

Battlefield Ukraine

A War of Aggression or a Preventive War?

Analysis, Causes and Background



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Disclaimer from the Author:

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Introduction

I.

With the start of the Russian military invasion in the Ukraine our continent experienced the blackest day since the end of the Second World War. The 24th February 2022 will go down in history books as a gloomy change of times, because the unimaginable has returned: War in Europe, and only a two-hour flight away from Germany.

When I was in Kiev, standing in the Maidan in November 2019, I could not have had any idea that two-and-a-half years later, war in its most brutal form would visit this beautiful city. War can **never** be justified. It always impacts the innocent with arbitrariness, death and destruction, loss and emergency, with families torn apart, disoriented people, crying children and millions of refugees.

My thoughts are with the many victims – from both sides.

II.

War is always associated with emotions and propaganda. Therefore, calm and objectivity are important if one wants to grasp what is really happening.

What is certain is that Putin has ignited a war of aggression, violated human rights, caused unending suffering and brought the world community against him. For this, Russia is paying a horrendous price which increases every day. Effectively overnight, the largest country in the world has become a rogue state, a pariah among others – devoid of honour, respect and without any friends. Politically, sportingly, culturally and economically, the "giant" stands (almost) abandoned on feet of clay. Its soldiers, most of whom are still very young, are being "burnt out" in a brutal war.

III.

I have Ukrainian and Russian friends, and both sides argue in their own way. Which of them is lying? Or does the truth, as so often, lie somewhere in the middle? In order to determine this, I need to go back three decades of history.

This view should however very clearly **not** be a description of the war in Ukraine, not a one-sided assessment or partisan viewpoint. My intention is to analyse the background and to describe **why** this war has come about. What is important for me is to have the arguments of both sides, those of the Ukraine and those of the Russian Federation. This is **not meant to glorify, but explain**.

The formulation "*Putin = the bad / Ukraine = the good*" is far too facile and short, because very much more lies behind this conflict.

In this publication I shall answer the following controversial questions:

- Did the West really promise there would be no NATO expansion eastwards?
- Why was Putin's outstretched hand [to the West] withdrawn?
- Is the USA really working in the background in Ukraine and pulling the strings?

- Who is the dodgy person behind President Zelensky?
- Why was the Ukrainian army already being trained in a secret CIA program before the invasion took place?
- Are there really 'neo-Nazis' in the Ukrainian army, as Putin supposes?

Apart from this:

- Is the Ukraine being 'sacrificed' by the West?
- Has Russia become a 'mafia state' under Putin?
- What influence do the oligarchs still have today in Russia and in the Ukraine?
- How will the situation develop in Germany?
- What consequences will the war have for us?
- Will we soon starve and freeze?

I will present facts that are either not known in this country or, if known, are largely concealed or distorted.

Nobody is the owner of the truth. A one-sided representation is however always a manipulation and does not serve in the search for truth.

I will first present facts and background in this publication. After this I will describe the Ukrainian and Russian view of the conflict. The reader should then be able to form his or her own judgement.

Sincerely,

Michael Grandt

Part I: Facts which you must know

1.

Did the West really promise to undertake no eastward expansion of NATO?

It is *the* question that is stirring minds today. Did the West really pledge to the Russians that there would be no enlargement of NATO eastwards and did they break their promise as Putin argues? – The answer to this delicate question lies way back, to be more precise over three decades ago.

Looking back: The fall of the Berlin wall was in 1989. The Cold War was over. Germany was reunited one year later. The Iron Curtain was a thing of the past. Russia's army withdrew after 49 years of occupation. (1)

In the negotiations concerning the re-unification of Germany, the Soviet Union demanded that no foreign NATO troops should be stationed in the former DDR and that NATO should not expand towards the east. At that time, the presidents of the world powers were George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Andreas Zumach, who worked at that time in Geneva as correspondent of the German daily 'Taz' wrote:

"In February 1990, as well as the government of the USA also the German government of Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, clearly promised Mr. Gorbachev and his foreign minister Edward Shevardnadze that there would be no eastward expansion of NATO." (2)

Is that correct?

Broken Pledges

Fact search: The then German foreign minister Genscher said on 31 January 1990 during a presentation at the Evangelical Academy Tutzing [emphasis mine]:

*"Whatever happens with the Warsaw Pact, **an expansion of the NATO territory towards the east, closer to the border with the Soviet Union will not happen** (...) The West must also take into account the realization that the changes in Eastern Europe and the process of German unification must not lead to an impairment of Soviet security interests."* (3)

Frank Elbe, who was among the closest work associates of Genscher and who led the ministry of foreign affairs office from 1987 to 1992, was in 1990 a member of the Bonn delegation for the 2+4 negotiations for German reunification. In a SPIEGEL interview at the end of February 2022 he confirmed that he himself had flown to Washington with Genscher's narrative "Whatever happens in Warsaw Pact, there will be no expansion of NATO territory to the east,

that is, closer to the borders of the Soviet Union", and had met there with two close associates of US Secretary of State Baker:

"The Americans liked the idea ... Genscher met a beaming Baker, who said that he liked the non-expansion formula and would see to it that it was accepted in the Alliance." (4)

To the interpretation that some observers have suggested, that Genscher's recommendation only related to the GDR, the witness Elbe answered:

"That is wrong. I would even state this under oath (...) Baker as well as Genscher presented the recommendation in the Kremlin at the beginning of February 1990." (5)

A German file note relays Genscher's statement to Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze like this:

"For us it is clear: NATO will not expand eastward" That applies "quite generally". Shevardnadze is said to have replied that he believed 'every word' of Genscher". (6)

Frank Elbe:

"That is correct. I was there. From the formulation 'quite generally' you can take away that this wasn't only concerning the DDR." (7)

I state: The American and German foreign ministers said to the Russian foreign minister also in the Kremlin that *"in general"* no eastward expansion of NATO would take place.

In a press statement on 2nd February 1990 Genscher repeated this in public. Beside him stood the US foreign minister Baker. Original quote (emphasis mine):

*"We were agreed that there is **no intention to expand NATO's area of defense eastwards**. That applies furthermore, **not only in relation to the GDR**, that we do not want to incorporate [i.e. into NATO], but **it applies quite generally**." (8)*

Genscher's words, with the agreement of the US foreign minister, which everyone can hear and view today, were a clear promise to Russia. It does not get clearer than this.

On 9th February 1990 US foreign minister Baker then promised Russian President Gorbachev: If the United States keeps its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, *"not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction"*. (9)

However, Baker was later to claim exactly the opposite. But there is note of the conversation, which can be understood as a promise not to allow NATO expansion to the east. (10)

The promises went still further: On 11th April 1990 the British foreign minister Hurd told Gorbachev during a state visit in Moscow that his country acknowledged the importance of *"not to do anything that would harm Soviet interests and dignity."*(11)

Critical historians argue that it was only on the basis of these and numerous similar assurances that Gorbachev agreed to the reunification of Germany and its subsequent NATO

membership. The complaints of Russian politicians about the "betrayal" are therefore justified." (12)

But the German political scientist Hannes Adomeit contradicts — in a politically correct way — the narrative of the Western breach of promise. There was "only" talk of not immediately integrating the "former territory of the GDR" into NATO structures. Adomeit sums up truthfully: (emphasis from the author):

*"However, this has **nothing** to do with a breach of **word** or treaty".* (13)

In contrast, the American political scientist, Marc Trachtenberg, argues that the German and American foreign ministers, Genscher and Baker, did indeed refer to Eastern Europe in 1990. This is made clear by other statements, for example to the press, and the context of the conversation. (14) This is correct, as documented by the statements of Baker and Genscher.

That there would be no eastward expansion of NATO was, for the Soviet Union and later also for the Russian Federation, namely very important. (15) As already mentioned: Mikhail Gorbachev placed value on the fact that no NATO troops would be stationed in east Germany, (16) right on his "doorstep".

The then protagonists, US President George H. W. Bush, the Soviet general secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl finally signed on 12th September 1990 the 2+4-Agreement *"on the final settlement with regard to Germany."* (17) As a quid pro quo in bilateral discussions for the Russian's readiness for compromise, Kohl offered Gorbachev funds totaling about DM 100 billion: as credit, economic help and finance for the withdrawal of the Red Army from East Germany. (18)

Agreement by blackmail?

In 1993 the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin explained to US President Bill Clinton that the Russian public sees NATO enlargement to the east as a "neo-isolation" of Russia. (19) On 15th September 1993 Yeltsin finally wrote to Clinton that the 2+4 Agreement in his view, excluded NATO enlargement eastwards. (20) However, the Americans saw it differently.

When Clinton in September 1991 then announced that NATO would now indeed expand eastwards, the Russian president felt deceived because, instead of a partnership for all, NATO was offering former Warsaw Pact countries (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia) entry into the exclusive western Alliance. In an angry speech Yeltsin branded the planned NATO expansion in December 1994 as the start of a "Cold peace" in contradiction to the logic of 1990. (21)

The NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 then attempted to mitigate Russia's reservations about eastward enlargement. In this, NATO and Russia clarified their intent to build a strong, stable and lasting partnership of equals. The goal of this would be to strengthen the security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. (22)

The fact is: Yeltsin agreed to the NATO eastward enlargement in the same year [1997]. But it is also a fact that he explained he was *"only doing this because the West are pressuring him and he designated the NATO eastward expansion as 'illegal' "*. [23]

The previously named diplomat Frank Elbe explained Yeltsin's situation of coercion as follows: "He was, because of the economic situation of Russia, bound into co-operation with the Western powers." [24]

So was it a matter of NATO expansion in return for western supply of food and other goods upon which Yeltsin depended in order to remain in power? This is certainly a question that will keep historians busy for a long time.

Trust is more important than treaties

In 1997, Russia's foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov, a former advisor to Gorbachev and former head of the Russian secret service, explained that several Western leaders "had told Gorbachev that no single country which leaves the Warsaw Pact will enter into NATO." (25)

The West made many promises and this is undisputed. However, there has never been a written agreement about this. This is the snag.

Dr. Dimitri Trenin, an officer of the Soviet army from 1977 to 1991, spelled out what is hard to understand for many who are not familiar with Russian culture:

"It was definitely no breach of a formal or informal agreement, it was a breach of trust. But for Russians a breach of trust is often considered more serious than a breach of contract." (26)

Even today, political shysters are trying to reinterpret the promises made by US Secretary of State Baker to the Russians in such a way that he was not entitled to "foreign policy guidelines and decision-making power", but only the US president at the time.

Baker had used this wording at an early stage of the special talks to allay the Soviet Union's fear of an expanding Germany. (27) In addition, the term "speculative exploratory talks" is trivialised. (28) Accordingly, the talks in February 1990 would only have been about the extension of the integrated NATO defense structures to East Germany. (29)

This is demonstrably false, as Genscher's public statement quoted above proves. He spoke of the "NATO defense area, not only in relation to the GDR" but "in general".

Americans without conscience?

The US policy of eastward expansion of NATO went ahead despite Russian objections and concerns. The Western defense coalition added new members, also states which up to 1990 had been members of the Warsaw Pact:

- **1999:** Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary
- **2004:** Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania
- **2009:** Albania and Croatia
- **2017:** Montenegro (30)
- **2020:** Northern Macedonia

Further countries who want to join NATO:

- Kosovo

- Ukraine
- Georgia
- Moldavia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (31)

Today, east European troops are an important part of NATO. However, in the Russian view that is a clear breach of the “Promises” of 1990.

Conclusion

There were no written guarantees that NATO would not expand eastwards, merely verbal statements – and these in great number. Even if this security wasn’t written in treaty form, in the eyes of the Russians it was still politically and morally binding. (32)

The West disappointed Russian with vague promises of a cooperative European security system, while the Bush administration deliberately placed NATO at the centre of the new security architecture in Europe. (33)

The decision of the Americans to expand NATO up to the borders of Russia was already in 1997 deemed by the historian and diplomat George F. Kennan as *“the most fateful failure of American politics in the era after the Cold War.”* (34)

Kennan prophesied: *“This decision could be expected to inflame nationalistic, anti-west and military tendencies in Russian opinion; to have a damaging influence on the development of democracy in Russia, such that the atmosphere of the Cold War in terms of the relationship between East and West would again be created and Russian foreign policy would pivot in a direction which will be decidedly displeasing to us”.* (35)

The Soviet Union felt itself deceived and henceforth saw NATO as an expansive opponent and no longer as a purely defensive coalition.

