

How the West Brought War to Ukraine

Benjamin Abelow

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How the West Brought War to Ukraine is a succinct, accessible introduction to an often overlooked aspect of the 2022 war in Ukraine.

In *How the West Brought War to Ukraine*, Benjamin Abelow explores what he believes to be an overlooked cause behind Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

When Russia sent troops into Ukraine in February of 2022, Western media outlets focused almost exclusively on Russia's aggression while overlooking the role that NATO—and the US in particular—played in sparking the conflict. Abelow highlights the ways in which Western nations have provoked Russia over the past thirty years, helping to create an atmosphere of suspicion and justified wariness. He also relates how their current actions could further destabilize the region and even increase the threat of nuclear war.

The book begins with a brief historical overview recounting how many times the US has withdrawn from or reneged on agreements made with the Russian government since the end of the Cold War in 1990. These incidents, as Abelow sees it, fostered distrust between the two nations, rendering Western reassurances of their peaceful intentions unreliable in Russian eyes. The book then explains how modern provocations and the misrepresentation thereof could have further fanned the flames of conflict. It concludes by considering how the situation today might be different had the US reconsidered its vehement anti-Russian stance and worked harder to welcome Russia into the global community.

Citing respected scholars and political experts, Abelow builds a solid argument that the US, Europe, and NATO are complicit in the current violence affecting Ukraine. For example, by staging war games very close to the Russian border, they gave the Russian government reason to fear NATO's expansion and encroachment into their territory. If Russia had behaved as the US has, he argues, the US would have taken action long before now.

Abelow acknowledges that this is all speculation, as it is impossible to know the mind and true motivations of Russian president Vladimir Putin. His conclusions are nonetheless based on facts and well-informed analyses, which he explicates in a straightforward way.

The book maintains a tight focus on the West's many missteps, leaving no room to consider Russia's provocations; the goals of Ukraine and Ukrainians; the broader history of Russian aggression against Ukraine, which gives Ukraine ample reason to distrust Russian promises of compromise or peace; or how the book's suggestion of negotiating for peace could reasonably be accomplished, given Putin's erratic behavior and the failure of past negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. It therefore should be read in conjunction with other texts to create a more complete picture of what has happened in Ukraine, why, and what remedies may still be available.

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EILEEN GONZALEZ (September 8, 2022)

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