



Is this Western war on Russia simply stupidity?

by

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on

[All Mayadeen](#)



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The US proxy war on Russia is stupid. Professor of Law at the LSE, Peter Ramsay, in a review

of Benjamin Abelow's book, *How the West Brought War to Ukraine*, outlines how the latter eschews the simplistic "Putin invaded Ukraine" narrative - attributing primary responsibility for the war to less proximate causes: 'American governmental stupidity and blindness' and 'the deference and cowardice' of Europe's leaders toward this American governmental 'stupidity'.

"Although Abelow describes the self-deluding arrogance and hypocrisy of Western policy very clearly, he does not attempt to explain how; or why US policy has become so stupid or European leaders so cowardly. He appears dumbfounded by it, describing the level of irrationality involved as 'almost inconceivable'".

Nevertheless, we must conceive of it, because it has happened, and it is bringing revolutionary change to a Middle East busily re-configuring itself as an integral part of the BRICS+ bloc; a transition, which in itself, portends a huge shift to the framework of geo-economics.

At the bottom, the core "monumental stupidity" - for which Abelow quotes British Academic Richard Sakwa - is not something concealed, but rather, is one of those 'truths' that are 'out there: hiding in the open'. It is that NATO's existence derives its validation from the management of perceived "threats" that in a circular process of thinking precisely were *provoked* by NATO enlargement - an enlargement done *ostensibly* to manage such 'threats'.

In short, it is a circular closed-loop argument. Not only is there no threat from Russia that is independent of American policy, but it is also the expansion of NATO to "meet the threat from Russia" that *creates* the very threat that expansion was supposed to meet.

Similarly, it is this type of circular reasoning which makes "Putin into Hitler" - a self-fulfilling epithet that is *created* because NATO expansion is firstly 'reasonable (a "Value", and a national Right), and therefore that anyone contesting it therefore must be "fascist".

Abelow asks simply, "What sane person could believe that putting a Western arsenal on Russia's border would not produce a powerful response?"

At its root, Abelow laments that the insanity that bothers him intensely is that US policy-makers recognize the circularity of their argument (he gives examples), yet will not countenance for a moment any argument against it. They know 'one thing', but say 'another', he says.

But the charge of insanity, Ramsay opines, "whilst appealing rhetorically, tends to obscure a vital aspect of the narcissism that drives Western policy: the aspect in which the self-regarding sense of virtue is informed by the dominant mindset of our time - ideas which influence not just 'experts' - but political leaders and entire populations."

This Narcissism and smug self-regard are indeed a key factor, but we need fully to understand their role by turning to Leo Strauss, whose thinking so shaped a generation of American conservatives (the Straussians).

Strauss taught classes at the University of Chicago at two separate levels: At one, he gave his teaching openly to all students; but for the elect few - kept quarantined from the others - he taught a different 'inner teaching' (about, for example, Plato's *Republic*). One set of students got the standard 'gig' about *The Republic* as a foundational western myth. The select few (many of whom were to become leading neo-cons), however, were taught Strauss' view of *The Republic's* inner meaning of Machiavellian, pathological manipulation.

Strauss taught Plato's 'truth' had to be excavated by an elect class who possess a certain 'nature' and gifts most men lack: being able to grasp the occult meaning of literal words. These men, Plato wrote, would **consist** of the class of warriors, higher in rank and honor than the class of producers and exchangers. Strauss **wrote** in a similar vein that Machiavelli's teaching was of a 'two-fold' character also.

But the core insight for the elect insiders was simple: Power is something you use - or lose.

And in this context, the neo-con "predicament" simply is that inner meaning is lost amid the overwhelming din made by liberal discourse.

The leading neo-con thinker, Robert Kagan, for example, echoed Jimmy Carter's *Malaise Speech of 1979* by viewing America's self-regarding liberalism as foreclosing on Americans' ability to question the roots of their own malaise. Carter had identified it "as a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation".

The neo-con argument for war with Russia then, on its own terms, may be stupid but is not necessarily as irrational as commonly held. As Kagan [pointed out](#), forward motion is the lifeblood of the American polity. Without it, the purpose of the civic bonds of unity inevitably [comes into question](#). An America that is not a glorious republican empire in motion is not America, 'full stop'.

This inner understanding of American 'malaise', however, cannot publicly be aired against a smothering liberal monopsony on public discourse, he suggests.

Pat Buchanan (leading political commentator and thrice presidential candidate) has [made](#) the same point, "How long before the American people ... begin to lose confidence in the democratic system itself? Clearly, among the reasons for our present division and national malaise is that we have lost the great animating cause earlier generations had: the Cold War."

"George H.W. Bush's 'New World Order' excited only the élites. George W. Bush's crusade for democracy did not survive the Afghan and Iraqi forever-wars that he launched in its name. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's "rules-based order "will suffer the same fate".

So, put plainly, the apparent "stupidity" inherent in the NATO narrative may be understood as the tensions between the neo-cons having their insider reading of politics, yet being willing to weaponize the NATO argument to destroy Russia.

That absurd neo-con and NATO circular rationale for war with Russia, of course, clearly serves to mobilize the American 'liberal' and EU constituencies, where destructive narcissistic laziness and unwillingness to practice self-awareness is obliterating critical thinking, in the Straussian view (i.e. blocking their understanding of the power-imperative of Putin being seen to fail).

But the Straussians - with their *inner* reading of politics - perceive that America cannot survive either a Russian victory or a Chinese technical and economic rise to pre-eminence, for if the US doesn't 'use (its power), it will 'lose (its global primacy)'.

Washington clearly made a possibly existential error in thinking that sanctions leading to a financial collapse in Russia would be a "slam dunk" success. Team Biden thus painted themselves into a Ukraine 'corner', and deserve no sympathy. But at this stage - realistically - what choice does the White House have? The neo-cons will argue that backing down becomes an existential risk for the US. Yet, it may be one that may ultimately prove unavoidable.

Again -- and just to be clear -- this is not so much about maintaining US military hegemony; it is about maintaining America's finance hegemony -- upon which all else depends, including its ability to fund US \$850bln defense budgets.

And "here we come to the real glue of America". Darel Paul, Professor of Political Science at Williams College, [writes](#): "From the founding of the country in the fires of war, the United States has been an expansionary republican empire ever incorporating new lands, new peoples, new goods, new resources, new ideas ... Continuous military, commercial, and cultural expansion since Jamestown and Plymouth cultivated the restlessness, vigour, optimism, self-confidence, and love of glory for which Americans have long been known." This 'glue' thus becomes existential in a non-military sense.

Ah... but the élite also built America's financial system on the same principle of the forward motion -



not just of military forces, but of dollar 'lifeblood' ('ever incorporating new lands, new peoples, new goods, new resources'..., etc.). Should, however, America's financial expansion (and its \$30tn of dollars held externally) become peripheral to trade necessity, we may witness the fetters tying an inverted pyramid of financialised debt to a tiny pivot of hard collateral rupture ... and the pyramid will crash.