

Thoughts on the Endgame in Ukraine

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Today, the dangers of military escalation are beyond description.

What is now happening in Ukraine has serious geopolitical implications. It could lead us into a World War III scenario.

It is important that a peace process be initiated with a view to preventing escalation.

Global Research does not support Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

A Bilateral Peace Agreement is required.

As my time in Russia draws towards an end – just three days to go before I start the long journey home, after over three weeks here already – I want to share with readers of my Facebook page a few wrap-up thoughts. I know I will be trolled for this by people including some who in other respects I like and admire, but I will block them. I honestly don’t care any more – angry and ill-informed words no longer affect me.

By coincidence I have been travelling in northwestern Russia during the past tumultuous three weeks in world history: in the cradle of modern Russia, visiting important sites in Russia’s history as a nation-state and in her cultural heritage – Pskov, Pushkinskie Gory, and the major cities Saint Petersburg and Moscow. My evident growing physical weakness as a sole traveller of advanced years forced me to cancel more ambitious plans to visit Volgograd and Samara.

While I was here, the crisis in Ukraine and in East-West relations generally has escalated towards the current crunch moment in Kiev and Kharkov, which I hope and expect will find peaceful resolution within the next few days.

I was here under a special guest visa to give lectures in the Moscow Diplomatic Academy and the St Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences. I travelled at my own expense and according to my own plans.

It has been uniquely bizarre to watch from here, as someone who now feels personally very comfortable in Russia after three independent visits in 2016, 2018 and 2019, how Western elites have finally become so entrapped in their own false information warfare narrative on Ukraine that they can no longer see what is real and under their very noses: Russian military power, her determination, her moral strength that comes from knowing she is in the right.

After eight years of standing by and watching helplessly the vicious Ukronazi-driven cruelty towards the four million people of Donbass, and the Ukronazi intimidation of their many cowed and silent sympathisers across the rest of Ukraine, Russia finally acted on 24 February 2022. For Russians, this had been a running sore over eight years since the Maidan Square coup in Kiev in 2014, instigated by the United States.

The vicious artillery war started by the new President Poroshenko in May 2014 against the rebel mini states Donetsk and Lugansk went completely unreported in the West. What did western mainstream media editors think: that the great and proud cities of Donetsk and Lugansk with their four million Russian-speaking people and their memories of heroic defiance of Nazi invaders in 1941-45 were muddy little villages of no importance? And that their people's sufferings did not matter in the larger scheme of things? 13,000 dead here, over 100,000 homeless refugees from bombed-out apartment buildings and houses? And every few days, more lethal shells randomly raining down on these cities and villages? Data carefully recorded by OSCE peace monitors, but not a word about this in Western media. Ever. Not even now. Not a word either in Western media about the growing infiltration and embedment in the Ukrainian National Army and national administration of people who can accurately only be defined as Ukronazis – people who glory and commemorate with statues, flags and torchlight parades of angry young head-shaven men, the crimes committed by their grandfathers during and after WW2 – by people like like Bandera who allied with Hitler in pursuit of their nationalist dreams, who seized the opportunity to murder Jews, Poles, political opponents, anyone who stood in the way of their mad dream of a cohesive Ukrainian-speaking Ukraine with all other human elements removed or suppressed. They reject Ukraine's rich cultural heritage as the cradle of Russian Christianity and civilisation: they reject the rich diversity of today's multicultural Ukraine, with its Greeks, Jews, Tatars, Turks, Romanians, Hungarians, Moldovans – and above all its native Russian speakers, making up at least half or more of the population.

Since 2014, with American help and money, Ukraine has been refashioned as a nationalistic state, a deadly weapon aimed against Russia. The Ukronazis, never spoken about on the West, have been given an easy road towards power. Other elements in the national makeup have been intimidated and suppressed as a Ukrainian national identity has been imposed on a multicultural people. The message from nationalists has been – become part of our dream of Ukraine, or leave. We have no use for you, this is our land now.

