

The Ukraine War: Echoes of 1914?

by Dr. Clifford A. Kiracofe

Dr. Kiracofe is an educator and former Senior Professional Staff Member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He is President of the Washington Institute for Peace and Development.

History may not repeat itself, but often there are echoes of the past. Patterns in interstate relations develop as power shifts through the centuries. Today the world is confronted by a war in Eastern Europe that could explode across the Continent and even lead to a nuclear World War III.

The war in Ukraine is a tragedy and resulted from a failure of diplomacy. The West blocked all diplomacy to avert the war, and then blocked all diplomacy to end the war. This is the same pattern that saw diplomacy blocked before and during World War I.

Blocking peace diplomacy so as to prolong war for strategic gain was the policy of the Entente powers in World War I, against Austria-Hungary, and it is the Western strategy today in the present proxy war against Russia.

Western military preparations for the Ukraine proxy war began in 2014 immediately following the Western-backed 2014 “Maidan Coup” against the legitimate, elected government in Kiev.

The Ukraine war could have been prevented through diplomacy. Prior to the war, on Dec. 17, 2021, Russia offered diplomatic proposals to the United States and to NATO. The proposals were flatly rejected. Subsequently, after the start of hostilities, peace initiatives by the Vatican, by Türkiye, and by China all have been blocked by the West and its NATO war machine, thereby prolonging the present war.



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Blocking peace diplomacy in order to prolong war for strategic gain was the policy of the Entente powers in World War I, against Austria-Hungary, and is again today in the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. Shown: the endless “meatgrinder” trench warfare of World War I.

19th- and 20th-Century British Imperialism

Does the present U.S.-UK-NATO war strategy echo 19th Century and World War I British Imperial geopolitics?

European imperial rivalries in the 19th Century led to the Crimean War (1853–1856) in which the United Kingdom and France fought against Russia. In the broader context, the United Kingdom sparred for over a century with Russia in Eurasia in what came to be called the “Great Game” (1804–1907).

It is not surprising, therefore, that today the U.S.-UK-NATO proxy war against Russia involves the Ukraine. In fact, it is consistent with the geopolitical concept of Sir Halford Mackinder (1861–1947). He put forward a theory about a Eurasian “Heartland” and “Rimland.” The basic concept was to contain the Eurasian Heartland—Russia and China—and thereby enhance the global strategic position of the British Empire.



The “Heartland and Rimland” theory of Sir Halford Mackinder (left) to contain Russia and China, and thereby enhance the global strategic position of the British Empire, had not been the approach of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (right), who had advocated restraint to main a balance of power in Europe.

Today, the proxy war in Ukraine is similarly designed as a tool of containment of the “Heartland” to weaken Russia and potentially to dismember it.

European Tensions, Imperial Rivalries and WWI

World War I saw a collision of several empires: British, French, German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Turkish. Today’s war in Europe is a collision of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states led by the United States and the United Kingdom, versus Russia.

Looking back, in Europe, imperial rivalry and tensions intensified in the 1890s after the fall of the German statesman Otto von Bismarck, who advocated restraint so as to maintain the European balance of power. The Kaiser’s Germany, however, espoused the aggressively expansionist ideology of “Pan-Germanism.” The Russian Empire espoused the expansionist ideology of “Pan-Slavism.” The French Republic and its Empire espoused the anti-monarchical and anti-clerical ideology of “Democracy versus Autocracy.”

Escalating tensions in Europe led to the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. In turn, these wars further escalated European tensions. It became a downward spiral into World War. The “black swan” event of the assassination of the Austrian archduke at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914 triggered World War I. The assassination

was done by the shadowy Serbian “Black Hand” organization which was under the leadership of the Serbian military.

Russia mobilized to support Serbia against Austria-Hungary, Vienna mobilized, Berlin mobilized, and France mobilized. Diplomacy failed to avert the mobilizations. The highly militarized empires were not restrained by peace diplomacy, so their military machines mechanically unleashed precipitous mobilizations that were followed by the tragic war itself.

Today, the NATO proxy war in Ukraine echoes the Balkan Wars preceding World War I. Potentially, it echoes as well the escalation to European and World

War should some yet unseen Sarajevo-like incident befall us. It also echoes the blocked peace diplomacy before and during World War I.

