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NATO as Religion

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Image by [Artur Voznenko](#).

The US/NATO/Ukraine/Russia controversy is not entirely new. We already saw the potential of serious trouble in 2014 when the US and European states interfered in the internal affairs of Ukraine and covertly/overtly colluded in the *coup d'état* against the democratically elected President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, because he was not playing the game assigned to him by the West. Of course, our media hailed the putsch as a “colour revolution” with all the trappings of democracy.

The 2021/22 crisis is a logical continuation of the expansionist policies that NATO has pursued since the demise of the Soviet Union, as numerous Professors of international law and international relations have long indicated — including Richard Falk, John Mearsheimer, Stephen Kinzer and Francis Boyle. NATO’s approach implements the US claim to have a “mission” to export its socio-economic model to other countries, notwithstanding the preferences of sovereign states and the self-determination of peoples.

Although the US and NATO narratives have been proven to be inaccurate and sometimes deliberately mendacious on numerous occasions, the fact is that a majority of citizens in the Western World uncritically believe what they are told. The “quality press” including the New York Times, Washington Post, The Times, Le Monde, El País, the NZZ and FAZ are all effective echo chambers of the Washington consensus and enthusiastically support the public relations and geopolitical propaganda offensive. I think that it can be said without fear of contradiction that the only war that NATO has ever won is the information war. A compliant and complicit corporate media has been successful in persuading millions of Americans and Europeans that the toxic narratives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs are really true. We believe in the myth of the “Arab Spring” and “EuroMaidan”, but we never hear about the right of self-determination of peoples, including the Russians of Donetsk and Lugansk, and what could easily be called the “Crimean Spring”.

Often I ask myself how this is possible when we know that the US deliberately lied in earlier conflicts in order to make aggression appear as “defense”. We were lied to in connection with the “Gulf of Tonkin” incident, the alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. There is abundant evidence that the CIA and MI6 have organized “false flag” events in the Middle East and elsewhere. Why is it that masses of educated people fail to take some distance and question more? I dare postulate the hypothesis that the best way to understand the NATO phenomenon is to see it as a secular religion. Then we

are allowed to believe its implausible narratives, because we can take them on faith.

Of Course – NATO is hardly a religion of Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount (Matthew V, 3-10), except for one typically Western Beatitude — *Beati Possidetis* – blessed are those who possess and occupy. What's mine is mine, what's yours is negotiable. What I occupy, I stole it fair and square. When we look at NATO as a religion, we can better understand certain political developments in Europe and the Middle East, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, Iraq.

NATO's credo is somewhat Calvinistic – a credo for and by the “elect”. And by definition, we in the West are the “elect”, which means “the good guys”. Only we shall have salvation. This can all be taken on faith. As every religion, the NATO religion has its own dogma and lexicon. In NATO's Lexicon a “colour revolution” is a *coup d'état*, democracy is co-terminous with capitalism, humanitarian intervention entails “regime change”, “rule of law” means OUR rules, “Satan Nr. 1” is Putin, and Satan Nr. 2 is Xi Jinping.

Can we believe in the NATO religion? Sure. As the Roman/Carthaginian philosopher Tertullian wrote in the third century AD – *credo quia absurdum*. I believe it because it is absurd. Worse than garden variety absurdity – it necessitates constant lying to the American people, to the world, to the UN. Examples? The WMD propaganda concoction in 2003 was not just a simple “*pia fraus*” – or white lie. It was well orchestrated and there were many players. The sad part is that a million Iraqis paid with their lives and their country was devastated. As an American, I and many others shouted “not in our name”. But who listened? UN Secretary General Kofi Annan repeatedly called the invasion contrary to the UN Charter, and when cornered by journalists for clarification, he affirmed that the invasion was “an illegal war”. Worse than merely an illegal war, it was the most serious violation of the Nuremberg Principles since the Nuremberg Trials – a veritable revolt against international law. Not only the US but the so-called “coalition of the willing”, 43 States ostensibly committed to the UN Charter and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, deliberately assaulted the international rule of law. One would think that after one has been lied to in matters of life and death, a healthy skepticism, some degree of caution would set in, that rational people would think “haven't we heard this kind of propaganda before?” But no, if NATO is indeed a religion, we *a priori* take its pronouncements on faith. We do

not question Jens Stoltenberg. There seems to be a tacit agreement that lying in matters of state is “honourable” and that questioning it is “unpatriotic” – again the Machiavellian principle that the supposedly good end justifies the evil means. Apostasy is one of the problems with any religion. This happens often when the leaders of a religion brazenly lie to the faithful. When people lose faith in the present leadership, they look for something else to believe in, e.g. history, heritage, tradition. I dare consider myself a US patriot – and an apostate from the NATO religion — because I reject the idea “my country right or wrong”. I want my country to be right and to do justice – and when the country is on the wrong track, I want it to return to the ideals of the Constitution, of our Declaration of Independence, of the Gettysburg address — something I can still believe in.

