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Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault

The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin

By *John J. Mearsheimer*

FROM OUR SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014 ISSUE



A man takes a picture as he stands on a Soviet-style star re-touched with blue paint so that it resembles the Ukrainian flag, Moscow, August 20, 2014. (Maxim Shemetov / Courtesy Reuters)

▶	<p>Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault</p> <p>34 min 45 secs</p>	<p>ADD TO PLAYLIST</p> <p>BUY AUDIO VERSION</p>
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According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. Russian President Vladimir Putin, the argument goes, annexed Crimea out of a long-standing desire to resuscitate the Soviet empire, and he may eventually go after the rest of Ukraine, as well as other countries in eastern Europe. In this view, the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 merely provided a pretext for Putin's decision to order Russian forces to seize part of Ukraine.

But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU's expansion eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine -- beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 -- were critical elements, too. Since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed NATO enlargement, and in recent years, they have made it clear that they would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor turned into a Western bastion. For Putin, the illegal overthrow of Ukraine's democratically elected and pro-Russian president -- which he rightly

labeled a “coup” -- was the final straw. He responded by taking Crimea, a peninsula he feared would host a NATO naval base, and working to destabilize Ukraine until it abandoned its efforts to join the West.

Putin’s pushback should have come as no surprise. After all, the West had been moving into Russia’s backyard and threatening its core strategic interests, a point Putin made emphatically and repeatedly. Elites in the United States and Europe have been blindsided by events only because they subscribe to a flawed view of international politics. They tend to believe that the logic of realism holds little relevance in the twenty-first century and that Europe can be kept whole and free on the basis of such liberal principles as the rule of law, economic interdependence, and democracy.

But this grand scheme went awry in Ukraine. The crisis there shows that realpolitik remains relevant -- and states that ignore it do so at their own peril. U.S. and European leaders blundered in attempting to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia’s border. Now that the consequences have been laid bare, it would be an even greater mistake to continue this misbegotten policy.

U.S. and European leaders blundered in attempting to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia’s border.

THE WESTERN AFFRONT

As the Cold War came to a close, Soviet leaders preferred that U.S. forces remain in Europe and NATO stay intact, an arrangement they thought would keep a reunified Germany pacified. But they and their Russian successors did not want NATO to grow any larger and assumed that Western diplomats understood their concerns. The Clinton administration evidently thought otherwise, and in the mid-1990s, it began pushing for NATO to expand.

The first round of enlargement took place in 1999 and brought in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The second occurred in 2004; it included Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Moscow complained bitterly from the start. During NATO’s 1995 bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs, for example, Russian President Boris Yeltsin said, “This is the first sign of what could happen when NATO comes right up to the Russian Federation’s borders. ... The flame of war could burst out across the whole of Europe.” But the Russians were too weak at the time to derail NATO’s eastward movement -- which, at any rate, did not look so threatening, since none of the new members shared a border with Russia, save for the tiny Baltic countries.

Then NATO began looking further east. At its April 2008 summit in Bucharest, the alliance considered admitting Georgia and Ukraine. The George W. Bush administration supported doing so, but France and Germany opposed the move for fear that it would unduly antagonize Russia. In the end, NATO’s members reached a compromise: the alliance did not begin the formal process leading to membership, but it issued a statement endorsing the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine and boldly declaring, “These countries will become members of NATO.”

Moscow, however, did not see the outcome as much of a compromise. Alexander Grushko, then Russia’s deputy foreign minister, said, “Georgia’s and Ukraine’s membership in the alliance is a huge strategic mistake which would have most serious consequences for pan-European security.” Putin maintained that admitting those two countries to NATO would represent a “direct threat” to Russia. One Russian newspaper reported that Putin, while speaking with Bush, “very transparently hinted that if Ukraine was accepted into NATO, it would cease to exist.”

Russia’s invasion of Georgia in August 2008 should have dispelled any remaining doubts about Putin’s determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, who was deeply committed to bringing his country into NATO, had decided in the summer of 2008 to reincorporate two separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. But Putin sought to keep Georgia weak and divided -- and out of NATO. After fighting broke out between the Georgian government and South Ossetian separatists, Russian forces took control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow had made its point. Yet despite this clear warning, NATO never publicly abandoned its goal of bringing Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance. And NATO expansion continued marching forward, with Albania and Croatia becoming members in 2009.

The EU, too, has been marching eastward. In May 2008, it unveiled its Eastern Partnership initiative, a program to foster prosperity in such countries as Ukraine and integrate them into the EU economy. Not surprisingly, Russian leaders view the plan as hostile to their country's interests. This past February, before Yanukovich was forced from office, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the EU of trying to create a "sphere of influence" in eastern Europe. In the eyes of Russian leaders, EU expansion is a stalking horse for NATO expansion.

