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Russian-Ukrainian war: The West's policy leads to an escalation of the war

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Abstract

The article aims to prove the hypothesis that the West contributed to the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, that its current policy towards the war is an obstacle to a negotiated settlement, and that this policy could lead to a NATO-Russian military conflict. According to the author, the West could certainly have prevented the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in three cases: 1. By forcing the implementation of the agreement signed on 21 February 2015 between the Ukrainian President and the leaders of the parliamentary opposition on the formation of a provisional unity government, constitutional reforms and the calling of early elections. 2. By implementing the 2014 and 2015 Minsk agreements aimed at resolving the status of the separatist region of Donbas (Donetsk and Lugansk provinces) and the situation of the Russian minority. 3. By refraining from interfering in the Russian-Ukrainian peace talks held in March-April 2022. The West has missed these opportunities, clearly demonstrating that it has never been in favour of a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The current policy of the West is based on increasing and expanding sanctions against Russia, increasing military and intelligence

assistance to Ukraine and fully supporting Ukrainian strikes against key military and infrastructure facilities on Russian territory. However, after three years of war, this policy has not resulted in either the liberation of the occupied Ukrainian territories nor in bringing Russia to its knees, and can lead only to an escalation of the war, the outbreak of the NATO-Russia military conflict and a deepening military cooperation between Russia and China, Russia and North Korea, Russia and Iran. Only the United States can prevent the West from becoming directly involved in the Russia-Ukraine war. The present article is related to previous papers written by the author on the Russian - Ukrainian War: "Doubts About Western Policy on Russo - Ukrainian War" UAI Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UAIJAHSS), volume-1 issue-5, Dec 15, 2024, "Two Years after the Outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian War - Narratives of Putin's War in Hungarian Media", Global Journal of Human-Social Science: F Political Science, Volume 24 Issue 3 Version 1.0, May 2024, "Political and Military Lessons of the Russian-Ukrainian War", SCIREA Journal of Sociology, Volume 7, Issue 5, October 2023.

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1. Introduction

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe, adopted at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Paris on 19-21 November 1990, declared the end of the division of Europe that had existed since the Second World War and defined new principles of cooperation. But it was a political document, not a treaty. British political scientist Richard Sakwa, former professor of Russian and European politics at the University of Kent, and a senior research fellow at the National Research University-Higher School of Economics in Moscow, argues that the breakdown of the post-Cold War European security order was both a cause and a consequence of the Ukraine crisis, as the failure to achieve the Charter of Paris' aspirations for a 'whole and free Europe' meant that the plan for pan-European unity failed. Russia reacted with the knowledge that it was excluded from the new European order and moved towards neo-revisionism (Sakwa 2005, Edmonds 2022, Judah 2022) ^[20, 6, 13].

Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine started in February 2014 with the seizure of Crimea, continued with the support of the separatists in Donbas, and finally on 24 February 2022 Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine after the Russian President announced the launch of a so-called "special military operation."

2. The main stages in the development of the Russian - Ukrainian conflict

1. The first military doctrine adopted in 1993 emphasized Ukraine's non-aligned status and neutrality. However, the Constitution adopted in 1996 and the National Security Concept of 1997 no longer included a strong neutrality clause. The NATO-Ukraine Distinct Partnership Agreement signed in Madrid in 1997 was the first clear indication that Ukraine had left the non-bloc status. The Bucharest Summit in 2008 was a milestone in NATO-Ukraine relations. In paragraph 23 of the Bucharest Summit's Final Declaration, the Alliance made it clear that "[NATO] welcomes the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia to achieve NATO membership. Today we have agreed that these countries will become NATO members". This decision has been reaffirmed at every summit since then.

Ukraine's intention to join and the willingness of NATO member states to accept it, as well as NATO enlargement as a whole, was considered by Russia, not without reason, as a violation of point 8 of the Charter for European Security adopted at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999 ("8. Each participating State has an equal right to security. We reaffirm the inherent right of each participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve. Each State also has the right to neutrality. Each participating State will respect the rights of all others in these regards. They will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States. Within the OSCE no State, group of States, or organization can have any predominant responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence.")

2. The series of protests, known as Majdan, with overt Western political, intelligence, and financial support (see Oliver Stone's documentary, „Ukraine on Fire”), led to a coup-like takeover of power by the Ukrainian nationalist opposition and a civil war between pro-Western and pro-Russian forces. In Crimea, there was a risk that within a few years, Russian troops would be replaced by US forces, and the Black Sea would be largely under NATO control. Taking advantage of the voluntary organization of the Russian-majority population of the peninsula, its opposition to the new anti-Russian Ukrainian leadership, and the controversial circumstances of Crimea's annexation to Ukraine, a 'pro-Moscow' leadership came to power in Crimea with active and effective Russian intelligence support and decided to join the Russian Federation, as confirmed by the referendum of 16 March 2014. The decision was welcomed even by former Soviet party general secretary Gorbachev: "Crimea was annexed to Ukraine under Soviet law, without consulting the people. Today, the people themselves have decided to correct this mistake. This should be welcomed, not sanctioned" (Interfax, 17 February 2014).

