

Shock and Awe: Then and Now. “Two Decades of Death and Destruction at the Hands of the U.S. Military”

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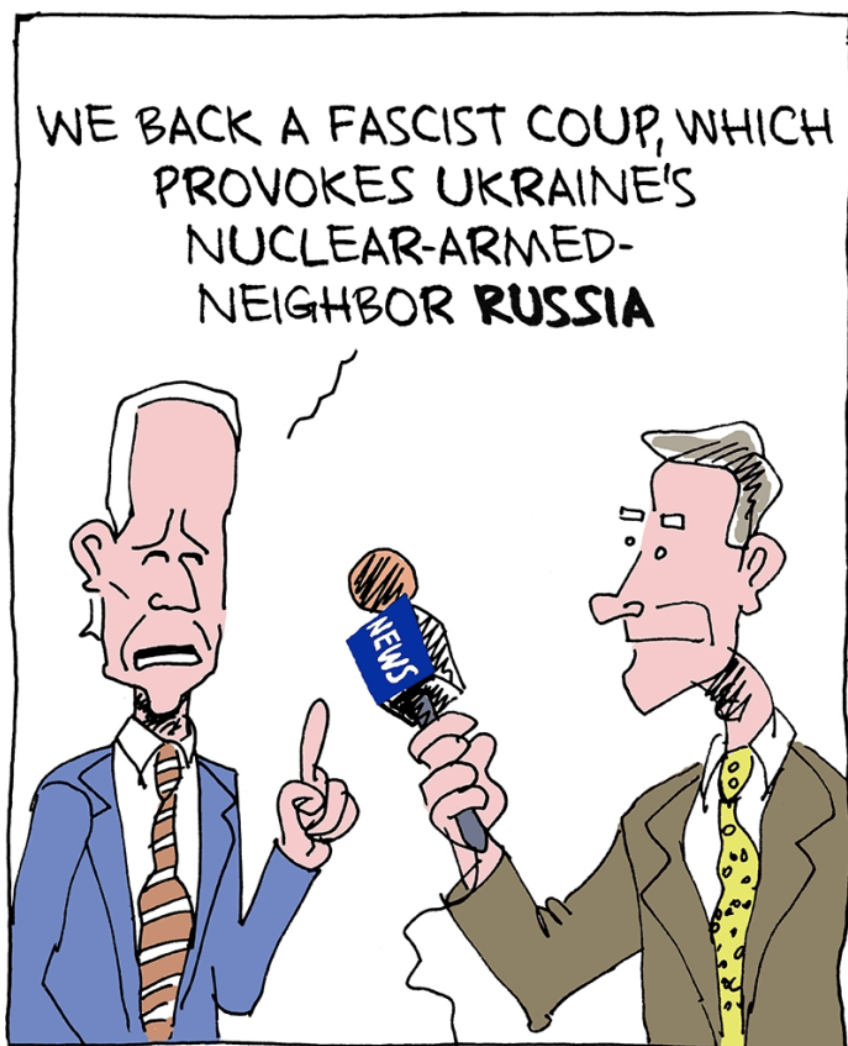
“Shock and awe” was George Bush senior’s name for his “Desert Storm” attack on Iraq in 1990 – 91. A [United Nations report](#) described the effect on Iraq as “near apocalyptic,” sending Iraq back to the “pre-industrial age.” But it wasn’t enough. After a decade of sanctions against Iraq, which further decimated the country and its people, George Bush junior launched a new invasion in 2003. Together with a parallel war in Afghanistan, the world has seen two decades of wholesale death and destruction at the hands of the U.S. military, at a cost of [trillions](#) and [countless deaths](#) estimated between one and two million.

When the savagery of the U.S. war was exposed by Wikileaks and Chelsea Manning, the official U.S. reaction was to demonize the whistle blowers, as if they were terrorists. Commenting on official U.S. hysterical condemnations of Russia and U.S. coverups of its own aggression elsewhere, Margaret Kimberley of *Black Agenda Report* [writes](#) that “it is the white supremacist underpinnings of U.S./NATO foreign policy which has created all of Ukraine’s suffering. The narrative that only white people deserve peace and security is all the more shameful because the global south suffers from war and privation as a direct result of U.S./NATO actions. It is NATO that destroyed the nation of Libya, NATO which attempted to do the same in Syria, NATO that occupied Afghanistan, NATO which wages war across [African countries](#) with U.S., French and British troops deployed across the continent.”

