

On the Precipice of Nuclear War: The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

by Donald Ramotar

Mr. Ramotar, who was the President of Guyana (2011-2015) and a Member of Parliament, submitted this article to EIR for publication. Subheads have been added.

March 15—It is just over a year since Russia sent its troops on a special military operation in Ukraine. Immediately the Western mainstream media and official spokespersons took up the task of distorting the news and to prevent any other views/information from being heard or seen. Russia’s media, *RT* and *Sputnik*, have been banned from broadcasting in any NATO countries. Some developing countries have followed suit due to fear of what the West can do to them. As the saying goes, the first casualty of war is the truth. Russia’s views and information are blocked from the Western public by these corporate media.

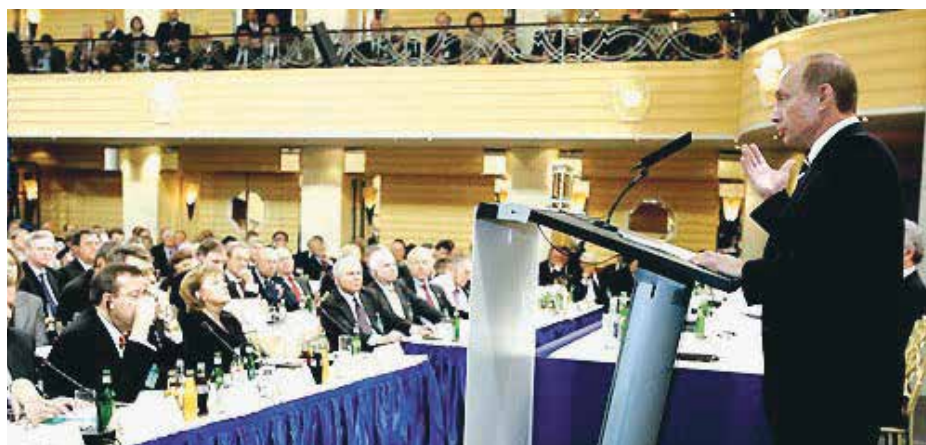
In this massive information blackout, the real reason for the tragedy has been obscured. That is why it is important to restate why the situation has reached this terrible state.

In the first place, this occurred because the U.S. broke its commitment not to move “one inch” to the East should the Soviet Union allow the reunification of Germany.

On the basis of that commitment, Russia (then the Soviet Union) voluntarily withdrew all its troops from Eastern European countries.

In the middle of the 1990s, the imperialist instincts of the U.S. in particular began to kick in. Seeing that Russia was very weak economically, the U.S., no doubt on the urging of the military-industrial complex, de-

cidated to take advantage and to move NATO towards Russia. The whole intention was to prevent Russia from ever again being an obstacle to the U.S.’s military dominance of the whole world. That move created a very serious security problem for Russia. Recall how the U.S. responded when the Soviet Union placed mis-



Presidential Press & Information Office

Vladimir Putin Addressing the Munich Security Conference, Feb. 10, 2007.

siles in Cuba in 1962.

The U.S. administration was warned that such a move would lead to conflict since Russia could not allow that. Ambassador Jack Matlock addressed the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Senate and issued that warning. He went so far as to tell the U.S. administration and its Congress that such a move could prove to be the worst mistake ever made by a U.S. administration.

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Ambassador Matlock also confirmed that this would be a betrayal of trust. In an article titled, “I Was There,” Mr. Matlock confirmed that Russia was given the assurance that NATO would not expand beyond Germany.

Sound professional advice provided by Mr. Matlock and others was promptly ignored. The U.S. began to expand NATO. That by itself is a threat to Russia. It

violated treaties signed which stated that no state would enhance its own security at the expense of another.

This brought forth angry protests from then Russian President Yeltsin. He was promptly ignored. The U.S. continued on its course, even though no threat was posed to it or its allies' security.

Putin's Strategy for Partnership

When Mr. Putin became president, he continuously sought friendship and partnership with the West. He proposed a solution to the problem. He suggested that Russia be allowed to join NATO. That, he reasoned, would ensure lasting peace in Europe. His proposal and his hand of friendship were rejected.

This was a most clear manifestation of the attitude of the U.S. and its NATO allies toward Russia. It became obvious that Russia was the target of U.S.-led expansion of NATO.