3. In eastern Ukraine, pro-Russian sentiment was not as strong as in Crimea. However, skepticism towards the new leaders in Kyiv was strongest in Donetsk and Luhansk. The pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian camps, however, seemed roughly equal. In the spring of 2014, separatists seized the administrative centers of several cities, stormed police stations, and obtained weapons. The organizers of the

operations were Russian citizens with apparent links to Russian intelligence services. The separatists then organized referendums in both areas to legitimize their declared 'self-determination'. Kyiv tried to quell the rebellion. The Ukrainian army managed to retake most of the territories by summer 2014. In August, however, the Ukrainian army was defeated when a combat group of nine Russian battalions, according to Ukrainian official sources, entered eastern Ukraine and surrounded Ukrainian forces near Ilovaik. (Interview with MoD 2016, White Book 2015, Judson 2015). It should be noted that the combat strength of the nine Russian battalions was then around 30 percent, with a total of up to 3,000 soldiers, so the successful counterattack by the Donetsk People's Republic forces played a decisive role in the separatist victory). Forced Ukrainian willingness to negotiate and the involvement of the Normandy Four resulted in the Minsk agreements of February 2015, which fixed the front line, set out the elements of a political settlement, and have since seen a shaky ceasefire between the Ukrainian army and the Russian separatists.

4. In essence, the Minsk agreements were imposed by Russia in the hope that, in the context of granting autonomy to the Donbas, Ukraine would retain its territorial integrity and be satisfied with it, and Russia would be allowed to intervene indirectly in Ukrainian internal affairs. Ukraine, of course, did not wish to implement the Minsk agreements, which had been proclaimed by a UN resolution and were thus binding in terms of international law, and, with Western support, began to prepare its armed forces for the reconquest of Donbas and, in this context, to avert a possible Russian attack.

5. After the annexation of Crimea and Donbas, a shocking anti-Russian campaign began in Ukraine.

5.1 Several anti-Russian laws have been introduced.

- Ukraine's law of 16.09.2014 "On the purge of power", bans the use of Russian in the education system.
- At the end of 2018, the "law on the renaming of religious organisations" was adopted, after which Ukraine created a single autocephalous Orthodox Church, abolishing the previously existing Ukrainian Orthodox Church (belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate).
- In April 2019, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a law "On ensuring the functioning of Ukrainian as the state language". This is a step towards the full Ukrainianisation of the population. According to the law, citizens of the country are obliged to use Ukrainian in all areas of public life. The gradual displacement of Russian is expressed in the abolition of Russian-language schools and the prohibition of the use of Russian, including in the humanitarian, advertising, medical, tourist, and transport spheres. The law provides for administrative penalties for violations of the language policy.
- At the end of March 2023, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a law banning the use of geographical names associated with Russia and Russian history. According to the law, such names "symbolize an occupying state or its famous, memorable, historical and cultural places and figures that have carried out military aggression".

5.2 A number of anti-Russian laws have been passed, which is incomprehensible, as the official Ukrainian position is that there are no Russians living in Ukraine.

"The European Commission cannot complain about discrimination against the Russian minority in Ukraine, because there is no such ethnic group," said Olha Stefanisina, Kyiv's Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration on 10 November 2023. "There is no Russian minority in Ukraine. It does not exist. There is no single legally defined community that identifies itself as a Russian minority." The politician also said that officials in Brussels share his position. The use of the Russian language is not something the European Commission pays attention to. EU recommendations on language policy will only apply to Hungarians, Romanians, and Bulgarians.

5.3 The official Ukrainian position is that there are no Russians living in Ukraine. Although the population figures show otherwise.

Ukraine's first and only official census was held on 5 December 2001, more than a decade after the country gained independence. According to the census, Ukraine's total population at that time was 48.457 million. In terms of ethnic composition, Ukrainians made up the majority of the population, accounting for 77.8% (37.541 million inhabitants), with Russians being the second - largest group at 17.3% (8.334 million inhabitants). The population of Ukraine is estimated to have decreased by 13.33% to 42 million by 2020, compared to 2001. Assuming that the proportion of ethnic Russians leaving Ukraine because of the hostile environment was three times higher, at 40% (3.334 million), thus, 5 million Russians remained in Ukraine, 11.9% of the total population. Ukraine's ethnic Russian population was mainly concentrated in the Donbas and Crimea. Today, experts estimate the population of the Russian-annexed Luhansk People's Republic at 1.464 million, and that of the Donetsk People's Republic at 2.306 million (Bense 2024)^[2]. In terms of ethnicity, 38-39% of the population in both territories (1.470 million in totals) declared themselves as Russian in 2001 and there is no reason to believe that this proportion has changed significantly. According to local data for 2024, the population of Crimea is 1.910 million, of which 1.393 million (72.94%) are Russian (source: <http://council.gov.ru/en/structure/regions/CR/>). The population of the Ukrainian-annexed territories is therefore 2.863 million Russians. In other words, there are still about 2 million Ukrainian citizens of Russian nationality living in Ukraine.

