



President Biden: De-Escalate in Ukraine, Do Not Risk Nuclear War!

By Gerry Condon

“The First Casualty of War Is Truth.”

This simple yet profound statement is attributed to many, including Hiram Johnson in a speech in the U.S. Senate in 1918, during the “war to end all wars.” Hiram Johnson was a progressive Republican who had been elected to the Senate from California that very year. He remained in the Senate until he died of old age on August 6, 1945, the day the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on the civilian population of Hiroshima, Japan.

The Baltimore Sun quoted Senator Johnson more fully in 1929, during a Sen-

Twenty-Four-Hour News Coverage Is Keeping Americans Hyped Up and Dumbed Down

Once the fighting commences, deception is also an important ploy on the battlefield. The ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus wrote, “God is not adverse to deceit in a just cause.” Aside from keeping the enemy guessing about when and where the next attack will be launched, it is critically important to maintain popular support for a questionable enterprise that requires the sacrifice of blood and treasure.

Twenty-four hour cable news coverage of the ugly war in Ukraine is keep-

It is not alarmist to say this is the greatest imminent threat of nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

ate debate on an international agreement called the “General Treaty for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy” (also known as the Kellogg-Briand Treaty):

“The first casualty when war comes is truth, and whenever there is a war, and whenever an individual nation seeks to coerce by force of arms another, it always acts and always insists that it acts under self-defense.”

As the war rages in Ukraine in 2022, actual combat is eclipsed by well-practiced information warfare. It was not surprising when the White House and State Department began shouting that the Russians were about to launch a “false flag” event to justify their pending invasion of Ukraine. After all, isn’t that the way it is always done? Isn’t that the way the United States did it with the Tonkin Gulf Incident in Vietnam, babies being thrown out of incubators in Kuwait, and Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. Of course, the United States has a bigger challenge claiming self-defense as it invades smaller, weaker countries halfway around the globe.

ing Americans hyped up and dumbed down. The very real horror of war is on the screen for all to see. The bombed-out buildings, the mounting civilian casualties and the frightened refugees speak their own truth. Unfortunately, we rarely see the victims, the grieving families and the terrified refugees when the invader is the United States. The “shock and awe” U.S. terror bombing campaign on Baghdad was described by one network TV anchor as a “beautiful thing to see.”

Totally absent from nonstop coverage of the war and condemnations of Russian president Putin is any reporting on the role of the United States and NATO in creating the crisis over Ukraine. No reports about the relentless NATO expansion up to the very borders of Russia. No mention of U.S. missile emplacements in Romania and Poland. Nothing about the unilateral U.S. exit from vital nuclear treaties—the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (George W. Bush, 2002), and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (Donald Trump, 2018).

Such reporting would be unpatriotic
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No-Fly Zones Mean War!

Veterans Warn Against “No-Fly Zone” In Ukraine

Veterans of several U.S. wars are urging President Biden to hold fast against growing political pressure to implement a “no-fly zone.”

A no-fly zone is an area established by a military power over which opposing aircraft are not permitted. No-fly zones are enforced by military interception of aircraft and missiles using deadly force, and sometimes include preemptive strikes to prevent potential violations. In other words, a country that declares a no-fly zone must then be ready to enforce the protected space, putting the United States in direct military conflict with Russia, escalating war between two nuclear powers.

No-fly zones have only been utilized three times in history—in parts of Iraq following the 1991 Gulf War, in Bosnia in 1992, and in Libya in 2011. Those crises were situations in which the United States and NATO used their superior air power to stymie the air defenses of the countries they were attacking.

The United States and NATO have so far resisted imposing a no-fly zone in Ukraine out of concerns that it would draw them into an armed showdown with Russia, and possibly even a nuclear war. A no-fly zone would almost certainly result in U.S. and allied aircraft directly

engaging Russian aircraft—something NATO leaders strenuously tried to avoid during all four decades of the Cold War.

“For several years during the 1990s, my job at the Pentagon was to help enforce the Southern NFZ over Iraq. I was part of the Battle Damage Assessment Cell,” said Robert Prokop of Veterans For Peace. “A no-fly zone is an act of war—nothing less. It is lethal ordnance falling, not just on equipment, but on human beings. We all need to be crystal clear about this with elected officials and the general public.”

“A no-fly zone would mean direct combat between the U.S. and Russia, leading to a wider European war involving countries with nuclear power,” said Garrett Reppenhagen, Iraq War veteran, and executive director of Veterans For Peace. “We need de-escalation and diplomacy to bring this terrible war to an end as soon as possible.”

Veterans For Peace continues to urge President Biden and congressional leaders to not implement a no-fly zone and to use every available diplomatic resource to push for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal and to apply pressure on other nations to do the same.



A Russian Su-34 fighter-bomber taking off.

Our Deeply Subconscious Magical Thinking

Last month our park system in Toledo sponsored a lecture by a renowned ornithologist, describing the international attention our part of the Lake Erie shoreline attracts during spring bird migration.

He explained that large birds like ducks and eagles travel typically by day, navigating by land features, whereas songbirds and warblers fly at night and navigate off the stars. Some birds, weighing barely an ounce, fly 450 miles a day for a week straight, sometimes over long stretches of open water, just to get back home to their natural breeding grounds. He described how the shapes of certain land masses, like in the Middle East, can channel large numbers of birds into narrow corridors.

Editorial

From the audience, one woman asked, “For birds that fly during the day and navigate by what they see on land, will the ones flying over Ukraine be able to make it?”

Instantly, everyone’s attention and emotions riveted on what had dominated the 24-hour news cycle for weeks – the war in Ukraine.

One needn’t be even an armchair psy-

chologist to reckon how deeply into the national subconscious two weeks of constant war news had permeated for someone listening to a lecture on bird migration, in Toledo, Ohio, to ask a question like that.

Since our speaker had also mentioned bird migration in the Middle East, I wondered if anyone in the audience had considered the plight of migrating birds or people there, one of the most heavily bombed regions on Earth?

Returning home I was glad to see these words from Jeff Cohen, founder of the media watch group, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), from online comments and a Free Speech TV interview. In a nation that prides itself on freedom of speech, his statements are not only rare but unfortunately in the current atmosphere, downright courageous.

“I’m happy to see that the U.S. media is covering the violation of international law committed by the Russians. I’m happy to see its empathetic coverage of all these civilians that are being terrorized because of missiles and bombs dropping in their neighborhoods. That’s a great thing because in modern warfare civilians are the main victims. That’s what journalism should do. But when the U.S. was the culprit killing all these civilians, you just couldn’t get it covered.



“When I hear about the pregnant women giving birth in shelters in terror (in Ukraine), do you think during the weeks and months of Shock and Awe—one of the most violent bombing campaigns in global history that the U.S. committed in Iraq—do you think that magically, women in Iraq quit giving birth? There’s this magical thinking when the U.S. is dropping the bombs.”

It’s not surprising most people here didn’t think of the death and destruction endured by civilians when U.S. bombs fell on Iraq. Why would they when, as many of us recall, U.S. network reporters waxed nearly orgasmic describing the “beauty” of the Shock and Awe images, or the ex-

citement they felt witnessing a cruise missile launched from a Navy warship, or hearing America’s most popular network anchor, Dan Rather, refer to George W. Bush as “my commander-in-chief?”

And in case heartfelt reportorial jingoism doesn’t generate sufficient subconscious magical thinking, network executives step in to assure it, as related in a FAIR article describing top CNN officials telling reporters how to spin stories to downplay civilian casualties caused by U.S. bombing in Afghanistan.

Wars, all wars, cause tremendous suffering to all life, but only an incalculably small number of Americans have seen
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Love Among the Chaos

By Tarak Kauff

With all modern wars, it is the innocent noncombatants who suffer the most. As I review reports from Ukraine I read of those who are most innocent, the children and the animals, and I want to cry. There is no excuse, no rationale for killing innocents. Whom to blame? Maybe all the participant governments of Ukraine, Russia and the U.S. and NATO. None of these actors is without guilt. A case can be made as to who is most responsible but I’m not going there; you can read the arguments for that elsewhere.

I want talk about what seems to be of little concern—the non-human animals who have no responsibility or blame for this madness, but who suffer in every way and die just as we do. Animals don’t make war, humans do. Animals give us

Ukrainian artist Iryna Potapenko paints between bombings: at left, a Ukrainian refugee family had to carry their elderly pet for 10 miles to the border.

so much, sometimes, as with the case of dogs with veterans suffering from physical, mental, and moral injuries, they share unconditional love, devotion, and loyalty, and give the veteran a reason to live.

Amid all the suffering of Ukrainian civilians, soldiers and the young Russian soldiers, who probably would rather not be fighting their ethnic cousins, there are still stories of love, courage and beauty. A Ukrainian soldier taking the time to bandage the head of a wounded dog; soldiers on both sides adopting, caring for, and feeding abandoned dogs and cats; and then there’s the family of Alisa, walking the last 10 miles to the Polish border with their 12-year-old female German shepherd, who kept falling down, but they would not leave her, this essential part of their family. The husband carried their dog to the border.

Alisa tells part of her story, “We left Kyiv in a small Peugeot 307 car. There were nine of us, me, my mum, my sister, our two husbands, four children and two big dogs, including an elderly German
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Peace & Planet News

Peace and Planet News is a project of New York City Veterans For Peace and the Vietnam Full Disclosure Project. The articles here do not represent an official position of Veterans For Peace or its members. They are intended to offer a range of viewpoints that are not covered in the mainstream media.

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De-Escalate

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in a time of war, would it not? We don't want to justify Russian aggression. We don't even want to hear their side of the story. A simplistic, one-sided narrative tells us that Vladimir Putin—who is both evil and mad—has initiated a war in order to rebuild the former Russian empire. Who knows where he might stop? There is absolutely no evidence to support this implausible narrative. But the truth be damned. This is war.

A “No-Fly Zone” Means World War III

President Biden is demonstrating at least a bit of prudence. The President must make life-and-death decisions that are somewhat based in reality. He is resisting the growing calls for a No Fly Zone in Ukraine. He and the generals at the Pentagon know what that means. Even the usually pugnacious Senator Marco Rubio stated “it means World War III.” Yet pressure is growing for a No Fly Zone—maybe a “limited” one—as both Republican and Democratic leaders take their turn on top of the war wagon.

Joe Biden is also worried about nuclear war, a serious concern for all modern presidents. Vladimir Putin is brandishing his large nuclear arsenal as a disincentive for direct U.S./NATO engagement in the Ukraine war. The United States canceled a planned ICBM test launch from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California to its usual target in the much-bombed Marshall Islands. Apparently, the United States did not want to risk spooking Putin, about whose mental state many people are speculating. Could it be that Putin is employing Richard Nixon's famous “madman theory,” keeping his enemies at bay with unpredictability?

Of course, Russia has its own propaganda apparatus, but we will not be much exposed to it here in the United States. Russia Today (RT) has been removed from most cable TV services as well as from YouTube. Well actually, almost everything Russian is currently being canceled, in a furious frenzy of Russia-hating that has been central to U.S. culture

ever since World War II. The Russians are never given credit for their outsized role in defeating the Nazis, nor sympathy for the 27 million lives lost in that war.

The United States Routinely Violates the U.N. Charter—and Now Russia Has Done So

The Russian invasion is a violation of the U.N. Charter, but hardly unprecedented. International law in no way restrained U.S. war-making in Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Grenada, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia or Yemen. Russia's invasion was not in self-defense—except in a preemptive sense—they were not under immediate military attack.

Some say that the ongoing Ukrainian war against two breakaway Russia-aligned provinces in eastern Ukraine provided Just Cause for Russia's invasion. Fourteen thousand people have died in the violence there since 2014, when a U.S.-backed coup overthrew a Russia-friendly president and replaced him with someone handpicked by the United States. An annoying factoid that.

Another annoying factoid is the well-documented role of Nazi militias in the

Another annoying factoid is the well-documented role of Nazi militias in the 2014 coup and in the current government and military.

2014 coup and in the current government and military. These inconvenient truths in no way justifies the blatant Russian aggression, however, which is killing hundreds of innocent civilians and has created a dangerous crisis for humanity.

