RUSSIA AND UKRAINE WAR

A Century of History

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Executive Summary

This document aims to lay out the history of the belligerents involved in the current Russo-Ukraine war and how that history fits into the conflict. We also break down some of the reasoning of not only claimed justifications but also the accusations of Russia towards Ukraine.

The 1917 Soviet-Ukraine war is a good starting point when looking at the current conflict. The independent claim of the several Ukrainian organizations and the interest of many other groups, make the time from 1917 – 1921 extremely complex. The ideology of a Parliamentary Republic and Marxist-Lenin Communism are fundamentally opposites. War broke out in Ukraine between the Soviet Ukrainians and the Nationalist Ukrainians. The Soviet Ukrainians were swiftly backed by the Red Army (Bolshevist Russia) and the Nationalists were eventually backed by the Central Powers (Germany and Austria) who were also at war with Russia. During the war, Jews had supported the Bolshevist uprising in Russia, thus the Ukrainians viewed killing Jews as fighting Bolshevism. The killing of 120,000 Jews during the war was even recognized by global media, some warning of future horrors. During the war, Germany fought with the Ukrainians to attain an agreement on the provision of foodstuffs for the war in Western Europe. The eventual capitulation of the Central Powers in WWI led to another war, this time the Ukraine was sandwiched between the Polish Republic and the Bolshevist militaries both invading Ukrainian territory attempting to seize as much land as possible.

Four topics to look at for this timeline that are respective to the current conflict. First, when discussing the age-old rivalry and inherent hostility between Ukraine and Russia, it can generally be traced from this point in history. Second it shows the initial documented killing of Jews by Ukrainians without an occupying or leadership ordering their deaths. This belief was pressed and used by the Nazis leading to the eventual atrocities in WWII, which formed beginnings of Russia naming Ukrainians Nazis or Fascists. Third, it lays the foundation for the long-held belief of Russia that the West is an adversary of Russia, time and time again through the next 100 years, Western powers will use Ukraine for their benefit. Never really recognizing them as independent but manipulating their beliefs and zeal to gain their own objectives. Fourth, highlighting the large acreage of fertile arable land as being a reason for the West and Russia to fight for control over the region. These four topics are reoccurring through the Russian lens when navigating objectives pertaining to the *Near Abroad*, a term applied to the nations of the former USSR. The Near Abroad is known to Russia as a double-edged sword, it can be an incredible strategic resource for them while simultaneously being a burden, any exertion of an outside power into those countries has always been met with overt or covert confrontation.

After Ukraine lost its war of independence, the years between 1922-1939 saw government-sanctioned destruction of the Ukrainian culture from the Soviets. A mix of their conduct in the previous decades and the massive new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) territory needing food led to aggressive policing and razing of the idea of Ukraine independence. An independent Ukrainian would rob from the USSR access to massive acreage of the most resilient and fertile soil on our planet. This extreme oppression by Russia led to tens of millions of deaths known in Ukraine as the Holodomor, which I believe

everyone should study on their own. Destruction of their culture, traditions, and independence led to animosity and nationalist sentiment brooding. Living under such conditions eventually led to armed conflict by Nationalists. I want to repeatedly highlight the strategic function of the Ukraine. It is one of the main reasons any land is fought over. If it presents no asset, why waste resources to attain it? The suppression of Ukrainian culture would lead to multiple rebel groups fighting against the soviets on the side of the Nazis. It is not hard to imagine why such groups would arise living under those conditions.