World War I Peace Initiatives Blocked by Britain and France

Why did the Entente powers in World War I, led by the United Kingdom, France, and the United States, seek to prolong that horrific war in the face of several peace initiatives 1916–1918? Who blocked those peace initiatives?

There were several well-known peace initiatives in World War I. The Vatican, from the very beginning in 1914, did its utmost to stop the war and to promote peace. There were peace initiatives through Belgium and Spain. There were French peace initiatives and there were German peace initiatives. The critically important Austrian initiative in 1917, led by the Austrian Emperor Karl’s brother-in-law, Prince Sixtus, was blocked by the British and French.¹

Pope Pius X died on Aug. 20, 1914, a few weeks after the war started on July 28. The next pope, Benedict XV, was elected on Sept. 3 and was crowned on Sept. 6. Experienced in diplomacy, he strove for the

1. For an overview of peace initiatives, see François Fejtő, *Requiem pour un empire défunt: Histoire de la destruction de l’Autriche-Hongrie*. Paris: Edima, 1992.

next four years to stop the war and to bring peace. But it was to no avail.

On November 1, 1914, Benedict published the first of his 12 encyclicals, *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum* (Appealing for Peace). The greatest and wealthiest nations, he wrote, were—

well-provided with the most awful weapons modern military science has devised, and they strive to destroy one another with refinements of horror. There is no limit to the measure of ruin and of slaughter; day by day the earth is drenched with newly shed blood and is covered with the bodies of the wounded and of the slain.

The pope's four years of effort to save humanity were blocked by the Entente and thus failed. It failed because the Entente alliances' strategic war objective was to bring down the Catholic Habsburg dynasty, to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire geographically, and to do the same to the German Empire, its dynasty, and its lands. A so-called "Catholic Peace" was rejected by French politicians who had a special enmity for the Roman Catholic Church.

Emperor Karl's Austrian peace initiative of 1917 was blocked and thus it, as the other peace initiatives, failed.²

For the Entente powers, the war had to be prolonged for political and strategic reasons in order to create a new map of for the "New Europe." For such reasons, the key strategic goal of the Entente powers in World



Benedict XV

Nicola Perscheid

War I was to bring down the Habsburg dynasty so as to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Central Europe.

There were two key elements in the Entente's war plan: 1. Political element: to bring down the Habsburg Dynasty to end "autocracy," and thereby lead to "democracy"; and 2. Geographic element: to convert the pieces of a dismembered Austria-Hungary into republics based on ethnic "nationalities."

These war objectives were strenuously advocated by France and its republican and anticlerical politicians such as René Viviani (1863–1925) and Alexandre Ribot (1842–1923). For them, cutting against the Vatican and Roman Catholic domestic and

international influence was an additional war objective.

Without Austria-Hungary as an ally, Germany would be fatally weakened and thus forced to come to terms to end the war. A fragmented Austro-Hungarian Empire broken into small pieces suited the British Imperial longer-term aim of reducing German power on the Continent.



René Viviani, French Prime Minister.

Henri Manuel

London Backs Breakup of Austria-Hungary

Britain over the years had good relations with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but when Vienna became firmly fixed into Berlin's orbit, the situation changed. Increasing rivalry with the German Empire caused the British to regard both, with their combined power, as a threat.³ Thus, in World War I, as noted earlier, the breakup of the Habsburg Empire

would weaken Germany and would advance the Entente war effort against the Central Powers.

Key players in London's policy toward Vienna

2. For details see, Tibor Frank, "C'Est la Paix!—The Sixtus Letters and the Peace Initiative of Emperor Karl I," *Hungarian Review*, September 8, 2015.

3. Charles Sarolea, *The Anglo-German Problem*. London: Thomas Nelson, 1912.

were: Lord Northcliffe; Wickham Steed; and Robert Seton-Watson, a journalist, historian, and political activist. Prominent British politicians such as Arthur Balfour (1848–1930) and David Lloyd George (1863–1945) followed their policy advice.