By 2007, when President Putin spoke frankly to NATO leaders in his famous speech in Germany, weighing heavily on his mind must have been (a) NATO/U.S. rejection of Russia's offer to become a member of the alliance and (b) the NATO seventy-eight days of bombing of Serbia and the forceful removal of Kosovo from Serbia.

In addition to the above, it was in this period that the U.S. unilaterally announced that it was withdrawing from the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT). Russia must have felt threatened, seeing NATO bases closer and closer to it.

In 2014, when the U.S.-instigated coup occurred that removed the Ukrainian President who had a more favorable disposition to Russia, it was clear that Ukraine would become a NATO outpost on the border of Russia. Ukraine had the infrastructure to manufacture nuclear weapons and strong weapons-making factories. The U.S. had invested heavily in labs that were experimenting with and manufacturing chemical weapons.

However, Russia continued to strive for a peaceful solution. The Russian-dominated area in eastern Ukraine, Donetsk and Lugansk, rejected the 2014 Maidan coup and announced the establishment of separate states.

Kiev's response was to begin military attacks on the breakaway states. Thousands died, mostly civilians, in the daily shelling of those areas by Ukrainian military forces from 2014, and it is still continuing.

Still, President Putin tried for a peaceful solution. Together with Germany and France he worked out an agreement to give the breakaway provinces some

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amount of autonomy while remaining as a part of Ukraine. Yet today President Putin is being accused of having intentions to expand Russia to include the former Soviet States.

It is apposite to recall this in the light of Western anti-Russian propaganda which accuses President Putin of land grabbing.

Now, however, we know that the West/NATO had no intention of honoring the agreement known as the "Minsk Accord." In a recent interview, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel informed us that it was a mere tactical maneuver to give NATO more time to continue to arm Ukraine and prepare her for war



European Parliament



NATO

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg both lied about the Minsk Accord, as NATO prepared Ukraine for war against Russia.

against Russia. This was confirmed by former French President François Hollande, among others.

Added to these revelations is the recent admission of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg that that organization was arming Ukraine and training its army to wage war with Russia. From a military standpoint Ukraine was a *de facto* NATO state threatening Russia and Russians living in Eastern Ukraine.

The West was negotiating in bad faith. Diplomacy was being used as an instrument of deception and a

tool to stall while preparing to either attack Russia or to force Russia to take action to prevent Ukraine's accession into NATO.

Even when it must have appeared that the U.S. and its allies were pushing for war, Russia tried its best to avoid it. In December of 2021 the Russians proposed to the U.S./NATO that Ukraine be designated a neutral country. The model it proposed was the Austrian model of neutrality that was in place since the end of the Second World War.

That was rejected by the West. Instead the Ukrainian regime intensified the bombing of Russians in Eastern Ukraine. Therefore, Russia had no option left. It then resorted to a "special military operation" to safeguard its people, including Russian people in Donetsk and Lugansk. That intended limited operation has escalated to an almost all-out war, not between Russia and Ukraine, but with NATO, which is using this for a proxy war against Russia.

Since the beginning of Russia's special military operation, things have become much clearer. Those who instigated this conflict have become open about their intention to destroy Russia. They had prepared and were ready to unleash massive economic measures designed to destroy Russia's economy.

The speed at which sanctions were imposed on Russia suggests that all of these were well planned and just waiting to go into operation. President Biden boasted that the sanctions were to be the "mother of all sanctions." He went on to add that the Russian currency, the ruble, would become rubble.

Russian government funds deposited in banks in many western countries were frozen. The attack was not confined to the Russian Government but also nationals of that country found that their investments and savings in banks belonging to the U.S. and EU were being confiscated. It was a massive robbery of the Russian State and businesses.

So much for the sanctity of private property.

These sanctions exposed a deep hatred for the Russian people and everything Russian by the Western powers.

Coming under attack were Russian sports persons. Russians were deprived of participation in the Olympic Games under their own flag. Some tennis tournaments banned Russians and Byelorussian players from participating while others were deprived of playing under their own flag. Sports were being weaponized in the attack on Russia.

