

## Ukraine, NATO and the World at Turning Points

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Friends,

It is privilege to be joining and learning from you here in Sarajevo. I especially want to thank Reiner Braun of IALANA and IPB and the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung for this opportunity.

As I thought about our marking the murderous hinge moment in Western and world history that began here in Sarajevo 100 years ago, a more recent image came to mind: the cellist of sniper's alley. At enormous personal risk, he affirmed what had been known as "the spirit of Sarajevo": beauty and that which is most noble in the human spirit. His simple act illuminated the madness and held forth the vision and hope of civilization. My hope is that our Peace Event will be another step on this path, despite the obstacles on our way - among them NATO Secretary General Rasmussen's recent visit here to spur the pace of Bosnia-Herzegovina's formally joining NATO. Having failed to learn the lessons of Georgia and Ukraine, Cold War ideologies are being reasserting when we should be pursuing Common Security diplomacy, which provided the paradigm for bringing humanity back from the brink of extinction.

Two other images also came to mind. First was Walter McCleneghan, an older Methodist minister with his white hair, Veterans for Peace cap, and sober demeanor as he stood with us 40 years ago in the scorching Phoenix, Arizona sun to protest the Vietnam War. Rev. McCleneghan had been gassed and was permanently disabled in the trenches of World War I, which explained why he joined us. Second was a statue I saw and which cut me to the quick when I first came to Europe in 1973 and which must still stand in St. Louis France. It

depicts a grieving mother cradling her child. The inscription initially read: *Les victims enfants de grande guerre*. In the early 1970s, additional s's shone more brightly than the other letters, intimating the Second World War's murder and suffering. Humanity has yet to learn the most fundamental lessons of these wars.

### **NATO's REPURPOSED AND SERIOUSLY DIVIDED**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO lost its raison d'être. Rather than move peacefully into a Common Security future, those whose privilege and power had been reinforced by the military Alliance repurposed it. With the specter of international communism reduced to memory, NATO was used to expand what the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations once called the "Grand Area," the United States' global sphere of influence.

Taking advantage of Moscow's economic, political and social weaknesses, through aggressive diplomacy and war NATO reached Russia's borders, and the 9-11 Al Qaeda attacks in the U.S. were exploited to cement NATO as a global military alliance. Its "out of area operations" doctrine underwrote the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and other interventions.

Today, as we hopefully move into the denouement of the Ukraine crisis and with appropriate trepidation approach September's NATO Summit, a "bitter debate" is reportedly raging over the Alliance's future. At its core are questions about whether NATO must again prepare for "possible Russian attacks," or if this crisis is "a mere blip in the Post-Cold War Order." The answer will determine if NATO ends the suspension of its multi-leveled cooperation with Russia –as favored by so-called "Old Europe" (Germany, France and Britain, whose economies are deeply entwined with Russia,) or if we have entered (or will spark) a new and non-ideological Cold War by making permanent and increasing NATO deployments in so-called

“New Europe” (Poland, the Baltics, and Rumania.<sup>i</sup>) The option of retiring NATO is not on the table.

My best guess is that NATO will opt for MORE, that even as Europe reels under the iron heel of austerity policies that fuel racist and xenophobic right-wing movements reminiscent of the 1930s, the summit in Wales will likely choose to reinforce NATO’s military power across Europe and to increase spending for out of area operations. Once again NATO will be reaffirmed as a nuclear alliance, all of which will reinforce Russian reliance on its nuclear arsenal and spur proliferation.

### **THE UKRAINE CRISIS**

Much will depend on perceptions of the Ukraine crisis.

Not unlike the Balkan States as the Ottoman Empire declined and later collapsed, and again after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine – divided by religion, historical experiences and economic interests – is caught midst powerful historical forces. President Putin may have a black belt in judo, but the U.S. is exploiting the Ukraine crisis by increasing its military deployments and reinforcing NATO’s power and influence across Eastern Europe, the Baltics and Scandinavia. Meanwhile, seeking to compensate for the loss of the Soviet Empire, Putin has been working to revitalize a neo-Tsarist state, attempting to reassert Russian influence in its “near abroad,” and is now hitching its economy, military and political ties to China’s rising star.

