of government buildings in Kiev and in Western Ukraine, the hurling of firebombs at police and other violent assaults on law enforcement officers and the proliferation of anti-Semitic slogans by a significant number of anti-Yanukovych protesters, all documented and even televised, are not an “example” most readers would recommend to Europeans or Americans. Nor are they tolerated, even if accompanied by episodes of police brutality, in any Western democracy.

§ “Representatives of a minor group of the Ukrainian extreme right have taken credit for the violence.” This obfuscation implies that apart perhaps from a “minor group,” the “Ukrainian
“Extreme right” is part of the positive “example” being set. (Many of its representatives have expressed hatred for Europe’s “anti-traditional” values, such as gay rights.) Still more, Snyder continues, “something is fishy,” strongly implying that the mob violence is actually being “done by russo-phone provocateurs” on behalf of “Yanukovych (or Putin).” As evidence, Snyder alludes to “reports” that the instigators “spoke Russian.” But millions of Ukrainians on both sides of their incipient civil war speak Russian.

Snyder reproduces yet another widespread media malpractice regarding Russia, the decline of editorial fact-checking. In a recent article in the International New York Times, he both inflates his assertions and tries to delete neofascist elements from his innocuous “Ukrainian extreme right.” Again without any verified evidence, he warns of a Putin-backed “armed intervention” in Ukraine after the Olympics and characterizes reliable reports of “Nazis and anti-Semites” among street protesters as “Russian propaganda.”

Perhaps the largest untruth promoted by Snyder and most US media is the claim that “Ukraine’s future integration into Europe” is “yearned for throughout the country.” But every informed observer knows—from Ukraine’s history, geography, languages, religions, culture, recent politics and opinion surveys—that the country is deeply divided as to whether it should join Europe or remain close politically and economically to Russia. There is not one Ukraine or one “Ukrainian people” but at least two, generally situated in its Western and Eastern regions.

Such factual distortions point to two flagrant omissions by Snyder and other US media accounts. The now exceedingly dangerous confrontation between the two Ukraines was not “ignited,” as the Times claims, by Yanukovych’s duplicitous negotiating—or by Putin—but by the EU’s reckless ultimatum, in November, that the democratically elected president of a profoundly divided country choose between Europe and Russia. Putin’s proposal for a tripartite arrangement, rarely if ever reported, was flatly rejected by US and EU officials.

Please support our journalism. Get a digital subscription for just $9.50!

But the most crucial media omission is Moscow’s reasonable conviction that the struggle for Ukraine is yet another chapter in the West’s ongoing, US-led march toward post-Soviet Russia, which began in the 1990s with NATO’s eastward expansion and continued with US-funded NGO political activities inside Russia, a US-NATO military outpost in Georgia and missile-defense installations near Russia. Whether this longstanding Washington-Brussels policy is wise or reckless, it—not Putin’s December financial offer to save Ukraine’s collapsing economy—is deceitful. The EU’s “civilizational” proposal, for example, includes “security policy” provisions, almost never reported, that would apparently subordinate Ukraine to NATO.
Any doubts about the Obama administration’s real intentions in Ukraine should have been dispelled by the recently revealed taped conversation between a top State Department official, Victoria Nuland, and the US ambassador in Kiev. The media predictably focused on the source of the “leak” and on Nuland’s verbal “gaffe”—“Fuck the EU.” But the essential revelation was that high-level US officials were plotting to “midwife” a new, anti-Russian Ukrainian government by ousting or neutralizing its democratically elected president—that is, a coup.

Americans are left with a new edition of an old question. Has Washington’s twenty-year winner-take-all approach to post-Soviet Russia shaped this degraded news coverage, or is official policy shaped by the coverage? Did Senator John McCain stand in Kiev alongside the well-known leader of an extreme nationalist party because he was ill informed by the media, or have the media deleted this part of the story because of McCain’s folly?

And what of Barack Obama’s decision to send only a low-level delegation, including retired gay athletes, to Sochi? In August, Putin virtually saved Obama’s presidency by persuading Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to eliminate his chemical weapons. Putin then helped to facilitate Obama’s heralded opening to Iran. Should not Obama himself have gone to Sochi—either out of gratitude to Putin, or to stand with Russia’s leader against international terrorists who have struck both of our countries? Did he not go because he was ensnared by his unwise Russia policies, or because the US media misrepresented the varying reasons cited: the granting of asylum to Edward Snowden, differences on the Middle East, infringements on gay rights in Russia, and now Ukraine? Whatever the explanation, as Russian intellectuals say when faced with two bad alternatives, “Both are worst.”

Stephen F. Cohen

CONTEXTS, ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Time for Realism and Common Sense on Ukraine
The international community should be pushing for compromise to prevent this fragile and bitterly divided country from breaking apart.