The West's final tool for peeling Kiev away from Moscow has been its efforts to spread Western values and promote democracy in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, a plan that often entails funding pro-Western individuals and organizations. Victoria Nuland, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, estimated in December 2013 that the United States had invested more than \$5 billion since 1991 to help Ukraine achieve "the future it deserves." As part of that effort, the U.S. government has bankrolled the National Endowment for Democracy. The nonprofit foundation has funded more than 60 projects aimed at promoting civil society in Ukraine, and the NED's president, Carl Gershman, has called that country "the biggest prize." After Yanukovich won Ukraine's presidential election in February 2010, the NED decided he was undermining its goals, and so it stepped up its efforts to support the opposition and strengthen the country's democratic institutions.

When Russian leaders look at Western social engineering in Ukraine, they worry that their country might be next. And such fears are hardly groundless. In September 2013, Gershman wrote in *The Washington Post*, "Ukraine's choice to join Europe will accelerate the demise of the ideology of Russian imperialism that Putin represents." He added: "Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself."

CREATING A CRISIS

Imagine the American outrage if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico.

The West's triple package of policies -- NATO enlargement, EU expansion, and democracy promotion -- added fuel to a fire waiting to ignite. The spark came in November 2013, when Yanukovich rejected a major economic deal he had been negotiating with the EU and decided to accept a \$15 billion Russian counteroffer instead. That decision gave rise to antigovernment demonstrations that escalated over the following three months and that by mid-February had led to the deaths of some one hundred protesters. Western emissaries hurriedly flew to Kiev to resolve the crisis. On February 21, the government and the opposition struck a deal that allowed Yanukovich to stay in power until new elections were held. But it immediately fell apart, and Yanukovich fled to Russia the next day. The new government in Kiev was pro-Western and anti-Russian to the core, and it contained four high-ranking members who could legitimately be labeled neofascists.

Although the full extent of U.S. involvement has not yet come to light, it is clear that Washington backed the coup. Nuland and Republican Senator John McCain participated in antigovernment demonstrations, and Geoffrey Pyatt, the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, proclaimed after Yanukovich's toppling that it was "a day for the history books." As a leaked telephone recording revealed, Nuland had advocated regime change and wanted the Ukrainian politician Arseniy Yatsenyuk to become prime minister in the new government, which he did. No wonder Russians of all persuasions think the West played a role in Yanukovich's ouster.

For Putin, the time to act against Ukraine and the West had arrived. Shortly after February 22, he ordered Russian forces to take Crimea from Ukraine, and soon after that, he incorporated it into Russia. The task proved relatively easy, thanks to the thousands of Russian troops already stationed at a naval base in the Crimean port of Sevastopol. Crimea also made for an easy target since ethnic Russians compose roughly 60 percent of its population. Most of them wanted out of Ukraine.

Next, Putin put massive pressure on the new government in Kiev to discourage it from siding with the West against Moscow, making it clear that he would wreck Ukraine as a functioning state before he would allow it to become a Western stronghold on Russia's doorstep. Toward that end, he has provided advisers, arms, and diplomatic support to the Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, who are pushing the country toward civil war. He has massed a large army on the Ukrainian border, threatening to invade if the government cracks down on the rebels. And he has sharply raised the price of the natural gas Russia sells to Ukraine and demanded payment for

past exports. Putin is playing hardball.

THE DIAGNOSIS

Putin's actions should be easy to comprehend. A huge expanse of flat land that Napoleonic France, imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all crossed to strike at Russia itself, Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia. No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow's mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine. Nor would any Russian leader stand idly by while the West helped install a government there that was determined to integrate Ukraine into the West.

Washington may not like Moscow's position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory. After all, the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it. Logic aside, Russian leaders have told their Western counterparts on many occasions that they consider NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine unacceptable, along with any effort to turn those countries against Russia -- a message that the 2008 Russian-Georgian war also made crystal clear.

Officials from the United States and its European allies contend that they tried hard to assuage Russian fears and that Moscow should understand that NATO has no designs on Russia. In addition to continually denying that its expansion was aimed at containing Russia, the alliance has never permanently deployed military forces in its new member states. In 2002, it even created a body called the NATO-Russia Council in an effort to foster cooperation. To further mollify Russia, the United States announced in 2009 that it would deploy its new missile defense system on warships in European waters, at least initially, rather than on Czech or Polish territory. But none of these measures worked; the Russians remained steadfastly opposed to NATO enlargement, especially into Georgia and Ukraine. And it is the Russians, not the West, who ultimately get to decide what counts as a threat to them.

To understand why the West, especially the United States, failed to understand that its Ukraine policy was laying the groundwork for a major clash with Russia, one must go back to the mid-1990s, when the Clinton administration began advocating NATO expansion. Pundits advanced a variety of arguments for and against enlargement, but there was no consensus on what to do. Most eastern European émigrés in the United States and their relatives, for example, strongly supported expansion, because they wanted NATO to protect such countries as Hungary and Poland. A few realists also favored the policy because they thought Russia still needed to be contained.

