

# 'Double standards:' Western Coverage of War on Ukraine

*Continued from page 1*

"It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blonde hair and blue eyes being killed every day with Putin's missiles and his helicopters and his rockets," Sakvarelidze said.

The BBC presenter responded: "I understand and of course respect the emotion."

On [Feb. 27], Al Jazeera English presenter Peter Dobbie described Ukrainians fleeing the war as "prosperous, middle class people" who "are not obviously refugees trying to get away from areas in the Middle East that are still in a big state of war; these are not people trying to get away from areas in North Africa, they look like any European family that you would live next door to."

The media network later issued an apology, saying the comments "were inappropriate, insensitive, and irresponsible."

"Al Jazeera English is committed to impartiality, diversity and professionalism in all its work. This breach of that professionalism will be dealt with through disciplinary measures," it said in a statement.

Meanwhile on [Feb. 25], Sky News broadcast a video of people in the central Ukrainian city of Dnipro making Molotov cocktails, explaining how grating Styrofoam makes the incendiary device stick to vehicles better.

"Amazing mainstream Western media gives glowing coverage of people resisting invasion by making Molotov cocktails," one social media user remarked. "If they were brown people in Yemen or Palestine doing the same they would be labeled terrorists deserving U.S.-Israeli or U.S.-Saudi drone bombing."

On B.F.M. TV, France's most-watched cable news channel, journalist Philippe Corbe said: "We're not talking here about Syrians fleeing the bombing of the Syrian regime backed by Putin, we're talking about Europeans leaving in cars that look like ours to save their lives."

British journalist Daniel Hannan was criticized online for an article in *The Telegraph*, in which he wrote that war no longer happens in "impoverished and remote populations."

European politicians have also expressed support for open borders towards Ukrainian refugees, using terminology such as "intellectuals" and "European" — a far cry from the fear-mongering used by governments against migrants and refugees from Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

"Skin is a passport ... epidermal citizenship," one social media user said.



Jean-Louis Boulanges, a member of the French National Assembly, told a TV channel that the Ukrainian refugees will be "an immigration of great quality, intellectuals, one that we will be able to take advantage of."

The Russia-Ukraine war has been billed by liberal media as Europe's worst security crisis since the end of World War II, contributing to the general amnesia [regarding] relatively recent conflicts on the continent, such as the Bosnian war in the 1990s and the Northern Ireland conflict that lasted from the 1960s until 1998.

Absent from such generalizations was the fact that in the post-World War era, Europe exported many wars to countries that were previous colonial entities.

Some commentators have also heaped praise on the steadfastness of Ukrainians and the country's defense capabilities, in such a way that they suggested no other nation or people have undergone such an experience before.

Critics pointed out the hypocrisy of crowd-sourcing and setting up online donations to fund Kyiv's military without facing any government backlash or suspension of their monetary accounts.

The double standards regarding calls for excluding Russia from cultural and sporting events and not extending the same move to other occupying entities have not been lost on social media either.

Examples were drawn between the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel — often touted by Western governments as anti-Semitic — and the current exclusion of Moscow from events such as the Eurovision contest and stripping of the Champions League final from St. Petersburg.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has backed the boycott of Russia from sports, but criticized the boycott of last month's Sydney Cultural Festival over receiving sponsorship from the Israeli embassy.

Claudia Webbe, a British member of parliament, tweeted that the people who genuinely care about Ukrainians are the ones who will welcome all refugees with open arms.

"The rest?" she posted, "Well, they're pretending."

— *Al Jazeera Arabic was the first independent news service in the Arab world dedicated to comprehensive news and live debate. Al Jazeera English was launched in 2006.*

## Chronicle of War Foretold

*Continued from page 1*

In a classified diplomatic cable obtained and released by WikiLeaks dated February 1, 2008 — written from Moscow, and addressed to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security Council, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, the NATO-European Union Cooperative, and the Russia Moscow Political Collective — there was an unequivocal understanding that expanding NATO risked an eventual conflict with Russia, especially over Ukraine:

"Not only does Russia perceive encirclement [by NATO], and efforts to undermine Russia's influence in the region, but it also fears unpredictable and uncontrolled consequences which would seriously affect Russian security interests," the cable reads. "Experts tell us that Russia is particularly worried that the strong divisions in Ukraine over NATO membership, with much of the ethnic-Russian community against membership, could lead to a major split, involving violence or at worst, civil war. In that eventuality, Russia would have to decide whether to intervene; a decision Russia does not want to have to face. . . . Dmitri Trenin, Deputy Director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, expressed concern that Ukraine was, in the long-term, the most potentially destabilizing factor in U.S.-Russian relations, given the level of emotion and neuralgia triggered by its quest for NATO membership ... Because membership remained divisive in Ukrainian domestic politics, it created an opening for Russian intervention. Trenin expressed concern that elements within the Russian establishment would be encouraged to meddle, stimulating overt U.S. encouragement of opposing political forces, and leaving the U.S. and Russia in a classic confrontational posture."

The Obama administration, not wanting to further inflame tensions with Russia, blocked arms sales to Kyiv. But this act of prudence was abandoned by the Trump and Biden administrations. Weapons from the U.S. and Great Britain are pouring into Ukraine, part of the \$1.5 billion in promised military aid. The equipment includes hundreds of sophisticated Javelins and NLAW anti-tank weapons despite repeated protests by Moscow.

The United States and its NATO allies have no intention of sending troops to Ukraine. Rather, they will flood the country with weapons, which is what it did in the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia.

The conflict in Ukraine echoes the novel "Chronicle of a Death Foretold" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. In the novel the narrator acknowledges that "there had never been a death more foretold" and yet no one was able or willing to stop it. All of us who reported from the Eastern Europe in 1989 knew the consequences of provoking Russia, and yet few have raised their voices to halt the madness. The methodical steps towards war took on a life of their own, moving us like sleepwalkers towards disaster.

Once NATO expanded into Eastern Europe the Clinton administration promised Moscow that NATO combat troops would not be stationed in Eastern Europe, the defining issue of the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations. This promise again turned out to be a lie.

Then in 2014 the U.S.-backed a coup against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich who sought to build an economic alliance with Russia rather than the European Union. Of course, once

integrated into the European Union, as seen in the rest of Eastern Europe, the next step is integration into NATO. Russia — spooked by the coup, alarmed at the overtures by the European Union and NATO — then annexed Crimea, largely populated by Russian speakers. And the death spiral that led us to the conflict currently underway in Ukraine became unstoppable.

The war state needs enemies to sustain itself. When an enemy can't be found an enemy is manufactured. Putin has become, in the words of Senator Angus King, the new "Hitler," out to grab the Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe. The full-throated cries for war, echoed shamelessly by the press, are justified by draining the conflict of historical context, by elevating ourselves as the saviors and whoever we oppose, from Saddam Hussein to Putin, as the new Nazi leader.

I don't know where this will end up. We must remember, as Putin reminded us, that Russia is a nuclear power. We must remember that once you open the Pandora's box of war it unleashes dark and murderous forces no one can control. I know this from personal experience. The match has been lit. The tragedy is that there was never any dispute about how the conflagration would start.

— *This first appeared on ScheerPost. Chris Hedger is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for fifteen years for The New York Times, where he served as the Middle East Bureau Chief and Balkan Bureau Chief for the paper. His books include American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America, Death of the Liberal Class, and War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning.*