Russia's Attack on Ukrainian Sovereignty and Ukraine's Pivotal Role in European Geopolitics

Haley Anna Morris

Thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Russian, Eurasian and Eastern European Studies in the Global Studies Department in the Graduate School.

Chapel Hill
2023

Approved by:

Graeme Robertson

Torin Monahan

Eren Tasar

ABSTRACT

Haley Morris: Russia's Attack on Ukrainian Sovereignty and Ukraine's Pivotal Role in
European Geopolitics
(Under the direction of Graeme Robertson)

This thesis examines why and how Ukraine is a buffer between Russia and the West.
After the fall of the Soviet Union, scholars in the West and Russia noted a Western fear of a
renewed Russian empire and a Russian fear of Western expansionism. Ukraine, with less-than-
ideal geographic positioning between Russia and the West, was often where the powers clashed.
Tensions between Russia and the West reached ever deepening nadirs during the Orange
Revolution, the Euromaidan protests, and the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Russia attempted to
exploit the Soviet history of Ukraine—the ethnic cleansing of millions of Ukrainians, ethnic
Russians within the territory of Ukraine and superimposed Soviet borders—to justify their
actions internally and externally. Through information warfare Russia strove to delegitimize the
Ukrainian government and highlight the necessity of Russia's influence in Ukraine. Russia-West
relations seemingly hit their absolute nadir in February 2022, when Russia officially invaded
Ukraine. Russia continues to justify their invasion through information warfare that frames the
current Ukrainian government as a fascist Nazi regime that is complicit with the West in
oppressing and victimizing ethnic Russians. A year into the war it is becoming clear that the
Ukrainian people have tired of being Russia's bulwark from Europe and are ready to join NATO.
However, it remains to be seen if the West will accept the responsibility of codifying Ukraine's
protection into a military alliance, as it could risk an even greater escalation of Russian
aggression.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

When Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, the post-Cold War period ended and the world entered a new era of security. It will take years to fully understand how Russia's invasion will impact world security. However, it is important to start unraveling the twisted web of geopolitics, history, and security that surrounds the invasion. This paper will focus on one specific yet essential thread of the complex web of Russia's impact on the geopolitical balance of the world: Ukraine's role as a buffer between Russia and the West.

This paper will first focus on the geopolitical frameworks in the West and Russia concerning Western expansion, how Russia framed their 2022 invasion as a response to that expansion, and Ukraine's role in European geopolitics. The next chapter will highlight Soviet history in Ukraine and how Russia exploited that history and Ukraine's geography to justify their involvement in the Orange Revolution, Euromaidan protests, and the annexation of Crimea to keep Ukraine as a buffer from the West. Chapter three will examine how Ukraine attempted to minimize Russian interference in the state through policy, while Russia used information warfare to support their geopolitical goals of keeping Ukraine as a buffer, which eventually culminated in the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The final chapter will assess current Russian information warfare that highlights the supposed illegitimacy of Ukraine and its government to frame the invasion as necessary. The final chapter will also analyze how Ukraine has changed in the wake of the invasion and what these changes, specifically its rejection of being a buffer, mean for the geopolitical stability between Russia and the West.

CHAPTER 1: GEOPOLITICAL SECURITY CONCERNS IN EUROPE

Introduction

Western expansion has been a major topic of discussion in the years following the fall of the Soviet Union. It is undeniable that Western institutions like NATO spread eastward quickly in the 1990s and early 2000s. As seen in Figure 1, 2004 marked the inclusion of several different countries that were previously Soviet Republics and satellite states into NATO, like Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltic States. This was already after Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999 (*Little Green Men,* 2015).
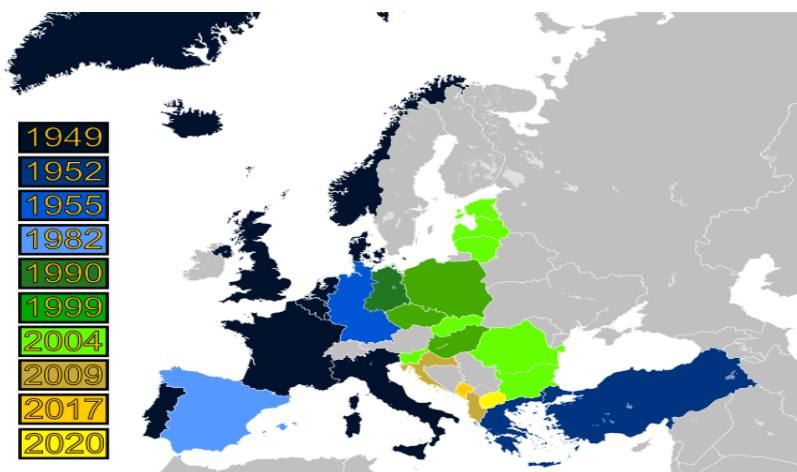

Figure 1 (*Little Green Men,* 2015)

Russian Views of Western-Dominated Security

Many Russian scholars point to 'aggressive' Western expansion as a legitimate reason to be wary of the West and act offensively to keep it off their borders. It is evident in Figure 1 that by 2004 Russia was quickly becoming surrounded by a historic enemy within a relatively short

amount of time. Russian scholars believe that NATO expansion is an affront to Russia's historical sovereignty in Eastern Europe. In the years following the fall of the Soviet Union Russia was no longer a major player in global security, and in 2014 Fyodor Lukyanov argued in his article *Russian Dilemmas in a Multipolar World*, that the West viewed the collapse of the Soviet Union as a sign of acquiescence to a hegemonic Western-dominated global security. However, he contended that Moscow viewed it as merely a fresh start for Russia to rise again as a major player in global security. It was the West, Lukyanov argued, that attempted to illegitimately exploit their position in the early 1990s by promoting democracy and expanding their control. He saw Russia as the undeserving target and the victim of Western aggression, and that Russia,

> "has merely been responding to temporary revisions that the West itself has tried to make permanent. No genuine world order existed at the end of the twentieth century, and attempts to impose U.S. hegemony have slowly eroded the principles of the previous world order, which was based on the balance of power" (Lukyanov, 31).

This idea that Western expansion has created a dangerous hegemony in European security and that Russia is merely an underdog to it is a common narrative in Russian rhetoric. As Demetri Trenin wrote in The Economist in 2021, Russia wants to re-establish itself as a major player on the world stage, fight the idea of Western controlled security and be perceived as "a world-class, self-standing player" (Trenin, 2021) despite having limited resources, military, and regional control. Russian scholars do not deny that NATO has greater military power than Russia (*Perspectives on Russia*, Trenin, 2017), which is why Russia perceives NATO expansion as such a threat. NATO encroachment on Russia can be considered military posturing, and Trenin warned that Russia did want NATO to "use their clear military superiority to make [Russia] do

things that [they] don't want to do" (Trenin, 2017). Trenin argued that the military threat NATO expansion posed to Russia was unlikely to result in a military invasion from the West, as modern warfare can be waged remotely. However, he argued that this Western posturing intimidated Russia and forced them to act territorially.

Western Views of Western-Dominated Security

Russian scholars are not the only ones who see the danger in the rapid expansion of Western institutions. In Western literature, there are two major schools of thought surrounding the impact of Western-dominated European security, with some scholars viewing it as a necessity, or even advantageous, and some scholars viewing it as a danger. As S Neil Macfarlane said in his 2001 article *NATO in Russia's Relation With the West*, "for better or worse NATO has claimed a role in regional security throughout Europe" (MacFarlane, 281). Scholars in the 'for better' camp see the possibility of Russian expansionism as dangerous and argue that Western influence was needed "to protect democratic governments in central Europe from Russian intimidation and military pressure" (*Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives,* Walker, 145) in case Russia consolidated power quickly and attempted to create a new empire. In 1998 President Clinton announced plans for expanding NATO and Western institutions, with the goal of creating a "Europe that is undivided, free, democratic, at peace and secure; a Europe in which Russia, Ukraine and other states of the former Soviet Union join with us to make common cause" (Clinton, 1998). Clinton hoped democracy would create alliances leading to a single security alliance in Europe. In *The New Role of Central and Eastern Europe in International Democracy Support,* Tsveta Petrova argued that the goal of democracy promotion in Eastern Europe was for "inspiring and preparing pro-democratic forces in neighboring hybrid regimes to organize several electoral revolutions" (Petrova, 1). By surrounding Russia with Western-backed democracies, it was

assumed that Russia's ability to consolidate power was inhibited. In these cases, scholars see NATO's prominent role in European security as a 'for better' situation.

On the other hand, there are many Western scholars who, like Russian scholars, view NATO's prominent role in European security as a 'for worse' situation. They argue that the eastward expansion of western institutions like the EU and NATO was too aggressive and acknowledge the legitimacy of Russia's fears of the West. In the 2017 article *Ukraine between a Constrained EU and Assertive Russia*, Taras Kuzio argued that while NATO and the EU are two distinct entities, the EU being a political and economic union and NATO being a security alliance, "Russia no longer viewed the EU and NATO as different actors and that Russia was opposed to both of their enlargement" (Kuzio, 2017). This conflation of the two Western powers, made Russia fear Ukraine's possible joining with the EU just as much as with NATO, as Russia saw the eastward expansion of NATO and the EU as a threat. John Mearsheimer contended that "since the mid-1990s, Russian leaders have adamantly opposed NATO enlargement" (*New York Times,* 2014), and Stephen Cohen argued in 2020 that the rise in tensions between Russia and the West was because of "politics in Washington, not Moscow" (*War with Russia?: From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate,* 2020). MacFarlane stated that while NATO is capable of being the dominant security power in Europe, as Clinton wanted it to be, not every country wanted to join their security alliance. Neil MacFarlane warned NATO that it should be wary of actually fulfilling the role as sole security provider in Europe, as it could sour relations with Russia. He cautioned that "the exclusive character of its membership reduces its legitimacy as a regional security institution in the eyes of those left outside, mainly Russia" (MacFarlane, 282). This Western school of thought ultimately highlighted the importance of not treating Russia as an inherently hostile power, respecting its historic sphere of influence and instead encouraged

dialogue and more nuanced actions in Russia's historical sphere of influence. Though it may be for different reasons, there are both Western and Russian scholars who see the dangers of Western-dominated European security.

Ukraine's Role in European Security

So far the scholarship discussed has regarded Europe generally. Ukraine, however, plays a unique role in the conversation concerning European security. As previously discussed, MacFarlane warned of NATO becoming an entirely dominant security power in Europe, and as Ukraine remains one of the last non-NATO states surrounding Russia, it plays a powerful role in avoiding that hypothetical outcome. Dmitri Trenin wrote in 2021 that "Ukraine occupies a crucial strategic position between Russia and the NATO member countries" (Trenin, 2021). This strategic position is largely geographic. Ukraine is a geographic buffer that keeps NATO military power off Russia's doorstep. It should be noted that Russia does not treat Ukraine as a traditional buffer. A traditional buffer state creates a sense of security for both sides of a conflict, as it keeps two opposing forces off each other's borders because "the anticipated costs of occupying the territory exceed the expected benefits" (Graham, Menon and Snyderl, 109). This is seemingly not Russia's goal with Ukraine. They do not want Ukraine to become neutral; they want Ukraine to be a shield, keeping the West off their borders. Theoretically Ukraine provides 785 miles of distance between Russia's border and the West (World Population Review). However, there are limits to how effective Ukraine is as a geographic bulwark from a possible European invasion. The established 2010 border between Russia and Ukraine is over 1200 miles long (Library of Congress). As seen in Figure 2, there are no physiographic boundaries that separate the two countries, and the entire region is part of the European plain that stretches from The Bay of Biscay to the Ural mountains. The border is flat and easily accessible from the West, creating a

perfect opening for a possible Western invasion that Russia fears. The planes of the Donbas, while effective at creating a transition zone that blends Ukrainian and Russian culture, ultimately exposes Russia to a strategic military weakness if Ukraine ever joined NATO.