Lord Northcliffe (1865–1922) was a newspaper and publishing magnate. Wickham Steed (1871–1956) was the editor of *The Times*. Robert Seton-Watson (1879–1951) from 1917 to 1918 served on the Intelligence Bureau of the War Cabinet in the Enemy Propaganda Department, where he was responsible for British propaganda to the peoples of the Austria-Hungary. He assisted in the preparations for the important April 1918 Rome Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, referring to the subject Habsburg peoples.⁴

Steed's attitude toward peace diplomacy was based on twisted anti-Semitism and conspiracy theory. Steed called efforts to stop the impending war "a dirty German-Jewish international financial attempt to bully us into advocating neutrality."⁵

These key British players maintained close links to the Czech nationalists Edvard Beneš (1884–1948) and Tomáš Masaryk (1850–1937), who both played a leading role in the downfall of the Habsburg Empire. Steed served as honorary secretary of the Serbian Relief Fund from 1914 and supported and found employment for his friend Masaryk after the latter fled to England to escape arrest. Both founded and published *The New Europe* (1916), a weekly periodical to promote the cause of the Czechs and other subject peoples. Seton-Watson ostensibly financed this periodical himself.

France Backs Breakup of Austria-Hungary

France also played a key role in blocking peace initiatives. René Viviani, a leading French politician who served as Prime Minister at the beginning of World War I, was prominent in anti-Austrian policy. He led an important official French mission to the United States in April 1917 just as the United States entered the war as an "associated power."

Viviani ideologically opposed monarchy and the Roman Catholic Church with its "clericalism." Thus, he was a fanatic proponent demanding the breakup of Austria-Hungary. For Viviani, World War I was a political revolution involving "Democracy versus Autoc-

racy" in which Democracy triumphed. As President of the Peace Commission, he said on Sept. 17, 1919, "You think you have waged a war. You haven't waged a war; you've waged a Revolution!"

The "Revolution" Viviani praised was one that overturned autocracies and created new "democracies," as defined by the Entente powers, changing the map of Europe. For the French politicians this was a continuation of the French Revolution and the model of the Third Republic (1871–1940).

Alexandre Ribot (1842–1923) was another prominent and influential French politician blocking peace diplomacy. Like Viviani he was a fanatic and ideologically opposed to monarchy and to the Roman Catholic Church and "clericalism." He was several times Prime Minister and, on March 19, 1916, he again became Prime Minister and additionally took the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. He was stridently anti-Austrian and his position prevailed over the more flexible position of President Raymond Poincaré (1860–1934), President of France from 1913–1920, and Aristide Briand (1862–1932), who served eleven times as Prime Minister in the Third Republic.

Influential politicians such as Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) supported the maximalist war "to the bitter end" policy and rejected all peace initiatives. The moderates were thus overwhelmed by the fanatic war party.

Colonel House and President Wilson Back Breakup

Behind the scenes, "Colonel" Edward Mandell House (1858–1938) served as U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's national security advisor. House's father was an English immigrant who became a prominent businessman in Houston, Texas and mayor of that city. As a cotton broker and Southern sympathizer during the Civil War, he shipped cotton through Matamoros, Mexico to evade the Union blockade. The family was closely associated with the Speyer banking interests in London and in Germany.

As a key advisor to President Wilson, House was instrumental in bringing the United States into World War I. He had gone to school in England and had many connections there with prominent members of the social and political elite, as well as with the Fabian Society.

During the war, House coordinated closely with the British and French as well as with Beneš and Ma-

4. For more, see Wikipedia's [entry](#) on the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

5. Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, pp. 32, 195.

saryk. Thus, the policy to dismember Austria-Hungary gained further political and military support when the United States entered the war. President Wilson framed U.S. participation in World War I as “a war to make the world safe for democracy.” This echoed the “Democracy versus Autocracy” slogan used by the extremist French politicians.

It should be noted that for the French and for the various behind-the-scenes Continental circles, “Democracy” meant a republican form of government with a strong anticlerical bias and with finance capitalism in the driver’s seat.

Color Revolutions and War To Weaken Russia

Echoes of World War I today are hard to ignore.

Two features seen in the World War I policy against Austria-Hungary are echoed today in the Ukraine war which had been planned for years by NATO. The first echo is in the war objective as a “regime change” policy to weaken and to bring down a government in order to impose “Democracy” and to dismember that target country. The second echo is the blocking of any peace diplomacy in order to prolong the war and thus to effect regime change and geographic dismemberment

The war objectives of the U.S.-UK-led NATO Ukraine war are officially stated by the United States as to “weaken” Russia and to bring down the present “autocratic” Russian government of Vladimir Putin so as to lead Russia to “Democracy.” President Joe Biden directly attacked Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying that he should not remain in office.