The great Patriotic War (World War II) led to Ukrainian Nationalist organizations siding with Nazi Germany. Viewed as liberators and allies, the famous Stepan Bandera and other Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) groups joined Nazi Germany and were subsequently employed for Nazi objectives being somewhat deceived that they in turn would be recognized independently. There are other Ukrainian Nationalist groups mentioned below, but to save time we will broadly mention the OUN. The Ukrainian Nationalists conducted intelligence operations, sabotage, open warfare, and execution of Jewish prisoners on their own and while serving under the German army. Several formal Ukrainian military units were recruited by the Nazis one of which even being a Schutzstaffel (SS) division, groups notoriously known for their heinous activities. Certain Ukrainian Nationals remained loyal to Nazi Germany; others fought against them once their declaration of independence by Stepan Bandera was not recognized by the Axis Powers. In the end the massacres, Anti-Semitic rhetoric, and voluntary joining create the bulk of the argument to why Russia uses the term "De-Nazification" when mentioning operations in Ukraine. Through the entire duration of the war, Ukrainian Nationalists fought the Russians. The use of the OUN by Nazi Germany also reinforced the previous narrative of the Western powers being anti-Russian and using Ukrainians to execute operations in the pursuit of their own goals.

During the opening stages of the Cold War (until ~1953), The Strategic Services Unit (SSU), the premier U.S. Intelligence agency at the time, began to learn about the Ukrainian Nationalists and recruit them for operations against the Soviets. The SSU eventually became the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and started training and funding the OUN groups to collect intelligence, sabotage, and assassinate Russian assets. The war in the shadows between the US/OUN and Soviets further adds in Russia's belief of the West being Anti-Russian and the dangers of Nationalist and Independent Ukrainians. 1950-1991 saw waves of oppressions be applied on and off the Ukrainians. Severe punishment of the Ukrainian identity would then be replaced with a flourishing time of growth and reintegration of their traditions. The back-and-forth oppression from this occupation under the Soviets slowly rebuilt independent and Anti-Russian aspirations. This period affirms the belief of Ukrainians to why they should want to fight and be independent.

The impending fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 saw increased economic and social turmoil for Ukrainians who were increasingly polarized by the policies and lifestyle under communism. In 1991, Ukraine declared independence and voted to remove itself from the Soviet Union. Ukraine wanted to lean more westward and hoped to advance its place in global standing. Unfortunately, crippling economic inflation, reportedly reaching 10,000% at times, and corrupt politicians plagued the nation. No overt Westernization happened; the country was still dealing with Pro-Russian representatives in its government and

political polarization of its population. In the 2000s, both the U.S. and Russia began to play a larger role in the Ukrainian government, each championing candidates that fit their needs. Eventually in 2014, a large Pro-West / Nationalist riot happened, the Euromaidan. Old nationalist symbols and groups along with moderate Ukrainians fought against security and government powers for months. These riots eventually ousted the Pro-Russian President and triggered both Russia and the U.S. to take advantage of the chaos.

Russia initiated action to consolidate as many gains as possible while the dust settled. Crimea is a strategic must for Russia. If a "Western leaning" Ukraine controlled the peninsula, it could shut off Russian power projection into the Black Sea and a sizable portion of Russian merchant vessel shipping. the Eastern Ukrainian provinces now known as Novorussiya were also part of the 2014 objectives to liberate the Russian people from "Ukrainian occupation." Russia claims that regions was facing genocide by Ukrainian military action in the region. Which a falsity that is tied to truthful statements that Ukraine has committed genocide in the past.

In summary, looking at the current conflict, several reasons for Russia's invasion are on the table. Warm water ports and securing the North bank of the Sea of Azov aligns with the Russian strategy. The ongoing war is most likely to pressure Ukraine to sign the Minsk accords, not to completely overtake Ukraine. Russia wants to continue to exert pressure until the U.S. loses interest or ability to prop up the Ukrainians. This removal of support would most likely play into the long-term strategies of Russia and its allies. Putin most likely saw an opportunity of a war weary U.S. and underfunded European Union military to take advantage of. Though Western media is filled to the brim with Pro-Ukrainian news and articles, they are not winning. Russia, at the time of this writing, is not overtly winning either but, the ability to endure is a strong suit in the Russian military history. They have held their most important ground and made advances in other areas. News media stating of idiocy and poor intelligence of the Russian cannot be thought of until the war is over. As a military strategist, one must assume that Russia knows exactly what they are doing, no matter the blunders. Most wars do not end in the complete destruction of a nation. Generally, one side reaches a point at which it no longer has the means to continue, whether that's economic, agricultural, social, or industrial, one of these pillars buckles and the country must put to terms. This is the most likely course for the Ukraine war, Russia wants to pressure Ukraine into Minsk agreements and have them adhere to it. Ukraine, though their President states that it will stop until Crimea and Novorussiya are back in Ukrainian hands, probably will have to sue for peace at some point.

