

NATO Reaffirms Its Bogus “Russian Invasion” Narrative

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Global Research, July 13, 2016

[Consortium News](#) 11 July 2016

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [Military and WMD](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

President Obama and NATO leaders signed on to the false narrative of a minding-its-own-business West getting sucker-punched by a bunch of Russian meanies, a storyline that suggests insanity or lies, reports Robert Parry.

It's unnerving to realize that the NATO alliance – bristling with an unprecedented array of weapons including a vast nuclear arsenal – has lost its collective mind. Perhaps it's more reassuring to think that NATO simply feels compelled to publicly embrace its deceptive “[strategic communications](#)” so gullible Western citizens will be kept believing its lies are truth.

But here were the leaders of major Western “democracies” lining up to endorse a Warsaw Summit Communiqué condemning “Russia’s aggressive actions” while knowing that these claims were unsupported by their own intelligence agencies.



President Barack Obama walks from Marine One on arrival on the White House’s South Lawn, July 5, 2016, a few days before leaving to attend the NATO Summit in Warsaw, Poland. Official White House photo by Lawrence Jackson

The leaders – at least the key ones – know that there is no credible intelligence that Russian President Vladimir Putin provoked the Ukraine crisis in 2014 or that he has any plans to invade the Baltic states, despite the fact that nearly every “important person” in Official Washington and other Western capitals declares the opposite of this to be reality.

But there have been a few moments when the truth has surfaced. For instance, in the days

leading up to the just-completed NATO summit in Warsaw, General Petr Pavel, chairman of the NATO Military Committee, divulged that the deployment of NATO military battalions in the Baltic states was a political, rather than military, act.

“It is not the aim of NATO to create a military barrier against broad-scale Russian aggression, because such aggression is not on the agenda and no intelligence assessment suggests such a thing,” Pavel [told](#) a news conference.

What Pavel blurted out was what I have been told by intelligence sources over the past two-plus years – that the endless drumbeat of Western media reports about “Russian aggression” results from a clever demonization campaign against Putin and a classic Washington “group think” rather than from a careful intelligence analysis.

Ironically, however, just days after the release of the British Chilcot report documenting how a similar propaganda campaign led the world into the disastrous Iraq War – with its deadly consequences still reverberating through a destabilized Mideast and into an unnerved Europe – NATO reenacts the basic failure of that earlier catastrophe, except now upping the ante into a confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia.

The Warsaw communiqué – signed by leaders including President Barack Obama, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande and British Prime Minister David Cameron – ignores the reality of what happened in Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014 and thus generates an inside-out narrative.

Instead of reprising the West’s vacuous propaganda themes, Obama and the other leaders could have done something novel and told the truth, but that apparently is outside their operating capabilities. So they all signed on to the dangerous lie.

What Really Happened

The real narrative based on actual facts would have acknowledged that it was the West, not Russia, that instigated the Ukraine crisis by engineering the violent overthrow of elected President Viktor Yanukovich and the imposition of a new Western-oriented regime hostile to Moscow and Ukraine’s ethnic Russians.



Russian President Vladimir Putin addresses a crowd on May 9, 2014, celebrating the 69th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany and the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Crimean port city of Sevastopol from the Nazis. (Russian government photo)

In late 2013, it was the European Union that was pushing an economic association agreement with Ukraine, which included the International Monetary Fund's demands for imposing harsh austerity on Ukraine's already suffering population. Political and propaganda support for the E.U. plan was financed, in part, by the U.S. government through such agencies as the National Endowment for Democracy and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

When Yanukovich recoiled at the IMF's terms and opted for a more generous \$15 billion aid package from Putin, the U.S. government threw its public support behind mass demonstrations aimed at overthrowing Yanukovich and replacing him with a new regime that would sign the E.U. agreement and accept the IMF's demands.

As the crisis deepened in early 2014, Putin was focused on the Sochi Winter Olympics, particularly the threat of terrorist attacks on the games. No evidence has been presented that Putin was secretly trying to foment the Ukraine crisis. Indeed, all the evidence is that Putin was trying to protect the status quo, support the elected president and avert a worse crisis.

It would be insane to suggest that Putin somehow orchestrated the E.U.'s destabilizing attempt to pull Ukraine into the association agreement, that he then stage-managed the anti-Yanukovich violence of the Maidan protests, that he collaborated with neo-Nazi and other ultra-nationalist militias to kill Ukrainian police and chase Yanukovich from Kiev, and that he then arranged for Yanukovich to be replaced by a wildly anti-Russian regime - all while pretending to do the opposite of all these things.

In the real world, the narrative was quite different: Moscow supported Yanukovich's efforts to reach a political compromise, including a European-brokered agreement for early elections and reduced presidential powers. Yet, despite those concessions, neo-Nazi militias surged to the front of the U.S.-backed protests on Feb. 22, 2014, forcing Yanukovich and many of his officials to run for their lives. The U.S. State Department quickly recognized the coup regime as "legitimate" as did other NATO allies.

On a personal note, I am sometimes criticized by conspiracy theorists for not accepting their fact-free claims about nefarious schemes supposedly dreamed up by U.S. officials, but frankly as baseless as some of those wacky stories can be, they sound sensible when compared with the West's loony conspiracy theory about Putin choreographing the Ukraine coup.

Yet, that baseless conspiracy theory roped in supposedly serious thinkers, such as New York Times columnist Paul Krugman, who conjured up the notion that Putin stirred up this trouble so he could pull off a land grab and/or distract Russians from their economic problems.