The Information War Presents the Peace Movement With a Dilemma

The nonstop barrage of information, misinformation, disinformation and rallying around the flag has presented the peace movement with a dilemma. How do peace-loving people righteously condemn the Russian invasion—the destruction of cities, the killing of hundreds of civilians, the displacement of millions? How do we



Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the largest in Ukraine.

express our outrage and our strong disapproval of this aggression and violence without appearing to join in the war fervor that is sweeping the United States?

Conversely, how do we explain the role of the United States and NATO in creating this crisis without appearing to justify this horrible violence? How do we demand that President Biden stop pouring fuel on the fire by sending more weapons into Ukraine? How do we tell people that sanctions are not an alternative to war, but

is always a U.S. general. President Biden probably could have headed off the Russian invasion by simply saying publicly that Ukraine would not become a member of NATO. But he refused to do that. He called Putin's bluff, and Putin showed him it was no bluff.

President Biden Must Act Now to De-Escalate This Dangerous War

Whatever disagreements there are about how the Ukraine war came about, reasonable people should be able to agree on this: This war is very dangerous. It threatens to become a wider war in Europe. It could even lead to a civilization-ending nuclear war. It therefore must be brought to an end as soon as possible.

President Biden is in a position to make a bold diplomatic move that could bring this war to a screeching halt. Instead of pouring in weapons and piling on sanctions, we should call on President Biden to begin good faith negotiations with all concerned parties, respecting each of their security concerns.

Once the world has—hopefully—pulled back from the brink, we should begin a serious international discussion about how to abolish nuclear weapons and war once and for all. How will we avoid getting into the same kind of war with China over Taiwan? How can the United States adjust to a multi-polar world where it is no longer The Sheriff?

Veterans For Peace is offering its own Nuclear Posture Review, with sections on Russia and Europe and all the nuclear powers. It makes well-researched recommendations, such as implementing No First Use policies and taking nuclear missiles off “hair-trigger alert.” It calls on the United States to rejoin the ABM and INF treaties, and to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It calls on the U.S. to initiate negotiations “to reduce and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons,” as the five permanent U.N. Security Council members—the original nuclear powers—agreed when they signed the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. If the United States and other nuclear powers had kept their promise to eliminate nuclear weapons, we would probably not be at war today in Ukraine, or worrying about Armageddon.

Gerry Condon is the former president of Veterans For Peace and a co-author of the Veterans For Peace Nuclear Posture Review.

rather an escalation of war?

Escalation is the very last thing we want. The Ukraine war presents the entire world with an existential threat. It is not alarmist to say this is the greatest imminent threat of nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The one where the United States was reacting to Russian nuclear missiles being positioned in Cuba, way too close for comfort. Does that ring a bell?

The Danger of Nuclear War Should Focus Our Attention

The very real danger of nuclear war should focus all our attention. With both U.S. and Russian nukes on “hair-trigger alert,” what could go wrong? And then there are the 15 or so nuclear power plants in Ukraine, several of them reportedly compromised by the war. Is that a real threat or is it war propaganda? Perhaps both. It is in *everybody's* interest to end this very dangerous war as soon as possible.

Joe Biden is not new to this conflict. Biden and—famously—his son Hunter, have been involved in the Ukraine mess at least since the 2014 coup, after which a Ukrainian oil company paid Hunter Biden \$50,000 a month to sit on its Board. No conflict of interest there, all the Democrats insisted. Even without family enrichment, Joe Biden has long been dedicated to the Cold War project of putting the Soviet Union—and now Russia—in its place, which is no place, and with no respect.

The United States leads NATO—the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe



The Greatest Evil is War

Russia was baited into war but that does not absolve its criminal act of aggression.



Kharkiv, Ukraine

By Chris Hedges

Preemptive war, whether in Iraq or Ukraine, is a war crime. It does not matter if the war is launched on the basis of lies and fabrications, as was the case in Iraq, or because of the breaking of a series of agreements with Russia, including the promise by Washington not to extend NATO beyond the borders of a unified Germany, not to deploy thousands of NATO troops in Eastern Europe, not to meddle in the internal affairs of nations on the Russia's border and the refusal to implement the Minsk II peace agreement. The invasion of Ukraine would, I expect, never have happened if these promises had been kept. Russia has every right to feel threatened, betrayed, and angry. But to understand is not to condone. The invasion of Ukraine, under post-Nuremberg laws, is a criminal war of aggression.

I know the instrument of war. War is not politics by other means. It is demonic. I spent two decades as a war correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans, where I covered the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. I carry within me the ghosts of dozens of those swallowed up in the violence, including my close friend, Reuters correspondent Kurt Schork, who was killed in an ambush in Sierra Leone with another friend, Miguel Gil Moreno.

I know the chaos and disorientation of war, the constant uncertainty and confusion. In a firefight you are only aware of what is happening a few feet around you. You desperately, and not always successfully, struggle to figure out where the firing is coming from in the hopes you can avoid being hit.

I have felt the helplessness and the paralyzing fear, which, years later, descend on me like a freight train in the middle of the night, leaving me wrapped in coils of terror, my heart racing, my body dripping with sweat.

I have heard the wails of those convulsed by grief as they clutch the bodies of friends and family, including children. I hear them still. It does not matter the language. Spanish. Arabic. Hebrew. Dinka. Serbo-Croatian. Albanian. Ukrainian. Russian. Death cuts through the linguistic barriers.

I know what wounds look like. Legs

blown off. Heads imploded into a bloody, pulpy mass. Gaping holes in stomachs. Pools of blood. Cries of the dying, sometimes for their mothers. And the smell. The smell of death. The supreme sacrifice made for flies and maggots.

I have felt the helplessness and the paralyzing fear, which, years later, descend on me like a freight train in the middle of the night, leaving me wrapped in coils of terror, my heart racing, my body dripping with sweat.

I was beaten by Iraqi and Saudi secret police. I was taken prisoner by the Contras in Nicaragua, who radioed back to their base in Honduras to see if they should kill me, and again in Basra after the first Gulf War in Iraq, never knowing if I would be executed, under constant guard and often without food, drinking out of mud puddles.

The primary lesson in war is that we as distinct individuals do not matter. We become numbers. Fodder. Objects. Life, once precious and sacred, becomes meaningless, sacrificed to the insatiable appetite of Mars. No one in wartime is exempt.

"We were expendable," Eugene Sledge wrote of his experiences as a Marine in the South Pacific in World War II. "It was difficult to accept. We come from a nation and a culture that values life and the

individual. To find oneself in a situation where your life seems of little value is the ultimate in loneliness. It is a humbling experience."

The landscape of war is hallucinogenic. It defies comprehension. You have no concept of time in a firefight. A few minutes. A few hours. War, in an instant, obliterates homes and communities, all that was

once familiar, and leaves behind smoldering ruins and a trauma that you carry for the rest of your life. You cannot comprehend what you see. I have tasted enough of war, enough of my own fear, my body

turned to jelly, to know that war is always evil, the purest expression of death, dressed up in patriotic cant about liberty and democracy and sold to the naïve as a ticket to glory, honor and courage. It is a toxic and seductive elixir. Those who survive, as Kurt Vonnegut wrote, struggle afterwards to reinvent themselves and their universe which, on some level, will never make sense again.

War destroys all systems that sustain and nurture life—familial, economic, cultural, political, environmental, and social. Once war begins, no one, even those nominally in charge of waging war, can guess what will happen, how the war will develop, how it can drive armies and nations towards suicidal folly. There are no good wars. None. This includes World War II, which has been sanitized and mythologized to mendaciously celebrate American heroism, purity, and goodness. If truth is the first casualty in war, ambiguity is the second. The bellicose rhetoric embraced and amplified by the American press, demonizing Vladimir Putin and elevating the Ukrainians to the status of demigods, demanding more robust military intervention along with the crippling sanctions meant to bring down Vladimir Putin's government, is infantile and dangerous. The Russian media narrative is as simplistic as ours.

There were no discussions about pacifism in the basements in Sarajevo when we were being hit with hundreds or Serbian shells a day and under constant sniper fire. It made sense to defend the city. It made sense to kill or be killed. The Bosnian Serb soldiers in the Drina Valley, Vukovar, Srebrenica had amply demonstrated their capacity for murderous rampages, including the gunning down of hundreds of soldiers and civilians and the wholesale rape of women and girls. But this did not save any of the defenders in Sarajevo from the poison of violence, the soul-destroying force that is war. I knew a Bosnian soldier who heard a sound behind a door while patrolling on the outskirts of Sarajevo. He fired a burst from his AK-47 through the door. A delay of a few seconds in combat can mean death. When he opened the door, he found the bloody remains of a 12-year-old girl. His daughter was 12. He never recovered.

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The Dangerous Idea of a Well-Behaved War

By Antonio De Lauri

The war in Ukraine resuscitated a certain dangerous fascination for war. Notions such as patriotism, democratic values, “the right side of history,” or a new fight for freedom are mobilized as imperatives for everyone to take a side in this war. It is not surprising then that a large number of so-called foreign fighters are willing to go to Ukraine to join one side or the other.

I met a few of them recently at the Poland-Ukraine border, where I was conducting interviews with a Norwegian film crew of soldiers and foreign fighters who were either entering or exiting the war zone.

Some of them actually never got to fight or be “recruited” as they lack military experience or proper motivation. It’s a mixed group of people, some of whom have spent years in the military, while others only did the required military service. Some have family at home waiting for them; others, no home to go back to. Some have strong ideological motivations; others are just willing to shoot at something or someone. There is also a big group of former soldiers who transitioned towards humanitarian work.

As we were crossing the border to get into Ukraine, a former U.S. soldier told me: “The reason why many retired or former soldiers moved to humanitarian work might easily be the need for excitement.” Once you leave the military, the closest activity that can take you to the “fun zone,” as another one said, referring to the war zone in Ukraine, is humanitarian work—or, in fact, a series of other businesses mushrooming in the proximity of war, including contractors and criminal activities.

“We are adrenaline junkies,” the former U.S. soldier said, although he now only wants to help civilians, something he sees as “a part of my process of healing.” What many of the foreign fighters have in common is the need to find a purpose in life. But what does this say of our societies if, to search for a meaningful life, thousands are willing to go to war?

Propaganda

There is dominant propaganda that seems to suggest war can be conducted according to a set of acceptable, standardized, and abstract rules. It puts forth an idea of a well-behaved war where only military targets are destroyed, force is not used in excess, and right and wrong are clearly defined. This rhetoric is used by governments and mass media propaganda (with the military industry celebrating) to make war more acceptable, even attractive, for the masses.

Whatever deviates from this idea of a proper and noble war is considered an exception. U.S. soldiers torturing prisoners in Abu Ghraib: an exception. German soldiers playing with a human skull in Afghanistan: an exception.

The U.S. soldier who went on a house-to-house rampage in an Afghan village, killing 16 civilians including several children with no reason: an exception. War crimes committed by Australian troops in Afghanistan: an exception. Iraqi prisoners tortured by British troops: an exception.

Similar stories are emerging in the current war in Ukraine too, even though mostly still unconfirmed.

With the information war obfuscating the distinction between reality and fantasy, we don’t know if and when we will be able to verify videos such as one showing a Ukrainian soldier talking on the phone with the mom of a killed Russian soldier and making fun of her, or Ukrainian soldiers shooting prisoners to make them permanently injured, or news about Russian soldiers sexually assaulting women.

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Defending Ukraine’s Draft Dodgers

How can we call Ukraine a part of the ‘free world’?

By Dave Lindorff

Back in 2015, when I was driving from Kuopio Finland up to the country’s far north to write an article on global warming and how it was affecting the Sami indigenous people of Lapland, I found myself offering rides to a number of Ukrainian young people, mostly male, or males accompanied by girlfriends, who were fleeing the civil war in their country, which saw Ukrainian forces, including the fascist Azov Battalion, shelling and shooting at ethnic Russians in the two breakaway oblasts (districts) of Donetsk and Lugansk.