The Russian Orthodox Church was penetrated and turned against the church centre in Moscow. A tragic schism has taken place.

Terrible events – above all, the torching by Ukronazis of the Odessa Trades Union Building in April 2014, and the burning to death of 45 peaceful protesters who had taken refuge inside – drove home the deterrent message of suppression of human rights. Do not resist us, you will

pay with your lives.

And the heroism of the people of Lugansk and Donetsk in saying no to such cruelty, in taking up arms to defend their vision of their homeland after Poroshenko in May 2014 ordered an all-out military assault on them – all this went unreported in the West.

For eight long years the Russian government tried to make the Minsk Accords peace process work. Kiev prevaricated and sneered, as the shells continued to rain down death on the rebel regions. And as the US and NATO pumped more and more weapons and instructors in terrorism and sabotage into Ukraine.

Finally in December last year, Russia had had enough. Putin tried to propose ambitious new principles for relations with the West, most importantly a pledge that Ukraine would never join NATO and the withdrawal of NATO weapons from Russia's borders. All to no avail. The West prevaricated, cherry-picked and sneered at Russia's peace proposals.

The west remains mired in its fantasy world of big bad aggressor Putin ruling his unhappy country with an iron fist. How totally untrue this narrative is, as I have tried to relate in my two books on Russia in 2017 and 2019.

Now, the real world of bombs and bullets, and the Western false narrative world of selective indignation and pointless 'how does it feel' fact-free journalism, finally have come together in jarring dissonance in Ukraine.

Colleagues Joe Lauria, Alexander Mercouris, Mark Sleboda, Scott Ritter and I spoke about this together in the excellent Consortium News panel broadcast on 25 Feb. We discussed the already blurring history of how this latest escalation began: on 18 February, with stepped up Ukrainian Army artillery shelling and advance to the line of contact with Donetsk and Lugansk with 60,000 battle-ready soldiers. With on 20 February the rebel leaders' final desperate appeal to Russia for protection against a coming genocidal onslaught on them. With the Russian Government's historic decision on 21 February to guarantee their military protection. Yet even then the shelling continued, and there was wild new talk from Kiev of acquiring their own nuclear deterrent weapons.

Finally, patience ended in Moscow. Something snapped. On 24 February, Putin announced the beginning of a limited special military operation to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine. Finally, there was no other way to lance the boil. NATO was determined to go on weaponising Ukraine against Russia. The Nazi-influenced regime in Kiev was determined to go on creating an anti-Russian national identity. Left unchecked, the strategic situation could only get worse in coming years. It had become a matter of Russia's national survival.

Now, heavy city-destroying weapons were flooding into Ukraine from the US: Biden's final provocative act of foolish irresponsibility. US and UK teams had come in, to train the Ukrainian Army in sabotage and terrorism: just as in Syria.

And the Western disinformation system now kicked into high gear its existing narrative settings, the fantasies of poor little democratic Ukraine under unprovoked – unprovoked! – attack by its big neighbour.

On 24 February, Putin carefully set out in the NSC the limits on the special operation: no attacks on Ukrainian civilians, US-supplied military systems the priority targets. Soldiers would be safe if they surrendered or remained in barracks. Ukronazi criminals would be

brought to justice. Russia would cooperate with a new government made up of decent Ukrainians who had quietly endured suppression for the past eight years.

Our panel's general view was that the war has gone well for Russia, with mercifully few casualties on either side. We considered that the real world will prevail in Kiev over the West's fantasy world, and quite soon too.

Yesterday morning – it came out in TASS and on the President's website late last night, but I watched and read it yesterday morning – came Putin's stunning public denunciation on day two of the war, of the Ukronazis' intent to use the army which they have infiltrated and civilians in Kiev and Kharkov residential areas as human shields in a Nazi style last stand. Putin said that foreign mainly American consultants are there advising them in such tactics. He said that the disciplined Russian Army would not let itself be put in the position of murderers of people who are in effect part of Russia's family. He called on responsible Kiev army elements to defy their fanatical embedded commissars, to lay down arms and provide interlocutors for ending the fighting honourably.