5.4 But the fact is that even old Russian historical monuments are no longer safe in Ukraine.

On 04.12.2024., Odesa city council representatives supported the demolition of the UNESCO-protected Alexander Pushkin monument. The monument was erected in 1889 with donations from residents.

6. The unprecedented level of Western military support for Ukraine, particularly US-Ukrainian military and intelligence cooperation, has led to the effective preparation of Ukrainian forces for the retake of the separatist territories. The Kremlin's political decision to launch a limited military operation in eastern Ukraine was a reaction to the threat of the actual collapse of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk

People's Republics in the event of a Ukrainian offensive. Failure to intervene would have led Russian nationalists to accuse Moscow of abandoning the Russian population in Donbas and betraying Russia's national interests. The intervention also demonstrated that there was no alternative to political negotiations with Russia.

3. The modernization of the Ukrainian armed forces and intelligence services, with professional assistance and funding from abroad, has made the reconquest of the Donbas a realistic objective for Ukraine in 2021

3.1 The reform of the Ukrainian armed forces

Ukraine's armed forces are composed of services (the Ground Forces, the Air Force, the Navy), separate branches (the Marine Corps, the Special Operations Forces, the Unmanned Systems Forces, the Territorial Defence Forces), and separate special troops (the Air Assault Forces). Ukraine's Navy includes its own Naval Aviation. The Coast Guard is a part of the Border Guard Service, not subordinated to the Navy. The National Guard serves as a paramilitary reserve component of the Armed Forces.

In the frame of the reform of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, a Unified Operational Command was established in 2016 under the Ministry of Defence, which coordinates and manages the activities of all three services of the Armed Forces.

One of the priorities of the military reform, which significantly increased the deployment efficiency of the armed forces, was the creation of the Ukrainian Special Operations Forces (SOF) as a separate branch with NATO standards.

The destination of the Ukrainian Special Operations Forces (SOF) is to carry out special (sabotage) operations and actions behind enemy lines to destroy enemy command posts, eliminate key commanders of the occupying forces, disrupt the logistical system of the enemy armed forces, destroy logistical centers and other important from military point of view objects. Among the SOF tasks is to organize resistance cells to conduct guerrilla warfare in enemy-occupied Ukrainian territory.

Before the Russian attack in 2022, the Ukrainian Special Operations Forces increased their capabilities by developing land, air, air defense, and maritime components.

There is, however, concern that NATO standards are seen by Ukraine as technical and binary and not multi-layered, casting doubt on the extent to which NATO standards have actually been achieved in practise (Sanders 2023)^[21].

The land components of special operations forces include the 3rd and 8th regiments, which are deployed in Kirovograd and Khmelnytskyi, and tasked with the direct execution of special operations and actions, including special reconnaissance missions. One regiment consists of 300 personnel, in a company-squadron structure, supplemented by special support subunits (engineering, heavy weapons, intelligence, and medical). Allegedly the land component also included one jager brigade, created in 2019 to provide the SOF with a capability similar to the US Rangers. The brigade specializes in intelligence and force protection tasks and independent missions. (Force protection, as a NATO doctrine, is the concept of protecting personnel, family members, civilians, military and special installations, and equipment from hostile operational threats

or hazards to preserve the operational effectiveness of its own special operations forces and ensure the success of its mission.) Probably this brigade was reorganized into the Ranger Corps, also known as the Ranger Corps of Special Operations Forces with 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Special Purpose Regiments in 2024.

The naval component of SOF includes the 140th Special Operations Centre, the 801st Special Marine Detachment, and the 73rd Special Naval Centre. (Some European sources suggest that the 801st Special Marine Detachment based at Odesa is an elite unit of the Ukrainian Navy concerned with underwater special operations, and combat reconnaissance operations.) These forces are focused on the security of the Black Sea.

Ukraine has also set up in 2020 an air component of SOF to provide air support to the Army and Navy Special Operations Forces, equipped with helicopters and transport aircraft to facilitate the deployment, supply, and withdrawal of subunits on the territory of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Special Operations Forces were among the main beneficiaries of Western support before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In particular, the United States has been active and effective in transforming the Ukrainian approach to warfare by improving the personnel selection process, providing access to better equipment, and developing more rigorous training programs.

The Ukrainian SOF has also regularly participated in NATO exercises, including the Combined Resolve exercise in Germany in 2021, which aimed to develop unconventional warfare skills (Kronvall 2011)^[15].

As a clear sign of the progress made by the Ukrainian Special Forces in interoperability and capability development was that the 140th Special Operations Centre received NATO Certification in 2019, allowing the unit to be deployed as part of the NATO Response Force (Fontenet, Degen, and Tohn 2004)^[10].

A particular feature of the Ukrainian Special Operations Forces organization is the settlement of four Informational Warfare and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) Centres, with headquarters in Huiva, Brovary, Lviv, and Odesa. The operators of these centers have been trained to establish intelligence networks within the zones of interest, conduct PSYOPS operations, and espionage, to find resistance and sabotage cells within the territory under enemy occupation. Special Forces Command numbers over 4,000 operative officers, all of whom are professional soldiers. In 2021 the end strength of the SSO was increased by 1,000 troops.