The war objective of breaking up Russia geographically has been called for openly in think-tank, policy, and political circles. The U.S.-based Hudson Institute and Jamestown Foundation are leading advocates for dismembering Russia. A number of conferences have been organized to promote a NATO policy of dismembering Russia.

It is no wonder that Russia has stated that the Ukraine war is existential.

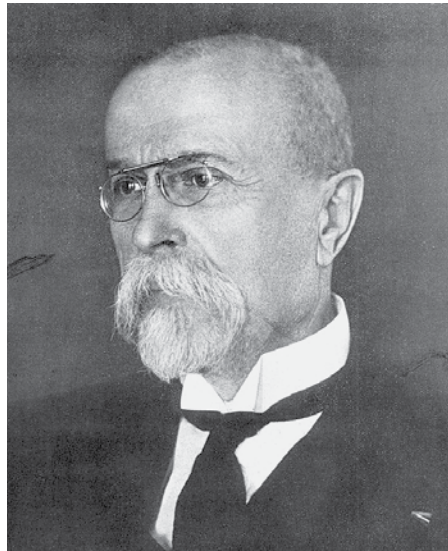
During World War I, the Czech politician Tomáš Masaryk said that

A longer war would give us more time for propaganda.

By that he meant propaganda for collapsing and dismembering the Austro-Hungarian Empire so as to create Czechoslovakia from the ruins.

Masaryk revealed that on Oct. 19, 1915, when he was in London,

I learned my first lesson: the dismemberment of the Hapsburg Empire appeared to be the principal objective of the war.



Tomáš Masaryk, first Czech President.

Today, the objectives of the U.S.-UK-NATO proxy war in Ukraine against Russia clearly echo the World War I Entente war objectives against the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as noted earlier in this essay.

Echoes of World War II and Nazi ‘Lebensraum’

The Pan-German geopolitical objective was a long march eastward to absorb Central and Eastern Europe and thence to attack Russia. There is a similar pattern after

World War II, during the Cold War. NATO’s eastward expansion into Central and Eastern Europe is a replay of the Nazi German strategy.

The Western strategy of subversion by creating internal divisions along ethnic lines in the former Soviet Union during the Cold War, is continued today in U.S. and NATO policy. Washington intervenes not only in the Ukraine but also in a number of other states to promote “Color Revolutions.” We can see that recent attempt at fomenting yet another “Color Revolution” in Georgia.

The strategy of promoting “Color Revolutions” is commonly called “regime change” policy. When the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union dissolved, Washington’s and NATO’s policy remained in Cold War mode although with adjustments and updates to fit new circumstances.

Brzezinski's Ghost and the Ukraine War

President Bill Clinton's administration (1993–2001) adjusted U.S. Russia policy and gave attention to the new states formed in Eurasia, strategic oil pipelines, and former Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe. Ukraine got special attention for reasons of Washington's geopolitical strategy against Russia.

Madeline Albright served from 1997–2001 as U.S. Secretary of State. She was a protégé of the late Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928–1917). She was first his student and then worked on the National Security Council with him during the Carter administration. Her father, Josef Körbel (1909–1977), was a Czech diplomat who had been associated with the London government in exile of Edvard Beneš during World War II. This is the same Beneš noted above for his World War I action, coordinated with London, against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Interestingly, Brzezinski's wife, Emilie Beneš (1932–2022), was a relative of Edvard Beneš, for whom Joseph Körbel served in London. One of Edvard Beneš' siblings was the future Czechoslovak politician Vojta Beneš (1878–1951). His nephew through his brother Václav was Bohuš Beneš, a diplomat and author. Bohuš was the father of Emilie Beneš Brzezinski, an American sculptor, and Václav E. Beneš, a Czech-American mathematician.

Brzezinski's book, *The Grand Chessboard*, was published in 1997, the same year his protégé Madeleine Albright became U.S. Secretary of State.⁶ Thus, his geopolitical and foreign policy concepts found wide acceptance in the State Department, not to mention in the Central Intelligence agency. The book has served as a roadmap for U.S. elite foreign policy circles for a quarter century.

Brzezinski, as a Polish-Canadian and later a Polish-

6. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostategic Imperatives*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.



