

NATO Isn't Defending Ukraine. It's Stabbing It in the Back

The US and its allies are sustaining the very war they now cite as grounds for disqualifying Kyiv from Nato membership

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The [Nato](#) summit in Lithuania this week served only to underscore the utter hypocrisy of western leaders in [pursuing](#) their proxy [war in Ukraine](#) to "weaken" [Russia](#) and oust its president, Vladimir Putin.

Both the [US](#) and Germany had made clear before the summit that they would [block](#) Ukraine's admission to Nato while it was in the midst of a war with Russia. That message was formally [announced](#) by Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [fumed](#) that Nato had reached an "absurd" decision and was demonstrating "weakness". British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace lost no time in [rebuking](#) him for a lack of "gratitude".

The concern is that, if Kyiv joins the military alliance at this stage, Nato members will be required to leap to Ukraine's defence and fight Russia directly. Most western states balk at the notion of a face-to-face confrontation with a nuclear-armed Russia - rather than the current proxy one, paid for exclusively in Ukrainian blood.

But there is a more duplicitous subtext being obscured: the fact that Nato is responsible for sustaining the war it now cites as grounds for disqualifying Ukraine from joining the military alliance. Nato got Kyiv into its current, bloody mess - but isn't ready to help it find a way out.

It was Nato, after all, that chose to flirt openly with Ukraine from 2008 onwards, promising it eventual membership - with the undisguised hope that one day, the [alliance](#) would be able to flex its military muscles menacingly on Russia's doorstep.

It was the [UK](#) that intervened weeks after Russia's invasion in February 2022, and presumably on Washington's orders, to [scupper](#) negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow - [talks](#) that could have ended the war at an early stage, before Russia began seizing territories in eastern Ukraine.

A deal then would have been much simpler than one now. Most likely, it would have required Kyiv to commit to neutrality, rather than pursuing covert [integration](#) into Nato. Moscow would have demanded, too, an end to the Ukrainian government's [political](#), [legal](#) and [military](#) attacks on its Russian-speaking populations in the east.

Now the chief sticking point to an agreement will be persuading the Kremlin to trust the West and reverse its [annexation](#) of eastern Ukraine, assuming Nato ever allows Kyiv to re-engage in talks with Russia.

And finally, it is Nato members, especially the US, that have been shipping out vast quantities of military hardware to prolong the fighting in Ukraine - keeping the [death toll](#) mounting on both sides.

Damp Squib

In short, Nato is now using the very war it has done everything to fuel as a pretext to stop Ukraine from joining the alliance.

Seen another way, the message Nato has sent Moscow is that Russia made exactly the right decision to invade - if the goal, as Putin has always maintained, is to ensure Kyiv remains neutral.

It is the war that has prevented Ukraine from being completely enfolded in the western military alliance. It is the war that has stopped Ukraine's transformation into a Nato forward base, one where the West could station nuclear-tipped [missiles](#) minutes from Moscow.

Had Russia not invaded, Kyiv would have been free to accelerate what it was already doing secretly: integrating into Nato. So what is Zelensky supposed to conclude from his exclusion from Nato, after he committed his country to an ongoing war rather than negotiations and neutrality?

So far, Ukraine's much-vaunted "spring counter-offensive" has turned into a damp squib, [despite](#) western media spin about "slow progress". Moscow is holding on to the Ukrainian territories it annexed.

So long as Kyiv can't "win the war" - and it seems it can't, unless Nato is willing to fight Russia directly and risk a nuclear confrontation - it will be precluded from the military alliance. Catch-22.

Do not expect this conundrum to be highlighted by a western establishment media that seems incapable of doing anything other than regurgitating Nato press releases and cheering on bigger profits for the West's war industries.

War Crimes

Another such conundrum is the Biden administration's decision last week to supply Ukraine with [cluster munitions](#) - small bomblets that, when they fail to explode, lie concealed like

mini-landmines, killing and maiming civilians for decades. In some cases, as many as a third are “duds”, detonating weeks, months or years later.

Washington’s move follows Britain recently supplying Ukraine with [depleted uranium shells](#), which contaminate surrounding areas with a radioactive dust during and after fighting. Evidence from areas such as [Iraq](#), where the US and Britain fired large numbers of these shells, suggests the [fallout](#) can include a decades-long spike in cancer and birth defects.