But most realists opposed expansion, in the belief that a declining great power with an aging population and a one-dimensional economy did not in fact need to be contained. And they feared that enlargement would only give Moscow an incentive to cause trouble in eastern Europe. The U.S. diplomat George Kennan articulated this perspective in a 1998 interview, shortly after the U.S. Senate approved the first round of NATO expansion. "I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies," he said. "I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anyone else."

The United States and its allies should abandon their plan to westernize Ukraine and instead aim to make it a neutral buffer.

Most liberals, on the other hand, favored enlargement, including many key members of the Clinton administration. They believed that the end of the Cold War had fundamentally transformed international politics and that a new, postnational order had replaced the realist logic that used to govern Europe. The United States was not only the "indispensable nation," as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright put it; it was also a benign hegemon and thus unlikely to be viewed as a threat in Moscow. The aim, in essence, was to make the entire continent look like western Europe.

And so the United States and its allies sought to promote democracy in the countries of eastern Europe, increase economic interdependence among them, and embed them in international institutions. Having won the debate in the United States, liberals had little difficulty convincing

their European allies to support NATO enlargement. After all, given the EU's past achievements, Europeans were even more wedded than Americans to the idea that geopolitics no longer mattered and that an all-inclusive liberal order could maintain peace in Europe.

So thoroughly did liberals come to dominate the discourse about European security during the first decade of this century that even as the alliance adopted an open-door policy of growth, NATO expansion faced little realist opposition. The liberal worldview is now accepted dogma among U.S. officials. In March, for example, President Barack Obama delivered a speech about Ukraine in which he talked repeatedly about "the ideals" that motivate Western policy and how those ideals "have often been threatened by an older, more traditional view of power." Secretary of State John Kerry's response to the Crimea crisis reflected this same perspective: "You just don't in the twenty-first century behave in nineteenth-century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped-up pretext."

In essence, the two sides have been operating with different playbooks: Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according to realist dictates, whereas their Western counterparts have been adhering to liberal ideas about international politics. The result is that the United States and its allies unknowingly provoked a major crisis over Ukraine.

BLAME GAME

In that same 1998 interview, Kennan predicted that NATO expansion would provoke a crisis, after which the proponents of expansion would "say that we always told you that is how the Russians are." As if on cue, most Western officials have portrayed Putin as the real culprit in the Ukraine predicament. In March, according to *The New York Times*, German Chancellor Angela Merkel implied that Putin was irrational, telling Obama that he was "in another world." Although Putin no doubt has autocratic tendencies, no evidence supports the charge that he is mentally unbalanced. On the contrary: he is a first-class strategist who should be feared and respected by anyone challenging him on foreign policy.

Other analysts allege, more plausibly, that Putin regrets the demise of the Soviet Union and is determined to reverse it by expanding Russia's borders. According to this interpretation, Putin, having taken Crimea, is now testing the waters to see if the time is right to conquer Ukraine, or at least its eastern part, and he will eventually behave aggressively toward other countries in Russia's neighborhood. For some in this camp, Putin represents a modern-day Adolf Hitler, and striking any kind of deal with him would repeat the mistake of Munich. Thus, NATO must admit Georgia and Ukraine to contain Russia before it dominates its neighbors and threatens western Europe.

This argument falls apart on close inspection. If Putin were committed to creating a greater Russia, signs of his intentions would almost certainly have arisen before February 22. But there is virtually no evidence that he was bent on taking Crimea, much less any other territory in Ukraine, before that date. Even Western leaders who supported NATO expansion were not doing so out of a fear that Russia was about to use military force. Putin's actions in Crimea took them by complete surprise and appear to have been a spontaneous reaction to Yanukovich's ouster. Right afterward, even Putin said he opposed Crimean secession, before quickly changing his mind.

Besides, even if it wanted to, Russia lacks the capability to easily conquer and annex eastern Ukraine, much less the entire country. Roughly 15 million people -- one-third of Ukraine's population -- live between the Dnieper River, which bisects the country, and the Russian border. An overwhelming majority of those people want to remain part of Ukraine and would surely resist a Russian occupation. Furthermore, Russia's mediocre army, which shows few signs of turning into a modern Wehrmacht, would have little chance of pacifying all of Ukraine. Moscow is also poorly positioned to pay for a costly occupation; its weak economy would suffer even more in the face of the resulting sanctions.

But even if Russia did boast a powerful military machine and an impressive economy, it would still probably prove unable to successfully occupy Ukraine. One need only consider the Soviet and U.S. experiences in Afghanistan, the U.S. experiences in Vietnam and Iraq, and the Russian experience in Chechnya to be reminded that military occupations usually end badly. Putin surely understands that trying to subdue Ukraine would be like swallowing a porcupine. His response to events there has been defensive, not offensive.