Figure 2 (*Wikipedia*)

Russia's Justification of Their 2022 Invasion of Ukraine

As previously discussed, Russian scholars viewed Western expansion as a dangerous military hegemony in European security. In Putin's February 21st, 2022 address that officially announced Russia's invasion, he applied this rhetoric to justify their actions. He highlighted NATO's eastward growth as a justification for the war, stating,

"We also know the main adversary of the United States and NATO. It is Russia. NATO documents officially declare our country to be the main threat to Euro-Atlantic security." Because Russia was the alliance's true enemy, Putin argued, their actions in countries that once had been allies of Russia were all because they feared Russia's power, and now that NATO has "reached Russia's borders…it has had the most negative impact on the entire system of international relations and led to the loss of mutual trust." (Putin, 2022).

In late 2021 Putin was clear that Russia did not want NATO military anywhere near Ukraine. He demanded that NATO guarantee Ukraine would never become a member, because Ukraine in

NATO provided too great a military threat to Russia. In late 2021 Maxim Samorukov of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace quoted Putin's security concerns that highlighted "the possible deployment in the territory of Ukraine of strike systems with the flight time of 7–10 minutes to Moscow, or 5 minutes in the case of hypersonic systems."(Samorukov, 2021).

Although Ukraine was not an official member of NATO by February 2022, Putin argued that the alliance's influence in Ukraine was already too dangerous and that NATO was on their doorstep. He spoke of the "military contingents of NATO countries [that] have been almost constantly present on Ukrainian territory under the pretext of exercises" and claimed that the "The Ukrainian troop control system has already been integrated into NATO. This means that NATO headquarters can issue direct commands to the Ukrainian armed forces." (Putin, 2022). Putin believes that Ukraine, while not officially part of NATO, is already too enmeshed and controlled by NATO to be a manageable threat and must be neutralized. He asserted to the Russian public that the decision to invade Ukraine was necessary for state preservation, as "Ukraine joining NATO is a direct threat to Russia's security" and that "Ukraine will serve as an advanced bridgehead" (Putin, 2022) for a lethal strike on Russia. For Putin, the invasion is the only plausible course of action that can stop a hostile Western takeover from happening. While taken to an extreme, Putin's rhetoric aligns with Russian scholarship on NATO expansion.

Ukraine's Relationship With The West and Russia in Independence

In the discussion of Ukraine's role in European geopolitics, it is important to not assume Ukraine is a submissive pawn to the controlling powers in the West or East. Ukraine is a sovereign country that has the right to establish relations with whichever alliance or country it chooses, and it exercised that right throughout its history. Since establishing independence in 1991, Ukraine has had formal relations with the West and Russia. In 1992 Ukraine joined the North Atlantic

Cooperation Council, and in 1994 it was the first post-Soviet state to join the partnership for peace (PFP), an organization set up to help central and eastern European countries join NATO. However, this did not stop Ukraine from strengthening ties with Russia. In 1995 President Leonid Kuchma signed an agreement with Russia to keep the Russian Black Sea Fleet positioned in Crimea, despite being Ukrainian territory. An important reason Ukraine never quickly allied itself with the West or Russia was because there was no overwhelming majority in public opinion in Ukraine on how the state should align itself security-wise. By 1995 there was very little consensus within Ukraine about joining NATO. Only 37% of Ukrainians supported joining NATO, 28% were against it and 34% were undecided (Reuters, 2017). This shows just how split Ukrainian citizens were about aligning with the West or Russia. There was vocal support on the pro-NATO side that wanted more connection and guaranteed security through alliances with the West. Russia was once a global power, but in the 1990's, it was weak, and NATO offered a greater guarantee of security. The anti-Western side recognized the historical and cultural overlap between Ukraine and Russia and wished to build upon it. They also recognized Ukraine's heavy reliance on Russian gas (Sloan, 2016), a security concern that kept Ukraine perpetually close to Russia economically throughout its history.

In 2005 the president of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, stated his desire for Ukraine to join the EU and NATO (Europa, 2021), and later that year the European Parliament began discussions on creating an EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council (Europa, 2005). These discussions continued throughout the 2010's, and greater ties to the EU and NATO were made, which will be discussed in the following chapter, but there was no established timeline of Ukraine's official accession into the EU or NATO. This was partially because Yanukovich, the president following Viktor Yushchenko, was aware that EU demands and reforms would weaken the political system that put

him in power (Economist, 2013). It was also because, "there was little popular support for the issue at the time and it was never pursued by Ukraine's pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich."(Reuters, 2017).

The West offered economic stability and long term state security, however, Russia offered more immediate benefits, which Ukrainian politicians wanted. Taras Kuzio wrote in 2017 that the West,

"overestimated the degree to which the medium- to long-term benefits for Ukrainian big business from a free trade zone with Europe was more important than short-term opportunities for rent seeking. 'As a Eurocrat puts it, the Ukrainian president must choose between a rich Russian dinner with lots of vodka and with the risk of discovering that he has been captured and his car stolen; or a boring Brussels sandwich lunch that offers respectability and a solid job, but only in the longer term."(Kuzio, 2017).

This metaphor, while harsh and reductive, effectively shows how Ukraine's politicians viewed relations with Russia and the West. For internal politics, it was easier to stay close to Russia, as they offered benefits and economic necessities, like gas, that did not require cutbacks and economic tightening that would most likely not have been popular among their constituents. This reasoning is understandable. The West offered greater stability and security from Russia, but there was no real timeline for it, and Ukraine and Europe still relied heavily on Russian gas, a legitimate security concern. Only 28% of Ukrainians wanted to join NATO in 2012 (Reuters, 2017). This was 9% less than the amount that wanted to join in 1995. As Ukraine attempted to create meaningful ties with Western Europe, Russia became dangerously possessive and attitudes in Ukraine understandably changed. According to Reuters, by 2017, three years after Russia's initial invasion, "69 percent of Ukrainians want to join NATO"(Reuters 2017). This massive increase in desire to join NATO was the result of Ukrainians exercising their right to be independent and make

their own decisions without Russia's influence. Under Presidents Poroshenko and Zelenskyy there was a continued push to have Ukraine officially join NATO and the EU, an agenda President Zelenskyy has made one of his highest priorities as president since the onset of the 2022 invasion.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the geopolitical theory surrounding Russia and the West. It is undeniable that after the collapse of the Soviet Union Western democracy and security spread eastward across Europe. It could be argued that this eastward movement was necessary in order to contain Russian expansionism. However, many scholars in the West and Russia argue that it only heightened tensions between Russia and the West. Russia ultimately framed their invasion of Ukraine as a response to dangerous 'western aggression', that Ukraine's relationship with the West posed too much of a geopolitical risk, and that they were fighting against dangerous Western hegemony in Europe by invading Ukraine. And while the geographic buffer Ukraine provides Russia is not the only reason for its interest in the state, it is a major reason, especially as Russia feels surrounded by NATO. In independence, Ukraine kept relations with Russia and the West. Many Ukrainians wished for the security NATO offered, while many other Ukrainians wanted to rely on the cultural and historical ties to stay economically close to Russia. The initial 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine made public sentiment in Ukraine more pro-Western and less willing to identify with their Eastern neighbor, a sentiment that has only intensified in the aftermath of the 2022 invasion.

CHAPTER 2: RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE IN MODERN UKRAINE

Introduction

Now that the theory surrounding the 2022 invasion has been established, it is important to understand *how* Russia justifies their involvement in Ukraine within this geopolitical framework. This chapter will focus on how Russia has interfered in Ukraine since it declared independence in 1991 in order to keep the West off their borders. This will be accomplished by highlighting important parts of Ukraine's history during the Soviet Union that are still seen in the country's political landscape. The chapter will then focus on specific examples of when Russia exploited those parts of Soviet history during the Orange Revolution, Maidan, and annexation of Crimea to have Ukraine remain a definitive buffer between themselves and the West.

A Brief Overview of Soviet History in Ukraine

A throughline in Ukraine's time in the Soviet Union is a desire by the Soviet government to control the state, a trend Russia continues today. By the time The Soviet Union took control of Ukraine, a distinct Ukrainian identity was already flourishing. Vladimir Lenin desired to exercise control over Ukraine through a process called *Korenizatsiya*. Korenizatsiya was the attempt by the Soviet government to integrate the diverse nations contained within the Soviet Union into the state. This did not mean an erasure of Ukrainian culture, but rather a melding of Ukrainian and Soviet culture. Ukrainian was still spoken, and the culture was celebrated and acknowledged, just in the context of a Soviet identity (*The USSR as a Communal Apartment, Or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,* 414-452*).* However, this did not last. Joseph Stalin believed Korenizatsiya to be a mistake and "was abandoned and replaced by suspicion and hostility"

(Kuzio, 2007). Stalin attempted to control Ukraine through "Russification" to quickly and harshly create a new Soviet Ukrainian identity.

Stalin's Russification was impactful in impeding the cohesion of the Ukrainian identity throughout the state while under Soviet control. The Soviet Union "weeded out representatives of the wrong kind of Ukrainian identity; offenders not only lost their positions, but were often imprisoned, exiled, or executed" (Himka, 2007). Soviet leadership perpetuated xenophobic ideals that were hostile to the West, encouraged intermarriage between Ukrainians and Russians, and "Ukrainians were expected and encouraged to participate in all-Soviet culture and society rather than just in the Soviet Ukrainian national culture that had been created" (Himka). This was the beginning of a state-organized attempt to control and dilute Ukrainian culture that continued under Stalin, and Putin continues to make the most of today.

The process of establishing Soviet control in Ukraine became extreme from 1932-1933 when there was a strategic starvation of Ukrainians throughout the country. This man-made famine, known as Holodomor, killed an estimated 4-7 million Ukrainians (Gorbunova & Klymchuk, 2020). This planned "attempt to eliminate the Ukrainian people" (Gorbunova & Klymchuk) by Stalin quickly made massive population gaps in the country, specifically in the countryside, where the Ukrainian identity was strongest. Soviet control over Ukraine was again strengthened under Stalin when he enforced population transfers of ethnic Russians to the region in the aftermath of the Holodomor. These Russians did not have strong nationalistic Ukrainian views to strengthen the hold of the heartland in areas that were historically less loyal to the Soviet Union (Gorbunova & Klymchuk). This resulted in a loss of Ukrainian state identity, as Soviet population transfers were coupled with the spread of propaganda and the Russian language being spoken instead of Ukrainian.

