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The Warfare State's Infinitely Mendacious Echo Chamber (/archives/featured-articles/2022/april/06/the-warfare-state-s-infinitely-mendacious-echo-chamber/)

written by david stockman (/archives/featured-articles/?author=david+stockman)

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It all starts with the number \$813 billion, the Biden national defense budget for FY 2023. That number is so hideously—nay, grotesquely—large that it is the inherent fount of the war fevers, Russophobia and sweeping disinformation that now gushes from the Washington war machine and its auxiliaries in the mainstream media.

The fact is, never before in the history of mankind have economic resources of this gigantic magnitude been showered upon the blob-like military-industrial-intelligence-foreign aid-think tank-NGO-lobbying complex that is now ensconced in the world's leading national capital.

Accordingly, there are literally hundreds of thousands of uniformed and civilian government employees and private contractors and consultants operating within the confines of the beltway and its outlying nodes that have an overriding interest in keeping the fiscal gravy-train flowing. So doing, they excel in inventing, spinning, hyping and lying about the national security threats which justify a “defense” budget of this staggering size.

Indeed, there is so much fat and walking around money in these elephantine totals that the US defense budget functions like a self-licking ice cream cone. Endless pockets of research and study money end up funding the think tanks, NGO's and consultants who, in turn, make it their business to fuel a massive threat exaggeration syndrome. And they do so day-in and day-out focused upon a constantly rotating set of theaters all around the planet.

For want of doubt, just recall where the defense budget was at the height of the Cold War when the Soviet Union was at the peak of its industrial might and at which time President Eisenhower delivered his famous farewell address warning of the dangers of unchecked power in the military-industrial complex. The budget then, which the greatest general to ever occupy the Oval Office felt was more than adequate to provide for the nation's security, was \$52 billion in dollars of the day.

In FY2021 purchasing power equivalents that translates to \$370 billion, meaning that the pending Biden budget is 2.2X larger in real terms. And, also in constant dollars, that \$813 billion Biden figure is:

- 2.0X Nixon's FY 1972 defense budget of \$398 billion, notwithstanding that Tricky Dick was a dyed-in-the-wool cold war hawk;
- 2.2X Jimmy Carter's outgoing \$370 billion defense budget, which did not lead to any Soviet invasion despite the endless "weakness" caterwauling by GOP hawks at the time;
- 1.33X Ronald Reagan's massive defense build-up which peaked in FY 1986 at \$610 billion in feckless pursuit of final victory over the original Evil Empire (note: the latter collapsed owing to communism, not the Reagan defense budget);
- 1.54X the last Cold War defense budget of \$545 billion in FY 1990, which should have been the dropping off point for post-Cold War demobilization and demilitarization of American foreign policy.

After all, at that point the frightful Soviet Union had been swept into the dustbin of history in 1991. Likewise, in the early 1990's Deng Xiaoping elected to replace Mao's slogan that power stems from the barrel of a gun with the proposition that everlasting communist party rule would be better facilitated by a smoking hot printing press and a debt fueled construction and exporting spree.

Of course, that meant there was no industrial power left on earth that could conceivably threaten the American homeland: Not the rump of Soviet Russia, which was economically feeble and still basically is; and not the great export machine of China because no rational rulers would elect to bomb and invade the customers whose purchases keep their people employed and happy and the Chicoms in power.

Still, the US war machine would not go quietly into the good night. Clinton could have led the world to global disarmament, but was so afraid of the Republican hawks in 1996 that he led in just the opposite direction—the eastward expansion of NATO, which turned Russia into a pariah and has now finally brought the world to the brink of nuclear Armageddon.

As a consequence, there was no sweeping demobilization of what was now a redundant Cold War military machine. In Clinton's last budget real defense spending totaled \$460 billion or 25% more than Ike's peak-of-the-cold war budget of 1961, when it should have been half that level given the negligible threats to the American homeland then extant.

As it happened, the military-industrial complex was just biding its time in the modest defense budget shrinkage of the Clinton years, waiting for a change in White House leadership and the chance to launch a new exaggerated "threat" to national security that would restore real defense spending to the Reagan era peaks and beyond.

They got their wish with Bush the Younger and his miserable posse of neocon war-mongers. By the time the Afghan and Iraq wars were in full swing and the idea of a post-cold war demobilization and peace dividend had been thoroughly buried, the final George W. Bush defense budget had exploded to \$840 billion in FY 2021 dollars of purchasing power.

That was 83% more than Clinton's out-going budget in constant dollars and was so festooned with loose change that Washington was basically turned into a permanent war capital. The dollars available to fund the threat-inflation game—beginning with the demonization of Putin after 2007 when he dared to draw some red lines near his own borders at the European Security Conference that year— were simply insuperable.

At that point it was all over except the shouting. The Bush years and the massive defense increases which accompanied them resulted in the euthanization of the modest resistance to the Warfare State that had shown a flicker of life during the early days of the Iraq invasion.

