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In today's #vatniksoup, I'll introduce an American political scientist, John Mearsheimer. He's best-known for his theory of offensive realism, for his pandering to authoritarian regimes, and for ignoring sovereignty of independent countries.

1/22



Mearsheimer is famous for his theory of offensive realism. The theory assumes that "great powers" such as the US, the CCP and (for some weird reason) Russia are being primarily driven by the rational desire to achieve regional hegemony in an anarchic international system.

2/22

**Great Power Politics in the 21st Century & The Implications for Hungary:**

NKE

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Prof. John J. Mearsheimer

His lecture "Why is Ukraine the West's Fault? Featuring John Mearsheimer" has been viewed over 29 million times on YouTube, and its often the cornerstone of any anti-US and anti-NATO argument in the context of Ukraine, including those originating from the Kremlin.

3/22

Why is Ukraine the West's Fault? Featuring John Mearsheimer

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Let's do a short review about Mearsheimer's theory: he suggests that Russia had no other choice but to invade Ukraine as the West was provoking them with the constant eastward NATO expansion. This view is based on the ideas of "Realpolitik" and "great power politics".

4/22

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# Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault

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The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin

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*John J. Mearsheimer*

According to the prevailing wisdom in the West, the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression. Russian President Vladimir Putin, the argument goes, annexed Crimea out of a long-standing desire to resuscitate the Soviet empire, and he may eventually go after the rest of Ukraine, as well as other countries in eastern Europe. In this view, the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 merely provided a pre-text for Putin's decision to order Russian forces to seize part of Ukraine.

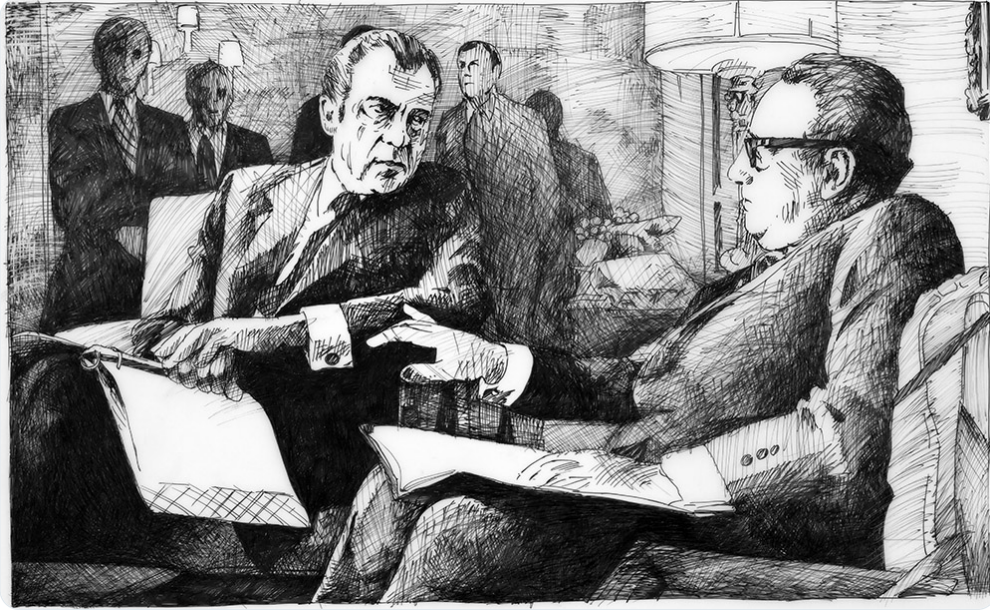
But this account is wrong: the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU's expansion eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine—beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004—were critical elements, too. Since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed NATO enlargement, and in recent years, they have made it clear that they would not stand by while their strategically important neighbor turned into a Western bastion. For Putin, the illegal overthrow of Ukraine's democratically elected and pro-Russian president—which he rightly labeled a “coup”—was the final straw. He responded by taking Crimea, a peninsula he feared would host a NATO naval base, and working to destabilize Ukraine until it abandoned its efforts to join the West.