These young people of draft age all told me they were fleeing their country to avoid being drafted to fight in a war against their countrymen in eastern Ukraine, a majority Russian region of Ukraine. “I have nothing against those people in Donbas,” one young man told me, “and I don’t want to be forced to kill them and get killed myself.”

They had all gone to Finland because of short-term agricultural work visas available to people willing to pick blueberries, which cover the forest floor above the Arctic Circle at that time of summer.

I appreciated their dilemma. Back in the Spring of 1967

and punishing and threatening ethnic Russians and also the violent attacks on Donetsk and Lugansk, in violation of an agreement reached in Minsk that granted them autonomy.

As well, regardless of the causes of this current war in Ukraine, many people simply do not believe war is the answer. As one young draft dodger who fled Kiev and slipped out of war-torn Ukraine making his way to the UK told *The New York Times*, “Violence is not my weapon.” He reports getting death threats from people in Ukraine.

It was, actually, a bit like that in the United States back in the late ’60s and early ’70s. Being even suspected of being or looking like the popular image of a “draft resister” could lead to one’s being called a traitor, being beaten up, or having one’s hair or beard cut off. I remember getting a few death threats back in those days for articles I wrote against the draft and against the U.S. war on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

So I want to say clearly that I heartily support those men of draft age in Ukraine who refuse to support the war by picking up one of the guns being handed out by the Ukraine government, and who flee the country to escape being made to fight something they don’t believe in — re-



I and many young men like me of draft age were faced with a draft at a time that the US was ramping up a war against Vietnam and forces in that country that were fighting for its liberation from a century or more of colonial and imperial subjugation and for unification after the US had blocked a unification election fearing it would result in a victory by national hero and Communist Party leader Ho Chi Minh.

I didn’t want to support the US war, or any war. My options were leaving for Canada, as some of my school classmates did, hiding out and dodging the draft and the FBI, which others did, or resisting the draft and refusing to be inducted, which would likely mean federal prison, as others did. I knew I would not participate in the war in Indochina in any capacity, even doing “alternative service.” With a low draft lottery number (81) assuring I would get a call to be inducted into the army, I chose resistance.

But I didn’t pass judgement on what choices other young men made. Anyone who took steps to avoid being made part of the US war machine was doing the right thing in my view.

Now in Ukraine men of all ages between 18 and 60 are required to take up arms and defend their country from a Russian invasion. Some may say that it is a struggle for the independence of Ukraine, but the issues are more complex than that. Ukraine has not been innocent in the conflict with its larger neighbor. Consider for example the laws passed since the 2014 US-backed Maidan Coup that overthrew Ukraine’s elected government and president — laws barring Russian language in schools,

portedly as many as 15,000 to date. I also heartily support those courageous protesters, tens of thousands of them, who are protesting Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, some of whom are facing stiff prison terms for their actions.

But nobody is calling Russia a free country. Ukraine is a different matter though, at least in the US media.

A free country is one that respects freedom of conscience. It is also one that allows freedom of travel. Ukraine’s government under the vastly over-praised western media darling of the moment, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has violated those freedoms by barring exit from the country to men of fighting age who don’t believe in this war, don’t want to fight in it, and don’t want to die for their country..

That action of a compulsory draft and a closed border to adult males should disqualify Zelenskyy from talking about freedom, and gives the lie to those in the US who describe Ukraine’s fight against Russia as being part of a struggle between dictatorship and some supposedly “free world.”

In January 1977, President Jimmy Carter (a U.S. Navy officer and veteran), granted a blanket amnesty to draft dodgers, resisters, and those who had fled the country. It was a presidential recognition that opposition to the draft was an act of conscience, not crime.

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Starving a People, Committing a Genocide: Biden's Sanctions on Afghanistan

By Eve Ottenberg

When the United States stole \$7 billion from Afghanistan on Feb. 11, that was no mere crime of robbery. It was a war crime and a crime against humanity that condemns possibly millions of Afghans to starvation. In short, prelude to genocide. Biden prevaricates about his excuse for this outright theft of Afghan funds, namely compensating the 9/11 victims. The Afghan government didn't kill their loved ones, indeed back in 2001 the Taliban offered to turn the al Qaeda culprits over to Washington. The U.S. refused the offer and invaded instead.

Biden's shocking action makes all Americans complicit in sickening atrocities. According to UNICEF, "more than 23 million Afghans face acute hunger, including 9 million who are nearly famished." By the middle of this year, 97% of Afghans will be in poverty, the U.N. estimates. To say these people need every penny of their \$7 billion is an understatement. To say those who steal half of it from them are monsters is the only moral assessment of such larceny. (The other half will supposedly be returned to them at some unspecified future date.) Biden has done highway robbers one better: "Your money AND your life" is the new American message, delivered in ringing tones of mendacious self-righteousness.

This particular heist equals roughly 40% of the Afghan economy and approximately 14 months of Afghan imports, according to Mark Weisbrot in the Feb. 4 *Sacramento Bee*. But Biden earlier slapped other sanctions on the country, as a parting gift when U.S. troops left after 20 years of wrecking the place. Overall Biden's sanctions mean "more people will die ... over the next year than the number who died in 20 years of war," Weisbrot wrote in the March 15 *CounterPunch*. That's because Biden's gratuitous sanctions kill funding for the Afghan government along with money for desperately needed food imports. So between the multi-decade U.S. war on this poor nation, drought, COVID, and frozen currency reserves—frozen by the Biden administration, just to be clear—it's no wonder millions of pauperized Afghans hover over the abyss of starvation.

Thus Biden cancelled out the good he did by yanking U.S. troops out of Afghanistan. The military withdrew, but the U.S. President opened the door to famine. This entirely man-made catastrophe could be averted, of course. Lift the sanctions. Give Afghanistan back all of its money and lives will be saved. Don't and lots of people will die.

Clare Daly, MEP from Dublin summed it up best in a March 8 speech: "There's no doubt about it, we're living in times where ... the lives of innocent civilians are sacrificed in the wars of their masters. Yes, in Ukraine, but not only. Since the last plenary tens of thousands of Afghani citizens have been forced to flee in search of

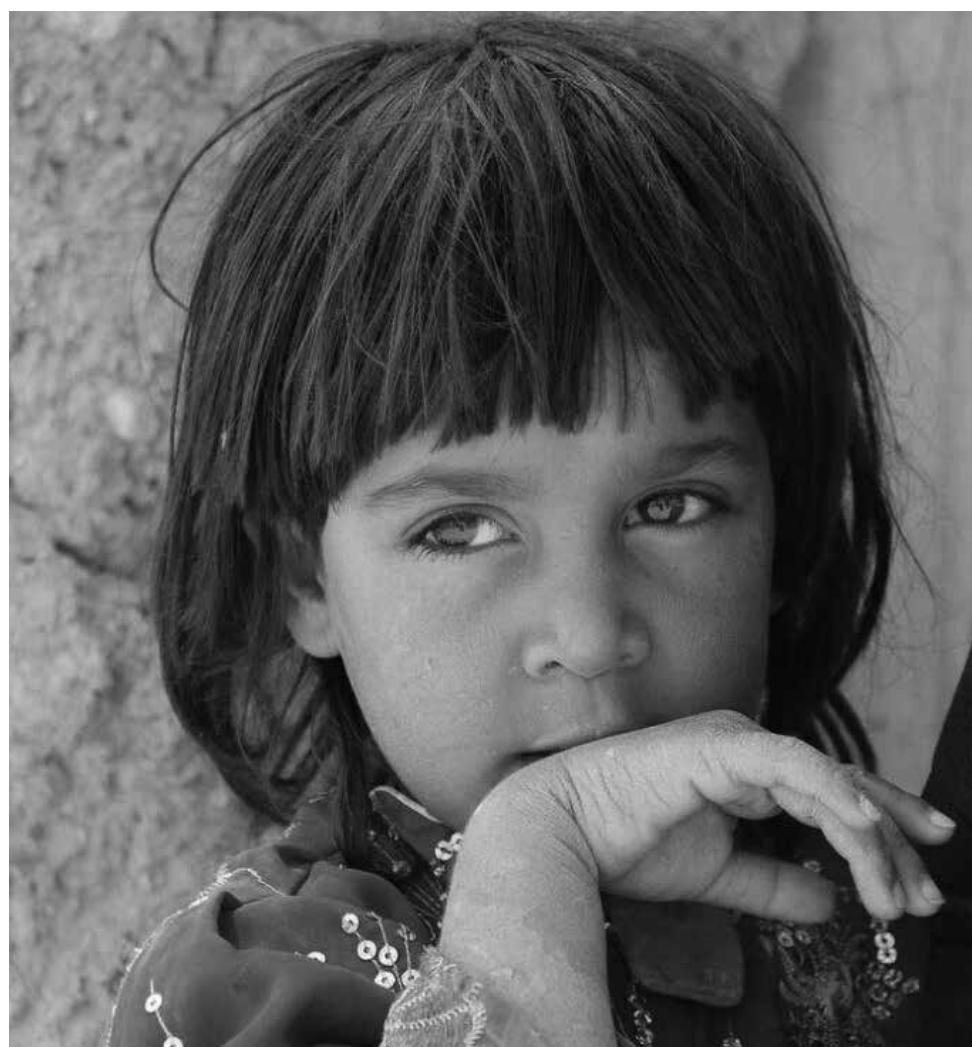
food and safety, five million children face famine, an agonizing and painful death, a 500% increase in child marriages and children being sold just so they can survive, and not a mention of it, not here, not anywhere, no wall-to-wall TV coverage, no emergency humanitarian response, no special plenaries, not even a mention in this plenary, no Afghani delegations and no statements. My God, they must be wondering what makes their humanitarian crisis so unimportant. Is it the color of their skin, is it that they're not white? They're not European? That their problems come from a U.S. gun or a U.S. invasion? Is it that the decision to rob their country's wealth was taken by a despotic U.S. President rather than a Russian one? Because my God, all wars are evil, and all victims deserve support and until we get on that page, we have no credibility whatsoever."

What if Russia or China engaged in such murderous chicanery? Well, Russians and Ukrainians are killing each other right now, but the projected Afghan starvation death toll beats anything they've come up with so far. And though Biden's actions put Chinese treatment of the Uyghurs to shame, don't expect furious denunciations of the sort regularly leveled at Beijing from the corporate media. No. Our press tiptoes around our government's culpability. But that's to be expected from our media, aka Washington's propaganda megaphone, once known as a proud free press. Free no longer. The only freedom of thought lies in the occasional unexpected investigative report or in the margins of independent media.

One exception was a March 5 article in the *Guardian* by Selay Ghaffar. "Across the country, five million children are on the brink of famine. Many young people are in despair; suicide is on the rise," Ghaffar writes and then laments the soaring price of wheat due to the Ukraine war. This rise in cost means more people will starve. Part of the reason is that during the 20-year U.S. occupation, the country was "made into a dependency, relying on flows of humanitarian aid." Biden "has refused responsibility for America's intervention in our country."

The lesson of the U.S. defeat in Afghanistan and the promptly ensuing sanctions is damned if you do and damned if you don't. Any country Washington attacks has a Solomon's choice: surrender or fight and win and then face Washington's global financial fury and the mass destitution it engenders. That's how the empire works. It's the sorest loser on the globe. Defeated, it exacts an excruciating revenge.

If the geniuses in Washington think they can win the propaganda war on Afghanistan, they better think again. Too many people will die to be concealed. Many cloistered Americans who consider their country blameless may not know about the Washington-inflicted mass death, but the rest of the world sure does. Just look



at the front page of China's *Global Times* back on February 23. It featured Afghanistan's Washington-imposed agony, with a petition demanding the U.S. return money to Afghans. And that's not the only international headline to point out Washington's brutality. As corpses pile up, the appalling U.S. starvation of Afghans inevitably becomes as widely known as its aid to the slaughter in Yemen. But the callous sociopaths who inflict this policy on an entire nation seem scarcely to notice.

According to *Vox* back on Jan. 22, before the August fall of Kabul to the Taliban, the country "relied heavily on foreign aid; after the Taliban takeover, that influx of cash ceased ... In December the World Food Program found that 98% of Afghans aren't getting enough to eat." Afghan famine has one culprit: "The U.S. decision to

halt aid to the country and freeze billions in Afghan government funds."