2.

The Budapest Memorandum

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991 there were still 1,132 strategic nuclear missiles stationed in the Ukraine. Additionally, there were around 3,000 tactical atomic weapons on Ukrainian territory. (36) Also in Kazakhstan and Belarus there were additional nuclear weapons. Ukraine at that time had the third largest arsenal of atomic weapons in the world, a “danger” that, from the Western point of view, had to be eliminated.

For this reason on 5th December 1994 the KSZE conference [non-proliferation of nuclear weapons treaty] in Budapest took place resulting in the “Budapest Memorandum”. (37)

With this memorandum Russia, the United States of America and Great Britain committed themselves in three separate declarations to each of Kazakhstan, Belarus and the Ukraine, to respect the sovereignty and existing borders of these countries in return for a renunciation of nuclear weapons. (38)

The Budapest Memorandum was a precondition of the signing and ratifying of the Nuclear Weapon Non-Proliferation and Atomic Test Ban Treaties. By 1996 all nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union were to be brought to Russia which, as principal heir of the USSR, had the right to possess atomic weapons. The document was signed by all the affected countries (39) and as a treaty under international law was deposited with the United Nations. China (40) and France issued their own statements on the security guarantee of Ukraine.

In connection with the Crimea crisis of 2014 (see chapter -> "The Annexation of the Crimea") the USA and Great Britain pointed to the agreement and interpreted the Russian intervention as breaking the terms of the Memorandum and as a definite breach of the territorial integrity of the Ukraine. (41)

De facto, Russia also violated this agreement by invading Ukraine on 24th February 2022.

3. Putin Reaches Out

As president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, appearing in March 2000 on the BBC, explained the need for joint work with the West including NATO, for Russia is *"a part of European culture"*, he could not imagine NATO as a foe. Putin did not rule out the possibility of accession, but noted that Russia was still opposed to NATO enlargement to the east. (42)

In the years of his first premiership, Putin however accepted the accession of the Baltic states into NATO. But as a consequence of this encroachment of the EU and NATO he especially intensified contact with Belarus and the Ukraine as regions of the former USSR.

On 25th September 2001, Vladimir Putin spoke in the German Bundestag and recommended a *"full partnership and working effort"*. (43) That was a small sensation. Though Putin's speech was celebrated, real concessions to the Russians did not ensue.

On the other hand: Because of the perpetual NATO expansion eastwards Putin felt he was not being taken seriously and was being deceived. In the following years, he then changed his strategic approach.

On 10th February 2007 Putin spoke at the Munich security conference, however no longer about a *"approach"* but of a *"threat"*, and this is how he also felt – threatened:

"It is obvious that the NATO expansion is not about the security of Europe. To the contrary, it is a provocation to be taken seriously, which destroys trust from the other side." (44)

The Journalist Andreas Zumach who attended the security conference:

"Above all, I experienced during the following coffee break how the political, security and military elites and also many of my journalist colleagues were laughing about Putin and were simply not taking him seriously." (45)

Today nobody is laughing any more. The relationships between the West and the Russian Federation became worse from year to year. The time of sabre rattling began. And there stands the Ukraine, the “doorstep of Russia”, always in the middle.

4.

Fateful Years 2002 & 2014

2004:

The Orange Revolution

The “Orange Revolution” refers to a series of protests, demonstrations and a general strike in the Ukraine, brought to an end by the presidential election in 2004.

Candidates were the former President Victor Yanukovych, who was supported by Russia, and the Western orientated candidate Victor Yushchenko (whose campaign colour was orange), the candidate for the opposition grouping, “Our Ukraine”.

Neither of the two candidates could secure an absolute majority of 50% in the first vote. Victor Yushchenko received 39.87% and Victor Yanukovych 39.32% of the vote. (46)
It came to a run-off vote.

The demonstrations began the day after the deciding vote, when the officially estimated election results differed significantly from the post-election polls. Namely, Yanukovych had won the vote. The supporters of Yushchenko as well as the observers of the OSZE considered however that there was election fraud in favour of Yanukovych.

On 22nd November 2004 more than 100,000 people came together at the Maidan in Kiev and protested against the apparent election fraud. Massive protests and demonstrations followed in other towns in the Ukraine. Many of the participants wore orange flags or scarves, the colour of the Yushchenko campaign. Kiev, Lviv and a few other towns declined to legitimize the result of the vote.

Nevertheless, Yanukovych was declared the winner of the election. Yushchenko and his fellow complainants thereupon determined to hinder the government with general strikes, blockades and sit-ins. (47) Demands to check the election results became ever louder. (48)

After weeklong protests it then really came to a check of the voting. The highest court of the Ukraine finally declared the first run-off vote invalid and ordered a repetition. With the repeat vote on 26th December 2004, Yushchenko received the most votes (51.9% against 44.1%). On 20th January 2004 the highest court confirmed the win of Yushchenko. He was sworn into office on 23rd January 2005. (49) The Ukraine now had a western oriented president.

Ian Traynors, the the long-term Moscow and East European correspondent of *the Guardian*, concluded that the Orange Revolution followed a "pattern" developed in Yugoslavia to overthrow the government with Slobodan Milosovic at the time and suspected a US campaign behind it. (51)

Intriguing: Known supporters of Pora! were the Open Society Foundation of the billionaire George Soros and to a large part the US government funded organization, Freedom House. (52) The German weekly newspaper, *Die Zeit* claimed among other things, that the USA's aim had been to expand NATO in this way. (53) Be that as it may, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine once again reinforced fears of encirclement in Russia. (54)

The next presidential election in 2010 however was then won by the “Russia friendly” Victor Yanukovich, who held office until his flight from the country in 2014.

2014: The Euromaidan

Prehistory: It’s about Raw Materials and geopolitical advantage

2008 NATO opened the door for Georgia and the Ukraine for negotiations concerning membership. Russia thereafter modernized its atomic weapons. (55)

2010 NATO laid plans for a missile defense system in Poland and Romania – allegedly for protection against an attack from Iran (!). Russia then stationed nuclear-capable missiles in the exclave of Kaliningrad, the Russian outpost surrounded by NATO territory. (56) Then Ukraine became more and more the focus of attention.

January 2013: The energy giant Shell und the Ukraine government signed a contract for the extraction of shale gas. Shell thus owned the rights to the Yusivska field in the eastern part of the Ukraine where the strongest pro-Russian sentiment prevails. (57) The Americans had in fact realised that Ukraine had 42 trillion (!) cubic feet of technically recoverable shale gas. (58)

July 2013: It became known that Burisma Holdings (the largest natural gas producer of the Ukraine), had of all people hired Hunter Biden, son of US President Joe Biden, as head of its legal department, (59) at the very time when his father was negotiating with the new regime in Kiev. Burisma Holdings and Royal Dutch Shell had the drilling rights exactly in that part of east Ukraine (in the Dneiper-Donetsk Basin, near Kharkiv) where opposition to the Kiev government was greatest. This is where 90% of the shale gas deposits of the whole of Ukraine are said to be located. (60)

25th September 2013: Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich announced at the UN General Assembly in New York his country's accession to a special free trade agreement between the EU and the Ukraine.

But the then Russian prime minister Dimitri Medvedev had warned shortly before, that if Kiev entered the US trade area, Ukraine could not become a member of the Customs Union between Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia. At that time, 60% of Ukrainian exports were going to the former Soviet Union. (61)

But the US was working behind the scenes to get the Ukraine in the EU free trade agreement to remove it from Russia’s sphere of influence. Geoffrey Pyatt, the US ambassador in Kiev explained:

"I am determined to work with the government of the Ukraine to strengthen the energy independence of the Ukraine. Many ways lead to this aim. One is to bring the American oil companies ExxonMobil and Chevron into the Ukraine to bore shale oil gas." (62)

It should be clear to the reader what the USA wanted: Access to Ukrainian raw materials and with it a substantial geopolitical advantage. After all, in addition to its gas reserves, Ukraine owns 30% of the most fertile black soil in the world. Ukrainian farmers belong among the most important worldwide producers of sunflower oil and they are important producers of grains and sugar. Additionally, more honey is produced in the Ukraine than in any member state of the EU. (63)

21st November 2013: At an EU summit meeting in Vilnius, Yanukovich explained to the surprise of many that his country would now, in contrast to earlier intentions, not sign any treaties of association and free trade with the EU. But instead, Ukraine would focus on strengthening its economic relationship with Russia. (64)

The announcement set off protests in the whole country. At rallies, some of which were violent, Yanukovich was called on to reverse his decision. The whole thing was spurred on by the public appeals of the German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle as well as Lithuanian and Polish parliamentarians who urged the Ukraine to join the EU and give up the connection with Moscow. (65)

The USA also got involved. Victoria Nuland, who was appointed by the then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as envoy for Europe and Eurasia, and who today works under Joe Biden as "Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs" (the third most important woman in the foreign office) said (emphasis mine):

"We will further support the wishes of the Ukrainian people to become a successful European democracy." (66)

This suggested a clear course against the Ukrainian president, and therefore Russia, and boosted the opposition in Ukraine.

18. December 2013: Yanukovich however, did not allow himself to be influenced by the protestors in his own country or the calls from western politicians and signed a comprehensive trade agreement with Russia.

The basis for Yanukovich's decision are not discussed in this country [Germany] which is why I would like to list them:

- Russia committed itself to reduce the price for gas exported to the Ukraine from 400 dollars to 268.50 dollars per 1,000 cubic metre.
- Russia also committed itself to buy an additional 15 billion dollars of Ukrainian government debt in euro bonds (67).

This gave Yanukovich breathing space and averted the threat of national bankruptcy. (68) This offer seemed more tempting to the Ukrainian president in comparison to the "plundering" of his raw materials by the Americans and tough restriction on the population. Because the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) had, in October 2013 in return for credit for the Ukraine demanded the balancing of the budget with the following measures:

- Doubling of gas and electricity prices.
- Lifting of the ban of private selling of farmland.
- Reform of economic participations.
- Devaluation of the currency.
- Reduction of state support.
- Reduction in numbers employed and pay in the public sector. (69)

For this an IMF credit of 17 billion dollars was to be granted. (70) This would have meant that the IMF (read: the USA as by far the largest financier) would have intervened directly in Ukraine's domestic politics. Obviously, Yanukovich with his U-turn, wanted to avoid this and with it the rigid discrimination against the population. But the advocates of the European project in the Ukraine ignored this. The demonstrations against Yanukovich continued.

The chaos begins

19th January 2014: The protests against the Ukrainian government occurred over eight weeks. On Sunday 19th January, right-wing activists named the Prawyj Sektor ("Right Sector", whose roots go back to the Second World War and Hitler's SS as an anti-Russian movement – see chapter ->Neonazis in the Ukrainian leadership and Army?) attacked the Ukrainian police (72) who were guarding the government building and trying to contain the angry crowd. From the roof of the Dynamo Kiev football stadium, Molotov cocktails were being thrown. The police used stun grenades and tear gas. The representative of the Right Sector explained the goal was the overthrow of the present government and the creation of a "Nationalist state" in the Ukraine. (73)

4th February 2014: The US Department's European envoy, Victoria Nuland, already mentioned above, was caught in the act of planning details of a US intervention in Ukraine's government during an intercepted telephone conversation with the US ambassador in Kiev, Geoffrey Pyatt.

In the intercepted phone call, it was clear that she advised Ambassador Pyatt to persuade Vitali Klitschko and the leader of the far-right party Svoboda, which won ten per cent of the vote in the last parliamentary elections, to stay out of the coalition.

