**Peace negotiations**

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On February 25, 2023, in response to the Chinese government’s proposal for peace negotiations in the Ukraine conflict, Joe Biden stated that the idea of China negotiating the outcome of the war was “just not rational”. He continued, telling ABC News, “Putin’s applauding it, so how could it be any good?” Ignoring the childishness of Biden’s statement, it seems only reasonable to ask not only whether Biden understands how negotiations work, but whether he even read the Chinese proposal before talking to the media. Rejecting peace talks is not only dangerous, it’s stupid. Furthermore, to quote Joe BIden, it’s just not rational.

It’s important to remember that in the early 1990s Washington was fine (even overjoyed) with a capitalist Russia. Washington remained at the unchallenged top of the capitalist world order and could exploit Russia’s resources and markets. Indeed, US investors went hog wild in the wake of the Soviet Union’s demise, championing their favorite apparatchik Yeltsin as he and a fair number of other Russians sold off the public’s property and services to the highest bidder.

Similarly, Washington encouraged the creation of the European Union, with the one non-negotiable stipulation that the military element was Washington’s sole domain. After all, it needed a reason to keep its military alliance Nato intact. As long as Washington maintained its dominance, it was mostly okay with Germany and other European economies growing in leaps and bounds. However, it’s quite interesting to note that when cheap Russian fuel became a key part of the engine for those economies in the 2000s, Washington’s bellicosity towards Moscow ramped up. Meanwhile, while Europe’s elites feasted on profits, Nato was assimilating those governments in Europe’s eastern region that were once in the thrall of Moscow. In essence, Nato occupied those nations in a manner quite similar to how the Global North kept control of most of its former colonies after granting them independence after World War Two. That phenomenon was named and described by the revolutionary Kwame Nkrumah in his classic text Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism. Although traditionally applied to the nations of the Global South, Nkrumah’s analysis is quite applicable to most if not all of the former socialist republics in Europe’s eastern regions. The manifestation of this, especially in today’s Ukraine, is succinctly expressed by this sentence near the end of Nkrumah’s text: “The general objective has been mentioned: to achieve colonialism in fact while preaching independence.”

Nkrumah writes in the early paragraphs of his text: “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.” This sentence describes Ukraine’s existence since its independence. It is nominally independent, but its economic system has always been directed from the outside. Indeed, it is that economic system which is the primary reason for this war. Moscow dominated Kyiv’s economy for many years after its independence and assumed it would continue to do so, naively believing that some kind of tacit agreement existed between Moscow and Washington regarding Ukraine’s place in the world’s power dynamics.

This aspiring imperialism of Russia did not sit well with the United States. After assimilating most other former members of the Warsaw pact into its economic bloc and reinforcing that control via its military alliance Nato, Washington stepped up its campaign to do the same in Ukraine. This resulted in the 2014 events known as the Maidan uprising or the Maidan coup; events that ultimately put a pro-Washington government in power. However, many Ukrainian citizens did not go quietly. They resisted, first by active unarmed resistance. After fascist groups attacked them in Odessa, and burned dozens of them alive in the Trade Unions building, the armed resistance took command. Then, what is essentially a civil war began, with Moscow supporting the resistance while Washington and some of its Nato cohorts stepped up their support of Kyiv’s military. This support involved training by Nato forces, more funding, more and better weapons, intelligence and logistical support. I know a few airmen and GIs who were involved in the training when they were deployed to Poland. Although negotiations continued between the various parties involved, it has become clear that Kyiv’s promises were lies. Some of those involved have clearly stated that Kyiv’s government never intended to follow the peace plan it agreed to. It is also clear that Kyiv’s decisions were influenced by (and probably insisted on) by Washington and Nato. Furthermore, Kyiv’s rejection of neutrality and its alignment with Washington meant that Kyiv’s neocolonial master was now Washington instead of Moscow. The subsequent escalation of the war via Washington/Nato’s sending of military and other aid to the Kyiv government has further emphasized this new reality – at least as far as Washington is concerned.

War is ultimately a moral question. The standards commonly held by the international community (but not so often adhered to), are: having just cause, being a last resort, being declared by a proper authority, possessing right intention, having a reasonable chance of success, and the end being proportional to the means used.

It can certainly be argued that the Ukrainian government had a just cause defending itself against the Russian invasion. As for the remaining four, Russia could argue their action was a last resort because Kyiv rejected peaceful alternatives. Both Kyiv and Moscow can also reasonably argue all but the final element. Already, the end–whatever it may be–is not proportional to the slaughter, destruction and despair of this conflict. No modern war is. The possibility of this war escalating even further, potentially officially bringing in combat troops from other national armies, introducing more devastatingly murderous weapons and bringing the threat of nuclear war ever closer not only makes it clear the means to fight this war are way out of proportion to any potential ending. Those who would deny this might best be characterized as zealots for whom the lust for victory has taken command of their reason.

As for Washington and Nato, any justification they might seek in these principles is countered by their history of preventing discussions between Kyiv and Moscow while counseling and cajoling Kyiv to ignore agreements they already signed that presented an alternative to military conflict.

Excerpted: ‘Neo-Colonialism in Ukraine’.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.org