The Editors
March 6, 2014 | This article appeared in the March 24, 2014 edition of The Nation. [The article I read in the 3-24 issue is entitled “Ukraine in Crisis.”]
The escalating crisis in Ukraine has set off reckless missile-rattling in this country. As Harvard’s Stephen Walt tweeted on March 2: “Public discourse on #Ukraine situation hitting new hghts in hyperbole. (‘New Cold War, WW III,’ etc.) Rhetorical overkill not helpful.” He may have been thinking of neocon Charles Krauthammer, who in his Washington Post column called for the United States to ante up $15 billion for Ukraine and send a naval flotilla to the Black Sea. The same paper headlined that the crisis “tests Obama’s focus on diplomacy over military force,” quoting Andrew Kuchins of the Center for Strategic and International Studies decrying President Obama’s “taking the stick option off the table.”

The Obama administration has responded to the crisis by flexing its own rhetorical muscles. When Russian President Vladimir Putin ignored Obama’s warning that “there will be costs” if Russia sent troops into Crimea, Secretary of State John Kerry denounced the “brazen act of aggression,” vowing that “Russia is going to lose, the Russian people are going to lose” and suggesting “asset freezes…isolation with respect to trade and investment,” while promising “economic assistance of the major sort” for whatever government emerges in Kiev.

European governments were far more measured, with many condemning Russia’s Crimean invasion but most of them clearly reluctant to impose economic sanctions. Their economic ties to Russia are much closer than America’s, of course, but they also understand that diplomacy will be more effective. Among the cooler heads at home was Jack Matlock, ambassador to the Soviet Union under Ronald Reagan, who described the administration’s warnings to Putin as “ill-advised” and argued that “whatever slim hope that Moscow might avoid overt military intervention in Ukraine disappeared when Obama in effect threw down a gauntlet and challenged him. This was not just a mistake of political judgment—it was a failure to understand human psychology—unless, of course, he actually wanted a Russian intervention, which is hard for me to believe.”

We should take a deep breath—and a sober look—before committing treasure and prestige to a still-unsettled new leadership in a country on Russia’s border, one that has had a fragile
independent existence for barely two decades. Some history would also serve us well if we’re to understand fast-moving developments. We are reaping the bitter fruit of a deeply flawed post–Cold War settlement that looks more like Versailles than Bretton Woods, a settlement inflamed by the shortsighted American decision to expand NATO eastward and pursue other policies aimed at isolating Russia and ignoring Russian interests.

Russia’s dispatch of military forces to Crimea is a clear violation of international law. Putin justifies the invasion as necessary to protect Russian citizens and allies, but this is a fig leaf. The Obama administration is right to condemn it, although much of the world will grimace at the irony of Secretary Kerry denouncing the invasion of a sovereign country even as the United States only now winds down its “war of choice” against Iraq, which is thousands of miles away from US borders. Crimea, of course, not only abuts Russia but houses its Black Sea Fleet, which, by treaty agreement between Ukraine and Russia, is set to remain there until at least 2042. Crimea historically was part of Russia until 1954, when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred it to Ukraine in what many viewed as a gesture of good will.

Viktor Yanukovych was corrupt and unpopular, but he was the democratically elected president of Ukraine. He had been steering the country toward an association agreement with the European Union last fall when he reversed course after Russia offered $15 billion in financial aid to the all-but-bankrupt country. That led to the street demonstrations—spurred in part by the EU and the United States—that eventually sent Yanukovych packing.

Ukraine is deeply divided. As David Speedie, director of the US global engagement program at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, says, “In simple terms, half the people in Ukraine look to Russia and the other half look to the West.” As Nicolai Petro details in his March 3 report at TheNation.com, the new leaders in Kiev include right-wing ultranationalists who, in one of their first acts, repealed the 2012 law allowing Russian and other minority languages to be used locally. (That measure was reversed, but not before arousing deep mistrust and fear in semiautonomous Crimea and many other parts of eastern and southern Ukraine, which are populated largely by Russian speakers.) It is also worth noting that one party in the new government, holding key cabinet posts as well as central leadership positions in Parliament and law enforcement, is Svoboda, which the European Parliament has condemned for its “racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic views.” Even further to the right is the neofascist Right Sector, which dominates the Maidan, or Independence Square, the heart of the rebellion, which has refused to disband and exerts significant influence over the new regime’s policies.

Yanukovych’s decision to postpone the EU’s association agreement was not irrational. It would have forced Ukraine to decide between Russia and the EU, flatly rejecting Putin’s offer of a tripartite arrangement that would allow the country to sustain its ties with Russia. Quite apart from
Putin's December offer of financial rescue, Ukraine is heavily dependent economically on Russia, which supplies and subsidizes much of its energy and is its largest trading partner. The EU and the United States, for all their bluster, are not about to replace that deep connection with Western aid and trade. Americans across the political spectrum will not be enthusiastic about sending billions to a country on the other side of the world while we are cutting back on vital investments at home. The EU, dominated by Germany, has inflicted brutal austerity on its own troubled members like Greece, Spain and Portugal. There’s every reason to think the EU, with or without the IMF, would impose an equally harsh regime on Ukraine as the price of financial aid. Any responsible government in Kiev should examine very carefully the level of support offered by these Western institutions, as well as the conditions attached to it.