Background

Vitali Klitschko sat together in the same boat with anti-Semites and Right-wing extremists

The Svoboda party was founded in 1995. It is openly anti-Russian and its leader often expresses anti-semitic rhetoric. (74) In December 2012, Svoboda's party leader Tyahnybok and his deputy Ihor Miroshnychenko were ranked 5th in its "Top Ten Anti-Semitic/Anti-Israel Slurs"

by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. Tyahnybok had previously claimed that Ukraine was ruled by a Russian-Jewish mafia. (75)

On 28 April 2013, the Svoboda party, with the participation of an MP, organised a rally in Lviv to mark the 70th anniversary of the SS "Galicia" division. (76)

In August 2013, the German government, based on a question by the parliamentary group Die Linke, assessed Svoboda as a right-wing populist and nationalist party, which in part represents extreme right-wing positions. (77)

According to an analysis from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, party leader Tyahnybok mobilized "anti-Semitic resentment, xenophobia and Ukrainian isolationism". (78)

With the start of the protests in the Ukraine in 2013 Svoboda together with Vitali Klitschko's UDAR and the all-Ukrainian "Fatherland" Association of Yulia Tymoshenko formed an opposition tripartite alliance with the aim of deposing the Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich. (79)

The fact that Klitschko was in the same boat as anti-Semites (80) and neo-Nazis (81) was concealed in this country [Germany]. That, too, is part of the truth. After all, Klitschko is still mayor of Kiev today.

In the last parliamentary election in 2019, Svoboda ran in an electoral alliance of various nationalist organisations and, with 2.4% failed to clear the five-percent hurdle, (83) but was able to win a mandate with Oksana Svachuk. (84)

Confusing: Svachuk was a student at the Open World Leadership Center of the US Congress, which even boasted in 2019 that she had been elected to parliament. (85)

But back to the telephone conversation of Nuland with her ambassador in Kiev.

One clearly heard Nuland declare that she "wanted" Arsenik Yatsenyuk, the leader of the Fatherland Party of the then imprisoned Julia Tymoshenko, to be the key man in the government. She also reported that the then US Vice-President Joe Biden had confirmed to her that he was ready to "make the deal watertight" (86) In the same conversation, Nuland also said: "Fuck the EU". (87)

The intercepted discussion, for which the BBC issued a transcript (88) – was further evidence that the US was pulling strings behind the scene. **This, in turn, is today denied by the Western media, politicians and by the Ukrainian government.**

21st / 22nd February 2014: A meeting between EU mediators, the Ukrainian government and the opposition resulted in an agreement: Presidential elections in December, a return to the 2004 constitution and the release of Julia Tymoshenko, who at the time was under arrest and charged with alleged abuse of office and misappropriation of state funds. (89 & 90)

However, a large part of the assembled activists including the militant and paramilitary group, Right Sector rejected the agreement and demanded as before the immediate resignation of President Yanukovych. (91)

22nd February 2014: Snipers began to shoot into the mass of committed demonstrators at the Maidan square. (92) People started to flee in panic. Nearly a hundred people died in the bloody clashes. The pro-Western opposition then blamed president Yanukovych's power apparatus of having ordered the shooting. (93)

The pressure on Yanukovych became ever greater. Militant groups announced a weaponized assault on the government building. (94) Yanukovych was forced to flee from Kiev. (95) The President's offices and private residence were then occupied by groups of protesters. The opposition leader, Klitschko suddenly — in the spirit of US envoy Nuland — withdrew from the agreement and announced that he wanted to have president, who had fled, deposed by parliament in Kiev. Parliament should also decide on a transitional government. (96)

No sooner said than done: On the same day, the Ukrainian parliament dismissed President Victor Yanukovych in a legally undisputed vote. (97) Putin will later say that the ouster was illegitimate. The fact check in DER SPIEGEL will show that Putin is "*right*" if you look at the change in the presidency in Ukraine from a "*purely legal*" perspective.

However, one question remained open: Who had deployed the snipers at the Maidan who shot randomly into the crowd which then led to the flight and deposing of the president of the Ukraine?

The American political economist William Engdahl is well connected with the US intelligence services. According to the source report privately leaked to him, the shooters came from an ultra-right paramilitary organization called the "Ukrainian National Assembly-Self-Defense of the Ukrainian People" (UNA-UNSO). (99) I could not verify this because I do not have access to this source.

One thing is certain, the leader of the ultraright UNA-UNSO, Andrij Schkli, was the advisor of Julia Timoshenko. (100) In addition, both Victoria Nuland and the Republican Senator John McCain had contacts with the opposition extreme right Swoboda party. Photos of meetings can be found today on the internet. (101) Swoboda is again the election arm of neo-fascist organisations in the Ukraine like UNA-UNSO. (102)

Just a coincidence? Intentional? Planned? *Who* was interested to install a western oriented president in Kiev?

End of February 2014: Again, a telephone conversation was overheard and made public. This time it was between the EU envoy Catherine Ashton and Estonia's foreign minister, Urmas Paet. Estonia was concerned about the new pro-western leadership in Kiev. Paet said in the reported phone conversation, also broadcast on Moscow state television, that the new Kiev leadership did not want to investigate the deadly sniper shots during the Maidan protests. He quoted a Ukrainian doctor who claimed to have evidence that *it was the same snipers* who

had fired on both protestors and the police. Behind it were the members of the new coalition, and not the government of Yanukovich. (103) Accordingly, there is more and more evidence that behind the killings was “*not* (the ousted President Victor) *Yanukovich, but someone from the new coalition,*” Paet said in the phone call. (104)

The recording can be found on the internet (e.g. in YouTube (105)). One hears how Ashton simply took note of the really sensational report from Paet but did not follow up with him but changed the topic. (106) Paet even confirmed the authenticity of the recording. From her side, Nuland reacted as if the disclosure had been nothing new.

The Estonian government quickly denied the statement of its foreign minister: “He gives an overview of what he heard in Kiev over the past day and expresses his dismay at the situation on the ground”, their statement reads. (107)

And how did the Americans react? – They gave no comment about the publicly released conversation. (108) However, the damage was already done.

27th February 2014: After Janukovich’s flight, Arsenij Yatsenyuk from the Verkhovna Rada was chosen to be minister president of the transitional government. (109) We recall the intercepted telephone conversation — already mentioned above — between the European envoy of the US Department, Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador in Kiev, Geoffery Pyatt, in which Nuland had clearly stated that she “*wanted*” Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the leader of the Fatherland Party of the then imprisoned Yulia Tymoshenko, as a key person in the regime.

Not for nothing did the *Financial Times* identify Yatsenyuk as “*favourite of the Americans*” (110) So the Americans had prevailed. But Yatsenyuk's cabinet included four ministers from the ultra-right and anti-Semite (111) Svoboda party. (112)

SPD stalwart, Egon Bahr said at the time:

“I do not know what the legal basis is for the present acting government in Kiev.”

The former Vice President of the EU Commission, Günter Verheugen noted:

“After Yanukovich was ousted from power, the new Ukrainian government immediately received unstinting support, although this government does not even enjoy the trust of the majority in its own country, is anti-Russian and is made up of ethnic forces.”

Yatsenyuk’s government unanimously said yes to the IMF loan of 17 billion dollars and the accompanying controls and restrictions, which Yanukovich had rejected. (115) With the devaluation of the currency and the reduction of social services this also affected the population. But for American and EU companies, doors were opened especially for Agrobusiness corporations such as DuPont or Monsanto. (116)

Neo-nazis in the Ukrainian Leadership and in the Army?

March 2014: After the right-wing extremists of the Svoboda party also took charge of the defense ministry, the government announced that it would hire American "Greystone Limited", (117) a company that had been linked to the mercenary force "Backwater Security", because the Ukrainian security service would apparently not be able to keep the climate of protest in the predominantly pro-Russian east under control. (118)

April 1st 2014: The Kiev parliament subsequently decided to disarm the paramilitary fighters of the right-wing Right Sector which had played a leading role during the Maidan revolution. But the secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of the Ukraine, Andrij Parubij, (Co-founder of the right-wing extremist "Socialist National Party of the Ukraine", the forerunner of the "Svoboda Party", who was also temporarily active in a leadership role of the nationalistic organization "Patriots of the Ukraine") (119) refused to proceed with the disarmament. On the contrary, he even allowed the neo-Nazis to march through the streets in orderly formation. (120) Also, the already mentioned ultra-right UNA-UNSO had now joined up with the Right Sector. (121)

April 24th 2014: Dmytro Yarosh, at that time a high-level functionary of the Right Sector and later advisor to the general staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (!), moved his headquarters from Kiev to eastern Ukraine. He said:

"Today I have relocated my headquarters to Dnipropetrovsk. This is in order to hinder the spreading of infection from the Kremlin." (122)

Apart from this he confirmed at a press conference the formation of a new paramilitary brigade with the name "Donbass". Yarosh again:

"We are coordinating our overall approach with that of the leadership of the National Security Service of Ukraine". (123)

The notorious ultra-nationalist and openly far-right "Azov Battalion" or "Azov Regiment", which uses Nazi emblems and, in the summer of 2014, was given official status as a battalion of the Ukrainian National Guard by the Interior Ministry, also operated and still operates in eastern Ukraine. Their trademark: black face masks and black uniforms. (124)

The office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented various human rights violations by the Battalion. It ranges from shootings, expulsions, torture and rape to the rape of a disabled person. Apart from this, another report of the OHCHR mentions "Cases of disappearance which possibly have led to death." (125)

Even the ORF had to admit:

"In fact, there were and are nodes for the international neo-Nazi scene in Ukraine. And indeed, there were and are several extreme right-wing groups in Ukrainian politics and the Ukrainian military (...) The political arm of the ultra-nationalist and largely extreme right-wing scene is the Svoboda party, a rallying point for several groups." (126)

The Azov units also fought in the port city Mariupol from the 24th February 2022. (127)

Also, right in the middle of the Ukraine war of 2022, Dmitri Yarosh, former leader of the Right Sector, suddenly came into public view. Yarosh is a follower of Stepan Bandera, the national hero of the Ukraine who temporarily collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. He was an advisor of the Ukrainian military and up to 2019 a representative in the Duma.

Yarosh reported on Facebook about the militias he apparently commanded again, so-called "volunteer units", which would support the regular troops.

"Victory will be ours! Death to the Moscow hordes!" (128)

Yarosh explained that his battalions in Kiev, Odessa, Lviv and Dnepr are fighting against the Russians. There are other combat groups and a headquarters in Kiev. (129)

On 20th February 2022 Yarosh wrote, it was not only about the formation, arming and coordination of the volunteer units, but also about the *"systematic cleansing of Ukrainian towns and villages of collaborators and scum"*. (130)

I conclude from this that right-wing extremist and right-wing nationalist combat units such as these and the Azov units continue to cooperate with the Ukrainian army, and even more, constitute a part of the Ukrainian armed forces. (131)

The role of the fascist Right Sector with its paramilitary units was and is almost blanked out by the mainstream media. Putin and his foreign minister were to come back to this after the invasion of his troops in Ukraine in February 2022 and argue that they would fight against "neo-Nazis" (see Chapter -> "We fight against neo-Nazis").

The journalist Aris Roussinos has long researched this topic and in my opinion has written the best article about it: *"The truth about Ukraine's far-right militias"*. Roussinos wrote that **the Government in Kiev cooperates with right-wing extremists and also supports right-wing militias and equips them with weapons**. To deny this, as many western media outlets do, is disinformation and thus indirectly promotes the Kremlin narrative. (132)

Roussinos has himself intensively researched and also visited the right-wing extremist militia the "Azov regiment". Their leadership pursues clearly right-wing extreme propaganda and uses national socialist symbols. In the USA there were even efforts to list Azov as a terror organization and place it on the black list. Azov included in its aims freeing Europe from "liberals, homosexuals and migrants". (133)

According to Roussinos, Ukrainian state support for such right-wing extremists and their integration into the state structure is unique in the western hemisphere and should not be downplayed. (134)

In the case of the right-wing extremist and nationalist fighting bands of Yarosh and the Azov units, the Kremlin is also correct. But here in Germany that is dismissed as a "conspiracy theory".