A WAY OUT

Given that most Western leaders continue to deny that Putin's behavior might be motivated by legitimate security concerns, it is unsurprising that they have tried to modify it by doubling down on their existing policies and have punished Russia to deter further aggression. Although Kerry has maintained that "all options are on the table," neither the United States nor its NATO allies are prepared to use force to defend Ukraine. The West is relying instead on economic sanctions to coerce Russia into ending its support for the insurrection in eastern Ukraine. In July, the United States and the EU put in place their third round of limited sanctions, targeting mainly high-level individuals closely tied to the Russian government and some high-profile banks, energy companies, and defense firms. They also threatened to unleash another, tougher round of sanctions, aimed at whole sectors of the Russian economy.

Such measures will have little effect. Harsh sanctions are likely off the table anyway; western European countries, especially Germany, have resisted imposing them for fear that Russia might retaliate and cause serious economic damage within the EU. But even if the United States could convince its allies to enact tough measures, Putin would probably not alter his decision-making. History shows that countries will absorb enormous amounts of punishment in order to protect their core strategic interests. There is no reason to think Russia represents an exception to this rule.

Western leaders have also clung to the provocative policies that precipitated the crisis in the first place. In April, U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden met with Ukrainian legislators and told them, "This is a second opportunity to make good on the original promise made by the Orange Revolution." John Brennan, the director of the CIA, did not help things when, that same month, he visited Kiev on a trip the White House said was aimed at improving security cooperation with the Ukrainian government.

The EU, meanwhile, has continued to push its Eastern Partnership. In March, José Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, summarized EU thinking on Ukraine, saying, "We have a debt, a duty of solidarity with that country, and we will work to have them as close as possible to us." And sure enough, on June 27, the EU and Ukraine signed the economic agreement that Yanukovich had fatefully rejected seven months earlier. Also in June, at a meeting of NATO members' foreign ministers, it was agreed that the alliance would remain open to new members, although the foreign ministers refrained from mentioning Ukraine by name. "No third country has a veto over NATO enlargement," announced Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO's secretary-general. The foreign ministers also agreed to support various measures to improve Ukraine's military capabilities in such areas as command and control, logistics, and cyberdefense. Russian leaders have naturally recoiled at these actions; the West's response to the crisis will only make a bad situation worse.

There is a solution to the crisis in Ukraine, however -- although it would require the West to think about the country in a fundamentally new way. The United States and its allies should abandon their plan to westernize Ukraine and instead aim to make it a neutral buffer between NATO and Russia, akin to Austria's position during the Cold War. Western leaders should acknowledge that Ukraine matters so much to Putin that they cannot support an anti-Russian regime there. This would not mean that a future Ukrainian government would have to be pro-Russian or anti-NATO. On the contrary, the goal should be a sovereign Ukraine that falls in neither the Russian nor the Western camp.

To achieve this end, the United States and its allies should publicly rule out NATO's expansion into both Georgia and Ukraine. The West should also help fashion an economic rescue plan for Ukraine funded jointly by the EU, the International Monetary Fund, Russia, and the United States -- a proposal that Moscow should welcome, given its interest in having a prosperous and stable Ukraine on its western flank. And the West should considerably limit its social-engineering efforts inside Ukraine. It is time to put an end to Western support for another Orange Revolution. Nevertheless, U.S. and European leaders should encourage Ukraine to respect minority rights, especially the language rights of its Russian speakers.

Some may argue that changing policy toward Ukraine at this late date would seriously damage U.S. credibility around the world. There would undoubtedly be certain costs, but the costs of continuing a misguided strategy would be much greater. Furthermore, other countries are likely to respect a state that learns from its mistakes and ultimately devises a policy that deals effectively with the problem at hand. That option is clearly open to the United States.

One also hears the claim that Ukraine has the right to determine whom it wants to ally with and the Russians have no right to prevent Kiev from joining the West. This is a dangerous way for

Ukraine to think about its foreign policy choices. The sad truth is that might often makes right when great-power politics are at play. Abstract rights such as self-determination are largely meaningless when powerful states get into brawls with weaker states. Did Cuba have the right to form a military alliance with the Soviet Union during the Cold War? The United States certainly did not think so, and the Russians think the same way about Ukraine joining the West. It is in Ukraine's interest to understand these facts of life and tread carefully when dealing with its more powerful neighbor.

Even if one rejects this analysis, however, and believes that Ukraine has the right to petition to join the EU and NATO, the fact remains that the United States and its European allies have the right to reject these requests. There is no reason that the West has to accommodate Ukraine if it is bent on pursuing a wrong-headed foreign policy, especially if its defense is not a vital interest. Indulging the dreams of some Ukrainians is not worth the animosity and strife it will cause, especially for the Ukrainian people.