Kimberley adds that

“Ukraine has been pushed to the forefront of American thought in order to defend the imperialist foreign policy which led to the current conflict with Russia. If the blue eyed nation is suffering it is because of U.S. and NATO arrogance and aggression. Ukraine’s current situation is a direct result of the 2014 coup engineered by the U.S. and its EU partners. An elected president was dispatched and a civil war began that has killed some 14,000 people. Ukraine is a U.S. colony with a puppet government now under

military attack.”



Cartoon courtesy of [Patreon/Tim Murphy](#)

John Mearsheimer, a leading proponent of the “realist school” of international relations, echoes Kimberley on the cause of the current crisis. In 2014, after the coup that brought far-right Ukrainians to power, Mearsheimer wrote that “the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for this crisis.” He [told the New Yorker](#)

“all the trouble in this case really started in April 2008, at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, where afterward NATO issued a statement that said Ukraine and Georgia would become part of NATO. The Russians made it unequivocally clear at the time that they viewed this as an existential threat, and they drew a line in the sand.”

The war toll in Ukraine is lower than all the earlier NATO interventions. Despite intense war hysteria and propaganda, [the BBC admitted on February 28](#) that many of the viral claims about “Russian atrocities” are false. The UN Human Rights office [said](#) March 8 it had verified 1,335 civilian casualties in Ukraine—474 killed and 861 injured—since February 24. (This does not include more in recent days.)

In the Donbass, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [found](#) that more than 14,000 people had been killed between 2014 and early 2022, with another 50,000 non-fatal casualties. About two million Ukrainian refugees have escaped to Poland and other European countries. Another million eastern Ukrainians have been evacuated to Russia,

which is seldom reported in western mainstream media.

Official U.S. government claims—echoed by the mainstream media—of global condemnation of Russia are not validated by reality. Much of the global south, led by China, India, Pakistan, middle eastern and African countries, and a substantial number of Latin American ones, have “abstained” from the avalanche of condemnations of Russia by the U.S. and its European allies.

The U.S. is waging a new “shock and awe” campaign, shipping countless tons of war material, mobilizing neo-fascist “volunteers” to join an “insurgency” against Russia, and urging NATO ally Poland to lend Soviet era bombers to Ukraine. President Zelensky of Ukraine is demanding a “no fly zone,” with strong support from many U.S. members of Congress. That would mean U.S. fighter jets shooting down Russian aircraft—“it means starting World War III,” according to Senator Marco Rubio.

Sanctions threaten global economy

Sweeping sanctions imposed on Russia by the U.S. and western Europe threaten the global economy. The Biden administration has imposed an embargo on Russian oil, frozen Moscow’s central bank assets and attempted to cut off most Russian banks from the SWIFT bank transfer system, not including the banks European countries use to pay for Russian gas they urgently need. All civilian air traffic between Europe and Russia has ended, and shipments of virtually all commerce to and from Russia have been frozen. U.S. and European companies have pulled out of Russia, with uncertain consequences.

Who gets hurt by this shock and awe campaign? It may be too early to tell. Starvation looms in north Africa, which depends on wheat from Russia and Ukraine. The COVID19 pandemic paralyzed the economies of many countries. As they struggle now to recover, this new hit could be a knockout blow. Gasoline prices and general inflation are skyrocketing everywhere.

European countries may not continue going along with the sanctions. Economist Michael Hudson argues the U.S. war on Russia is actually a U.S. war on Europe, to keep the EU subordinated to U.S. capital. Now European industry is shutting down as energy prices soar due to sanctions. [Hudson says](#) U.S. sanctions aim to “prevent America’s NATO and other Western allies from opening up more trade and investment with Russia and China,” to keep them “firmly within America’s own economic orbit.”

To offset the loss of Russian oil on the global market, the U.S. is rushing to reopen negotiations with Iran and Venezuela. This is a sign of over-extension: one set of U.S. sanctions complicates or even cancels others.

Russia offers ceasefire and peace talks

On March 7, [Reuters reported](#) that Russia offered to immediately cease hostilities—to end its military actions “in a moment”—if Ukraine and the West would do four things:

- Cease military action as part of a wider ceasefire;
- Change Ukraine’s constitution to enshrine neutrality, and pledge to stay out of NATO;
- Acknowledge Crimea as Russian territory;
- Recognize the separatist republics of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent

states.