Ukraine's history is complex, as is Russia's. These are two nations of the same history that share a common trait, endurance. The Ukrainian identity has survived throughout decades of government mandated eradication. Russia and the Ukrainian peoples endured through the horrors of communism. In the Great Patriotic War (WWII) the Soviet Union lost ~8.6 million soldiers in the war and another ~19 million civilians. Yet both nations continue to this day. This document isn't meant to justify either side, it is to lift the veil that has been in the way of truth. I hope that this inspires you to study more into the actions of these nations. Ukraine has wanted independence by nearly any means available and Russia has aimed to stop that by any means. A scenario as such will always lead to warfare.

The Okraina

The history of Ukraine, or more so, the history of *the okraina (Borderlands)*, is one of conflict. Common men marching for liberty, hordes of swift riders on horseback, Empires, Uprisings, and Anarchists have all staked their claim on the lands which are called the Ukraine. Within its modern borders, the fields, forests, and rivers have been walked through, sailed down, and contested by peoples unknown to most of us. The many actors throughout the region play a strong role in the current conflict you and I read about today. *The Borderlands* have been owned by numerous entities over the centuries and are comprised of generally Hungarian, Polish, Turkic, Ukrainian, and Russian ethnicities.

As an example of how many times this region has changed hands or has had different names, if one was standing in some region of modern Ukraine and could travel back through time, you may find yourself standing in the; Scythian Empire, Principality of Kiev, Varangian Empire, Kingdom of Bosporus, Pecheneg Khanate, Mongolian Empire, Moscow Principality, Kingdom of Hungary, Kingdom of Russia, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Reichskommissariat Ukraine, The Khazar Khaganate, Ukrainian National Republic, the Hetmanate, Russian Empire, Soviet Ukraine, and of course others.

Many criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin's essay he released on 12 July 2021 claiming that the Russian and Ukrainian societies are "one people," share a history together, and have repeatedly persevered through foreign attacks and invaders dividing the country. Whether you think this is true or not, it reveals how President Putin and many other Russians view the two nations relationship through time. Their perspective gives insight on how past events are either believed whole heartedly or manipulated for the present of a narrative to base Russia's military actions on. Many points he commented on, even in the recent interview with Tucker Carlson, are based on true events with some aspects overgeneralized or broad sweeping in nature. In this report we will cover a brief history of the relations and actions of groups that lead us to the current conflict. Whether you believe one side, or the other is more justified, the following topics are made to enlighten individuals to core and peripheral facts around the complexities of history, not to persuade anyone one way or another.

Prior to the start our breakdown, The region of modern Ukraine was owned by Polish, Lithuanian, Hungarian and Russian entities from around the year 1300. Before that a series of Cimmerian Peoples, Kievan Rus Principalities, Tartars, and Sarmatians.

Soviet – Ukrainian War

The *War of Independence* for Ukraine, which did not lead to Ukraine's independence, is known also as the Soviet - Ukrainian War, a timeframe that also encompasses the Polish – Ukrainian war and these series of conflicts were waged from 1917 to 1921. We will join the trail of breadcrumbs here on the path that takes us to the present. Soon after the October Revolution of 1917, which saw the rise of the Socialist Revolution in Russia and the fall of

the Tsarist Russian Empire, residents of the region suffered economic crisis and food

shortages leading to the loss of public order which saw many parties and organizations

coalesce, each attempting to seize land amidst the crisis. The two main representing bodies

of the Ukrainian peoples was the Ukrainian Peoples Republic (UPR) in Kiev and the

Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) in the West adjacent to Poland. To give scope on the

upcoming events, during this timeframe (1917-1921) these were the actors involved in the

regional conflict;

> The Ukrainian Peoples Republic (UPR)
> West Ukrainian National Republic (UNR)
> Ukrainian Galician Army (UHA)
> Ukrainian Peoples Republic of Soviets
> The Second Polish Republic
> Kingdom of Romania
> Czechoslovakia
> Hungarian Empire
> The Bolsheviks (Red Army)
> The Makhnovshchina Anarchists (Black Army)
> White Russia / Alekseyev Organization (White Army)
> The Hetmanate
> Free Cossacks
> Pro-Soviet Ukrainian Partisans
> Austrian Empire
> German Empire
> Ottoman Empire

Map showing the complexities of the 1917-1919 Ukraine war of Independence.

The UPR's goal was to have ownership and autonomy of the land they claimed, freedom of speech, and removal of Tsarist law on the people of Ukraine. The governing body deteriorated rapidly with relations abroad and internally, foundering due to the varying ideals and peoples that occupied the society. Anarchists, monarchists, capitalists, socialists, and nationalists being the primary governing beliefs held by Ukrainians at the time. The increased pressure from representatives and amount of workers supporting Soviet ideals led to internal disputes among the body politic hindering actions supporting government proceedings. Eventually in December of 1917 a separate body of representatives in Kharkiv declare Ukraine to be a Soviet Republic. This action divided the

country and triggered an invasion of Ukraine from the Red Army of Russia which led to Kiev falling to the Bolsheviks.

During these events we mustn't forget that the Great War (World War I) was in full swing. Central Powers, mainly Germany and Austria supporting the UNR, forced the Bolsheviks out of Kiev. This action by the Central Powers wasn't from some moral point, it was to combat its enemy and gain vital fertile land to feed its war effort. The hostilities eventually led to the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk being signed *(3 March 1918)* between them, which pulled Bolshevik Russia out of the Great War. This treaty also ensured the independence of Ukraine from Russia and was viewed negatively by Soviet Russia as it removed nearly a third of Russia's agricultural land from it.

During 1918 Polish forces had also been fighting the Western Ukrainian National Republic army in a region called Galicia. To the present day, the area containing modern day Lviv and historical Galicia remains at the core of Ukrainian independency and Nationalist identity. Though the Ukrainians will also lose this conflict to the Poles, the area will again rise up and declare itself an independent Ukraine in the near future.

Another brick in Russia accusations of Ukrainians practicing Nazism throughout history, is the Ukrainian Pogroms that led to the killing of around 120,000 Jews. These mass murders and tortures were perpetrated across the region. Ukrainians justified the atrocities because they viewed Jews as Bolsheviks due to the support from the Jewish for the Bolshevik revolution. This viewpoint is also present in an article written in the newspaper *Ukrainskaia Tribuna* on 7 SEP 1921 stating that Jews study Bolshevism and

Bolshevism erodes traditions and history. It was then believed that killing Jews was the same as fighting against the Soviets. Observing these actions and statements, we see links between Ukrainian independence, Nationalism, and antisemitism in the earliest of years from the Ukrainian identity. Interestingly, the mass murders were even reported by the New York Times in 1919 and which also warned that 6 million are in peril. stated the possibilities of the mass extermination seen later in the century.

(Left) A New York Times article that published on September 8, 1919.

