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Greenwald: Biden's Reckless Words Underscore Dangers Of US Using Ukraine For Proxy War

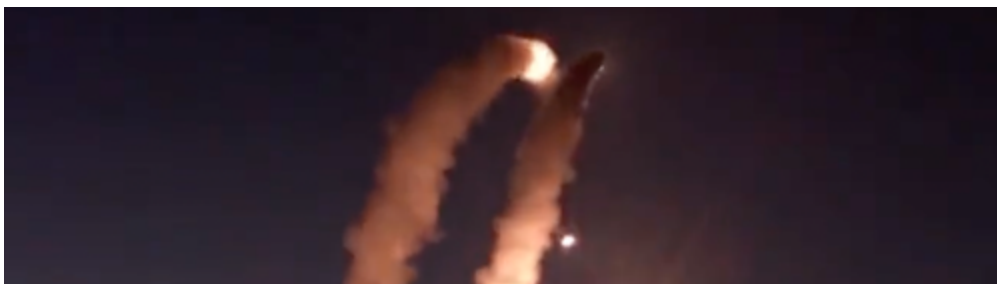
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via greenwald.substack.com,

The central question for Americans from the start of the war in Ukraine was what role, if any, should the U.S. government play in that war? A necessarily related question: if the U.S. is going to involve itself in this war, what objectives should drive that involvement?





Three long-range cruise missiles are launched from a Russian submarine in the Black Sea on Saturday, striking targets near the Ukrainian border with Poland, following President Biden's apparent declaration of regime change on Saturday (Credit: 7NEWS Melbourne, Twitter)

Prior to the U.S.'s jumping directly into this war, those questions were never

meaningfully considered. Instead, the emotions deliberately stoked by the relentless media attention to the horrors of this war — horrors which, contrary to the West's media propaganda, are common to all wars, including its own — left little to no space for public discussion of those questions. The only acceptable modes of expression in U.S. discourse were to pronounce that the Russian invasion was

unjustified, and, using parlance which [the 2011 version of Chris Hayes correctly dismissed](#) as adolescent, that Putin is a “bad guy.” Those denunciation rituals, no matter how cathartic and applause-inducing, supplied no useful information about what actions the U.S. should or should not take when it came to this increasingly dangerous conflict.

That was the purpose of so [severely restricting discourse](#)

to those simple moral claims:
to allow policymakers in
Washington free rein to do
whatever they wanted in the
name of stopping Putin without
being questioned. Indeed, as
so often happens when war
breaks out, anyone questioning
U.S. political leaders instantly
had their patriotism and loyalty
impugned (unless one was
complaining that the U.S.
should become *more involved*
in the conflict than it already

was, a form of pro-war "dissent" that is always permissible in American discourse).

With these discourse rules firmly implanted, those who attempted to invoke former [President Obama's own arguments](#) about a conflict between Russia and Ukraine — namely, that “Ukraine is a core Russian interest but not an American one” and therefore the U.S. should not

risk confrontation with Moscow over it — were widely maligned as Kremlin assets if not agents. Others who urged the U.S. to try to avert war through diplomacy — by, for instance, formally vowing that NATO membership would not be offered to Ukraine and that Kyiv would remain neutral in the new Cold War pursued by the West with Moscow — faced the same set of accusations about their loyalty and patriotism.

Most taboo of all was any discussion of *the [heavy involvement of the U.S. in Ukraine](#)* beginning in 2014 up to the invasion: from [micro-managing Ukrainian politics](#), to arming its military, to placing military advisers and intelligence officers on the ground to train its soldiers how to fight (something Biden [announced he was considering last November](#)) — all of which amounted to a form of *de facto*

NATO expansion without the formal membership. And that leaves to the side the still-unanswered yet supremely repressed question of what Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland [referred to as](#) the Ukrainians' "biological research facilities" so dangerous and beyond current Russian bio-research capabilities that she gravely feared they would "fall into Russian hands."

As a result of the media's embracing of moral righteousness in lieu of debating these crucial geopolitical questions, the U.S. government has consistently and aggressively escalated its participation in this war with barely any questioning let alone opposition. U.S. officials are boastfully leading the effort to collapse the Russian economy. Along with its NATO allies, the U.S. has flooded

Ukraine with billions of dollars of sophisticated weaponry, with at least some of those arms ending up in the hands of actual neo-Nazi battalions [integrated into](#) the Ukrainian [government and military](#). It is providing [surveillance technology](#) in the form of drones and [its own intelligence](#) to enable Ukrainian targeting of Russian forces. President Biden [threatened Russia](#) with a response “in kind” if Russia

were to use chemical weapons. Meanwhile, [reports](#) *The New York Times*, "C.I.A. officers are helping to ensure that crates of weapons are delivered into the hands of vetted Ukrainian military units."