Due to the importance of long-range artillery, the MoD of Ukraine has created five new artillery brigades and a separate artillery regiment within the land forces and the Ukrainian Navy. (Farrell 2008, Shimko 2010)^[8, 23]. In addition to increasing the quantity of artillery, Ukraine has also introduced qualitative improvements to increase efficiency and destructive firepower in the last phase of its force reform. These included the introduction of new artillery positioning radars, battery command, and control systems, drones to improve the effectiveness of forward observation and fire coordination, and the modernization of training.

The new force structure, the development of a more effective command and control system, the modernization of non-commissioned officer training and operations, the development of special forces equipped with new anti-tank

weapons, unmanned aerial vehicles, and equipment, the achievement of specific procurement objectives and other elements of military reform (for example development of the Ukrainian Army Reserve System, establishment of Territorial Defence Battalions), together with military training, advisory and intelligence support from NATO countries, have played a decisive role in strengthening Ukraine's military potential (Mevlutoglu 2022, Bonenberger 2022, Garamone 2022, and Butchenko 2022)^[16, 3, 11, 4]. While Western training is seen by many as a key element of a modern Ukrainian force, others emphasize the development of leadership and command as the most important element of Ukraine's military reform.

As for the financial resources for military reform, based on my own calculations, between 2014 and February 2022, Ukraine's total military expenditure was around \$36 billion, of which experts estimate that 20%, or \$7.2 billion, was spent on development and procurement. Analyzing the US military assistance over the same period, we can conclude that its value is approximately equal to the amount of the Ukrainian budget spent on development and procurement during the above period: \$2.7 billion in military assistance + about \$4.5 billion in PDA (emergency Presidential Drawdown Authority)-related assistance = \$7.2 billion. If we add to this the amount of NATO support (approximately \$3 billion) and assistance in bilateral cooperation (\$0.2 billion), we can conclude that a total of \$17.6 billion in financial coverage for military reform was provided (\$7.2 billion + \$7.2 billion + \$3 billion + \$0.2 billion = \$17.6 billion).

To sum up, the training, advisory, and intelligence support of NATO countries has contributed significantly to increasing the combat effectiveness of the Ukrainian army. As part of this: – US officers have helped train Ukrainian army units at the Yavoriv Training Base, where five battalions have been trained annually since 2015. – Canada trained the Ukrainian Rapid Response Brigade in urban warfare in the summer of 2021. A few months later, 4,000 Ukrainian soldiers participated in the annual Rapid Trident exercise designed to strengthen interoperability. – Since 2014, the UK has trained 22,000 Ukrainian troops in various military medical, logistical, intelligence, and combat training subjects as part of Operation Orbital. – In 2016, Poroshenko asked for and received Western military advisers to bring the Ukrainian armed forces up to NATO standards, rules, and procedures by 2020. An important achievement in this area has been the ability of Ukrainian units to integrate their logistics systems with NATO units in combat operations. – Finally, Ukraine seems to be a case where foreign security assistance has positively contributed to force development, and the combat capabilities and preparedness of Ukrainian army, special operations forces, and national guard have reached a much higher level since 2014 (Mevlutoglu 2022)^[16].

The Ukrainian armed forces have learned the lessons of the 2014 fighting in Donbas. They quickly learned that lower-level leaders, such as platoon and company commanders, should not wait for the approval of the higher command for every move they make. The dynamics of combat do not allow for this. A new command philosophy has emerged, and now the Ukrainians are also fighting according to the "ends justify the means" philosophy, in other words, they are more concerned with results than with processes. This change in command culture, combined with eight years of combat

experience in the Donbas, has created a new generation of officers and a new military leadership. The new military leadership's change in approach has led to a battle strategy based on small, dispersed battle groups equipped with modern anti-tank weapons. These small battle groups, supported by well-trained and well-coordinated artillery units and drones, can inflict significant losses on attacking troops and their logistical support systems.

As a result, by the end of 2021 the Ukrainian armed forces, with Western assistance, were able to recapture the separatist Donbas (in November 2021, trained Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region were 125 000 against 20 000 in the Donetsk People's Republic and 14 000 in the Luhansk People's Republic).

3.2 Modernizing Ukrainian military intelligence: US-Ukrainian intelligence cooperation

The intelligence partnership between Washington and Kyiv is a cornerstone of Ukraine's ability to defend itself. The CIA and other US intelligence agencies provide intelligence for targeted Ukrainian missile strikes, track the movement of Russian troops, and assist Ukrainian spy networks operating on Russian territory.

Located in an underground bunker in a forest along the Russian-Ukrainian border, the main radio reconnaissance and human intelligence base of the General Directorate of Military Intelligence (GRU) of Ukraine is equipped and operated by the CIA, and it is part of a network of 12 intelligence bases along the Russian-Ukrainian border, which was built with CIA assistance between 2017 and 2024.

Regarding radio reconnaissance, in 2016, the CIA trained an elite Ukrainian commando unit - Unit 2245 - to procure Russian drones and communications equipment for the CIA so that US specialists could hack and decrypt Moscow's encryption systems (one of the officers in the unit was Kyrylo Budanov, now head of the GRU). This activity continues today.