The russification of Ukraine's population did not just stop with the murder of ethnic Ukrainians and a loss of history and culture. Moscow continued to weaken Ukraine's cultural identity by changing the territory's geographic borders. In 1954, Ukraine was gifted the Crimean Peninsula by the Soviet Union to "mark the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's merger with the Russian empire" (NPR, 2014). The Soviet Newspaper Pravda reported in 1954 that "the integral character of the economy, the territorial proximity and the close economic ties between Crimea Province and the Ukraine Republic" (NPR) were the reasoning behind the gift of the Crimean peninsula to the Ukrainian Republic. This, coupled with the removal of the native Tatars from the peninsula and replacing the population with ethnic Russians (NPR), shows how Ukraine's territory was strategically changed to enhance control over the region while it was part of the Soviet Union. Geographically, there was very little territory that was historically seen as 'Ukrainian,' and a majority of the current borders of the state are just lines arbitrarily drawn without thought given to ethnic divisions and cultural differences. While the gift of Crimea and more land in the east may have seemed like a show of goodwill to the Ukrainian people from the Soviet Union, it also was a way to strengthen their geographic influence over the state. For the Soviet Union, it did not matter if the land was part of the Soviet Republic of Ukraine or the Soviet Republic of Russia. Both were ultimately under the same government. It was a symbolic gesture of supposed solidarity with Ukraine, but most importantly, it changed the established Ukrainian 'shared territory' that was used as the borders when Ukraine became its own state in 1991. It also diluted the actual Ukrainian population of the state even more, as an overwhelming majority of the population of Crimea was ethnically Russian or not attached to Ukraine or its culture.

The Impact of the Soviet Union on Ukraine's Landscape

14

When Ukraine declared independence on August 24th 1991, the legacy of Soviet control in Ukraine did not disappear from the state overnight. And Russia used this to their advantage as their effort to stake a claim "for itself in a multipolar system"(Lukyanov, 2010). In a 2005 address, President Putin stated,

"it must be acknowledged that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. For the Russian people, it became a real drama. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and compatriots have found themselves outside Russian territory" (Putin, 2005).

It can be debated if the collapse of the Soviet Union was indeed the 'greatest geopolitical catastrophe' of the 20th century, but it cannot be denied that a result of it was a large number of ethnic Russians in Ukraine's borders. There are ethnic Russians in every oblast (district) in Ukraine, and the population increases in the east and south, where there is a minimal geographic barrier between Ukraine and Russia. The highest population of Ethnic Russians is in Crimea, where, according to the 2001 Census, 58.1% of inhabitants were Ethnic Russians, not native Ukrainians. Ethnic Russians make up 17.1% of the population of Ukraine (Ukrainian Census, 2001). Russia points to the use of the Russian language as a major indicator of their cultural connection to the region, and Figure 3 shows that Russian is spoken in every oblast, more in areas geographically closer to Russia. More than 75% of people in Donetsk and Crimea claimed Russian as their native language rather than Ukrainian (CNN, 2014).
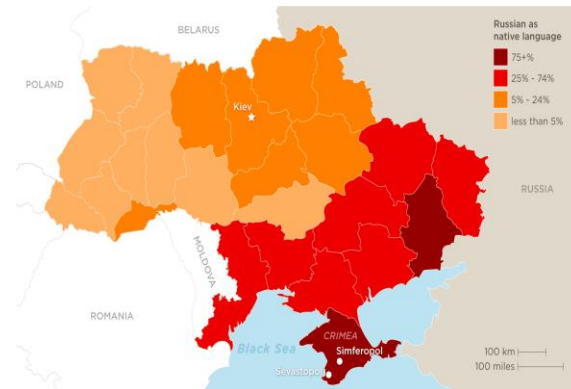
Figure 3 (CNN, 2014)

In a 2008 speech, Steven Pfifer stated, "Russia wants a sphere of influence in the former Soviet space"(Pfifer, 2008). The Soviet history of Ukraine provides a way of justifying their influence in that space. The Soviet Union's impact on modern day Ukraine is significant. It increased the number of ethnic Russians in Ukraine, it starved and led to the death of millions of Ukrainians, and changed the borders to include a historically Russian territory. The Soviet legacy in Ukraine did not disappear after the country declared independence. As Ukraine tried to create a new independent state it still had a large number of ethnic Russians and historically Russian territory that Russia took great interest in. It led to political and cultural fissures in Ukraine in the years following independence. And as Graham, Menon and Snyder wrote in their article *Ukraine Between Russia and the West*, "Russia deliberately exacerbates the fissures within Ukraine"(112) to destabilize the country and keep the West out.

The Orange Revolution

By 2004 Ukraine was one of the last states left between the West and Russia. With the objective of keeping Ukraine culturally and politically close and the West off their border, Russia instigated the poisoning of Viktor Yushchenko and the rigging of the presidential election of 2004. These events led to the 2004 Orange Revolution. This time period of political unrest in Ukraine was one of the first instances that showed how Russia "deliberately exacerbates"(112)

16

fissures left behind by the Soviet Union to keep the West off their borders. Taras Kuzio argued in 2005 that the fissure Russia hoped to exploit in 2004 was the shared Soviet history between the two states that Russia believed bound the two countries together. Under this rationalization, Russia's actions leading up to the Orange Revolution were not really meddling in a foreign election, as the two countries were not culturally separate (Kuzio, 123). As NATO and the EU moved Westward, Russia feared their buffer would become a weapon "in the hands of Western powers [who were] intent on wielding them against Russia" (Kotkin, 4).

According to the book *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* by Andrew Wilson, The second president of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, originally had strong ties to Russia. However, he drifted and began to strengthen ties with the West. That lasted a few years until the early 2000s when several considerable scandals marred his presidency and legitimacy as a leader. The West abandoned supporting Kuchma's presidency, and as a result, he strengthened ties with Russia once again. When his time as president ended, he reportedly tried to find a pro-Russian candidate to replace him, finding one in Viktor Yanukovich. Not long into Yanukovich's presidential campaign, Yanukovich himself was accused of working with Russians when his opponent, Viktor Yushchenko, was poisoned. Yushchenko survived the poisoning attempt and continued to run as Yanukovich's opponent. A short time later, Yanukovich again colluded with the Russians in election fraud, where he added ballots to tip the presidential election in his favor (Wilson).

The first election was on October 31st, 2004. Yanukovich had 39.32% of the vote, while Yushchenko had 39.87%. This created the need for a runoff election between the two candidates(Wilson, ch.6). The runoff election was scheduled for November 21st, 2004. Exit polls that day suggested that Yushchenko would win. However, when the official results were published on November 21st, Yanukovich won (ch.1). He was accused of rigging the election

with the help of Russia, as he won with a million extra votes. Yanukovich ensured his failure by winning with an unprecedented manifestly improbable margin. On November 21st, Yushchenko called for protests and a new election. This triggered the official beginning of the Orange Revolution (ch.1). It was called the Orange Revolution, as orange became the adopted color of Yushenko's campaign for president. It was a continuation of the trend of colored revolutions in former soviet states in the early 2000s, like the Rose Revolution in Georgia. Thousands of Ukrainians fled to the streets of Kyiv's Maidan (square) to demand a new and fair election. City councils in places like L'viv and Kyiv were unanimous in rejecting the election results and demanded reelection. In the East and South, there was less protest against the legitimacy of the results, as the majority vote in those regions were for Yanukovich. By November 28th, thousands of people were in Kyiv's central maidan area protesting the results of the election (Ch.7). The fraudulent election and large protests resulted in severe international backlash and an expectation for Ukraine to hold another election. The revote happened on December 26th, 2004, and Yushenko won with 52% of the votes while Yanukovich only received 45% (Ch.7). This revote was considered fair by external observers and international committees sent to Ukraine to ensure a free and fair election. The results were also legitimized by Kuchma, who officially declared Yushchenko the actual election winner, despite Yanukovich's own denial of the loss (Ch.7).

By 2004 Russia was already attempting to exploit their history with Ukraine to keep the West at bay. These events show that in 2004 Russia was already standing firm on their stance that Ukraine was a buffer, ready to ensure that Ukraine stayed firmly in their sphere of influence. Scholars like Mearsheimer argue that the West's dedication to ensure democracy after the 2004 revolution was critical in Russia's increased efforts to control Ukraine (New York Times, 2014).

As a result of this 'western meddling,' Russia continued to invest more and more in Ukrainian politics. Eventually, these issues all came to a head again at the Euromaidan protests ten years later.

Russia and The Maidan Revolution

In the book *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution*, it was reported that the The Euromaidan protests officially began on November 23rd, 2013, at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kyiv, Ukraine (Marples, David et al, introduction). The Euromaidan protests provide an example of how much Russia values Ukraine's geographic buffer and fears Western powers in Ukraine. In 2010, only a few years after the Orange Revolution, Yanukovich was elected (legitimately) into the office of President. Ukrainians did not vote for the more nationalistic Yulia Tymoshenko in the election. Brookings reported that, although there were Ukrainian nationalists that "held sharply anti-Russian views" in the years before the Maidan Revolution, "they constituted a small minority" (Brookings, 2017). In late 2013, Yanukovich refused to sign the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement, which would have been a momentous step for Ukraine to become significantly more economically tied to the West and to become a member of the EU eventually. However, Yanukovich abruptly decided to strengthen relations with Russia, and instead made a deal with The Eurasian Economic Union, which put Ukraine definitively with Russia and not the West. It is assumed Yanukovich caved to pressure from Vladimir Putin and pro-Russian Ukrainians that feared Western control in the country(Marples, David et al, introduction). The Euromaidan protests followed immediately and, in turn, eventually morphed into the Maidan Revolution (Reuters, 2013). The Euromaidan protests began because Ukrainians felt their sovereignty as a democratic state was being denied. As Ukrainian scholar Nadia Dudik explains in 2014 in her article *Ukraine's Self Organizing*

Revolution, the choice to join the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement was a "new stage in the evolution of Ukraine as an independent and sovereign state"(Dudik, 10).

If Ukraine became a codified member of a major western trade alliance, it would have given the West access to Ukraine's relatively unprotected border with Russia. Furthermore, being in a trade alliance would create a more bureaucratic Ukrainian identity less aligned with its history with Russia and more with the West (Dudik, 10). While an economic partnership is not equivalent to being an EU member state, it could have eventually led to the possibility of Ukraine joining the EU. People who once identified themselves as Russians in Ukraine could claim EU citizenship, and thus Russia's claims to Ukraine could weaken. By late February 2014, Ukraine had massive amounts of protests against the Yanukovich government in predominantly pro-West cities. However, in places like Donetsk and Crimean cities like Sevastopol, there was a large amount of pro-Russian counter-protests gaining traction. Referring back to Figure 3, there is a clear correlation between the areas with the most uprisings and Pro-Russian protests in 2014 and where there are high Russian-speaking populations, which signifies a high amount of ethnic Russians. The anti-Yanukovich and pro-Western protests had become violent to the point that the Kremlin justified and called them a threat to pro-Russian Ukrainians and ethnic Russians who lived in Ukraine (Marples, David et al, ch. 3). Vladimir Putin was a major player in the Euromaidan protests. Although he was not in Ukraine to destabilize the country, he still had a massive impact on the protests and offered refuge to Yanukovich after he was ousted as president on February 22nd, 2014 (Baunov, Jarbik, et al, 2015).