The new Ukrainian government of Kiev that came from the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, was short lived, as its policies were not aligned to the Central Power's interests to the extent they were expecting. The Germans intended to receive ample food for its war effort in the West but supplies from the new government fell short. In April 1918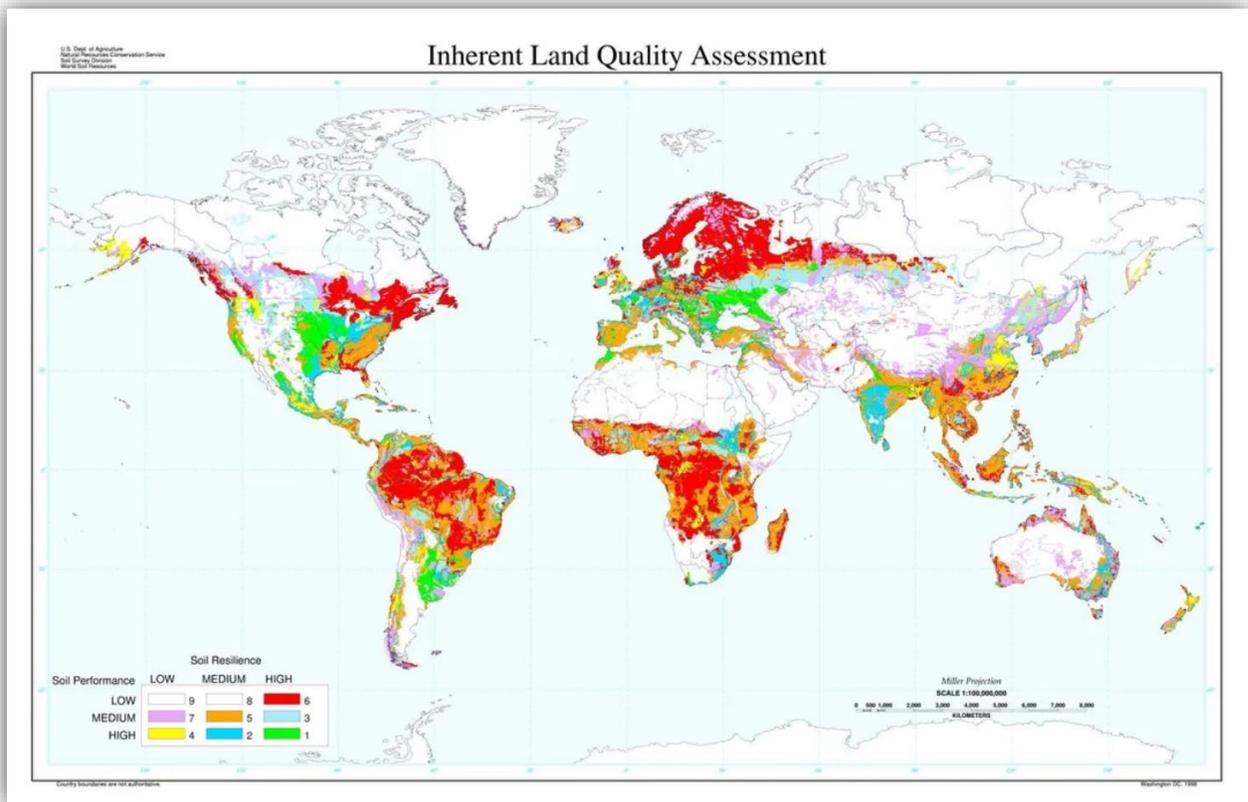, the Ukrainian Government was overthrown by a German supported coup and installed the Hetmanate, a Cossack Military Figure and puppet of Germany, to govern the region. This political body did not last long either as it was propped up by the Central Powers and with their capitulation at the end of the Great War *(29 SEP 1918),* The Hetmanate dissolved and Ukraine fell into civil war once again between Nationalists and Socialists. The differences between the *Left* and *Right Banks* have played a

role in political beliefs and allegiances to this day. *(note) the left and right banks are opposite what it would initially appear, the Left Bank is the side of Ukraine East of the Dnipro River closer to Russia and the Right Bank is West of the Dnipro River closer to Poland.* The left bank, supported by Soviet Red Army, saw an opportunity to take as much land as possible and Poland who had, been fighting the Western Ukrainian Nationals, attempted to do the same. Both sides seized land until their battle lines met, which led to the Poles fighting the Red Army until 1921. Poland steadily lost ground, and eventually the two sides signed the Treaty of Riga. This gave up parts of Poland to become Belarus and most all Ukraine back under control of Russia. Forming shortly after the treaty was signed, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on 30 December 1922.

