

Ukraine on the Verge of Civil War: Blood on the Maidan

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, February 02, 2014

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By Mark Hackard

Ukraine is teetering [on the verge of civil war](#), and as usual Western media haven't been particularly helpful in shedding light on the unravelling situation. Aside from evocative photos of clashes between legion-like formations of *Berkut* riot police and their rough nationalist opponents on the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square), about all we can expect from the mainstream press corps is the following fanciful narrative:

- When corrupt Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich scrapped the country's EU Association Agreement he had been set to sign in November 2013, "peaceful protests" were launched by pro-Western Kievans intent upon a European future.
- Popular anger only intensified after Yanukovich agreed to a [wide-ranging economic cooperation treaty](#) with Vladimir Putin's Russia on December 17th. Helpless, liberty-loving Ukraine was being sucked into Moscow's dark orbit. Only the gallant protestors could halt this process.
- The battle for Kiev continues as the unsteady regime enacted draconian laws limiting freedom of assembly in an attempt to hold on to power. Ukraine is the new front line in the struggle for democracy, genetically engineered Big Macs, and psychological warfare via Disney and MTV.

✘ Strategic realities, however, rarely fit the script of a made-for-TV morality tale. The story behind the scenes concerns a drive by the United States to short-circuit [Russia's resurgence](#) where it truly matters: in Ukraine.

US foreign policy commentators would rather divert focus from facts that discredit their preferred plotline; the first of these is Washington's activation of an upgraded template for carrying out a coup d'état in Kiev. For over a decade now, the American public has been led to believe that successive waves of "[people power](#)" have risen up to overthrow oppressive rulers across Eurasia and the Middle East, all of whom just happened to contradict US interests. None of this was accidental; from Belgrade and Tbilisi to Minsk and Kishinev, the CIA and State Department have carried out plausible-deniability regime-change operations with varying degrees of success. Western darling Viktor Yushchenko's 2004 "Orange Revolution" deflated ignominiously, but Ukraine's valuable geographic position and its ethnic and cultural fissures have again made it the target of US covert action.

The issue of European integration only delivered a necessary pretext to set off this latest round of the Great Game. What talking heads and Upper East Side columnists also omit to tell their audiences is the nature of Kiev's potential "association" with the EU - the country

would have become an economic colony of Western corporate interests, complete with the gutting of Ukrainian manufacturing capacity and a crushing, banker-imposed austerity already familiar to current EU residents. The agreement itself was originally promoted by the nation's oligarchic elite, the real power behind any presidency in Kiev. Brussels sought to acquire Ukraine on the cheap, offering less than \$1 billion to cover its \$17 billion debt obligations plus the enormous damages that would be wrought to Ukraine's economy from signing on. Russia, in contrast, [deepened partnership](#) with its neighbor by assigning \$15 billion to Ukrainian debt, forming joint enterprises in key heavy industries and setting gas prices below market value[\[i\]](#).

Since Ukraine's official declaration of sovereignty in 1991, the corruption and malfeasance of any presidential administration has never been a matter worth debating. Yet Yanukovich and pivotal backers such as [Rinat Akhmetov](#) finally came to understand that the Association Agreement itself would be a sure recipe for economic ruin and political catastrophe, even as European officials publicly presented the deal as Ukraine's "choosing Europe" over Russia. Seeing few tangible benefits from this glaringly uneven arrangement, the regime in Kiev found more amenable negotiating partners in Putin's Kremlin than among the likes of Chancellor Angela Merkel and Baroness Catherine Ashton.

The West's main assets in upending a closer Russo-Ukrainian relationship are the opposition groups who have swarmed Kiev and are currently engaged in urban combat with police in addition to seizing regional capitals. But many of these "protestors," today's cause célèbre among US policymakers, are in actuality [hard-core nationalists](#) who hail primarily from Galicia, composed of three provinces in Ukraine's far west. Often Catholic and previously under centuries of Polish and Austro-Hungarian rule, the Galicians nurse a strong animus toward the Orthodox, Russian-oriented east and Crimea.



The recent forefathers of today's fighters on the *Maidan* once filled the ranks of a whole Waffen-SS Division, and now Galician-heavy outfits like *Batkivschyna* "Fatherland," and *Svoboda*, "Freedom," see themselves as advancing their ancestors' cause of national independence from the hated *Moskali* yoke. It's a near-certainty that Washington is not only providing the Ukrainian opposition with [vocal diplomatic cover](#) (including threatened sanctions) and extensive coordination and logistics aid through a host of NGOs like Freedom House and the NED. US intelligence networks, along with allies from MI6, BND and the Polish service, have in all likelihood been actively supporting the marauding nationalists, who are called "peaceful protestors" in the same way that [jihadist mercenaries](#) who have laid waste to Libya and Syria are "[freedom fighters](#)" and partisans of deviance are celebrated as "[rights activists](#)." Whatever their aspirations, the ultras are ultimately foot soldiers in a wider geopolitical gambit.

The lands astride the Dnepr and the Don are not only the historical heart of Eastern Slavic civilization; they form the cornerstone of a viable Russian security posture vis-à-vis Europe. For a proper understanding of the aims of US foreign policy in Ukraine, it is worth recalling the analysis of [Zbigniew Brzezinski](#), strategist emeritus of international financial elites:

Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire...However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its [46 million] people and major resources as well as its access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia.

Brzezinski also often [speaks of his hopes](#) for the imposition of liberal democracy upon Russia – doubtless due to his tremendous philanthropic affection for the Russian people. The only things he consistently despises about that nation are its sovereignty, identity and Orthodox Christianity.

It is a sovereign Russia that prevents bankster-run America from fully realizing the inhuman dream of a planetary panopticon; therefore Brzezinski and his acolytes in the US national security apparatus have slated their enemy for subversion and dismemberment. Coupled with continuous [unofficial US backing](#) of Islamic separatist movements in the Caucasus, choreography of a revolution in Ukraine is a rather cheap method of destabilizing Russia's southern periphery. Not only would the 2014 Sochi Olympics be overshadowed, but major energy projects like South Stream could also be thrown into disarray. As in Kosovo, unleashing chaos to the accompaniment of liberal-humanitarian rhetoric can furnish a ready excuse for the introduction of NATO forces into a region.

After Putin's 2013 success in deterring an attack on Syria and strengthening the Kremlin's position in the Eastern Mediterranean, Washington is now channeling its efforts to undermine any consolidation of Russian power in Eurasia. Its grand opportunity lies in exploiting the schisms that rack Ukrainian society to install another [pro-Western government](#) in Kiev and set the stage for a US military presence mere hundreds of kilometers from Moscow. Yet Russia seems to appreciate the lessons it learned from the past decade's Orange Revolution and is in no mood to entertain such notions.

With the hope of avoiding a civil war, there exists in Ukraine the distinct possibility of a future partition that would see the industrial east and Black Sea littoral under Russian protection while the westerners fulfil their European destiny^[ii]. So let the Galician ultras be feted by their benefactors with parades in Paris, London and Berlin; US diplomats and the eurocrats will hardly know what hit them.

Notes

^[i] Aid tranches from Moscow are [currently frozen](#) due to the resignation of PM Mykola Azarov. They are set to resume when Kiev forms a new government and honors its side of the agreements.

^[ii] Should a partition take place, one cannot rule out respective territorial claims on Carpathian Ruthenia and Bukovina by Hungary and Romania.

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