The U.S. is, by definition, waging a proxy war against Russia, using Ukrainians as their instrument, with the goal of not ending the war but prolonging it. So obvious is this fact about U.S. objectives that

even *The New York Times* last Sunday [explicitly reported](#) that the the Biden administration “seeks to help Ukraine lock Russia in a quagmire” (albeit with care not to escalate into a nuclear exchange). Indeed, even “some American officials assert that as a matter of international law, the provision of weaponry and intelligence to the Ukrainian Army has made the United States a cobelligerent,” though this is

“an argument that some legal experts dispute.” Surveying all this evidence as well as discussions with his own U.S. and British sources, Niall Ferguson, writing in *Bloomberg*, [proclaimed](#): “I conclude that the U.S. intends to keep this war going.” UK officials similarly told him that “the U.K.’s No. 1 option is for the conflict to be extended and thereby bleed Putin.”

In sum, the Biden

administration is doing exactly that which former President Obama warned in 2016 should never be done: risking war between the world's two largest nuclear powers over Ukraine. Yet if any pathology defines the last five years of U.S. mainstream discourse, it is that any claim that undercuts the interests of U.S. liberal elites — no matter how true — is dismissed as "Russian disinformation."

As we witnessed most vividly in the run-up to the 2020 election — when that label was unquestioningly yet falsely applied by the union of the CIA, corporate media and Big Tech to the laptop archive revealing Joe Biden's political and financial activities in Ukraine and China — any facts which establishment power centers want to demonize or suppress are reflexively labelled “Russian disinformation.”

Hence, the DNC propaganda arm Media Matters [now lists](#) as “pro-Russian propaganda” the indisputable fact that the U.S. is not *defending* Ukraine but rather *exploiting and sacrificing it* to fight a proxy war with Moscow. The more true a claim is, the more likely it is to receive this designation in U.S. establishment discourse.

That there are few if any risks graver or more reckless than a direct U.S./Russia

military confrontation should be too obvious to require explanation. Yet that seems to have been completely forgotten in the zeal, arousal, purpose and excitement which war always triggers. It takes little to no effort to recognize the current emergence of the dynamic about which Adam Smith so fervently warned 244 years ago [*in Wealth of Nations*](#):

In great empires the people who live in the capital, and in

the provinces remote from the scene of action, feel, many of them scarce any inconveniency from the war; but enjoy, at their ease, the amusement of reading in the newspapers the exploits of their own fleets and armies. To them this amusement compensates the small difference between the taxes which they pay on account of the war, and those which they had been accustomed to pay in time of

peace. They are commonly dissatisfied with the return of peace, which puts an end to their amusement, and to a thousand visionary hopes of conquest and national glory, from a longer continuance of the war.

The grave dangers of the world's two largest nuclear-armed powers acting on opposite sides of a hot war extend far beyond any intention by the U.S. to deliberately

engage Russia directly. Such a war, even with the U.S. waging it “only” through its proxies, severely escalates tensions, distrust, hostilities, and a climate of paranoia. That is particularly true given that — ever since Democrats decided to blame Putin for Hillary's 2016 loss — at least half of Americans have been feeding on a non-stop, toxic diet of anti-Russian hatred under the guise of “Russiagate.” As recently as

2018, 2/3 of Democrats believed that Russia *hacked into voting machines and altered the 2016 vote count* to help Trump win. This cultivation of extreme anti-Russian animus in Washington has been made even more dangerous by the virtual prohibition on dialogue with Russian officials, which during Russiagate was deemed inherently suspect if not criminal.

And all of those preexisting dangers are, in turn, severely exacerbated by an American president who so often is too age-addled to speak clearly or predictably. That condition is inherently dangerous, made all the more so by the fact that it leaves him vulnerable to manipulation by the Democratic Party's national security advisers who will never forget 2016 and seem more intent than ever on finally

attaining vengeance against Putin, no matter the risks. Speaking to U.S. troops in Poland on Friday, a visibly exhausted and rambling President Biden — after extensive travel, time-zone hopping, protracted meetings and speeches — appeared to tell U.S. troops that they were on their way to see first-hand the resistance of Ukrainians, meaning they were headed into Ukraine:

It seems clear that this was not some planned decision to have the U.S. president casually announce his intention to send U.S. troops to fight Russians in Ukraine. This was, instead, an old man, more tired, unpredictable and incoherent than usual due to intense overseas travel, accidentally mumbling out various phrases that could be and almost certainly were highly alarming to Moscow and other countries.

But accidental or unintentional escalation — from misperception or miscommunication — is always at least as serious a danger for war as the deliberate intention to directly engage militarily. In January of this year, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists [announced](#) that its so-called "doomsday clock" was set to 100 seconds before midnight, the metaphorical time they used to signify an extinction-

level event for humanity. They warned that the prospect of a cataclysmic nuclear exchange among the U.S., Russia and/or China was dangerously possible, and specifically warned: “Ukraine remains a potential flashpoint, and Russian troop deployments to the Ukrainian border heighten day-to-day tensions.”