MSC/Tobias Kleinschmidt

The virulently anti-Russian Zbigniew Brzezinski promoted a neo-Mackinder geopolitical perspective directed against Russia.

American citizen, was virulently anti-Russian, as is well known. In his book, he promotes a neo-Mackinder geopolitical perspective directed against Russia. Not only does he promote “Color Revolutions”; he specifically calls for the breakup of Russia, and suggests that it be broken into three parts.

Tony Blinken, the present Secretary of State, served on the National Security Staff, 1994–2001. In that capacity, he participated with Madeline Albright in the alignment of U.S. foreign policy

with Brzezinski's geopolitical perspective and policy proposals as outlined in his 1997 book.

Blinken served on the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations as its staff director, 2002–2008,



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The 2014 “Maidan Coup” in Ukraine, backed by the West, deposed a legitimate, elected government, replacing it with an anti-Russia NATO proxy regime. Here terrorist rioters throw Molotov cocktails at police from behind a barricade in Kiev, Feb. 18, 2014.

where he worked closely with then Senator Joe Biden. When Biden became Vice President, Blinken went on to serve as Deputy Assistant to the President, and National Security Advisor to Biden. In 2014, he was made Deputy Secretary of State and became deeply involved

in Ukraine policy and the Crimea situation.

It is not surprising that the anti-Russia policy of the present Biden Administration reflects the geopolitical perspective and policy recommendations of the late Zbigniew Brzezinski. It is also not surprising that Brzezinski's pro-Ukraine strategy against Russia is, in fact, being realized in the present proxy war in Ukraine which is directed against Russia.

Ukraine War Peace Initiatives Blocked

As to blocking peace initiatives, we find the same features as in World War I.

The 2014 Western backed "Maidan Coup" in Ukraine deposed a legitimate, elected government, replacing it with a NATO proxy regime. At that point, there were three possibilities: a new constitution for a federal state giving the Russian-speaking Donbass region autonomy; civil war; and Russian intervention.

The Kiev regime rejected a federal solution, provoking civil war and eventual Russian intervention.

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation were centered on the Minsk 1 (2014) and Minsk 2 (2015) Accords. The Minsk 2 Accords package was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council in its Resolution 2202 of 2015.

The Minsk peace process was blocked by France and Germany, who were the guarantors of the process. The strategy they used to block the peace process was purposeful stalling of the negotiations. This was done in order to give time for the NATO military buildup of Ukraine that began in 2015. Both the German leader at the time, Angela Merkel, and the French leader at the time, François Hollande, have recently admitted publicly that it was indeed their intention to stall the negotiations and thus give time to build up Ukraine militarily against Russia.

During eight years of fruitless negotiations, Ukraine was built up into a formidable military threat to Russia. When the situation in Ukraine became increasingly unstable in late 2021, Russia offered proposals on Dec. 17 to the United States and to NATO, for diplomacy. These proposals were rejected out of hand by the United States and by NATO. The Russian intervention began on Feb. 24, 2022, owing to the blocked diplomacy and to the worsening of the Donbass situation and threatening Ukrainian preparations for a major offensive.

The Vatican, just as in World War I, tried to promote an end to the war. Pope Francis proposed that the Vatican offer its good offices in the search for a



Catholicnews.org.uk/Mazur

Pope Francis' offer of the Vatican as a venue for negotiations toward a peace settlement in Ukraine was rejected by the U.S. and NATO.

ceasefire and for a peace settlement through diplomatic negotiations. The Pope's initiative was rejected by the United States and U.S.-led NATO.

President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hosted promising meetings in early 2022. At these meetings, Russian and Ukrainian officials made progress. But this Turkish peace initiative was blocked openly by former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson in his April 2022 visit to Ukraine.

Most recently, China submitted a [peace proposal](#) which also was rejected by the United States.

So the tragic war in Ukraine continues and threatens to engulf Europe and possibly lead to World War III in which nuclear weapons could be used. Moscow has forcefully and significantly stated that Russia views this war as existential. The West has given massive support to Ukraine after systematically preparing Ukraine for war since the Western sponsored 2014 Maidan Coup.

Clearly, it is urgent that diplomacy be unblocked and that a ceasefire and negotiation process be undertaken. The Vatican's proposal for its good offices for talks is viable, as are the efforts of Türkiye and China; they all must be taken seriously by all sides at the earliest possible time.