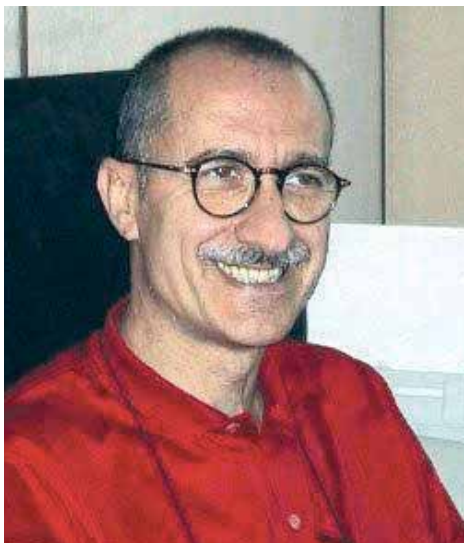


INTERVIEW: PROF. FRANCO BATTAGLIA

‘NATO Is Acting Very Dangerously’

This is an edited transcript of the interview conducted by Claudio Celani on April 20, 2022 with Franco Battaglia, a professor at the University of Modena, in Italy. Professor Battaglia spoke at the November 13-14 2021, Schiller Institute International Conference, “All Moral Resources of Humanity Have To Be Called Up: Mankind Must Be the Immortal Species!” His [subject](#) then was, “Nobel Prize Winners’ Climate Models Are Wrong.”



Prof. Franco Battaglia

Courtesy photo

big issue is the war between Russia and Ukraine, so I write articles on that. It's not because I'm a General or an expert on geopolitics. However, I keep myself informed and I have my own ideas on what is going on over there. I read, for instance, a very important paper by Mr. Putin, which he wrote last July 12, 2021, which, since, nobody mentions—because in that paper it is very clear that on one side, Putin is giving a sort of ultimatum to Ukrainians. So reading that paper, one can understand the reasons why Mr. Putin has taken those actions.

Claudio Celani: This is Claudio Celani, and Prof. Franco Battaglia from Italy is with me today.

He is a professor of physical chemistry at the University of Modena, and the author of several books on the issue of climate, from a standpoint critical of the theory of anthropocentric, or man-made climate change. He doesn't deny climate change, but, he says that human activity, industrial production, etc. are negligible in their effect, from the standpoint of the real causes of climate change that need to be examined at the level of many natural dynamics, including the astrophysical. Prof. Battaglia was the initiator of a petition of more than 1,000 international scientists, first to the Italian President, and then to the Secretary General of the United Nations, saying that there is no climate emergency, and that policies which are suggested to fight climate change, are wrong.

But now, Professor, in the last weeks you have started to write articles of analysis expressing your views on the war emergency, on what's going on in Europe, in Ukraine. Can you talk about the connection between the two issues?

Prof. Franco Battaglia: Well, the connection is that I'm a collaborator of a national newspaper, called *La Verità*. As a collaborator, I provide articles on subjects of what is going on at the moment. Nowadays, the

Celani: Let me go into this: Why did Putin, or the Russian government, attack Ukraine? Did they attack because they wanted to conquer Ukraine, because they want to rebuild the Russian empire, or what?

Battaglia: From the standpoint of what's going on, on the Putin side, one has to go back to 2014. In 2014, there was a legitimate government in Kyiv, which was thrown out by a popular movement. The old government was, in a way, close to Russian politics; however, there were Ukrainians who wanted to become part of the European Union, so there was a sort of revolution in 2014. Then what happened was that a pro-Western government was installed in Ukraine, that discriminated against the Russian-speaking Ukrainians, especially in the east and south of Ukraine, in Donbas and Crimea.

Now, Crimea, which was part of the Russian S.S.R. [Soviet Socialist Republic] was donated by Khrushchev in 1954 to Ukraine. However, the donation was against the Soviet law, because it was supposed to be supported by a referendum. The referendum never happened. So, in 1992, the Russian parliament asked then-President Boris Yeltsin to tackle this Crimea problem, because Crimea was supposed to be part of Russia. The idea was that once the countries which were part of the

Soviet Union, when the union broke up, each country should take with itself the territories it had when they joined the Soviet Union. That was the idea. Now, Crimea was indeed part of Ukraine, because of this illegal donation by Khrushchev. On the other hand, after the 2014 movements, in both Crimea and Donbas, there were election referendums asking the voters whether they wanted to be part of Ukraine or independent: 90% of the population voted for independence.

Why did they have this problem? They had the problem because the Ukrainian government didn't treat the region of Donbas very well at all; they didn't even recognize the Russian minority. They were making life miserable for those people, including not allowing the use of the Russian language in public. It was forbidden to speak Russian in the schools. All these things made life for these people quite miserable, so there was a very strong separatist movement, which ended up with the referendum. The referendum was not recognized by the international community, so there were military actions of the Ukrainian army against the region, horrible actions. For instance, the massacre of Odessa: It was a terrible action. It was a crime! And nobody said anything about this massacre. [On May 2, 2014 neo-Nazis trapped anti-coup protesters in the Trade Union Building and set it on fire, killing at least 40 people.—ed.]