The White House was all too ready to denounce the use of cluster bombs as a war crime [last year](#) – when it was Russia that stood accused of using them. Now it is Washington enabling Kyiv to commit those very same war crimes.

More than 110 states – not including the US, of course – have ratified a 2008 international [convention](#) outlawing cluster munitions. Many are in Nato.

Given the high “dud” rate of US cluster bombs, President Joe Biden appears to be breaking US law in shipping stocks to Ukraine. The White House can invoke an exemption only if [exporting](#) such weapons satisfies a “vital US national security interest”. Apparently, Biden believes “weakening” Russia – and turning parts of Ukraine into a death zone for civilians for decades to come – qualifies as just such a vital interest.

Desperate Stop Gap

While the official story is that this latest escalatory move by the US will help Kyiv “win the war”, the truth is rather different. Biden has not shied away from admitting that Ukraine – and Nato – are running out of conventional arms to fight Russia. This is a desperate stop-gap [measure](#).

While most Nato members might be signatories to the convention on banning cluster munitions, they appear more than willing to turn a blind eye to Washington’s decision. Germany’s president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who signed the convention in his earlier role as foreign minister, said this week that Berlin should not block the US shipment [because](#) to do so “would be the end of Ukraine”.

In other words, the resort to cluster munitions is an admission that it is Kyiv and its Nato partners – not Moscow – that have been weakened militarily by the war.

Once again, a supposedly “humanitarian war” by the West – remember Afghanistan, Iraq, [Libya](#) and [Syria](#) – is becoming the opposite. Like every previous weapon delivered to Ukraine, the cluster bombs are being supplied to postpone the inevitable: the need for Kyiv to engage in talks with Moscow to end the fighting.

And every day such talks are delayed, Ukraine loses more of its fighting men, and potentially more of its territory.

Horrors of Cluster Bombs

It is not as though Washington or the rest of Nato are unaware of the effects of using cluster bombs. The US is [estimated](#) to have dropped 270 million of them on Laos during its “secret war” on that country more than half a century ago. Up to 80 million of them did not detonate.

Since the bombing ended in 1973, at least 25,000 people – 40 percent of them children – are reported to have been killed or injured by these small [landmines](#) littered across Laos's territory.

More recently, the US used cluster munitions in its invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Hun Sen, the prime minister of Cambodia, which was bombed alongside Laos by the US during the Vietnam War, reminded the world this week of the horrors in store. He noted that, half a century on, Cambodia had still not found a way to destroy all the explosives: "The real victims will be Ukrainians," [he said](#).

But that warning is likely to fall on deaf ears in Ukraine. Zelensky, a leader who has been all but beatified by the western media, is no stranger to the use of cluster bombs. Though journalists prefer to mention their use by Russia only, [human rights](#) groups have documented Kyiv's firing of [cluster munitions](#) on its own population in eastern Ukraine since 2014.

The need to protect Russian-speaking communities in eastern Ukraine from their own government – and from Ukrainian ultra-nationalists in the Ukrainian military – was one of the main reasons given by Moscow for launching its invasion. The New York Times reported Kyiv [using](#) cluster bombs last year on a small Ukrainian village in the country's east.

According to an investigation by Human Rights Watch, Ukrainian forces also fired cluster munitions on the Ukrainian town of Iziom last year, [killing](#) at least eight civilians and wounding 15 others.

Given this history, Washington would be foolish to take at face value reassurances from the Zelensky government that US supplies of cluster bombs will be fired only on Russian troops. All the evidence indicates that they will likely be used on civilian areas in eastern Ukraine too.

Double Standard

Publicly, European leaders are trying to salve their consciences by implying that there are exceptional justifications for providing cluster munitions to Kyiv. The bomblets are supposedly essential if Ukraine is to defend its territory against Russian aggression and occupation.

But if that is really Nato's yardstick, then there is another exceptional, oppressed state in no less need of such munitions: [Palestine](#).

Like Ukraine, the Palestinians have had their territory seized by an implacable foe. And like Ukraine, the Palestinians face continuous military attacks by an [occupying](#) army.



[Source](#)

Occupation forces always end up committing war crimes, as Russia's have. The United Nations [accuses](#) the Russian army of rapes, killings and torture, and attacks on civilian infrastructure.

The commission of war crimes is inherent in the task of invading another people's sovereign territory and subduing the local population, as the US and UK proved in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Undoubtedly, both Israel and Russia's actions are causing untold suffering. But where there are differences, they reflect worse on Israel than Russia.