One can only hope some major power, like maybe China, comes to the rescue. China is generally careful about illegal U.S. sanctions, but it has cordial relations with the Afghan government and wants to include the country in its Belt and Road Initiative. Perhaps China could coordinate with the United Nations to put some food on Afghan tables—not too much, of course, because that would offend the omnipotent nitwits in the U.S. government. But maybe just enough to save some lives.

This article was originally published at CounterPunch.org.

Eve Ottenberg is a novelist and journalist. Her latest book is Hope Deferred. Her website is eveottenberg.com.

Magical Thinking

... continued from page 2

this to be true with our own eyes. Since our people have been spared what millions in other nations have seen firsthand or heard from elders, it's understandable that America's purposefully hypocritical news reporting can anesthetize a citizenry into forgetting the starving in Afghanistan now that the war is "over" or unsee millions in Yemen enduring famine from years of our war-making, or disregard thousands of ethnic Russians killed in Ukraine's Donbas with U.S. weapons.

Most Americans wouldn't believe these things can be done by the Land of the Free Press because it runs counter to a lifetime of received popular culture steeped in untruths. Wrenching free of that is psychologically painful, indeed impossible for some. Harsh realities await. Magical thinking feels so much better.

But just sometimes, as difficult as it is,

magical thinking can be set aside. Like in this case, when Pope Francis dropped what has to be the exact opposite of a bombshell, by denying 1600 years of Roman Catholic tradition with just four words.

"Wars are always unjust," he told Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill in a video conference on March 16. Mark that date because the "just war theory" has sent millions to slaughter—every one of whom had God on their side—since St. Augustine proposed it. One can easily say it is the very cornerstone of magical thinking.

Francis sealed his historic statement with this universally-resonant reason even the spin masters at CNN and the temporary resident of the White House can't deny, "because it is the people of God who pay."

—Mike Ferner

Mike Ferner was a hospital corpsman during the Vietnam War and has travelled to Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a senior editor of Peace & Planet News and a past president and executive director of Veterans For Peace.

Will Humans Be the Next 'Freedom Fries'?

By Ray McGovern

U.S. pundits and strategic experts seem blissfully unaware of how close we all are to being fried in a nuclear strike by Russia. (Fair Labeling: if you are simply looking for yet another reason to demonize Putin, rather than to understand where he is coming from, save time and read no further.)

Here's the thing: The Russians have good reason to be on hair-trigger alert. Their early-warning radar system is so inadequate that there are situations (including those involving innocent rocket launches) under which Russian President Putin would have only a few minutes—that—to decide whether or not to launch nuclear missiles to destroy the rest of the world—on the suspicion that Russia was under nuclear attack.

"If that"? Yes, launch-to-target time is now so short that it is altogether likely that the authority to launch nuclear weapons is now vested in subordinate commanders "in the field," so to speak. Readers of Daniel Ellsberg's *Doomsday Machine* are aware of how the United States actually devolved this authority during the days of the first Cold War. I, for one, was shocked to learn that. Worse: today the subordinate commanders might be non-commissioned computers.

Russia, of course, is not about to admit that its early-warning system is far inferior to the U.S.'s worldwide, satellite-based capability. But such is the case. The implications could not be more serious.

This came to mind today as former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said the Kremlin would never allow the destruction of Russia. He warned, however, that if Washington did achieve what he described as its destructive aims, the world could face a dystopian crisis that would end in a "big nuclear explosion."

President Putin addressed this issue four years ago, shortly after unveiling Russia's new nuclear arsenal, including hypersonic missiles and other highly advanced weapons. Commenting on nuclear war, Putin told an interviewer:

"Certainly, it would be a global disaster for humanity; a disaster for the entire world." He added that "as a citizen of Russia and the head of the Russian state I must ask myself: Why would we want a world without Russia?"

Use Them or Lose Them

Putin went on to say that, despite the disastrous consequences, Russia would be forced to defend itself using all available means, if its very existence were put at stake:

"A decision on the use of nuclear weapons may only be taken if our ballistic missile attack warning system not only detects a launch, but also predicts that the warheads would hit Russian territory. This is called a retaliation strike."

That's the rub. Some radar "detects" and "predicts," and we're all toast—or freedom fries. While Russia now has

in its operation inventory sophisticated weaponry that can defeat any traditional Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) defense, it lags the United States in the capability for early warning.

Think about it. Which should you fear more: getting fried on purpose, or getting fried by mistake? Macabre. Are not these choices incredibly stupid for rational human beings? If forced to choose, though, I think I'd resent much more getting fried by "Oops, pardon our mistake." Please read what follows and ask yourself

(and there are signs that the Pentagon is paying it no heed), we could all suddenly be very dead—or "mostly dead" (to quote Billy Crystal in *The Princess Bride*). Ted Postol spelled this out in some detail at a Committee for the Republic virtual salon on March 17.

Postol, a retired MIT professor of physics and senior Pentagon adviser, provided a brief case study, which I summarize below:

On Jan. 25, 1995, Russian generals were focused on a rocket that was launched

States were on a relatively even keel. Now? Not so much.

Postol added the following to indicate Russia's redoubled concern over its early warning deficiency: the United States has now increased the overall killing power of U.S. ballistic missile forces by a factor of between two or three. This is exactly the kind of capability that a nuclear-armed state would build if it wanted to have the capacity to fight and "win" a nuclear war by a disarming first-strike.

The rocket from Norway? Scientists launched it to study the Northern Lights, but apparently no one had thought to tell the Russians.

Aside from asking the Norwegians to forewarn the Russians next time, what else can be done? Washington can stop making relations still more tense over Ukraine. The Pentagon may boast about its formidable offensive strategic capabilities, but it has no way to protect us from a Russian nuclear attack. And if a false alert occurs a la 1995, this time sans the "saving grace" of a decent bilateral relationship with Russia, we could all end up as human fries. It should give us zero consolation to know that most Russians would too.

Ray McGovern works with *Tell the Word*, a publishing arm of the ecumenical *Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington*. His 27-year career as a CIA analyst includes serving as chief of the Soviet Foreign Policy Branch and preparer/briefer of the President's Daily Brief. He is co-founder of *Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)*.

Russia, of course, is not about to admit that its early-warning system is far inferior to the U.S.'s worldwide, satellite-based capability. But such is the case. The implications could not be more serious.

whether an immediate ceasefire is needed in Ukraine, or whether those who want to risk war with Russia should be given their head.

Russia: Limited Early-Warning Coverage

The U.S.'s satellite "global situational awareness" alert system enables it to detect immediately the launch and location of a ballistic missile anywhere on the planet, including the sea. Russia lacks that worldwide capability. If this technical shortcoming is not taken into account

from Norway and detected by their automatic-alarm radar. Could this be the opening volley of a large-scale nuclear attack including sea-launched ballistic missiles? Given Russia's inability to detect missile launches from submarines at sea, those generals could not rule out the possibility that Russia was already under attack by nuclear-armed Trident submarines.

A saving grace in 1995 was that those same generals had reliable intelligence that U.S. ICBMs were not about to attack. At least equally important, in 1995 relations between Russia and the United

Love Among the Chaos

... continued from page 2

shepherd. It was impossible to move inside the car. We drove for 16 hours to a village about 140 kilometers from Kyiv." After the village, they came to a point where cars were backed up and no one was moving, so they decided to walk the remaining 10 miles. Alysa continues, "We decided to leave the village later in the morning because it was dangerous, even there. Near the border with Poland there were a lot of cars and we couldn't stay in the car for the next three—or five—days, so we decided to walk the last 17 kilometers to the border. We left at 4 am—it was minus seven degrees. It was a hard trip around mountains and rivers. My kids were crying because of the cold. I wanted to cry too but I couldn't give up ... it was my idea to go to the border."

Here's the part that gives me hope. "My dog is 12 and a half and she struggled to walk and fell down every kilometre or so and couldn't stand up again. I stopped cars and asked for help but everyone refused; they advised us to leave the dogs. But our dogs are part of our family. My dog has experienced all the happy and sad moments with us. Mum's dog is all she has left of her former life. So my husband, at times, carried our dog on his shoulders."

Tarak Kauff is the editor-in-chief of *Peace and Planet News*. He was a paratrooper in the U.S. Army from 1959 to 1961 and is a lifetime member and former board member of *Veterans For Peace*. He is a longtime activist for peace, justice, and the environment.

Top: Soldier sheltering cat; bottom: Alisa's family and dog huddle together on the floor after arriving in Poland from Ukraine. Photograph: Alisa/Guardian Community



Urging Regime Change in Russia, Biden Exposes U.S. Aims in Ukraine

Biden's declaration that Putin "cannot remain in power" was not an error, but a clear expression of entrenched U.S. policy: using Ukraine for a proxy war against Russia.

By Aaron Maté

President Biden's declaration in Warsaw that Vladimir Putin "cannot remain in power" has forced the White House into damage control, insisting that he was not calling for the Russian leader's ouster.

No amount of spin can obscure the obvious: Just like when he blurted out the truth that the United States and its allies supported an Al Qaeda-dominated insurgency in Syria, Biden has laid bare the United States government's longstanding regime change aims in Russia, with Ukraine used as the tip of the spear.

Months before the U.S.-backed Maidan coup that ousted Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014, the head of the National Endowment for Democracy, a U.S. intelligence cutout, dubbed Ukraine "the biggest prize" in the new Cold War with Russia. Pulling Ukraine into the Western orbit, Carl Gershman wrote, could leave Putin "on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself."

The message was heard within Russia. "The Kremlin is convinced the United States is laying the groundwork for regime change in Russia, a conviction further reinforced by the events in Ukraine," the Defense Intelligence Agency reported in 2017. "Moscow views the United States as the critical driver behind the crisis in Ukraine and believes that the overthrow of former Ukrainian President Yanukovich is the latest move in a long-established pattern of U.S.-orchestrated regime change efforts, including the Kosovo campaign, Iraq, Libya, and the 2003—05 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan."

The "events in Ukraine" that "reinforced" the Kremlin's perception included not just the 2014 coup but the proxy war that erupted in the eastern Donbas region as a result. Unwilling to live under a U.S.-backed far-right government that banned the Russian language, venerated Nazis, and committed atrocities like the Odessa massacre, rebels in Donetsk and Luhansk took up arms in the spring of 2014 with Russia's support. The Ukrainian government responded with an "Anti-Terrorist Op-



Biden declines to 'walk back' comment on Putin not remaining in power.

By choosing to invade Ukraine rather than exhaust all diplomatic options to resolve its grievances over the Donbas war and NATO expansion, Russia is legally and morally responsible for the carnage that it has caused.

eration" backed by U.S. weapons and military trainers.

When it became undeniable that U.S.-backed shock troops for the Ukrainian counteroffensive included the "openly neo-Nazi" Azov battalion, President Obama began getting cold feet. Obama worried that sending more arms to a Nazi-infested military "would only escalate the bloodshed," in Ukraine and possibly "[end] up in the hands of thugs," the New York Times reported in 2015.

Inside the White House, Obama was virtually alone. His concern that flooding Ukraine with weapons "would escalate the crisis" and give "Putin a pretext to go further and invade all of Ukraine," Senior Pentagon official Derek Chollet later recalled, marked a rare situation "in which just about every senior official was for doing something that the president opposed."

Obama's misgivings about arming Ukraine helped yield the 2015 Minsk II accords, in which an outmatched Kiev accepted limited autonomy for the Donbas in exchange for the Russian-backed rebels' demilitarization. While this bargain would end the war, it would also grant the Donbas region an effective veto over Ukraine's NATO ambitions. The Ukrainian far-right, empowered by the 2014 Maidan coup and in no mood for an accommodation with Russian-speakers in the east, successfully undermined the Minsk accords with violent protests.

With Obama's exit from the White House, the DC foreign policy establishment—also opposed to an accommodation with Russia—seized the opportunity to permanently sabotage Minsk and escalate the Ukraine proxy war that the outgoing president had tepidly waged. Their goal was made clear by two of the Senate's leading hawks, Republican Senators John McCain and Lindsay Graham, during a visit to Ukraine in December 2016.