Some Western scholars argued that Russia's heavy interference in Ukrainian politics led to the Maidan protests and 'proved' the necessity for the West to double down on their influence in Ukraine. The Economist argued that "the West must make Mr. Putin see that, with this havoc

at the heart of Europe, he has gone too far" (Economist, 2014). However, many security scholars disagreed. The protestors that demanded EU and NATO membership (2014) that some Western scholars praised, Mearsheimer believed merely proved to Putin that the West was sowing this 'unrest' and that the West was desperate to get rid of a legitimately democratically elected pro-Russian president in order to take control of Ukraine. In their article *Russia and Ukraine*, Charap and Darden argued that it was highly possible that the Russian government viewed the protests as confirmation they needed that the West was actively pursuing access to their borders and convinced themselves it was time to act. Moscow believed the collapse of the Ukrainian government and that the 'coup' in Kyiv,

"resulted at least in part from a Western plot to install a loyal government in Kyiv that included far-right leaders who would revoke Russia's basing agreement in Crimea, quickly move Ukraine to EU and NATO membership, repress the country's Russian minority and further cement regime change as an acceptable modus operandi in international affairs. An escalation spiral set in as Russia … to deter what it saw as hostile behavior" (Charap, Darden, 2014).

The Annexation of Crimea and The War in The Donbas

It is not an accident that Crimea was the first place to be successfully annexed by Russia. This significant Russian population, a relic of Ukraine's soviet history, and weak geographic ties to mainland Ukraine ultimately made it difficult for the Ukrainian government to control the region. The land, culture, and history of a large part of the state were not inherently tied to Ukraine, and it was so close to Russia geographically and culturally. It created an opportunity for Russia to definitively take control of the land they felt entitled to, and fit within the previously discussed narrative that Russia wanted to protect the ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Scholars point to the swift actions of Russia in Crimea as proof that Russia was preparing for this eventuality

and there were "long-standing contingency plans for the occupation of Crimea" (Walker,

Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives,151).

Crimea's high priority to Russia is not surprising. It had economic, military and cultural advantages Russia wished to exploit. Crimea's placement on the Black Sea is convenient for oil access and its exclusive economic zone; NATO reported in 2014 that Crimea "has vast offshore oil and gas resources in the Black Sea, estimated between 4-13 trillion cm of natural gas" (Umbach, 2014). However, it is also ideal for trade and strategic naval positioning, something Russia has already exploited since 1997 when Ukraine and Russia signed the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet (Ukraine-Russia Partition Treaty). Crimea and Russia were also connected culturally. By 2014 the majority of the population of Crimea was Russian (Brookings, 2022). As Figure 2 shows, the Crimean peninsula is attached to the country of Ukraine only by narrow strips of land surrounded by water, and is only separated by the narrow Kerch Strait from Russia. This isolation from Ukraine and proximity to Russia likely stopped ethnic Russians in Crimea from feeling connected to the state of Ukraine and lessened the influence of Ukraine over the peninsula. In 2014, Putin argued that economic and historical circumstances that tied Crimea to Russia were stronger than the peninsula's ties to Ukraine (Putin, 2014) and that the people of Crimea, because of their cultural ties to Russia, wanted to leave Ukraine. Ironic, as many of the connections between Russia and Crimea were engineered by Soviet population transfers and then merely exploited by Russia.

On February 27th, 2014, masked Russian troops without any official flag or Russian regalia were dispatched to Crimea. They used military force to quickly take over Crimea, and by March 16th, 2014, there was an 'official' referendum where a majority of Crimean residents voted to secede from Ukraine and become a part of Russia (*Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of*

a Civil Revolution, 21*). After the swift success of the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea on February 27th, pro-Russian forces attempted to take over the local governments of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts on March 1st. The victories for pro-Russian forces were not as swift as the takeovers in Crimea. After pro-Russian protesters stormed official government buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk, they were seized back by the Ukrainian government in mid-March before ultimately being taken over by the separatist protesters that demanded a referendum like the one in Crimea. By April 7th, the Donetsk Oblast had been seized by separatists and renamed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). Similar protests were held in the Luhansk Oblast, and by April 8th, the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) had declared independence from Ukraine as well (121). Cities like Kharkiv also had separatist movements; however, they were unsuccessful in establishing strong enough independence movements to create a new republic (introduction). These dissident movements that were supported by Russian forces began the Donbas War in Ukraine, a war that has been ongoing in the country to this day (and, of course, has been heightened to an all-out war throughout the country in 2022). Despite the Minsk Protocol— a ceasefire agreement between Ukraine, the DPR, and the LPR signed later in 2014 (UN Peacekeeper, 2014)—there was continued fighting between these groups leading up to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Conclusion

When the Soviet Union fell and Ukraine became an independent country in 1991, the years following were tumultuous and Russia utilized the fissures the Soviet Union left behind in Ukraine to keep Ukraine in their sphere of influence and in their control. Attempts to establish an independent Ukraine that was not within Russia's parameters for an acceptable buffer state were reframed by Russia as a catalyst to call for the protection of ethnic Russians from Western

meddling. Russia's escalating efforts to distance Ukraine from the West culminated in the

Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014. They seized Crimea and started an almost decade-long war

in The Donbas to mitigate Western influence in Ukraine and keep it too preoccupied and

debilitated to join the West in any meaningful alliance. This pattern of Russia striving to

destabilize Ukraine through interference is a destructive cycle perpetuated to this day and is seen

in their information warfare and on an even greater scale with their 2022 invasion.

CHAPTER 3: UKRAINE'S BATTLE WITH RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE

Introduction

Taras Kuzio wrote in early 2022 that "Ukraine and Russia moved further apart" (Kuzio, 2022) in the years following the annexation of Crimea. This is in large part due to increasing anti-Russian sentiment and Ukraine's policy shift that attempted to create distance between itself and Russia. Many Ukrainians wanted to scrub the country of Soviet culture and history and lessen Russia's presence within its borders, especially after the 2014 invasion. Russia, in turn, attempted to reframe this as further proof that ethnic Russians in Ukraine were being mistreated, and Russia needed to keep Ukraine close for their safety. By using information warfare, specifically targeting Ukrainian language laws and promoting its own version of events in the 2014 invasion, Russia was writing a narrative where Ukraine was increasingly corrupted by the West and Russia was in imminent danger.

Ukrainian Pushback Against Russian Influence

After 2014, Ukrainian leaders attempted to form a Ukrainian identity that was less connected to Russia by painting Russia as the common enemy of anyone living in Ukraine. This was done by targeting Russia's history, culture, and language in an attempt to minimize impact on the country. This was not a new idea but rather a ramping up of previous efforts to create a unique and statewide Ukrainian identity that was not closely tied to Russia. In Viktor Yushchenko's last 10 days in office in 2010, he signed a decree that "defines strategic priorities in overcoming the deformations of the national linguistic-cultural and linguistic-informational

space caused by the centuries-old assimilation policy of the colonizers and occupiers"
(Yushchenko 2010). His decree perpetuated the belief that speaking Russian instead of Ukrainian
made Ukraine weaker, and only through speaking Ukrainian "in all spheres of public life on the
entire territory of the state is a guarantee of preserving the identity of the Ukrainian nation and
strengthening the state unity of Ukraine" (Office of the President, 2022). This continued in 2012,
still two years before the Maidan Revolution, when a controversial language law called for a
Ukrainian-speaking majority in the country and only "allowed for the official use of Russian and
other minority languages as regional languages" Biersack, O'lear, 2014). The limitation, or even
just the threat of limiting when and where Russian was spoken within the country, would have
impacted the lives of Russian speakers in every oblast of Ukraine. Looking back at Figure 3, it is
clear that large sections of the country would have been affected by this law, especially the
ethnic Russians, as it could be interpreted as an attack on them, not an attack on Russia.

In 2015, barely a year after the annexation of Crimea, there were more attempts to
distance Ukraine from Russia. A decommunization law was passed that changed all street names
that referred to Soviet history in any form to more nationalistic, Ukrainian equivalents in order to
"promote a single and distinct post-Soviet Ukrainian cultural identity as the antithesis of Russia"
(BBC, 2015). It also changed the names of cities to more Ukrainian equivalents, like
Dnipropetrovsk to Dnipro. Ukrainian language laws continued to be enacted the longer the war
went on, like the 2016 language quota in broadcast radio (BBC, 2016), the 2017 Education Law
(Tulup, 2017), Lviv's oblast's 2018 ban on Russian language cultural products (Unian, 2018),
and the 2019 Law on Protecting the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State
Language (Council of Europe, 2019). All of these laws and decrees were escalations from the

Ukrainian government under Poroshenko, in an attempt to unite Ukrainians across the country to reject Russian control.

In the aftermath of the 2014 invasion, the Ukrainian government was proactive in combating information warfare and mitigating Russian influence on an official level. However, while the Ukrainian government was quick to make laws that perpetuated Ukrainian nationalism and attempted to minimize Russian influence in the country, it was more challenging to regulate Russia's actual influence in everyday life which kept the two countries close. Russian culture was still intertwined with Ukrainian culture and way of life in a way that was harder to be controlled by the state. After the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainians continued to use VKontakte (VK), a Russian social media site, despite its connection to the Russian government. It was the second most popular form of social media in Ukraine, only behind YouTube (Roth, 2017). It was only in 2017 that President Petro Poroshenko banned the use of VK in the country in an attempt to mitigate Russian influence and information warfare (Office of the President, 2017). Social media embargoes were not the only way in which Ukraine tried to minimize Russian influence. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church was founded in 1992, not long after Ukraine became an independent state (Economist, 2022). The division of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that early in Ukrainian independence shows how Ukraine saw themselves as a separate entity from Russia, wished to distance themselves from Russian control, and establish their own identity. However, it was not until 2018, when President Petro Poroshenko petitioned the leader of the Orthodox Church, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, to give the Ukrainian Orthodox Church full autonomy to operate independently that the church became truly separate from the Russian Orthodox church (Economist). Russia took note of these attempts to mitigate

their influence in Ukraine and tried to create their own narrative that framed these actions as overtly anti-Russian and spread their narrative as part of their information warfare campaign.