In the Western media's passion play, which largely disdains or distorts context and history, Putin is the designated villain. But Ukraine is central to Russian security, and Russia is far less concerned about its next-door neighbor’s economic relations with the EU (Russia itself is a major source of energy for the Europeans) than the further extension of NATO to its borders. A hostile Ukraine might displace Russian bases on the Black Sea, harbor the US fleet and provide a home to NATO bases. This isn’t an irrational fear. Despite promises by George H.W. Bush not to extend the West’s Cold War military alliance after Germany was united, eight former Warsaw Pact nations and three former Soviet republics have been incorporated into NATO, with the United States and NATO even setting up a military outpost in Georgia. And the EU association agreement, advertised as offering free trade, in fact had military clauses that called for integrating Ukraine into the EU military structure, including cooperation on “civilian and military crisis management operations” and “relevant exercises” concerning them. No one should be surprised that Putin reacted negatively to such a prospect. It’s difficult to imagine any American administration accepting a decision by Mexico to join a military alliance with Russia.

Please support our journalism. Get a digital subscription for just $9.50!

US foreign policy needs a strong dose of realism and common sense. It’s absurd to scold Obama for “taking the stick option off the table”: the unavoidable fact is that the United States has no stick in relation to Ukraine. Americans have no desire and no reason to go to war with Russia over Crimea, and the EU and the United States are not about to supplant Russia’s economic influence in Ukraine. Washington is not going to provide the aid, the trade or the subsidized energy Ukraine needs, and the EU—which is still mired in its own deep economic crisis—doesn’t have the means to offer Ukraine much beyond painful austerity. Its new government is not elected, not legitimate and not at all settled. The international community should be pushing hard for compromise before this fragile and bitterly divided country breaks apart.

Frustrated cold warriors filling armchairs in Washington’s outdated “strategic” think tanks will
continue to howl at the moon, but US policy should be run by the sober. The president should work with the EU and Russia to preserve Ukraine's territorial unity, support free elections and allow Ukraine to be part of both the EU and the Russian customs union, while pledging that NATO will not extend itself into Ukraine. It is time to reduce tensions, not draw red lines, flex rhetorical muscles and fan the flames of folly.

Read Next: Eric Alterman on the American right wing's reaction to the situation in Ukraine. P. 10

The Editors
March 6, 2014 | This article appeared in the March 24, 2014 edition of The Nation.

How Crimea plays in Beijing

By Pepe Escobar

"We are paying very close attention to the situation in Ukraine. We hope all parties can calmly maintain restraint to prevent the situation from further escalating and worsening. Political resolution and dialogue is the only way out."

This, via Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Li Baodong, is Beijing's quite measured, official interpretation of what's happening in Ukraine, tailored for global consumption.

But here, in a People's Daily editorial, is what the leadership is really thinking. And the focus is clearly on the dangers of regime change, the "West's inability to understand the lessons of history", and "the final battlefield of the Cold War."
Yet again the West misinterpreted China's abstention from the UN Security Council vote on a US-backed resolution condemning the Crimea referendum. The spin was that Russia - which vetoed the resolution - was "isolated". It's not. And the way Beijing plays geopolitics shows it's not.

Oh, Samantha ...

The herd of elephants in the (Ukraine) room, in terms of global opinion, is how the authentic "international community" - from the G-20 to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) - who has had enough of the Exceptionalist Hypocrisy Show, has fully understood, and even applauded, that at least one country on the planet has the balls to clearly say "F**k the US". Russia under President Vladimir Putin may harbor quite a few distortions, just like any other nation. But this is not a dinner party; this is realpolitik. To face down the US Leviathan, nothing short of a bad ass such as Putin will suffice.

NATO - or shorthand for the Pentagon dominating European wimps - keeps issuing threats and spewing out "consequences". What are they going to do - launch a barrage of ICBMs equipped with nuclear warheads against Moscow?

Furthermore, the UN Security Council itself is a joke, with US ambassador Samantha "Nothing Compares to You" Power - one of the mothers of R2P ("responsibility to protect") - carping on "Russian aggression", "Russian provocations" and comparing the Crimean referendum to a theft. Oh yes; bombing Iraq, bombing Libya and getting to the brink of bombing Syria were just innocent humanitarian gestures. Samantha The Humanitarian arguably gives a better performance invoking Sinead O'Connor in her shower.

Russian ambassador Vitaly Churkin was polite enough to say, "these insults addressed to our country" are "unacceptable". It's what he added that carried the real juice; "If the delegation of the United States of America expects our cooperation in the Security Council on other issues, then Power must understand this quite clearly."

