

Russia in Ukraine: Qui Bono?

I don't know if the U.S. foreign-policy elite *wanted* Russia to invade Ukraine — an argument could be made for the affirmative — but I'd hate to think it did. Yet given its long record of global mischief (a polite word for its machinations), we certainly cannot rule out the point *a priori*.

Perhaps the best evidence in favor of the proposition is that President Biden refused to take the few simple steps that might have averted the whole thing. (The attempt would have cost nothing.) But if an invasion might have been averted, why was so much weaponry and other military aid poured into Ukraine in apparent anticipation of a splendid little war? I acknowledge that none of this constitutes a smoking gun (pun intended), but the question is worth asking.

That said, I am far more confident that, from Biden on down — if I'm not giving him too much credit — the foreign-policy makers foresaw benefits in the reprehensible Russian invasion.

Benefits? *Qui bono?* To whom? Well, certainly not the Ukrainians who are dying, hurting, and fleeing their homes in terror. Nor do the beneficiaries include the rest of the world's regular people, including Americans, who now must wonder if the end of the world is at hand, or if not that, then how they'll cope with the inevitable economic hardship that war and sanctions impose: rising prices, food shortages, and so on.

But make no mistake: there are beneficiaries, as there are in all wars. ("There's not much I can tell you about this war. It's like all wars, I guess. The undertakers are winning.") The American foreign-policy elite itself is a beneficiary because the heightened tensions and potential for conflict offer enormous political opportunities for bigger budgets, grander missions, and the prestige that comes from playing Winston Churchill.

Then there are the sheer economic benefits — the profits, compliments of the taxpayers — to the military-industrial complex, which has profited handsomely from NATO expansion since 1998 and from the increased military budgets in NATO countries. Crystal City, Va., will not be on hard times, so matter how the rest of us fare. (Remember when Salesman-in-Chief Donald Trump used to chide the NATO countries for spending too little on their militaries? Get it now? Did you really think he had the American taxpayers in mind?)

And let's face it, NATO needed a shot in the arm. The Soviet Union was long gone, and international terrorism has just not lived up to its ominous billing. It hasn't had the staying power to justify the sinecures that the obsolete alliance had provided over the years. Now things have changed — in Finland and Sweden, historically neutral countries, "public

support for joining NATO has surged to record levels,” Yasmeen Serhan writes in *The Atlantic*.

Nor should we underrate the satisfaction that the elite expects to get from the likely prolonged Russian quagmire. As Scott Horton writes,

Weapons to Ukraine had all been supposedly “calibrated” they said, “not to provoke Mr. Putin,” officials told the *New York Times*. Maybe arming an insurgency truly is Plan B after an invasion they truly meant to deter and these Democrats are just very poor at “calibration.” But they sure seem to be thinking ahead to how an invasion could hurt Russia, with the poor Ukrainians serving as merely an instrument against them.

“The level of military support would make our efforts in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union [in the 1980s] look puny by comparison,” said former Hillary Clinton adviser retired Adm. James Stavridis. I sense some anticipatory glee.

The failed presidential candidate herself — the one who did as much as anyone to ratchet up tensions with Russia during and after her witless campaign — herself weighed in during a Feb. 28 MSNBC interview. She was asked what she thought about Americans going to fight as private individuals (as they did during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s), and also whether other countries, including NATO members, ought to send troops to fight the Russians. Clinton responded:

It may well be that some people will go into Ukraine to help fight the Russians.

I don't think it's a good idea for that to be a government-sponsored effort. And I think people who go should be made aware that they are going on their own.

It is heartbreaking to see Ukraine standing alone against Russia, although they're doing so far an amazing job in rallying their citizens. I don't think you will find any country right now that will do that.

And then she added:

But, remember, the Russians invaded Afghanistan back in 1980. And although no country went in, they certainly had a lot of countries supplying arms and advice and even some advisers to those who were recruited to fight Russia. It didn't end well for the Russians. There were other unintended consequences, as we know. But the fact is that a very motivated and then funded and armed insurgency basically drove the Russians out of Afghanistan.

Did you catch the carefully buried reference to 9/11 and all the death and destruction that ensued in the “war on terror” and that still plagues the Middle East? It's in these words:

"There were other unintended consequences" — as though what followed was an insignificant detail of the valiant effort to aid the mujahideen — al Qaeda was there — against the Russians beginning in 1979.

Scott Horton, the author of *Enough Already: Time to End the War on Terrorism*, commented:

People really should watch the entire clip to see the way Clinton smirks at the cute little irony of al Qaeda's attacks against America and the entire 20-year terror war: What are two million dead humans, 10 trillion dollars wasted, the 21st century and new millennium started off soaking in blood just a decade after the peaceful victory for the West after the fall of the USSR? Just a few little-old "unintended consequences," not even worth mentioning.

Anyone who can talk the way Clinton does is a seriously flawed human being. And she's not the first. Recall that President Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, bragged, no doubt with exaggeration, that he personally lured Russia into Afghanistan so Russia would have its own "Vietnam." Now here's Hillary Clinton essentially saying that, with Western help, Ukraine just might be Russia's 21st-century Afghanistan. Oh, joy!

We shouldn't be surprised by her cynical neglect of the suffering Afghans and Ukrainians. Remember, she was co-president in the 1990s when she and her husband, Bill Clinton the triangulator, helped to pave the way for every virtually manmade disaster of the 21st century.