Putin's pushback should have come as no surprise. After all, the West had been moving into Russia's backyard and threatening its core strategic

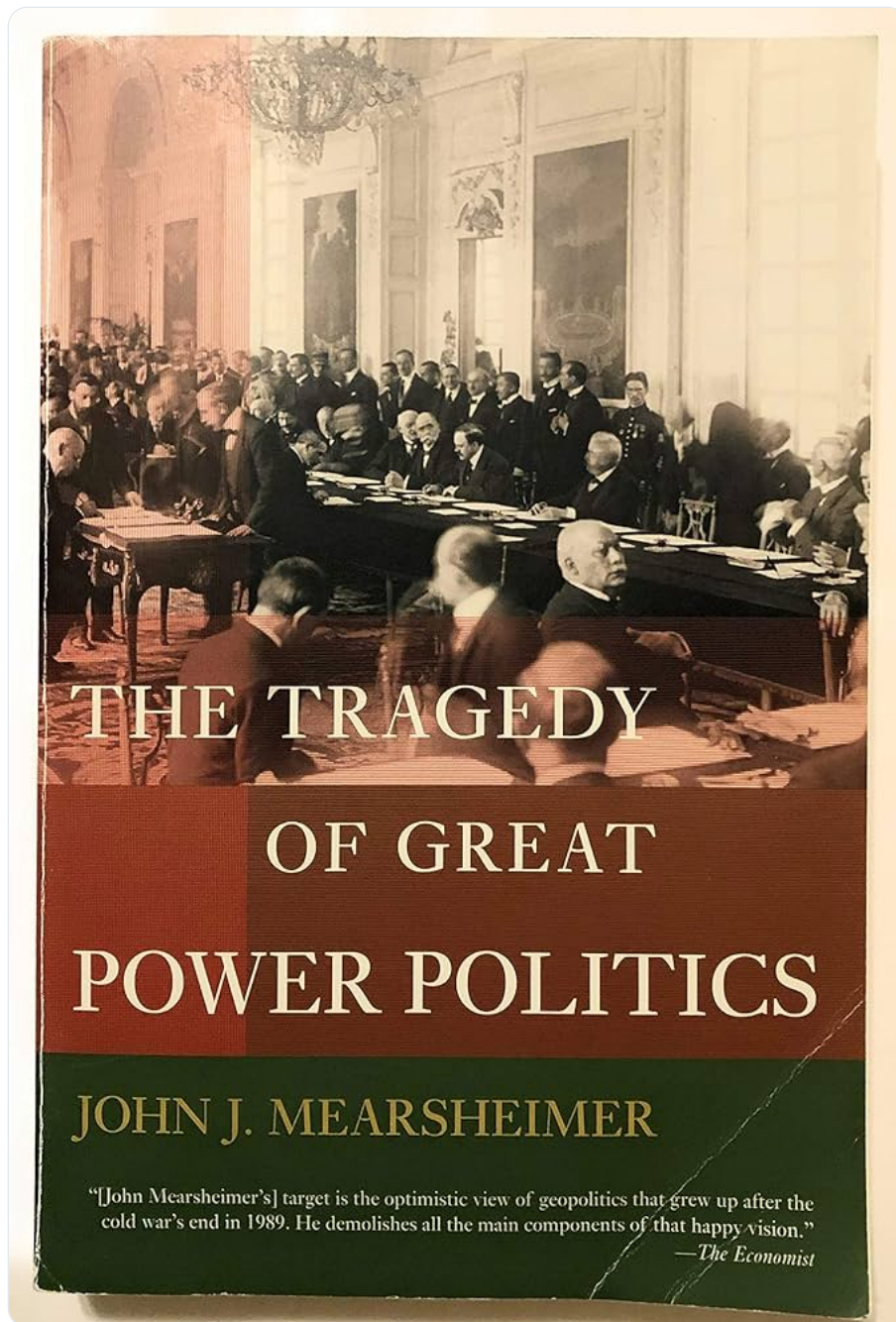
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**JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER** is R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago.