Samantha The Humanitarian, as well as the whole bunch of juvenile bystanders in the Obama administration, won't understand it. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov gave them a little help; Russia didn't want to use the Iranian nuclear talks to "raise the stakes", but if the US and the EU continue with their sanctions and threats, that's what's going to happen.

So the plot thickens - as in a closer and closer strategic partnership between Tehran and Moscow.
Secessionists of the world, unite?

Now imagine all this as seen from Beijing. No one knows what exactly goes on in the corridors of the Zhongnanhai, but it's fair to argue there's only an apparent contradiction between China's key principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, and Russia's intervention in Crimea.

Beijing has identified very clearly the sequence of affairs; long-running Western interference in Ukraine via NGOs and the State Department; regime change perpetrated with the help of fascists and neo-nazis; a pre-emptive Russian counterattack which can be read as a by-the-book Samantha The Humanitarian R2P operation (protecting Russians and Russian speakers from a second coup planned in Crimea, and thwarted by Russian intelligence.)

On top of it Beijing well knows how Crimea has been essentially Russian since 1783; how Crimea - as well as a great deal of Ukraine - fall smack into Russian civilization's sphere of influence; and how Western interference directly threatened Russia's national security interests (as Putin made it clear.) Now imagine a similar scenario in Tibet or Xinjiang. Long-running Western interference via NGOs and the CIA; a take over by Tibetans in Lhasa or Uighurs in Kashgar of the local administration. Beijing could easily use Samantha's R2P in the name of protecting Han Chinese.

Yet Beijing (silently) agreeing to the Russian response to the coup in Kiev by getting Crimea back via a referendum and without a shot fired does not mean that "splittists" Tibet or Taiwan would be allowed to engage in the same route. Even as Tibet, more than Taiwan, would be able to build a strong historical case for seceding. Each case bears its own myriad complexities.

The Obama administration - like a blind Minotaur - is now lost in a labyrinth of pivots of its own making. A new Borges - that Buddha in a gray suit - is needed to tell the tale. First there was the pivoting to Asia-Pac - which is encircling of China under another name - as it's well understood in Beijing.

Then came the pivoting to Persia - "if we are not going to war", as that Cypher in Search of an Idea, John Kerry, put it. There was, of course, the martial pivoting to Syria, aborted at the last minute thanks to the good offices of Moscow diplomacy. And back to the pivoting to Russia, trampling the much-lauded "reset" and conceived as a payback for Syria.
Those who believe Beijing strategists have not carefully analyzed - and calculated a response - to all the implications of these overlapping pivots do deserve to join Samantha in the shower. Additionally, it's easy to picture Chinese Think Tankland hardly repressing its glee in analyzing a hyperpower endlessly, helplessly pivoting over itself.

While the Western dogs bark ...

Russia and China are strategic partners - at the G-20, at the BRICS club of emerging powers and at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Their number one objective, in these and other forums, is the emergence of a multipolar world; no bullying by the American Empire of Bases, a more balanced international financial system, no more petrodollar eminence, a basket of currencies, essentially a "win-win" approach to global economic development.

A multipolar world also implies, by definition, NATO out of Eurasia - which is from Washington's point of view the number one reason to interfere in Ukraine. In Eurasian terms, it's as if - being booted out of Afghanistan by a bunch of peasants with Kalashnikovs - NATO was pivoting back via Ukraine.

While Russia and China are key strategic partners in the energy sphere - Pipelineistan and beyond - they do overlap in their race to do deals across Central Asia. Beijing is building not only one but two New Silk Roads - across Southeast Asia and across Central Asia, involving pipelines, railways and fiber optic networks, and reaching as far as Istanbul, the getaway to Europe. Yet as far as Russia-China competition for markets go, all across Eurasia, it's more under a "win-win" umbrella than a zero-sum game.

On Ukraine ("the last battlefield in the Cold War") and specifically Crimea, the (unspoken) official position by Beijing is absolute neutrality (re: the UN vote). Yet the real deal is support to Moscow. But this could never be out in the open, because Beijing is not interested in antagonizing the West, unless heavily provoked (the pivoting becoming hardcore encirclement, for instance). Never forget; since Deng Xiaoping ("keep a low profile") this is, and will continue to be, about China's "peaceful rise". Meanwhile, the Western dogs bark, and the Sino-Russian caravan passes.


Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space
Pierce writes: "The producers decided that who the country really needed to hear from concerning the situation in the Ukraine was well-known zombie war criminal Dick Cheney."
READ MORE

US Will Not Recognize Crimea Poll
Harding writes: "America's ambassador in Kiev said the US would refuse to recognise next Sunday's 'so-called referendum' in Crimea, and said Washington would take further steps against Russia if it used the poll to legitimise its occupation."
READ MORE
[Harding is the author of the new excellent new book, The Snowden Files, which recounts the suspenseful story of Snowden’s disclosure of the NSA files, but gives dramatic, clear explanations of the various institutions Snowden dealt with, from the NSA to The Guardian magazine. This book is worth far more than its price. –Dick]

Published on Sunday, March 2, 2014 by Consortium News, Common Dreams 3-11-14

Ukraine: One ‘Regime Change’ Too Many?

