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Volume I

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# Preface to the English Edition

## Ukraine’s War of Independence

### February 24, 2022: Ukraine’s Fateful Day

Since the victory of the “Maidan”, the popular uprising against the kleptocratic regime of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich at the end of February 2014, a Russian military invasion has hovered over Ukraine like a sword of Damocles. Eight years later, on February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin cut the silken thread; with an army of 175,000 men, he invaded Ukraine.

The long path from 2013 to February 24, 2022, the actual “fateful day” of Ukraine, is described in the present two volumes—“Ukraine’s Fateful Years 2013–2019” —especially in Part VI of the 2nd volume: “Russia’s Hybrid Aggression against Ukraine”. The goal of this path, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, was not predicted *expressis verbis* by the author, but this turn was also not entirely excluded—although he himself considered a different development more probable. (See Chapter VII.14 to Chapter VII.16).

The manuscript of the German version of “Ukraine’s Fateful Years” was completed in February 2020; two years later there is war in Ukraine. All “Kremlinologists”, experts as well as politicians, Western as well as Ukrainian, did not expect such a military invasion. It surprised and shocked the whole world.

The U.S. had expressed concern about Russia’s war preparations many weeks before Putin’s declaration of war, but American warnings were disregarded.<sup>1</sup> On February 18, U.S. President Biden personally told the world that Putin had made the decision to invade Ukraine. But even Ukrainian President Zelensky did not want to hear the warnings about a Russian attack, as Biden himself told.<sup>2</sup>

The numerous conjectures—including those of the author—about the intentions of Russian President Putin proved to be wastepaper, when he decided to solve *his* Ukraine problem militarily (probably) in the fall of 2021. Since his plan—the author suspects—to influence Ukraine’s internal and external orientation by implementing the “Minsk Agreement” (“Minsk II”<sup>3</sup>) did not work out,

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1 Ever since the U.S. war of aggression against Iraq, which was justified by untrue claims, Europeans have distrusted “information” from U.S. intelligence agencies.

2 The Russian-Belarusian military maneuver “Zapad-2021” (“West”), which took place from September 10 to 16, 2021—without Western observers—could be recognized in retrospect, but also already in its course, especially in the Russian troop deployments after its official end, as a preparation for the war of aggression against Ukraine. A clear indication, among other things, was the provision of large quantities of blood reserves (blood bags) near the border.

3 Specifically, by enshrining extensive autonomy for the southeast of Ukraine’s Donbas region, occupied by Russia (since 2014) but remaining part of Ukraine. In the “Minsk Agreement” (“Minsk II”), Putin had assigned to the two so-called People’s Republics “DNR” and “LNR”

Putin lost “patience”; he is now attempting a violent achievement of his overall goal, namely the subjugation of Ukraine under Moscow’s rule.

Similarly to 2014 – when he took advantage of the temporary impotence of the Ukrainian state<sup>4</sup> and annexed Crimea without encountering serious countermeasures from “the West” – Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to have seized an opportunity in 2022 that he perceived as favorable. Speculative answers to the question “why now?” may lie in Putin’s presumed perceptions: The U.S. is weak, its president an old man. The withdrawal of the world’s most modern army from Afghanistan, where it could not defeat the Taliban in 20 years of war, was tantamount to an escape. And in general, the U.S. is tired of its role as “world policeman.”

NATO is “brain dead”, French President Emmanuel Macron had stated in an interview with the British magazine “The Economist” in November 2019. Yet Putin insists that Russian security interests are threatened as a result of NATO’s encirclement of Russia: In reality, the narrative of “encirclement” was merely a pretext for Russia’s planned westward expansion, specifically a pretext to justify the intended submission of Ukraine.

After the end of the Cold War, NATO seemed obsolete. Its eastward expansion did not pose a threat to Russia – at most, Moscow was (rightly) irritated by U.S. unilateral moves such as the planned construction of a *national* U.S. (not “Euro-Atlantic”) missile defense system in Poland (and the Czech Republic). This American operation was also carried out under a pretext, namely the defense against Iranian missiles. Yet 30 years after the end of the Cold War, NATO has regained its *raison d’être*, indeed existential necessity – revived by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine; in itself, Russia should be interested in the slow demise of “brain-dead” NATO. In the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, NATO committed itself not to permanently station military forces in countries that would join NATO after 1999. Russia is now practically forcing NATO to revoke that commitment.