Secretary of State Kerry provided us with a textbook example of Orwellian doublespeak when he decried Moscow’s “incredible act of aggression,” adding that “you just don’t in the 21<sup>st</sup> century behave in 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion by invading another country on [a] completely trumped up pretext.”<sup>ii</sup> Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya are down the memory hole!

Russia, with its campaign to bring Ukraine into a Eurasian Economic Community, its annexation of Crimea and its apparent support of separatists in eastern Ukraine was hardly alone in creating the Ukraine crisis. Ignorant or simply insensitive to the history of Western invasions of Russia and dismissive of the value of international agreements, over the past generation NATO marched east to Russia's borders – including the designation of Ukraine as a NATO “aspirant” country. The U.S. and NATO created precedents with their Kosovo and Iraq wars, which were launched in violation of the U.N. Charter. As in other Color Revolutions directed against similarly autocratic and kleptocratic elites, Washington and the E.U. poured billions of dollars into divided Ukraine to develop and nurture allied forces and to turn the former Soviet republic away from Moscow and toward the West. The E.U. dictated an ultimatum to the corrupt Yanukovich government: divided Ukraine could take the next steps toward E.U. membership only by burning its bridges to Moscow. As tensions built in Kiev, CIA Director Brennan, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland – now famous for her “fuck the E.U.” disrespect of European allies – and right-wing U.S. Senator McCain all traveled to the Maidan to encourage the revolution. And, once the shooting began, the U.S. and the E.U. failed to hold their Ukrainian allies to the April 17 Geneva power sharing agreement designed to defuse the deadly confrontations in Maidan Square.

This said, and even as we concede that Russia's origins lie in Kievian Rus, and that since the 1750s Crimea has provided Russia with critically important warm water ports, we need to acknowledge Russia's violation of international law and what the U.N. Commissioner for Human Rights termed the “alarming deterioration” of human rights in eastern Ukraine.<sup>iii</sup> The annexation of Crimea violated the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 signed by Russia, the United

States, Britain, China and France, which committed the powers to “respect the independence, sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine.” It also required that they “refrain from the threat of use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine.”<sup>iv</sup>

While their fears are over blown, given Russia’s Eastern European imperialism in the decades following World War II, the over reaction of many in eastern Europe is understandable.

### **IN CRISIS LIES OPPORTUNITY - NATO’S CONTINUING**

Naomi Klein’s “shock doctrine” reminds us that in crisis there is opportunity. Several weeks ago the realpolitik *STRATFOR* reported that “As a confrontation with Russia continues to build, the United States feels compelled to reevaluate, reshape and reinforce its web of alliances. From the Baltic Sea to the Carpathians, Washington is already stepping up its involvement along Russia’s periphery.” *SRATFOR* continued, “At the same time, we are starting to see the southern arc of the U.S. alliance form, beginning with Iran, reaching up to the Caucasus through Azerbaijan and then swinging westward to Turkey.”<sup>v</sup>

This week, in addition to providing economic and lethal military equipment to the government in Kiev, President Obama announced the \$5 billion European Reassurance Initiative, the increase of U.S. military deployments in Eastern Europe, the Black and Baltic Seas and military exercises across the region, and the coming review of U.S. military deployments across Europe. Two weeks earlier, Vice President Biden’s tour in Central Europe was designed to reassure U.S. allies and to confirm the U.S. and NATO movement east. Biden announced that the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush would remain in the Mediterranean and a Cold War-like tripwire, initially a minimum of 300 U.S. ground troops was established in Poland, thus

moving NATO's center of gravity eastward from Berlin. The Polish government has asked for more, including two battalions of U.S. forces, and although there are concerns in Washington that such deployments will result in reciprocal increases in Russian military deployments, the U.S. deployments could come as a result of President Obama's reviews. In Bucharest, Biden boasted that he advocated Romania's early entry into NATO, underlined Washington's "sacred obligation" to Romania - Sacred obligation? -- and presided over a joint U.S.-Romanian joint military exercise. And, like President Obama and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, he reiterated that all NATO allies "must" fulfill their commitments to raise military spending to 2% of their GDP, even with what for many European countries is an economic depression.