Is “regime change” in Ukraine the bridge too far for the neoconservative “regime changers” of Official Washington and their sophomoric “responsibility-to-protect” (R2P) allies in the Obama administration? Have they dangerously...over-reached by pushing the putsch that removed duly-elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych?
Russian President Vladimir Putin has given an unmistakable “yes” to those questions – in deeds, not words. His message is clear: “Back off our near-frontier!”

President Barack Obama discusses Ukraine during a meeting with members of his National Security Staff in the Oval Office, Feb. 28, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Moscow announced on Saturday that Russia’s parliament has approved Putin’s request for permission to use Russia’s armed forces “on the territory of the Ukraine pending the normalization of the socio-political situation in that country.”

Putin described this move as necessary to protect ethnic Russians and military personnel stationed in Crimea in southern Ukraine, where the Russian Black Sea Fleet and other key military installations are located. But there is no indication that the Russian parliament has restricted the use of Russian armed forces to the Crimea.

Unless Obama is completely bereft of advisers who know something about Russia, it should have been a “known-known” (pardon the Rumsfeldian mal mot) that the Russians would react this way to a putsch removing Yanukovich. It would have been a no-brainer that Russia would use military force, if necessary, to counter attempts to use economic enticement and subversive incitement to slide Ukraine into the orbit of the West and eventually NATO.

This was all the more predictable in the case of Ukraine, where Putin – although the bête noire in corporate Western media – holds very high strategic cards geographically, militarily, economically and politically.

Unlike ‘Prague Spring’ 1968

Moscow’s advantage was not nearly as clear during the short-lived “Prague Spring” of 1968 when knee-jerk, non-thinking euphoria reigned in Washington and West European capitals. The cognoscenti were, by and large, smugly convinced that reformer Alexander Dubcek could break Czechoslovakia away from the U.S.S.R.’s embrace and still keep the Russian bear at bay.

My CIA analyst portfolio at the time included Soviet policy toward Eastern Europe, and I was amazed to see analysts of Eastern Europe caught up in the euphoria that typically ended with, “And the Soviets can’t do a damned thing about it!”

That summer a new posting found me advising Radio Free Europe Director Ralph Walter who, virtually alone among his similarly euphoric colleagues, shared my view that Russian tanks would inevitably roll onto Prague’s Wenceslaus Square, which they did in late August.

Past is not always prologue. But it is easy for me to imagine the Russian Army cartographic agency busily preparing maps of the best routes for tanks into Independence Square in Kiev, and that before too many months have gone by, Russian tank commanders may be given orders to invade, if those stoking the fires of violent dissent in the western parts of Ukraine keep pushing too far.
That said, Putin has many other cards to play and time to play them. These include sitting back and doing nothing, cutting off Russia’s subsidies to Ukraine, making it ever more difficult for Yanukovich’s successors to cope with the harsh realities. And Moscow has ways to remind the rest of Europe of its dependence on Russian oil and gas.

Another Interference
There is one huge difference between Prague in 1968 and Kiev 2014. The “Prague Spring” revolution led by Dubcek enjoyed such widespread spontaneous popular support that it was difficult for Russian leaders Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksey Kosygin to argue plausibly that it was spurred by subversion from the West.

Not so 45-plus years later. In early February, as violent protests raged in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev and the White House professed neutrality, U.S. State Department officials were, in the words of NYU professor emeritus of Russian studies Stephen Cohen, “plotting a coup d’état against the elected president of Ukraine.”

We know that thanks to neocon prima donna Victoria Nuland, now Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, who seemed intent on giving new dimension to the “cookie-pushing” role of U.S. diplomats. Recall the photo showing Nuland in a metaphor of over-reach, as she reached deep into a large plastic bag to give each anti-government demonstrator on the square a cookie before the putsch.

More important, recall her amateurish, boorish use of an open telephone to plot regime change in Ukraine with a fellow neocon, U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt. Crass U.S. interference in Ukrainian affairs can be seen (actually, better, heard) in an intercepted conversation posted on YouTube on Feb. 4.

Yikes! It’s Yats!
Nuland was recorded as saying: “Yats is the guy. He’s got the economic experience, the governing experience. He’s the guy you know. … Yats will need all the help he can get to stave off collapse in the ex-Soviet state. He has warned there is an urgent need for unpopular cutting of subsidies and social payments before Ukraine can improve.”

And guess what. The stopgap government formed after the coup designated Nuland’s guy Yats, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, prime minister! What luck! Yats is 39 and has served as head of the central bank, foreign minister and economic minister. And, as designated pinch-hitter-prime-minister, he has already talked about the overriding need for “responsible government,” one willing to commit “political suicide,” as he put it, by taking unpopular social measures.

