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How the West Gave Us the Ukraine Invasion

There's a certain "strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions" that the West is making, wrote cold warrior and Russia expert George F. Kennan decades ago. It will lead to "a new Cold War" with Russia, he also predicted, "probably ending in a hot one." That new Cold War came.

And now the hot one has come, in Ukraine.

That strategic blunder was one that some, even now, aim to exacerbate. And it is this: the expanding of NATO — right up to Russia's borders.



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Kennan was no appeaser, mind you, nor was he a war hawk. A diplomat and historian, he served in America's Moscow embassy for six years and later became U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union. Considered by many to have been a foremost Russia expert, his writings inspired the Truman Doctrine prescribing the USSR's "containment." And just yesterday *American Thinker* (which [offers](#) more biographical information on Kennan) called him "the man who predicted the Ukraine war 30 years ago."

Kennan wasn't alone in sagely warning about NATO expansionism. In 2007, commentator and ex-presidential advisor Pat Buchanan opined likewise in "[Who Restarted the Cold War?](#)" Providing some background, he recounted what happened in 1991 and '92:

Russia let the Berlin Wall be torn down and its satellite states be voted or thrown out of power across Eastern Europe. Russia agreed to pull the Red Army all the way back inside its border. Russia agreed to let the Soviet Union dissolve into 15 nations. The Communist Party agreed to share power and let itself be voted out. Russia embraced freedom and American-style capitalism, and invited Americans in to show them how it was done.

Russia did not use its veto in the Security Council to block the U.S. war to drive Saddam Hussein, an ally, out of Kuwait. When 9/11 struck, Putin gave his blessing to U.S. troops using former republics as bases for the U.S. invasion.

What was Moscow's reward for its pro-America policy?

The United States began moving NATO into Eastern Europe and then into former Soviet republics.

You don't have to like Russian president Vladimir Putin to understand this was folly. You don't have to believe he's a good man or even not a wicked man. Most leaders are people of questionable character, to say the least, but they're for sure something else: *people and leaders*. As such, they'll react as people and leaders do.

Now, we had our Monroe Doctrine, which held that any foreign-power intervention in the Americas was a potentially hostile act against the United States. It's logical to assume the Russians might feel the same way about NATO expansion toward its borders.



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Note also that NATO was created to counter the Soviet Union. Yet instead of recognizing that with the latter's collapse NATO's *raison d'être* was gone and at least questioning the alliance's continued existence, what did we do?

We treated Russia "as a defeated power, as France treated Weimar Germany after Versailles," as Buchanan put it.

Buchanan provides a list of unwise provocations, such as bombing Serbia, nixing the Nixon-Brezhnev ABM treaty, and putting a missile-defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. But to the point here, NATO went full-expansionist nutso.

"After Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic (admitted [to NATO] in 1999) came Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in 2004; Albania and Croatia in 2009; Montenegro in 2017; and North Macedonia in 2020," [related](#) American Thinker (AT) yesterday. "And the Bush 43 and Obama administrations (and their European counterparts) openly discussed inviting Georgia and Ukraine to join the alliance."

(Ironically, in response to Mitt Romney's warnings about Russia in a 2012 presidential debate, Obama sarcastically quipped that "the 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back." He should have heeded his own words.)

It's a bit as if China made a mutual defense alliance with Mexico — and then drew Canada into it. Then Cuba. Then the Bahamas. If our pseudo-elites weren't totally bought and paid for by Beijing, they might wonder: "What's the point of this? It's mighty odd and aggressive."

Speaking of which, Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson has lamented that our foreign policy has drawn China and Russia closer; in fact, we understand that Putin got Beijing's assurances that it would have his back before invading Ukraine. Now consider: Keenan predicted decades ago that our policies would cause Russia to "develop much closer relations with ... Iran and China, with a view to forming a strongly anti-Western military bloc as a counterweight to a NATO pressing for world domination," as AT relates it. And so it has come to pass.

Calling NATO expansion "the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era" in a 1997 *New York Times* piece, Keenan [also wrote](#) that such "a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-Western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; to have an adverse effect on the development of Russian democracy; to restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations, and to impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking."

This move also was wholly unnecessary, Kennan later added, and the Russians would be "little impressed with American assurances that it reflects no hostile intentions. They would see their prestige (always uppermost in the Russian mind) and their security interests as adversely affected."

It's irrelevant here if we believe, or even if it's true, that NATO poses Russia no threat. We must have what Keenan was credited with: "an insight into the minds of other nations than [your] own." Russia's reaction to NATO expansionism was predictable — and predicted.

Moscow's attack on Ukraine, which may result in the latter's subsumption, is just one outcome that might've been avoided if NATO had "stood down" post-Cold War.



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