I will leave Moscow to fly home on 2 March, with three days in Phuket to transition before getting home to family peace and obscurity on 7 March. Irony alert – a prophet has no honour in his own country: certainly not in Australia. Our national broadcaster ABC is running neck to neck with the BBC, the Guardian and the Economist in purveying inane and at times hysterical false narratives about Ukraine, Russia and Putin. It seems that our media believe – they certainly claim – that the people are rising up in Russia and Putin's dictatorship will fall soon. They ignore facts that do not fit this stupidity. Which is now more real to them than reality.

Three days ago, after my essay on what was actually happening in Ukraine was published in Pearls and Irritations, ABC News interviewed me for fifteen minutes. They used none of my words, because these clashed with their fantasy narrative of the heroic democratic Ukrainian people rising up as one against, or bravely fleeing in their cars from, the brutal Russian invaders in tanks crushing all before them. It has quickly become a war of false or misrepresented horror memes and facile 'how does it feel' 'war journalism'. Truth could not be allowed to interfere with the consolidating false narrative.

I have again been deplatformed by ABC. I am used to this now. It is a mark of a fearful lackey country that is too scared to stand up to Washington's Russophobe narrative, no matter how implausible it has become.

Here in Moscow and St Petersburg I have seen in these past weeks people relaxed and getting on with their normal lives. No differences from my three previous visits, except a well founded natural anxiety and prudence about COVID risks is evident. People trust Putin and his National Security Council team to manage the Ukraine crisis. Yes, there were little symbolic demonstrations in Moscow and Saint Petersburg by a few dissident intelligentsia, but they gained no public purchase. Nor were the participants victimised.

Having said that, I have no doubt that the midnight candles are burning bright in the Kremlin as the NSC manage the crisis. It is very big, and what Putin said yesterday on new Ukronazi human shield tactics in Kiev and how Russia would respond was remarkable in its bluntness and emotional intensity.

Kiev and Kharkov are not Fallujah or Stalingrad, thank God. The Russian Army is not going to

incinerate its own relatives and friends in these great, essentially Russian, cities. There will be a negotiated solution in coming days. There could be false flag operations before that, in which Ukronazis may kill people and try to blame the deaths on the Russian Army. Ukronazi artillery shells may hit residential buildings and kill people and Russia will be blamed, and the West will believe it, because it fits the universal narrative. Remember Douma in Syria. There is talk of White Helmets here, among the foreign advisers.

It will come to an end. Russia has already won the military war. The groundwork for denazification is being laid: there will be trials. As for the information war, this will go on, it has a life of its own. Prospects for Detente with the West have been set back, maybe for decades. Many including myself will grieve over this. But that is another big story to tell. I will end here.

What was done, had to be done. There was no alternative course of action left for Russia.

Tony Kevin is a former Australian career diplomat (1968-1998) who held diplomatic postings and ambassadorships in Moscow, UN New York, Poland and Cambodia. Since retiring from foreign service, he has been an active advocate for change in areas such as Australian asylum-seeker policy, border protection, and climate change.

He has written several books inspired by his career and life experiences, including *A Certain Maritime Incident* (Scribe 2004) which won the ACT Book of the Year Award and the NSW Premier's Literary Award for Multicultural Writing in 2005; *Walking the Camino* (Scribe 2007), winner of the ACT Book of the Year Award 2008; *Crunch Time* (Scribe 2009), and *Reluctant Rescuers* (self-published 2012).

In 2012 Tony Kevin was awarded an Emeritus Fellowship at Australian National University, Canberra, for his four books.

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Tony Kevin, former Australian diplomat.

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