Folly of Banning Russian Energy

Putin's idea was first to help those Russian-speaking people in Donbas and Crimea to separate from the Ukrainian government. Putin writes in his paper that Ukraine does not need Donbas, because if the central government treats those people in Donbas so badly, obviously they don't need it.

I can make a similarity in Italy: In Italy, we have an area which is called South Tyrol; we call it Alto Adige in Italian, where people speak German. Once they were part of Austria, but the Italian government did not ask those people to speak only Italian. It doesn't send military actions, killing those people. Actually, the Italian government gives them very, very high independence. And they are treated well as a minority, I'm sure that if there were a referendum in South Tyrol, I bet those people would prefer to stay with Italy, where they were treated "with white gloves," rather than be part of Austria, with nobody taking care of them.

Celani: So, there were eight years where these people in the Donbas were treated badly, and actually

there was a war against them, and then Russia decided to intervene. Let's come to the situation now: Now there is a war there.... But there is one issue which is now at the forefront of the strategic crisis, which was there in the forefront when the "emergency" was climate: Now it's [still] "climate emergency" but it's no longer in the forefront—it's war.

And this issue is energy. Can you tell us something about it? Is there a correlation between the discussion of energy today, and the discussion of energy in the context of climate policies?

Battaglia: Yes, obviously, this war has brought to the surface how stupid and false was the climate emergency: Because the idea of "climate emergency" is this: We humans use fossil fuels—coal, oil, gas—which when we burn them emit CO₂—carbon dioxide—and carbon dioxide is supposedly the cause of irreversible climate change. So the European Union aims at getting to net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050, thirty years from now.

All of a sudden, we discover, once the war started, that we might have problems getting gas, oil and coal from Russia. Russia is a very important supplier for Europe in these. Now, all of a sudden they have a problem: Now that it seems that their dream (which is a nightmare) of achieving net zero CO₂ emissions could come true, helped by the fact that Mr. Putin could cut off all exports of fossil fuels, they are panicking. Why? Because we cannot reduce CO₂ emissions. This attempt to reduce CO₂ emissions is not something of modern policy: it's a policy that has been going on for 20 years. There was a [1997—ed.] Kyoto Protocol, which aimed at reducing the CO₂ emission worldwide by 6% by 2012. And there was the 20-by-20 package of the European Union, according to which the CO₂ emissions should be reduced by 20% by 2020, by two years ago.

In 2012, were the emissions 6% less, according to the Kyoto Protocol? The answer is "No." They were 40% higher, and in 2020, global CO₂ emissions were 60% higher, not 20% less! The point is, humanity, humankind, needs energy; 85% of this energy, almost 90% of the energy needs of humanity comes from fossil fuels. There is no way at all that we can even think of reducing the CO₂ emissions, and actually, CO₂ emissions are growing unstopably since the start. That's the reality.

The question is, we are dreaming [in] putting sanctions on Mr. Putin, saying we're no longer going to buy any more of Russia oil, coal and gas. Is that possible?

The answer is, “No!” It’s a hypocrisy. Why? Because we’ll continue to buy gas from Russia. Because Russia sells its gas, for instance, to Turkey which gets it through the Blue Stream pipeline. Turkey has not put any sanctions on Russia; we buy this gas. The same for Algeria. It’s just all fake: All these claims that we are planning to get rid of Russian gas, is fake. And even if it was not fake, it doesn’t do anything to Mr. Putin, because, as he said himself, he can sell his fossil fuels to China and to India very easily.



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NATO’s Tools, and Nuclear War

Celani: Now, there is strong pressure on Italy and Germany, especially coming from the United States, but also from Great Britain. Actually, Great Britain puts more pressure than United States, both to have an oil and gas embargo against Russia, but also for intervening militarily: Now there’s a discussion in Britain to send troops to Ukraine. They already want to send tanks and heavy artillery.

Do you think there is a danger that NATO would go too far, and then we have a Third World War?

Battaglia: Yes. First of all, I don’t see why NATO has any business, anything to do with this conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Why NATO? Ukraine is not part of NATO. NATO is actually acting very dangerously, very dangerous actions that they are making. I don’t see why they are doing so. I really don’t see why they are trying to bring the whole world into a war. If this happens, it will be terrible! I’m very worried about this.

Moreover, I don’t see why they are sending, even this military help—why? Ukraine is such a democracy that has to be defended? That’s not the case. In 2014, once the new government took power, the first thing they did was to forbid two major political parties—the Party of the Regions, and the Communist Party. And recently Mr. Zelenskyy has forbidden 11 parties which are against the government policy. It’s very easy to win democratic elections, in this way, when you make illegal parties that are against you.

Also, the army. The Ukrainian army is made up of Nazi troops. Those troops have as one of their heroes, Stepan Bandera: This guy was part of the Nazi Party

Vladimir Putin: “The U.S. is putting weapons against us, a few kilometers from our borders. We cannot allow this.”

and supported Adolf Hitler. There are statues of Bandera all over. And you can look on the Google map, and look for streets and places named after this pro-Nazi guy Bandera.