The Dangers of Ukraine's Language Laws and Politicization of Culture

Ukraine has the right to distinguish its culture, language, and religion from Russia. Russia has incorrectly deemed Ukraine as an illegitimate state. They argue that Ukraine is merely an internal part of Russia that was incorrectly given statehood. This is categorically false. However, the creation of strict language laws and politicizing culture is dangerous. Setting such stringent language laws may have unnecessarily alienated many proud Ukrainians who preferred to speak Russian as a result of their heritage or the circumstances in which they grew up, not because they are pro-Russian. Many Ukrainians were able to identify as Ukrainian, be against the Russian invasion and continue speaking Russian. Creating laws in such quick succession does not account for the time it takes for a shift in language to realistically be implemented, in public or private. As Human Rights Watch argued in 2018, "Ukraine is fighting a war in its eastern region against Russia-backed armed groups, and Crimea remains occupied by Russia. The government has rights and reasons to protect Ukraine's security. Arbitrarily banning speech isn't among them"(Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Limiting how Ukrainians speak or choose to express themselves is dangerous. It threatens many freedoms and can possibly lead to the threatening of many more for the sake of minimizing Russia's influence in the country. The older generations of Ukrainians that grew up speaking predominantly Russian in the Soviet Union would need time to adjust. Millions of Ukrainians living in Eastern Ukraine that grew up speaking Russian, but were pro-Ukrainian, would be forced to change the way they spoke and lived their lives or be punished, which could have turned them against the government in Kyiv. Petro Poroshenko, a staunch Ukrainian nationalist,

implemented these language laws as a way to minimize Russian influence in Ukraine, unite citizens under a single Ukrainian culture, and help Ukrainians display nationalistic pride. However, the conflation of language and pride in Ukraine also resulted in more rhetoric from Russia that Russian culture was under attack in Ukraine. While the 2022 invasion of Ukraine was a tragedy and a flagrant violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, it created a renewed sense of unity in Ukraine and a desire for more Ukrainians to speak Ukrainian instead of Russian (this will be discussed in the following chapter). Nevertheless, these laws set a dangerous precedent in Ukraine of the state's ability to control and punish speech. These laws were not born from a grassroot and public decision to reject Russian influence, but rather a top-down attempt at promoting a more polarizing nationalistic Ukrainian identity.

Russian Information Warfare Tactics

After the Euromaidan protests, Ukraine became increasingly resistant to overt Russian interference. Russia turned to information warfare to continue to destabilize Ukraine, exploit Soviet history and keep the West from their borders. Information warfare is defined by NATO's Defense Education Enhancement Program as "controlling one's own information space, protecting access to one's own information, while acquiring and using the opponent's information . . . and disrupting the information flow" (DEEP, 2). NATO states that a clear example of Information Warfare is Russia's actions surrounding the 2014 invasion. They stated,

"Russia has been influencing the Ukrainians and the international community in order to promote its own version of events. This was achieved using both traditional media controlled by the Russian authorities and social media, which were a field of operation of the troll factories. Russia is attempting this on many fronts in Ukraine, specifically with the influence of ethnic Russians within the borders of Ukraine" (3).

Stephen Blank argued in his 2013 article *Russian Information Warfare as Domestic Counterinsurgency* that Russia saw information warfare "as a new means to conduct large-scale political warfare to reshape the thinking of an entire political community," (Blank, 2013) and a way of combating Ukrainian state building. The actions of pro-Western Ukrainian 'insurgents' were targeted by Russia and false narratives were spread about their actions. This perpetuation of false narratives as a way to combat insurgency was not limited to traditional media but it was also in social media. This was effective because as the article *Russian Information Warfare of 2014* points out, "It is difficult to draw a definitive line between Runet (Russian Internet) and Ukrainian-language Internet" (Jaitner, Mattson, 44), like the continued use of VK in Ukraine after the invasion, there were opportunities for the Russian government to bolster their own narrative of the situation to their own citizens and Ukrainian citizens discreetly, yet effectively.

This narrative bolstering was in part done by linking the actions of Ukraine to a historical Soviet enemy, the Nazis. Russia continued to exploit the Soviet history of Ukraine and created a narrative of the necessity of Russian protections outside their border, not because they want to expand and create a new Soviet Union, but because of their need to protect the ethnic Russians who are "fighting for their elementary right to live on their own land, to speak their own language, and to preserve their culture and traditions" (Putin, 2022). Russian news outlets reported that the Ukrainian forces, who, in reality, were fighting Russian-backed separatists,

"launched a 'punitive operation'" (NPR, 2014). This means little in English, however, in Russian, the term *karatelnaya operatsiya* is "a phrase that refers almost exclusively to Nazi atrocities carried out in German-occupied lands during World War II" (NPR).
The Russian government at that time was comparing Ukrainian government officials that removed Yanukovich from power to Nazis as well. Framing Ukraine as a Nazi state evoked

strong negative feelings from Russians, as they were the Soviet Union's paramount enemy in World War II. This evocation of hatred is a powerful tool and will be discussed in greater detail when discussing Russia's continued information warfare on Ukraine in the wake of the current war.

Nazi imagery does not just elicit powerful emotions from Russians, but also from many countries around the world that fought against Nazi Germany or its ideals in different forms. This is how information warfare can be more dangerous than just pure propaganda.

"Unlike propaganda during Soviet times, which relied heavily on narratives designed at the top level as well as on isolation, today's Russian IW (information warfare) incorporates the audience as a narrative-bearing and a narrative-developing factor . . . Therefore, anything that the top leadership aims to share with domestic audience is almost instantly shared with the foreign population" (Jaitner, Mattson, 47).

When a person outside of Russia reads Kremlin-backed news sites, there is usually an understanding of the bias and propaganda inherent in what is written. Information warfare uses troll farms and social media to make it difficult to understand where the information is coming from, and thus more difficult to discern if something is propaganda.

Conclusion

In 2015, Rod Thornton wrote that Russia 'won' in Crimea through their successful information warfare campaigns (Thornton, 40). Their seditious and subversive tactics portrayed Ukraine as a puppet of the west, a dangerous state full of Nazis that wanted to punish ethnic Russians for being Russian and helped fuel a desire to separate from Ukraine. From the Maidan revolution to right before the 2022 invasion, Russia's view of Ukraine as a buffer did not change. They continued to destabilize Ukraine to keep Ukraine as a buffer, their tactics just adapted to

the changing geopolitical landscape. The Ukrainian government attempted to distance itself from Russia by enacting controversial language laws that would limit Russia's overt influence within the country's borders. However, these laws were exploited by Russia and used to justify their actions in Ukraine to Russian citizens internally, and to an international audience, a trend that continued in 2022 and onward.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE FEBRUARY 2022?

Introduction

In February 2022, Demetri Trenin said that Russia's ultimate goal in Europe is to "replace the current European security order based on U.S. dominance and NATO's central role with a new two-pillar architecture based on an agreement between Russia and the United States" (Trenin, 2022). A major throughline of this paper is that Russia views Ukraine as a necessary geographic deterrent from NATO and establishes a bipolar power structure. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, Putin argued that NATO was already in Ukraine, and that the only way to keep the alliance from their borders was to invade Ukraine. This was an escalation of the information war Russia was already waging. The information war Russia is currently waging against Ukraine continues this narrative. It has expanded the narrative of Ukraine as an illegitimate Nazi state that is committing horrific acts of violence against its own ethnically Russian citizens due to Western influence and its hatred of Russia. On top of fighting an actual war with Russia, Ukraine has become even more overtly aggressive to Russia's lasting imperial legacy in Ukraine. Moderates like Zelenskyy have embraced Ukrainian pride and attempted to end Ukraine's unsustainable role as a buffer between two world powers. While Ukraine's allies must continue to support the country's efforts to defend its sovereignty, they must also be wary of the increased politicization of Ukrainian culture in the wake of the war.

Russian Information Warfare in 2022 and Onward

It is important to analyze the trends of social media to understand the narratives Russian information warfare is pushing to justify their war with Ukraine. The CTEC-Spectrum Project on

the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine scraped and analyzed more than 18000 comments on Russian language Youtube channels. These channels were RT, RT на русском, Sputnik на русском, and Страна.ua. According to Spectrum-CTEC, Russia uses a few main narratives to justify their invasion. Andreas Umland and Olexander Hryb argued in their 2020 book *Understanding Contemporary Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism : The Post-Soviet Cossack Revival and Ukraine's National Security* that the Russian "narrative in 2019 was chiefly about 'liberating' Ukrainians from EU/NATO domination and 'reuniting' them with Russian Civilization" (233). CTEC-Spectrum found that this was a common narrative in the misinformation created by the Kremlin, specifically that "Russian state-run media often places blame on the West and has been pushing narratives of the West poisoning Ukraine against Russia, leading to a firm foundation in anti-Western conspiracy theories in Russia" (5). However, there needed to be an actual villain in Ukraine for Russians to rally against. Russia is justifying the use of information warfare in Ukraine by reframing history. According to Julie Fedor in the book *Memory, Conflict and New Media : Web Wars in Post-Socialist States*, "historical reconstruction has become an instrument for manipulating public memories and mass emotions" (Fedor). CTEC-Spectrum found that for Russia to "perpetuate the historical pattern of the nation as a 'collective victim'" (Fedor), they framed Ukraine as an even more dangerous Nazi state than it was in 2014 (CTEC-Spectrum, 3), being corrupted by the fascist West.

Russian promotion of Ukraine as a Nazi state was done in information warfare that draws comparisons to the current war in Ukraine to The Great Patriotic War (World War II) when the Soviet Union considered the fascist Nazi party the antithesis of Soviet values. It should be noted that the framing of Ukraine as Nazis is not completely unfounded; however, it is being exploited heavily by Russian media and not representative of the current democratic government in

Ukraine. Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevych, and many other historical Ukrainian nationalists are considered heroes by many in Ukraine for their defiance of Soviet oppression, but they also publicly supported Nazi Germany. Russia also points to the AZOV battalion, a major paramilitary organization, as 'powerful proof' of current-day Ukraine's ties to the Nazi belief system. The AZOV battalion is a militia that has fought for Ukraine against Russia since 2014, and it has direct ties to Nazi belief systems and uses Nazi iconography. Although the battalion is a powerful part of the national guard, its influence is limited. It is not an official part of the military and is still just a fraction of the forces fighting Russia (MMP: Azov Battalion).

The Russian government can use this information out of context in order to 'prove' Nazi worship and the erasure of the 'proud' Soviet history by the Ukrainian government. Their propaganda dissemination has been successful. The New York Times reported that, "A data set of nearly eight million articles about Ukraine collected from more than 8,000 Russian websites since 2014 shows that references to Nazism were relatively flat for eight years and then spiked to unprecedented levels on the day Russia invaded Ukraine, and has stayed high ever since." This shows the Kremlin's desire to justify their invasion internally to its citizens by appealing to their patriotism more than an actual belief that Ukraine is currently an actual fascist state full of Nazis. Furthermore, according to the CTEC-Spectrum project, many YouTube commenters are "explicitly attributing the events in Ukraine to that of Nazi Germany. This stance leads users to believe that Russia is on the right side of history, and the West are supporters of evil fascist regimes and genocide." (CTEC-Spectrum, 3), which shows how accepted the propaganda is by the public in Russia. The propaganda creates the logic that if a person in Ukraine is rejecting its 'true' identity as part of the Great Russian Nation, then by default they are Nazis, Russia's enemy, "irrespective of their language preference or political beliefs" (Kuzio, *Imperial*

Nationalism as the Driver behind Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, introduction). In January 2023 the Levada center reported that 75% of Russians still supported the war in Ukraine (Levada, 2023). It is unclear if this is the result of Russian information warfare, however, it shows that part of the Russian population believes there to be a reason to keep fighting Ukraine.