[Israel](#)'s occupation has lasted many decades longer than Russia's, and it has throughout those years continued to commit war crimes, including creating hundreds of illegal, armed settlements exclusively for Jews on Palestinian land.

Further, there was an existing civil war in Ukraine that had [killed](#) more than 14,000 Ukrainians before Russia invaded. At least a proportion of Ukrainians - largely its ethnic Russian population in the east - welcomed Moscow's intervention, at least initially. It would be hard to find a Palestinian who wants Israel or its settlers occupying their land.

Is anyone in Nato considering supplying cluster munitions to the Palestinians to defend themselves? Would Nato endorse Palestinians firing cluster bombs at Israeli military bases or at militarised settlements in the occupied West Bank?

And would Nato accept Palestinian reassurances that such munitions would not be fired into Israel, just as it has accepted Ukrainian assurances that they won't be fired into Russia?

These questions answer themselves. In the case of the Palestinians, western states don't

just apply a double standard. They even echo Israel in condemning Palestinian conventional attacks on Israeli forces.

Dangerous Delusions

But the hypocrisies do not end there. Annalena Baerbock, Germany's hawkish foreign minister, [wrote](#) in the Guardian last week that her country had made a mistake in pursuing a policy of what she called "chequebook diplomacy".

Berlin, she added, had naively believed that political and economic interaction with the West would "sway the Russian regime toward democracy". Instead, she concluded that "Putin's Russia will remain a threat to peace and security on our continent and that we have to organise our security against Putin's Russia, not with it."

Europe's path forward, Baerbock suggests, is limited to either a forever war against Russia or imposing regime change on the Kremlin. All of this is dangerous nonsense. The fact that self-serving, delusional analysis of this kind is [echoed](#) so uncritically by western media should be a stain on its reputation.

Baerbock implies that it was Moscow that rebuffed "our efforts to construct a European security architecture with Russia". But Russia was never offered a meaningful place within Europe's security umbrella after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

That contrasts strongly with West Germany's treatment after the Second World War. With the Nazi regime barely gone, Germany received massive US aid via the [Marshall Plan](#) to rebuild its economy and infrastructure, and it was soon embraced by Nato as a bulwark against the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was handled very differently. It was not viewed as an opportunity to bring Russia into the fold.

Instead, the US and its western allies denied Russia both a proper aid plan and the cancellation of Soviet-era debts. The West preferred to prop up a weak president, Boris Yeltsin, [insisting](#) he commit to "shock therapy" privatisation that left the Russian economy open to asset-stripping by a new class of oligarchs.

Nefarious Ambitions

While Russia was being hollowed out economically, Washington hurried to isolate its historic rival militarily and [bring](#) former Soviet states into the US "sphere of influence" via Nato. Successive US administrations developed and zealously pursued a hubristic foreign policy known as "full-spectrum global dominance" [against](#) its main great-power rivals, Russia and [China](#).

Putin's popularity among Russians grew the more he posed – often only rhetorically – as the strongman who would stop Nato's expansion to Russia's borders.

Contrary to Baerbock's suggestions, Moscow wasn't wooed by a Nato "chequebook". It was gradually and systematically cornered. It was turned, bit by bit, into a pariah.

This isn't the assessment simply of "Putin apologists". Nato's strategy was understood and warned against in real time by some of the biggest figures in US foreign policy-making –

from George Kennan, the father of US Cold War [policy](#), to William [Burns](#), the current CIA director.

In 2007, as US ambassador to Moscow, Burns wrote a diplomatic cable – later revealed by [Wikileaks](#) – arguing that “Nato enlargement and U.S. missile defense deployments in Europe play to the classic Russian fear of encirclement”. Months later, Burns [warned](#) that offering Ukraine Nato membership would place Moscow in an “unthinkable” predicament.

Washington simply ignored these endless warnings from its own officials, because maintaining peace and stability in Europe was not its goal. Permanently isolating and “weakening” Russia was.

The Biden administration understands it is playing with fire. Last year, in a remark most likely unscripted, the president himself invoked the danger of Russia, faced with a defeat in Ukraine it viewed in existential terms, unleashing a nuclear “[Armageddon](#)”.

Tragically, Nato’s malevolence, deceit and betrayal means that the only alternative to Armageddon may be Ukraine’s downfall – and with it, the crushing of Washington’s nefarious ambitions to advance full-spectrum global dominance.

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