The Massacre of Odessa

2nd May 2014: After pro-Russian activists marched through the city, attacked the "March of Unity" of pro-Ukrainian activists and a street battle broke out (135), the pro-Ukrainian leaders called on their supporters to march to the tent camp of the pro-Russian activists at Kulikov Square.

The pro-Russian activist withdrew to the nearby union building. Pro-Ukrainian activists also including supporters of the Right Sector burned the tent down. Subsequently, the pro-Ukrainian activists threw incendiary bombs at each other outside the trade union building and the pro-Russian activists inside. Shots were also fired at both sides. Finally, a fire broke out in the union building so that at 19:43 the fire brigade was called. However, the pro-Ukrainian activists allowed nobody to leave the union building. The fire brigade arrived only 40 minutes after being alerted. A minimum of 42 pro-Russian activists died, 32 of these inside the building and a further 10 in trying to escape by jumping out of windows. The police did not intervene at the Kulokov Square. (136)

However, eye witnesses reported that the pro-Russian activists had no weapons, only sticks or cudgels and the Molotov cocktails came from outside of the building. Radicals of the Right Sector had finally stormed the union building, shot some of the pro-Russians and brutally assaulted others. (137)

The Ukrainian government then initiated criminal proceedings and appointed several commissions of enquiry.

In November 2015 one-and-a-half years after the riots, the Council of Europe criticized the investigations of the Ukrainian judiciary. According to its report "*no substantial progress has been made with the investigations*" (138) They have been neither independent nor efficient. Moreover, the Ukrainian authorities lacked the "*necessary thoroughness and diligence*" (139).

In September 2016 the responsible public prosecutor said that some main suspects have been identified. (140) The office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights however found fault with the fact that the Ukrainian authorities had only opened investigations against pro-Russian activists. (141) Two years later, in 2018, it still objected to the continuing one-sided investigations. (142) To this day nobody has been prosecuted for the fire and deaths which occurred there and it is also officially not known who started the fire and why the police did not intervene. (143)

Russia also complained about this. The Ukraine had, in its view done too little, to refute such allegations. The then governor of Odessa even justified the arson: In order "*to neutralize armed terrorists*" the action had been "*legal*". (144)

Civil war in the Ukraine

25th May 2014: Petro Poroshenko was voted to be the new president of the Ukraine. The billionaire is owner of the business group Ukrprominvest which includes involvement in car

production, shipbuilding, chocolate manufacture and armaments, as well as television stations. In 2021 he was listed in the business magazine *Forbes* in place 7 among the Ukrainian oligarchs with an estimated fortune of 1.6 billion US dollars. (145) Poroshenko was the chairman of the Ukrainian party "European Solidarity".

With this government, Ukraine pushed itself ever closer into the Western sphere of influence. So it is no wonder that Russia had to take this as a direct strategic attack on its security.

Wolfgang Ischinger (former leader of the Munich Security Conference) said in an interview:

"In the Russian view that was almost a declaration of war. For these were territories that had not simply been members of the Warsaw Pact, in the cold war period, but were territories that had belonged to the Soviet Union. So that was part of the heartland, at least in the minds of many Russians." (146)

The fight in the east of the Ukraine, especially in the pro-Russian Oblasts (administrative districts) of Donetsk and Lugansk increased in intensity.

The Ukraine was torn. NATO opponents feared a too great influence from the West while proponents hoped for more security from NATO and the EU. Right-wing nationalists used the conflict to instigate chaos.

But what role was NATO playing in this?

The historian Söhne Neitzel wrote:

"My reading of the Americans is precisely that they then exploited Russia's weakness more and more and that the Europeans, who are really closer to it, saw, we must not turn the wheel too far either." (147)

The east of the Ukraine finally sank into a civil war. In Donetsk and Lugansk the Ukrainian army fought against separatists who were supported by Russia. Since the start of the fighting in east Ukraine more than 10,000 people have lost their lives.

A country in civil war was out of the question for NATO membership. But how likely was accession in the first place?

The journalist Andreas Zumach:

"In background talks with Chancellor Merkel or Foreign Ministers Steinmeier and Gabriel, you can clearly hear that you can forget about Ukraine joining not only NATO but also the EU for decades to come. In public, people are still saying something different with regard to the EU and are thus fuelling false hopes among the people in Ukraine. This is a highly ambiguous, dishonest policy." (148)

This is also true: Many people in east Ukraine and on the Crimean peninsula feel nearer to Russia than to the West. A deep political rift has become visible. Putin from his side saw vital Russian interests endangered and dealt with that in his way: militarily.

5.

The annexation of the Crimea

March 2014: Soldiers in green uniforms, without national emblems, brought Crimea under their control. Supposedly, they were self-defenders of the Russian-born population in Crimea, which belongs to Ukraine under international law. Moscow initially denied any involvement.

In fact, however, regular Russian troops attacked the neighbouring country. They occupied the Crimean government building and raised the Russian flag. The provincial government was deposed and the peninsula sealed off. The aim of the action: the annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

The occupation of Crimea secured Russia's strategically important ports and access to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. NATO did not want to and could not act. NATO did not want to and could not act. The annexation of Crimea, which was against international law, gave Putin a lot of popularity in his own country. Since then, Russia is once again "feared" in Eastern Europe. (149)

In March 2014 Putin justified his action. He spoke of "*Betrayal of 1990*" and by that he meant the broken promises about NATO eastward expansion. The West has "*lied to Russia many times, [and] made decisions behind our backs*". (150)

The Crimea crisis initiated a new Ice Age between East and West. NATO against Russia. The old enemy positions under new auspices. NATO wanted to concentrate more strongly on its core task again, defence of the Alliance. Among other things, with the stationing of an intervention force on the Russian border.

Meanwhile, the war in eastern Ukraine continued unabated.

6.

Minsk-I

In Belarussian Minsk on **5th September 2014** a peace plan (152) for the fighting in east Ukraine was signed.

The Minsk Protocol is the written summary of the outcome of consultations of the trilateral contact group consisting of Ukraine, the OSCE and Russia on joint steps to implement the peace plan of Ukrainian President Petra Poroshenko and the initiatives of Russian President Vladimir Putin. (153) The goal of the agreement was a limited cease fire.

But the cease fire did not hold for long. On **28th September 2014** new fighting broke out and resulted in the second battle at the Donetsk airport. (154) **On 12th February 2015** Germany and France made an initiative to get a new cease fire agreement: Minsk II.

7. Minsk-II

The Minsk II agreement was the result of the continued civil war in East Ukraine. It was negotiated by French President François Hollande, German chancellor Angela Merkel, the Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko as well as President Vladimir Putin. The agreement aimed to pacify the war that had been raging in eastern Ukraine since 2014 and reach a political settlement of the conflict. (155)

The agreements included 13 points, including:

- A cease fire for all sides.
- A security zone around the "*line of contact*" ("Front").
- Withdrawal of heavy weapons.
- The implementation of regional elections. The elections should be carried out in compliance with the relevant OSCE standards and under monitoring by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.
- A decision by the Ukrainian parliament on a law "On the temporary order of local self-government in individual areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts".
- Restoration of full control over the state border by the Ukrainian government in the entire conflict area, starting from the first day of holding regional elections.
- Implementation of a constitutional reform in Ukraine and entry into force of a new constitution by the end of 2015. This constitution had to have as a key element decentralisation (taking into account the specifics of individual areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), agreed with the representatives of these areas.
- The adoption of a permanent law on the special status of individual regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. (156)

However, both sides subsequently failed to abide by the agreement or were reluctant to do so. The main problem turned out to be the undetermined order of implementation: From the Ukrainian perspective, security was to be ensured first. Moscow, on the other hand, insisted on the political measures such as a say for the armed forces in a constitutional amendment and in parliament. Only then could one talk about disarming them. (157)

On 13th February 2015 Russia submitted a draft resolution to the World Security Council recording the Minsk II agreements and calling for their implementation. (158) **On 17th February 2016**, the resolution was unanimously adopted as Resolution 2202 (2015). (159)

On 21st April 2019 in the second ballot, the previous Ukrainian President Poroshenko lost the presidential election against the political career changer Vladimir Zelensky, with the worst election result ever received by a candidate in the run-off. (160) With that, the former actor and comedian became the new president of the Ukraine. Zelensky had been chosen by many precisely because of his apolitical past. They were hoping for an improvement of their living standards and the end of rampant corruption.

On 21st February 2022 President Putin explained that he saw no prospects for the Minsk agreement. (161) Still on the same day he announced and signed the recognition of the self-

proclaimed and internationally unrecognised People's Republic of Lugansk and the Donetsk People's Republic as independent states. Simultaneously he ordered the sending of troops into the areas controlled by separatists. (162) With that, the Minsk II document signed by all sides became null and void.

8.

How the CIA prepared the Ukrainian army for a war

What the majority of mainstream consumers do not know: In the Ukraine, since the annexation of the Crimea, there has been a secret CIA training program to school Ukrainians in the use of offensive weapons. The program started in 2015. (163) At least, that is what the US military expert Zach Dorfman reported citing several sources from the CIA. (164)

According to the report, CIA veterans instructed Ukrainian soldiers in the use of sniper rifles and US Javelin anti-tank missiles. They were also trained to encrypt their communications from the Russian army. The official word from Washington is that the CIA's mission in eastern Ukraine was limited to intelligence gathering.

"The snipers are really effective, especially now that the Russian advance has stalled and they have been deprived of provisions. I think the training has really paid for itself", Dorfman quoting the words of a CIA official during the 2022 Ukraine war. (165)

According to the official, the CIA training programme was strictly focused on irregular warfare (guerrilla tactics):

"We initially focused fully on planning and implementing such operations. Next, we trained in long-range marksmanship, under combat operations. The Ukrainians were not only to learn how to shoot, but how to thin out the leadership team of the opposite side on the battlefield". (166)

According to the CIA official, the US-trained troops form a "hard core" in the Ukrainian army. According to the report, the CIA veterans were withdrawn only a few weeks before the start of the Russian invasion on 24th February 2022. The reason: The prospect of US agents acting covertly and shooting at Russian soldiers on the front lines had alarmed the Biden administration. (167)

9.

24th February 2022 The Russian invasion of Ukraine

Like any armed conflict, this one had a history that is all too easily ignored today.

Middle of December 2021: Moscow presented written proposals for agreements with the USA and an agreement with NATO in Geneva. In it, Russia raised demands that the Americans and the Defense Alliance could not and would not agree to. It provided for a formal rejection of NATO enlargement and a withdrawal of NATO troop presence to the 1997 level. In addition,

there would have to be a formal guarantee that Ukraine would "never" enter the Alliance. (168) But this would have meant an encroachment on the American monopoly of power in Eastern Europe.

26th January 2022: The answer from the NATO headquarters in Brussels was accordingly curt: The fact that Russia could feel threatened by NATO at all was simply ignored. The letter from Washington, on the other hand, was conciliatory with promises on arms control. But not a word about NATO enlargement. For Putin, both answers were disappointing. Proof that the West continues not to take the Russians' concerns seriously, as it has done for many years. (169)

My speculation: Putin could well have made the decision for the invasion *on this day*.

21st February 2022: Russian president Vladimir Putin gave a speech to his people. In it he declared the recognition of the separatist republic of the Donbass. About Ukraine, he said, it was "*fully founded by Russia— by Bolshevik, communist Russia*". It was a product of the October Revolution, generously endowed with Russian territories by Vladimir Lenin. Today's Ukraine, Putin said, "*can rightly be called 'Vladimir Ilyich Lenin Ukraine'*. *He is its creator and its architect.*" (170)

In his speech, Putin de facto withdrew recognition from Ukraine. According to the Russian president, Ukraine was a misunderstanding of world history that had no right to exist. (171) Three days later he created facts.

