

HIVE MIND MENTALITY

By Jason Salvesen



Source: Christopher J. Wilkinson (used with permission)

As glad as I am that the [COVID hysteria has come to a rather abrupt end](#), we have seamlessly been plunged into yet another all-consuming crisis – the [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#).

Everywhere you look is blue and yellow in support of Ukraine. Rightly so, I strongly oppose aggression by any country, and I certainly don't support what Putin is doing in any way. This war is extremely complicated. I'll leave it to others to explore the nuances and details.

What I'm equally concerned about, however, is our (the West) reaction to it. Almost overnight, COVID is over and a new narrative has been constructed by our government and media. Everyone MUST support Ukraine, and everyone MUST hate Russia. No questions asked! The propaganda machine has had a good servicing and been fired right up again, and instantly the hive mind has kicked back in.

Anything Russian must be purged! Russian [vodka disposed of](#), Russian [cats banned from competitions](#), Russian [restaurants vandalised](#), Russian students removed from American universities, Russian teams [removed from FIFA video games](#), even a [US senator calling for the assassination of Vladimir Putin](#). None of which would help this conflict with Russia in the slightest; [on the contrary](#). Anyone who deviates from the narrative is vilified and [opposing views censored](#). I'm sure for many, the parallels with the COVID hysteria will be stark. I do wonder if China happens to invade Taiwan, if we in the West would summarily boycott and cut off ties with all things Chinese?

Mattias Desmet [has been speaking out about peoples irrational behaviour](#) during the COVID panic and calls the phenomena "mass formation". It seems, combined with this natural phenomena, that government has figured out that [by the use of behavioural science](#), targeted messaging, media and social media propaganda, it now has the power to put the majority of people under some kind of spell and can [manufacture consent for any policy](#) it wants to push. This should worry us all.

War always benefits the rich and powerful. It seems the very same rich and powerful individuals and entities that stoked fear and panic over COVID are doing the same thing with the Ukraine conflict. It seems the pharmaceutical-industrial-complex has had their turn at the feeding trough, and they will now be making way for their friends at the military-industrial-complex. Who says there is no honour among thieves?

UKRAINE ECONOMY 'HIT FROM ALL ANGLES'

By Gareth Seward ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#))



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So much has been spoken and written about the Russian-Ukraine conflict. Depending on what sources you subscribe to, you either have a general overview of the simplistic version – as being peddled by the Western mainstream media – of it being Bad Russian Man Bullying Smaller Country, or if you look at more independent sources, you'll have a more mature overview of the complexities and nuances. These involve civil wars with separatist regions in East Ukraine, and ever-increasing provocative behaviour from NATO, looking to expand its infamous brand of “freedom and democracy” closer and closer to Russian borders.

Bully narrative, I am in absolutely no way a supporter of Putin or his actions. I wholeheartedly condemn his Ukrainian invasion, and there is no justification for it. However, I do acknowledge and recognise that there is more than one side to this story, and Ukraine, NATO and the United States are far from being whiter than white in all this, and Ukraine certainly isn't as innocent as it has been portrayed as.

Let me clear, as we have now been conditioned by the media to instantly brand anyone as a pro-Russian Putin apologist if they don't subscribe to their Bad Russian

But as I say, so much has already been written, and you can easily go digging for yourself to find a more in-depth analysis of events that have resulted in the current escalated situation we find ourselves looking at. Here, I would like to focus briefly on what all this is doing to the Russian economy.

At the moment, Russia's economy is being hit from all angles. It was somewhat prepared for sanctions to come its way, with its £470 billion of foreign currency reserves, one of the largest in the world. However, certain sanctions have come rather unexpectedly, namely on the Central Bank of Russia, blocking access to its foreign reserves. For as “smart” as Russia may have been in building up so much foreign reserves, with a large amount being held in China and Japan, a significant amount is still held in Western banks. In light of Putin's recent actions, that part perhaps wasn't quite so smart.

Russian banks have also been frozen out the Swift banking system, which is what is used for global trade transactions. Also, Putin and a select group of Russian officials have all had their foreign assets frozen too. So in short, these sanctions have basically taken Russia's financial liquidity hostage.

Foreign investors in Russian assets also seem to be abandoning the ship faster than a Tory party u-turn. Some of the more prominent ones are Shell and BP. Shell will abandon its stakes with state-controlled gas company Gazprom, whilst BP are looking to sell its 20 per cent stake in Rosneft, a state-controlled oil company. The problem though, is who is going to want to touch that \$25 billion asset now? China?

Russian currency has taken a dive too. The central bank more than doubled the interest rate from 9.5 per cent up to 20 per cent, to help regain some of what the rouble lost when it dropped by 29 per cent at the beginning of last week. Export companies in Russia also have been told to sell 80 per cent of their foreign reserves. The rouble has been sliding for years though, and these attempts to prop it up in the midst of this current crisis is almost next to futile relative to the big picture. It is likely to plunge much further.