Washington's strategy, Biden stressed, is not only about imposing costs on Russia in response to the Ukraine crisis. As Biden said, it is primarily about investing in a revitalized NATO that emerges from this crisis and works toward a successful summit in Wales....including finalizing contingency plans for NATO's "Black Sea allies." U.S. leaders have highlighted the "stepped up...military presence in the air, land and on the sea of NATO's eastern flank." Which includes U.S. warships – including Aegis destroyers – being deployed to the Black Sea, threatening Russia's southern underbelly, U.S. aerial missions over Poland and Romania and the plans to deploy missile defenses in Romania.<sup>vi</sup> And the provocative twelve-nation Rapid Trident military exercise in Ukraine and the Saber Strike 2014 NATO exercise in Latvia have been reconfirmed for July.

There is considerably more to NATO's "revitalization." On NATO's southeastern flank, Georgian military forces have been trained by the U.S. and NATO for more than a decade. In 2008, along with Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, Georgia was

designated a “NATO aspirant” country.<sup>vii</sup> Despite Georgia’s path to full NATO membership having been blunted by its war with Russia, the U.S. recently agreed to deploy so-called “defensive” military systems to Georgia and reiterated its commitment to Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Nearby, Secretary General Rasmussen has reinforced the Partnership Action Plan with Armenia, and there are rumors of possible NATO base construction in Moldova, whose territorial integrity President Obama has also named as a “sacred commitment” of the United States.<sup>viii</sup>

In Central Europe, as Poland’s defense Minister Siemoniak tells us, Poland will play a leading regional role “under U.S. patronage.” U.S. ground forces are being deployed there, and details are being hashed out for “intensified cooperation in air defense, special forces, cyberdefense and other areas.”<sup>ix</sup> An outstanding question is how permanent these deployments will be.

To the North, U.S. warplanes have returned to Iceland,<sup>x</sup> while NATO has tripled air patrols over the Baltic States and launched the STEADFAST JAVELIN 1 war games in Estonia.<sup>xi</sup> Sweden has all but surrendered its ostensible neutrality, having long provided secret military bases and hosted NATO war games. Sweden’s “armed forces are reported to be more NATO-compatible than are those of many NATO member states.”<sup>xii</sup> Next door, Finland’s defense minister is pressing his government to join NATO, a redundant step given that Finland is entering “into an Article 5-style partnership with NATO that obligates the entire 28-nation Alliance to enter the fray if Finland is under threat.” The partnership will also require Helsinki to

join NATO in warfighting whenever NATO's mutual defense clause is activated, say in the case of a Turkish-Syrian war!<sup>xiii</sup>

### **HOW GRAND THE AREA?**

Another unanswered question is how NATO's "out of area" doctrine and partnerships will be impacted by NATO's European revitalization. Many still think of NATO as a European alliance, but in the words of Secretary General Rasmussen, its "Mediterranean Dialog" – which includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, and Libya – was created to contribute to regional "stability and prosperity." Stability and prosperity? NATO has named its targets: "terrorists" and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems." The counter-productivity of this approach was demonstrated in Libya where, as *The Guardian* recently reported, "The dire consequences of the west's intervention are being felt today in Tripoli and across Africa, from Mali to Nigeria."<sup>xiv</sup> Elsewhere, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative ties NATO to oil-saturated monarchies in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. NATO's other global partners include Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, New Zealand and Mongolia.

The truth is that from the beginning NATO was about more than the Soviet Union, and throughout the Cold War both NATO and the Warsaw Pact pursued ideological and imperial goals. As we think about the ways NATO functioned during the Cold War and its expansion over the past two decades, it is worth noting that NATO's Charter states that member nations "will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them."