The European Union is divided. Euro-skeptical national populism is spreading in all member states. In the weeks leading up to the Russian military aggression, there was no clear commitment to support Ukraine in the case of invasion by the Russian army. Instead of deterrence, the EU’s leaders practiced “appeasement” – as the British and French prime ministers did in 1938 – appeasing the belligerent dictator in the Moscow Kremlin: for Putin, a demonstration of weakness. Faced with dissension and half-heartedness on the part of “The West”, Putin thought he could undertake a blitzkrieg – a “special military operation,” as he had the war officially called – without encountering serious Western opposition. The opportunity seemed favorable – as with the annexation of

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in the Donbas the role of a team of two Trojan horses, which he wanted to use as levers of influence within the Ukrainian state in order to gain control over the whole of Ukraine.

4 As a result of the change of power in Kyiv and because of the scrapped state of the Ukrainian armed forces.



Crimea in 2014—especially since the “Beijing 2022 Olympic Games” (February 4–20, 2022) diverted the attention of the world public.

However, visible to the whole world, Putin achieved the opposite of what he expected to achieve through his war of aggression against Ukraine: The “aged” president of the “degenerate” (Adolf Hitler) USA, Joseph (“Joe”) Biden, turned out to be—despite initial restraint easing the anxieties of the American people (see below)—the most determined and energetic opponent of Putin and the “healer” of American-European “fractures”. The widespread critical attitude toward the U.S. in Europe until February 24, 2022 (to which, however, U.S. administrations, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon / because of the Vietnam War 1955–1975; George W. Bush / because of the war on Iraq and Donald Trump in every respect)<sup>5</sup> have made their contribution) gave way to a new unity in the face of Russia’s aggression. Putin’s expectation of being able to drive a wedge between Europe and America proved deceptive. Since taking office, U.S. President Biden has sought to close ranks with Europe once again. Transatlantic relations are now closer than at any time since the end of the Cold War; Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine has welded the Atlantic defense alliance, which had become fragile, together again.

NATO proved far from “brain dead.” At its June 29, 2022 summit in Madrid, NATO updated its “Strategic Concept” (last time in 2010) with a fundamental shift in priorities and a new perception of threat: NATO identified Russia as “the most significant and direct threat” to the peace and security of its member countries. China was classified as a “strategic challenge” for the first time. In the face of Russian aggressiveness, even Sweden, which has been neutral for 200 years, and Finland are taking refuge under NATO’s protective umbrella; both countries were welcomed in Madrid. And the European Union, which for two decades stalled Ukraine’s desire for membership—out of “consideration” for Russia—with hollow phrases such as that of the “open door” and “Ukraine belonging to the European family”, and which did not even want to give Ukraine the prospect of eventual membership in the preamble of the agreement on its association,<sup>6</sup> decided after the Russian invasion to give the victim the status of an “accession candidate”.

The “Euro-Maidan” in the winter of 2013 / 2014 was the most impressive demonstration “for Europe” in the entire history of the European Union. No candidate deserves admission to the EU more than Ukraine. At its summit on June 23, 2022, Ukraine (as well as Moldova) was officially accepted into the circle of accession candidates with the (long-overdue) unanimous decision of the 27 member states. President Zelensky had repeatedly demanded such a message

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5 The author admits to having also been critical of U.S. global hegemony.

6 Reasons (some of them valid) were advanced, such as rampant corruption, which, however, was not an obstacle when Romania and Bulgaria were admitted. In reality, the issue was the shifts in the EU’s financial structure, which would result from Ukraine’s membership: net recipients would become net payers.

from the EU in view of the Russian war against his country—also to show the more than 40 million citizens of his country that the fight for freedom is worthwhile.

Apart from these misperceptions about the West’s unity and determination, Russian President Putin underestimated (as did the West) Ukraine’s will to resist, the fighting spirit and fighting strength with which Ukrainians are fighting back. In his assessment of the West’s reaction to his war against Ukraine, Putin was probably deceived by his experience in the case of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and in the following case of Russia’s covert aggression in the Donbas; both times the West contented itself with completely ineffective personalized and economic sanctions.

Regarding the hot “reception” of the Russian (“liberation”) army in Ukraine, Putin may have been a victim of misinformation by his advisors (e.g. Sergei Karaganov), his agents on the ground, and “pro-Russian” Ukrainian politicians (e.g. Viktor Medvedchuk). Self-deception cannot be ruled out either: his idea of Russians and Ukrainians being “one people” does not correspond to reality. Putin has probably never understood the changes in Ukrainian society since the independence of the Ukrainian state: The outward orientation of the majority of the Ukrainian population toward the West and the resulting turning away from Russia, the internalization of democracy—even if it is (still) deficient—are reality. Putin possibly believed himself that Ukraine wanted “reunification” with Russia, or he did not care, just as he does not care about the fate of the Russian people. And because Ukraine does not want to be the “smaller brother” (grammatically actually “sister”) of the “bigger brother”, Putin acts according to the motto: “And if you don’t want to be my brother, then I’ll smash your skull” (a German proverb), and pursues the subjugation of Ukraine with military force.