Of course, some analysts might concede that NATO handled relations with Ukraine poorly and yet still maintain that Russia constitutes an enemy that will only grow more formidable over time -- and that the West therefore has no choice but to continue its present policy. But this viewpoint is badly mistaken. Russia is a declining power, and it will only get weaker with time. Even if Russia were a rising power, moreover, it would still make no sense to incorporate Ukraine into NATO. The reason is simple: the United States and its European allies do not consider Ukraine to be a core strategic interest, as their unwillingness to use military force to come to its aid has proved. It would therefore be the height of folly to create a new NATO member that the other members have no intention of defending. NATO has expanded in the past because liberals assumed the alliance would never have to honor its new security guarantees, but Russia's recent power play shows that granting Ukraine NATO membership could put Russia and the West on a collision course.

Sticking with the current policy would also complicate Western relations with Moscow on other issues. The United States needs Russia's assistance to withdraw U.S. equipment from Afghanistan through Russian territory, reach a nuclear agreement with Iran, and stabilize the situation in Syria. In fact, Moscow has helped Washington on all three of these issues in the past; in the summer of 2013, it was Putin who pulled Obama's chestnuts out of the fire by forging the deal under which Syria agreed to relinquish its chemical weapons, thereby avoiding the U.S. military strike that Obama had threatened. The United States will also someday need Russia's help containing a rising China. Current U.S. policy, however, is only driving Moscow and Beijing closer together.

The United States and its European allies now face a choice on Ukraine. They can continue their current policy, which will exacerbate hostilities with Russia and devastate Ukraine in the process -- a scenario in which everyone would come out a loser. Or they can switch gears and work to create a prosperous but neutral Ukraine, one that does not threaten Russia and allows the West to repair its relations with Moscow. With that approach, all sides would win.

ON THIS TOPIC



REVIEW ESSAY, MAR/APR 2010

Frostbitten

Lawrence D. Freedman

As the years pass, the Cold War increasingly appears as an undifferentiated chunk of history that stretched across time and space, with a vast cast of characters and occasional moments of drama. It is presented as a curious concatenation of summits and negotiations, alliances and clients, spies ...

ESSAY, MAY/JUN 1998

Russia's Phony Capitalism

Grigory Yavlinsky

OLIGARCHY OR DEMOCRACY? Russia faces a watershed decision. The vital question for Russia is whether it will become a quasi-democratic oligarchy with corporatist, criminal characteristics or take the more difficult, painful road to becoming a normal, Western-style democracy with a market economy. ...



SNAPSHOT, MARCH 24, 2014

Monitoring Moscow's Victory

Elisabeth Brocking

In an apparently grudging concession to Western demands, Russia agreed on March 21 to a deployment of international monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to Ukraine (not including Crimea). The United States and Europe have long advocated such a mission. ...

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Charlie Jellinek • 6 months ago

"In March, according to The New York Times, German Chancellor Angela Merkel implied that Putin was irrational, telling Obama that he was "in another world."

Question: Who the hell would leak just 3 words from a conversation between Obama and Merkel to the NYT?

Anyway, the Office of the Federal Chancellor told a German newspaper: Merkel did not say that Putin was irrational, what she said was Putin has a different perception, a different viewpoint concerning the situation in Crimea.

<http://www.welt.de/politik/deu...>

But the Guardian headlines: Vladimir Putin has lost the plot, says German chancellor

<http://www.theguardian.com/wor...>

An Madeleine Albright goes on CNN to "agree" with Merkel.

<http://edition.cnn.com/video/a...>

Somebody in Washington sabotaged Merkel's attempt to diplomatically defuse the situation and used her for some nice Propaganda. If I were her I would be furious.

355 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



knave27 → Charlie Jellinek • 6 months ago

This isn't the case, Merkel is fully devoted to implementing Washington's war agenda against Russia. Germany is the real US trojan horse in Europe, not little and irrelevant Britain, and the country through which the Transatlantic policies are filtered and imposed on Europe. It helps a lot that Germany detached itself in the past from the military adventures of the US, unlike France and Britain, and always kept a low profile when it came to war rhetoric to cover for its role as the main enabler and facilitator of the US agenda in Europe. BTW this isn't what Merkel said about Putin, only another example of the NYT being the official outlet of Washington's war agenda, assigned with the responsibility to twist facts and fabricate evidence to sell wars and regime change.

182 ^ | v • Reply • Share >



JayTe → knave27 • 6 months ago

Not even close! Germany is far from a trojan horse. Germany is one of the few actors who are at least trying to act rationally. I suspect that the US has some very compromising stuff on Merkel and/or her government because what is abundantly clear is that she is openly working against not only her own interests but those of Germany.