"Realpolitik" is a system where politics is stripped off from any moral or ideological considerations and which focuses more on the practical side of things. "Great power politics" means that the big players like the US, and the CCP decide what happens to smaller...



...countries that are considered to be a part of their "spheres of influence". This strips these smaller countries from their agency and sovereignty, and it's up to the big players to decide what their faiths are.



According to Mearsheimer, the US should actually stop any aid to Ukraine and form an alliance with Putin, so that they together can beat another great power, the CCP. So, if it were up to John, the US really shouldn't interfere with Putin's genocidal war in Ukraine.

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## The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia<sup>†</sup>

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John J. Mearsheimer\*,<sup>§</sup>

The United States has been the most powerful state on the planet for many decades and has deployed robust military forces in the Asia-Pacific region since the early years of the Second World War. The American presence has had significant consequences for Australia and for the wider region. This is how the Australian government sees it, at least according to the 2009 Defence White Paper: 'Australia has been a very secure country for many decades, in large measure because the wider Asia-Pacific region has enjoyed an unprecedented era of peace and stability underwritten by US strategic primacy'.<sup>1</sup> The United States, in other words, has acted as a pacifier in this part of the world.

However, according to the very next sentence in the White Paper, 'That order is being transformed as economic changes start to bring about changes in the distribution of strategic power'.<sup>2</sup> The argument here, of course, is that the rise of China is having a significant effect on the global balance of power. In particular, the power gap between China and the United States is shrinking and in all likelihood 'US strategic primacy' in this region will be no more. This is not to say that the United States will disappear; in fact, its presence is likely to grow in response to China's rise. But the United States will no longer be the preponderant power in the Asia-Pacific region, as it has been since 1945.

The most important question that flows from this discussion is whether China can rise peacefully. It is clear from the Defence White Paper—which is tasked with assessing Australia's strategic situation out to the year 2030—that policymakers in Canberra are worried about the changing balance

<sup>†</sup> This article is a slightly revised version of the annual Michael Hintze Lecture delivered at the University of Sydney in Australia on August 4, 2010.

<sup>§</sup> John J. Mearsheimer is the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Defence, Australian Government, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, p. 49. [http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/docs/defence\\_white\\_paper\\_2009.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/docs/defence_white_paper_2009.pdf), accessed on October 20, 2010.

