

## OPINION PAGES

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We are not at the one-year anniversary of the war, as the Western governments and media claim. This is the nine-year anniversary of the war. And that makes a big difference.

The war began with the violent overthrow of Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014, a coup that was overtly and covertly backed by the United States government. From 2008 onward, the United States pushed NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia. The 2014 coup of Yanukovich was in the service of NATO expansion.

We must keep this relentless drive towards NATO expansion in context. The US and Germany explicitly and repeatedly promised Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not enlarge “one inch eastward” after Gorbachev disbanded the Soviet military alliance known as the Warsaw Pact. The entire premise of NATO enlargement was a violation of agreements reached with Soviet Union, and therefore with the continuation state of Russia.

The neocons have pushed NATO enlargement because they seek to surround Russia in the Black Sea region, akin to the aims of Britain and France in the Crimean War (1853-56). US strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski described Ukraine as the “geographical pivot” of Eurasia. If the US could surround Russia in the Black Sea region, and incorporate Ukraine into the US military alliance, Russia’s ability to project power in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and globally would disappear, or so goes the theory.

Of course, Russia saw this not only as a general threat, but as a specific threat of putting advanced armaments right up to Russia’s border. This was especially ominous after the US unilaterally abandoned the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, which according to Russia posed a direct threat to Russian national security.

During his presidency (2010-2014), Yanukovich sought military neutrality, precisely to avoid a civil war or proxy war in Ukraine. This was a very wise and prudent choice for Ukraine, but it stood in the way of the U.S. neoconservative obsession with NATO enlargement. When protests broke out against Yanukovich at the end of 2013 upon the delay of the signing of an accession roadmap with the EU, the United States

# The ninth anniversary of the Ukraine war

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—Jeffery D. Sachs.



took the opportunity to escalate the protests into a coup, which culminated in Yanukovich’s overthrow in February 2014.

The US meddled relentlessly and covertly in the protests, urging them onward even as right-wing Ukrainian nationalist paramilitaries entered the scene. US NGO spent vast sums to finance the protests and the eventual overthrow. This NGO financing has never come to light.

Three people intimately involved in the US effort to overthrow Yanukovich were Victoria Nuland, then the Assistant Secretary of State, now Under-Secretary of State; Jack Sullivan, then the security advisor to VP Joe Biden, and now the US National Security Advisor to President Biden; and VP Biden, now President. Nuland was famously caught on the phone with the US Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, planning the next government in Ukraine, and without allowing any second thoughts by the Europeans (“Fuck the EU,” in Nuland’s crude phrase caught on tape).

The intercepted conversation reveals the depth of the Biden-Nuland-Sullivan planning. Nuland says, “So on that piece Geoff, when I wrote the note Sullivan’s come back to me VFR [direct to me], saying you need Biden and I said probably tomorrow for an attabooy and to get the deets [details] to stick. So, Biden’s willing.”

US Film director Oliver Stone helps us to understand the US involvement in the coup in his 2016

documentary movie, *Ukraine on Fire*. I urge all people to watch it, and to learn what a US-regime change operation looks like. I also urge all people to read the powerful academic studies by Prof. Ivan Katchanovski of the University of Ottawa (for example, here and here), who has laboriously reviewed all of the evidence of the Maidan and found that most of the violence and killing originated not from Yanukovich’s security detail, as alleged, but from the coup leaders themselves, who fired into the crowds, killing both policemen and demonstrators.

These truths remain obscured by US secrecy and European obsequiousness to US power. A US-orchestrated coup occurred in the heart of Europe, and no European leader dared to speak the truth. Brutal consequences have followed, but still no European leader honestly tells the facts.

The coup was the start of the war nine years ago. An extra-constitutional, right-wing, anti-Russian and ultra-nationalist government came to power in Kiev. After the coup, Russia quickly retook Crimea following a quick referendum, and war broke out in the Donbass as Russians in the Ukraine army switched sides to opposed the post-coup government in Kiev.

NATO almost immediately began to pour in billions of dollars of weaponry to Ukraine. And the war escalated. The Minsk-1 and Minsk-2 peace agreements, in which France and Germany were to be co-guarantors, did not function, first, because the nationalist

Ukrainian government in Kiev refused to implement them, and second, because Germany and France did not press for their implementation, as recently admitted by former Chancellor Angela Merkel.

At the end of 2021, President Putin made very clear that the three red lines for Russia were: (1) NATO enlargement to Ukraine as unacceptable; (2) Russia would maintain control of Crimea; and (3) the war in the Donbass needed to be settled by implementation of Minsk-2. The Biden White House refused to negotiate on the issue of NATO enlargement.

The Russian invasion tragically and wrongly took place in February 2022, eight years after the Yanukovich coup. The United States has poured in tens of billions of dollars of armaments and budget support since then, doubling down on the US attempt to expand its military alliance into Ukraine and Georgia. The deaths and destruction in this escalating battlefield are horrific.

In March 2022, Ukraine said that it would negotiate on the basis of neutrality. The war indeed seemed close to an end. Positive statements were made by both Ukrainian and Russian officials, as well as the Turkish mediators. We now know from former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett that the United States blocked those negotiations, instead favoring an escalation of war to “weaken Russia.”

In September 2022, the Nord Stream pipelines were blown up. The overwhelming evidence

at this date is that the United States led that destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines. Seymour Hersh’s account is highly credible and has not been refuted on a single major point (though it has been heatedly denied by the US Government). It points to the Biden-Nuland-Sullivan team as leading the Nord Stream destruction.

We are on a path of dire escalation and lies or silence in much of the mainstream US and European media. The entire narrative that this is the first anniversary of war is a falsehood that hides the reasons of this war and the way to end it. This is a war that began because of the reckless US neoconservative push for NATO enlargement, followed by the US neoconservative participation in the 2014 regime-change operation. Since then, there has been massive escalation of armaments, death, and destruction.

This is a war that needs to stop before it engulfs all of us in nuclear Armageddon.

I praise the peace movement for its valiant efforts, especially in the face of brazen lies and propaganda by the US Government and craven silence by the European governments, which act as wholly subservient to the US neoconservatives.

We must speak truth. Both sides have lied and cheated and committed violence. Both sides need to back off. NATO must stop the attempt to enlarge to Ukraine and to Georgia. Russia must withdraw from Ukraine.

We must listen to the red lines of both sides so that the world will survive.

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