Zelenskyy's Elections and a Desire for Change

It was not long ago in Ukraine's history that Ukraine was tired of being torn apart by pro-Russian forces and pro-Western forces. In 2007, John Paul Himka wrote that Ukraine is "not particularly interested in nationality questions, but it is strongly opposed to the ethnic nationalism"(Himka). He argued that the Ukrainian identity being formed was more "open, that is, to both the West and, somewhat more, to Russia. In daily life and for most purposes, it uses the Russian language, but is comfortable with using Ukrainian for official purposes" (Himka). Ukraine was not hostile or overtly loyal to Russia or the West. However, it seems that was too dangerous for Russia, which meant it was not a guaranteed long-term buffer. By the time the 2019 presidential elections rolled around, Ukraine still was not completely polarized and pro-Western, despite the four years of war in the Donbas with Russia. Ukraine itself was being pulled for years by two camps: Ukrainian nationalists that wanted to expunge Russian influence from the country completely and Russian-influenced politicians who wanted to increase their dominion in the country. However, most Ukrainians did not fall into either camp, as these were the extreme ends of the country's political spectrum. Ukrainians were tired of being a tool of deterrence exploited by both the West and Russia.

When the 2019 presidential campaigns began, two familiar faces in Ukrainian politics announced their candidacy. First was Yulia Tymoshenko. A staple of Ukrainian politics, she was involved in the Orange and Maidan revolutions. She was pro-Western. However, she was

embroiled in scandal for a large part of her political career, thanks largely in part to her connections with Gazprom, which had heavy ties to many Russian oligarchs who were not popular in Ukraine (*Ukraine's Orange Revolution,* ch.1). Despite her refutation and position as anti-Russian, her scandals marked her as a dirty politician deeply entrenched in corruption. Second was the strict Ukrainian nationalist incumbent President Petro Poroshenko. Popular in Western Ukraine for his nationalistic views, he was Ukraine's 'chocolate king' responsible for the increased Ukrainian language and decommunization laws and also for being unable to end the war with Russia, which by 2019 had been ongoing for over five years. Both of these figures, while well known, did not impress Ukrainian voters who wanted actual change and something new to break the cycle of corruption in the country (The Economist, 2019).

Volodymyr Zelenskyy was the 'something new' the Ukrainian people wanted. He was a political outsider whose primary political experience was playing the president of Ukraine on the sitcom 'Servant of the People.' He marketed his lack of experience as a promising sign that he was not beholden to any questionable deals or corrupt political parties. He won his 2019 bid for the presidency on a campaign promise of negotiating peace in the war with Russia and rooting out long-lasting corruption within the Ukrainian government, two things the previous president was incapable of delivering to his constituents (The Economist, 2019). 74% of Ukrainians agreed with Zelenskyy, trusted him, and voted him into office against Poroshenko (Wilson Center) despite his minimal knowledge of politics. Zelenskyy was not pro-Russian, but he spoke Russian and was an example of a proud Ukrainian who did not identify solely with extreme Ukrainian nationalists. He identified with Ukraine's state identity, not the narrow western idea of Ukrainian national identity that politicized language. A large portion of the population did as well, the

reason extreme Ukrainian nationalists were not always elected president of Ukraine before Zelenskyy and why they were willing to trust him in 2019.

This lack of extreme nationalist fervor in the presidential candidate, while in direct contrast to the misinformation Russia perpetuated about the 'western puppet' Ukraine, was in line with how citizens actually felt about themselves. Until recently, it was only fringe Ukrainian nationalists who identified with Europe and wanted to build ties with Europe (Brookings). This shows that the majority of the country actually desired to move past defining Ukraine as solely being the opposite of Russia, which is what nationals like Poroshenko tried to promote and embrace and celebrate their identity of being uniquely Ukrainian. Zelenskyy ran as president to create a new Ukraine for anyone within the borders of Ukraine, not just ethnic Ukrainians or ethnic Russians. His 2020 New Year's speech called for unity among Ukrainian and Russian speakers and to forget the old rhetoric of extreme Ukrainian nationalists and Russia (Zelensky, 2020).

Ukraine's Rejection of their Role as a 'Buffer'

In 2023, ideas of peace and the hope of a neutral Ukrainian identity no longer seem possible. President Zelenskyy was voted into the presidency just four years ago as the candidate elected on a promise to end the war with Russia and create unity between Ukrainian and Russian speakers in Ukraine. He is now the face of pure Ukrainian national pride to the whole world. He won the presidency speaking almost exclusively Russian and now addresses the country in speeches every night, only speaking Ukrainian, a symbol of Ukrainian unity and strength against the Russian invaders. The average Ukrainian citizen is following suit. According to Volydymir Kulyk, a political scientist at the National Academy of Sciences in Kyiv, a survey he commissioned for the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology shows a "substantial increase in

the share of respondents [in Ukraine] speaking primarily Ukrainian in everyday life, with a correspondent decrease in the share of Russian"(Kulyk, 2023). He continued to explain the results of this survey, specifically analyzing the language the respondents in Ukraine chose to answer in. According to Kulyk, "when a bilingual interviewer tries to elicit their preference, and at that which they actually use during the interview (which may be different from one chosen at the beginning), 86% choose to be interviewed in Ukrainian, including 28% of those who admit to speaking primarily Russian in everyday life" (2023). Kulyk argues that the war, while tragic, accelerated Ukraine's path towards overcoming Russian imperial rule and has created a strong desire to identify as uniquely Ukrainian in public settings. Unlike the language laws of the 2010's, where there was a top-down decision to nationalize Ukrainian culture, there seems to be a consensus among the Ukrainian people that they wish to distinguish themselves from Russia. It is their choice to distance themselves from Russia, not a quota enforced by the government in Kyiv. The choice to speak Ukrainian is not Russophobia, as Russia would argue, but rather a personal decision to have pride in Ukraine and remove the remnants of their oppressor.

This pride in Ukraine is not just evident in the language spoken by its citizens. According to Gallup polls conducted in Ukraine in September of 2022, the majority of Ukrainian citizens do not wish for a quick and peaceful resolution to the current war with Russia. They want to win and believe in their ability to make that happen. Gallup reported that 70% of Ukrainians believed that Ukraine should fight Russia until the war is won, and 90% of Ukrainians believe that victory in the war means "When all territory lost between 2014 and now is regained, including Crimea" (Reinhart, 2022). Only 26% believe the war should end as soon as possible (Reinhart). Lastly, according to Statista, 81% of Ukrainians would like to join the EU. These attitudes are vastly different from the attitudes Ukrainians held five years ago. In 2017, Ukraine was still at war with

Russia, albeit on a much smaller scale, yet only 57% of Ukrainians supported Ukraine joining the EU (Atlantic Council). As Kulyk noted, with the desire to speak Ukrainian publicly, there is an increasingly strong desire throughout Ukraine to overcome Russian imperialism and no longer just be viewed as a buffer between the East and West.

Ukraine theoretically could have stayed a long-term buffer state between the East and West, with promises of being embraced by the West forever in the future and Russia's fear of NATO's westward expansion always being a possibility, not an eventuality. Russia could have continued its information warfare campaign against Ukraine and the West could have continued to discuss the eventual joining of Ukraine to NATO without actually ever delivering on that promise. However, Ukraine is now officially rejecting their status as a buffer and has officially applied for "an accelerated accession" to join NATO (Politico, 2022). Zelenskyy argues that NATO membership is necessary for Ukraine and that Ukraine's role as a buffer ultimately hurt the country and caused Russia to believe an invasion was necessary. He stated in 2022 that "Russia was able to start this war precisely because Ukraine remained in the gray zone — between the Euro-Atlantic world and the Russian imperialism" (Politico, 2022). Ukraine is tired of its historic role as a buffer and is ready to join the West in a more meaningful way. It still has a long way to go before that becomes a reality.

What Should Change for Ukraine to be Aligned With the West

If Ukraine truly wishes to join Western security and political institutions, it must first overcome its history of corruption. It is clear from the previous discussion of the 2004 elections, the Orange Revolution, and the Maidan Revolution that Ukraine has a history of corruption within its government due in large part to Russian interference. The protests and outrage by the Ukrainian republic in the face of all of the political corruption show great promise for the future

of democracy in the country, as it conveys a desire by the public to hold leaders to higher standards and expects and demands better democratic practices. The war may now eclipse these corruption issues. However, the scars from years of Russian meddling and malfeasance are still visible in the Ukrainian government today. Ukraine's allies should still be wary of corruption in the government and not ignore their struggle for sovereignty. Zelenskyy ran on a platform of rooting out governmental corruption as a political outsider, and he continues to find corruption within the government, even now. There have been scandals since the war began on overpriced military rations (Economist, 2023) and Ukrainian officials vacationing in Spain while there was a mandate in place not allowing males between 18-35 to leave the country (Time, 2023). Even as late as January 2023, there were announcements about Zelenskyy's cabinet members being investigated for embezzlement (Politico, 2023). While it is a promising sign that there continue to be investigations and indictments of officials to root out corruption in the country, it shows that Ukraine has a ways to go before it reaches the standard of anti-corruption held by the EU and NATO. These institutions should not lower their standards to expedite Ukrainian membership, despite Ukraine's insistence as it could set a dangerous precedent and cause issues down the line in their integrity.

Ukraine also must be careful in how it handles their heightened nationalism in the face of war. The politicization of culture is expected in war, as it is a powerful tool to unite people, however, it should be looked at cautiously from Ukraine's allies. The war could allow Ukraine to become polarized and increasingly nationalistic, creating laws that attempt to limit the influence of Russia without pushback from its allies, as there are 'bigger' issues facing Ukraine than increasing nationalism. Ukraine's ties to fascist groups and extreme rightwing nationalists were considered in 2016 by scholars as a major hurdle to be seen as a stable democracy by the West,

and "the way Ukrainian scholars, civil society activists, and the Ukrainian state deal with this difficult past will be one of the most important tests of the maturity of the Ukrainian democracy" (Julie Fedor, 2016). Understandably, there are greater priorities facing Ukraine and its allies. The number one priority is ensuring Russia does not succeed in taking over Ukraine. The polarization of Ukrainian identity is not highly prioritized by the West. The unease of possible fascism was eclipsed by a Russian presence in the country that is legitimately a far bigger geopolitical concern.

James Bingham argued in his 2012 paper, *How Significant is Nationalism as a Cause of War?*, nationalist sentiment promoted by a state government "may invoke … feelings of division in order to appeal to popular opinion"(Bingham, 2012). It is understandable that Russia is hated in Ukraine at the moment. Russia invaded, tried to take Ukraine's sovereign land, killed thousands of Ukrainians and attacked civilians. However, the implementation of Ukrainian nationalism as a tool to combat Russian influence in Ukraine is dangerous. Banning Russian music, literature and culture is understandable in the face of a Russian invasion (Legal Aid Ukraine, 2022), however, it is far from where Ukraine was only 18 months ago. Zelenskyy won his presidency speaking Russian and encouraged a new state identity that did not rely on historic Ukrainian nationalism to tie the country together. Now Zelenskyy addresses Ukraine only ever speaking Ukrainian, passed strict language laws and will most likely never speak Ukrainian publicly again. This forced removal of Russian influence in Ukraine and reliance on old Ukrainian nationalism sets a dangerous precedent for Ukraine's future with the West. Ukraine was close to creating a new state identity that did not draw on nationalist rhetoric and united citizens under inclusivity, not exclusivity. Now it is possible that their identity is intrinsically tied to nationalist rhetoric for the long term. Ukraine's allies should prioritize ending Russia's

invasion of Ukraine, but they should still monitor the increasing nationalism within Ukraine and what it could mean down the line, especially as Ukraine wishes to join the West in major alliances.

