

La Jornada – The US and Europe ignored warnings from experts about the conflict with Russia

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New York. Political leaders in the United States and Europe ignored warnings from their own top geopolitical strategists that their policies around Ukraine would provoke an unnecessary war with Russia.

President Joe Biden and the European community have managed to impose a narrative that Russia is solely responsible for the war by violating international law with its invasion of Ukraine, with much of the mainstream media reporting the war through that prism, and reject their role in generating the crisis.

However, a wide range, from the most renowned geopolitical strategists and architects of the *cold War* even their most prominent critics warned for years that the policies promoted by the powers of the so-called “west” would culminate precisely in this crisis.

The consensus among these experts is that any expansion of NATO around Russia, and in particular Ukraine, since the end of the *cold War* it would be intolerable for any Russian leader.

In fact, Washington, Moscow and the Europeans and even the UN Security Council signed but never implemented the so-called Minsk Agreement of 2015, the axis of which is just to resolve the issue of NATO expansion by guaranteeing Ukraine’s independence in exchange for that country is neutral.

It is not the first time that the “west” has violated its agreements with Russia on security, since in the process of dissolving the Warsaw Pact, the “west” made a commitment with the then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not expand its geography “not by an inch” to the east. Washington and some of its allies began violating this agreement as early as 1993.

George Kennan, one of the intellectual architects of the *cold War* and in particular of the containment strategy of the Soviet bloc that he framed in 1947, and who was present at the creation of NATO, wrote in 1997 in the *New York Times*: “expanding NATO would be the most fateful mistake of US policy in the entire post-war era.*cold War*”. He explained that such a decision could be expected to “inflare” Russia’s nationalist and militaristic tendencies and that

it would lead to “restoring the climate of *cold War* to East-West relations, and will push a Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking.”

Keenan emphasized that there was no need for NATO expansion. Keenan was responding in part to strategists in the Bill Clinton administration who were breaking with Gorbachev and others by inviting former Warsaw Pact members Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into NATO – something protested by the then Russian leader Boris Yeltsin.

Responding to the ratification of NATO’s expansion promoted by Clinton in 1998, Keenan – at 94 years of age – sadly expressed: “I think this is the beginning of a new *cold War*... I think it’s a tragic mistake. There is no reason for this. No one was threatening anyone.”

Henry Kissinger, in an article he wrote in 2014 for the *Washington Post*, reiterated his opposition to Ukraine joining NATO and warned that “too often the Ukrainian issue is presented as a confrontation: whether Ukraine should join the East or the West. But if Ukraine is going to survive and prosper, it should not be the outpost of either against the other – it should function as a bridge between them....” And he recommended: “The United States needs to avoid treating Russia as an aberrant entity that has to be taught rules of conduct established by Washington.”

Washington under Barack Obama was already meddling in Ukraine’s internal affairs in 2013-2014 where it supported a coup against a pro-Russian government, further contributing to the deterioration of relations with Moscow.

In recent years, many other top US officials have expressed that the relationship has been mishandled over the last 30 years, especially around the issue of NATO expansion and Ukraine, including Robert Gates, who was secretary of defense. in the governments of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. William Perry, Clinton’s defense secretary who declared five years ago that “the United States deserves a lot of the blame” for deteriorating relations with Russia, and even Biden’s current CIA chief William Burns, who warned in an autobiography two years ago that inviting Ukraine to NATO is perceived across Russia’s political spectrum as “nothing less than a direct challenge to Russian interests.”

“It was entirely predictable that NATO expansion would lead to a tragic, possibly violent, break in relations with Moscow... the warnings were ignored. Now we are paying the price for the shortsightedness and arrogance of US foreign policy,” concludes Ted Galen Carpenter, a specialist in international relations at the conservative Cato Institute.

Agreeing from the other end of the political spectrum Noam Chomsky, who has insisted that the basic question is why does NATO continue to exist? He points out that with the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact and the USSR, there is no reason for NATO to exist. He affirms that the only reason is to ensure the “supremacy” of the United States in the Atlantic alliance, and that this fuels the current conflict [El supremacismo de EU atiza el conflicto en Ucrania].

“NATO, adrift since the end of the Soviet Union, now proclaims a new purpose and energy. Hawks in Russia and the United States are emboldened. Arms manufacturers are hatching plans to profit from the weapons surge, and ideologues and demagogues are dusting off their well-

known rhetoric,” laments Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor of *The Nation* in her column on the *Washington Post*.

He rejects arguments that the conflict is forging a new world order, but rather “the old order – with its attitudes of *cold War* military, alliances and enmities – is returning to center stage.

Vanden Heuvel calls for a transnational movement for peace and to prevent the leadership in Russia as well as in Europe and the United States from returning to the old-fashioned and obsolete scheme of *cold War*.