As for human intelligence, the CIA has also helped train a new generation of Ukrainian intelligence officers who have been operating in Russia, Europe, Cuba, and other places where there are large Russian populations.

The cooperation between Washington and Kyiv has turned Ukraine into an intelligence and radio interception center against Russia, and this intelligence center intercepts more Russian communications than the CIA station in Kyiv can handle.

The cooperation between the CIA and the Ukrainian GUR started in 2015. In the summer of 2015, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko appointed General Kondratyuk as head of the GUR, who tried to establish a confidential relationship with his US counterpart, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), but the Americans were distrustful. Kondratyuk then turned to the CIA and in an attempt to build trust, handed over secret documents relating to the Russian navy to the Americans. After Langley analysts determined the documents were credible, the CIA became the GUR's primary partner. Kondratyuk needed the CIA to revive the weakened GUR; at the same time, the CIA also needed the GRU's help in recruiting agents in Russia. The CIA found it difficult to recruit potential American spies in Russia because CIA agents were under close surveillance. However, he agreed with Kondratyuk that "... for a Russian to allow himself to be recruited by an American is treason,

the absolute, ultimate form of treason, but to be recruited by a Ukrainian is just a friendly chat over a beer".

The CIA has agreed to help modernize GUR, train intelligence officers, and improve GUR's ability to intercept Russian military communications. In return, General Kondratyuk shared all raw intelligence information with the Americans.

Accordingly, the CIA oversaw a training program in two European cities designed to teach Ukrainian intelligence officers how to convincingly assume false identities and "steal secrets" in Russia and other countries that are effective in spy detection. The programme is called "Operation Goldfish". After training, officers were deployed to 12 forward radio reconnaissance/radio interception and human intelligence bases along the Russian border.

The CIA has installed advanced technical equipment at the bases, which has effectively assisted Ukrainian radio reconnaissance. They also selected some "Operation Goldfish" graduates to work with them in tracking down potential Russian human intelligence sources and training sleeper agents on Ukrainian territory. The latter were intended to launch guerrilla operations in the event of a Russian invasion.

Trump's election in November 2016 appeared to be uncomfortable for Ukrainians and their CIA partners. In fact, Trump put anti-Russia officials in key positions, appointing Mike Pompeo as CIA Director and John Bolton as National Security Advisor, who fully supported the covert partnership, which was expanded with more special training programs and the construction of additional secret bases. The central military intelligence base mentioned above has been added with a new command building and barracks, and its staff has swelled from 80 to 800 Ukrainian intelligence officers.

During this period, the CIA's priority was to prevent Russia from interfering in US elections. Ukrainian and US reconnaissance teams worked together to probe Russian intelligence agencies' computer systems in an attempt to identify Russian agents manipulating US voters. In one joint operation, the GUR covert team obtained information from a Russian military intelligence officer that allowed the CIA to link the Russian government to the so-called Fancy Bear hacker group, which has been linked to election meddling attempts in several countries.

Speaking about the CIA-GUR cooperation, General Budanov, appointed by Zelensky as head of the GUR in 2020, said that it was so successful that the CIA wanted to expand it to other European intelligence services with the common goal of fighting Russia. The head of Russia House, the CIA division overseeing operations against Russia, organized a secret meeting in The Hague where representatives of the CIA, Britain's MI6, Ukraine's GUR, the intelligence service of the Netherlands, and other services agreed to share intelligence on Russia. The result was a secret coalition against Russia, of which the Ukrainian GUR became a vital member.

In March 2021, the Russian army began to deploy troops along the Ukrainian border. The question has been raised whether Putin is faking or preparing for war. In November and the weeks that followed, the CIA and MI6 sent a consistent message to their Ukrainian counterparts that Russia was preparing a full-scale invasion to overthrow the Ukrainian government and install a puppet government in Kyiv that would do the Kremlin's bidding. The reports

included the names of Ukrainian officials whom the Russians wanted to kill or capture, as well as Ukrainians whom the Kremlin wanted to bring to power. According to a Ukrainian official, the CIA briefings contained shockingly specific details. He also said the Russians had attempted to assassinate senior Ukrainian officials, including President Zelensky. In at least one case, the CIA shared information with Ukrainian security agencies that helped thwart an assassination attempt on the president.

Within weeks of the launch of the Russian attack and the evacuation of the Americans, the CIA returned to Kyiv and sent a large number of new officers to help the Ukrainians. CIA advisers reviewed lists of potential Russian targets the Ukrainians intended to strike and compared the Ukrainians' information with US intelligence to ensure its accuracy. Some of the CIA officers were deployed to Ukrainian intelligence bases along the border.

Even before the invasion, the CIA and MI6 trained Ukrainian counterparts to recruit human resources and build and operate covert partisan networks. In the first weeks of the war, in the Russian-occupied southern region of Kherson, these guerrilla networks went into action: assassinating local collaborators and helping Ukrainian forces to map Russian positions.

