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Ukraine: The War on Truth

By Armen Abazajian

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"The War on Truth" seems to be an appropriate name for the propaganda war waged in the theater of global media over the real war in the eastern Ukraine. I have borrowed the title from an op-ed article in the New York Times by Keith Darden. This particular propaganda war has human victims and has an influence on the real war in the east of Ukraine. A real war where human flesh is torn and scorched, limbs are severed and bone pulverized.

To sweep away at least some of the fog of this propaganda war and figure out what's happening in the Ukraine, we must concentrate on verifiable facts. These facts are being convoluted by the Obama administration, and are keeping the American public from seeing the horror of the Ukrainian situation. The following are false claims that the Obama Administration has made via the popular media:

1. That the conflict in Ukraine is a direct result of Russian aggression

The Obama Administration and its European and NATO Allies have focused the global conversation on Russian Federation's president, Vladimir Putin's, supposed desire to reconstitute the Soviet Union and Russia's subsequent material support of the eastern Ukrainian separatists. However, a review of the recent Ukrainian history shows that the conflict has long-standing economic roots.

Having started on the path of independence in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and despite having a reasonably developed industry and agriculture as part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine is now the second poorest country in Europe, after its neighbor to the west, Moldova, as measured by the International Monetary Fund in terms of per capita GDP at purchasing power parity (GDP (PPP)). GDP per capita, adjusted by purchasing power parity, is a measure of affluence of a nation. In comparison, United States GDP (PPP) per capita is about seven times larger. Ukraine's neighbors, with the exception of Moldova, are also considerably more affluent: the Russian Federation to the east is almost two and a half times more affluent, Poland to the northwest is almost 3 times more affluent, Belarus is over two times more prosperous, and Bulgaria to the southwest is about two times more affluent. Ukraine's \$7,400 in per capita GDP, on the average, means abject poverty.

A Ukrainian friend of mine told me: "A Ukrainian man, Petro, looks across the border at his cousin Piotr in Poland and sees that Piotr has a good job and goes on vacations to Greece. His cousin Pyotr in Russia has a pretty good job too and goes on vacations to Turkey, while Petro does not have two pennies to rub together, that's why all the trouble".

Ukrainian impecunity isn't evenly distributed. The east of Ukraine, currently laid waste by the criminal fratricidal war, prior to the war had an average salary ranging 300 to 2500 hrivna (about 25% to two and a half times) higher than the population in the west. The impoverished west currently supplies most of the recruits fighting against the eastern Ukrainians. Many eastern Ukrainians also supplement their income by working "abroad" in the Russian Federation where salaries are much higher and their mastery of Russian language and short travel distance from home make it easy to get work.

Thus, western Ukraine's dislike for eastern Ukrainians is somewhat understandable giving the west's abject poverty. The conditions in Ukraine are similar to those which existed in the Weimar Germany which led to the rise of Nazis. The Ukrainian west has supplied most of the electoral support (in some *oblasts*, or regions, up to almost 40 percent of the vote) for the extremist Svoboda party and various factions of the mostly fascist Right Sector, a leading force in "Euromaidan." The Svoboda was formerly known as the Social-Nationalist Party of Ukraine and had a swastika as its insignia.

2. **That the so-called "Euromaidan" protests in Ukraine in the latter part of 2013 and beginning of 2014 were a grassroots movement against the Russian-dominated Yanukovich government**

The movement eventually toppled the corrupt administration of president Yanukovich. However, there is evidence and widespread consensus that popular economical dissatisfaction with the government has been aided and channeled by outside forces.

"Euromaidan" has been heavily funded by the United States and the European Union. Victoria Nuland, the current Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, admitted as much during her speech at the International Business Conference on

Ukraine at the National Press Club on December 13th, 2013, stating that the United States has spent \$5 billion funding anti-government "pro-democracy" groups in Ukraine. Assistant Secretary Nuland's background is interesting in this context. Ms. Nuland served as the principal foreign adviser to Dick Cheney, who was a prominent member of the neoconservative "Project for the New American Century". She is married to the co-founder of this same "Project for the New American Century" think-tank which provided much of the theoretical underpinning for the Afghanistan and Iraq wars still bedeviling the United States. She also represented the United States in NATO, an anti-Soviet Union alliance. Her paternal grandfather may have emigrated to the United States from Ukraine. Some authors have claimed Nuland to be a Russophobe. Given her experience and background, Nuland's antipathy to Russia, if true, is understandable.

3. **That the "Euromaidan" protests were a popular Ukrainian movement for freedom and democracy**

What the Obama administration and its European allies don't mention is that the Nazi Svoboda and even more violent fascist Right Sector played a leading role in "Euromaidan". Participation of the Nazi Svoboda and fascist Right Sector in Euromaidan is well documented by a number of investigative journalists with firsthand accounts on the subject. As with all fascist parties, Svoboda and Right Sector support freedom and democracy only for the like-minded, proper Ukrainians. Fascist groups need an enemy to justify their extremism. For the Nazis in Germany, it was the Jews. For Svoboda and Right Sector, it's the Russians.