After WWII, having suffered twenty million dead and massive devastation, the Soviet Union posed no immediate threat to Western Europe. With the Red Army's sacrifices and its primary role in driving Hitler's armies from Moscow to Berlin, U.S. acceptance of the post-war division of Europe was inevitable if not just. Even George Kennan, the author of the containment doctrine, wrote that in the wakes of the Napoleonic invasion and the two world wars, Moscow understandably insisted on having eastern and central European buffers against possible future invasions from the West.<sup>xv</sup>

In the late 1990s, Zbigniew Brzezinski, formerly President Carter's National Security Advisor, published a primer describing the operating principles of what he termed the U.S. "imperial project."<sup>xvi</sup> Geostrategically, he explained, dominance over the Eurasian heartland is the prize required for global mastery. As a distant "island power," the U.S. Empire needs toeholds on Eurasia's western, southern and eastern peripheries to project coercive power.

NATO, according to Brzezinski, provides the means to ensure "the United States [as] a key participant even in inter-European affairs." European allies, in his view, are "vassal states" The reward that allied elites receive for providing hundreds of military bases and installations, diplomatic support, co-production of weapons systems, intelligence sharing, and so on is a slice of imperial privilege. And, not incidentally, NATO and U.S. troop deployments have served to cap German military power and influence.

As the Afghan and Libyan Wars illustrate, NATO reduces the U.S. monetary costs and the U.S. casualties of Washington's wars. It provides political and diplomatic cover for imperial aggression, while allied partners gain privileged access to development and reconstruction contracts, oil, and relatively low cost guarantees for their military security. Of course, neither

the Afghanistan or Iraq Wars nor the Libyan intervention played out as planned. Iran proved to be the big winner in Iraq. China may end up with the lion's share of Afghan resources. And, Libya is anything but secure for European and U.S. energy companies.

Joseph Nye, President Clinton's Assistant Secretary of Defense, provided a complementary lens for understanding these dynamics: "Markets and economic power rest on political frameworks, and American military power provides that framework."<sup>xvii</sup> Thomas Friedman put it still more bluntly, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist -- McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."<sup>xviii</sup>

Today in Ukraine, we are paying for the Clinton Administration's arrogance in dealing with Russia as a defeated nation. Rather than retiring NATO after the Soviet implosion, the Alliance was re-purposed, transformed into a global alliance. Violating the Elder Bush's 1990 pledge not to expand NATO a centimeter closer to Moscow in exchange for the Kremlin's acceptance of German reunification on Western terms, NATO was expanded to Russia's borders. That expansion was also directed against Washington's Western European allies, opening the way for the Bush-Cheney, now Obama, divide and rule diplomacy, that has played "New Europe" (in the east) against "Old Europe" (in the west).

NATO's 1999 war on Serbia was a major turning point. Promoted as a "humanitarian" intervention, the war, which brought corrupt elite to power in Kosovo, sought "enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies" by reducing Russian influence.<sup>xix</sup> More importantly, as *Foreign Affairs* reported, the U.S. and NATO "with little discussion and less

fanfare ... effectively abandoned the old U.N. Charter rules that strictly limit international intervention in local conflicts...in favor of a vague new system that is much more tolerant of military intervention but has few hard and fast rules."<sup>xx</sup>

Prior to the Ukraine crisis, the Pentagon's strategic guidance<sup>xxi</sup> tasked NATO with ensuring control of mineral resources and trade while reinforcing the encirclement of China as well as Russia.<sup>xxii</sup> Toward this end, and to reinforce its war against Al Qaeda, NATO adopted "out of area operations" doctrines, making what Secretary Kerry termed "expeditionary missions" in Africa, the Middle East, and beyond the alliance's primary purpose.<sup>xxiii</sup> These commitments were institutionalized with the Afghan war; the New Strategic Doctrine adopted in 2011; and the Libyan intervention which resulted in what the U.S. State Department now terms "a terrorist safe haven."