NATO has emerged as the perfect religion for bullies and war-mongers, not unlike other expansive ideologies of the past. Deep down, the Romans were proud of their legions, the French grenadiers gladly died for Napoleon’s glories, GIs by the thousands applauded the bombing campaigns over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Personally, I view NATO in the tradition of the village bully. But most Americans cannot jump over their own shadows. Emotionally most Americans do not have the temerity to reject our leadership. Perhaps because NATO auto-proclaims itself to be a positive force for democracy and human rights. I would ask the victims of drones and depleted uranium in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yugoslavia what they think about NATO’s pedigree.

Many religions are solipsistic, self-aggrandizing, based on the premise that it and it alone possesses the truth – and that the devil is threatening that truth. NATO is a classical solipsist religion, self-contained, self-serving, based on the premise that NATO is by definition the good Force. A solipsist is incapable of self-reflection, self-criticism, incapable to see others like himself — with strengths and frailties, and possibly with some truths too.

NATO builds on the “exceptionalist” dogma practiced by the United States for more than two centuries. Pursuant to the doctrine of “exceptionalism”, the US and NATO are both above international law – even above natural law. “Exceptionalism” is another expression for the Roman slogan “*quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi*” – that which Jupiter can do — is certainly not allowed for common mortals like us – We are the “Bovi”, the bovines.

Moreover, we in the West have gotten so used to our “culture of cheating” — that we react surprised when another country does not simply accept that we cheated them. This culture of cheating has become so second nature to us, that we do not even realize it when we cheat someone else. It is a form of predator behaviour that civilization has not succeeded yet in eradicating.

But, honestly, isn’t NATO also a reflection of 21st century imperialism, akin to neo-colonialism? NATO does not only provoke and threaten geopolitical rivals, it actually loots and exploits its own member States — not for their own security—but for the benefit of the military-industrial complex. It should seem obvious to everyone – but it isn’t obvious at all – that Europe’s security lies in dialogue and compromise, in understanding the views of all human beings living in the continent. Security was never identical with the arms race and sabre-rattling.

According to the mainstream narrative, the crimes committed by NATO over the past 73 years are not crimes but regrettable errors. As a historian – not only a jurist – I acknowledge that we may be losing the battle for truth. It is quite probable that in thirty, fifty, eighty years, NATO’s propaganda will emerge as the accepted historical truth — solidly cemented and repeated in history books. This is partly because most historians, like lawyers, are pens for hire. Forget about the illusion that as time passes historical objectivity increases. On the contrary, all the canards that eyewitnesses can debunk today ultimately become the accepted historical narrative once the experts are all dead and can no longer challenge the narrative. Forget declassified documents that contradict the narrative, because experience shows that only very seldom can they overthrow a well-entrenched political lie. Indeed, the political lie will not die until it has ceased to be politically useful.

Unfortunately, many Americans and Europeans continue to buy the NATO narrative – perhaps because it is easy and comforting to think that we are the “good guys” and that the grave dangers “out there” make NATO necessary for our survival. As Julius Caesar wrote in his “*De bello civile*” – *quae volumus, ea credimus libenter*. What we want to believe, we believe – in other words, *mundus vult decepi* – the world actually wants to be deceived Objectively seen, NATO’s expansion and non-stop provocation of Russia was and is a dangerous geopolitical error, a betrayal of the trust owed by us to the Russian people – worse yet — a betrayal of the hope for peace shared by the great majority of humanity. 1989/91 we had the opportunity and the

responsibility to guarantee global peace. Hubris and megalomania killed that hope. The military-industrial-financial complex relies on perpetual war to continue making billions of dollars in profits. 1989 could have ushered in an era of UN Charter implementation, of respect for international law, a conversion of military-first economies into human security and human services economies, the slashing of useless military budgets and the direction of the liberated funds into eradicating poverty, malaria, pandemics, devoting greater funds to research and development in the health sector, improving hospitals and infrastructure, addressing climate change, maintaining roads and bridges ...

Who bears the responsibility for this massive betrayal of the world? The late President George H.W. Bush and the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, together with their successors and all their neo-con advisors and proponents of “exceptionalism”, together with the think tanks and pundits that cheered them on.

How was this betrayal possible? Only through dis-information and propaganda. Only with the complicity of the corporate media, which applauded Fukuyama’s idea of “the end of history” and “winner takes all”. For a while NATO reveled in the illusion of being the only hegemon. How long did this chimera of the unipolar world last? And how many atrocities were committed by NATO to impose its hegemony on the world – how many crimes against humanity were committed in the name of “democracy” and “European values”? The corporate media dutifully played the game by declaring Russia and China to be our sworn enemies. Any reasonable discussion with the Russians and Chinese was and is decried as “appeasement”. But shouldn’t we look in the mirror and acknowledge that the only ones who should “appease” themselves is us? Indeed, we need to calm down and stop aggressing everybody else – stop both military and information offensives.

If there is a country that cares precious little for the international rule of law – otherwise known as Blinken’s “rules-based international order” – it is – alas, my country, the United States of America.

Among the treaties that the US has failed to ratify are the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, the ICC Statute, The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Open Skies Treaty, the Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the

Convention on Migrant Workers, the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights...

At the end of the day we understand that neither Huntington nor Fukuyama got the 21st century right – Orwell did.

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