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Other countries such as Italy and France may be affected by the hit Russia is currently taking, as government bonds in Russia have also taken a severe drop. This could very well exacerbate problems throughout Europe, with billions of dollars worth of Russian bonds being owned by several banks on the continent.

So, whilst all this may seem bleak for Russia, there may just be a lifeline by proxy: Western inflation. With inflation hitting highs – and still rising – in much of the West, to put a full embargo on Russian oil and gas could pose a serious problem in accelerating inflation even further. Europe relies on Russia for around a quarter of its oil supply and about a third of its gas supply. In the current oil climate, the shortage has seen prices hit their highest level in over eight years. A full sanction on Russian oil would see prices rocket even further. So for now, this is very likely to help keep the Russian economy above water. But it is on a fine wire, especially considering the crazy economic recklessness we see, and have seen, from many of our global world leaders.

DO THE UK & US HAVE UKRAINIAN BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS?

By Benjamin D.W Truman ([Website](#))

Ask a person on the street if they have heard of James Baker, the United States Secretary of State in 1990, or Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet General Secretary in 1990, and it's likely they won't know them. Ask them who is responsible for the invasion of Ukraine and they might tell you Vladimir Putin, and how [the brave Volodymyr Zelenskyi](#), President of Ukraine, is defending the unprovoked attack. But what if you knew a meeting between Baker and Gorbachev in February 1990 ending with a promise, now broken, is likely the origin of this horrible saga?



Source: Jamin Mahmood of Vulvani, [Wikimedia \(CC BY-SA 4.0\)](#)

On February 9, 1990, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and United States Secretary of State James Baker met. The meeting concluded with the promise to Gorbachev that the US would never expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to the east. Years later, NATO doubled in size, breaking the promise to Russia.

During the time of the meeting in 1990 a unification of Germany was desired by the United States; however, the Soviet Union, United Kingdom and Western Europe were against it, worried Germany would cause another war if the East and West were to unite. The fears were removed by the US under assurance that keeping a united Germany in NATO would actually prevent another escalation. The Soviet Union could have vetoed the unification process but decided not to off the back off the promise made by the US that they would not expand NATO towards Russia.

In 1991, the same promise to Russia was made by John Major, the British Prime Minister. He told Russian officials NATO would not expand to the East.

In 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO. NATO and US neoconservatives pushed for more members, adding Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. Albania and Croatia joined in 2009, Montenegro in 2017, and North Macedonia in 2020. NATO's push provided more troops for the ill-advised wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in addition to massive profits for the American military industrial complex.

Could the promise, seen as well and truly broken to Russia have been one of the main drivers of the violent Russian invasion of Ukraine? Most of the world, and Western countries, appear shocked at the invasion. Why haven't they foreseen this coming in light of their previous actions? Could the west have played a part in the bloodshed in Ukraine, or have the last thirty years been a prelude to a mighty clash of two great civilisations?

CYCLE OF DEPENDENCY

By Stephen McNamara ([Website](#), [Twitter](#))



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[Wikimedia \(CC BY 4.0\)](#)

When politicians argue, it's always the people governed by them that suffer the consequences, on all sides. Why does this happen?

We wake up each day finding ourselves in a world where the population blindly assumes a government has control over their and our lives. It is this blindness to their assumed authority where the problems start in a cycle of dependency. Like all commonly known cycles of dependency, such as drug and alcohol addictions, domestic abuse, and bad personal habits, each have their own destructive consequences. Dependence upon a government's central control is destructive in that the consequences of its actions and inactions are suffered by those it has control over.

Today, I heard a story about some Russian soldiers captured in Ukraine. They apparently told their captors that they were told that they were only heading to a planned exercise. If true, then their trust in their government, and their assumption of its control over their lives, has led to their current suffering, as well as the suffering of millions of their neighbours. I also heard stories of how the Ukrainian government passed laws banning certain people from leaving the country, essentially abandoning them to die at the hands of their neighbours. This cannot continue.

What can we do to break this cycle of dependency and violence though?

It starts with each one of us. As individuals we can demonstrate the power that freedom and liberty has so that our family, friends, neighbours, and other associates can see for themselves the difference that a libertarian lifestyle leads to. Make choices that suit our personal situation that also actively point out the flaws in a statist's viewpoint. Not only do we point out what is wrong with it, but we also demonstrate the opposite truth. We can also seek out each other so that we can gain strength and courage in each other's success and help each other overcome our weaknesses.

I fear that one day soon, our own Ukraine moment will happen, and our sons and grandsons will be abandoned to suffer the consequences of our own government's decisions. Let us stand now and stop that from happening.

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