Consequently, the leftist Obama Administration, which decades earlier would have been filled with McGovernite peace activists, punted completely on the Warfare State. Even after the expansive and expensive occupation of Iraq had been rolled back, the outgoing Obama budget weighed in at \$668 billion or 181% of the Eisenhower standard.

And, of course, Trump finished the job, bringing real defense spending back to \$750 billion in his final budget. While the Donald had moved his lips correctly about the obvious obsolescence of NATO and America's failed Forever Wars, the real rulers of Washington were having none of it. Bamboozling the Donald with the toys of war weaponry, they got fat and happy like rarely before, feeding fulsomely the legions of avaricious Warfare State mouths that inhabit the beltway.

So the question recurs. For what earthly reason does the US need a defense budget bigger than the next 10 largest defense budgets on planet earth, friend and foe taken together, which is also 2.2X larger in real purchasing power than Ike's cold war budget in the early 1960s?

Answer: There is no reason!

The true threats to the safety and security of the American homeland are no greater today than they were at the end of the cold war in the 1990s.

After all, the GDP of the US/NATO combined is \$43 trillion and the combined defense budgets are \$1.2 trillion. By contrast, the fearsome enemy at the moment, Russia, has a GDP of just 3.4% (\$1.46 trillion) of the US/NATO total and a defense budget (\$67 billion) which is just 5.5% of the US/NATO combination.

Likewise, the enemy next in line, China, has a GDP of \$14.7 trillion and a defense budget of \$230

billion. But neither of those figures, which are 34% and 19% of the US/NATO totals, respectively, even amount to the fractional threat they imply.

That's because the Chinese economy is buried under \$50 trillion of internal and external debt and would therefore scarcely survive a year without the \$2.6 trillion of annual export earnings that keep its massive Ponzi alive. To paraphrase the president who went to Beijing in 1972, China is essentially a massively and fatally indebted version of Nixon's "pitiful, helpless giant"; it does not have the economic latitude to wage war on the west, even if it had the military wherewithal, which it most surely does not.

Still, if real threats are non-existent, fake ones will do when it comes to the care and feeding of the fiscally voracious Warfare State. And that gets us back to the topic of the hour—the relentless con job that has become the war in Ukraine. It is *prima facie* evidence that the great assemblage of Warfare State denizen congregated in Washington are so needful of endless "threat" narratives that they are capable of conjuring and/or conveying sheer fiction when it serves that purpose.

For instance, the going MSM narrative is that the Russian offensive has been stalled and blunted by the valiant efforts of the Ukrainian military and gutsy resolve of the civilian population; and that they can eventually prevail if Washington and Brussels have the wisdom and fortitude to notch up the weapons supply and the pain of the Sanctions War until Putin finally cries uncle!, and shuffles home with his (devilish?) tail between his legs.

That's unadulterated nonsense, of course. The fact is, the Ukrainian military has been decimated and fragmented unto isolated parts and pieces that are on their last legs in terms of fuel, ammo, spares, communications and reinforcements.

Thus, according to Moscow's figures which haven't been refuted by Washington:

- 123 of Ukraine's 152 fighter jets had been destroyed, as well as 77 of its 149 helicopters and 152 of its 180 long- and medium-range air defense systems.
- Currently, the Ukrainian air forces and the air defense system have been almost completely destroyed. The naval forces of the country have ceased to exist.
- Sixteen main military airfields from which combat sorties of the Ukraine air force were carried out have been destroyed or made inoperable;
- Thirty nine storage bases and arsenals have been destroyed, which contained up to 70% of all stocks of military equipment, materiel and fuel, as well as more than 1.54 million tons of ammunition.

- All 24 formations of the Land Forces that existed before the start of the operation suffered significant losses. Ukraine has no organized reserves left.
- At the start of the war, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, together with the National Guard, numbered 260,200 thousand servicemen. During the month of hostilities, their losses amounted to about 30,000 people, including more than 14,000 dead and about 16,000 wounded.
- Of the 2,416 tanks and other armored fighting vehicles that were in combat on February 24, 1,587 units (65%) have been destroyed;
- 636 units out of 1,509 field artillery guns and mortars have been lost, as well as 163 out of 535 MLRS;
- 148 out of 180 S-300 and Buk M1 air defense systems have been eliminated, along with 117 out of 300 radars for various purposes.

Far be it from us to know whether Moscow's inventory of the damage to Ukraine's military is reliable, but the silence of the Pentagon and spokesman for NATO and the Ukrainian government is deafening. Even then, suppose the above numbers are exaggerated by double—they still bespeak of a military that has essentially been wiped off the battlefield.

Moreover, there is plenty of circumstantial evidence—dogs that aren't barking—to validate the latter proposition. For instance, consider the alleged Russian failure in Kiev, symbolized by the "40-mile-long" convoy of battle tanks, armored vehicles and heavy artillery that descended from Belarus in the north and reached the outskirts of Kyiv in the early days of the war and then were claimed to be stalled, lost and suffering from a host of resupply, coordination and morale issues.