24th February 2022: **Russia, a nuclear state, started a war against a sovereign European country.** And this with around 150,000 to 200,000 soldiers (the figures vary), land and airborne troops, tanks and armed helicopters, cruise missiles and ships. **The attack was a clear breach of International law.** (172)

To back up his actions, the Russian president threatened all actors who would rush to Ukraine's aid with "*consequences unprecedented in its history.*" (173) This was taken by Western politicians and the media as meaning an indirect threat of nuclear war.

Military Strength prior to the Invasion

	Ukraine	Russia
Active Soldiers:	197,000	900,000
Reserves:	900,000	2,000,000
Armoured Personnel Carriers:	1,305	6,570
Artillery pieces:	1,960	6,000
Battle Tanks:	887	3,417
Fighter Aircraft:	124	1,476
Helicopters:	114	948
Large Battleships:	1	32

Source: Military Balance (174)

Part II: The Ukrainian View

Who is Vladimir Zelensky? – A short biography

Vladimir Alexandrovich Zelensky was born on 25th January 1978 into a Russian speaking Jewish family in Krivoi Rog in the then Soviet Union. (175) After studying law, he attained popularity as an actor, comedian, dubbing actor, director, TV moderator, film producer and script writer.

His wealth is estimated at around € 1.4 million. (176) However, that appears to be a very elusive estimate because, as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* writes, in 2017 Zelensky purchased a 17-room villa in the posh Tuscan resort Forte dei Marmi which alone had a value of €3.8 million. During his presidential candidacy he will “forget” to declare this as an asset. (177)

In October 2021 it was revealed through the publishing of the “Pandora Papers” that Zelensky is also said to maintain a shell company in a tax haven. (178) The “Pandora Papers” also contained data on previously unknown offshore transactions of the "Quarter 95" network around Zelensky, his connections to the oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky and the "PrivatBank" operated by him until 2016 and then nationalised. Before the nationalisation, 41 million dollars were allegedly transferred from the "PrivatBank" to the account of Zelensky 's production company "Quartal 95". Ivan Bakanov, a childhood friend of Zelensky, is also said to be part of the network. (179)

On New Year’s Eve 2018 Zelensky announced his candidacy for the election. He would have a certain dependence on the Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. This is the richest man in the Ukraine. Also, as a presidential candidate, Zelensky would be massively promoted by Kolomoisky. (180)

Zelensky denied that Kolomoisky had any influence. (181) But *Radio Free Europe* uncovered that during the years 2017 / 2018 Zelensky flew a minimum of 14 times first to Kolomoisky’s then residence in exile in Geneva and then to Tel Aviv – the last time in autumn 2018 after his decision to run for president. Kolomoisky is also of Jewish extraction, therefore explaining his residence in Tel Aviv. But this is not all: Kolomoisky's long-time lawyer Andrij Bohdan also played a prominent role on the campaign staff. (182) Zelensky's bodyguards were also paid by the oligarch Kolomoisky. (183)

On the 21st April 2019 Zelensky won the run-off election for president clearly ahead of the then acting President Petro Poroshenko (184) and since the 20th May 2019 is the sixth president of the Ukraine.

The Tel Aviv daily newspaper, Haaretz noted that Ukraine was now the only country other than Israel to have both a Jewish president and a Jewish prime minister. (185) In 2020, Zelensky had "Roshah-Shanah", the Jewish New Year, declared a bank holiday. (186)

After Zelensky came to power via an oligarch he passed a lobby law with the help of parliament that exposed and somewhat curtailed the influence of the oligarchs. Since the law

came into force, oligarchs have been forbidden to finance parties in Ukraine. Public officials must also declare any non-public meeting with oligarchs. In addition, Zelensky established a National Security Council that can impose sanctions against oligarchs. (187) But in reality, he did not do much about the oligarchs' great influence in politics and the media.

February 2021: According to the polls, less than two years after his triumphant win over officeholder Petro Poroschenko, just one fifth of Ukrainians wanted to vote for Zelensky in a first round of voting. According to a renowned institute, half of those polled said they demanded Zelensky's immediate resignation and early presidential elections. (188)

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* at that time gave a devastating résumé (emphasis mine):

“But the main reason for Zelensky’s fall is his **unwillingness for real reform. Zelensky continues the post-Soviet system of rule and accepts corruption and lawlessness** in exchange for keeping him and his apparatus largely in control. Zelensky, with the exception of his action against the pro-Kremlin politician and media mogul Viktor Medvedchuk, has **done nothing to break up the power of the oligarchs over large sections of politics, the media and the economy.** A functioning state needs **independent institutions – they still do not exist under Zelensky.** To the contrary, in 2020, **he effectively subordinated to himself the previously semi-independent Central Bank and the Prosecutor General's Office;** virtually all respected reformers were fired. The secret service SBU, **the breathtakingly corrupt courts, the bodies for selecting and dismissing judges: they all remain untouched.**” (189)

And further:

“Now the president also wants to subordinate the semi-independent anti-corruption bureau Nabu because it is rightly investigating several of Zelensky's associates. If billions were not stolen in Ukraine, the country would not need billions in loans from the West. The International Monetary Fund, however, has now refused to lend Zelensky any more money as long as he is only making "cheap promises of reform". (190)

So Zelensky is a hero with a dark side. But here in Germany, this is ignored.

Background

Zelensky’s shady mentor: Ihor Valeriovitch Kolomoiski

Kolomoisky is a really shady character. In June 2014 Russian law enforcement agencies led an investigation against him and the Ukrainian interior minister Arsen Awakov. Kolomoisky was investigated among other things for organized crime. As the then governor of Dnepropetrovsk region, he is alleged to have financed right-wing extremist death squads. He is also under investigation for murder and the use of illicit weapons in the Donbas war zone. (191) At the start of July 2014, a Moscow court issued an arrest warrant against Kolomoisky. (192)

In December 2016 a large part of the PrivatBank belonging to Kolomoisky was nationalized in order to protect Ukraine’s financial system from collapse. 95 percent of the bank's loans were allegedly paid out to companies owned by him and to Hennady Boholyubov as the second

major owner, with many loans being bad. Both were supposed to repay these insider loans. (193)

According to a media report from March 2018, Kolomoisky moved his residence to Israel on account of the criminal investigation proceedings against him. (194)

But the dubious oligarch is also threatened with trouble in the USA: In 2019, the US Public Prosecutor of North Ohio led an investigation into Kolomoisky's investments transacted there. (195) In March 2021 the USA finally imposed entry bans on him and his closest relatives and accused him of corruption. (196)

Kolomoisky was also suspected of having organized the contract killing of a lawyer. It is also said that he intimidates opponents during meetings by feeding his five-metre-long shark, which he keeps in an aquarium in his office. With the help of Kolomoisky's media channels Zelensky's popularity in the Ukraine reached a new high point. (197)

Also, without oligarchs, nothing gets done in the Ukraine. That it still the case today. So if one talks about the influence of Russian oligarchs over Putin, one must also do the same with the influence of oligarchs in the Ukraine.

An acquaintance from Kiev who is also the niece of an oligarch, already confirmed to me a few years ago that without the influence and the money of an oligarch, nobody gets into high government office in the Ukraine. The scientific study "Regions and Oligarchs: Influence on Ukrainian Foreign Policy" confirms this view. (198)

1.

Nuclear missiles on the Kremlin

For the Ukrainian President Zelensky and the Western world it is clear – and there is no doubt about it: The Russian attack is a "*War of Aggression*" and an "*Invasion*". In his many video messages, tweets and interviews in the days that followed Zelensky spoke about "*Russian aggressors*", "*occupiers*", of "*genocide*" and "*war crimes*". (199)

In order to understand why Putin attacked the Ukraine, one must however also analyse the behaviour of Zelensky, who had spoken out in favour of rapprochement with the West since he took office and had also geared his policy accordingly.

7th February 2019: The Ukrainian parliament with a majority of 334 of the 450 delegates enshrined in the Constitution a "*strategic orientation of the Ukraine towards full entry into the EU and NATO*". (200) Thus, the intention to join the Western and US-dominated military alliance was even written into the Constitution.

End of May 2019: Immediately following his election to president, Zelensky propagated an entry into the EU and NATO. (201) But at that time, it was clear that the Kremlin would take this as a provocation.

A further enlargement of NATO to the core territory of the Russian Federation could not be accepted by Moscow. The thought that nuclear missiles could be stationed only a few flight minutes away from the Kremlin was unthinkable for the Russian leadership. Putin openly said this many times. Ukrainian missiles could reach Moscow in seven to ten minutes, in the case of hypersonic gliders even in five minutes — possibly armed with nuclear warheads: *“That is a serious challenge for us, a challenge to our security”*, Putin warned during a speech in the Ministry of Defense. (202)

Russian security concerns were taken seriously neither by NATO nor the Ukraine.

2. Ukrainian Language Act “Right to service in the national language”

How does it look with the allegations of disadvantages and discrimination of Russian culture in the Ukraine propagated by the Russian leadership? An example of this is the controversial Ukrainian language law.

April 2019 / January 2022: The Ukrainian parliament passed a language law requiring Ukrainian to be used in public institutions. It had a transitional period of three years and finally came into force on 16th January 2022. (203)

All state employees, traffic police officers, court bailiffs, clinic doctors have since been obliged to address citizens in Ukrainian, unless they ask to be addressed in another language. The same applies to service providers, i.e. employees of supermarkets, pharmacies, banks. Violations of the *“right to be served in the national language”* can be reported to the *“Special Plenipotentiary for the Protection of the language”* and, in the event of a repeat offence, can be punished with fines. (204) In addition, the quota for Ukrainian-language television and radio programmes will be increased. (205)

Supra-regional newspapers and magazines must now appear in Ukrainian. Russian editions are not prohibited, but in parallel, a Ukrainian version must be printed with the same number of copies. For the vast majority of publishers, however, this is unprofitable. (206)

The only exceptions to the obligation to publish in Ukrainian are the languages of *“ancestral minorities”* such as the Crimean Tatars, the Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Greeks, Bulgarians, but also the English as well as all official languages of the EU, with the exception of Russian — a further provocation for the Kremlin. Also, from the obligation of Ukrainian bookshops to offer at least fifty per cent of their stock in Ukrainian there are exceptions for the aforementioned minorities and EU languages. (207)

There was a hail of criticism in the German media. There was talk of *“stifling Russian”* (208) and *“language coercion”* (209).

While Russia condemned the new regulation as "*scandalous*", Zelensky (who was not yet president at the time) announced that he would review the law after his inauguration (two months later). (210) However, the law came into force three years later, under his leadership. This makes the Ukraine the first country to de facto ban press publications in a specific language. (211)

2021: Zelensky also had three pro-Russian TV stations banned, (212) which also drew the ire of the Russians.

3.

Zelensky pushes into NATO

Mid-February 2022: At the Munich Security Conference — even before the Russian invasion — Zelensky said that his country needed help in the form of weapons, money and investment in the economy. In addition, he called upon the Western states to be more honest. This applies especially to Ukraine's much-discussed accession to NATO. In this regard Zelensky wanted a "*clear*" time frame. (213)

Zelensky also called on the Western states to change their behaviour towards Russia. Ukraine was Europe's "*protective shield*" against Russia and therefore deserving of more international support. (214)

With this speech, Zelensky provided the Kremlin's propaganda with further arguments, namely, that the Russians were later to say that Ukraine always wanted to join NATO, that this posed a threat to the Federation, and that economic aid would make Ukraine even more of a "*puppet*" of the West.

4.

Zelensky pushes into the EU

1st March 2022: In an emotional appeal to the European Parliament in the midst of the war, Zelensky demanded that his country be admitted to the European Union: "*We are fighting for our rights, for our freedom, for our lives. And now we are fighting to survive,*" he said in a video message at the beginning of a special session of parliament. (215) And further:

"But we are also fighting to be equal members of Europe. The European Union will be much stronger with us. That is certain. Without you, Ukraine will be alone. We want to see our children live. Prove that you are with us (...) Prove that you really are Europeans". (216)

Zelensky was greeted with a standing ovation by the deputies and was also given a similar farewell. Many parliamentarians carried t-shirts with the Ukrainian national flag and there were many protest placards on display. (217)

Even earlier, a few days after the Russian attack on his country, Zelensky had called for an "*immediate admission of Ukraine according to a new special procedure*". The Ukrainian

parliamentary President Ruslan Stefanchuk, also appealed to the European Parliament in favour of his country's accession to the EU. (218)

Mid-March 2022: Following the EU summit in Versailles, France EU Council Chief Charles Michel said:

"The Ukraine is part of the European family, and we all want to make efforts to strengthen ties with it". (219)

Austria's Federal Chancellor, Karl Nehammer summed up the negotiations to a common denominator:

"Quick aid, long accession process". (220)

It seems clear that the Ukraine is to become a member of the European Union in the medium to long term.