"Your fight is our fight. 2017 will be the year of offense," Graham declared to a group of Ukrainian soldiers at a military base. "All of us will go back to Washington and we will push the case against Russia ... It is time for them to pay a heavier price."

"We are with you, your fight is our fight and we will win together," McCain told Ukrainian state media. "In 2017 we will defeat the invaders and send them back where they came from."



Members of the Azov Battalion

When Donald Trump took office weeks later, Washington neoconservatives capitalized on Russiagate mania to achieve their desired "year of offense." Heavy bipartisan lobbying, coupled with his own incentive to disprove the frenzied allegations that he was beholden to the Kremlin, swayed Trump to reverse the Obama pol-

more Ukrainian territory."

According to the RAND authors, Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, the former general of U.S. Army Europe, "argued against giving Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukraine for precisely this reason."

While serving in Obama's State Department, the cur-

In opting to provoke Russia with NATO expansion, prolonging the Donbas war, and flooding Ukraine with weapons, the Biden administration is making clear that its goal of destabilization and regime change in Moscow far supersedes any Ukrainian lives lost as a result.

icy and approve the sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukraine.

In the Donbas, the heaviest price was paid by residents living under Ukrainian military shelling, who, according to U.N. figures, have accounted for 81% of the civilian casualties since 2018.

Although billed by proxy war champions like McCain as a fight against Russian "invaders", the United States has long known that the rebels are in fact a local insurgency. In the Donbas, "Ukraine has mainly not been fighting Russia's armed forces," two senior analysts with the Pentagon-tied RAND corporation recently observed. Instead, "the vast majority of rebel forces consist of locals—not soldiers of the regular Russian military." Up until the invasion last month, the Russian military "never used more than a tiny fraction of its capabilities against the Ukrainians."

A 2019 study by the same think tank offers strong evidence that turning Russia into "invaders"—rather than just expending a "tiny fraction" of its military power to support the rebels—has been the U.S. goal.

The RAND study, "Overextending and Unbalancing Russia," found that arming Ukraine stands the highest chance of success of "exploit[ing] Russia's greatest point of external vulnerability."

"Expanding U.S. assistance to Ukraine, including le-

rent Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, publicly advocated the same position. "If you're playing on the military terrain in Ukraine, you're playing to Russia's strength, because Russia is right next door," Blinken told a Berlin audience in March 2015. "It has a huge amount of military equipment and military force right on the border. Anything we did as countries in terms of military support for Ukraine is likely to be matched and then doubled and tripled and quadrupled by Russia."

Since taking office as Biden's Secretary of State, Blinken and his colleagues have adopted the reverse position, flooding Ukraine with weapons and undermining diplomatic opportunities that could have avoided war.

"The doors will remain open" to provocation

An early signal that Biden would continue the proxy war in Ukraine came with his appointment of Victoria Nuland as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. A former aide to Dick Cheney, Nuland is the neoconservative State Department official who was caught plotting the installation of a Washington-friendly government weeks before the Maidan coup in 2014. In an intercepted phone call with U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt, Nuland stressed that she would need Joe Biden and Jake Sullivan to ensure the plan's success.

Geopolitical Cost-Imposing Options	Likelihood of Success in Extending Russia	Benefits	Costs and Risks
Provide lethal aid to Ukraine	MODERATE	HIGH	HIGH
Increase support to the Syrian rebels	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
Promote liberalization in Belarus	LOW	HIGH	HIGH
Expand ties in the South Caucasus	LOW	LOW	MODERATE
Reduce Russian influence in Central Asia	LOW	LOW	MODERATE
Flipping Transnistria	LOW	LOW	MODERATE

From the 2019 RAND Study, "Overextending and Unbalancing Russia,"

that military assistance, would likely increase the costs to Russia, in both blood and treasure, of holding the Donbas region," the study said. "... The Ukrainian military already is bleeding Russia in the Donbas region (and vice versa). Providing more U.S. military equipment and advice could lead Russia to increase its direct involvement in the conflict and the price it pays for it. Russia might respond by mounting a new offensive and seizing

Biden signed on to Nuland's plan, positioning himself as the key U.S. official in the post-coup Ukrainian government that soon came to power. "No one in the U.S. government has wielded more influence over Ukraine than Vice President Joe Biden," Foreign Policy noted in late 2016. The scale of Biden's influence in Ukraine was made plain when the energy giant Burisma deemed it prudent to hand Biden's son, Hunter Biden, a lucrative board seat.

With the boost of a U.S. media that refused, in the final weeks of the 2020 presidential campaign, to report on the contents of Hunter Biden's laptop on the laughable (and newly re-debunked) grounds that it was "Russian disinformation", Joe Biden as president has picked up where he left off. Biden, Sullivan, Nuland, and Blinken have done nothing to support the Minsk accords while simultaneously provoking Russia's red line against NATO expansion into Ukraine.

In August 2021, Washington and Kiev signed the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Defense Framework, which calls for collaboration "to advance the military capabilities and readiness of Ukraine to preserve the country's territorial integrity, progress toward NATO interoperability, and promote regional security." The plan also calls for a "closer partnership of defense intelligence communities in support of military planning and defensive operations."

This was followed in November by the U.S.-Ukrainian Charter on Strategic Partnership, which declared U.S. support for "Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO." The agreement also touted "Ukraine's efforts to maximize its status as a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner," a special



Victoria Nuland

status for a small number of NATO allies, and a green light for increased NATO weapons shipments and integration.

The Biden administration has promoted Ukraine's entry into NATO despite knowing that it could trigger a Russian response. Although now widely portrayed as a sacrosanct right that supersedes all else, the quest to incorporate Ukraine into NATO was so controversial that the president who first pledged it, George W. Bush, had to overrule his own advisers, including Fiona Hill. As Bush's Russia ambassador William Burns, now the Director of Biden's CIA, wrote in a 2008 cable: "Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite (not just Putin) ... I have yet to find anyone who view Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests."

As Biden promoted Ukraine's entry into NATO, his administration also continued to fuel Ukraine's civil war with U.S. weapons shipments and a support for crackdowns on Ukraine's Russia-aligned political forces. In a recent interview with Time magazine, Zelensky's first national security adviser, Oleksandr Danyliuk, revealed that the Zelensky deliberately targeted Ukraine's Russian-backed opposition in early 2021 to please the new regime in Washington. According to Danyliuk, when Zelensky shut down three pro-Russian opposition TV networks, the move was "conceived as a welcome gift to the Biden Administration, and 'calculated to fit in with the U.S. agenda.'" The Biden administration signaled its appreciation by cheering the crackdown. Its silence on Zelensky's recent banning of 10 opposition parties suggests a similar reception.

Zelensky's DC-inspired hostility to the Russian-tied opposition also carried over to the peace accords that he was elected on implementing. At the final round of Minsk talks, which concluded just two weeks before Russia's invasion, a "key obstacle," the Washington Post reported, "was Kyiv's opposition to negotiating with the pro-Russian separatists." And even as "the talks continue

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Ten Thousand Eagles *By Donna M. Loring*

Ten thousand eagles flew that day across the bright blue sky to meet the spirits on their way from fiery smokefilled tombs.

They soared above the dark, black clouds billowing from the earth and hovered for a moment there and saw the face of doom.

Ten thousand eagles gathered and swooped down beneath the clouds.

They found the spirits one by one and plucked them from their plight.

They carried each new spirit through the black and hatefilled clouds.

They gave them each a shelter wrapped in warm wings oh so tight.

They gave them strength and comfort too on their unexpected flight.

On swift wings they flew towards their final destination, where each spirit knew without any hesitation there would be peace and love and harmony, they would forever be wrapped within the eagles' wings through all eternity.

Ten thousand eagles flew that day as all the world stood still and watched in shock and horror as the tragedy unfurled.

Now we are left here on this earth to face the billowing clouds and our eyes search for the eagles as we say our prayers out loud.

May our spirits soar on eagle's wings above the dark black clouds of hatred, murder and revenge that keep us hatred bound.

Ten thousand eagles flew that day as all the world stood still.

The eagles flew above those clouds. Perhaps someday ... we will.

Donna M. Loring is a U.S. Army veteran and Penobscot elder. Loring served as a member of the Women's Army Corps, stationed in Vietnam 1967–1968, and she is an elder and former council member of the Penobscot Indian Nation. She was the nation's representative to the Maine State Legislature for 12 years and is a former senior advisor on tribal affairs to Gov. Janet Mills. She hosts her own radio show, *Wabanaki Windows*, on WERU Community Radio in Orland.

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Being Antiwar Isn't Easy

By Caitlin Johnstone

Everyone's antiwar until the war propaganda starts. Nobody thinks of themselves as a warmonger, but then the spin machine gets going and before you know it, they're spouting the slogans they've been programmed to spout and waving the flags they've been programmed to wave and consenting to whatever the imperial war machine wants in that moment.

Virtually everyone will tell you they love peace and hate war when asked; war is the very worst thing in the world, and

no healthy person relishes the thought of it. But when the rubber meets the road and it's time to oppose war and push for peace, those who'd previously proclaimed themselves "antiwar" are on the other side screaming for more weapons to be poured into a proxy war that their government deliberately provoked.

This is because the theory of being antiwar is very different from the practice. In theory people are just opposed to the idea of blowing other people up for no good reason. In practice they're always hit with a very intense barrage of media messaging giving them what looks like very

good reasons why those people need to be blown up.

Being truly antiwar isn't easy. It's not as people might imagine it looks. Instead, it looks like getting smashed with a deluge of information designed to manipulate and confuse and working through it while getting screamed at by those who've fallen for the brainwashing. It's not cute. It's not fun.

No Flower Power

It's not the feel-good flower power time that people intuit it is when they look at the part of themselves that seeks peace. It's standing up against the most sophisticated propaganda machine that has ever existed while being offered every reason not to.

When people think of themselves as "antiwar," they're usually imagining themselves as anti-another Iraq War, or anti-some theoretical Hitler-like president starting a war because he likes killing people. They're not picturing the reality of what being anti-war actually is in practice.

Because selling the war to the public is a built-in component of all war strategy, the war will always look necessary from the mainstream perspective, and it won't look like those other wars which we now know in retrospect were mistakes. It's always designed to look appealing.

There's never not going to be atrocity propaganda. There's never not going to be reasons fed to you selling this military intervention as special and completely necessary. That will be the case every single time, because that's how modern wars are

Propaganda is the single most overlooked and under-appreciated aspect of our society.

packaged and presented.

This is why you'll always see a number of self-described leftists and anti-imperialists cheering for the latest U.S. war project. They are ideologically opposed to the idea of war in theory, but the way it actually shows up in practice is always different from what they pictured.

Shaped by Propaganda

Our entire civilization is shaped by domestic propaganda, but the only time you ever hear that word in mainstream discourse is when it's used to discuss the comparatively almost nonexistent influence of Russian propaganda on our society.

All the mainstream alarm ringing about Russian propaganda gives the impression

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I Resigned My Diplomatic Post Over the U.S. Invasion of Iraq. Will Any Russian Diplomats Do the Same?

It would not be easy. But from my own experience, I can tell those Russian diplomats that a heavy load will be lifted from their consciences if they do.

By Ann Wright

Nineteen years ago, in March 2003, I resigned as a U.S. diplomat in opposition to the President Bush's decision to invade Iraq. I joined two other U.S. diplomats, Brady Kiesling and John Brown, who had resigned in weeks previous to my resignation. We heard from fellow U.S. diplomats assigned to U.S. embassies around the world that they too believed that the decision of the Bush administration would have long term negative consequences for the U.S. and the world, but for a variety of reasons, no one joined us in resignation until later. Several initial critics of our resignations later told us they were wrong and they agreed that the decision of the U.S. government to wage war on Iraq was disastrous.

The U.S. decision to invade Iraq using the manufactured threat of weapons of mass destruction and without the authorization of the United Nations was protested by people in virtually every country. Millions were in the streets in capitals around the world before the invasion demanding that their governments not participate in the U.S. "coalition of the willing."