A [New York Times report on March 10](#) said “talks fail to stop the fighting.” Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said Russia remained open to talks, suggesting a meeting between the presidents. Lavrov highlighted Ukrainian President Zelensky’s recent comments that he was prepared to make concessions over Ukraine’s aspirations to join NATO to stop the war.

“We are ready to discuss security guarantees for the Ukrainian state along with security guarantees for European countries and, of course, for the security of Russia,” Mr. Lavrov said. “And the fact that now, judging by the public statements of President Zelensky, an understanding of just such an approach is beginning to take shape, inspires a certain optimism.” *The Times* reported that the White House press secretary said “the United States also speaks to Mr. Putin’s interlocutors before and after all these conversations.”

Medea Benjamin and Nicholas Davies [report](#) that after President Zelensky’s election in 2019, Ukraine’s extreme right [threatened him](#) with removal from office, or even death, if he negotiated with separatist leaders from Donbas and followed through on the Minsk Protocol, which would grant autonomy to the Donbas region. Zelensky had run for election as a “peace candidate,” but under threat from the right, he [refused](#) to even talk to Donbas leaders, whom he dismissed as terrorists.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky shakes hands with neo-Nazi militia commander. [Source: thegrayzone.com]

[John Mearsheimer said](#) he thinks “the Russians would be willing to live with a neutral Ukraine, and that it won’t be necessary for Moscow to have any meaningful control over the government in Kyiv... They just want a regime that is neutral and not pro-American.”

A role for China?

U.S. Secretary of State Blinken has called Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi numerous times during this crisis, pressing China to use its leverage on Russia. Each time the Chinese have emphasized “rock-solid” friendship with Russia. Wang told *Global Times* March 10, “we would like to see an early ceasefire and cessation of fighting, which is also the common aspiration of the international community.”

The *Global Times* report said “the major consensus reached by Chinese, French and German leaders during a virtual summit” was “the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter must be fully observed, the legitimate security concerns of all countries must be taken seriously, and all efforts that are conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis must be supported.”

Concerning the three rounds of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, Wang said that although there remain obvious differences between the two sides, the differences will be reduced each time the two speak, the hope for peace will increase, and the goal of a ceasefire and cessation of fighting will be further advanced. “China has put forward a six-point proposal to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Ukraine,” Wang said, “and is ready to step up communication with France and push the UN Security Council to reach a relevant consensus.” There was no comment on a possible mediator role for China.

A united anti-war movement?

The Ukraine crisis has taken its toll, at least for the moment, on the still modest forces of the U.S. and international antiwar movements, [according to Jeffrey Mackler](#), a founder and leader of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC). He said two poles are emerging with counterposed strategic conceptions. “In the U.S., a growing minority, perhaps a majority, feels compelled to denounce with equal fervor both sides, Russia on the one, and U.S./NATO on the other.” In sharp contrast, he said, “organizations representing the major antiwar coalitions demand: ‘No to U.S./NATO War in Ukraine! No wars with Russia! No sanctions! No to NATO and NATO expansion’—a central cause of the present crisis—and, ‘Fund human needs, education, housing, the environment and healthcare, not war!’”

That group includes UNAC, Black Alliance for Peace, ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and Eliminate Racism), CodePink, International Action Center, Popular Resistance, U.S. Peace Council, Black Agenda Report, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Veterans For Peace, World Without War, and Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space.

These groups agree that “the U.S. imperialist government, with 1,100 military bases around the world in 110 countries is by far the world’s greatest purveyor of force and violence. This all-encompassing violence includes an Orwellian-like U.S. and worldwide surveillance system, cyber wars aimed at disrupting or disabling vital communication and power generating systems, drone wars, sanction wars against 40 nations, embargo-blockade wars, CIA Special Operation wars, death squad assassination wars and open military interventions aimed at ‘regime change’ and conquest.

It also includes wars of multi-lateral UN-sponsored ‘humanitarian’ interventions in the name of “democracy” as is the case of the present US/UN occupation of Haiti.”

Michael Hudson adds that “the aim of U.S. sanctions is to keep the world oil trade firmly under U.S. control, because oil is energy and energy is the key to productivity and real GDP.”

“U.S. imperialism lit the fuse that ignited and sustains the present war in Ukraine,” Mackler concludes. “The U.S. antiwar movement’s simple demand ‘U.S./NATO Out Now!’ remains central to its future success.” He calls for a united front, democratic and mass action antiwar movement capable of defeating the U.S. warfare state’s endless atrocities. “U.S. working people, allied with the nation’s oppressed and exploited have a key role to play in the coming struggles.”

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