Essential to these "out of area" operations, and possibly to NATO's future in Europe, have been the Obama kill lists and the U.S. and NATO's extra-judicial drone assassinations. Many of these have claimed civilian lives, as well as those of targeted "terrorists" in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The U.S. has gone it alone in Yemen and Mindanao. Fifteen NATO nations now participate in the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) drone system, which is slated to cost 2.2 billion Euros and is being financed by all NATO member nations. AGS is to be operated from NATO's U.S. base in Sigonella, Italy, with NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe to oversee NATO's Global Hawk killer drones out of the Ramstein Air Base in Germany once they are deployed in 2016.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Indeed, the current negotiations to create a U.S.-E.U. Free Trade Agreement should be seen as another dimension of the campaign to maintain and expand the Grand Area. The

Obama Administration has sought to create a Greater West, combining the economic resources, technologies and coercive power needed to leverage China and to remain dominant through the 21st century, even as the U.S. is in decline. Obama's early, failed, efforts to "reset" relations with Moscow were a part of this strategy. Washington's aggressive policies, now including sanctions against Moscow's elite, short circuited the strategy, undermined NATO's "partnership" with Russia and the vision of a common European house. Instead, Putin has opted for his own Pivot to Asia, establishing strategic economic, diplomatic and military ties with China.

### **NATO AS A NUCLEAR ALLIANCE**

The Ukraine crisis reminded us that NATO is a nuclear alliance, and that the dangers of a catastrophic nuclear exchange did not disappear with the end of the Cold War. Despite calls in recent years for the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, we are again hearing that "In light of the new status quo arising out of the Ukraine crisis, NATO will not be able to leave things at conventional armament. Credible determent will involve nuclear weapons..."<sup>xxv</sup> This, of course, will only reinforce Russian reliance on its nuclear arsenal. Together the two great powers are returning fear to Europe and to the rest of the world.

You may have read about scandals in the U.S. Nuclear Command: officers sleeping at the controls of omnicidal weapons, cheating on tests, and redeploying the weapons in dangerous and unauthorized ways. Daniel Ellsberg, a senior nuclear war planner for Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, says that these shouldn't be our concern today.<sup>xxvi</sup> Instead, he is certain that U.S. and Russian nuclear forces have been on high alert during the Ukraine crisis. While the intensity of the Ukraine crisis may be abating, given the history of nuclear miscalculations and

accidents we should again be working for the elimination of nuclear dangers as if our lives depended on it, which they do! Nuclear war may be more likely today than it was through much of the Cold War.

Ignorant of the history threats and preparations to initiate nuclear attacks during international crisis and wars, most US people believe that the nation's nuclear arsenal is designed primarily for deterrence. In fact, the Pentagon has been clear, stating that deterrence "has never been our doctrine."<sup>xxvii</sup>

A RAND history of NATO's nuclear doctrines tell us that NATO's inability to fulfill a 1954 agreement to match the Soviet Union's conventional military deployments played a major role in the development of Eisenhower's "massive retaliation" doctrine. To "deter" possible "Soviet aggression," NATO's conventional forces were to serve as "trip wires" to trigger Washington's "nuclear sword."<sup>xxviii</sup>

Then, as now with the so-called modernization of B-61 nuclear warheads, the challenge for U.S. strategists was to prevent Western Europe's "decoupling" from the United States, losing the U.S. western toehold in Eurasia. To prevent Europe from going its own way, the Nuclear Planning Group was created.