For the past two decades, Russian President Putin has warned the U.S. and NATO in stark terms that the international rhetoric of "the doors will not close for the possible entry of Ukraine into NATO" was a threat to the national security of the Russian Federation.

Putin cited the 1990s verbal agreement of the George H.W. Bush administration that following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO would not move "one inch" closer to Russia. NATO would not enlist countries from the former Warsaw Pact alliance with the Soviet Union.

He also warned NATO about the increasing number of military war games conducted on the Russian border including in 2016 a very large war maneuver with the ominous name of "Anaconda," the large snake that kills by wrapping around suffocating its prey.

However, under the Clinton administration, the U.S. and NATO began its "Partnership for Peace" program that morphed into full entrance into NATO of former Warsaw Pact countries—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.

The U.S. and NATO went one step too far for the Russian Federation with the February 2014 overthrow of the elected, but allegedly corrupt, Russia-leaning government of Ukraine, an overthrow that was encouraged and supported by the U.S. government. Fascist militias joined with ordinary Ukrainian citizens who did not like the corruption in their government. But rather than waiting less than one year for the next elections, riots began and hundreds were killed in Maidan Square in Kyiv by snipers from both the government and the militias.



Vasily Alekseevich Nebenzya, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations.

Violence against ethnic Russians spread in other parts of Ukraine and many were killed by fascist mobs on May 2, 2014 in Odessa. The majority ethnic Russians in the eastern provinces of Ukraine began a separatist rebellion citing violence against them, lack of resources from the government and cancellation of teaching of Russian language and history in schools as reasons for their rebellion. While the Ukrainian military has allowed the extreme right-wing neo-Nazi Azov battalion to be a part of military operations against the separatist provinces, the Ukrainian military is not a fascist organization as alleged by the Russian government.

The Azov participation in politics in Ukraine was not successful with their receiving only 2% of the vote in the 2019 election, much less than other right-wing political parties have received in elections in other European countries.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is just as

maintaining Tatar population held a plebiscite in Crimea and voted to ask the Russian Federation to be annexed. 83% of the voters in Crimea turned out to vote and 97% voted for integration into the Russian Federation. The results of the plebiscite were accepted and implemented by the Russian Federation without a shot being fired. However, the international community applied strong sanctions against Russia and special sanctions against Crimea that destroyed its international tourism industry of hosting tourist ships from Turkey and other Mediterranean countries.

In the next eight years from 2014 to 2022, over 14,000 persons were killed in the separatist movement in the Donbass region. President Putin continued to warn the United States and NATO that Ukraine being annexed into the NATO sphere would be a threat to the national security of the Russian Federation. He also warned NATO about the increasing number of military war games conducted on the Russian border including in 2016 a very large war maneuver with the ominous name of "Anaconda," the large snake that kills by wrapping around suffocating its prey, an analogy not lost on the Russian government. New U.S./NATO bases that were constructed in Poland and location of missile batteries in Romania added to the Russian government's concern about its own national security.

In late 2021 with the U.S. and NATO dismissing the Russian government's concern for its national security, they again stated the "door was never closed to entry into NATO" where upon the Russian Federation responded with a build-up of 125,000 military forces around Ukraine. President Putin and long-standing Russian Federation Foreign Minister Lavrov kept telling the world that this was a large-scale training exercise, similar to military exercises that NATO and the United States had conducted along its borders.

However, in a lengthy and wide-ranging televised statement on February 21, 2022, President Putin laid out a historic vision for the Russian Federation including the recognition of the separatist provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbass region as independent entities and declared them allies. Only hours later, President Putin ordered a Russian military invasion of Ukraine.

Acknowledgement of the events of the past eight years,
continued on page 15 ...

Michael Brenner: American Dissent on Ukraine Is Dying in Darkness

When it came to the Ukraine conflict, Professor Michael J. Brenner did what he's done his whole life: question American foreign policy. This time the backlash was vitriolic.

Below are excerpts from a provocative conversation between Robert Scheer and Professor Brenner. Hear the full discussion at www.scheerpost.com, as they continue to dissent despite living in an America that is increasingly hostile to any opinion that strays from the official line.

Robert Scheer: Corporate media's "cartoonish" depiction of Russian president Vladimir Putin is not only misleading, but dangerous given the nuclear brinkmanship that has ensued. The irony is that we're back in the worst moments of the Cold War, but then at least we were willing to negotiate with people who were ideological enemies. Nixon had his kitchen debate with Khrushchev, and we had arms control with the old Soviet Union. Nixon went to China and negotiated with Mao Zedong. There was no illusion that these were wonderful people, but they were people you had to do business with. Suddenly Putin is now Hitler and you can't talk.

Michael Brenner: We have to look in the mirror at the source of our disquiet, it's within us; it's not out there, and it is leading to gross distortions of the way in which we see and interpret the world. And of course, continuing along this course can only have one endpoint, and

that's disaster of some form or other.

From day one, we've had faith that we were born in a condition of original virtue, with some kind of providential mission to lead the world to a better, more enlightened condition, that we were therefore the singular exceptional nation. That justifies the United States as the judge of what government is legitimate and what isn't; which self-defined national interests by other governments we can accept, and which we won't accept.

Of course, this is absurd in its hubris. It also defies logic. We don't exercise restraint based on ideological humility, nor on realism grounds. And that's why I say we're living in a world of fantasy—a fantasy which clearly serves some vital psy-

chological needs of the country and especially of its political elites. Because they are the people who are supposed to have taken on the custodial responsibility for the welfare of the country and its people, and that requires maintaining a certain perspective and distance on who we are,

thesis of the one that is caricatured and almost universally accepted, not only in the Biden administration, but in the foreign policy community and in general.

Putin is an extraordinarily sophisticated thinker. But people don't bother to read what he writes, or to listen to what he says. I know of no national leader that has laid out with such detail and precision and sophistication his view of the world, Russia's place in it, the character of interstate relations, with the candor and acuity that he has.

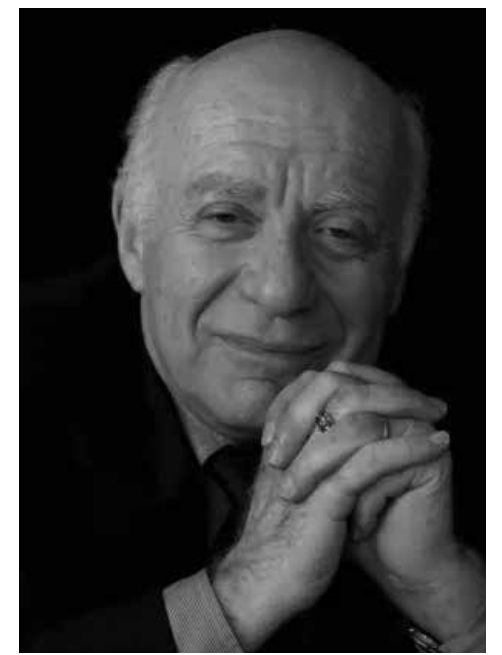
It's not a question of whether you believe that that depiction he offers is entirely correct, or his conclusions regarding policy. But you are dealing with a person and a regime which is the anti-

We have to look in the mirror at the source of our disquiet, it's within us; and ... it is leading to gross distortions of the way in which we see and interpret the world.

chological needs of the country and especially of its political elites. Because they are the people who are supposed to have taken on the custodial responsibility for the welfare of the country and its people, and that requires maintaining a certain perspective and distance on who we are,

thesis of the one that is caricatured and almost universally accepted, not only in the Biden administration, but in the foreign policy community and in general.

From 1964 to 69 Robert Scheer was Vietnam correspondent and editor of *Ramparts* magazine. From 1976-93 he



Professor Michael J. Brenner.

was national correspondent for the *L.A. Times* and in 1993 became a contributing editor and nationally syndicated columnist until 2005. He is now based at the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Author of eight books, he was a fellow at the Center for Chinese Studies at UC-Berkeley and was a fellow in arms control at Stanford.

Michael J. Brenner is professor emeritus of International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh and a fellow of the Center for Transatlantic Relations at SAIS/Johns Hopkins, as well as former director of the International Relations and Global Studies Program at the University of Texas. He worked at the Foreign Service Institute and the U.S. Department of Defense and Westinghouse, and has written several books on U.S. foreign policy.

Being Antiwar

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that it comprises close to 100 percent of the total propaganda that Westerners consume, when in reality it's a tiny fraction of one percent of the total propaganda that Westerners consume. Almost all of it comes from Western sources.

Propaganda is the single most overlooked and under-appreciated aspect of our society. It has far more influence over how the public thinks, acts, and votes than any of our official mechanisms for doing so, yet it's barely discussed, it isn't taught in schools, and even the best political ideologies barely touch on it relative to their other areas of focus.

All the fretting about Russian propaganda from Establishment narrative managers comes so close to giving away their secret: that they know it's possible to manipulate the way the public thinks, acts and votes using media. They just don't admit that they're the ones who are doing this.

It's actually the weirdest thing in the world that there's something that has been directly affecting our minds our entire lives, and which directly affects the way our entire society is organized, but we don't talk about it constantly. It should be at the front and center of our attention.

But of course, that's the whole idea. Propaganda only works on those who



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky delivering video address to U.S. Congress March 16. Photo: President of Ukraine, Flickr

don't know they're being propagandized. The U.S.-centralized empire's ability to hide its propaganda machine is a foundational element of its brilliance.

Being truly antiwar is necessarily a commitment to finding out not just what's true about all the war narratives currently promulgated by the imperial war machine, but all the narratives you've been fed about the world since you were young. It's a commitment to truth that takes on an almost spiritual quality in the way it informs every aspect of your life when truly espoused.

It's important to research and learn new things about the world, but what's equally important and which doesn't get emphasized nearly enough is the practice of examining the beliefs you already hold about your society, your government, your nation, and your world. Inquiring as to whether they're really true, and who might benefit from your believing them.

Don't make the error of assuming you'll be aware and informed enough to spot all the lies right away. You're dealing with the single most advanced and powerful propaganda machine that has ever ex-

isted, and you've been marinating in its effects your entire life. It takes some time.

Even the most aware among us were indoctrinated into the mainstream worldview to some extent earlier in life, and to this day most of the information they get about the world has some of its roots and branches in parts of the propaganda matrix.

It takes work to see things clearly enough to form a really truth-based worldview. But unless you do this it's impossible to be truly antiwar, because you can't skillfully oppose something you don't understand. To fight the imperial war machine is to fight the imperial propaganda machine.

This article is from CaitlinJohnstone.com and re-published with permission.

Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly at Medium. Her work is entirely reader-supported, so if you enjoyed this piece please consider sharing it around, liking her on Facebook, following her antics on Twitter, checking out her podcast on either Youtube, soundcloud, Apple podcasts or Spotify, following her on Steemit, throwing some money into her tip jar on Patreon or Paypal, purchasing some of her sweet merchandise, buying her books *Notes From the Edge of the Narrative Matrix*, *Rogue Nation: Psychonautical Adventures With Caitlin Johnstone*, and *Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers*.

So This Is What It Looks Like When the Corporate Media Opposes a War

Major American media outlets oppose military aggression ... unless the United States is doing it.

By Jeff Cohen

Having worked inside mainstream U.S. media during the beginning of the “War on Terror” and run-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the differences in today’s war coverage are dizzying to me.

Civilians

While covering Russia’s horrific aggression in Ukraine, there is a real focus—as there always should be—on civilian victims of war. Today, the focus on that essential aspect of the Russian invasion is prominent and continuous—from civilian deaths to the trauma felt by civilians as missiles strike nearby.

Unfortunately, there was virtually no focus on civilian death and agony when it was the U.S. military launching the invasions. After the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 on false pretenses—made possible by U.S. mainstream media complicity that I witnessed firsthand—civilian deaths were largely ignored and undercounted through the years.

Shortly after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, leaked directives from CNN’s management to its correspondents and anchors showed that the network was intent on playing down and rationalizing the killing and maiming of Afghan civilians by the U.S. military. One memo instructed CNN anchors that if they ever referenced Afghan civilian victims, they needed to quickly announce to their audience: “These U.S. military actions are in response to a terrorist attack that killed close to 5,000 innocent people in the U.S.” Such language was mandatory, said the memo: “Even though it may start sounding rote, it is important that we make this point each time.”