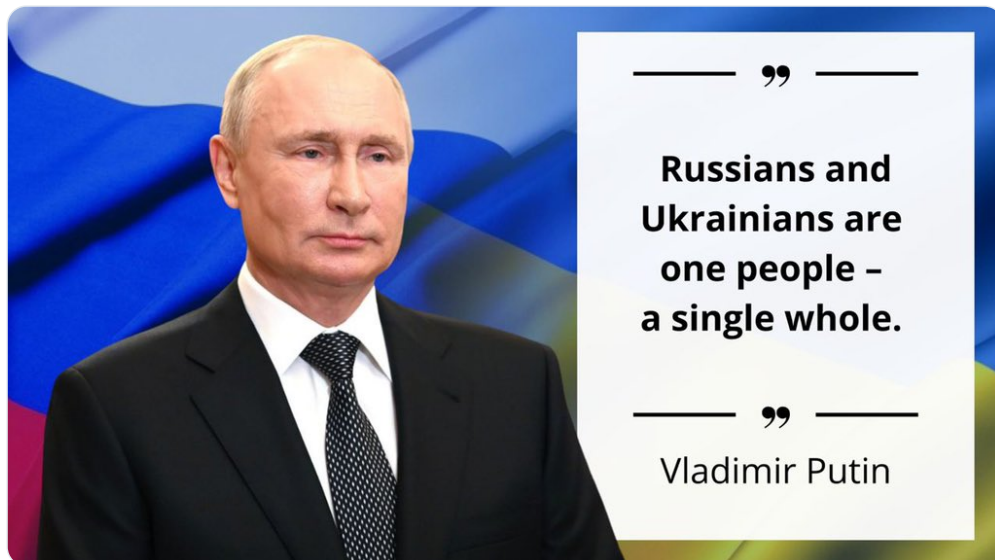
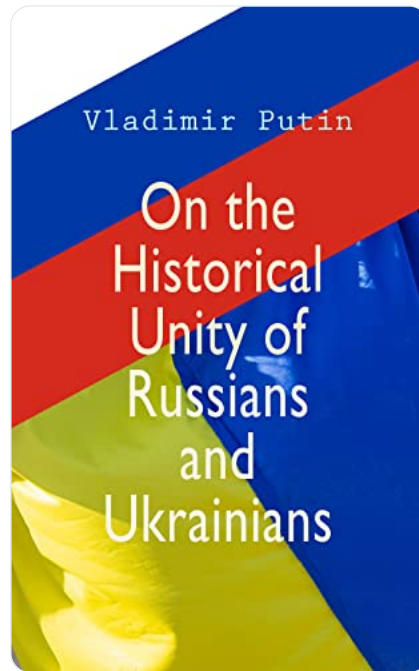
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Few days after Russia launched their full-scale invasion in Ukraine, he stated that Putin "understands that he cannot conquer Ukraine and integrate it into a greater Russia or into a reincarnation of the former Soviet Union" and that "Putin is much too smart for that".

8/22

In his famous 2015 lecture, Mearsheimer dismissed the idea that Russia would ever try to "conquer Ukraine" — arguing that "Putin is much too smart for that". His view was that the Russian leader would stick with the goal of wrecking Ukraine as a state, to prevent it aligning with the west. Today, Mearsheimer is still arguing that Russia never intended to conquer Ukraine — an argument that seems hard to square with the columns of Russian tanks heading towards Kyiv last February.

Of course we now know that this was exactly what Putin planned to do, and this plan had been started already back in early 2010s. Putin's plans were laid out clearly in his 2021 essay "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians".



In a later interview and after Putin had annexed four more Ukrainian Oblasts, Mearsheimer still agreed with his previous statement, saying that all Putin wants is these four Oblasts (although he had previously said he wants just two) as well as "regime change" in Kyiv.



He also absurdly claimed that Putin's "response to events there [in Ukraine] has been defensive, not offensive." Soon after this, Putin gave a speech in which he compared himself to conqueror Peter the Great and did not say one word about NATO or its expansion.

11/22

**Vladimir Putin**

This article is more than 1 year old

## Putin compares himself to Peter the Great in quest to take back Russian lands

President draws parallel with tsar who waged war on Sweden and says campaign in Ukraine stems from 'basic values'

Russia-Ukraine war: latest updates

Andrew Roth and agencies  
Fri 10 Jun 2022 11.09 CEST

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Putin compares himself to Peter the Great in Russian territorial push – video

Vladimir Putin has compared himself to the 18th-century Russian tsar Peter the Great, drawing a parallel between what he portrayed as their twin historic quests to win back Russian lands.

Of course, his claim that Russia is a "great nation" is also disputable. It's a declining power with huge demographic problem and the country basically acts only as a Mafia-run gas station that completely disregards democracy and human rights.

12/22



Europe | Russian demography

# Russia's population nightmare is going to get even worse

War in Ukraine has aggravated a crisis that long predates the conflict



Getty Images

Mar 4th 2023

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Mearsheimer's view of "realism" is also inherently unrealistic - it completely disregards internal politics and leaves no room for decision-makers. In his world, it doesn't matter if Russia is run by Stalin, Gorbachev or Putin, or Germany is run by Merkel or Hitler.