And despite that, she's still trying to negotiate a diplomatic solution because first and foremost is that if the tit for tat sanctions continues or open warfare breaks out, Germany is the big loser. Even countries that are openly and irrationally (to a certain degree) hostile towards Russia

(i.e. the Baltic states) are coming to their senses are realising that it's just madness to continue with the present policy. They all know that since Pinchuk arranged to conference at Yalta in September 2013, the west has been hell bent on pushing this change in Ukraine even though Russia warned them of the consequences and recommended that Ukraine serve as a bridge between the east and west so that it could gradually be brought up to western standards rather than abruptly turning its back on Russia and embrace the west since at least 3/4 of the population in

see more

168 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



knave27 → JayTe • 6 months ago

What nonsense. As I wrote elsewhere going against one's own national interests is one of the prerequisites in order to be an "ally" of the US. Germany is still an occupied country by the US. It has no sovereignty. It is occupied politically, economically, strategically and intellectually by the Atlantacist-US block. Germany, far from seeking a diplomatic solution, was the chief instigator of the Maidan uprising and the country that initiated EU sanctions against Russia even if they are against European interests because as Merkel put it "we need to show that we are serious about Russia". She is willing to sacrifice the well-being of German citizens to serve US strategic interests. Merkel raped the nation of Greece in order to introduce the IMF which is a tool of US financial occupation, further cementing US control over the European economy. Germany never negotiated in good faith with Russia or independently from the US. It was merely acting as a messenger of Washington's arrogant demands towards Russia. She does all this willingly and not because the US has "compromising stuff" since Merkel is not the "leader" of Germany. She is merely the appointed regional overseer of the US empire, like the provincial governors of Roman times, assigned with the task to adjust the US imperatives and dictates to the European political and economic reality.

174 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



blackfeather99 → knave27 • 6 months ago

Merkel is a puppet of American interests. Germany is an occupied country, and has been since 1945. It is occupied militarily and the pivot of American imperialism in Europe. It is occupied culturally and ideologically. The German elites fully subscribe to the verdict of the Nuremberg SHOW-TRIALS, meaning to the concocted lies of the victors. In a collective sense they suffer from a version of the Stockholm Syndrome and love the abusers of their own people. The mere fact that the official line in Germany is that she was "liberated" in 1945 reveals the abjection of these elites. Read HELLSTORM. THE DEATH OF NAZI GERMANY by Thomas Goodrich and see what this "liberation" looked like---millions murdered, starved to death, expelled from their home provinces, rang-rapes and tortures the entertainment of the day and of the night. Thank you America!

98 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



beorn → blackfeather99 • 5 months ago

Everyone listen to this guy. America started WW II not Germany. The Americans were responsible for the nazi death camps, and forced Germany to invade Western Europe and Russia so they could reap the economic rewards of the war and reconstruction!!!

93 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jonathan Swift → beorn • 4 months ago

I understand you are satirizing the piece but there is some credence that the treaty in Versailles put war guilt on Germany and imposed such fierce reparation expectation on the country that England and France can be said to have laid the ground work for bitterness in Germany

which Hitler then used to build up nationalistic pride in Germany.

27 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → Jonathan Swift • 4 months ago

The treaty was very very wrong but war creates bitterness as the likes of Hitler and his evil killers actions have proved. You will note it was not the UK or the west in general that invaded country after country in such a vicious manner. I can't see how you could call or consider all that was done by Germans "national pride"

10 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Tapasap → beorn • 5 months ago

LOL, brilliant satire!

19 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → beorn • 5 months ago

Total and utter rubbish.

13 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



David Murphy → beorn • 5 months ago

He's a complete nutter, but then so is the author of the original article, who seems to believe that the US is in thrall to the Jews and zionists (he has written elsewhere on this subject).

13 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Nityananda Svarupa das → David Murphy • 4 months ago

You think the US isn't controlled by zionist gangsters?

Oh boy.

33 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Lucy Joy → Nityananda Svarupa das • 4 months ago

stupid and ridiculous assumptions!

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → Lucy Joy • 4 months ago

Yes Lucy, from stupid and ridiculous people if you can call them that, they talk more like morons than anything else.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Zhar Bird → David Murphy • 5 months ago

Well, someone is pulling Obama and Merkel's strings...

13 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



hatfey → David Murphy • 5 months ago

they are but you lazy ass yanks are too good to figure that . Stupid dimwits

11 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Daniel Anderson → hatfey • 8 days ago

Has anyone seen "into the woods"? We're playing the blame game like they did, all these actions by different people in different parts of the world culminated in something no one wanted. All that's done is over and done, and can't be changed. The biggest question now is who will step up and stop reacting to perceived wrong, but rather start being proactive to the solving of problems. Retribution is necessary at times but only gets you so far. You say something not nice to a kid because he might have looked at you funny, he might push you. You don't like being pushed, so you push back. That makes him angrier so he takes a swing. This doesn't end because you both have friends, and they'll help. Pretty soon kids are going to the hospital, and everyone thinks they are justified. Let's face the fact that both parties were wrong, the true cause cannot be clearly established, and get on with life

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → beorn • 4 months ago

I've never heard such drivel from the last three comments in my life. It's no wonder Russia is like it is with such arrogant, uniformed, despicable untrue propaganda words coming from such people. They certainly have no reasoning for such disrespectful words for any or all foreign nations. Surely they are referring to a Russia that has no respect for anything, anyone or any nation.