As if these measures were not enough, the West

turned on a most abominable attack on Russian culture. Russian cultural groups were banned from performing in the West. Books by Russian authors or books on Russians were taken out of libraries and book stores. These included the classics. Literature by Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and others was removed from libraries in the West. Classical Russian music was also subjected to the onslaught. This was an attack on everything Russian. This is an attempt to wipe out a people.

The U.S.-UK Attack on Europe

In the meantime, on the military aspect, the U.S. was able to drag Europe along with it in its mad rush to destroy Russia. The U.S. has aligned itself with the most reactionary elements in Europe and has been openly pushing to keep the war going. Billions of dollars in modern weapons are being poured into Ukraine.

The German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, late in January said openly, "we are fighting a war against Russia." Not to be outdone, Boris Johnson, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, added his voice to Merkel's and Hollande's in admitting that the Minsk Agreement was just a smoke screen to arm and train Ukraine. He called it a "diplomatic charade."

The U.S., apart from its direct involvement in Ukraine, has resorted to state terrorism against Russia and, surprisingly, Europe as well.

In February 2023, Seymour Hersh, one of the most famous investigative journalists, made a compelling case in his article, "How America Took Out the Nord Stream Pipeline." He amassed convincing evidence to show that it was the U.S. that mounted a covert operation to destroy the possibility of Russian natural gas reaching Europe. The motive was first aimed at Russia. It was also to deprive Germany from having the option of cheap Russian gas. That was to ensure that Germany would not have been tempted to make an agreement with Russia to stop the war. All stops were being removed.

Moreover it has tied Germany even tighter to the U.S. and made her dependence on U.S. gas and oil almost complete. The attack on Nord Stream 2 is just as much an attack on Germany as it is on Russia. The German leadership has remained subdued and unable to lift a finger in protest.

The consequence of this type of terrorism could be the deindustrialization of Germany. Very brazenly the U.S. has established policies to attract European industries to the U.S. The bait is cheap oil and gas in the U.S., as compared to expensive ones in Germany.

The U.S. treats Europe as its colony and is abusing it as colonies were abused. That was reflected in two incidents. In 2014 Victoria Nuland, a high-level official in the U.S. State Department, in deciding who should be president of Ukraine after the U.S. organized 2014 coup, said “F**k the EU,” in response to an ambassador’s request to consult the European Union on the issue.

Recall too that in December 2021, at a joint press conference between President Biden and Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, Biden said that if Russia attacked Ukraine, Nord Stream 2 would be stopped. He promised this while Scholz stood there, like a little boy, at his side.

It has become clear for those who initially refused to see, that it is the U.S. and the new-conservative forces in Europe that has initiated and kept the war going. Those are forces that hated Russia since the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917. It seems impossible for them to stop, despite the fact that the Soviet Union is no more. They still harbor intentions of destroying Russia. That has led them to arm and finance fascist forces in Ukraine. This, even though Russia is no longer socialist.

It is impossible to draw any other conclusion when we see every proposal to encourage peace talks between Russia and Ukraine being sabotaged by the West.

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The latest such proposal came from President Xi Jinping of China. President Zelensky welcomed the proposal and said he would like to meet President Xi on the question. The next day the U.S. rejected it and Zelensky has gone silent.

Zelensky may very well be a prisoner of sorts. One of the main forces fighting in the Ukraine against Russia is the fascist Bandera group. This is the body that fought with Hitler during World War II and is now very influential in Ukraine. Stepan Bandera, the fascist, is now a national hero in Ukraine. That fascist organiza-



White House/Adam Schultz

At a Dec. 21, 2021 joint press conference, when President Joe Biden announced that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline would be stopped, should Russia attack Ukraine, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stood there at his side, like a little boy.

tion is being armed by the U.S. with very sophisticated weapons. They operate U.S.-made HIMARS multiple launch rocket systems and are provided with intelligence from the U.S. to attack hospitals and schools in Lugansk and in Donetsk.

In February 2023, videos appeared showing those fascist forces shooting Russian prisoners of war.

It could very well be that NATO is using this group to keep Zelensky in check. If he tries to make a settlement, the U.S. can use this fascist group to stop him. To justify his removal, all they have to do is to resurrect his known corrupt past. The U.S. and the most reactionary elements in NATO are determined to keep the war going at the expense of the people of Ukraine.

The War and the Shifting of Power

Meanwhile, the situation in the Ukraine is accelerating major changes in economic and political relations in the world.