5.

"Our dignity is the greatest treasure"

3rd March 2022: The Ukrainian president addressed his people in a video address. Among other things, he spoke of "occupiers" and the end of the war:

"And I say to Russia. Learn the words reparation and contribution. You will compensate us for everything, everything you have done against our state and against every Ukrainian, to the full extent (...) We have nothing to lose except our own freedom, our own dignity, that is the greatest treasure for us". (221)

He then gave a press conference. When asked what he would discuss with Putin if he could, Zelensky replied:

"I think we should just talk without conditions, without insults, like people, like men. It is very important, if it is possible, I don't know what's going on with him now (...) Yes, there are questions and I am ready to discuss everything. All the questions. (...) Our language, the problems with the Russian language here. I don't see the problem with this, I can talk about it, no problem. Donbass, the occupied or not occupied regions, the status of the people's Republics (...)".

However, in the next few days, he again made his demand to join NATO, which the Russian side probably interpreted as a further provocation.

6. Playing with the Third World War

7th March 2022: According to President Vladimir Zelensky, Ukraine is now *no longer* pressing for a third world war and — probably under the impression of continued bloody hostilities — to become a member of NATO. He had "*softened*" his stance on the issue "*some time ago*", as NATO was apparently not prepared to "*accept Ukraine*", he said in an interview with the US channel ABC. (223)

In the days that followed, Zelensky admonished the West for failing to impose a no-fly zone and blamed Western politicians for the deaths of women and children from Russian bombs. (224)

Over and over again he pointed out the importance of such a no-fly zone, claiming that "*anyone*" who did not want it was a murderer. (225)

16th March 2022: With a dramatic speech before the two chambers of the US Congress (via video link), which was accompanied by a film of the devastation in his country and the dead, including pictures of dead children, Zelensky again called for the establishment of a no-fly zone, telling US senators and congressmen that Russia had turned the skies over Ukraine into a source of terror and death. The no-fly zone was necessary so that Russia could no longer "*terrorise*" Ukrainian cities. Such terror has not been seen in Europe for 80 years. (226)

This reasoning may have been correct from the point of view of his desperate situation, but it concealed the fact that it would mean a Third World War if NATO fighter jets were to attack Russian MIGs to enforce the grounding. Zelensky's appeals were therefore dangerous for the rest of the world, albeit highly understandable in his dramatic situation.

The German daily Taz wrote:

"Wrong and dangerous. President Zelensky's call for a no-fly zone is understandable. But this would threaten a war between nuclear powers." (227)

Fear of a Third World War was almost palpable around the globe during these days. Ever since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, when the Americans refused to accept the deployment of Soviet missiles on the Latin American island and also risked a third world war, the danger had never seemed so great.

Even then, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the great powers USA and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war. The reason was the stationing of Soviet nuclear missiles on the Caribbean island. Washington imposed a naval blockade around Cuba and threatened harsh military action. The nuclear forces of both sides were put on alert. After days of great tension, the USA and the Soviet Union finally agreed to withdraw their forces from Cuba and Turkey. (228)

The Kremlin now argues that the Western military alliance is, via the Ukraine — formerly part of the Soviet Union — moving closer to Russia and wants to station missiles. NATO rejects

this. (229) However, the experience with previous eastward enlargement makes the Russians extremely suspicious.

17th March 2022: Zelensky spoke live via video link to the German Bundestag. He addressed the German people directly, calling for accession to the EU and appealed to the historical responsibility of the Germans. (230) He appealed to Chancellor Olaf Scholz personally:

"Help us to stop this war, so that your children will later be proud of you!" (231)

Some members of the Bundestag had tears in their eyes.

The Ukrainian president's situation during the Russian war of aggression was extremely difficult. The Swiss daily *Tagesanzeiger* put it in a nutshell:

"The world makes him a hero — and abandons him". (232)

7.

"Putin, you are a murderer!"

Another important protagonist in the external perception is Andriy Melnyk, the Ukrainian ambassador to Germany. He attempted to convince the German public with sometimes drastic statements, arguing that the war against Ukraine was a war against the entire West (233) and thus forced his way from being an unknown diplomat to a talk-show star in just a few days.

He suddenly appeared on television everywhere. Melnyk is now the face of his people, but also the "*entertainment programme of the Greens*", as DER SPIEGEL put it. (234) Melnyk also comes to the Axel Springer building, because they have even hoisted the Ukrainian flag in front of their skyscraper. (235)

Melnyk is apparently a "fan" of Ukrainian nationalist leader Stepan Bandera, who collaborated with the Germans in the Second World War and whose notorious OUN-B militia took part in pogroms against the Jewish civilian population in Lviv. (236) The Ukrainian ambassador to Germany, according to DER SPIEGEL, even laid flowers at the Munich grave of the anti-Semite, Nazi collaborator and fascist Bandera. (237)

For Melnyk, Bandera, who has a major street in Kiev named after him, was a freedom fighter. (238)

Melnyk, unimpressed, immediately reproduced his arguments and demands in the German media:

- One cannot rely on German policy.
- International pressure has to be built up.
- Suspension of Swift for Russian banks.
- Establishment of a no-fly zone.

- Delivery of defensive weapons.
- Supply of heavy weapons, including tanks. (239)
- Support for EU membership.
- The end of Nord Stream. (240)

On 10th March 2022, Melnyk called out in the Berlin House of Representatives:

"Putin, you are a murderer, you will languish in hell for all eternity!" (241)

As expected, he did not spare Germany either:

"The world has watched, Germany has watched. Putin is waging a war of extermination against Ukraine, especially against innocent civilians". (242)

"We are fighting. For ourselves, for our lives, for our children. But we are also fighting for you. We are also fighting for your freedom", said Melnyk to the applause of the MPs. (243)

A few days earlier, in response to a question from an American journalist as to whether he would also fight, he said: No, he himself was in Berlin. He could do more here than with a gun at home. He had no military training at all. (244)

There is no doubt that Ukraine is in a desperate situation. The country is fighting for its survival. The Russian war of aggression is crippling cities and kills people. The West supplied weapons, gave special support and took in millions of refugees. However, neither the USA nor its allies want to risk a Third World War. A difficult situation that has ultimately victimised Ukrainians.

Part III:

The Russian Federation's view

Who is Vladimir Putin? — A short biography

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin was born in Leningrad on 7 October 1952. His paternal grandfather, Spiridon Iwanowitsch Putin, was allegedly a cook for Lenin and Stalin. (245)

Putin speaks fluent German (246) and was married from 1983 to 2013 to the German teacher Lyudmila Shkrebneva. (247) They have two daughters. (248)

Putin has had a truly adventurous life, which in no way compares with the biographies of other state leaders:

At an early age he became interested in martial arts. As a youth he practiced boxing, sambo and judo, in the latter of which he became Leningrad city champion. (249)

At the age of 18, he was awarded a black belt. (250) Even as president, he regularly trained in judo in the Kremlin. Furthermore, skiing is one of his favourite sports and he also plays ice hockey.

Putin completed a law degree at Leningrad University. From 1975 to 1982 he was a KGB officer in the first main department (foreign espionage). From 1984 to 1985 he attended the KGB college in Moscow. Putin worked in the GDR from 1985, mainly in Dresden, where he improved his German. He advanced from the rank of Captain to Major. His activities in the GDR included recruiting, training in radio communication and the surveillance of visitor groups. (251)

Putin was ordered back to the USSR in January 1990. Due to an overcapacity of personnel in the Leningrad KGB, he went back to the USSR as an assistant to the rector for international affairs at the university there. A year later he was appointed head of the city's Committee for External Relations. In 1994 Putin rose to become the first deputy mayor of Petersburg. In 1996 he helped Boris Yeltsin's local campaign staff for the Russian presidential elections. In March 1997, he became deputy head of his office. In May 1998, Putin was promoted to deputy head of the presidential administration. From 25 July 1998 until August 1999, Putin was director of the FSB domestic intelligence service, and from 26 March 1999 he was also Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation.

President Yeltsin appointed his preferred candidate, Putin, as Prime Minister on 9 August 1999; the Duma confirmed this decision a week later. (252)

Presidential elections were held on 26 March 2000. Putin won the first round with 52.9 per cent of the vote. After Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin became the second president of the Russian Federation.

He has been President of the Russian Federation since 7 May 2000 (with an interruption from 2008 to 2012). From August 1999 to May 2000 and from May 2008 until his re-election as President 2012 Putin was Prime Minister of Russia. From 31 December 1999 until his election on 7 May 2000, he served as acting president. As president, according to the Kremlin, he earns only 130,000 dollars a year. His private fortune, however, is estimated to be in the billions. (253)

But there are also many dark sides under Putin: According to Rosstat, the state statistics agency of Russia, the number of employees in the courts and prosecution offices has doubled in the last 20 years. The political scientist Nikolay Petrov estimates that there are currently around 4.5 million "siloviki" in Russia (members of the security services, police and judiciary), which is six per cent of the total working population: "[That] *is more than in the Soviet Union, when Russia was only half the size.* (254)

In Putin's Russia, citizens are deprived of the very fundamental rights and freedoms that we know: Freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly, the right to fair elections and the right to an unbiased trial in court. In addition, they have lost the voices of the opposition and free media. Since 2000, independent media have been single-mindedly destroyed, placed under the control of the state or companies close to the Kremlin, or forced to be loyal to the government. (255)

In Russia, as in Ukraine (see Chapter 4 "The Ukrainian Perspective"), there are still oligarchs worth billions. These are big industrialists who, through their wealth, exert influence over the government, over a country or a region. In the Western world an oligarch is harmlessly depicted as a "business magnate" or "Tycoon". (256)

In the 1990s, the influence of the Russian oligarchs was so great that there was talk of the "golden age of oligarchs". With Putin, the influence of the powerful initially declined: he made an example of the oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who was sentenced to nine years in prison for tax offences. Also, other oligarchs also got into trouble with the justice system. However, it is assumed that Putin only had those people prosecuted who might later stand in his way (257) since oligarchs still exist in Russia.

Leonid Newslin, a member of the board of trustees of the Institute of Modern Russia (IMR), wrote (emphasis mine):

"In the course of the past 20 years, a special type of elite has emerged in Russia, personally focused on Putin and dependent on him. This elite has established a system of neo-feudal domination in Russia and sees the country only as a source of personal enrichment. Entire dynasties have grown up under the Putin system: the Timchenkos, Rotenbergs, Kovalchuks, Patrushevs, Murovs, Shamalovs, Bortnikovs, Sechins. Russia's economy has been so tidied up that it serves the interests of this elite. The state and political institutions have been in such a way that, while maintaining the façade of a democracy, they strengthen and conserve the regime. In essence, the result of Putin's rule is that Russia has become a mafia state". (258)

Putin's Russia a Mafia State? Nevertheless, my Russian friends testify to me in unison, that Putin is a very good president who has made Russia strong again. He is quite different from the "drunken" Yeltsin, who gave the empire to the oligarchs just to be able to continue to govern. Gorbachev, who is stylised as a "hero" in this country [Germany] is regarded by my friends as the "weakest" president the country has ever had, who was responsible for the collapse of the USSR, hunger and impoverishment. (259)

In July 2021, Vladimir Putin's essay "*On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*" was published by the Kremlin. (260) In this, Putin described the Ukraine as an "*anti-Russia*" controlled by the West. (261)

In order to understand how the disastrous events and the attack on Ukraine have come about, it is necessary to know the Russian view of things. This is not to glorify, but to explain. I ask you to note the difference. For Putin, the "special operation" was a preventive measure.