Throughout this period, the U.S./NATO nuclear arsenal had purposes other than classical deterrence. As President Carter's Secretary of War Harold Brown testified, with nuclear weapons as the core of U.S. security systems, its conventional forces became "meaningful instruments of military and political power." Noam Chomsky explained that this meant that "we have succeeded in sufficiently intimidating anyone who might help protect people who we are determined to attack."<sup>xxix</sup>

US nuclear weapons in Europe were essential to US preparations for and threats to initiate nuclear war, not only during the Berlin crises of 1948 and '61, but as the U.S. reinforced its hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East and beyond. Such threats and/or preparations were made during the Suez Crisis in 1956; the Marine incursion into Lebanon and revolution in Iraq in 1958; the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, in which the U.S. threatened human existence in order to enforce the principle that the U.S. could deploy nuclear weapons – even obsolete nuclear weapons – in Turkey along the Soviet Union's periphery, but that Moscow could not do likewise in Cuba. And we shouldn't forget the nuclear threats made during the 1967 Middle East War and the Iraq wars of 1991 and 2003. As we meet, the "all options" nuclear threat against Iran that began with Bush and Cheney, remains "on the table."

Further afield, US nuclear forces based in Europe were placed on the highest level of nuclear alert during President Nixon's 1969 "madman" threats to intimidate Vietnam, and had any of the nine nuclear threats made against North Korea, or one of the four against China escalated to general nuclear war, weapons based in Europe would not have remained in their bunkers.

Throughout this sorry history, preventing European "vassal states" from decoupling has been a constant. Before the Ukraine crisis a growing number of European political leaders called for the withdrawal of all U.S. "tactical" nuclear weapons based in Europe and even for the beginning of the "good faith" negotiations to completely eliminate the world's nuclear arsenals, as promised in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite President Obama's stated commitment to work for a nuclear weapons free world, U.S. leaders have repeatedly

stressed the importance of maintaining the world's most powerful nuclear arsenal and urged NATO "Alliance cohesion."

In 2011, then Secretary of State Clinton (possibly the next U.S. president) insisted that "as long as nuclear weapons exist, we, the United States, will maintain a[n] ... effective nuclear arsenal ... And we will continue to guarantee the security of our NATO allies." Nodding in her wake and citing the dangers of rogue states and terrorists, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen pressed that "the alliance continues to need a credible nuclear deterrent ...."<sup>xxx</sup> But, who really believes that nuclear threats deter non-state terrorists or can reasonably deny that the threats encourage non-nuclear states to emulate NATO by building deterrent nuclear arsenals of their own?

Thus the NATO summit in Portugal adopted the "experts'" recommendations that "NATO should continue to maintain secure and reliable nuclear forces, with widely shared responsibility for deployment and operational support ... Any change in this policy, including the geographic distribution of NATO nuclear deployments in Europe, should be made ... by the Alliance as a whole..." and that "Broad participation of the non-nuclear Allies is an essential sign of transatlantic solidarity and risk sharing."<sup>xxxi</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

What then follows for those of us committed to preventing war and to building a more peaceful and just world?

Most immediately, we need to do all that we can to demand that the killing in Ukraine stop and to press for negotiations that can put Ukraine on a more peaceful path – which would

likely include Ukraine becoming a formally neutral nation with considerable autonomy for its different regions, and economic ties to both Russia and the West.

It is long past time to learn the lessons of World Wars I & II and of global warming which, more gradually than nuclear weapons, threatens the human and other species. The commitment to unending economic growth is killing the planet, and the competition for resources, markets and financial wealth is the driving force of military competition, arms races, and ultimately murderous war. There are profound connections between our struggles for peace and justice and to slow and reverse climate change.

One critically important step along this way to prevent war and exploitation, to secure the financial resources needed to create green jobs, to build sustainable green infrastructures, and to preserve essential social services would be to retire NATO. The Cold War was ended on the basis of the pursuit of Common Security, and this can again serve as our paradigm for peace.

Finally, as Professor Zia Mian recently reminded us, growing out of the excruciating lessons of the First World War, the world's peace forces won a signal achievement: the Kellogg-Briand Treaty which outlawed war. The Treaty didn't hold because citizens didn't demand – in all the ways that we can – that it be honored and implemented. If we are to ensure peace, security, environmental sustainability and lives lived with dignity for this and future generations we must live with the commitment of being “neither victims nor executioners.

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<sup>xvi</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Grand Chessboard*, Basic Books, New York: 1997.

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