



The Washington Blob: Its Blind Arrogance May Lead to War with Russia

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The Washington foreign policy elite, aka the Blob, hates nothing more than dissent from the conventional wisdom that the US must always do more, ever more, in the world. Those who disagree are treated as fools or traitors.

Every Friday the *Washington Post* engages in its weekly act of journalistic masturbation, when one of its establishment journalists interviews its other establishment journalists. The conversations are always informed, usually interesting, and often drenched in condescension. Last Friday was no different.

The Posties took on congressional passage of the \$40 billion aid bill for Ukraine, expressing shock and dismay that 11 Republican senators voted no. Can you imagine – putting the interests of Americans first!? Playing the perfect Tartuffe was Josh Rogin, brimming with pietistic outrage. He singled out Tennessee Sen. Bill Hagerty, announcing that the former ambassador "knows better." Rogin huffed: "It seems pretty simple." It is better to spend the money now than to have World War III if Russia wins, he explained.

Eh? That's the best the *Post* can come up with? Rogin's argument is simple, or more accurately, simplistic. Surely Rogin knows better. However, his attitude is typical of the Blob.

For a city filled with masters of the universe whose fondest desire is to run the world, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a gift from the Devil. The war provides an excuse to add to America's bloated military budget, transfer massive amounts of weapons and money, fight a proxy war, increase US control over Europe, browbeat the Global South to follow America's lead, and remake the world. Which Washington rushed to do with nary a dissenting thought. Perhaps even more remarkable, though, is the fact that a succession of US policymakers helped generate the very crisis which fulfilled their ambitions, all the while piously proclaiming their sacrificial dedication to others. And preparing to lead America to disaster.

First, though Russian President Vladimir Putin bears sole responsibility for the decision to attack Ukraine, the US and European governments created conditions for war. They recklessly violated security assurances made to Moscow and acted aggressively in ways Washington would never have accepted in the Western hemisphere. And bleated sanctimonious cant about the sacred sovereignty of other nations.

Imagine if Russia (or China, or another adversarial great power) attempted to draw Mexico away from America toward an alternative trade block, promoted a street putsch ousting the elected, pro-US president, pushed political favorites for the new government, and promised Mexico membership in a hostile military alliance. Blob members, including the *Washington Post* editorial page and journalists, likely including Rogin, would have joined in frenzied unanimity demanding action, with nary a thought about Mexico's right to make its own decisions and chart its own destiny. So much for the Blob's commitment to the "rules based international order."

Second, members of several administrations callously and recklessly set up Ukraine. Since 2008 Washington, NATO, and European governments assured Kyiv that they looked forward to its eventual membership in the transatlantic alliance. Yet no one in Europe, and few in Washington after the disastrous Bush administration mercifully passed into history, were prepared to go to war over Ukraine. By repeating this faux promise, they simultaneously fueled Russian anger – oft articulated by Putin and a gaggle of Russian officials – and Ukrainian overconfidence. For instance, feeling secure, Kyiv signed, with apparently no intention of fulfilling, the Minsk agreements; Washington and Brussels placed no pressure on Ukraine to complete the deal. Perhaps peace was impossible, but allied malpractice ensured conflict.

Third, America's interests are different from Kyiv's. Washington's view of the world differs, sometimes dramatically, even from European states with which it has been formally allied for decades. (For instance, their primary security goal always has been to cheap ride on Americans.) The divergence is greater the more distant and less connected the nation. Unsurprisingly, Ukraine wants to not just rebuff Russia's attack, but recapture lost territory, even against the wishes of its population, as likely in Crimea's case. In doing so, Kyiv would be perfectly happy to drag the US and NATO into direct combat against Russia. In contrast, Washington has no significant interest in reversing Ukraine's past. Ending the war should be America's highest priority.

Fourth, US interests in Ukraine are limited. In a perfect world the lion would lie down with the lamb and members of the global community would join in a rousing chorus of Kumbaya. The result would be perfect justice – international law respected, popular desires fulfilled, security concerns resolved, political miscreants ousted, military criminals punished, tragic history repaired. However, this is a fantasy. What major conflict, even if a convincing victory, concluded thus? Certainly, neither World Wars I and II nor Iraq I and II. And many wars, such as Korea, Iran-Iraq, and the Balkans, had messy, inconclusive outcomes and equally unsatisfactory results.

In today's imperfect world Washington should seek a "good enough" conclusion. The war would end with a stable peace. Necessary would be respect for Ukrainian sovereignty and understanding of Russian insecurity. The rest would be negotiable. The Biden administration should temper its ambitions since the cost and risk of pushing for more is far too great.

Fifth, determined to give life to their inner feldmarschall, Blob members are prepared to fight to last Ukrainian, spend Uncle Sam's last dollar, and perhaps even send in the Marines, along with quite a few other Americans. The \$40 billion just approved by Congress, on top of \$13 billion already provided to Ukraine, is more than what Russia spends on the military annually, greater than what all but three European nations devote to their own defense every year, and a multiple

of what the Europeans have provided and will provide Kyiv. This makes no sense given Ukraine's disproportionate interest to Europe and limited importance to America.

Worse, administration officials are not just pursuing inflated war aims, but promoting them publicly, expressing desire for regime change, war crimes trials, and a weakened Russia. This ostentatious challenge raises the stakes for the Putin government, increasing pressure on it to respond. Public discussions of America's role in combat operations, including targeting Russian generals and ships, also highlights Washington's status as a cobelligerent and tempts Moscow to retaliate.

Escalation could be striking Western aid shipments *before* they reach Ukraine, perhaps in Poland; encouraging attacks by Russian or proxy forces on US garrisons elsewhere, such as in Syria or Iraq; augmenting the military capabilities of American adversaries, most dangerously Iran or North Korea; employing more destructive weapons and firepower, including nuclear weapons; and declaring full mobilization, thereby committing the Russian people to a modified version of total war. All of these would set up a potentially dangerous confrontation with Washington. It would be madness for the US to match or trump Moscow, given the stakes. However, backing down, seemingly abandoning Ukraine, would sacrifice US credibility.

This is how World War III could start. Washington treating Russia like Serbia, Afghanistan, Libya, or Iraq, as Rogin and many others advocate. In those wars even stupid, disastrous policies had limited impact on America despite wrecking other nations, killing hundreds of thousands of foreigners, and displacing millions of people. Being a superpower often means you can destroy and kill with little consequence at home. Get Russia wrong, however, and Americans, too, could pay a very high price. Surely Washington's foreign policy elite understand that.

This is the moment for someone in the Biden administration, assuming there is an adult in the room making policy, to call a halt. The US must balance Ukraine with other American interests, reverse the thoughtless rise in war objectives, and limit Washington's involvement. Despite the Blob's self-reverential belief that it is entitled to run the world, its members' principal duty is to the American people. Washington policymakers should know better than to risk a devastating conflict over Ukraine.

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