In 2018, when the [clock was “only” at two minutes before midnight](#), they emphasized

tensions between Russia and the U.S. as one of the primary causes: “The United States and Russia remained at odds, continuing military exercises along the borders of NATO, undermining the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), upgrading their nuclear arsenals, and eschewing arms control negotiations.” They urged recognition of this specific danger: “Major nuclear actors are on the cusp of a new

arms race, one that will be very expensive and will increase *the likelihood of accidents and misperceptions.*”

That Biden's "gaffe" about U.S. troops headed into Ukraine could generate exactly this sort of "misperception" seems self-evident. So do the grave dangers from Biden's sudden yet emphatic declaration on Saturday that Putin "cannot remain in power" — the classic language of declared U.S.

policy of regime change:

That clear declaration of regime change as the U.S. goal for Putin was quickly walked back by Biden's aides, who [absurdly claimed](#) he only meant that Putin cannot remain in power *in Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe*, not that he can no longer govern Russia. But this episode marked [at least the third time in the past couple weeks that White House officials had to](#)

[walk back Biden's comments](#), following his clear decree that U.S. troops would soon be back in Ukraine and his prior warning that the U.S. would use chemical weapons against Russia if they used them first. That Biden seems to be stumbling and bumbling rather than following scripted recklessness seems likely in some of these cases but not all. The White House's vehement denial, in the wake

of Biden's speech, that regime change in Russia is its goal was contradicted by Ferguson's reporting in *Bloomberg* last week:

Reading this carefully, I conclude that the U.S. intends to keep this war going....I have evidence from other sources to corroborate this. "The only end game now," a senior administration official was heard to say at a private event earlier this month, "is the end

of Putin regime"I gather that senior British figures are talking in similar terms. There is a belief that "the U.K.'s No. 1 option is for the conflict to be extended and thereby bleed Putin." Again and again, I hear such language. It helps explain, among other things, the lack of any diplomatic effort by the U.S. to secure a ceasefire. It also explains the readiness of President Joe Biden to call Putin a war

|criminal.

Whether deliberate or unintentional, these escalatory statements — particularly when combined with the U.S.'s escalatory *actions* — are dangerous beyond what can be described. As an Australian news outlet [reported](#) on Sunday, “Russia has launched a missile strike near Poland in what appears to be a deadly warning to the United States.” The accompanying video (see

lead photo above) shows at least three long-range cruise missiles, launched from a Russian submarine in the Black Sea, precisely striking targets in western Ukraine, near to where Biden was in Poland. That missile launch, the outlet reasonably concluded, “appears to be a deadly warning to the United States.”

Whatever else is true, the U.S. and Russia are now in waters

uncharted since the Cuban missile crisis. Even the savage US/USSR proxy wars of the 1980s in Latin America and Afghanistan did not entail these sorts of rapidly escalating threats. A Russian president who, validly or not, feels threatened by NATO expansion in the region and driven by questions of his legacy, on the other side of a U.S. president with a long record of hawkishness and war fever

which is now hobbled by the carelessness and infirmities of old age, is a remarkably volatile combination. As former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis [put it](#) on Saturday: “A U.S. President who, during an atrocious war, does not mean what he says on matters of War and Peace, and must be corrected by his hyperventilating staff, is a clear and present danger to all.”

Hovering above all of these

grave dangers is the question of *why*? What interests does the U.S. have in Ukraine that are sufficiently vital or substantial to justify trifling with risks of this magnitude? Why did the U.S. not do more to try to diplomatically avert this horrific war, instead seemingly opting for the opposite: namely, discouraging Ukrainian President Zelensky from pursuing such talks on the alleged grounds of futility and

rewarding Russian aggression, and not even exploring whether a vow of non-NATO-membership for Ukraine would suffice? How does growing U.S. involvement in this war benefit the people of the United States, particularly as they were already — before this war — weighed down by the dual burdens of pandemic-based economic depravations and rapidly escalating inflation? These are precisely the

questions that a healthy nation discusses and examines *before* jumping head-first into a major war. But these were precisely the questions declared to be unpatriotic, proof of one's status as a traitor or pro-Russia propagandist, as the hallmark of being pro-Putin. These are the standard tactics used to squash dissent or questioning when war breaks out. That neocons, who [perfected these smear tactics](#),

are back in the saddle as discourse and policy leaders — due to their six-year project of ingratiating themselves back into American liberalism with performative anti-Trump agitprop — makes it inevitable that such sleazy attacks will prevail.

As a result, the U.S. now finds itself more deeply enmeshed than ever in the most dangerous war it has fought in years if not decades. It may be

too late for those questions to be meaningfully examined. But given the stakes, this is as clear a case of *better late than never* as one will ever encounter.

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