A powerful example of the normalization of Ukrainian nationalism into standard Ukrainian culture is the phrase "Slava Ukraini, Heroyam slava" (glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes). In 2023, this phrase is considered a commonplace and shows support for Ukraine's fight for independence. However, its origins are quite different. The entire phrase was originated by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in the 1920's and 1930's, when the OUN fought for Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union. However, the OUN also supported the Nazi party and took part in ethnic cleansings (Per A Rudling, 2011). In 2023, this phrase, and many other parts of Ukrainian history have been co-opted by Ukrainians in remembrance of their historical fight for independence. However they ignore the dangerous history associated with the phrase and Ukrainian history. Erasing and rewriting history in order to fit a narrative is dangerous. Ukraine's narrative surrounding their historical fight for independence is partially true. Ukrainians did fight for independence from the Soviet Union, and Ukrainian culture is legitimate, but its ties to ethnic cleansing and the nazi party cannot be ignored. It allows Russia to rhetorically frame their invasion as a necessity to stop a Nazi insurgence. It also allows right wing extremists to become normalized in Ukrainian politics. Ukraine's allies should support Ukrainian independence, but should ensure that Ukraine does not allow the fight for independence as an excuse to embrace a fascist history for the sake of being anti-Russian.

Even if Ukraine is able to meet the standard of anti-corruption and stability needed to join NATO and avoid permanently creating an extreme nationalist identity, there is no guarantee of membership. NATO has yet to extend membership to Ukraine and does not seem to plan to soon.

The sides of the 'for better' or 'for worse' arguments in Chapter 1 discussing Western expansion still exist in Western security debates today. The 'for better' camp sees NATO expansion into Ukraine as a deterrent of war. The Economist argued in February 2023 that Ukraine should try to take back as much land as possible and should join NATO, as having a maximum amount of land would create more economic and geopolitical prospects for Ukraine. NATO membership would minimize risk "by turning the tables on Mr. Putin. . . If Mr. Putin invaded he would be the one choosing a superpower war" (Economist, 2023). This seems unlikely for Russia to do, as Russian scholars like Dmetri Trenin pointed out only a little over a year ago that "the task of rebuilding Russia as the leading great power—not an empire—in the space previously occupied by the Soviet Union will take a sustained effort over a fairly long period of time" (Trenin, 2022). Starting a war with NATO would be a massive step up that Russia would not be ready for.

However, many Western scholars in the 'for worse' camp see Ukraine joining NATO as an impossibility. Few people truly believed Russia would escalate their meddling in Ukraine to all out war, yet it happened. Creating an even higher risk geopolitical situation could backfire on the West if they are not careful. John Mearsheimer gave a speech on this topic at the European Union Institute in June 2022. There he warned of the war's escalation and the need to keep Ukraine out of NATO, as it would only inflame the situation and aggravate Russia further (Mearsheimer, 2022). As Zelenskyy continues to promise the return to pre-2014 Ukraine borders (Zelenskyy, 2014), there seems to be little hope of a quick resolution or peace talks that either side would agree to. As the war drags into its second year, tensions are only rising. It is unclear what these rising tensions ultimately mean for the geopolitical future of either side. However, it is clear that Ukraine is growing wary of its role as a buffer and ready to decide its own future, and the West and Russia need to be prepared for what that could mean.

Conclusion

Ukraine is a beautiful country, full of unique culture, language, and history. It is also a country with a deeply unfortunate geography. Being the largest country between two hostile powers has left Ukraine with a turbulent and violent history in its mere 31 years of independence. Western powers pushed eastward to promote democracy and establish political and security institutions like the EU and NATO. Russia saw this as an incursive attack that threatened their sovereignty and security. Ukraine was where they decided to take a firm stand against the West. This can be seen in their involvement in the Orange Revolution, the Maidan Revolution, and the annexation of Crimea. Russia accomplished their goal of keeping Ukraine firmly out of Western control throughout the 2000s. They did this by supporting uprisings of the ethnic Russians and directly interfering with Ukrainian politics. Russia also turned to information warfare to discredit the more nationalistic Ukrainian government and Ukrainian culture in order to destabilize Ukraine further. While this information warfare continued, some Ukrainians attempted to move past the binary of being 'pro-Russian' or 'pro-Western' and elected a moderate as president in the hopes of uniting Ukraine under the central idea of a state-centric identity, not a nationalistic one. This hope was short-lived, as Russia invaded in 2022, and Ukrainian citizens, both ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians, rallied behind state pride and a firm stance against Russian oppression.

Understandably, Ukraine is firmly anti-Russian and deeply committed to expelling Russian forces from the country. While the West is supportive, it is also clear that Russia is firmly taking a stand against Western expansion and wants to establish itself as a major security player in Europe once again, despite its inability to achieve a decisive victory in Ukraine. It is unclear if the West is ready to take on Ukraine's war by admitting it into NATO in the near or

distant future. Unfortunately for Ukraine, its role as a buffer, a seemingly immovable side effect of its geography, appears to be a true linchpin of geopolitical equilibrium in Europe. Russia has shown an overt desire to shift European security eastward and challenge Western supremacy by attempting to absorb Ukraine and solidify its role as a buffer. It remains to be seen how the West will respond. Allowing Ukraine NATO membership could force Putin to retreat and deter their plans for a new two-seat power structure in Europe. Or, extending Ukraine's NATO membership could provoke Russia into declaring war with the West, creating an even larger security crisis that could trigger an even greater upheaval of global security. Russia made its intentions with Ukraine clear when it invaded. The West now needs to be clear with their intentions. They must be sure that whatever they choose, NATO membership for Ukraine or keeping Ukraine as a buffer, it needs to minimize the risk of the crisis expanding beyond its current borders.

REFERENCES

1997 Ukraine-Russia Crimea Partition Treaty Главная - Министерство Иностранных Дел Российской Федерации.

"2001 : English Version : Results : General Results of the Census : National Composition of Population:" 2001 | English Version | Results | General Results of the Census | National Composition of Population: http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/

"A Divided Ukraine." CNN, Cable News Network, www.cnn.com/interactive/2014/02/world/ukraine-divided/.

"Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation." *President of Russia*, 25 Apr. 2005, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931.

"Address by the President of the Russian Federation." *President of Russia*, 18 Mar. 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.

"Address by the President of the Russian Federation." *President of Russia*, 21 Feb. 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828.

ALEXANDER WARD, MATT BERG and LAWRENCE UKENYE. "Goodbye, Post-Cold War Era!" *POLITICO*, https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2022/10/12/goodbye-post-cold-war-era-00061441.

Baunov, Jarbik, et al. *A Year after Maidan: Why Did Viktor Yanukovych Flee after Signing the ...* https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/59172.

Bayer, Lili. "The West's Last War-Time Taboo: Ukraine Joining NATO." *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 6 Dec. 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/west-war-taboo-ukraine-join-nato/.

Biersack, John & O'lear, Shannon. (2014) The geopolitics of Russia's annexation of Crimea: narratives, identity, silences, and energy, Eurasian Geography and Economics, 55:3, 249, DOI: 10.1080/15387216.2014.985241

Bingham, James. "How Significant Is Nationalism as a Cause of War?" E, 21 June 2012, https://www.e-ir.info/2012/06/19/how-significant-is-nationalism-as-a-cause-of-war/.

Blank, Stephen. "Russian Information Warfare as Domestic Counterinsurgency." *American Foreign Policy Interests*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2013, pp. 31–44., https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2013.757946.

Calamur, Krishnadev. "Crimea: A Gift To Ukraine Becomes A Political Flash Point." NPR, NPR, 27 Feb. 2014, www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/02/27/283481587/crimea-a-gift-to-ukraine-becomes-a-political-flash-point.

Charap, Samuel, and Keith Darden. "Russia and Ukraine." *Survival*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2014, pp. 7–14., https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2014.901726.

Clinton. National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives and Records Administration, https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/.

Cohen, Stephen F. *War with Russia?: From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate*, Hot Books, an Imprint of Skyhorse Publishing, Inc., New York, NY, 2022.

"События Января." *Levada Center*, 17 Feb. 2023, https://www.levada.ru/2023/02/17/sobytiya-yanvarya/.

"Council of Europe." *Venice Commission :: Council of Europe*, https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD%282019%29032-e.

"CTEC-Spectrum Project 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine March 2022." *Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey*.

"Crimea Crisis: Russian President Putin's Speech Annotated." *BBC News*, BBC, 19 Mar. 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26652058.

Diuk, Nadia. "EUROMAIDAN: Ukraine's Self-Organizing Revolution." World Affairs, vol. 176, no. 6, 2014, pp. 9–16. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43555086. Accessed 30 Mar. 2023.

Elsewhere..., News from. "Ukraine Imposes Language Quotas for Radio Playlists." *BBC News*, BBC, 8 Nov. 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-37908828.

Fedor, Julie et al. Memory, Conflict and New Media : Web Wars in Post-Socialist States, edited by Ellen Rutten, et al., Taylor & Francis Group, 2013. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=1170297.

Flintoff, Corey. "Russia Condemns Ukraine with Comparisons to Nazis." *NPR*, NPR, 3 May 2014, https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/05/03/309006428/russia-condemns-ukraine-with-comparisons-to-nazis.

"Geography of Ukraine." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 25 Mar. 2023, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Ukraine.

Gijs, Camille, and Lili Bayer. "Ukraine Formally Applies for Fast-Track NATO Membership." *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 30 Sept. 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-formal-application-join-nato/.

Gorbunova, Viktoriia, and Vitalii Klymchuk. "The Psychological Consequences of the Holodomor in Ukraine." East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies, vol. 7, no. 2, 2020, pp. 33–68., doi:10.21226/ewjus609.

Graham, Menon, et al "UKraine Between Russia and the West: Buffer or Flashpoint?", World Policy Journal, vol. 34, no. 1, 2017, pp. 107–18. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26781473. Accessed 30 Mar. 2023.

Haring, Melinda. "What Ukrainians Really Think: 10 Key Insights from Ukraine's 2017 Opinion Polls." *Atlantic Council*, 29 Aug. 2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/what-ukrainians-really-want-10-key-insights-from-ukraine-s-2017-opinion-polls/.

Himka, John-Paul. "The Basic Historical Identity Formations in Ukraine: A Typology." Harvard Ukrainian Studies, vol. 28, no. 1-4, 2007, pp. 483-XII. ProQuest, http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/basic-historical-identity-formations-ukraine/docview/220868140/se-2.

"How to Win the Hot War in Ukraine and the Cold War That Will Follow It." *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, https://www.economist.com/leaders/2023/02/23/how-to-win-the-hot-war-in-ukraine-and-the-cold-war-that-will-follow-it.