A few weeks after 9/11, what CNN viewer had forgotten it?

Noting the cursory U.S. television coverage of Afghan civilian casualties, a New York Times reporter wrote: “In the United States, television images of Afghan bombing victims are fleeting, cushioned between anchors or American officials explaining that such sights are only one side of the story. In the rest of the world, however, images of wounded Afghan children curled in hospital beds or women rocking in despair over a baby’s corpse, beamed via satellite by the Qa-

tar-based network, Al Jazeera, or CNN International, are more frequent and lingering.”

The near-blackout on coverage of the civilian toll continued for decades. In April of last year, NBC anchor Lester Holt did a summing-up report on Afghanistan as “America’s longest war” by offering one and only one casualty figure: “2300 American deaths.” There was no mention of the more than 70,000 Afghan civilian deaths since 2001, and no mention of a U.N. study that found in the first half of 2019, due mostly to aerial bombing, the U.S. and its allies killed more civilians than the Taliban and its allies.

As the war on terror expanded to other countries, U.S. mainstream media remained largely uninterested in civilian victims of U.S. warfare and drone strikes.

U.N. Security Council resolution. On a BBC television special six weeks before the invasion, for example, Tony Blair was cross-examined on that point by antiwar citizens.

In 1989, when the U.S. invaded Panama in perhaps the bloodiest drug bust in history, mainstream U.S. media made a determined effort to ignore international law and its violation—as well as the slaughter of civilians.

Imperialism

Mainstream media in our country today are outraged by imperialism. On Friday night, MSNBC’s Lawrence O’Donnell indignantly and repeatedly denounced “Russian imperialism.”

As a lifelong opponent of imperialism,

2011).

This denial persists despite the fact that our country maintains more than 750 military bases in nearly 80 foreign countries (Russia has about 20 foreign bases in a half-dozen countries); that our military budget dwarfs that of every other country (more than 12 times larger than Russia’s); that the U.S. provides nearly 80 percent of the world’s weapons exports—including weapons sales and military training to 40 of the 50 most oppressive, anti-democratic governments on earth.

Speaking of U.S. imperialism, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has been all over the news in recent days commenting on Ukraine and accurately denouncing Putin as anti-democratic. But her commentary reeks of hypocrisy on many grounds; one is her key role, largely ignored by mainstream U.S. media, in enabling the violent military coup regime that replaced elected Honduran President Manuel Zelaya in 2009.

So as we rally to support Ukrainian civilians against great-power aggression from Russia, let’s do so with the



International Law

Invasions and military force by one country against another are clearly illegal under international law, unless conducted in true self-defense (or authorized by the U.N. Security Council). In coverage of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, U.S. mainstream media have correctly, repeatedly, and without equivocation, invoked international law and declared it illegal. As they did when Russia invaded Crimea in 2014.

By contrast, when the U.S. illegally invaded or attacked country after country in recent decades, international law has almost never been invoked by mainstream U.S. media. That was surely the case in the lead-up to the Iraq invasion—unlike in Britain, where major media prominently discussed the reality that invading Iraq would be a crime against international law unless authorized by a

I’m also indignant that a powerful country like Russia is using force to try to impose its will and its own chosen leadership on the Ukrainian people.

But I’ve never heard O’Donnell or anyone at MSNBC denounce U.S. imperialism. Indeed, the existence of something called “U.S. imperialism” is so adamantly denied by mainstream U.S. media that the phrase doesn’t appear in print without scare quotes.

This stubborn unwillingness to recognize U.S. imperialism persists despite the fact that no country (including Russia) has come close to ours in the last 70 years in imposing its will in changing the leadership of foreign governments—often from good to bad (for example, Iran in 1953; Guatemala in 1954; Congo in 1960; Chile, in 1973; Honduras in 2009). Not to mention other U.S.-led regime changes (for example, Iraq in 2003 and Libya in

understanding that imperialism should always be opposed, that all civilian victims of wars and violent coups are worthy whether Iraqi or Honduran or Ukrainian—and that all criminals who violate international law should be held accountable whether they’re based in Moscow or Washington, D.C.

Jeff Cohen is an activist and author. Cohen was an associate professor of journalism and the director of the Park Center for Independent Media at Ithaca College, founder of the media watch group FAIR, and former board member of Progressive Democrats of America. In 2002, he was a producer and pundit at MSNBC. He is the author of *Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media* and a co-founder of the online action group, *RootsAction.org*. His website is jeffcohen.org.

Greatest Evil

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Only the autocrats and politicians who dream of empire and global hegemony, of the god-like power that comes with wielding armies, warplanes, and fleets, along with the merchants of death, whose



The body of a Russian soldier is coated in snow next to a destroyed Russian military multiple rocket launcher vehicle on the outskirts of Kharkiv, Feb. 25.
Photo: AP/Vadim Ghirda.

business floods countries with weapons, profit from war. The expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe has earned Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Analytic Services, Huntington Ingalls, Humana, BAE Systems, and L3Harris billions in profits. The stoking of conflict in Ukraine will earn them billions more.

The European Union has allocated hundreds of millions of euros to purchase weapons for Ukraine. Germany will almost triple its own defense budget for 2022. The Biden administration has asked Congress to provide \$6.4 billion in funding to assist Ukraine, supplementing the \$650 million in military aid to Ukraine over the past year. The permanent war economy operates outside the laws of supply and demand. It is the root of the two-decade-long quagmire in the Middle East. It is the root of the conflict with Moscow. The merchants of death are Satanic. The more corpses they produce, the more their bank accounts swell. They will cash in on this conflict, one that now flirts with the nuclear holocaust that would terminate life on earth as we know it.

The dangerous and sadly predictable provocation of Russia—whose nuclear arsenal places the sword of Damocles above our heads—by expanding NATO was understood by all of us reporting in Eastern Europe in 1989 during the revolutions and the break-up of the Soviet Union.

This provocation, which includes establishing a NATO missile base 100 miles from Russia's border, was foolish and highly irresponsible. It never made geopolitical sense. This does not, however, excuse the invasion of Ukraine. Yes, the Russians were baited. But they reacted by pulling the trigger. This is a crime. Their

crime. Let us pray for a ceasefire. Let us work for a return to diplomacy and sanity, a moratorium on arms shipments to Ukraine and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the country. Let us hope for an end to war before we stumble into a nuclear holocaust that devours us all.

Originally published at SheerPost.
Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-win-

ning American journalist, Presbyterian minister, author, and television host. His books include *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2002), a finalist for the *National Book Critics Circle Award for Non-fiction*; *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*; *Death of the Liberal Class*; *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*, written with cartoonist Joe Sacco, which was a *New York Times* best-seller; *Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt*; and his most recent, *America: The Farewell Tour*. He writes a regular original column for *SheerPost*.

A Clean War?

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All exceptions? No. This is exactly what war is. Governments make big efforts to explain that these kinds of episodes don't belong in war. They even pretend to be surprised when civilians are killed, even though systematically targeting civilians is a feature of all contemporary wars; for example, over 387,000 civilians were killed in the U.S. post-9/11 wars alone, with more likely to die from those wars' reverberating impacts.

The idea of a clean and efficient war is a lie. War is a chaotic universe of military strategies intertwined with inhumanity, violations, uncertainty, doubts, and deceit. In all combat zones emotions such as fear, shame, joy, excitement, surprise, anger, cruelty, and compassion co-exist.

We also know that whatever the real reasons for war, identifying the enemy is a crucial element of every call for conflict. In order to be able to kill—systematically—it is not enough to make fighters disregard the enemy, to despise him or

Regime Change

... continued from page 9

to stall and the threat of war grows more present," the Post added, "it's unclear how much pressure the United States is placing on Ukraine to reach a compromise with Russia."

In a recent interview, Zelensky made clear that the only U.S. pressure he received was to sabotage diplomacy. Speaking to CNN, Zelensky effectively admitted that Russia's core demand to avoid war—that Ukraine renounce NATO membership and commit to neutrality—was used to bait Russia instead.

"I requested them [NATO] personally to say directly that we are going to accept you into NATO in a year or two or five, just say it directly and clearly, or just say no," Zelensky said. "And the response was very clear, you're not going to be a NATO member, but publicly, the doors will remain open."

By insisting that the "doors will remain open" to a NATO pledge that they had no intention of fulfilling, the United States and its NATO allies knowingly crossed a Russian red line that could trigger an invasion. The fact that Zelensky was willing to entertain this charade—and only casually acknowledge it weeks after it helped spark a catastrophic invasion of his country—raises questions about the heroic image that the U.S. media and political establishment have cultivated for him.

"The End of the Putin Regime"

With Zelensky admitting that NATO membership for Ukraine was the bait, Biden and other top officials continue to make clear that regime change in Moscow is the goal.

"The only end game now," a senior administration official reportedly told a private event earlier this month, according to

her; it is also necessary to make them see in the foe an obstacle to a better future.

For this reason, war consistently requires the transformation of a person's identity from the status of an individual to a member of a defined, and hated enemy group.

If the only objective of war is the mere physical elimination of the enemy, then how do we explain why the torture and destruction of bodies both dead and alive is practiced with such ferocity on so many battlefields? Although in abstract terms such violence appears unimaginable, it becomes possible to visualize when the murdered or tortured are aligned with dehumanizing representations portraying them as usurpers, cowards, filthy, paltry, unfaithful, vile, disobedient—representations that travel fast in mainstream and social media.

War violence is a dramatic attempt to transform, redefine, and establish social boundaries; to affirm one's own existence and deny that of the other. Therefore, the violence produced by war is not mere empirical fact, but also a form of social communication.

It follows that war cannot be simply de-

Niall Ferguson in Bloomberg, "is the end of Putin regime. Until then, all the time Putin stays, [Russia] will be a pariah state that will never be welcomed back into the community of nations."

A British official likewise told Ferguson that the prevailing "No. 1 option" is for "the conflict to be extended and thereby bleed Putin."

"This war will not end easily or rapidly," Jake Sullivan declared shortly before Biden left for Europe last week. "[Biden's trip] will send a powerful message that we are prepared and committed to this for as long as it takes."

The Biden administration has given every indication that it wants the proxy war in Ukraine to last a long while. The White House, the *New York Times* reports, "seeks to help Ukraine lock Russia in a quagmire without inciting a broader conflict with a nuclear-armed adversary", primarily by deploying the CIA "to ensure that crates of weapons are delivered into the hands of vetted Ukrainian military units." These weapons shipments, the *Wall Street Journal* reports, are "one of the largest and fastest arms transfers in history."

By choosing to invade Ukraine rather than exhaust all diplomatic options to resolve its grievances over the Donbas war and NATO expansion, Russia is legally and morally responsible for the carnage that it has caused. In opting to provoke Russia with NATO expansion, prolonging the Donbas war, and flooding Ukraine with weapons, the Biden administration is making clear that its goal of destabilization and regime change in Moscow far supersedes any Ukrainian lives lost as a result.

Aaron Mate is a journalist with *The Grayzone*, where he hosts *Pushback*, and a contributor to *Real Clear Investigations*. He won the 2019 *Izzy Award for outstanding achievement in independent media for Russiagate coverage* in *The Nation*.

scribed as the by-product of political decisions from above; it is also determined by participation and initiatives from below. This can take the form of extreme brutal violence or torture, but also as resistance to the logic of war.

It is the case of the military personnel who object to being part of a specific war or mission: examples range from conscientious objection during wartime to explicit positioning such as the case of the Fort Hood Three who refused to go to Vietnam, considering that war "illegal, immoral, and unjust," and the refusal of the Russian National Guard to go to Ukraine.

"War is so unjust and ugly that all who wage it must try to stifle the voice of conscience within themselves," wrote Leo Tolstoy. But it's like holding your breath under water—you can't do it for long, even if you are trained to.

Antonio De Lauri is a Research Professor at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, the director of the Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies, and a contributor to the *Costs of War Project* of the *Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs* at Brown University.

Transcending the Certainties of War

By Robert Koehler

Peace, in the deepest sense—in the midst of war—requires a clarity and courage well beyond the boundaries of linear understanding. The warning lights flash. World War III has entered the red zone.

