

🗝️ NATO chief admits NATO expansion was key to Russian invasion of Ukraine

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**NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg • European
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The continuing U.S. obsession with NATO enlargement is profoundly irresponsible and hypocritical. And now Ukrainians are paying a terrible price.

During the disastrous Vietnam War, it was said that the **US government treated the public like a mushroom farm: keeping it in the dark and feeding it with manure.** The heroic **Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers** documenting the unrelenting U.S. government lying about the war in order to protect politicians who would be embarrassed by the truth. A half-century later, during the Ukraine War, *the manure is piled even higher.*

According to the U.S. government and the ever-obsequious *New York Times*, the Ukraine war was "unprovoked," the *Times'* favorite adjective to describe the war. Putin, allegedly mistaking himself for Peter the Great, invaded Ukraine to recreate the Russian Empire. Yet last week, **NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg committed a Washington gaffe, meaning that he accidentally blurted out the truth.**

In [testimony to the European Union Parliament](#), Stoltenberg made clear that it was **America's relentless push to enlarge NATO to Ukraine that was the real cause of the war and why it continues today.** Here are Stoltenberg's revealing words:

"The background was that President Putin declared in the autumn of 2021, and actually sent a draft treaty that they wanted NATO to sign, to promise no more NATO enlargement. That was what he sent us. And was a pre-condition to not invade Ukraine. Of course, we didn't sign that.

The opposite happened. He wanted us to sign that promise, never to enlarge NATO. He wanted us to remove our military infrastructure in all Allies that have joined NATO since 1997, meaning half of NATO, all the Central and Eastern Europe, we should remove NATO from that part of our Alliance, introducing some kind of B, or second-class membership. We rejected that.

So, he went to war to prevent NATO, more NATO, close to his borders. He has got the exact opposite."

To repeat, *he [Putin] went to war to prevent NATO, more NATO, close to his borders.*

When Prof. John Mearsheimer, I, and others have said the same, we've been attacked as Putin apologists. The same critics also choose to hide or flatly ignore **the dire warnings against NATO enlargement to Ukraine long articulated by many of America's leading diplomats**, including the great scholar-statesman **George Kennan**, and the former US Ambassadors to Russia **Jack Matlock and William Burns**.

Burns, now CIA Director, was US Ambassador to Russia in 2008, and author of a memo entitled "[Nyet means Nyet](#)." In that memo, Burns explained to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that **the entire Russian political class, not just Putin, was dead-set against NATO enlargement**. We know about the memo only because it was leaked. Otherwise, we'd be in the dark about it.

Why does Russia oppose NATO enlargement? For the simple reason that Russia does not accept the U.S. military on its 2,300 km border with Ukraine in the Black Sea region. Russia does not appreciate the U.S. placement of Aegis missiles in Poland and Romania *after the U.S. unilaterally abandoned the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty*.

Russia also does not welcome the fact that the **U.S. engaged in no fewer than [70 regime change operations](#) during the Cold War (1947-1989), and countless more since**, including in Serbia, Afghanistan, Georgia, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Venezuela, and Ukraine. Nor does Russia like the fact that **many leading U.S. politicians actively advocate the destruction of Russia under the banner of "Decolonizing Russia."** That would be like Russia calling for the removal of Texas, California, Hawaii, the conquered Indian lands, and much else, from the United States.

Even Zelensky's team knew that the quest for NATO enlargement meant imminent war with Russia. **Oleksiy Arestovych**, former Advisor to the Office of the President of Ukraine under Zelensky, [declared](#) that **"with a 99.9% probability, our price for joining NATO is a big war with Russia."**

Arestovych claimed that even without NATO enlargement, Russia would eventually try to take Ukraine, just many years later. Yet history belies that. **Russia respected Finland's and Austria's neutrality for decades, with no dire threats, much less invasions. Moreover, from Ukraine's independence in 1991 until the U.S.-backed overthrow of Ukraine's elected government in 2014, Russia didn't show any interest in taking Ukrainian territory.** It was only when the U.S. installed a staunchly anti-Russian, pro-NATO regime in February 2014 that Russia took back Crimea, concerned that its Black Sea naval base in Crimea (since 1783) would fall into NATO's hands.

Even then, Russia didn't demand other territory from Ukraine, *only fulfillment of the U.N.-backed Minsk II Agreement*, which called for autonomy of the ethnic-Russian Donbas, not a Russian claim on the territory. Yet instead of diplomacy, the U.S. armed, trained, and helped to organize a huge Ukrainian army to make NATO enlargement a *fait accompli*.

Putin made one last attempt at diplomacy at the end of 2021, tabling a [draft U.S.-NATO Security Agreement](#) to forestall war. The core of the draft agreement was an end of NATO enlargement and removal of U.S. missiles near Russia. Russia's security concerns were valid and the basis for negotiations. **Yet Biden flatly rejected negotiations out of a combination of arrogance, hawkishness, and profound miscalculation.** NATO maintained its position that NATO would not negotiate with Russia regarding NATO enlargement, that *in effect, NATO enlargement was none of Russia's business.*

The continuing U.S. obsession with NATO enlargement is profoundly irresponsible and

hypocritical. The U.S. would object — by means of war, if needed — to being encircled by Russian or Chinese military bases in the Western Hemisphere, a point the U.S. has made since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. Yet the U.S. is blind and deaf to the legitimate security concerns of other countries.

So, yes, Putin went to war to prevent NATO, more NATO, close to Russia's border. Ukraine is being destroyed by U.S. arrogance, **proving again Henry Kissinger's adage that to be America's enemy is dangerous, while to be its friend is fatal.** The Ukraine War will end when the U.S. acknowledges a simple truth: **NATO enlargement to Ukraine means perpetual war and Ukraine's destruction.** Ukraine's neutrality could have avoided the war, and remains the key to peace. The deeper truth is that European security depends on collective security as called for by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), not one-sided NATO demands.

About the Author:

Jeffrey D. Sachs is a University Professor and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, where he directed The Earth Institute from 2002 until 2016. He is also President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and a commissioner of the UN Broadband Commission for Development. He has been advisor to three United Nations Secretaries-General, and currently serves as an SDG Advocate under Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Sachs is the author, most recently, of *A New Foreign Policy: Beyond American Exceptionalism* (2020). Other books include: *Building the New American Economy: Smart, Fair, and Sustainable* (2017) and *The Age of Sustainable Development*, (2015) with Ban Ki-moon.

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