Hryb, Olexander, et al. *Understanding Contemporary Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism the Post-Soviet Cossack Revival and Ukraine's National Security*. P. 233. Ibidem, 2020.

"John Mearsheimer on the Causes and Consequences of the Ukraine War." *European University Institute*, https://www.eui.eu/news-hub?id=john-mearsheimers-lecture-on-the-causes-and-consequences-of-the-ukraine-war.

Jaitner, Margarita, and Peter A. Mattsson. "Russian Information Warfare of 2014." *2015 7th International Conference on Cyber Conflict: Architectures in Cyberspace*, 2015, https://doi.org/10.1109/cycon.2015.7158467.

Kotkin, Stephen. "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics: Putin Returns to the Historical Pattern." Foreign Affairs, vol. 95, no. 3, 2016, pp. 2–9. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43946851. Accessed 30 Mar. 2023.

Kulyk, Volodymyr. "Tries to Elicit Their Preference, and at That Which They Actually Use during Interview (Which May Be Different from One Chosen at the Beginning). Fully 86% Choose to Be Interviewed in Ukrainian, Including 28% of Those Who Admit to Speaking Primarily Russian in Everyday Life. 3/." *Twitter*, Twitter, 1 Jan. 2023, https://twitter.com/VolodymyrKulyk4/status/1609641049043144704.

Kulla, Katarzyna. "Deep Portal." *DEEP Portal*, 26 Nov. 2022, https://deepportal.hq.nato.int/eacademy/.

Kuzio, Taras. "Ukraine: Coming to Terms with the Soviet Legacy." Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, vol. 14, no. 4, 1998, pp. 1–27., https://doi.org/10.1080/13523279808415388.

Kuzio, Taras. "Ukraine's Orange Revolution: The Opposition's Road to Success". Journal of Democracy, vol. 16, no. 2, Apr. 2005, pp. 117-30.

Kuzio, Taras. "Ukraine between a Constrained EU and Assertive Russia." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2016, pp. 103–120., https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12447.

Kuzio, Taras. "Imperial Nationalism as the Driver behind Russia's Invasion of Ukraine." *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2022, pp. 30–38., https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12875.

Law, Tara. "Corruption Scandals Continue to Sweep Ukraine's Government." *Time*, Time, 1 Feb. 2023, https://time.com/6249941/ukraine-corruption-resignation-zelensky-russia/.

Legal Aid Ukraine. "Щодо Обмеження Публічного Використання Музичного Продукту Держави-Агресора." Безоплатна Правова Допомога, 31 Oct. 2022, https://legalaid.gov.ua/publikatsiyi/shhodo-obmezhennya-publichnogo-vykorystannya-muzychnogo-produktu-derzhavy-agresora/.

Library of Congress. "Ukraine: Demarcation of Border with Russia." The Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2014-12-02/ukraine-demarcation-of-border-with-russia/.

Lukyanov, Fyodor. "RUSSIAN DILEMMAS IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD." Journal of International Affairs, vol. 63, no. 2, 2010, pp. 19-XI. ProQuest, http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/russian-dilemmas-multipolar-world/docview/276328566/se-2.

"Lviv Region Bans Movies, Books, Songs in Russian until End of Russian Occupation." *Information Agency*, https://www.unian.info/society/10266729-lviv-region-bans-movies-books-songs-in-russian-until-end-of-russian-occupation.html.

MacFarlane, S. N. NATO in Russia's Relations with the West. Security Dialogue, vol. 32 no 3, pp. 281–296, 2001. https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1177/0967010601032003002

Marples, David R., and Frederick V. Mills. Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution. Ibidem-Verlag, 2015.

Mearsheimer, John J. "Getting Ukraine Wrong." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 13 Mar. 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/14/opinion/getting-ukraine-wrong.html.

Melkozerova, Veronika. "Heads Roll in Ukraine Graft Purge, but Defense Chief Reznikov Rejects Rumors He's Out." *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 6 Feb. 2023, https://www.politico.eu/article/volodymyr-zelenskyy-reznikov-ukraine-heads-roll-graft-purge-but-defense-chief-rejects-rumors/.

Minakov, Mykhailo, and Matthew Rojansky . "The First Six Months: An Assessment of Zelenskyy's Achievements." *Wilson Center*, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/the-first-six-months-assessment-zelenskyys-achievements.

"MMP: Azov Battalion." *CISAC*, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/azov-battalion.

Nietschmann, Bernard Q. "*The Fourth State*" *Geographical Review*, vol. 91, no. 1/2, 2001, p. 228.

Office of the President. "Про Концепцію Державної Мовної Політики." *Офіційний Вебпортал Парламенту України*, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/161/2010#Text.

P6 Ta(2005)0009 Results of Ukraine Elections - European Parliament. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-6-2005-0009_EN.pdf?redirect.

Petrova, Tsvetova, *The New Role of Central and Eastern Europe in International Democracy ...* https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/06/new-role-of-central-and-eastern-europe-in-international-democracy-support-pub-44375.

"Perspectives on Russia - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace." *Carnegie Moscow*, https://carnegiemoscow.org/2017/04/12/perspectives-on-russia-pub-68693.

Pifer, Steven. "Crimea: Six Years after Illegal Annexation." *Brookings*, Brookings, 9 Mar. 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/03/17/crimea-six-years-after-illegal-annexation/.

Pifer, Steven. "How Ukraine Views Russia and the West." *Brookings*, Brookings, 9 Mar. 2022, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/10/18/how-ukraine-views-russia-and-the-west/.

Pifer, Steven. "What Does Russia Want? How Do We Respond?" *Brookings*, Brookings, 10 May 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/what-does-russia-want-how-do-we-respond/.

Piper, Elizabeth. "Special Report: Why Ukraine Spurned the EU and Embraced Russia." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 19 Dec. 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-deal-special-report/special-report-why-ukraine-spurned-the-eu-and-embraced-russia-idUSBRE9BI0DZ20131219.

Polityuk, Pavel, and Natalia Zinets. "Pledging Reforms by 2020, Ukraine Seeks Route into NATO." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 10 July 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-nato/pledging-reforms-by-2020-ukraine-seeks-route-into-nato-idUSKBN19V12V.

Published by Statista Research Department, and Nov 16. "Ukraine: Eu Membership Poll 2022." *Statista*, 16 Nov. 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1284801/ukraine-opinion-on-eu-accession/.

"Putin's Inferno." The Economist, The Economist Newspaper, https://www.economist.com/leaders/2014/02/20/putins-inferno.

Reinhart, RJ. "Ukrainians Support Fighting until Victory." *Gallup.com*, Gallup, 20 Jan. 2023,
https://news.gallup.com/poll/403133/ukrainians-support-fighting-until-victory.aspx.

Roth, Andrew. 2017. "In New Sanctions List, Ukraine Targets Russian Social-Media
Sites." Washington Post, May 16. https://wapo.st/2wkQ6mZ (accessed October 26,
2020).

Rudling, Per A. "The OUN, the UPA and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of
Historical Myths." The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, no. 2107,
2011, https://doi.org/10.5195/cbp.2011.164.

"Russia's Conflict with Ukraine Has Caused the Orthodox Church to Split."
The Economist, The Economist Newspaper, 12 Jan.

Samarukov. "Tuning out Putin on Ukraine Is Easy – and Self-Defeating." *Carnegie
Institute*, https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/85925.

Shevchenko, Vitaly. "Goodbye, Lenin: Ukraine Moves to Ban Communist Symbols." *BBC
News*, BBC, 14 Apr. 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32267075.

Slezkine, Yuri. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted
Ethnic Particularism." Slavic Review, vol. 53, no. 2, 1994, pp. 414–452.,
https://doi.org/10.2307/2501300.

Sloan, Stanley R. Defense of the West: NATO, the European Union and the Transatlantic
Bargain. Manchester University Press, 2016.

Smart, Charlie. "How the Russian Media Spread False Claims about Ukrainian Nazis." *The New
York Times*, The New York Times, 2 July 2022,
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/07/02/world/europe/ukraine-nazis-russia-
media.html.

"Stealing Their Dream." The Economist, The Economist Newspaper,
https://www.economist.com/europe/2013/11/30/stealing-their-dream.

Trenin, Dmitri. "Dmitri Trenin on Russia's Interests in the New Global Order." *The Economist*,
The Economist Newspaper, https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2021/10/01/dmitri-
trenin-on-russias-interests-in-the-new-global-order.

Thornton, Rod. "The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare." The RUSI Journal, vol. 160, no. 4,
2015, pp. 40–48., https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2015.1079047.

Trenin, Dmitri. "How Russia Could Recalibrate Its Relationship With Ukraine" *Carnegie
Institute*, https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/85314

Trenin, Dmitri. "Mapping Russia's New Approach to the Post-Soviet Space." *Carnegie Institute*, https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/86438.

Tulup, Marharyta. "Beyond the Scandal: What Is Ukraine's New Education Law Really about?" *OpenDemocracy*, 8 Dec. 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraines-new-education-law/.

"Ukraine." Economy and Finance, https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/international-economic-relations/candidate-and-neighbouring-countries/neighbouring-countries-eu/neighbourhood-countries/ukraine_en.

"Ukraine Elects Volodymyr Zelensky, TV Star and Political Neophyte." *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/04/22/ukraine-elects-volodymyr-zelensky-tv-star-and-political-neophyte.

"Ukraine's Misguided Curbs on Freedom of Expression." Human Rights Watch, 28 Oct. 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/26/ukraines-misguided-curbs-freedom-expression.

Umbach, Frank. "The Energy Dimensions of Russia's Annexation of Crimea." *NATO Review*, Nato Review, 27 May 2014, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2014/05/27/the-energy-dimensions-of-russias-annexation-of-crimea/index.html.

United Nations. "Protocol on the Results of Consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group (Minsk Agreement) | UN Peacemaker." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed March 30, 2022. https://peacemaker.un.org/UA-ceasefire-2014.

United States Army Special Operations, Www.jhuapl.edu. The United States Army Special Operations Command, 2015, https://www.jhuapl.edu/sites/default/files/2022-12/ARIS_LittleGreenMen.pdf.

Walker, Edward. *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, E-International Relations Publishing, Bristol, England, 2016.

"The War Is Making Ukraine a Western Country." *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, https://www.economist.com/briefing/2023/02/21/the-war-is-making-ukraine-a-western-country.

"Where Is Ukraine in the World?" World Population Review, https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ukraine/location.

Wilson, Andrew. *Ukraine's Orange Revolution*. Chapters 2,7,9, 19, 21. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.

Yushchenko, Viktor. "Про Концепцію Державної Мовної Політики." *Офіційний Вебпортал Парламенту України*, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/161/2010#Text.

Zelenskyy. "Volodymyr Zelenskyy: After the Return of Ukraine to Crimea, Life Will Return There as to the Kharkiv Region." *Official Website of the President of Ukraine*, https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/volodimir-zelenskij-pislya-povernennya-ukrayini-v-krim-tudi-77777.

Zelenskyy. "New Year Greetings of President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy." *Official Website of the President of Ukraine*, https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/novorichne-privitannya-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelens-80197.