### **China: On Hold**

However, Putin did not become a “pariah on the international stage” as which Biden wants to see him. The “Global South” did not condemn Russia and did not join the sanctions of the West. With foresight, Russia revived relations with the “Third World” that had been severed after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991—and established a special relationship with China.

As a result of the severance of its relations with the West, Russia will inevitably become even more dependent on China, Estonian journalist Kadri Liik writes.<sup>7</sup> In order to achieve the subjugation of Ukraine, Putin has undermined his own future position in the global power structure, she argues. In fact, China dictates to the Russian Federation the price of the raw materials it imports from Siberia; the time will come when it will not pay for oil, gas—and wood—from neighboring Siberia at all, the author assumes. China does not invest in Russia

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7 Kadri Liik is “senior policy fellow” at the “European Council on Foreign Relations”.

in technically sophisticated and promising areas; it contents itself to attack in rhetorical solidarity the West in unison with Russia.

The author sees “the West”, namely the European Union, and “the East”, specifically the Russian Federation, being pushed to the periphery of the “Middle Kingdom” in the course of the “Chinese Century” (See Part VII of Volume 2: “Pax Sinica” – the Pacification of Eurasia by China”). If the “descending” powers, the USA and the EU – together with the RF – do not unite to form an “anti-Chinese wall”, they will be dominated by the new world power. In the foreseeable future, China will be the decisive factor fomenting or ending regional conflicts such as the current renewed “East-West conflict” in its own interest.

The author sticks to his assessment that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the “Chinese Seculum” (See Part VII of the 2nd volume: “Pax Sinica”). In the Russian war against Ukraine, China is (still) holding back; this suggests that it does not yet feel sufficiently equipped for the role of “world policeman” – i.e., taking over the legacy of the United States of America. Obviously, however, the war of its Russian “partner” irritates the Chinese leadership, because it is setting back the peaceful conquest of the world through global infrastructure projects (“Belt and Road Initiative”; see Chapter VII.4 in Volume 2). Though China attaches great importance to a close political relationship with Russia (apart from Xi Jinping’s and Putin’s shared aversion to U.S. global hegemony), the importance of economic relations with the U.S. still seems to prevail. World domination by the “Middle Kingdom” is not “planned” until 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

### **Putin’s February 24 Declaration of War**

In the televised speech in which Putin announced the attack on Ukraine, he repeated the lie, that the Ukrainian government had been “mistreating and murdering” people for years.<sup>8</sup> The speech Putin delivered at 6 a.m. on February 24, 2022, is reminiscent of Hitler’s September 1, 1939 speech to the German Reichstag (Parliament), broadcast on Greater German Radio (“Grossdeutscher Rundfunk”), on the occasion of the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, thereby triggering World War II. Hitler justified the attack on Poland (“Since 5.45 a.m. we are now shooting back!”) by saying that the German minority living in Poland was being disenfranchised and mistreated. He stated that he had often tried to change these conditions by peaceful proposals. The parallels – like those to the “Sudeten crisis” of 1938 – are striking.

Putin expressed worries and concerns “about these fundamental threats that [...] are directed against our country by irresponsible politicians in the West. I am referring to the expansion of the NATO bloc to the east [...] the war machine

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8 February 24, 2022, source: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843> ZEIT ONLINE; <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2022-02/wladimir-putin-rede-militaereinsatz-ukraine-wortlaut>.

is on the move, it is approaching our borders.” Over the past 30 years he had persistently and patiently tried to reach an agreement with the leading NATO countries on the principles of equal and indivisible security in Europe. Instead, Putin said, they have broken the promise to our country not to expand NATO an inch further east. [...] “They have created [...] on the territories adjacent to us—I emphasize, on our own historic territories—an ‘Anti-Russia’ hostile to us [...] placed under complete external control.” The West’s so-called “policy of containment” is “ultimately a matter of life and death for Russia, a matter of our historical future as a nation ...”.