10 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



@rno → newsfromwashington • 2 months ago

And the USA has a lot of respect? ->

<http://thainews.prd.go.th/cent...>

They just control their press and vasaal states better then Russia does so it seems...

9 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



predrag cvetkovic → newsfromwashington • 2 months ago

Everything started with a fib that Russia is a Europe, or worlds, saviour in WWII. When the world realize that that nation is mainly prone to resolve its own interests, and noones else, will be a progress. We speak about people, in big majority, that venerate the most ridiculous political characters in human history. Soviet Union has never suffered domestic upheaval. About 30 milion were killed and they never stood against. That "country" stopped to exist due the economical problems not because russians wanted to. Other, todays free countries like baltic or kaukaz states made the initiative and all Eastern Europe (but Yugoslavia that never made a part) is very thankful for breaking that perverse coalition. Mr. Putin is doing what his people is eager to see.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Evgeniya Moscow → newsfromwashington • 4 months ago

In Russia no sane people accept this view. The correspondent to whom you reply surely has nothing to do with Russia, or may be purposefully provoking such reaction.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



JOHN CAMERON → beorn • 3 months ago

You can't anymore cynical than than that. Would you like to prove that?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Roger Wee → blackfeather99 • 5 months ago

Well stated! The founding families of Federal Reserve of America are the ones that finance Hilter in his campaign. <http://www.usagold.com/federal...> These are the people that is behind this conflict. They owns the medias, banks and controls nations. They tried to control Putin, but got kick out of Russia, this time round is for Revenge.

47 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Greg → Roger Wee • 23 days ago

Russia has always been an aggressor nation. Take a look at their history. Never has the leadership really cared about their citizens. The people of Russia have learned how to live in a world where they do not matter. This is a nation of people that cannot perform any "critical thinking". As mentioned earlier Stalin murdered millions and the people did nothing. I cannot think of another country where its citizens just stood back to watch as they are abused.

Putin cannot believe that Ukrainians want a different life. He is shocked that people will refuse to submit to the leadership. Putin is after worship just as Hitler.

What Russia needs to understand or better yet to accept is, why no one wants to be part of a Russian world? Why are no countries running to embrace this man and country?

see more

10  • Reply • Share ›



Marco Amaral → blackfeather99 • 5 months ago

What??? Do you know the meaning of nazi? It is National Socialism. You can even check out its program in the 30's. You should study a little bit more its elemental background. Also try to interview people who lived in Germany that time (as I did) and try to note the difference between both Germanys before and after the wall fall. Despite of the interests of NATO (always business not ideology and in fact this is controversial I have to agree), Putin is a genocidal like his predecessors. Do you support people like them???

17  • Reply • Share ›



Miamigirl → Marco Amaral • 5 months ago

How many conflicts has Putin started and how many people died as a result in last 14 years? Now compare this to how many conflicts we started and how many people died.

145  • Reply • Share ›



Artem Nazarov → Miamigirl • 5 months ago

Marry me)

20  • Reply • Share ›



Dave the neutral → Miamigirl • 2 months ago

Please read your history about how many people were killed in Chechnya, Georgia and the other ex Soviet States that have been part separated by Putin. I believe in Chechnya 20% of the population were slaughtered.

4  • Reply • Share ›



Rodney → Dave the neutral • a month ago

Don't be an idiot. Chechnya is very much like Afghanistan. The problems started there in the early 1990's and most of the then uprising was funded by that good mate of the USA "Saudi Arabia". Yeltsen probbaly did the wrong thing by using too much force. About 19,000 bombing sorties flown against the estimated 20,000/25,000 "Separatists" Sunni Terrorists. Whatever you want to call them. You know the type the USA loves to support if it suits there purpose. Something like the Taliban that the USA recruited and supported and armed into power in Afghanistan. The Russians pulled out of Chechnya 1996. They virtually had independence. Should have been no problem. They had there own Government and to all intents and purposes were independent. With about as much oil as Kuwait they should have prospered. As usual the Saudis were not there to finance the re-starting of the Oil Industry and no Western Oil Company was willing to invest money there with basically a Terrorist Government

see more

16  • Reply • Share ›



Dave the neutral → Rodney • a month ago

Rodney

Why do you spout crap and belittle other peoples opinions. The USA or the EU are no worse than Russia. Why did/does Russia put people in prison for political

Why does Russia put people in prison for political reasons? that does not happen in the free democratic world. Why does Russia allow criminals from other countries to reside in their country? I could state the ones I mean but I am sure you also know. Why does Russia support the Donbass area of Ukraine? (internal strife) why did Russia send attack helicopters into Crimea with soldiers in unidentified uniforms. Why was the supposed Crimean election not monitored by an international body. If you are not an idiot as you state me to be, do you know that it is against the Geneva convention to enter another country under arms and unidentified. Whether you are from the West, East or Mars you need to respect other peoples views and knowledge. Let us see what Putin will do now as Russia's economy is in free fall. Finally you need to understand the difference between the words "there" and "their" to prove you are an intelligent person. Good Bye.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Stas Filippov → Rodney • 3 days ago