Incidentally, Mearsheimer's never passed any judgment on the most horrific war crimes, including the abduction of Ukrainian children, that Russia has conducted in their genocidal war. For some weird reason, he has done this in the case of Israel: in his 2007 book,...

July 31, 2023

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## More Than 700,000 Ukrainian Children Taken To Russia Since Full-Scale War Started, Official Says



Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and his commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, were included in an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court over the deportation of Ukrainian children.

Russian children's commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova has said that more than 700,000 Ukrainian children have been taken from Ukraine to Russia since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Lvova-Belova said in a report published on July 30 that the vast majority of those children came to Russia accompanied by parents and relatives. On March 17, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued an arrest warrant for Russian President

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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# Ukraine: Apparent War Crimes in Russia-Controlled Areas

Summary Executions, Other Grave Abuses by Russian Forces



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... "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy", Mearsheimer refers to a "moral dimension" in the US's enabling of Israeli "crimes perpetrated against the Palestinians." So, according to him, it's okay for Russia to be genocidal, but not for the US.

15/22

Remarkably, Mearsheimer, in his second interview with Chotiner earlier this month, still contends that Putin's main fear is Ukraine joining NATO. He denies that Putin has any desire to conquer all of Ukraine or to restore the old Russian empire—even though Putin has *said* that this is his aim. He claims only that Putin wants to annex four oblasts, without acknowledging that he'd earlier said Putin wanted only two, and—more disturbingly—without allowing that there might be something wrong with simply grabbing land.

This is another oddity in Mearsheimer's brand of Realism. He makes no distinction between how great power politics work and how they *should* work; he passes no *judgment* on even the most horrific acts committed in great-power wars because, well, what's the point of protesting the inevitable?

Two problems stand out here. First, in his 2007 book, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Mearsheimer and his co-author, Stephen Walt, cite a "moral dimension" in America's enabling of Israeli "crimes perpetrated against the Palestinians." Chotiner quotes this passage, expressing surprise that the cold Realist should have moral qualms about anything. Mearsheimer replies that all foreign policy has a moral dimension, but that sometimes, strategic interests must prevail, as when the U.S. allied with Stalin to defeat Hitler. In the same way, he says, Ukrainians "run a grave risk if they alienate the Russians in a fundamental way." It's a remarkable statement—that it's immoral for Israel to crush Palestinians but a fact of life for Russia to stomp on Ukrainians.

But most of all, Mearsheimer doesn't understand Russia. At its core, Russia is an imperialist, revisionist, expansionist and aggressive state. Waging small wars along its borders has been a tool of domestic control in "Russkiy Mir" since the time of the Tsars.

16/22



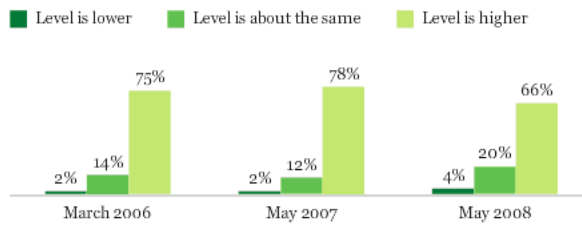
In addition, he has no clue about Ukraine - a sovereign country that had suffered greatly under the Soviet Union, its people only wanted to become closer to Western democracies and distance themselves from the corruption and oligarchy brought in by the Soviet leadership.

17/22



Do you think the level of corruption in Russia is lower, about the same, or higher than it was in the Soviet Union days?

