

Ukraine: Three Tragedies - Putin 1, Biden 2

By [Don L. Durivan](#)

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It is commonplace in the west that the first and only recognized tragedy regarding Ukraine is Russia's decision to invade on February 24th 22. It is without question an absolute tragedy as Russian President Putin's decision should not be seen as anything other than both immoral and illegal. It was immoral because Russia did not face an immediate threat. It was illegal as it violated another country's borders and the UN Charter. But in western governmental perspectives and with western mainstream media in tow, the discussion abruptly ends there and conveniently ignores two additional tragedies, one pre-war and one in the spring. With the current need for launching real diplomacy facing all parties, these additional tragedies may suggest trouble without an about face from the west.

That tragedy of the invasion is many times over exposed for the dreadful consequences that have ensued and which are so predictable in war: here the ongoing mayhem for civilians who have fled to eastern European countries, or been killed or traumatized by injury, families torn apart, hundreds of thousands of soldiers (total) whose early lives have ended, buildings, bridges and other infrastructure left in ruins, the terrible anxiety of bombs or missiles falling on one's town, the power grid being seriously jeopardized by attacks.

But the overall process before and during this war demonstrates a dreadful combination of other tragedies that sit most squarely upon President Biden, with assistance from other national heads of state, European in particular. "Negotiations" between the west and Russia before the invasion mark the initial tragedy (a form of more passive western sabotage) and the outcome of the late March, early April negotiations between Ukraine and Russia themselves in Istanbul, the third tragedy, an active western knife to the back of negotiators that spelled dismay and lost hope as well as continued absolute hell for all victims of this war, those mentioned plus the unfolding effects upon economies in major European countries, Germany and Britain to name but two.

During the discussions and negotiations before the invasion Russia had presented its redline position (s), repeating its very deep security interests being at stake with what had been happening in Ukraine especially since the coup there in 2014, to say nothing of the very

long-term expansion of NATO eastward over the past twenty-five years. Russia wanted negotiations that essentially would have had Ukraine become a neutral nation, in other words, demilitarized and unaligned in that way. The United States under Mr. Biden, with NATO in tow, objected, indicating repeatedly that doing so would rob Ukraine of its sovereignty because it deserved the right to join with any alliance it wished. Mr. Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, State Department spokesperson Ned Price, then Press Secretary Jen Psaki, and NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg, stuck to this position as if it were sacrosanct. It was empty. To be discussed, it later became a position Ukraine itself was willing to discard if peace negotiations offered promise.

Mr. Biden deceived the American public as well as the publics of other nations into believing that a nation's sovereignty was totally and uniquely defined by its freedom to choose membership in a military alliance of its choosing. Austria and Switzerland, as examples of neutral nations, have clearly through decades not declared that their general sovereignty has been compromised. Any nation makes thousands of sovereign decisions over time – what kind of economic system it will have, its programs for social security, taxation, investments regulation, programs for low-income and poor residents, its political system, the nature of its constitution, postal system, educational system, energy policies, criminal system, foreign relations and the list goes on and expands over time with adjustments to any of them. Ukraine would have been doing the same as a neutral country, given security guarantees. Mr. Biden and his followers were spouting nothing but simplified rhetoric, worthy of being labeled a charade and likely cloaking unexpressed intentions.

During negotiations it took independent media to expose that the U.S. and its allies at the table refused to allow Russia's chief security interests to even be discussed, as revealed in an interview with Derek Chollet, counsel to Mr. Blinken himself and privy to the negotiations. (1) These were non-issues as far as the United States was concerned.

These failed “negotiations” were a tragedy by themselves because they had held out a prospect that at the very least the invasion could have been thwarted with a genuine full give and take negotiation worthy of the name but instead represented empty rhetoric and the arrogance that only some countries have a right to issue a redline. Russia seemed not to recognize that the U.S. does not allow another nation to present a red line to it, that the U.S. presents red lines to others and that it decides another country's real security interests.

Remarkably on April 20, '22 an event occurred outside of the Ukraine-Russia war that strikingly exposed the nature of American hypocrisy when it comes to security interests of others versus its own. The clear and profound meaning of the event went unnoticed by the mainstream media and received far too little exposure from even independent media.

The Solomon Islands, a U.N. South Pacific Ocean member country 8,000 miles from Washington, D.C. and of miniscule size, announced a security agreement with China. This set off alarm bells within the Biden Administration because such an agreement represented a potential security threat to the U.S. It sent officials twice to the Islands despite the Islands indicating that there was no military nature to the agreement. In addition, the U.S. has military bases in the Pacific among its worldwide count of 867 such bases. Those who very closely watch U.S. behavior abroad wondered if in fact the U.S. might actually threaten the Islands. It did just that, threatening “military action” against them. This situation was an apparent American redline without the name but Russia's longstanding perception of threat from encroaching NATO and neighbor Ukraine's threats to it by potentially joining NATO

were not even worthy of discussions meant to help prevent a full scale actual war.

A number of weeks into the war and the intervention of Turkish President Erdogan to sponsor peace talks led to the two nations of Ukraine and Russia making very significant progress by themselves, as represented in the “15 point” peace plan. (2) This was a remarkable achievement to date where Ukraine neutrality and Russian withdrawal of troops were cornerstone features. That sacrosanct issue of “sovereignty” for Ukraine that the west had obsessed about seemed to have become a lesser issue after all, specifically for Ukraine itself and especially with the security guarantees discussed in the negotiations. The fact that there were as many as 15 agreed upon points was enormously important. But then something happened. A different type of major tragedy, and number three among the group of them.

That something was a change in position by Ukraine that left Russian Foreign Secretary Sergei Lavrov, a key member of Russia’s negotiating team, in disbelief before media sources. That change came about by the intervention of the United States and Britain indicating to Ukraine President Zelensky that the west would not support negotiations with Russia. Boris Johnson, acting on behalf of the true signal caller, Mr. Biden himself, expressed to the press that he had, on a solo trip to Ukraine urged that country not to negotiate any further. What was Ukraine to do under the circumstances where it was totally dependent upon western weaponry, multiple sources of other materials and billions of dollars flowing into it?

Since then we have been told multiple times by Biden spokespersons that Russia has no interest in negotiations. During a summer Atlantic Council event, for example, Mr. Blinken made the claim that

“We have not seen any interest on the part of Vladimir Putin in engaging in any kind of meaningful diplomatic initiative”. (3)

This is a sad example of the type of distorting propaganda that the U.S. has stored in its playbook and is ever ready to launch.

In addition to the many hideous consequences of this war there is an insipid and poisonous propaganda campaign that erupts from all sides (Ukraine, Russia, the U.S., Britain, NATO generally) which does nothing but place added obstacles in the way of peaceful settlement. Some signs of hope have emerged – the grain transport agreements, prisoner swaps, some level of U.S.-Russia military communications to help prevent a nuclear war. But assuming that the world avoids a nuclear “exchange” arising from this war and that negotiations to actually end the war are finally decided upon, is there any confidence that with what has transpired to date in the name first of negotiations to prevent and then later stop the war that there will be a full setting of “adults in the room”? Or will the past be prologue?

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Don L. Durivan is a long-time activist against wars, is engaged in humanitarian projects abroad and at home and works in health care finance issues for the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts.

Notes

1. Alex Jordan, Responsible Statecraft, April 28, 2022, "Did the U.S. really take Russia's NATO concerns 'very seriously'?"
2. The Irish Times, March 16, 2022, "Ukraine and Russia draw Up a 15 point neutrality plan to end war".
3. Connor Echols, Responsible Statecraft, July 1, 2022, "Diplomacy Watch".

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