**War of choice**

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Saturday, Feb 18, 2023

Recent revelations from France, Germany, Israel, and Ukraine that the Minsk Accord(s) was a deception engineered by the US to buy time for Ukraine to organize a US-led, armed, and funded war against Russia, contradict American assertions regarding the conflict. Readers will recall that it was only after the failure of the Ukrainian government to implement the terms of the Minsk Accord(s) that the Russian military moved into Ukraine. In other words, the Russians waited for 2022 – 2014 = eight years before rising to the American challenge in Ukraine.

Representatives from each of these nations have now claimed that the US was being duplicitous, telling the world that it favored a negotiated settlement while doing everything in its power to assure that no settlement was reached. The former Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, went so far as to charge that the US said that there were no terms that the Russians might offer that would be acceptable because the Americans wanted a war with Russia. Question: at what point does provocation turn into instigation?

Recall, the publicly stated position of the US since the war began has been that it has no say in the negotiations because they are between the sovereign state of Ukraine and Russia. Recall, the US has repeatedly asserted that Ukraine, being a sovereign nation, can negotiate any deal that it cares to with Russia. There are now reports of multiple instances where Ukraine had come to terms with the Russians but was subsequently told that there is no deal by the Americans. Is this evidence of Ukrainian sovereignty?

Recall, the public position of the Americans has been that the war was unprovoked, and therefore unavoidable. In fact, at least one party in the dispute – the Russians, disagrees with this characterization. Otherwise, why was a solution being negotiated at Minsk? Like the Americans, the Russians may or may not have been negotiating in good faith. The way to test Russian motives was to implement the Accord(s), which, depending on the timing, would have either precluded the Russian move into Ukraine or stopped it at the borders of Donbas.

With the President of Ukraine, Volodymir Zelensky, having now admitted that he never intended to implement the Minsk Accord(s), it is difficult to see how negotiations move forward. This was more likely than not the American purpose in organizing the Minsk deception. When the Russians concluded that there was no path to resolution with the Americans through negotiations, war was launched. To understand the problem, imagine if it had been the Russians who had negotiated in bad faith before launching hostilities toward Ukraine.

With the US now running the war in Ukraine, and all of the major players (except the US) having stated that the Minsk Accord(s) was a deception, the implication is that the Americans want for the Accord(s) to be perceived as a deception by the Russians. In fact, the Russians indicated that they understood the deception when they moved the Russian military into Ukraine last year. It is the American people who are being played here. The Biden administration is precluding future negotiations by proving the Americans to be untrustworthy negotiating partners.

The question of the legal status of the Russian military incursion into Ukraine keeps being raised under the implied premise that ‘the law’ will provide moral and political clarity regarding the war. In the closest claimed analog, the US war against Iraq launched in 2003, the US provided evidence known at the time to be fraudulent in order to convince the United Nations that ‘defensive’ war was justified. In other words, the UN gave its legal authority to the American slaughter in Iraq because it was defrauded into doing so by the Americans.

To then point to the legal authority given the Americans with respect to Iraq as legitimate illustrates why the senior leadership of the (George W.) Bush administration must be prosecuted for its illegal and murderous war against Iraq. When nations are allowed to deceive the UN into giving legal sanction to Wars of Aggression, legal cover is severed from political legitimacy. If an adjudicating body (court) is indifferent to being defrauded, then fraud will come to define its judgments. This is why I joined Ramsey Clark in 2004 to prosecute the (George W.) Bush administration for its crimes against Iraq.

In fact, the Americans who slaughtered one-million Iraqis and lit the wider Middle East on fire in 2003 still run the country. The ‘Neocons,’ neoconservatives who promote policies based on the imperialist logic that colonized peoples benefit from the superior knowledge and wisdom of their colonizers, migrated to the Democratic Party following the public relations disaster of the US war against Iraq. Joe Biden has been a Neocon since former US President Bill Clinton tied his War of Aggression (Kosovo) to his ‘business friendly’ neoliberal economic policies.

The fact that the current US President, Joe Biden, was a major participant in the Iraq-WMD deception, as well as a proponent of the US war against Iraq, places the current US political leadership at the heart of the American imperial project. The formula is: 1) create a pretext for taking military action, 2) use political leverage to coerce a coalition from ‘the international community,’ to 3) pursue economic advantage for American oligarchs and corporations using the ruse of ‘keeping the world safe for democracy.’

Question: how does the US retain credibility with its allies in Europe? Whatever the motives, the fact that all of the major players except the US have now publicly admitted that the US was perpetrating a fraud against the Russians should have divided the ‘coalition of the European Marshall Plan.’ The true recipient of American largesse has been Germany, which just had its critical energy infrastructure, the Nord Stream pipelines, bombed by the Americans. If this is an act between allies, they are of the ruling class. Biden bombed German pipelines, not Olaf Schulz.

In fact, the circumstances that now find the Russians in Ukraine raise broad and deep questions regarding what international law is, and why it matters. In its favor is the set of rules it provides by which states can avoid avoidable, and therefore unnecessary, conflicts. Against it is the existing distribution of political and economic power that has made ‘the law’ a tool of the powerful against their enemies. Here is former Reagan administration functionary Elliot Abrams explaining an American insider’s view of international law. Note the sense of imperial right.

The claim from American liberals has long been that the national Democrats lack the power to pass important and necessary policies in the public interest. In fact, after abandoning his alleged domestic agenda because pursuing it would have required effort, Joe Biden launched war of choice against nuclear-armed Russia.

Excerpted: ‘Russia, Ukraine, and International Law’.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.org