Russian respondents

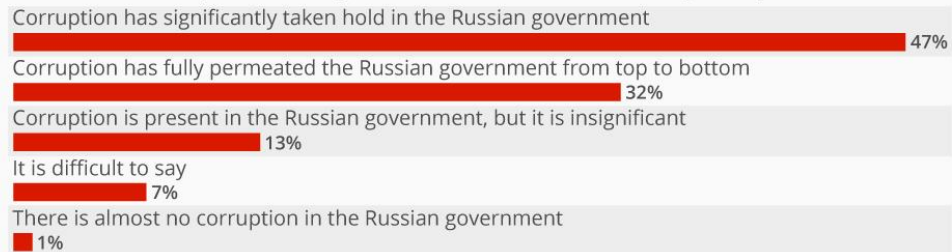


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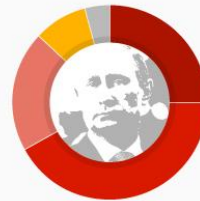
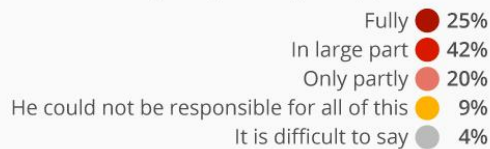
## How Russians Feel About Corruption

Russian attitudes towards high-level government corruption (March 2017)

To what extent do you think the government of Russia is affected by corruption?



Does Vladimir Putin bear responsibility for the scale of high-level corruption/financial abuse frequently cited by his opponents?



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Forbes statista

Like so many Eastern European country before them, Ukraine wanted protection against genocidal imperialistic power that is Russia. Neither EU or NATO forces anyone to join them: it's a voluntary process, whereas joining the Russian "sphere of influence" often isn't.




In Jun 2022, Mearsheimer gave a lecture in which he stated that "Putin does not have a history of lying to other leaders," neatly forgetting Putin's lies that Russia will not invade Ukraine, that Russia had no role in the downshooting of MH17, that the Kremlin had...

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## Vladimir Putin says Russia will not invade Ukraine but sends warning to West

UKRAINE | UNITED STATES | RUSSIA | WORLD | Friday 28 January 2022 at 10:54pm



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## Kremlin dismisses claims Putin was involved in MH17 downing

Reuters  
February 9, 2023 1:15 PM GMT+2 · Updated 10 months ago



...nothing to do with the poisoning of Navalnyi, and that the Russian army does not strike at civilian facilities. There's of course hundreds, if not thousands, of more lies, these just being the most blatant ones.





The Washington Post  
*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

WAR IN UKRAINE Verified videos Donbas region Russian combat capabilities HIMARS

🕒 This article was published more than 1 year ago

## Russia says attacks aren't hitting civilians. Scenes in cities tell a different story.

By [Siobhán O'Grady](#), [Isabelle Khurshudyan](#), [Sudarsan Rajhavan](#) and [Kostiantyn Khudov](#)  
February 25, 2022 at 5:13 p.m. EST