Thank you!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → Miami girl • 4 months ago

I'm not American Miami girl but I see it that the US ended it not started it. Might be an idea if you did marry Artem or even Mr Wee. I can see every reason for what the US has done except for the billions of dollars they have given away to every Tom, Dick and Harry.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Roger Wee → Marco Amaral • 5 months ago

I believe you had your head screw somewhere else ! Yes, Russia before Putin was destructive. You have to study Putin only after he comes in power, 2000. Yes, he controls Russia with an Iron Fist. He has to as there were a lot of western WOLFS circling round Russia hoping for its destruction, so they can pick up the pieces, Putin saw this. Why you think he Nationalise all the critical infrastructures ? How many Banksters & Nobles did he arrest ? From 2000 onwards, Russia from a country on the brink of Bankrupt, he has brought it to a country with more than USD\$2 Trillion Dollars surplus. Russia is the same as China, it needs time to grow and reform, but it must be controlled by an Iron Fist. It is like a teenage kid having his first taste of freedom.

68 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → Roger Wee • 5 months ago

Seems that there are few who know exactly how Russia survived after the fall of Communism. Just ask the U.S. of A.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Nityananda Svarupa das → newsfromwashington • 4 months ago

You really are very uninformed.

Have you studied the Iraq war? It's the single greatest embarrassment in the last 100 years of world history - yet the American people don't even know what happened.

Most Americans don't know what's going on at all. Your government is lying to you and a few wealthy people/families are sucking your country dry.

38 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



windship → Nityananda Svarupa das • 3 months ago

NATO's pompous and futile destruction of Libya hasn't taught us anything either, obviously. The Ukraine has an

inevitable future as a political football in a crowded field populated by historical imbeciles.

17 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



GEORGES SEGUNDO → Nityananda Svarupa das
• 4 months ago

True to the most deep core brother.

God bless you.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → Nityananda Svarupa das
• 4 months ago

Incidentally, what has Iraq got to do with the fall of communism in Russia.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → Nityananda Svarupa das
• 4 months ago

You sir are a total fool. Every government on this earth does exactly the same thing, suck the blood from your body and your bank account. Every citizen of every country is aware of this with the exception of you apparently. If that thug Putin was so damn clever at running Russia he sure as hell wouldn't need Crimea and eastern Ukraine for access.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



peter → newsfromwashington • 4 months ago

what is it with you? as if you are in the know about anything?

you go out there talking sh.t...educate yourself and remember ,

history is always written by the winner...

10 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



newsfromwashington → peter • 4 months ago

If history is written by the winner it is usually written by a liar.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



peter → newsfromwashington • 3 months ago

but of course my friend....

lies always lies...look at at the Nuremberg trial and forged evidences....funny also, nobody ever talks about the the 30 million chinese massacre during second world war , and the Holodomor massacre , people blamed Stalin , but who was the very special group of people under Stalin really doing the massacre? countless stories like this ...and very few people are aware

of what really happened..they just go with the propaganda , reading without criticisizing what they read...

Cheers

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



peter → newsfromwashington • 4 months ago

of course because the winner does not want to undetmine his own bullshi.t

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Nityananda Svarupa das → newsfromwashington
• 4 months ago

If you'd have studied history at all then you'd know you're wrong. To say all governments are like that is to be utterly naive. You don't have to look too far into history to see noble leaders. Unfortunately you have to contend with the media's portrayal of those leaders and thus miss out on the truth.


5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›





newsfromwashington → Nityananda Svarupa das
• 4 months ago


 You should read the article even if it's just the headlines. I didn't realize Iraq was in Crimea or Ukraine. better get out the map book.
[^](#) [v](#) • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›

 **Dave the neutral** [→](#) Roger Wee • 2 months ago
Please tell how Putin has got his estimated 50 million dollar fortune? He has never managed a business in his life!
1 [^](#) [v](#) • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›

 **Rodney** [→](#) Dave the neutral • a month ago
Give us some facts. Nobody knows what he is worth.
1 [^](#) [v](#) • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›

 **Dave the neutral** [→](#) Rodney • a month ago
Rodney
Please read what I said, it is an ESTIMATED worth, I would prefer that you surf the net to find the answer to your question instead of asking someone else to do your work for you, it is not difficult.
[^](#) [v](#) • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›

 **johncdvorak** [→](#) Dave the neutral • 5 days ago
\$50 million is chickenfeed nowadays for these guys. Let's find out how Clinton got his \$500 million. This is all discussed in detail on the No Agenda Show.
[^](#) [v](#) • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›

 **Dave the neutral** [→](#) johncdvorak • 5 days ago
I was awaiting someone to correct me but it has gone unnoticed, Putin's wealth is estimated at 50 billion dollars not 50 million. I guess he got it by colluding with the other Russian oligarchs, killing those who opposed him.
[^](#) [v](#) • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›

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