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To sum up, before the Russian attack began, Moscow learned that the CIA and MI6 had made Ukraine the center of intelligence operations against Russia. However, it was not assumed that US and British intelligence had detailed information about the Russian attack, which they shared with Ukrainian military intelligence. This certainly contributed to the failure of the Russian operation to seize Kyiv and to the failure of the takeover of power by pro-Russian politicians (Entous and Schwirtz 2024)^[7].

4. The West's responsibility for the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war and the obstruction of a peaceful settlement. Findings and conclusions.

4.1 Findings

1) The agreement between the Ukrainian president and the parliamentary opposition to settle the internal political crisis caused by the "Maidan" protests and the Minsk agreements on the status of Donbas and the situation of the Russian minority was not supported by the West, a de facto mediator between the opposing parties. As for the consequences, on the one hand, by helping the nationalist Ukrainian opposition to power, the West contributed to the outbreak of a civil war in Ukraine and the escalation of Russian-Ukrainian relations. On the other hand, by refusing the implementation of the Minsk agreements, the West made it clear that it believed the secession of Crimea and the separatism of Donbas were the results of Russian interference, thus excluding the problems related to the situation of the Russian minority in Ukraine from the substance of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which further exacerbated the conflict. At the March-April 2022 Russian-Ukrainian peace talks, the West prevented a ceasefire agreement by influencing the Ukrainian position. This temporarily ended the prospects for a negotiated settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict.

As regards the situation of the Russian minority in Ukraine, it should be said that from the Ukrainian side, there was no genocide. Between 2014 and 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation resulted in a total of 14 thousand Russian and Ukrainian civilian and military victims. Most of the anti-Russian violence occurred in 2014-2015. In 2020 and 2021, there were no such atrocities. Only anti-Russian legislation took place in Ukraine. However, repressive legislation is not genocide. In the Donbas area, severe anti-Russian violence happened indeed; there have been killings, but not in the thousands. There were also artillery attacks on civilian targets in Donetsk by the Ukrainians. But the number of non-combatant Russian civilians killed in the fighting is in the hundreds, not in the thousands.

Among the anti-Russian atrocities in Ukraine, the brutal massacre in Odesa, which claimed 42 victims of Russian nationality, should be highlighted. The other known incident was in Mariupol, where Ukrainians fired into the crowd, but this cannot be called genocide either. Unfortunately, the perpetrators of unlawful acts of violence against Russians have never been prosecuted, which makes it easier to objectively assess the situation of the national minority. (Demkó 2023)^[5]

As for the Russian intervention in Donbas, the European Court of Human Rights has also been puzzled by the assessment of the alleged Russian intervention. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, in its decision in Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia (cases 8019/16, 43800/14, and 28525/20), declared the Ukrainian claims only partially founded and admissible. Ukraine wanted an international court to declare that mostly Russian soldiers had been fighting in the separatist armed squads since April 2014 and that Russian officers had been in commanding positions from the beginning, so that it was not

a "civil war" but the Russian-Ukrainian war, now ongoing since 2014.

2) The West, above all the United States and the United Kingdom, has made the reconquest of the Donbas a realistic objective for Ukraine by providing technical assistance and funding for the implementation of Ukrainian military reform and the modernization of Ukrainian intelligence. This, in turn, triggered an early but inevitable Russian pre-emptive reaction, based on incorrect assumptions about the West's response, the Ukrainian military, and Russian military capabilities. In this context, it is worth noting that former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, speaking to the BBC on 12 January 2025, said: 'I have concluded that this war was inevitable. But it could have been postponed. Not for years, but perhaps for months.'

3) The policy of the collective West, based, among other things, on increasing sanctions against Russia, stepping up military assistance to Ukraine, and supporting the implementation of ill-considered and mostly unnecessary Ukrainian strikes on Russian military and infrastructure sites inside Russia, has not resulted in either the liberation of the occupied Ukrainian territories or in bringing Russia to its knees after three years of warfare. Maintaining this policy can only lead to an escalation of the war.

It is understandable that on 1 January 2025, Ukraine stopped natural gas transit through its territory. Even the fact that on 11 January, Ukrainian drones attacked the infrastructure of the Ruskaya compressor station in the Krasnodar region, which is part of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline system and through which Russian gas is transported to Turkey and Europe, because both serve US interests, namely to cut off Europe from Russian gas.

What is more difficult to understand is why the West allowed the Ukrainian strike on the civilian airport of the Chechen capital on 27 December 2024 which had no military significance or self-defense necessity but led to the downing of a civilian Azerbaijani airliner and the cooling of Russian-Azerbaijani relations. The incident, like the sudden and unexpected Western support for Armenia, fits into the "annoy the Russians where we can" plan of action that only encourages Russia to destroy the remaining 20% of critical Ukrainian infrastructure as well.

4) NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte stated in his speech to the European Parliament on January 13, 2025: "For sustainable peace, military support to Ukraine must be increased. We all want this war to end, but we want a lasting peace. I don't know how and when this war will end. But I do know that there will be no peace if Putin gets what he wants in Ukraine. He will go to war further. He has not only been threatened by war in the past but also launched war: in Georgia in 2008, in Ukraine in 2014, and Ukraine again in 2022."