UPDATED April 08, 2023

By RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service



## Kramatorsk Marks Anniversary Of Deadly Russian Missile Attack On Train Station



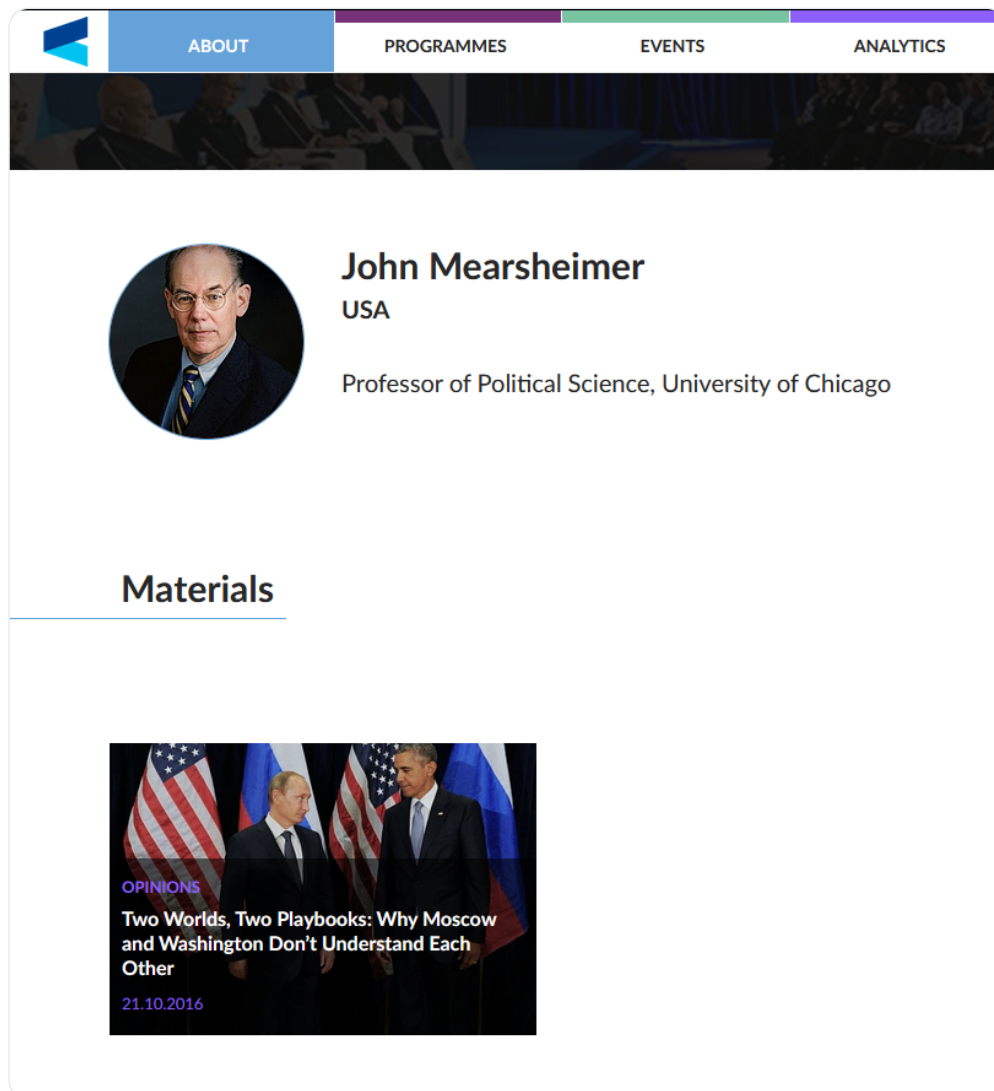
A woman lays flowers at a memorial near the train station in Kramatorsk in Ukraine's Donetsk region where dozens of civilians were killed by a Russian missile strike one year ago.

Residents and officials gathered in the Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk on April 8 to **commemorate** the dozens of lives lost one year ago when a Russian missile hit the central rail station where thousands of people had gathered to board trains to evacuate the area.

Due to his stance on Ukraine, Mearsheimer has been invited to many influential gatherings. He's part of Moscow-based Valdai Club which incidentally also funded his work. He's also met with Hungary's Orbán, but really, REALLY doesn't want to talk about this meeting at all.


mention here.

We are fortunate to have received excellent administrative and financial support. Special thanks go to Elyse Boldt, David Mearsheimer, and Burak Tan for their first-rate research assistance. Mearsheimer's research was facilitated by a small grant from the Valdai Discussion Club that he received in conjunction with his book *The Great Delusion*, winning the club's best book award for 2019. Rosato's work on the book was funded in part by the College of Arts and Letters at Notre Dame.




The screenshot shows a website profile for John Mearsheimer. At the top, there is a navigation bar with four tabs: 'ABOUT' (highlighted in blue), 'PROGRAMMES' (purple), 'EVENTS' (green), and 'ANALYTICS' (purple). Below the navigation bar is a dark banner image showing a group of people in a meeting. The profile section features a circular portrait of John Mearsheimer on the left. To the right of the portrait, his name 'John Mearsheimer' is displayed in a large, bold, black font, followed by 'USA' in a smaller, bold, black font. Below this, his title 'Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago' is written in a standard black font. Underneath the profile information is a section titled 'Materials' in a bold, black font, with a horizontal line underneath. Below the 'Materials' section is a featured article preview. It includes a small image of Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama standing together in front of their respective national flags. To the left of the image, the word 'OPINIONS' is written in purple. Below the image, the title of the article is 'Two Worlds, Two Playbooks: Why Moscow and Washington Don't Understand Each Other' in bold black text, and the date '21.10.2016' is written in purple at the bottom left of the preview.