1.

Russia wants security guarantees

December 2021: I have already explained in "The Russian invasion of the Ukraine" that in his yearly press conference, Vladimir Putin made far-reaching demands on the USA and NATO for binding security guarantees. Shortly thereafter the Kremlin published drafts for two agreements with the aim of hindering a further opening up of the Atlantic Alliance to the East and the establishment of US military bases in former Soviet republics that are members of NATO. NATO would also have to withdraw its forces to their 1997 positions and the US would have to remove its nuclear arsenal from Western Europe. (262)

It was not until the **end of January 2021** that NATO and the USA responded: They made it clear that there was no room for negotiation on the big principles. For NATO (and the EU), the following applied and still applies: Every state is free to choose its own alliances. This is the basis of the European security order. (263)

But from the Russian point of view, this was and still is the crux of the matter. The European security order, as it has crystallised and developed since 1992, is no longer acceptable to the Kremlin. Russia wants a buffer zone between itself and the West.

Also Putin stated in **December 2021** that, since the end of the Cold War, NATO has "*brazenly deceived*" his country with "*five waves of enlargement*" without any consideration for Russian security. (264)

Troop strengths of the world's largest armies (2022)

Place	Country	Troop Strength (#soldiers)
1.	China	2,000,000
2.	India	1,450,000
3.	USA	1.390,000
4.	North Korea	1.200,000
5.	Russia	850,000
6.	Pakistan	640,000
7.	Iran	575,000
8.	South Korea	555,000
9.	Vietnam	470,000
10.	Egypt	450,000

Source: Global Firepower (265)

For Vladimir Putin, the war in Ukraine is a "*special military operation*", as he announced in a historic speech to the nation on the day of the invasion on 24 February 2022. Here are some rather long excerpts because for the historical context it is important to know Putin's view (emphasis mine):

"It is about what particularly worries and concerns us, about these fundamental threats, which year after year, step by step have been directed at us rudely, unabashedly, by irresponsible politicians in the West. I am referring to the expansion of the NATO bloc to the east, the approach of its military infrastructure to Russia's border.

It is well known that in the past 30 years we have persistently and patiently tried to reach an agreement with the leading NATO countries on the principles of equal and indivisible security in Europe. In response to our proposals we have been met time and again with either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure and blackmail, while the North Atlantic Alliance continues to expand despite all our protests and concerns. The war machine is on the move, and, I repeat, it is approaching our borders.

(...) This includes the promises made to our country not to extend NATO one inch further east. I repeat: They have deceived us, or, to put it in the vernacular, simply ditched us (...)

The problem is that on the territories bordering us — I stress, on our historical territories — an "anti-Russian" country that is hostile to us is being created, which has been placed under complete control from the outside, intensively populated by the armed forces of NATO countries and pumped full of the latest weapons.

For the US and its allies, this is a so-called politics of containment of Russia, an obvious geopolitical dividend. For our country, however, it is ultimately a question of life and death, a question of our historical future as a nation (...)

The leading NATO countries support extreme nationalists and neo-Nazis in the Ukraine in order to achieve their goals. The NATO countries, for their part, will never forgive the people of Crimea and Sevastopol for their free decision to reunite with Russia. (...)

We have simply been left with no other option to defend Russia and our people than the one we have to resort to today. Circumstances demand that we act decisively and immediately.

*The People's Republics of the Donbass have asked Russia for help. In this context, in accordance with Chapter 7, Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, with the consent of the Russian Federation Council and in implementation of the treaties ratified by the Federal Assembly on 22 February this year with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic, **the decision was taken to conduct a special military operation.***

***Its aim is to protect the people** who have been subjected to abuse and genocide for eight years. And to this end, we will carry out the demilitarisation and denazification of the Ukraine and bring to justice those who have committed numerous bloody criminal acts against the civilian population, including citizens of the Russian Federation (...)*

*Now, a few important, very important words for those who might be tempted to interfere in the story from the sidelines. **Whoever tries to obstruct us, let alone create a threat to our country and our people must know that Russia's response will be immediate and will lead to consequences that you have never experienced in your history (...)**" (267)*

Putin also accused the US and the West of creating an "empire of lies", which had wreaked havoc in Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria and Iraq. The West is imposing alien values on Russia, which "lead to decline and extinction because they contradict the nature of man". [apparently a reference to LBQT, genderism, and gay marriage, etc./MGRJ]. Nevertheless, in December 2021, Russia sought talks on security guarantees and an end to NATO's expansion in vain. (268)

Ten minutes after the broadcast of this speech, the first explosions could be heard in the Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk and Russian forces entered the Ukraine. (269)

2.

"We are fighting against neo-Nazis"

Time and again the Russian leadership claims to be fighting "neo-Nazis" in Ukraine and wants to "denazify" the country. This provokes shaking heads in this country [Germany]. But for the Russian leadership this is very serious. I have already dealt with this issue in part I. chapter 4 -> "Neo-Nazis in the Ukrainian leadership and army?",

On 3rd March 2022, Putin said in a TV address (my emphasis):

"(...) At the same time, I will never renounce the fact that Russians and Ukrainians are one people, although part of the population of Ukraine has been intimidated. Many have been dumbed down by Nazi propaganda (...) And the fact that we are fighting against neo-Nazis shows the course of the struggles". (270)

Putin was clearly referring here to the far-right volunteer units and the Azov units (see chapter -> "Neo-Nazis in the Ukrainian leadership and army?")

The Russian Foreign Minister, Lavrov, also responded at a viral press conference on 3 March 2022, to the question of an American journalist from ABC:

"President Zelensky, the first Jewish president, a neo-Nazi?"

Lavrov:

"It is difficult to explain how President Zelensky can hold the presidency in a society where neo-Nazis and neo-Naziism are flourishing. They march, they do their torchlight processions and for these torchlight parades President Zelensky has provided his guard of honour. They conduct drills.

*They are **being trained to practise street fighting** (...) That all this happens under Zelensky and when he then explains that his grandfather fought [Nazis], then look at what he signs. **How can a president who should be a man of peace, like any Jew, sign a law on the indigenous people of the Ukraine, and the Russians do not belong to it.** How can a president, who is not a racist, support and sign a law that not only bans the Russian language in schools — which is bad enough — but in all of daily life. It's forbidden there— so, you come to the pharmacy and you want a medicine, then you are not allowed to do the transaction in Russian. I could list many more things (...)"*. (271)

Notes: The right-wing extremist Azov regiment (see Chapter -> "Neo-Nazis in the Ukrainian leadership and army?") marched in Kiev in 2020. (272) Lavrov also referred to the Ukrainian Language Law (see part II, Chapter 2 -> "Ukrainian Language Law: Right to Service in the National Language").

3.

"Ukraine poses a threat of attack"

This is the main argument of the Russian attack against Ukraine and shows — from the Russian point of view — the preventive nature of the invasion. At the viral press conference already mentioned, the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov (emphasis mine):

"We cannot allow Ukraine to pose a direct threat of attack (...) Ukraine's push for NATO and NATO's determination to behave in a way that creates its security at the expense of others are the main reasons. (273)

*(...) **What is at stake is the world order**, and it is no coincidence that the West is trying by all possible means to avoid responding to our clear proposals, which also concern a future*

security architecture. **But no country can build its security at the expense of other countries (...)** **It is a matter of increasing the security of the West at the expense of Russia (...)**

*I can't avoid the comparison: **Napoleon and Hitler wanted to subjugate Europe, and that's what the Americans have done now.** In NATO the question does not arise at all, and the EU has shown to whom it belongs, and the Nordstrom 2 affair has shown where Europe's place is in the world (...). They have been forced and that's it (...) We are always ready for dialogue, on one condition: Only at eye level, on an equal footing, with respect for the interests of the other". (274)*

In another speech on **16th March 2022** on the "*Special Operation operation to demilitarise and denazify Ukraine*", Putin said that the West wants to "*break up*" and "*abolish*" Russia. Probably in view of the sanctions, he said his country would be "*turned into a weak, dependent country*" and "*in the best case*" to be dismembered. (275) And further:

"Many countries have resigned themselves to living with their backs bent, but Russia will never find itself in such a wretched and humiliated state". (276)

4.

"World War III is a nuclear war"

When asked by a US journalist from NBC whether Russia could promise that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov was evasive:

"We have a military doctrine where the parameters and the conditions for the use of nuclear weapons are fixed (...) And please look at what your president, Mr Biden said. He answered the question of whether there would have been an alternative to these sanctions— no, the only alternative would have been World War III, and we know that a World War III is a nuclear war. **But these are the minds of the Western politicians, where this nuclear war is always to be found and not in the minds of Russians.**

I can assure you that we will not allow any provocations to force us to lose our composure. **But if a real war is unleashed against us** those who harbour such plans should consider that. (277)

The discussion panel "Talk in Hangar-7" also included the former editor-in-chief of Russia Today (the Russian foreign TV broadcaster), Ivan Rodionov, who also spoke about the nuclear threat from the Ukraine. Rodionov apparently represented the official Russian point of view. With regard to Ukraine and nuclear weapons, [emphasis mine]:

*"For Russia, this represents a critical threat factor. **A Ukraine, which has now also recently threatened to use nuclear weapons as President Zelensky did twice at the Munich Security Conference** (278) (...) he said it again that only **nuclear weapons, a strong army and NATO** could protect his country and a nuclear-armed Ukraine, is a far greater threat than a nuclear-armed Iran for Israel". (279)*

Atomic weapons depots of the nuclear powers

Warheads on standby:	3,750
Constantly on alert:	2,000 (280)
Russia:	6,257
USA:	3,750
China:	350
France:	290
United Kingdom:	225
Pakistan:	165
India:	160
North Korea:	45
Israel:	90

Source: Arms Control Association: Nuclear Weapons. Who Has What at a Glance. Fact Sheets & Briefs (as of January 2022) (281)

5.

"The Ukraine has been turned into a kind of anti-Russia"

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov reiterated Putin's same argument:

*"There have been **five waves of enlargement** of the alliance, and each time the rhetoric of this alliance and the military planning, the military exercises were **targeted more and more against Russia** (...) And they began to be extended eastwards, ever more one-sidedly was this so-called line of defense drawn and it is now **right up next to the Russian Federation**. The USA sets the tone and writes their orders and instructions (...) I say it once again: We do not want this threat. But **the Ukraine has long been turned into a kind of anti-Russia**, a bridgehead to fight everything Russian. (...) Our interests are constantly affected, and they also create physical threats to Russian security, and we will not allow that. We must not allow that". (282)*

I will summarise the arguments of the Russian leadership once again because without understanding the Russian point of view, there will be no long-term solution:

- No more US military bases in former Soviet republics.
- Security guarantees.
- Withdrawal of the US nuclear arsenal from Western Europe.
- No further NATO enlargement to the East.
- Reversal of Ukrainian reprisals against the Russian minority (e.g. language law).

High-ranking Russian government representatives also threatened that if the USA and NATO continue to insist on their activities near Russia, then the government in Moscow could deploy troops and offensive weapons in allied Latin American countries. Thus, in Cuba or Venezuela,

for example. (283) Whether the Americans, who are now criticizing Russia, would allow this, I dare to doubt.

For Russia and Putin, the "special operation" in Ukraine has a preventive character. In a survey from the Russian Market and Opinion Research Institute, WZIOM, at the beginning of March 2022 more than 70 per cent of respondents were *in favour* of carrying out a "*special military operation*", 21 per cent were against. (284)

Comparison of Armed Forces

	NATO	Russia	China
Soldiers:	3.37 million	850,000	2.0 million
Combat aircraft:	4575	1511	1571
Military ships:	2049	605	777
Main battle tanks:	9155	3417	5400

Sources: Sipri, Globalfirepower, IISS, NATO, Statista, FAS.org (285)

**Part IV:
What consequences does war in
in the Ukraine have for us?**

1.