In response to the massive sanctions of the U.S. and EU, Russia has taken counter-measures that must be causing very serious concerns in Washington.

Russia’s demand to be paid in rubles for its gas has effectively nullified the worst effects of the sanctions. Moreover, Russia has begun to encourage trade with other countries in local currencies, thus lessening dependence on the U.S. dollar. This measure is welcomed by many countries, some of which were subjected to U.S. sanctions and others which see this move as a sort of immunization from future U.S. sanctions.

In this situation, the Chinese yuan is growing in importance as one of the most stable reserve currencies in the world. This is sending chills down the spines of the imperialists. The U.S., whose foreign policy is geared to weaken China, has inadvertently given China a great push forward.

In the meantime, the search for other options is continuing. That is creating shifts in alliances in the world.

In this process, the BRICS alliance has become very attractive to many emerging economies. More and more countries are seeking to join this group, seeing it as a vehicle to enhance their options, thus strengthening their own sovereignty. These include Mexico, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. The aggressiveness of the U.S. and EU has accelerated the formation of new alliances.

Russia has clearly taken steps to reduce its trade relations with Europe. It finally seems to have woken up to the reality that the West has no good intentions toward the Russian people. It is rapidly pivoting towards Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Today, the issue has changed. Russia is no longer seeking to strengthen relations with Europe but is consciously turn-

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ing away from it.

Russia is benefiting from the tremendous solidarity work that the Soviet Union had given to countries that were struggling for National Liberation throughout the world during the post-World War II period.

It is because of many of these changes that NATO is seeking to defeat Russia. Russia's defeat would mean a more direct re-colonialization of most of the world's peoples. This is being realized by more and more states; that is why the support for Russia in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is growing.

How To End the War

So far, all the efforts to end the confrontation have not succeeded. As we noted above, Ukraine has already been colonized and is not allowed to make a decision on

peace on its own. The U.S. and some of the neo-cons in the West often say that the settlement depends on what Ukraine wants. They say this because they are aware that they are the ones who pull Zelensky's strings.

At the moment, there are some important proposals on the table which deserve serious consideration. In the first instance we have the proposal by the Pope to use the Vatican as a place for negotiating peace. This must be supported.

There are proposals from Helga Zepp-LaRouche of the Schiller Institute. She has proposed ten points which also link peace to development. These must be given very serious consideration as well.

More recently President Lula da Silva of Brazil has made proposals which are aimed at getting countries involved in bringing an end to this dangerous situation.

The proposal by President Xi of China is well thought out and can make an important contribution to the restoration of Peace in Europe and the world.

We Must Act!

All the proposals that are on the table individually and collectively can be the basis for the beginning of the process toward peace.

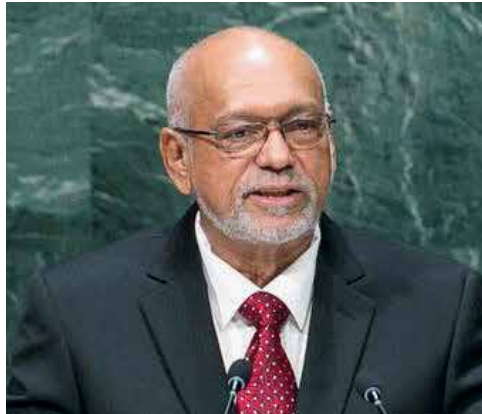
All of these proposals are worthwhile and have many common positions that should be explored.

Most important, however, must be the recognition that the security of Russia and Ukraine are interlinked and cannot be separated. Only Russia can guarantee Ukraine's security. However, Ukraine can also guarantee Russia's security by refusing to become a pawn in NATO's quest for total world domination.

Guyana's most famous poet, Martin Carter, wrote in one of his poems of resistance that we are all involved, we are all consumed. Those words have a striking meaning in these times when four nuclear-armed states are involved in this bitter conflict.

That is why we must all get involved. Therefore we must support direct action by the masses in every part of the world. We urge that people take to the streets to demand our right to live in peace!

One year of this conflict is too long. We must act now to stop the sufferings of working people at the soonest!



UN/Amanda Voisard

Donald Ramotar, as President of Guyana, addresses the UN General Assembly.