The two Donbas People’s Republics, he said, have asked Russia for help. “Circumstances demand that we act decisively and immediately.” In accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter—the right to self-defense—and in accordance with the treaties of friendship and assistance ratified by the Federation Assembly with the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic, he had decided to conduct a “special military operation”. “We do not intend to occupy the whole of Ukraine, but to demilitarize it,” declared Putin, a notorious liar; experience shows that the exact opposite of what he says is the case. The goal of the Russian special operation, Putin said, is to protect the people who have been mistreated and murdered by the Kyiv regime for eight years. “To this end, we will seek to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine and bring to justice those who committed numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including Russian citizens.” Russia cannot feel secure, develop and exist if it is constantly threatened by Ukraine, Putin said—a *casus belli* that cannot be surpassed in absurdity. In reality, the point is that Russia cannot develop into a great empire again unless it recaptures Ukraine. “Russian policy is based on freedom,” says the man who tramples on freedom in his own country. “And we consider it important that this right can be exercised by all peoples living on the territory of today’s Ukraine.” Putin’s mendacity knows no bounds. Then Putin addressed the Ukrainian military: “The Ukrainian military has sworn allegiance to its people, not to the anti-people junta that is plundering Ukraine.” “Dear comrades!” he appealed to Ukrainian soldiers:

Your fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers did not fight against the Nazis to defend our common fatherland so that today’s neo-Nazis could take power in Ukraine. I urge you not to carry out criminal orders, to lay down your arms immediately and go home. All soldiers of the Ukrainian army who comply with this demand will be allowed to leave the war zone and return to their families without hindrance.

“We respect the sovereignty of all newly emerged countries in the post-Soviet space,” Putin declared; the “Newly Independent States” know, that Putin means the opposite. In the case of Ukraine, Putin has exposed his lie already by his invasion. In the spirit of Hitler, Putin calls for “cohesion of society, its willingness to consolidate and join all forces to move forward. Strength is always needed.” Hitler made it sound like this on September 1, 1939: “If we form this

community, closely conspired, determined to do everything, never willing to capitulate, then our will can master every adversity.”<sup>9</sup> The enemy, the United States, is an “empire of lies”, Putin said. “The heart of its politics is above all brute force.” And with unsurpassable hypocrisy, dictator Putin, who seeks to maintain his power through lies and violence, proclaims “that true power lies in justice and truth, which are on our side.”

Turning to the West, Putin threatened, “Now a few important, very important words for those for whom the temptation might arise to interfere in events from the side. [...] Whoever tries to obstruct us [...] must know that Russia’s response will be immediate and will lead to consequences that they have never experienced in their history.” Hitler was more restrained in this respect; in his declaration of war on September 1, 1939, he merely feigned “incomprehension” that the Western European states, meaning Great Britain and France, were “interfering in the conflict.”

### Putin’s War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine is Putin’s war, just as World War II was Hitler’s war—quite different from World War I, when the political actors “sleepwalked” (Christopher Clark)<sup>10</sup> into the “primordial catastrophe” (George F. Kennan)<sup>11</sup> of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Before his assassination (February 27, 2015), Russian dissident Boris Nemtsov had collected material for a report on Putin’s readiness for war under the title “Putin. War”.

Putin’s war is a war of aggression, which is forbidden in principle under modern international law. (Briand-Kellogg Pact 1928; Article 2, No. 4 of the UN Charter of 1945; Rome Statute, legal basis of the International Criminal Court). Consequently, Ukraine is fighting a defensive war that is legitimate under international law. Putin’s war in Ukraine is not just a war of conquest; it is a war of extermination—like Hitler’s war against the Soviet Union. It is literally about Ukraine’s very existence; Ukraine is to be wiped off the European map, according to Putin’s will. Dmitrii Medvedev, currently Deputy Head of the Security Council of the Russian Federation (sovet bezopasnosti R F) and former (interim) president, publicly expressed doubts about Ukraine’s future existence.

But it is not just about the Ukrainian state; it is about the national identity of Ukrainians. The goal of the war of extermination is the eradication of the Ukrainian language, the eradication of Ukrainian culture: a cultural genocide.

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9 [https://www.1000dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument\\_de&dokument=0209\\_pol&object=translation&l=de](https://www.1000dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument_de&dokument=0209_pol&object=translation&l=de).

10 Christopher Clark: *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*; New York (Harper Collins) 2013. Sir Christopher Munro Clark is an Australian historian living in the United Kingdom. Professor Clark teaches modern European history at St. Catharine’s College, Cambridge.

11 In 1979, U.S. historian and diplomat George F. Kennan called World War I “the great seminal catastrophe of this century.”