

JACQUES BAUD

UKRAINE BETWEEN
WAR



PEACE

Max Milo

UKRAINE: BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE

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*We are very pleased to bring this excerpt from Colonel Jacques Baud's latest book on the Ukrainian conflict. It is entitled, *Ukraine: Between War and Peace*, and you may purchase it either on [Amazon](#) or at [Barnes & Noble](#).*



Understanding the Conflict

The way in which a crisis is understood determines the way in which it is resolved. This statement, which I often repeat, seems simple. Yet we are unable to do so. This was already the case with George W. Bush's "war on terror", which all Western countries rushed to follow in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, where we supported the aggressor (even though we knew he was lying).

All these wars have been lost, our soldiers, the civilian victims of war (including those of terrorist attacks) have died for only one reason: we did not want to understand these conflicts, their nature, and their actors before we got involved.



You can't win a war by convincing yourself that you've won.

Learning the lessons of a conflict should not only allow us to revisit our doctrines of engagement and the orientation of our armament policies, but also - and this is essential - to avoid the emergence of new conflicts. To think that a conflict is the product of a single cause ("Putin is crazy!") is childish. Conflicts are always the result of a cluster of causes, whose relative importance varies over time.

The identification of these causes and their interactions is the task of the intelligence services and of those who are supposed to enlighten our decision-makers. However, in France more than elsewhere, the thinking on the conflict, whether it comes from "pro-Russians" or "pro-Ukrainians", is not based on

facts, but on convictions. The problem is not limited to military conflicts, but to all crises. We remember the statement of Olivier Véran, Minister of Health, on February 18, 2020, whose intonations strangely recalled General Gamelin in 1939.

I don't need to check that France is ready. France is ready! And it is ready because we have an extremely solid healthcare system.

In France, military "experts" such as Generals Dominique Trinquand, Michel Yakovleff, and colonels such as Pierre Servent or Michel Goya are in this tradition. They base their judgment on their perception (even their prejudices) and not on facts. This pleases our media, but it leads to defeat.

This phenomenon is exemplified by the French Senate's information report, published in February 2023. It is built on prejudices, unfounded accusations, and rumors, while elements essential to the understanding of the conflict have been dismissed. Each event is described as if it had fallen from the sky, without reason. The result is a fatalistic reading of the problems, which is necessarily emotional, which is understood only through "punch lines" and which makes in-depth solutions impossible.

We can already predict that it will satisfy those who speak on television, but will perpetuate the mistakes that have been made over the last thirty years and that have systematically led to disasters. The problem is that this report has the ambition to guide the reflection for the future of the French armed forces.

That being said, the Swiss Annual Security Report, published in September 2022, suffers from exactly the same shortcomings. In the western French-speaking world, our reading of the Ukrainian conflict suffers from a cruel lack of honest, scientific and academic reflection. In Europe, more than in the United States, problems are judged without being analyzed in order to condemn and not to find solutions. This is true both for those who adhere to the official narrative and for those who reject it. Everyone seems to see it as a reflection of their own concerns, without really asking whether it corresponds to the reality on the ground.

We adapt the facts to our conclusions instead of adapting the conclusions to the facts. This is the way political problems in all fields seem to be treated.

The United States

The conflict in Ukraine is often presented as a conflict between Russia and NATO. This is partly true, but it would be more accurate to say that it is a conflict between the United States and Russia. NATO being, conceptually, only the armed arm of the American strategy in Europe (and perhaps in Asia too, as we shall see).

The understanding of the Ukrainian conflict inevitably starts from the study of the global American strategy, which the Americans call "Grand Strategy". It is imbued with a complex combination of philosophical, societal, political and military elements that have been the subject of numerous books. We will not go into detail here and focus on some of the salient aspects.

There is a messianic dimension to American culture that stems from its religious past, which assumes that the United States is the bearer of a moral and economic truth that justifies its presence in the world. Both paternalistic and missionary, the United States believed it had a role to play in the development of the world. This sentiment emerged at the end of World War II with the accession of the United States to nuclear power, and it became even more pronounced after the fall of communism in 1989 and the Gulf War in 1991.

In his book *The Grand Chessboard*, Zbigniew Brzezinski gives us a glimpse of the American perception of the world. But, as relevant and interesting as it is, this reading must be qualified. In 1997, when he wrote his book, Brzezinski was no longer "in business." His vision is essentially that of the 1980s. For example, he does not perceive the emerging structural weakening of the United States, nor the growing role of China in a globalized system. It also fails to take into account the emerging economic powers (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa or BRICS) and their potential to challenge Western leadership.

That being said, he correctly observes that the relationship between Ukraine and Russia is of a special nature. He shows how US policy can use Ukraine as a lever to affect Russia and that the goal is less to develop Ukraine than to prevent Russia's re-emergence as a superpower. The real element that allows us to understand the "Grand Strategy" of the United States in the post-Cold War era is the "Wolfowitz

doctrine."

The Trap of Thucydides

As long as the United States had the material, economic and military capacities to ensure its role as leader of the Western world, the Wolfowitz doctrine was consistent with a kind of natural order of things. But this did not last.

The fall of the Berlin Wall heralded a new era. Whereas the Cold War had been driven by the notion of "division", the idea of globalization was to emerge from that of "integration", as Thomas Friedman explained:

The symbol of the Cold War system was a wall, which divided us all. The symbol of the globalization system is the World Wide Web, which unites us all.

In synergy with technological evolution, globalization is the system of movement and ubiquity, whereas the Cold War was essentially a static system, symbolized by the notion of "blocs."

The end of the cold war is the most important event of the end of the 20th century, but it is only one element of a convergence of factors at that time. Technological evolution, the fall in the cost of communications, economic integration mechanisms, free trade agreements, industrial relocation and the resulting (imperfect) social harmonization, give rise to the notion of a "global village" with growing interdependencies.\

Particularly in the United States, globalization is not simply seen as an economic phenomenon, but above all as a mental attitude, a philosophy. Its ambition is to reshape the world into a network of actors who are both partners and competitors, whose relationships are determined by their comparative advantage.