Can we stare into hell and refuse to see ... an enemy?

This is the deep, haunting need that is now required, as we clutch tomorrow, hold it tight, vow to protect it with our lives. But it's far too easy, instead, to surrender to a certainty that the other guy—Russia, with the smirking face of Vladimir Putin—is 100% wrong, acting solely out of greed and delusional grandeur, which is something we would never do (and have never done). And it goes without saying we are blameless in all this. On with the show!

“Twenty-four hour cable news coverage of the ugly war in Ukraine is keeping Americans hyped up and dumbed down,” writes Gerry Condon of Veterans For Peace. “The very real horror of war is on the screen for all to see. The bombed-out buildings, the mounting civilian casualties and the frightened refugees speak their own truth.”

None of this horror should be minimized, bandaged over, for the sake of “peace,” as cynics assume. But, as Condon notes, “we rarely see the victims, the grieving families and the terrified refugees when the invader is the U.S. The ‘shock and awe’ U.S. terror bombing campaign on Baghdad was described by one network TV anchor as a ‘beautiful thing to see.’” We also fail to notice three decades of Western minimization of Russian concerns—of Russian existence.

“The decision to spurn the possibility of peaceful co-existence with Russia at the end of the Cold War is one of the most egregious crimes of the late 20th century,” writes Chris Hedges. Instead, he notes, we spiraled into “a furious frenzy of the Russia-hating that has been central to U.S. culture ever since World War II.”

This is not about blame, but it is about accountability—in all directions. Peace! It's an ongoing, collective process, a crucial force needed especially in the midst of conflict. It's about bridging gaps, listening to everyone, creating the future. A conflict isn't simply “solved,” but understood and transcended. In this context, meet Yurii Sheliazhenko, executive secretary of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, a board member of the European Bureau of Conscientious Objection and a member of the board of directors at World BEYOND War.

Speaking from Kyiv with Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez of Democracy Now!, Sheliazhenko—in an incredible interview—tells the world that there is no military solution to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. More than that, he describes how peace as a force is confronting the invasion: “... brave Ukrainian civilians are ... blocking streets and blocking tanks, just staying in their way without weapons ... to stop the war. In Berdyansk city and Kulykivka village, people organized peace rallies and convinced the Russian military to get out.”

Despite what we may learn from media coverage, there are ways to confront war, to confront hell, without participating in it. Sheliazhenko does not speak abstractly. What is necessary right now is not the cancellation of Russia but a unification of the world.

“War profiteers of the West are the same threat to democracy as the authoritarian rulers of the East,” he said.

“Instead of breaking the last bonds of humanity out of rage, we need more than ever to preserve and strengthen venues of communication and cooperation between all people on Earth, and each individual effort of that sort has a value.”

Every last soul on this planet is a participant in the peace process! This is a message emerging from Ukraine. What's needed in this moment, of course, is a negotiated ceasefire, a Russian pullout. To that end, here's part of the text of a letter Code Pink has written to President

Biden and Congress, one you can sign onto at the Code Pink website if you wish:

“There is no military solution to the conflict over Ukraine, a country caught in the crossfire between the U.S. and Russia, the world's two most heavily armed nuclear nations. While the U.S. and the world are rightfully denouncing Putin's invasion of a sovereign country, the shelling of civilians, the destruction of homes and hospitals, and threats of nuclear attacks, the major role the U.S. has played in exacerbating the conflict that led up to Russia's invasion must also be acknowledged and addressed.

“By breaking promises not to expand NATO into Eastern Europe, by placing offensive missiles in Romania and Poland that could reach Russia in minutes, by arming Ukrainian forces, by continuing to ‘modernize’ the U.S. nuclear arsenal and by withdrawing from key non-proliferation treaties, the U.S. exacerbated the conflict that led up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We know that Russia must withdraw its troops and commit to respecting the sovereignty of Ukraine, but the United States must be ready to make compromises and support nego-

tiations between Ukraine and Russia ... “

The letter concludes with a list of commitments the U.S. needs to make to help a negotiated ceasefire happen. Here's what I would add, in solidarity with Yurii Sheliazhenko: Sign—and honor—the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons! It's time to step into the future, fellow residents of Planet Earth. Nuclear weapons are not a “deterrent.” They're either an accident waiting to happen or a geo-psychopath's last result. And the time to tuck them into history and move toward real peace is N-O-W. We can turn the invasion into the spark for global salvation.

Noting that the European Union is considering opening its doors to Ukraine, Sheliazhenko expressed joy at the possibility of such a uniting, but added that a “consolidation of the West should not be a consolidation against a so-called enemy, against the East. East and West should find the peaceful reconciliation and should pursue global governance, unity of all people in the world without armies and borders.”

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Resign Post

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does not absolve a government of its violation of international law when it invades a sovereign country, destroys infrastructure and kills thousands of its citizens in the name of the national security of the invading government.

This is exactly the reason I resigned from the U.S. government nineteen years ago when the Bush administration used the lie of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as a threat to U.S. national security and the basis for invading and occupying Iraq for almost a decade, destroying large amounts of infrastructure and killing tens of thousands of Iraqis.

I didn't resign because I hated my country. I resigned because I thought the decisions being made by elected politicians serving in government were not in the best interests of my country, or the people of Iraq, or the world.

Resignation from one's government in opposition to a decision for war made by one's superiors in the government is a huge decision, particularly with what Russian citizens—much less Russian diplomats—face with the Russian government criminalizing use of the word “war,” arresting of thousands of protesters on the streets, and shutting down independent media outlets.

With Russian diplomats serving in over 100 Russian Federation embassies all over the world, I know they are watching international news sources and have much more information about the brutal war on the people of the Ukraine than their colleagues at the Foreign Ministry in Moscow, much less the average Russian, now that international media has been taken off the air and internet

sites disabled.

For those Russian diplomats, a decision to resign from the Russian diplomatic corps would result in much more severe consequences and most certainly would be much more dangerous than what I faced in my resignation in opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq.

However, from my own experience, I can tell those Russian diplomats that a heavy load will be lifted from their consciences once they make the decision to resign. While they will be ostracized by many of their former diplomatic colleagues, as I found, many more will quietly approve of their courage to resign and face the consequences of the loss of the career that they worked so diligently to create.

Should some Russian diplomats resign, there are organizations and groups in virtually every country where there is a Russian Federation embassy that I think will provide them with aid and assistance as they embark on a new chapter of their lives without the diplomatic corps. They are facing a momentous decision.

And, if they resign, their voices of conscience, their voices of dissent, will probably be the most important legacy of their lives.

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Ann Wright is a 29 year U.S. Army/Army Reserves veteran who retired as a Colonel and a former U.S. diplomat who resigned in March 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq. She served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia and Mongolia. In December 2001 she was on the small team that reopened the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. She is the co-author of Dissent: Voices of Conscience.

Russia's War Is Inexcusable—But the U.S. Is Not a Credible Force for Peace

Russia bears responsibility for this ghastly tragedy—but decades of U.S. policy helped make it possible

By Norman Solomon



While the world desperately needs adherence to a single standard of nonaggression and human rights, some convoluted rationales are always available in a quest to justify the unjustifiable. Ideologies get more twisted than pretzels when some people can't resist the temptation to choose up sides between rival forces of terrible violence.

In the United States, with elected officials and mass media intensely condemning Russia's killing spree, the hypocrisy can stick in the craw of people who remain mindful that the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions started massive protracted carnage. But U.S. hypocrisy in no way excuses the murderous rampage of Russia's war on Ukraine.

At the same time, hopping on a bandwagon of the U.S. government as a force for peace is a fantasy journey. The U.S. is now in its 21st year of crossing borders with missiles and bombers—as well as boots on the ground—in the name of the “war on terror,” and its military spending

is more than 10 times higher than Russia's.

It's important to shed light on the U.S. government's broken promises that NATO would not expand “one inch eastward” after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Expanding NATO to Russia's border was a methodical betrayal of prospects for peaceful cooperation in Europe. What's more, NATO became a far-flung apparatus for waging war, from Yugoslavia in 1999 to Afghanistan a few years later to Libya in 2011.

The grim history of NATO since the disappearance of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact military alliance more than 30 years ago is a saga of slick leaders in business suits bent on facilitating vast quantities of arms sales—not only to longtime NATO members but also to countries in Eastern

Europe that recently gained membership. The U.S. mass media makes a careful collective detour around mentioning, much less illuminating, how NATO's dedication to avid militarism keeps fattening the profit margins of weapons dealers. By the time this decade began, the combined annual military spending of NATO countries had hit \$1 trillion, about 20 times Russia's.

After Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, denunciations of the attack came from one U.S. antiwar group after another after another, which had long opposed NATO's expansion and war activities. Veterans For Peace issued a cogent statement condemning the invasion while saying that “as veterans we know increased violence only fuels extremism.” The organization said that “the only sane course of action now is a commitment to genuine diplomacy with serious negotiations—without which, conflict could easily spiral out of control to the point of further pushing the world toward nuclear war.”

The statement added that “Veterans For Peace recognizes that this current crisis did not just happen in the last few days, but represents decades of policy decisions and government actions that have only contributed to the building of antagonisms and aggressions between countries.

We should be clear and unequivocal that Russia's war in Ukraine is an ongoing, massive, inexcusable crime against humanity for which the Russian government is solely responsible. But we should be under no illusions about the U.S. role in normalizing large-scale invasions while flouting international security. And the geopolitical approach of the U.S. government in Europe has been a precursor to conflict and foreseeable calamities.

Consider a prophetic letter to then-President Bill Clinton that was released 25 years ago, with NATO expansion on the near horizon. Signed by 50 prominent figures in the foreign-policy establishment—including a half-dozen former senators, former Defense Secretary Rob-

ert McNamara and such mainstream luminaries as Susan Eisenhower, Townsend Hoopes, Fred Iklé, Edward Luttwak, Paul Nitze, Richard Pipes, Stansfield Turner and Paul Warnke—the letter makes for chilling reading today. It warned that “the current U.S.-led effort to expand NATO” was “a policy error of historic proportions. We believe that NATO expansion will decrease allied security and unsettle European stability.”

The letter went on to emphasize: “In Russia, NATO expansion, which continues to be opposed across the entire political spectrum, will strengthen the non-democratic opposition, undercut those who favor reform and cooperation with the West, bring the Russians to question the entire post-Cold War settlement, and galvanize resistance in the Duma to the START II and III treaties. In Europe, NATO expansion will draw a new line of division between the ‘ins’ and the ‘outs,’ foster instability, and ultimately diminish the sense of security of those countries which are not included.”

That such prescient warnings were ignored was not happenstance. The bipartisan juggernaut of militarism headquartered in Washington was not interested in “European stability” or a “sense of security” for all countries in Europe. At the time, in 1997, the most powerful ears were deaf to such concerns at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. And they still are.

While apologists for the governments of either Russia or the U.S. want to focus on some truths to the exclusion of others, the horrific militarism of both countries deserves only opposition. Our real enemy is war.

Originally published by Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and the author of a dozen books including Made Love, Got War: Close Encounters with America's Warfare State and War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death. Solomon is the founder and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy.

The Decade the Rainforest Died*

By Teresa Mei Chuc

the deer did not stop running
leopards climbed into trees that could not hide them

the douc langur and the white cheeked gibbon cursed at the metal gods we flew

raining on them as they burned from napalm

elephants choked on the smoke of gunpowder and poison their steps a strange rhythm

as they tried to fly

the thunder of bombs echoed the steps of elephants

tigers exploded as they stepped onto landmines

in a forest covered with leaves dead from Agent Orange, fallen trees and decomposing bodies of animals and people

the earthworms were washed away

*For ten years, the U.S. Air Force flew nearly 20,000 herbicide spray missions in order to destroy the forest cover as well as agriculture lands in key areas of southern Viet Nam.

in monsoons with soil that could no longer grab onto roots

the Javan rhinoceros and the wild water buffalos that were still alive wandered aimlessly

wary with M16s and AK-47s, we marched quietly and steadily not knowing why we were killing each other