**The "Pearl Harbor moment": (286)
Germany is being militarised again**

With the decision by the "traffic light" government to provide 100 billion euros for the Bundeswehr, which Chancellor Scholz announced on 27 February 2022 in a special session of the Bundestag, (287) Germany's foreign and security policy is experiencing the greatest militarisation since the end of the Cold War (288) and that with the with the supposedly "pacifist" and "anti-war" party of the Greens in government. Once again, the Greens have forgotten basic principles.

Our society was continuously demilitarised after the Second World War, in society, in everyday life, in thought and in politics. Now the turning point. There is even talk of introducing conscription again and weapons are being supplied to Ukraine, a war zone. Who would have thought that within just a few days, our politicians would throw out to the winds the status quo, which has lasted for over 30 years?

Now a "security strategy" is supposed to be in place by the end of 2022 and our de facto "weaponless" country is to be militarised again. (289) Gender-Tanks and uniforms for pregnant women are no longer at the centre of the "Bundeswehr destroyers", and even Baerbock's grandly announced "feminist foreign policy" is nothing but ridiculous in view of the war in the East.

The arms industry can hardly believe its luck. After decades of left-green-red discrimination, it is now back centre stage again — and how!

How disastrously the Bundeswehr has been "castrated"

	1989	2022
Soldiers:	490,000	180,000
Battle tanks:	5,000	300
Combat aircraft:	620	230
Ships:	190	60
Submarines:	24	6

Source: Military Balance (290)

The war in Ukraine has not only geostrategic and military consequences, but also very far-reaching ones for our everyday life.

2.

Energy crisis: Will we freeze next winter?

Phasing out coal and nuclear power. This is exactly what the green climate fascists wanted. Now we are being presented with the bill for this insanity. It is not for nothing that the Wall Street Journal wrote in an editorial: "*The world's dumbest energy policy*" (291) and hit the nail on the head.

Now we have to pay for the policy of the "stupid": Consumers must prepare for further cost explosions for electricity and gas. Germany gets more than half of its gas imports from Russia. With the shutdown of Nordstream-2, the risk that Putin turning off the gas tap has increased even more. The Russians have already announced that Stream-1 is under threat. (292) Then God have mercy on us. For contrary to the full-bodied promises of Climate Minister Habeck or EU Commission President von der Leyen — it will take longer to find an *adequate* replacement. And when it is there, it will be even more expensive for us.

Now gas is even to be bought from Qatar, of all places, a country that does not take human rights very seriously. (293)

On 20 March 2022 the Green Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Change, Robert Habeck, travelled to Qatar especially for this purpose and made a speech to Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Kasim al-Abdullah Al Thani (Minister of Trade and Industry). Significantly, BILD wrote of a "suppliant" bowing low before a country with a head of state who, among other things, finances the terrorist organisations Hamas and Taliban. (294)

"But apparently Habeck, in his quest for energy, is less afraid of these than of nuclear power!" (295)

In the mind of the Green climate minister, an autocratic system is simply being replaced. What hypocrisy!

Full of panic, the EU has also already gone on an energy shopping and begging tour for the coveted gas: in Azerbaijan, Algeria and Nigeria. (296)

All "highly democratic" countries. Human rights or no human rights, this is apparently no longer of interest.

Natural gas: the biggest exporters (in billion cubic metres)

Russia:	238
USA:	138
Qatar:	128
Norway:	111
Australia:	106

Sources: BP, Bafa, World's Top Exports (297)

Crude oil: The largest exporters (in billions of US dollars)

Saudi Arabia:	114
Russia:	73
Iraq:	51
USA:	50
UAE: (298)	48

Sources: BP, Bafa, World's Top Exports (299)

Russia's share of German imports (in %)

Natural gas:	55
Hard coal:	46
Nickel:	44
Titanium:	41
Mineral oil:	34
Palladium:	18

Sources: Bafam BP, Dera, VDKI (300)

Russia's importance for the German economy

Number of companies with representative offices in Russia:	3,650
Number of companies with Russian business relations:	40,000
German export volume to Russia (2021):	26.6 Billion €
German jobs linked to these exports:	280,000
How much of its energy needs industry covers with gas:	25 %

Source: DIHK (301)

People in this country are quite rightly asking themselves the question: Will I freeze next winter? Because Habeck's plans for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which are supposed to bring about a turnaround, are failing because of the climate protectionists in his own party, who denounce the poor CO₂ balance of the energy carrier.

Moreover, it will probably take years before so many terminals have been built nationwide. The environmentally damaging fracking gas from the USA is not a long-term alternative either.

Even the Ministry of Economic Affairs assumes that the expansion of renewable energies will not be in full operation until 2028. (302) Another own goal scored by the green "do-nothing" thinkers is the fact that China accounts for 83 per cent of the global demand for cells and three quarters of the world's demand for modules, which are urgently needed for the solar factor. (303)

It is not for nothing that Gunter Erfurt, head of the Swiss company Meyer Burger says:

"If Russia and China were to make common cause now, they could destroy our energy supply".
(304)

Gabriel Felbermayr, director of the Austrian Institute for Economic Research, is of the same opinion:

"If China and Russia move even closer together, we will have bad cards" (305)

The fact is: if energy prices rise, production becomes more expensive for companies. For consumers, this means higher prices and even higher inflation. Energy constitutes the part of the monthly budget that is hardest to cut back on because no-one wants to freeze. Calculations by Commerzbank subsidiary Comdirect show that, due to high inflation, every German citizen lost 1,000 euros in purchasing power last year. There is no end in sight.

On top of higher inflation, higher prices and the gigantic energy price levies, which the left-green climatists in the government have introduced by raising the price of CO₂, are now compounded by the effects of the war in Ukraine. Because as a result of this crisis oil and gas have become much more expensive. The Munich-based ifo Institute expects a real "price shock" for gas, electricity, heating oil, fuel and coal. No amount of government "aid" will help the citizens, because these cannot in any way cushion the price increases. Driving is also becoming so expensive that many people will soon no longer be able to afford it.

But a cutback in gas supplies can also be highly problematic for the economy, because the factories have to be kept running.

Primary energy consumption in Germany (2021) in per cent

Crude oil:	31,8
Natural gas:	26,7
Renewables:	16,1
Lignite:	9,3
Hard coal:	8,6
Nuclear energy:	6,2
Other:	1,3

Source: AG Energiebilanzen (306)

3.

Food crisis: Will we soon starve?

The effects of the war in Ukraine may jeopardise food security in Europe and Germany in the medium-term. As discussed in the chapter -> "It's all about raw materials and geopolitical advantages", Ukraine is one of the largest exporters of barley, maize and rapeseed. Over 60 million tonnes of grain are produced annually, more than half of which is exported. In 2021, the Ukraine earned 12.3 billion US dollars from grain exports. If these shipments fail, the whole of Europe and many developing countries will face food shortages.

The consequences have been clear for weeks now: food prices are rising dramatically, coupled with energy prices. A devastating situation. More and more people can no longer afford fresh bread or even fresh meat, but even the car is becoming a money-burning machine.

And this is how it looks in the spring of 2022: Empty shelves and price explosions.

Now the meat industry is also sounding the alarm: high prices for energy, and for the slaughter cattle are destroying all calculations. Food associations are even talking about the biggest commodity crisis since the Second World War. (308)

The consequence: meat and sausage will become significantly more expensive. Pork already costs between 50 and 60 per cent more than it did a year ago. But the producers are also having to cope with the exploding prices for electricity and gas as well as higher feed and operating costs, plus the loss of Ukrainian drivers. Hubert Kelliger, group sales manager at Westfleisch, said:

"We need to cover our costs quickly, otherwise the supply of both fresh meat and processed meat will no longer work." (309)

However, the situation is difficult not only for the meat industry but also for all other food producers with record costs for energy and agricultural raw materials. This also applies for other sectors. Paper, for example, is becoming increasingly scarce because energy prices are causing producers to shut down. (310)

In a commentary on WELT online, Edeltraud G. described the situation in which many people find themselves:

"Today I was in four supermarkets looking for rapeseed oil. That was a real shock, I have never seen such empty shelves in our country. Flour, oil, pasta, yeast are rationed — everywhere. In some shelves, e.g. crispbread, a few packets lay as if for decoration. We will know shortages if energy costs are not reduced and even fewer lorries are driven. The dreams of the Greens (the highest possible energy prices) have already failed miserably in the face of reality". (311)

The IMF predicted that the war in Ukraine could fundamentally change the world economic order. In addition to consequences such as inflation with declining growth, longer-term effects are conceivable if the energy balance shifts, supply chains change, payment methods change, payment networks disintegrate and countries rethink their currency reserves. (312)

Thus, war is coming directly to us and increasingly dominating our daily lives.

Part V: Conclusion

I repeat: Putin has unleashed a war of aggression, broken international and human law, caused immense suffering and turned the world community against him. The victims are the people in the Ukraine, civilians and soldiers, but also the members of the Russian armed forces, who are being senselessly burnt up.

The facts, however, also include NATO having waged wars of aggression in Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq. The first NATO war of aggression was waged against Serbia: in 1999 NATO jet fighters and missiles attacked Serbian military installations and infrastructure. This was NATO's first war against a sovereign state. An attack without a UN mandate and therefore illegal under international law. (313)

NATO bombs claimed many civilian lives in Kosovo and Serbia. NATO fighter jets hit a passenger train on a bridge and a refugee convoy. The images of burnt and dead people were horrific. Within 11 weeks more than 400 uninvolved civilians were killed by NATO attacks. NATO spoke belittlingly of "collateral damage". (314)

Prof. Peter Kuznik (historian, Washington):

"This has nothing whatsoever to do with the original task of alliance defense. Rather, the action is intended to consolidate the position of Western supremacy." (315)

In fact NATO was operating "*out of area*" for the first time, and not to defend a member state. The official goal was to protect human rights. From NATO's point of view, the operation in the Balkans was a "*peacekeeping mission*". (316) Putin argued in a similar way when he invaded Ukraine.

I do not want to be misunderstood: This is in no way meant to be a justification or relativisation. But it is part of my work, to point out these events in order to objectively assess them, away from moral indignation.

In reality, the world became a different place on 24 February 2022. The war in Ukraine is a turning point. But it is also a war about different world views, values, economic and life models. We are probably now entering a phase of ruthless and open power and interest politics on the part of the great powers USA, China and Russia.

As I write these lines, the war in Ukraine is still in full swing. The future will show how it will continue. What is certain, however, is that the war in Ukraine will end an era of relative peace in Europe. (317) A new, more dangerous time is beginning. The only question is whether and how we are prepared for it.

About the author:



Dr. h.c. Michael Grandt (born 1963) has worked since 1992 as an investigative journalist, publicist and specialist consultant in the fields of the economy, finance and contemporary history. He has worked on numerous television reports for the British BBC, the Canadian *Channel 4*, the Austrian *ORF* and the German channels *RTL*, *SAT 1* and *PRO 7*, and has appeared as an expert on many TV talk shows.

Michael Grandt has written more than 5,000 technical reports and has published 34 books to date. The total number of copies sold is over 600,000. His books have been a hundred times on the German and Austrian bestseller lists, such as *Spiegel*, *Focus*, *Stern*, *Manager Magazin* and *Handelsblatt*.

In 2005, Michael Grandt was awarded the Staufermedal for special services to the state of Baden-Württemberg. In 2011 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Romanian State University, Pitesti for "*applied journalistic sciences*" in the field of investigative research.

In 2014, his article "*Why are there stock corporations?*" was included in the textbook "*Startup — Wirtschaft und Recht für das Gymnasium Band 1*" published by C.C. Buchner Verlag in Bamberg.

His novel "*Das Merkel Assassination*" (with Alexander Strauß) and his multi-volume non-fiction series "*Adolf Hitler, a correction- what the history books and textbooks are not telling you*" (from 2019) as well as "*Without SPD Hitler would not have come to power*" (2021) and "*Young global leader. Annalena Baerbock: Who she is. Who she controls. What she wants*" (2021) caused outrage in the mainstream.

More books by Michael Grandt:

<http://www.michaelgrandt.de/meine-buecher/>

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