U.S. meddling has been so obvious that at President Barack Obama’s hastily scheduled Friday press conference on Ukraine, Yats’s name seemed to get stuck in Obama’s throat. Toward the end of his scripted remarks, which he read verbatim, the President said: “Vice President Biden just spoke with Prime Minister [pause] – the prime minister of Ukraine to assure him that in this difficult moment the United States supports his government’s efforts and stands for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic future of Ukraine.”
Obama doesn’t usually stumble like that – especially when reading a text, and is normally quite good at pronouncing foreign names. Perhaps he worried that one of the White House stenographic corps might shout out, “You mean our man, Yats?” Obama departed right after reading his prepared remarks, leaving no opportunity for such an outburst.

Western media was abuzz with the big question: Will the Russians apply military force? The answer came quickly, though President Obama chose the subjunctive mood in addressing the question on Friday.

**Throwing Down a Hanky**

There was a surreal quality to President Obama’s remarks, several hours after Russian (or pro-Russian) troops took control of key airports and other key installations in the Crimea, which is part of Ukraine, and home to a large Russian naval base and other key Russian military installations.

Obama referred merely to “reports of military movements taken by the Russian Federation inside of Ukraine” and warned piously that “any violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity would be deeply destabilizing.”

That Obama chose the subjunctive mood – when the indicative was, well, indicated – will not be lost on the Russians. Here was Obama, in his typically lawyerly way, trying to square the circle, giving a sop to his administration’s neocon holdovers and R2P courtiers, with a Milquetoast expression of support for the new-Nuland-approved government (citing Biden’s assurances to old whatshisname/yatshisname).

While Obama stuck to the subjunctive tense, Prime Minister Yatsenyuk appealed to Russia to recall its forces and “stop provoking civil and military resistance in Ukraine.”

Obama’s comments seemed almost designed to sound condescending – paternalistic, even – to the Russians. Already into his second paragraph of his scripted remarks, the President took a line larded with words likely to be regarded as a gratuitous insult by Moscow, post-putsch.

“We’ve made clear that they [Russian officials] can be part of an international community’s effort to support the stability of a united Ukraine going forward, which is not only in the interest of the people of Ukraine and the international community, but also in Russia’s interest.”

By now, Russian President Vladimir Putin is accustomed to Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, National Security Adviser Susan Rice, et al. telling the Kremlin where its interests lie, and I am sure he is appropriately grateful. Putin is likely to read more significance into these words of Obama:

“The United States will stand with the international community in affirming that there will be costs for any military intervention in Ukraine … and we will continue to coordinate closely with our European allies.”

**Fissures in Atlantic Alliance**

There are bound to be fissures in the international community and in the Western alliance on whether further provocation in Ukraine is advisable. Many countries have much to lose if Moscow uses its considerable
economic leverage over natural gas supplies, for example.

And, aspiring diplomat though she may be, Victoria Nuland presumably has not endeared herself to the EC by her expressed “Fuck the EC” attitude.

Aside from the most servile allies of the U.S. there may be a growing caucus of Europeans who would like to return the compliment to Nuland. After all does anyone other than the most extreme neocon ideologue think that instigating a civil war on the border of nuclear-armed Russia is a good idea? Or that it makes sense to dump another economic basket case, which Ukraine surely is, on the EU’s doorstep while it’s still struggling to get its own economic house in order?

Europe has other reasons to feel annoyed about the overreach of U.S. power and arrogance. The NSA spying revelations – that continue, just like the eavesdropping itself does – seem to have done some permanent damage to transatlantic relationships.

In any case, Obama presumably knows by now that he pleased no one on Friday by reading that flaccid statement on Ukraine. And, more generally, the sooner he realizes that – without doing dumb and costly things – he can placate neither the neocons nor the R2P folks (naively well meaning though the latter may be), the better for everyone.

In sum, the Nulands of this world have bit off far more than they can chew; they need to be reined in before they cause even more dangerous harm. Broader issues than Ukraine are at stake. Like it or not, the United States can benefit from a cooperative relationship with Putin's Russia – the kind of relationship that caused Putin to see merit last summer in pulling Obama’s chestnuts out of the fire on Syria, for example, and in helping address thorny issues with Iran.

© 2014 Consortium News

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, the publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in Washington, DC. During his career as a CIA analyst, he prepared and briefed the President's Daily Brief and chaired National Intelligence Estimates. He is a member of the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals.
LIGHTING THE FIRES FOR CHAOS IN UKRAINE

A couple of people have wondered if I exaggerated the possibility of war with Russia over Ukraine. I don’t think so - in fact I would suggest that the proxy war is already underway.