So this Ukrainian government is not democratic at all! They do have elections, but half of the people cannot vote for the party that represents them because they have been made illegal. So there are many, many things that aren’t very clear with Mr. Zelenskyy and this Ukrainian government.

What Putin Wants

I think the best thing that should have been done, when Putin started to invade Ukraine, which should have been the responsibility of the international powers, was to ask Mr. Putin, “What do you want?” What he wanted was very clear, as I said, first in the paper mentioned before, and also in a speech he gave in December 2021, when he said: “First, we cannot allow Ukraine to be part of NATO.” It is very reasonable. It just happened in 1962, when Mr. Khrushchev wanted to send nuclear missiles to Cuba, and Mr. Kennedy said, either you go back, or we start World War III. And Mr. Khrushchev took the missiles back. In exchange, [Kennedy] had the weapons that the United States had in Turkey were moved out of Turkey.

Putin said very clearly—I’m now using Putin’s words—“We are not putting weapons in front of the United States, and the United States are putting weapons against us, a few kilometers from our borders. We cannot allow this.” Second, we have then to destroy the military structure that has been built in Ukraine against

Russia, with the help of Western countries. This was his second request. And the third request was that we should accept the independence of those regions, the Donbas region and that of Crimea, which is now part of the Russian Federation, because obviously, the Ukrainian government does not need Donbas, given that they are treating them so badly, and that they have already killed 14,000 Russian-speaking people in Donbas.

So the international powers should have asked Putin “What do you want? Let’s see whether your requests are reasonable. If there is something reasonable about your requests, then we should try to make you happy with those requests.” Putin didn’t want to conquer all of Ukraine. That’s obvious, in his action. What he did, he destroyed a few military structures, sending bombs in this war, but now he’s moved out of Kyiv and now he’s taking care of Donbas and Crimea. So that’s very clear.

I think Mr. Zelenskyy should surrender. He should have surrendered several weeks ago.

Celani: In one of your articles, you gave the example with the Roman Republic and the invasion of the Gauls, the Galli, the famous Brennus. [Battaglia laughs] Can you tell us this story, in brief?

Battaglia: If Putin had some request at the beginning of the war, now if he wins the war, his requests will become greater, because he has spent a lot of money and people and effort in getting what he wanted from the beginning. Now, he’s increasing his requests.

Now, what Brennus did at that time, when the people from what is called Gallia, which is now France, moved out and completely destroyed Rome, and they went back to Gaul. Well, Brennus, the legend goes—it’s a legend also; this is what Titus Livius writes—he put his sword on the scale where on one side was the gold that Brennus wanted from Romans, and on the other side were the weights, of course; he put his sword on the top of the weights, to get more gold, and said, “*Vae Victis*” which means something like “Woe to the vanquished.”

And so the question is, when Putin acts as Brennus acted at that time, I don’t think it would be a good idea for him. I think it *would* be a good idea if he could simply restore the Ukrainian government, getting those territories which are 90% populated by Russian-speaking people, and making those territories either independent, or part of the Russian Federation, asking that Ukraine should not be in NATO, and that’s it. I think this could easily happen in the near future.

Unless America and the Western countries insist on continuing this endless war, and they will make a sort of area like Palestine and Israel, on the border of Russia and Ukraine, if things are not settled once and for all.

New Security Arrangement in Europe

Celani: If it’s true what the Russians said, Ukraine is not the end of the story. The Russians want to have what they call a comprehensive security arrangement in Europe and internationally. And a few days ago, there was an international conference, organized by the Schiller Institute, with the participation of the Russian ambassador to Washington; there were Chinese spokesmen, Indian spokesmen, African spokesmen, etc. And the idea was launched that the crisis can be overcome only if the United States accepts the idea of a new security architecture for the world, with security for all participants.

Do you agree that this is the only solution?

Battaglia: I think I agree, this is quite reasonable. Actually, the United States has created a big problem in this part of Europe, because when the Soviet Union dissolved, it gave the assurance that NATO wouldn’t expand eastward. But most of the countries in East Europe are part of NATO now.

Putin asked back at that time, about 20 years ago—no, sorry: it was in 2017 but maybe even earlier—he asked why, against whom, against which countries is NATO expanding? It seems it is against Russia. Actually, there was a time when Russia itself wanted to be part of NATO, and they denied its participation. And then he naturally asked, why is NATO expanding so close to Russia and against what country is NATO expanding? Obviously, against Russia. I think it’s a reasonable request by Mr. Putin, that he should get some assurance for the security of Russia.

Celani: I think we’ve come to the end of our time, and I thank you very much. Is there anything you want to say at the end for our viewers and readers?

Battaglia: Oh yes, of course, I agree, it’s a pleasure for me. I thank you, if you want to invite me to talk again about climate change, or energy problems, for instance, how useless are those so-called renewables, like solar and wind energy, one day we can talk about this, too.

Celani: Certainly, we will do it. So, thank you again.