"Delusions of easy winnings still happen," Krugman wrote in a 2014 [column](#). "It's only a guess, but it seems likely that Vladimir Putin thought that he could overthrow Ukraine's government, or at least seize a large chunk of its territory, on the cheap, a bit of deniable aid to the rebels, and it would fall into his lap. ...

Recently Justin Fox of the Harvard Business Review [suggested](#) that the roots of the Ukraine crisis may lie in the faltering performance of the Russian economy. As he noted, Mr. Putin's hold on power partly reflects a long run of rapid economic growth. But Russian growth has been sputtering, and you could

argue that the Putin regime needed a distraction.

Midwifing This Thing

Or, rather than “a guess,” Krugman could have looked at the actual facts, such as the work of neocon Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland conspiring to organize a coup that would put her hand-picked Ukrainians in charge of Russia’s neighbor. Several weeks before the putsch, Nuland was caught plotting the “regime change” in an [intercepted phone call](#) with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt.



Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, who pushed for the Ukraine coup and helped pick the post-coup leaders.

Regarding who should replace Yanukovich, Nuland’s choice was Arseniy “Yats is the guy” Yatsenyuk. The phone call went on to muse about how they could “glue this thing” and “midwife this thing.” After the coup was glued or midwifed on Feb. 22, 2014, Yatsenyuk emerged as the new prime minister and then shepherded through the IMF austerity plan.

Since the coup regime in Kiev also took provocative steps against the ethnic Russians, such as the parliament voting to ban Russian as an official language and allowing neo-Nazi extremists to slaughter anti-coup protesters, ethnic Russian resistance arose in the east and south. That shouldn’t have been much of a surprise since eastern Ukraine had been Yanukovich’s political base and stood to lose the most from Ukraine’s economic orientation toward Europe and reduced economic ties to Russia.

Yet, instead of recognizing the understandable concerns of the eastern Ukrainians, the Western media portrayed the ethnic Russians as simply Putin’s pawns with no minds of their own. The U.S.-backed regime in Kiev launched what was called an “Anti-Terrorist Operation” against them, spearheaded by the neo-Nazi militias.

In Crimea – another area heavily populated with ethnic Russians and with a long history of association with Russia – voters opted by 96 percent in a referendum to secede from Ukraine and rejoin Russia, a process supported by Russian troops stationed in Crimea under a prior agreement with Ukraine’s government.

There was no Russian “invasion,” as The New York Times and other mainstream U.S. news

outlets claimed. The Russian troops were already in Crimea assigned to Russia's historic Black Sea naval base at Sevastopol. Putin agreed to Crimea's annexation partly out of fear that the naval base would otherwise fall into NATO's hands and pose a strategic threat to Russia.

But the key point regarding the crazy Western conspiracy theory about Putin provoking the crisis so he could seize territory or distract Russians from economic troubles is that Putin only annexed Crimea because of the ouster of Yanukovich and the installation of a Russia-hating regime in Kiev. If Yanukovich had not been overthrown, there is no reason to think that Putin would have done anything regarding Crimea or Ukraine.

Yet, once the false narrative got rolling, there was no stopping it. The New York Times, The Washington Post and other leading Western publications played the same role that they did during the run-up to the Iraq invasion, accepting the U.S. government's propaganda as fact and marginalizing the few independent journalists who dared go against the grain.

Though Obama, Merkel and other key leaders know how deceptive the Western propaganda has been, they have become captives to their governments' own lies. For them to deviate substantially from the Official Story would open them to harsh criticism from the powerful neoconservatives and their allied media outlets.

Even a slight contradiction to NATO's "strategic communications" brought down harsh criticism on German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier after he said: "What we shouldn't do now is inflame the situation further through saber-rattling and warmongering. ... Whoever believes that a symbolic tank parade on the alliance's eastern border will bring security is mistaken."

Excoriating Russia

So, at the Warsaw conference, the false NATO narrative had to be reaffirmed — and it was. The communiqué [declared](#), "Russia's aggressive actions, including provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory and its demonstrated willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force, are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. ...



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg opens the NATO Warsaw Summit in Poland, July 8, 2016. NATO heads of state agreed to send reinforced, multinational battalions to the eastern part of the alliance's border with Russia. "These battalions will be robust and

multinational,” Stoltenberg said. (NATO photo)

Russia’s destabilising actions and policies include: the ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognise and which we call on Russia to reverse; the violation of sovereign borders by force; the deliberate destabilisation of eastern Ukraine; large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders, including in the Baltic and Black Sea regions and the Eastern Mediterranean; its irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military concept and underlying posture; and its repeated violations of NATO Allied airspace.

In addition, Russia’s military intervention, significant military presence and support for the regime in Syria, and its use of its military presence in the Black Sea to project power into the Eastern Mediterranean have posed further risks and challenges for the security of Allies and others.

In the up-is-down world that NATO and other Western agencies now inhabit, Russia’s military maneuvers within its own borders in reaction to NATO maneuvers along Russia’s borders are “provocative.” So, too, is Russia’s support for the internationally recognized government of Syria, which is under attack from Islamic terrorists and other armed rebels supported by the West’s Mideast allies, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and NATO member Turkey.

In other words, it is entirely all right for NATO and its members to invade countries at will, including Iraq, Libya and Syria, and subvert others as happened in Ukraine and is still happening in Syria. But it is impermissible for any government outside of NATO to respond or even defend itself. To do so amounts to a provocation against NATO – and such hypocrisy is accepted by the West’s mainstream news media as the way that the world was meant to be.

And those of us who dare point out the lies and double standards must be “Moscow stooges,” just as those of us who dared question the Iraq WMD tales were dismissed as “Saddam apologists” in 2003.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, America’s Stolen Narrative, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

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