During "Euromaidan" at the end of 2013, Ukrainian nationalist extremists occupied most of the government buildings in the central Kiev as well as most of the other regional administration buildings in central and western Ukraine. Interestingly enough, the Obama administration and its European Union allies did not demand the withdrawal of extremists from these government buildings with the same indignation that they demanded the withdrawal of eastern Ukrainian separatist forces from the regional government buildings they occupied. The western media, blithely following the administration's PR line, completely overlooked the Svoboda attacks, instead making eastern Ukrainians appear to be the radical rebels. In fact, they and much of the media following in their storyline continue neglecting to mention that most government buildings in Kiev and in the center and west of the country are still occupied by the Ukrainian nationalist extremists.

Yanukovich finally fled Ukraine after incidents during which dozens of demonstrators and police were killed. The Obama administration and its EU allies squarely placed the blame on the Yanukovich government for the massacre. However, later the official Ukrainian sources said that the investigation into the killings revealed that they were inflicted on both sides by the same set of guns — by unknown provocateurs — with one of the possibilities being "groups not controlled by the government."

4. **That once Yanukovich fled, the Ukrainian Parliament, called Rada, voted for the new "legitimate interim government"**

In reality, the Obama administration appears to have hand-picked the so-called "interim government." The irascible Ms. Victoria Nuland placed a by now famous call to Geoffrey Pyatt, U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, during which she basically outlined who will front the interim Ukrainian government (she named Arseni Yatseniuk), and who will give it direction by "talking to the interim president four times per week." Among those who will give the government direction, she named Oleh Tyahnibok, the leader of the Nazi Svoboda party. Ms. Nuland also wholeheartedly cursed the EU, who may have had second thoughts about the monster they were unleashing. She also said that she will bring in US Vice-President Joe Biden to "glue this whole thing together." Mr. Biden did come and apparently succeeded in "gluing things together" so well that his son got a directorship at a Ukrainian energy company.

The Obama administration hurriedly recognized the legitimacy of the "interim government" in Kiev led by Arseni Yatseniuk. This is the government they recognized as legitimate and representing the will of the Ukrainian people. Of the 20 members of the new "Yatseniuk government":

5 (25%) were the members of Nazi Svoboda Party although at the time of the coup Svoboda held only 8% of the parliament.

1 (5%) member, named Serhey Kvit, is from Right Sector, an extreme fascist group previously not represented in the parliament.

7 (35%) were from Batkivshina, a nationalist party that held less than 20 percent of the seats in the parliament.

None were from Party of Regions which held the largest single block of seats in the parliament (27%) and received much of its support in the east of Ukraine. None were from the Communist, Socialist, or the pro-Russian parties in Ukraine, who, however flawed their convictions, were duly elected by the Ukrainian people to represent them in the parliament.

As a reminder, the "vote" to form the "Yatseniuk government" was held while the parliament and the rest of government buildings in Kiev were occupied by "Euromaidan" activists, mostly composed of Svoboda, Right Sector and Batkivshina, thus hardly being a "free" vote. There were documented incidents of physical assault on the officials of the former government, members of the Party of Regions and Ukrainian communist and socialist parties by the hoodlums of the Right Sector and Svoboda too numerous to site within the limited scope of this article.

5. That Russia "invaded" Crimea and fanned the radical eastern separatist rebellion

The people of the east Ukraine rose against what they considered to be an illegal coup in Kiev. The "Yatseniuk government" in Kiev put Andriy Parubiy, a man who co-founded the Nazi Svoboda party, in charge of putting down the eastern Ukrainian rebellion. Naturally, this choice may very well have told eastern Ukrainians not to expect mercy.

However, the Obama administration and the blithe western media blames the Russian Federation for this exchange, saying that Russia is encouraging the rebellion of eastern Ukrainian Russian sympathizers.

People of Crimea are 57% native Russians and 77% native Russian speakers. The rise of the new "government" in Kiev dominated by nationalists and fascists, accompanied by calls on the social media "moscalei na nozh (knife the Russians)" and "mochit koloradov" (bloody the Russians) threaten and dehumanize the Russians and Russian-speakers by using the word koloradov, which is a reference to the black-orange St. George's ribbon worn by the separatists and the black-orange Colorado beetle plaguing the European forests. These cries could not possibly be viewed as a positive development, and justifiably warrant eastern Ukrainians' attempts to defend themselves. The Crimean referendum to join the Russian Federation passed with 89% participation of the voters and over 95% voting for joining. Although the Obama administration, its allies in the EU, and in fact the majority of the nations in the world condemned the referendum as illegal or lacking full legitimacy, numerous international polls before and after the referendum showed that the population of Crimea indeed preferred to be part of Russia, and the referendum correctly expressed the will of the people. Given later wanton violence unleashed in Eastern Ukraine, it would not be surprising that the Crimeans are congratulating themselves on their choice.