ABOUT PROGRAMMES EVENTS ANALYTICS



**John Mearsheimer**  
USA  
Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago

**Materials**



OPINIONS  
**Two Worlds, Two Playbooks: Why Moscow and Washington Don't Understand Each Other**  
21.10.2016

**I am curious about your meeting with Orbán, because it seems like he is maybe trying to play somewhat of a mediating role. What can you tell me about your trip? You said you were there for five days.**

I think the Hungarians are deeply interested in ending this war as soon as possible. The Hungarians, as opposed to the Poles, are not interested in further escalation. They want to de-escalate the war. And, in fact, the Orbán government is not happy at all about sanctions, and it's not happy about NATO's efforts to try to defeat Russia inside of Ukraine. The basic belief in Hungary is that this is just making the bad situation worse, and instead of escalating, what we should be doing is everything possible to de-escalate.

**I know Orbán said that the "hope for peace is named Donald Trump," and suggested him as a mediator in terms of bringing the war to an end.**

I don't know that.

**Orbán tweeted, "The #liberals have got it all wrong - that's the bottom-line of our great conversation with Prof Mearsheimer today. We—"**

Look, I don't want to talk about Orbán. You told me that we were going to talk about Ukraine.

**We did talk about Ukraine.**

Right, but I don't want to talk about my visit to Hungary and my talk with Orbán. I really don't. I mean, I answered that one question, yes, but I just don't want to get into that. I really don't want you quoting me on anything other than what I just said a minute ago. I mean, you should tell me what you want to talk about. Because you know that I'm in a very delicate position when I talk to you.

**No, tell me why. I don't know that.**

This is off the record.

**This conversation's on the record, so can we keep it on the record?**

I don't want to talk about this. I actually think this is unfair to me. I think you're being unfair. You wanted to talk about Ukraine and you wanted to talk about mainly nuclear issues.

**Right. I told you over e-mail that I wanted to talk about Ukraine. You e-mailed me back and said you were in Hungary. I noticed that Orbán had tweeted about you, and I thought we could talk about that.**

You did not say that. You did not say that. You said you wanted to talk about Ukraine. And you said you wanted to talk about nuclear issues.

**Well, you did talk about both those things. If you don't want to talk about Hungary, then you absolutely don't have to. No one's forcing you to talk about Hungary.**

I don't want to. I told you. I don't want to talk about Hungary.

**When the head of a country tweets a photo of you and him, I think it's fair to ask you about it.**

I just told you I didn't want to talk about Hungary. ♦

During a Valdai event, Mearsheimer stated that "I'm much more comfortable in Moscow than Washington!"

I wonder if it's all the money he's getting from there?



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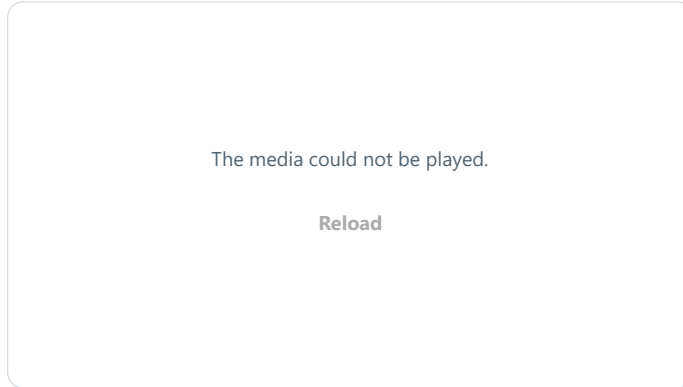


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