He says peace will be neither sustainable nor lasting if Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese leader Xi Jinping, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, and the Iranian regime, after agreeing to end the war in Ukraine, feel stronger. It would be a path to global instability. Rutte also stressed that "peace can only be lasting if Ukraine comes to the negotiating table from a position of strength: to reach this position it still needs our help—more weapons and faster—to make a good deal not only for the sake of Ukraine

but also for Europe and the world." (Pataki 2025)^[18]

Rutte's speech sounds fine; it shows consistency, but at the same time it is full of misleading, unsubstantiated claims. First, Russia will not attack, because it is not capable of attacking more European states in the hope of a permanent occupation. (See Andras Hugiik, Doubts about the West's Policy on the Russian-Ukrainian War, UAI Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, UAI Publisher, December 15, 2024). As for the wars launched by Russia in the past, given the facts, I do not think it is necessary to prove that "Georgia 2008" is a bad example, "Ukraine 2014" is a disputed example, and "Ukraine 2022" is the only good example.

As for the perception of the Russian-Chinese-North - Korean-Iranian rapprochement, with roughly 40 states supporting some 20,000 sanctions against Russia and 34 countries providing military support to Ukraine, it is natural that Russia is looking for allies. It is also natural that it will not find these allies among the pro-Western states. It is not only my personal opinion, however, that the rapprochement of the four states can be seen more as a consequence of the West's policy on the Russia-Ukraine war than as a desire to forge a new, lasting military alliance.

The much-vaunted "peace can only be lasting if Ukraine comes to the negotiating table from a position of strength" approach is also fine. But Ukraine can only achieve such a position if military assistance from the 34 states is maintained in the long term and foreign troops are directly involved in the fight against the Russians, as Ukrainian military staff is depleted. The latter, however, would push events in the direction of a NATO-Russia confrontation, or, in other words, a third world war.

Based on the above, we can conclude that the West significantly contributed to the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and with its current policy, it is hindering its end.

4.2 Conclusion

From the 1990s onwards, the views of Alexander Dugin, the unofficial ideologist of Putin's Russia, gained ground, who argued that patriotism in the Russian Federation meant building a new empire, a Eurasian superpower, in opposition to the Atlanticist world led by the United States, integrating the former Soviet republics into a new alliance under the protective wing of Russia. This Eurasian empire must necessarily gain access to the 'warm seas,' because only then will it be able to face the global challenge of Atlanticism. The obstacle to this is Ukraine, which will either become an extension of Moscow's hand or, if it refuses to do so, will call into question Russia's security and become a factor of war (Fedinec 2024, Akimenko 2018, Shekhovtsov 2014)^[9, 1, 22].

Ukraine's neutrality has helped it become an "extended arm" of Moscow. After its neutrality was abandoned and a pro-Western government came to power in Kyiv in the wake of the Maidan events, access to Crimea, which provides a warm sea exit, and the existence of Russian military bases were threatened, leading to the Russian annexation of the peninsula.

Subsequently, Ukraine, instead of fulfilling the Minsk agreements to settle the status of the separatist Donbas and the situation of the Russian minority, began preparing to retake the Donbas by military force, mainly with the active and effective military support of the United States and the

United Kingdom, turning the country into an anti-Russian Western military staging area and intelligence center. The acceptance of Kyiv's desire to join the European Union and NATO already meant that Ukraine, with the support of the West, became a 'war factor' for Russia.

Although Russia is the aggressor and deserves the 20,000 sanctions, this war seems to have been "wanted" by all parties concerned:

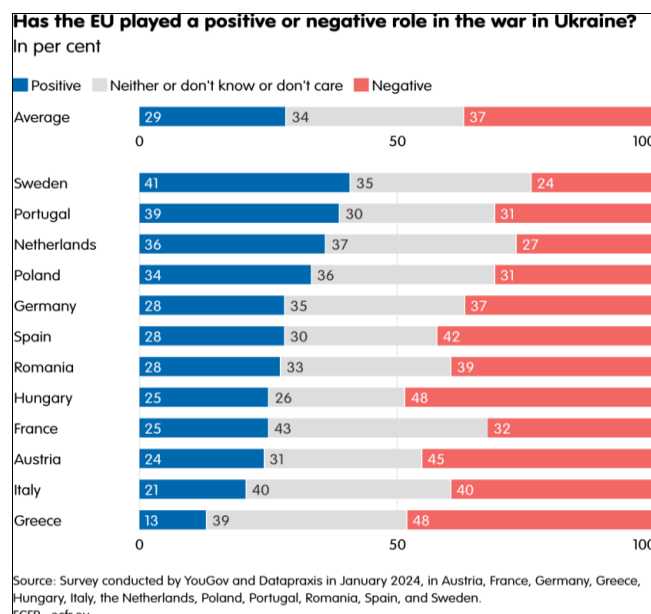
- 1) By Ukraine, because it hopes to restore its territorial integrity with the military support of the West and to join the European integration organizations;
- 2) By Russia, because the militarized, Nazi, west henchman Ukraine is an obstacle "to build a new empire, a Eurasian superpower, in the face of the Atlanticist world."
- 3) By NATO, because NATO believes that only its constant expansion and enhancement of its deterrent capabilities will guarantee the security of its members against an alleged Russian invasion.
- 4) By the United States, because it does not need a "Eurasian superpower" to ensure its hegemony. Russia, without Ukraine, is just an Asian superpower that can challenge China in particular.
- 5) By the EU, because the war provides a pretext to break dependence on Russian energy and raw materials, an opportunity to strengthen Euro-Atlantic (EU-US) relations and to expel Russia from Europe.