If the Ukrainians had any substantial military assets left, this endlessly strung-out convoy would have been a sitting duck for attack by Ukrainian fixed wing planes, attack helicopters, artillery, heavy mortar, cruise missiles, hit-and-run infantry units, etc. But to our knowledge there is not one video or set of satellite photos in existence giving evidence to such attacks—mainly because the Ukrainian military was incapable of mounting any.

Instead, what happened was a classic maneuver warfare feint on Russia's part. Not only did they encircle much of Kiev without encountering serious resistance *en route* to the capital, but then repaired to a stationary mode because that was the chosen strategy, not evidence of a failure.

It should be obvious to anyone not subject to the Putin is a Hitleresque land-grabber myth that the Kiev encirclement was a diversionary tactic designed to deter Ukraine from sending reinforcements to Donbas in east Ukraine. That's where the real battles for territory are actually being fought.

Indeed, apart from the handful of neo-Nazi militias and foreign mercenaries fighting pitched battles against Russian forces in Donbas, the much-touted “resistance” was nowhere to be found in the rest of Ukraine.

So for better or worse, Russia is achieving its actual war objectives. Namely, to liberate the Donbas republics, reinforce its claims to Crimea and render the rump of Ukraine demilitarized, neutralized and incapable of hosting future threats to its security, ala Khrushchev’s emplacement of missiles in Cuba in October 1962.

In that regard, here is the tri-cornered boundaries of the Donbas which will soon be completely liberated, even as the forward positions of the Azov Battalions encircled there are finally liquidated.

Even more importantly, the sweeping distortion of the battlefield situation is evidence that Washington’s war machine has become a conveyor belt for the out-and-out war propaganda emanating from Zelensky’s desperate remains of a government in Kiev. As Patrick Lawrence aptly noted,

There was the 'Ghost of Kiev' story, featuring an heroic fighter pilot who turned out to derive from a video game. There were the Snake Island heroes, 13 Ukrainian soldiers who held out to the death on some small speck in the Black Sea, except that it turned out they surrendered, though not before Zelensky awarded them posthumous medals of honor that were not posthumous.

There was the maternity ward the Russians supposedly bombed in Mariupol. And then the theater, and then the art school. All filled with huddling citizens the Russian air force cynically targeted because 'this is genocide,' as the ever-intemperate Zelensky does not hesitate to assert.

All of this has been reported as fact in the Times and other major dailies and, of course, by the major broadcasters. There have been pictures. There have been videos, all very persuasive to the eye.

And then, as evidence mounts that these incidents were staged as propaganda to frame the Russians and draw NATO forces directly into the war, a silence worthy of a Catholic chapel descends. We read no more of the maternity ward that turned out to be an improvised Azov base, or the theater, where citizens were herded, photographed in raggedy blankets, and sent away. Ditto the art school: Nothing more on this since the initial reports began to collapse. No body counts, no mention of the fact that Russian jets did not fly over Mariupol on the days in question.

And this leads, of course, to the latest and greatest propaganda assault from Kiev, the alleged war crimes in Bucha.

The latter is a suburb of 35,000 souls a few miles north of Kiev and one of the cities Russian forces began to evacuate on March 29 as peace talks in Istanbul progressed. By March 30 the Russian forces were gone and the next day, March 31, the towns mayor, Anatoly Fedoruk, celebrated the

city's liberation in a selfie-speech to his citizenry.

He made no mention of anything untoward in Bucha's streets, backyards, or public spaces.

Two days later on April 2, however, a special unit of the Ukrainian national police deployed to Bucha. And then overnight the place turned out to be a hellhole with bodies in the streets — 410, according to the Prosecutor General's office in Kiev. All of this was purportedly evidence of atrocities galore, people bound and shot point blank.

Most suspiciously, however, was the fact that during the four week period of the Russian army's occupation local citizens had taken to wearing white arm bands to signify that they were not affiliated with the Ukrainian military or harbored hostile intentions toward the Russian Army. That is to say, in the eye's of the then absent Ukrainian military they had become collaborators and traitors.

Not surprisingly, therefore, many of the newly discovered corpses in the videos were wearing white armbands. Indeed, before the reports of the mass killings emerged, the Ukrainian police announced it was performing an op in the town to "clear the area of saboteurs and accomplices of Russian troops".

Needless to say, in a single day's time Washington, London, and Paris resounded with cries of outrage. No demand for an impartial inquiry, forensic inspections, or any such thing. No one asked why corpses left in the street for five days appeared to be fresh, or why the relatives of the dead left them there until Kiev's commando unit arrived.

Worse still, even the Pentagon with all its massive satellite intelligence, which surely was focused like a hawk on the environs of Kiev, refused to weigh in on behalf of a narrative that emerged from whole cloth literally overnight.

Indeed, the headline below is truly the case of the dog which didn't bark.

At the end of the day, the Bucha story is surely the final straw.

Throughout NATO-land new sanctions are being cranked out and Russian diplomats are being thrown out of national capitals. And that's all based on a suspicious narrative that emerged unverified from the Zelensky propaganda machine and was then amplified hugely by the Washington's infinitely mendacious echo chamber.

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