Two of the first things that happened following the US led coup d’etat in Ukraine was the "new government” declaring that the Russian language would be outlawed in the country (which has millions of Russians in it) and that the ban on Nazi symbols and ideology would be lifted. It cannot be said often enough that many of the violent agitators in Kiev were in fact the ultra-nationalist descendants of those Ukrainian Nazi sympathizers who supported Hitler’s invasion of the former Soviet Union during WW II.

But there is even more. NSNBC International reports the following:

Being one of the most reliable sources of information about the activities of Turkey’s intelligence service MIT and Turkey’s armed forces, Aydinlik Daily quotes a “source that has spoken with the newspaper”, alleging, that an intelligence unit linked to Turkey’s intelligence service MIT has headed to the Ukrainian Autonomous Republic Crimea to provoke Crimean Turks to act against the ethnic Russian majority and Russian interests in the autonomous republic. The source reported that the deployment of the Turkish unit has been coordinated with both the USA and EU.

Translated this essentially means that for all the moralistic talk coming from the Obama administration about how Russia should not be intervening in Crimea, the US-NATO are, and have been, deeply embedded in the drive to take over Ukraine.

Russian intelligence obviously is aware that this "low intensity" warfare is now being directed by US-NATO. That is why Putin asked his governing body for permission to move Russian forces into the Crimea to stabilize the situation.

I am indeed a lifelong peace activist. I don't support war. But I also have always believed that someone under attack has the right to defend himself or herself. Whether they were the Native Americans; people in Nicaragua being attacked by the US funded and trained Contras;
the Syrian government now under attack by a CIA and Saudi Arabian funded and trained Al Qaeda forces; or anywhere else - they have a right to defend their lands.

This morning I watched a bit of mainstream TV news just to get a feel for what the talking heads were saying. Here are some of the things I heard:

- We must put economic sanctions on Russia
- Putin does "not care" what the US thinks
- We must "roll back this Russian invasion"
- Putin is not in touch with reality
- It's almost like we are dealing with North Korea
- Putin is "unstable"
- There is "confusion in Moscow"
- Putin is clumsy
- There could be a military collision
- US should help bail out Ukraine

The video of Victoria Nuland speaking last December, on a stage decorated with the logos of ExxonMobil and Chevron, is particularly important as she reveals that the US "invested" $5 billion in this coup d'etat. There can be no doubt that the US-NATO have pulled this stunt and is that not a violation of international law to destabilize and overthrow an elected government? (Even if you don't approve of it?) Is that not an act of war toward neighboring Russia and would not Russia have the right to take measures to stabilize the situation?

Yesterday I watched a video from a news conference where Ukrainian Navy Rear Admiral Berezovsky (who had just been appointed to that post by the "new revolutionary government" in Kiev) had come to Crimea and announced that he was not going to support the coup d'etat and instead pledged himself to the Crimean government, which is allied to Russia. The mainstream American media this morning was spinning that story by saying Berozovsky had "surrendered" to Russia.

As you can see on the map above this whole situation is about natural gas and oil. Russia's huge supplies of natural gas are shipped to Europe and other locations by pipelines that run throughout Ukraine. ExxonMobil, Chevron and other western oil majors want control of these resources. Like we've seen in Iraq, Libya, Venezuela and other places that have natural resources, Mr. Big is quite willing to destabilize and go to war if necessary to grab these resources. This is a long-term project by the US-NATO and they are just getting started.

Mr. Big is a bully and when anyone stands up to the bully they will be demonized.

Bruce K. Gagnon
Coordinator
Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space
PO Box 652
John Pilger: The Forgotten Coup - and How the Same Godfather Rules From Canberra to Kiev
Tuesday, 18 March 2014 09:51 By John Pilger, Truthout | News Analysis

Ukrainian police with riot gear guard the regional administration building from pro-Russia demonstrators in the center of Kharkiv, Ukraine, March 16, 2014. With thousands of heavily-armed Russian troops occupying the perennially embattled peninsula, the voters of Crimea went to the polls in a public referendum on secession from Ukraine that Western leaders have declared illegal and vowed to punish with economic sanctions. (Photo: Tyler Hicks/The New York Times)

Since 1945, dozens of governments, many of them democracies, have met a fate similar to that of the elected government of the Ukraine, usually with bloodshed, says John Pilger.

Washington's role in the fascist putsch against an elected government in Ukraine will surprise only those who watch the news and ignore the historical record. Since 1945, dozens of governments, many of them democracies, have met a similar fate, usually with bloodshed.

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries on earth with fewer people than Wales, yet under the reformist Sandinistas in the 1980s, it was regarded in Washington as a "strategic threat." The logic was simple; if the weakest slipped the leash, setting an example, who else would try their luck?

The great game of dominance offers no immunity for even the most loyal US "ally." This is demonstrated by perhaps the least known of Washington's coups - in Australia. The story of this forgotten coup is a salutary lesson for those governments that believe a "Ukraine" or a "Chile" could never happen to them.