There is much more to study on the wars between 1917-21, but this is just the first step towards our current conflict. It allows us to see a baseline that Russians, to this day, have viewed about the struggle between the East Europe vs West Europe and the beginnings of the claims of Nazism and Fascism. We may think this current conflict in 2022 is something new, but it is a part of a repetitive series of wars among the same cities and battlefields that Russian and Ukrainian families have fought on throughout their entire written history.

The Interwar Soviet Socialist Ukraine

The Soviet Ukraine was mainly assimilated into greater USSR with few parts of it given to Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. For a time Ukrainization, the spread of culture and language of Ukraine, were promoted throughout the central regions of the former nation. Once Vladimir Lenin, Chairman of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the Soviet Union, died in 1924, Joseph Stalin replaced him. Stalin soon applied a systematic oppression towards the Ukrainian identity. Language, religion and traditions of Ukraine were considered a threat to the Soviet way of life and pronounced illegal. The unity of people inside of the Ukraine was viewed as a potential strategic threat to one of the main pillars of power, agriculture. If Ukraine rebelled, as witnesses inside of the Russian Government had seen it do in the recent past, The Soviet Union would lose its rich farmland. To give perspective, Ukraine holds approximately 25-30% of the worlds black soil and roughly 70% of its territorial acreage is arable and agricultural, this is a significant prize for any nation that owns it, whether it be today or in history. Not only to feed a population but to also feed a military should the Soviet Union need to bear arms again with the West. This factor alone is an integral part to why a government would use fear and/or force to exert control over such an area. Stalin's rise didn't just effect Ukraine, after exiling political rivals and purging dissidents, failure of the five-year plan led to the deaths of tens millions across the USSR. We will specifically identify a period from 1932-33, a horrific event known to Ukrainians as the Holodomor, *death by hunger.* A man-made famine that resulted in the estimated deaths of 7-10 million Ukrainians. some debate was purposeful to further suppress the Ukrainian identity.

(Above) Representation of the World's soil quality assessment from USDA-NRCS.

Political parties inside of the stateless Ukrainian body sought remedy and plight
abroad to the rest of the world, Democratics made their plight to the French, others to the
British, and some to Germany. For the Western Ukrainians, the area of Subcarpathian Rus,
life fared little better under the rule of Poland and Romania. These nations sought to
assimilate the population into their own. Poland had fought Russia to the brink of
destruction and now wanted to ensure there was no possibility of Russian influence
capable of extorting communist Ukrainians to conduct anti-Polish activities. For this effort
Poland attempted to use religion, a common tool for such an endeavor. Unfortunately, the
three nations had different versions of Christianity. Romania had Greek Oriental, Poland
was Roman Catholic, and the threat viewed by Poland was the Ukrainian Orthodox religion,

which had ties to the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1930, the pacification of Ukrainians was called about by the Polish government. Beatings, property destruction and the desecration of their holy sites by dismantling the Ukrainian religious body and forcing a mass conversion into Catholicism.

The polarization of the people in former West Ukrainian Peoples Republic was growing evermore significant as the people watched their fellow citizens being killed or brutalized across the region. Former Nationalists looked to the structures of Italy and Germany to potentially solve their issues. Support for Communism did grow favorably for a time, especially among intellectuals, until Stalin's actions ended most of its popularity. The political frustrations and actions against its fellow people saw several moderate nationalist and radical nationalist groups emerge; the moderate Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance (UNDO), and the radical Ukrainian Military Organization (UVO) which formed into the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The OUN's goal was to, at all costs, establish an independent Ukraine. The group gained popularity, the meteoric rise of the party was brought about by the extreme suffering and destruction of its entire identity along with the Western Democracies largely ignoring the plights of the Ukrainians. Striking back against the Polish, the OUN began a campaign of terrorism, *(note) I am basing this word from the 2023 FBI definition,* against the Polish Government. Destruction of railways, burning estates, cutting telephone lines, assaults etc., were conducted by members of the OUN.

