

# “How to Start a Proxy War with Russia”. Ukraine is the Proxy

By [Eric Zuesse](#)

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

*Michael Kofman isn't just a defense expert; he's specialized in the precise region where Ukraine is located. He spent years managing professional military education programs and military-to-military engagements for senior officers at National Defense University. There he served as a subject matter expert and adviser to military and government officials on issues in Russia/Eurasia. And, now, he is telling [the Brookings Institution war-hawks, and its insider 'experts' whose expertise is about getting America into invasions but not getting us out, and is certainly not about "winning" anything more than defense contracts](#) — he is telling them that their arguments for getting us into sending weapons to Ukraine as our “proxy” against Russia, is a shockingly stupid and counterproductive idea for everyone but America's armaments-makers.*

America's weapons makers won't like what he has to say, because he's not selling their products into Ukraine's civil war (a huge and wholly taxpayer-funded market), like President Obama's advisors, and John McCain and other Republicans, definitely are. (They're such fine salesmen.)

In the February issue of *National Interest* journal, he headlines, [“How to Start a Proxy War with Russia”](#) (with Ukraine being the “Proxy”), and he subheads, with remarkable (even courageous) directness: “Arming the Ukrainian government would be a bad idea, no matter what the next defense secretary says.” He opens by taking on not only the new Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, but the Brookings ‘experts’ who are looking to become hired by President Hillary Clinton (all war-hawks not much different from G.W. Bush's Paul Wolfowitz and other such ‘defense experts’).

He says:

Sending a mix of weapons to Ukraine is unlikely to improve the situation, given the overwhelming force-on-force mismatch the country faces against Russia, but it could add fuel to a fire that is steadily consuming the country's chances of emerging as a new nation on a European path. ... [The Brookings report] does not offer recommendations on a path to peace, and no explanation of how weapons shipments could result in a political settlement to the war. ... The [Brookings] report is intended to press the reluctant president into changing his course in Ukraine [so as to send lethal weapons]. ...

Its core premise is that by giving Ukraine the ability to kill more Russian soldiers, sending weapons would raise the costs of war for Moscow to an unacceptable level, thus forcing Russia to abandon its existing policy and thus deterring further aggression. The weakness in the armaments proposal is that it offers no vision for what a new political settlement to the current conflict might look like. ... This [Brookings] document advocates in no subtle terms for

the United States to undertake a proxy war with Russia in Ukraine, and to supply the country with weapons equivalent to half of its [Ukraine's] current defense budget. ...

One of the problems in the report's argumentation is that it lists a series of fears and anxieties regarding Russia's territorial ambitions. ... [However,] analysis of Russia's annexation of Crimea has shown that the operation was inherently unique and could not be repeated elsewhere in Europe, while Moscow has demonstrated little interest in spontaneously invading NATO countries. On the contrary, previous references regarding the Russian world, or Novorossiia, have already been eliminated from official rhetoric. Real ultranationalists in Russia are suppressed by the government, which does not plan to realize their ambitions.

Russia has shown no desire for a broader invasion of Ukraine, either, although it has the means, and the report confirms that Ukrainian officials believe a large-scale attack to create a land corridor to Crimea is highly unlikely. ...

In reality, the United States has absolutely no obligations to Ukraine's security under any type of accord or framework. ... American credibility is not on the line in what is first and foremost a European effort, especially when Berlin refuses to see such policies as viable. ...

Experts familiar with the reasons for Ukraine's military defeat understand that it is ... because its army as a whole is not a capable force. It lacks logistics, training, commanders with experience at maneuvering brigade- or battalion-sized elements, any coordination between volunteer battalions and regular forces, along with independent military analysis of the problems. There is no intelligence, no mobile reserves, no unified command and a political leadership that often seems disconnected from the facts on the ground. Dumping weapons into this operating environment is unlikely to prove a solution to the problems, all of which are fundamental and structural. ...

[Furthermore, despite Washington's assumption to the contrary,] the overwhelming majority of fighters [on the rebel side] are locals and likely Ukrainian citizens, which completely undermines the premise of the entire [Brookings] report that Russian forces are the key participants and their casualties will prove a deterrent. ...

NATO's estimates [of Russian involvement] ... are so fantastical in range, that they suggest there is an entire Russian armored division fighting in Ukraine, perhaps even two, that have gone unnoticed by U.S. satellites. ...

The [Brookings] authors also advocate for strategic air defense, even though one of the few areas where Ukraine's military remains effective is precisely in air defense. ... [and] no airpower has been used by Russia in this war [so that's useless anyway]. ...

The real problem is that many of Ukraine's munitions are long past their service lives, the United States has no replacements for them or a quick fix for the lack of training and experience amongst Ukraine's soldiers. The administration was right in arguing that any weapon we provide will be matched by Russia, escalating the conflict with no advantage gained for Ukraine. ...

The [Brookings] authors keenly argue for the provision of armored Humvees, a piece of equipment not only long derided by U.S. troops and due for replacement, but also an unnecessary recommendation in light of Ukraine's advanced defense industry. Ukraine is highly capable and proficient at producing indigenous lightly armored vehicles and heavy tanks. This is

actually Ukraine's defense industry's area of expertise.

Bottom line: If Obama sends weapons, like [Brookings advises \\$3 billion worth](#), it'll get the U.S. into a "proxy war" against Russia, and one that we'll almost certainly lose (along with that \$3 billion of expenses paid to U.S. arms-makers by us taxpayers).

For once: a real military expert, who's something more than just a salesman for Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, GE, and other eager manufacturers of killing-machines.

For once: a patriotic American in Washington. Probably this scathing report he wrote on the Establishment's new proposal for wasting another \$3 billion to kill people (specifically [to kill the residents in the Donbass](#) region of the former Ukraine) will prevent Michael Kofman from rising any further. He's not doing his sell-job for the privateers; he's doing his advisory job for the public, but in a country that's being run for the benefit of its aristocracy, *not* of its public. (The public are here only to pay taxes to fund the aristocracy's ventures — in this case its next invasion.)

Will Michael Kofman end up in the breadlines, while the authors of the Brookings report end up in the headlines, and inside the White House? What would a President Elizabeth Warren, or a President Bernie Sanders, say about that? Of course, no one knows, but virtually all of the other prospective Presidential candidates would probably love to preside over more opportunities to "protect" "allies," such as Ukraine's ravenous oligarchs, who are already stripping that entire country clean — but they're 'America's friends.'

As for [the residents of Donbass](#): they get in the way of Obama's plans — such as to [place nuclear missiles right next door to Russia](#).

*Investigative historian **Eric Zuesse** is the author, most recently, of [They're Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST'S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).*

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