

Some hard thoughts about post Ukraine

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The war in Ukraine has dragged on long enough now to reveal certain clear trajectories. First, two fundamental realities:

1. Putin is to be condemned for launching this war– as is virtually any leader who launches any war. Putin can be termed a war criminal–in good company with George W. Bush who has killed vastly greater numbers than Putin.
- 2) secondary condemnation belongs to the US (NATO) in deliberately provoking a war with Russia by implacably pushing its hostile military organization, despite Moscow's repeated notifications about crossing red lines, right up to the gates of Russia. This war did not have to be if Ukrainian neutrality, á la Finland and Austria, had been accepted. Instead Washington has called for clear Russian defeat.

As the war grinds to a close, where will things go?

Contrary to Washington's triumphalist pronouncements, Russia is winning the war, Ukraine has lost the war. Any longer-term damage to Russia is open to debate.

American sanctions against Russia have turned out to be far more devastating to Europe than to Russia. The global economy has slowed and many developing nations face serious food shortages and risk of broad starvation.

There are already deep cracks in the European façade of so-called "NATO unity." Western Europe will increasingly rue the day that it blindly followed the American Pied Piper to war against Russia. Indeed, this is not a Ukrainian-Russian war but an American-Russian war fought by proxy to the last Ukrainian.

Contrary to optimistic declarations, NATO may in fact ultimately emerge weakened. Western Europeans will think long and hard about the wisdom and deep costs of provoking deeper long term confrontations with Russia or other "competitors" of the US.

Europe will sooner or later return to the purchase of inexpensive Russian energy. Russia lies on the doorstep and a natural economic relationship with Russia will possess overwhelming logic in the end.

Europe already perceives the US as a declining power with an erratic and hypocritical foreign policy "vision" premised upon the desperate need to preserve "American leadership" in the world. America's willingness to go to war to this end is increasingly dangerous to others.

Washington has also made it clear that Europe must sign on to an "ideological" struggle against China as well in some kind of protean struggle of "democracy against authoritarianism". Yet, if anything this is a classic struggle for power across the globe.

And Europe can even less afford to blunder into confrontation with China—a “threat” perceived primarily by Washington yet unconvincing to many European states and much of the world..

China’s Belt and Road initiative is perhaps the most ambitious economic and geopolitical project in world history. It is already linking China with Europe by rail and sea. European exclusion from the Belt and Road project will cost it dearly. Note that the Belt and Road runs right through Russia. It is impossible for Europe to close its doors to Russia while maintaining access to this Eurasian mega project. Thus a Europe that perceives the US already in decline has a little incentive to join the bandwagon against China. The end of the Ukraine war will bring serious reconsideration in Europe about the benefits of propping up Washington’s desperate bid to maintain its global hegemony.

Europe will undergo increasing identity crisis in determining its future global role. Western Europeans will tire of subservience to the 75 year American domination of European foreign policy. Right now NATO *is* European foreign policy and Europe remains inexplicably timid in asserting any independent voice. How long will that prevail? We now see how massive US sanctions against Russia, including confiscation of Russian funds in western banks, is causing most of the world to reconsider the wisdom of banking entirely on the US dollar into the future. Diversification of international economic instruments is already in the cards and will only act to weaken Washington’s once dominant economic position and its unilateral weaponisation of the dollar.

One of the most disturbing features of this US-Russian struggle in Ukraine has been the utter corruption of independent media. Indeed Washington has won the information and propaganda war hands down, orchestrating all Western media to sing from the same hymnbook in characterizing the Ukraine war. The West has never before witnessed such a blanket imposition by one country’s ideologically-driven geopolitical perspective at home. Nor, of course, is the Russian press to be trusted either. In the midst of a virulent anti-Russian propaganda barrage whose likes I have never seen during my Cold Warrior days, serious analysts must dig deep these days to gain some objective understanding of what is actually taking place in Ukraine.

Would that this American media dominance that denies nearly all alternative voices were merely a blip occasioned by Ukraine events. But European elites are perhaps slowly coming to the realization that they have been stampeded into this position of total “unanimity”; cracks are already beginning to appear in the façade of “EU and NATO unity.” But the more dangerous implication is that as we head into future global crises, a genuine independent free press is largely disappearing, falling into the hands of corporate-dominated media close to policy circles, and now bolstered by electronic social media, all manipulating the narrative to its own ends. As we move into a predictably greater and more dangerous crises of instability through global warming, refugee flows, natural disasters, and likely new pandemics, rigorous state and corporate domination of the western media becomes very dangerous indeed to the future of democracy. We no longer hear alternative voices on Ukraine today.

Finally, Russia’s geopolitical character has very likely now decisively tilted towards Eurasia. Russians have sought for centuries to be accepted within Europe but have been consistently held at arms length. The West will not discuss a new strategic and security architecture. Ukraine has simply intensified this trend. Russian elites now no longer

possess an alternative to accepting that its economic future lies in the Pacific where Vladivostok lies only one or two hours away by air from the vast economies of Beijing, Tokyo, and Seoul. China and Russia have now been decisively pushed ever more closely together specifically out of common concern to block unfettered US freedom of unilateral military and economic intervention around the world. That the US can split US-induced Russian and Chinese cooperation is a fantasy. Russia has scientific brilliance, abundant energy, rich rare minerals and metals, while global warming will increase the agricultural potential of Siberia. China has the capital, the markets, and the manpower to contribute to what becomes a natural partnership across Eurasia.

Sadly for Washington, nearly every single one of its expectations about this war are turning out to be incorrect. Indeed the West may come to look back at this moment as the final argument against following Washington's quest for global dominance into ever newer and more dangerous and damaging confrontations with Eurasia. And most of the rest of the world—Latin America, India, the Middle East and Africa— find few national interests in this fundamentally American war against Russia.

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