It is not difficult to see how fierce nationalism took to the Ukrainian people. This interwar period is a crucial part of the puzzle when analyzing the current state of affairs

between Russia and Ukraine. Edging closer to the start of World War II, the Soviet Russian and Polish State imposed destruction of the Ukrainian peoples would be used by Nazi Germany and Ukrainian Nationalists to form their narrative around the re-emergence of an independent Ukraine for the safety of the Ukrainian people. Rifts and atrocities are easily exploitable by military information operations, *I am using the U.S. Military JP 3-13 definition.* Having their culture and people targeted for years by government mandated brutality and death plays to the benefit of a government capable and willing to manipulate a populace for its own benefit. The age old "Enemy of my enemy is my friend," has been used to make normally disagreeable parties allies throughout the centuries.

Ukrainians and the Great Patriotic War

This section forms some of the greatest foundational arguments for the current Russian statements claiming "De-Nazification." Organization's actors and actions taken during World War II have been praised by modern Ukraine, Stepan Bandera was awarded the title *Hero of Ukraine* in 2010. This award was annulled not because of the operations of the OUN with the Nazis killing Jews, but on the statements that Bandera was never technically a Ukrainian citizen. Seeing to the fact that he was killed in 1959 by a Soviet agent, decades before Ukraine formally existed in 1991. This was probably the statement or formal reasoning they chose because Stepan Bandera is a divisive topic to this day. Nonetheless, he is a leader and one of the many individuals who fiercely fought for an independent Ukraine, even being recognized as one of the most influential persons to the cause by the CIA. Russians may merely say or fully believe the statements that modern Ukraine has always been antisemitic but, it is a founding argument of Russia in their

current beliefs. When looking at the actions of the previous government and military wings of Ukraine during the war of independence, there can be an argument made as there was no Nazi Germany giving orders. These prior actions of Ukraine do not create a fixed scenario in which every modern Ukrainian is a Nazi, Fascist, or antisemite, it merely is a truth that we cannot discount that some of the prominent founding organizations tied to Ukraine's history were antisemitic with and without order from Nazi Germany. We now return to the past.

August 23, 1939, saw the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, promising a guaranteed ten years of non-violence between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Though seemingly both sides believed this to be a paper shield, as Germany had already committed itself against communism. Stalin believed this treaty to be a sure sign of a war opening between France and Germany. September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded the Second Polish Republic. At the time of the invasion, Poland was dealing with an insurgency *(I am using the CIA definition of the word)* of the Organization Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The OUN had been conducting the previously mentioned terror activities as it worked towards its end goal, an identified autonomous state for Ukrainians, thus their slogan "Ukraine for Ukrainians." On 17 September, Soviet Russia invaded Poland from the East, when the Germans and Russians met, they split control of the territories. Russia gained all the land previously claimed by independent Ukraine and rolled it under the USSR. Referring to the previous section, we know that the Soviets view Ukrainian Nationalism as a threat that needs to be purged. Many Ukrainians, radical and moderate, were executed or arrested and deported to gulags in Russia by the Soviet Peoples Commissariat for Internal Affairs

(NKVD), a special political police force used to conduct mass executions and other extrajudicial actions.

The OUN moved its main operating body to German occupied Poland, believing that the Germans were more aligned to their cause and the hunting down of OUN forces inside Soviet territories pushed them to relocate their headquarters. Inside the Nationalist movement two groups formed, The OUN-M, led by Andriv Melnyk, was considered a more moderate extremist looking to have an identity possibly shepherded by Nazi German, and the OUN-B, led by Stepan Bandera, which held a more radical position on the identity of an independent Ukraine along with intense Anti-Rus/Muscovite and antisemitic beliefs. We must remember that Jews were historically viewed by Ukrainians as supporters of Bolshevism in which the previous war saw over a hundred thousand of them killed by Ukrainians.