In fact, when the separatists in the east rose against the "Yatzeniuik government" in Kiev, the government sent in the regular Ukrainian army as they were encouraged to do by the Obama administration during the visits to Kiev by the director of CIA and the Vice President. Most soldiers in the regular army refused to fight; they either went home or joined the separatists. A similar situation developed in the annexed Crimea, according to one report. As many as 90 percent of the Ukrainian army and navy personnel may have joined the Russian military or chose to be discharged and became Russian Federation's civilians. Encountering no support among the regular army, the "Yatzeniuik government" enlisted and armed their shock troops in the "Euromaidan," many of them from the Nazi Svoboda and fascist Right Sector into a "National Guard." The Nazi Svoboda and the fascist Right Sector also formed their own armed gangs, who appear to cooperate with the like-minded "National Guard" in attacking the eastern Ukrainians.

6. Claim no responsibility for anti-eastern aggression, slurs, violence and eventually murder.

The "Yatzeniuik government" and the Ukrainian official media call the easterners "terrorists" and "bandits," encouraged by the Obama administration with EU and NATO support. In Odessa, egged on by the government and social media, Ukrainian fascists lost all vestiges of humanity and brutally murdered over 40 protesters against the "Yatzeniuik government" (warning: the pictures in the article are gruesome – heinous crimes by evil men). The official Ukrainian line, parroted by the increasingly complicit Obama administration and its EU co-conspirators, is that the anti-government demonstrators set fire to themselves. To restore "peace" in Odessa, the Kiev "government" sent extremist thugs newly armed with weapons and impunity. Ukrainian official press called them an

"elite National Guard" unit. Mostly parroting the official Ukrainian line, world media picked up the moniker. Typically the word "elite" is reserved for highly trained and thoroughly professional military units, but apparently not in the eyes of the official Ukrainian press.

While the Obama administration carried the banner of the Euromaidan freedom-loving Ukrainian revolution, similar "elite" National Guardsmen were arriving in Mariupol in the Donetsk Oblast in Eastern Ukraine. Using their "extensive training" they unloaded magazine after magazine, some into the Mariupol policemen who tried to stand up to them, some into the sky, and some into the unarmed protesters. Next, the "elite" National Guardsmen made an appearance in Kramatorsk and Slavyansk, taking potshots at young girls. They are still there, a few dying in separatist ambushes, a few wounded by RPG shrapnel, but most bringing up heavier and heavier equipment, tanks, aircraft, using more and more long-distance artillery and howitzers to perpetrate murder more efficiently.

7. That Russia's has sent troops to Ukraine, is preparing to invade Ukraine, and that the best response is to impose sanctions

The Obama administration and NATO sternly demanded the withdrawal of the Russian army from the Ukrainian border and announced sanctions on Russian individuals. As a "justification" for its actions, the Obama administration paraded fabricated photos of "Russian spetznaz," scratchy doctored phone recordings and a plethora of other larks in front of the global media ⁽²⁹⁾. The administration in its eagerness to implicate Russia kept swinging with gusto at the rotten "evidence" of Russian military involvement, soft-pitched to them by the Kiev's "Yatzeniuik government." Secretary of State John Kerry must be either improbably gullible or so motivated that he does not mind being caught in a lie. When the investigative journalists got to the front lines of the separatist units, they did not find Russian troops or modern Russian equipment. They found tired Ukrainian or Russian army veterans now living in Ukraine, armed with weapons commandeered from the Ukrainian army depots or bought off of Ukrainian soldiers or border guards on their way home. They also found plenty of Russians recently arrived to stand with their cousins and friends against the fascist "National Guard" and Right Sector onslaught, drifting across the border the locals never fully recognized since its ephemeral appearance in 1991. Some others drifted over just to fight. There are lots of unemployed or underemployed ex-military and mercenaries in the region. Meanwhile, according to the leaked reports by the German military intelligence it is the "National Guardsmen", in fact, appear to be stiffening their ranks with US and European mercenaries.

Given the facts showing inhumane acts against eastern Ukrainian citizens and immoral support for radical groups now in control of the Ukrainian government and backed by the United States, the question is: "Why?" Why does the Obama administration resort to obvious subterfuge, deception and spin-control regarding Ukraine? Did the administration and the EU enmesh itself in the Ukrainian regime change early on for commercial reasons (free trade agreement) and now feel they have to play it out although they did not anticipate the Svoboda/Right Sector hijacking of the "Yatzeniuik government"? Did the administration decide that Vladimir Putin is a bad guy and his Eurasian free trade zone must be curtailed off, even at the expense of hundreds and maybe thousands of Ukrainian lives? Is this a case of the tail "wagging the dog"? After all the

last proxy war with Russia was in 2008, when the Republicans were in trouble. Important mid-term elections are coming up and now the Democrats are in trouble. Is this the military-industrial complex flexing its muscle and NATO attempting to stave off its irrelevance? Is this some combination of all or some of the above?

Whatever the real reason is, the Obama administration's illegal blundering in Ukraine has caused the deaths of hundreds and misery for millions of Ukrainians. The administration must stop supporting the criminal fratricidal war in eastern Ukraine, get all parties in the conflict to the table and hammer out a diplomatic solution.