

New York Times backs Poroshenko's offensive in Ukraine

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As the US puppet regime in Kiev launches a new offensive in eastern Ukraine, the *New York Times* is stepping up its campaign of lies and distortions, praising the assault and covering up the danger of the Ukrainian civil war escalating into a broader regional or even global war.

Since February's pro-Western putsch installed an anti-Russian regime in Kiev, the *Times* has recklessly pressed for a confrontation with Russia. It covered up the fascist character of the groups that led the putsch, such as the Right Sector militia, and fabricated photos to back up Washington's false charges that opponents of Kiev in eastern Ukraine were simply Russian agents. Now, the *Times* is demanding that Washington and its European allies support Poroshenko's attack and step up sanctions designed to isolate and economically destroy Russia.

In an editorial entitled "The Ukrainian Crisis Reaches a New Level," the *Times* wrote: "President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine took the fateful step late Monday of ending his unilateral cease-fire in the struggle with separatists in eastern Ukraine, declaring: 'We will attack and liberate our land.' The attacks began shortly after, moving the Ukrainian crisis to a highly dangerous but unavoidable level. Dangerous, because Ukrainian forces are woefully ill-equipped and ill-trained to fight what is essentially a civil war, in which Ukrainian civilians are bound to be casualties; unavoidable because neither the rebels nor Russia ever took seriously the negotiations with Kiev and Western mediators. In effect, the long-building showdown has begun."

The *Times*' presentation of Poroshenko's bloody offensive as a war for liberation is a political fraud. In a major European country of 46 million, the government is deploying artillery, white phosphorus chemical weapons, attack helicopters, and fascist paramilitaries to attack cities opposed to an illegitimate, far-right government. It is a war to establish Western imperialist domination over

Ukraine, in which Washington can be victorious only by inflicting sufficiently high civilian casualties to terrorize into submission regions of the country opposed to the Kiev regime.

This war is also designed to humiliate Russia—giving it the choice of either impotently acquiescing to the installation of an anti-Russian regime in Ukraine or risking a clash with NATO should Moscow seek to politically oppose Poroshenko's offensive or intervene militarily to halt it.

The question the editorial leaves unanswered is: What exactly is the "new level" now being reached in the Ukrainian crisis? The policies advocated by the *Times*—a bloody offensive in Ukraine and a cut-off of Russian energy exports that would devastate the Russian economy—make clear that the *Times* is advocating within Europe the policies of war and regime change it supported in the disastrous US interventions in the Middle East.

The *Times* editorial promotes the dangerous illusion that the resulting conflicts between Russia and the NATO powers can be safely limited "only" to a trade war, which will not escalate into a military, and potentially nuclear, conflict between Russia and the major powers.

"The United States and Europe have been right, so far, to moderate their response and to give diplomacy every chance. Nobody wants a trade war," the *Times* cynically writes. However, it continues, "the agreement that Ukraine signed, along with Georgia and Moldova, is not only about trade. It's also a commitment by the West to support them in their progress towards a high standard of governance. Washington and Brussels have drawn lines and threatened serious sanctions, and the time has come to show they mean it."

The *Times*' silence on the risk of world war posed by the policies it is advocating is politically criminal. It knows that these policies have no support in the working class, which is sick of war in the face of the debacles in

Iraq and the rest of the Middle East. It therefore peddles the claim that the people have a moral responsibility to support US policy in Eastern Europe because it is designed to obtain “good governance” in the region.

A shameless lie! The type of governance Washington, Berlin and their allies want to promote in Eastern Europe is exemplified by the Kiev regime itself. A neocolonial regime headed by billionaire “Chocolate King” plutocrat Poroshenko, it works out its policies in collaboration with US and German officials and fascist militias such as the Right Sector that are totally unanswerable to the Ukrainian people. As the *Times* itself has noted, this regime is waging a civil war targeting Ukrainian civilians.

As it published its editorial, the *Times* mobilized its foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman to write a piece, “People of Influence,” promoting the Ukraine intervention as a struggle for democracy.

“The fate of Ukraine matters—as much, if not more, as Syria and Iraq. We don’t have to search for ‘moderates’ in Ukraine. Millions there have already fought for and voted to align their country with the free markets and free people of the European Union,” Friedman wrote.

It is difficult to know how to answer such incoherent lies. US imperialism did not search for “moderates” in Ukraine, but directly allied itself with far-right forces that glorify the World War II-era Ukrainian fascists who assisted the Nazis in the Holocaust of Ukrainian Jewry. These include, besides the Right Sector, the fascist Svoboda party, which in 2012 was formally censured by a vote of the European Parliament for its racist policies. A few thousand thugs recruited from these forces participated in the February putsch that brought a pro-American regime to power.

As for the election subsequently organized to install Poroshenko and retroactively give democratic credentials to the February putsch, it was an empty and antidemocratic exercise. Fascist thugs beat up the candidates of opposition parties, including the Party of Regions and the Ukrainian Communist Party, to ensure that there would be no competition for the US-designated oligarch Poroshenko. In large parts of the besieged east of the country, there was a near-total boycott.

Even as he seeks to glorify the Ukrainian putsch, Friedman makes a backhanded acknowledgment of the disaster produced in the Middle East by the policies of regime change and war that Washington is now seeking to apply in Europe. Washington has been stunned by the unanticipated consequences of its backing for various Islamist factions in its occupation of Iraq and its proxy

war in Syria.

Now, as the Al Qaeda-linked Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militia that emerged from the Syrian war attacks the US-backed regime of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq, US officials do not know towards which so-called “moderate” faction to turn.

These developments are a debacle not only for US foreign policy, but also for Mr. Friedman personally—who has enthusiastically advocated the most horrific crimes of US imperialism in the region.

To justify his support for the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, Friedman announced that he had “no problem with a war for oil.” As he pressed for a US war in Syria to back Sunni Islamist opposition forces last September, he praised Washington for supposedly struggling for Middle East democracy, calling American policy the road “from Saddam to Jefferson.” He said he hoped that Syria and Iraq would “devolve into self-governing, largely homogeneous ethnic and religious units... And if we are lucky, these units will find a *modus vivendi*, as happened in Lebanon after 14 years of civil war.”

The policies advocated by Friedman backfired. The offensive of ISIS to create a “homogeneous” Sunni Islamist state along the Syrian-Iraqi border by attacking the Maliki regime has produced a major disaster for US foreign policy, leading Washington to contemplate launching another deeply unpopular intervention in Iraq.

The tragic experience of Iraq and Syria is a warning of the danger of more unforeseen catastrophes arising from the reactionary scheming in Eastern Europe of pyromaniacs such as Mr. Friedman and his cohorts at the *Times*.



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