Australia's deference to the United States makes Britain, by comparison, seem a renegade. During the American invasion of Vietnam - which Australia had pleaded to join - an official in Canberra voiced a rare complaint to Washington that the British knew more about US objectives in that war than its antipodean comrade-in-arms. The response was swift: "We have to keep the Brits informed to keep them happy. You are with us come what may."

This dictum was rudely set aside in 1972 with the election of the reformist Labor government of Gough Whitlam. Although not regarded as of the left, Whitlam - now in his 98th year - was a maverick social democrat of principle, pride, propriety and extraordinary political imagination. He believed that a foreign power should not control his country's resources and dictate its economic and foreign policies. He proposed to "buy back the farm" and speak as a voice independent of London and Washington.

On the day after his election, Whitlam ordered that his staff should not be "vetted or harassed" by the Australian security organization, ASIO - then, as now, beholden to Anglo-
American intelligence. When his ministers publicly condemned the Nixon/Kissinger administration as "corrupt and barbaric," Frank Snepp, a CIA officer stationed in Saigon at the time, recalled: "We were told the Australians might as well be regarded as North Vietnamese collaborators."

Victor Marchetti, the CIA officer who had helped set up Pine Gap - a joint US-Australian satellite tracking station in the center of Australia - later told me a "threat to close Pine Gap caused apoplexy in the White House. Consequences were inevitable . . . a kind of Chile was set in motion."

The CIA had just helped General Pinochet crush the democratic government of another reformer, Salvador Allende, in Chile.

In 1974, the White House sent Marshall Green to Canberra as ambassador. Green was an imperious, very senior and sinister figure in the State Department who worked in the shadows of America's "deep state." Known as the "coupmaster," he had played a central role in the 1965 coup against President Sukarno in Indonesia - which cost up to a million lives. One of his first speeches in Australia was to the Australian Institute of Directors and was described by an alarmed member of the audience as "an incitement to the country's business leaders to rise against the government".

Pine Gap's top-secret messages were decoded in California by a CIA contractor, TRW. One of the decoders was a young Christopher Boyce, an idealist who, troubled by the "deception and betrayal of an ally," became a whistleblower. Boyce revealed that the CIA had infiltrated the Australian political and trade union elite and referred to the Governor-General of Australia, Sir John Kerr, as "our man Kerr."

MORE

Copyright, Truthout. May not be reprinted without permission.

John Pilger

John Pilger is an Australian-born, London-based journalist, filmmaker and author. For his foreign and war reporting, ranging from Vietnam and Cambodia to the Middle East, he has twice won Britain's highest award for journalism. For his documentary films, he won a British Academy Award and an American Emmy. In 2009, he was awarded Australia's human rights prize, the Sydney Peace Prize. His most recent film, Utopia, will be broadcast at 10:35 PM December 19, 2013, on ITV in Britain and will open in Australia in January 2014. www.johnpilger.com
Robert Freeman, Common Dreams, Reader Supported News, March 8, 2014
Freeman writes: "Ukraine is a lot more portentous than it appears. It is fundamentally about the play for Persian Gulf oil. So was World War I. The danger lies in the chance of runaway escalation, just like World War I."
READ MORE

Contact Arkansas Congressional Delegation

Arkansas is represented in Congress by two senators and four representatives. Here is how to reach them. None of the senators or representatives publishes his e-mail address, but each can be contacted by filling in forms offered through his website.

**SENATORS**
Sen. John Boozman
Republican, first term
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-4843
Fax: (202) 228-1371
Arkansas offices:
FORT SMITH: (479) 573-0189
JONESBORO: (870) 268-6925
LITTLE ROCK: (501) 372-7153
LOWELL: (479) 725-0400
MOUNTAIN HOME: (870) 424-0129
STUTTGART: (870) 672-6941
EL DORADO: (870) 863-4641
Website: www.boozman.senate.gov

Sen. Mark Pryor
Democrat, second term
255 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 225-4747
Fax: (202) 228-0903
Arkansas offices:
LITTLE ROCK: (501) 324-6336
Website: www.pryor.senate.gov

**REPRESENTATIVES**
Rep. Rick Crawford
1ST DISTRICT
1771 Longworth Office Building
Independence Avenues SE

Rep. Tom Cotton
4TH DISTRICT
415 Cannon House Office Building

Rep. Steve Womack
3RD DISTRICT
1119 Longworth Office Building

Rep. Tim Griffin
2ND DISTRICT
1232 Longworth Office Building
Independence Avenues SE

Contact information for other senators and representatives is available on their respective websites.
What is the mission of OMNI?
With the Quakers we seek:
a world free of war and the threat of war,
a society with equity and justice for all,
a community where every person’s potential may be fulfilled,
and an earth restored.
Join us if you are committed to these values and wish to advance them.

END RUSSIA (UKRAINE) NEWSLETTER #1

--
Dick Bennett

Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
jbennet@uark.edu
Blog
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
j.dick.bennett@gmail.com
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703