The situation regarding achieving the goals can be briefly described as follows:

- 1) Ukraine will not be able to liberate the territories annexed by Russia in the next few years. Kyiv can avoid military defeat only by overt or covert, gradually increasing intervention by the armed forces of Western countries, but this intervention could lead to a NATO-Russia armed conflict. From the Ukrainian side, the only realistic objective for continuing the war is to obtain security guarantees from the West against an eventual new Russian attack.
- 2) Russia has only partially achieved its objectives: it has weakened Ukrainian military capabilities, eliminated the hard core of the extreme nationalist, semi-fascist Ukrainian formations, occupied the Donbas, gained land access to the Black Sea. Since it cannot achieve the occupation of Kyiv, the overthrow of the Zelensky regime, the restoration of Ukraine's neutrality, the suspension of operations of Western military bases and intelligence centres in Ukraine, the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the Kursk region and the suspension of US and UK support for Ukrainian strikes on critical military and infrastructure sites in Russia the continuation of the war for Russia is inevitable.
- 3) The accession of Sweden and Norway has strengthened NATO, but the organisation's defence philosophy, enemy perception and new doctrine require Ukraine and other former Soviet republics to join as soon as possible. NATO's policy on the Russo-Ukrainian war is characterised by a steady increase in military aid to Ukraine and, for the time being, indirect intervention in the war in order to put Ukraine in a favourable bargaining position in the peace negotiations. The leaders of the Alliance therefore firmly believe that "the path to peace lies through the continuation of war". Since NATO does not define the content and parameters of a favourable bargaining position, this approach is meaningless and serves only as a pretext for continuing the war. The path to peace is through the

continuation of the war only if this approach is unconditionally supported by the United States, which has two-thirds of NATO's military potential. If this support diminishes, NATO's belligerence will also diminish.

- 4) The United States may have realized that Russia has become not a challenge but an ally for China, and this strategic partnership together with deepening military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, Russia and Iran threatens the assertion of America's global hegemonic role. This war is about the destruction of Russia at a time when the main rival of the US is China.
- 5) The EU has become the absolute servant of US interests. The EU has successfully freed itself from Russian energy dependence, serving American interests and not its own. Its policy on the war remains unchanged, based on increasing sanctions against Russia and increasing military assistance to Ukraine, without clearly defined parameters to achieve the goals of military support (weakening Russia, deterring Russia from further aggression, improving Ukraine's future negotiating position). The EU's role in the Russian-Ukrainian war is not unanimously appreciated by the citizens of the Member State. However, this opinion apparently does not bother the wise leaders of Europe.



In summary: The EU and NATO believe that future peace can only be sustainable if Ukraine comes to the negotiating table from a position of strength. Fulfillment of this requirement needs constant, large-scale, rapid military assistance from the West. They often say, "The path to peace is through the continuation of the war." The responsible leaders of the above organizations are not particularly concerned that this policy, after three years of warfare, has resulted in neither the liberation of the occupied Ukrainian territories, nor in bringing Russia to its knees, nor in strengthening Ukraine's future negotiating position. Regarding the latter, it should be noted that 1) if the strengthening of the Ukrainian negotiating position presupposes the destruction of several thousand Russian critical infrastructure objects, it is impossible to destroy all of them; 2) if the improvement of the negotiating position requests repeated Ukrainian incursions into the Kursk area, the North Koreans will help repel Ukrainian troops; 3) if the Ukrainians want to get into a better negotiating position by

destroying the Crimean bridge, the new Russian doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons provides the answer.

The EU and NATO can conduct this policy because, contrary to official statements, they know very well that Russian military capabilities are limited and that Russia does not pose a military threat to Europe. The only mistake that they make is not counting on effective Russian responses and treating Russian warnings as empty threats. If the West does not change its policy, it will sooner or later lead to a powerful, warning, conventional Russian missile strike against some Western target. Russia will not allow the Americans and the British to destroy its critical infrastructure with Ukrainian help, and threaten Russia's security.

It must also be seen that the losses of the Ukrainian army's personnel must be replaced, which will sooner or later result in the appearance of many trained foreign volunteers and later NATO member states' units disguised as foreign volunteers' units on the battlefield, which could lead to a NATO-Russia military conflict.

Long-term military support for Ukraine should mean the provision of military assistance necessary to maintain effective defense. Let's support Ukraine, but not be direct participants in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Let's not encourage the continuation of the war; "the path to peace is NOT through the continuation of the war BUT through PEACE NEGOTIATIONS." Let's remember, "better ten years of negotiation than one day of war" (Andrei Gromyko, 1909–1989, Soviet statesman). Let's hope that the new American administration will make America great by preventing the outbreak of NATO – Russia war.

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