Nazi Germany saw an opportunity to use the strong emotion of the Ukrainians to their benefit. For antisemitic purposes, they used the OUN in locating and arresting Jews in occupied Poland. For anti-Russian purposes, two Nazi Structured Ukrainian units were established, the Nachtigal and Roland Battalions. These were used as part of the German invasion of the USSR. The Ukrainian Liberation Army (UVV), title given to all Ukrainian military units serving under German control, comprised of several variations of military units including the Ukrainian 14th Waffen Grenadier of the SS which itself held about 25,000 under it. In total around 250,000 Ukrainians would volunteer to fight under the German Armed Forces during WWII. Outside of the formal military units, a group called the

Abwehr, Nazi intelligence organization, used the extreme ideologies of the Ukrainians to their benefit.

Not all the Nationalist groups could be relied upon by the Germans, the ideological separation between the OUN-B and OUN-M was apparent to the Abwehr and they believed Stepan Bandera could not be trusted to serve in the interest of the Reich, to which their assessment was accurate. Though they ordered Bandera to stay in occupied Poland, on June 30, 1941, Stepan Bandera traveled with the OUN-B and led the Ukrainian National Assembly in Lviv, officiating the Act of restoration of the Ukrainian State, a formal declaration of independence for Ukraine. Bandera stated that the newly established Ukrainian state will work closely with National Socialist Greater Germany who will aid the Ukrainian people to free itself from Moscow's occupation.

Germany had no intention of allowing Ukraine to exist independently, at least at this time, and arrested Stepan Bandera, he was in captivity the rest of WWII. As Germany progressed pushing back the Russians, they discovered mass executions of Ukrainian and Polish people killed by the Soviet NKVD. In a severely unfortunate circumstance, surviving the Russian occupation, Jews would be targeted and murdered by their new occupiers. Nazi Germans, Hungarians, Romanians, and UVV operations killed 1.4-1.6 Million Jews in Ukraine during the war. During the advance Eastward of Germany, the Abwehr, used some of the Nationalist groups to conduct guerilla warfare activities forward of German lines inside of Soviet held territories. This use of resistance fighters and irregular warfare would be carried on by the predecessor organization of the CIA, more on that in the next section. As the war went on the former Roland and Nachtigall units were eventually disbanded and

formed into Scutzmannschaft (auxiliary police) battalions to enforce the

Reichskommissariat Ukraine. One of which, the 118th, participated in the Babi Yar massacre

killing over 33,000 Jews. Ukrainian Nationals did not completely stop their operations

while under the Third Reich, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) continued the fight

anyone not Ukrainian on the belief of someday having an independent country. These

groups continued terrorist activities against all sides as the Russians started back through

former Soviet Ukraine in 1943. By October 1944, all former claimed land of Ukraine was

under Soviet control. As Germany retreated, it had finally recognized Ukraine as an

independent country. This was short-lived due to the onslaught of the Soviet Army rapidly

taking back the lands. At the closing of WWII, the UPA and other Ukrainian resistance

groups continued to fight on against the Soviet occupation once more.

This section focused heavily on the Fascist and anti-Semitic actions of Ukrainian

Nationalist groups to ensure that today's readers understand where Russia's statements

come from when mentioning de-Nazification. There are some other groups actions and

political bodies that acted on behalf of Ukrainian Nationalist and were not specifically

named. I encourage others to study into the subject on their own to truly grasp how

complex this issue is. These nationalist groups, names, and symbols continue, some of

which, to this day are venerated. Other symbols and organizations deliberately trace their

path to the OUN and are in open service of the modern Ukrainian Military. I want to restate

that this section does not mean that all Ukrainians are Nazis, as there were many

Ukrainians that hid Jewish people. To understand the history of the Ukrainian problem we

need to understand there is a very real history of fascist beliefs in the Nation's past. It is

also easy to see how a group would align itself to a would-be liberator. The horrors

repeatedly suffered under Soviet rule would push many groups, especially those as fanatically dedicated to independence as the OUN, to side with a country they feel will recognize and assist them.
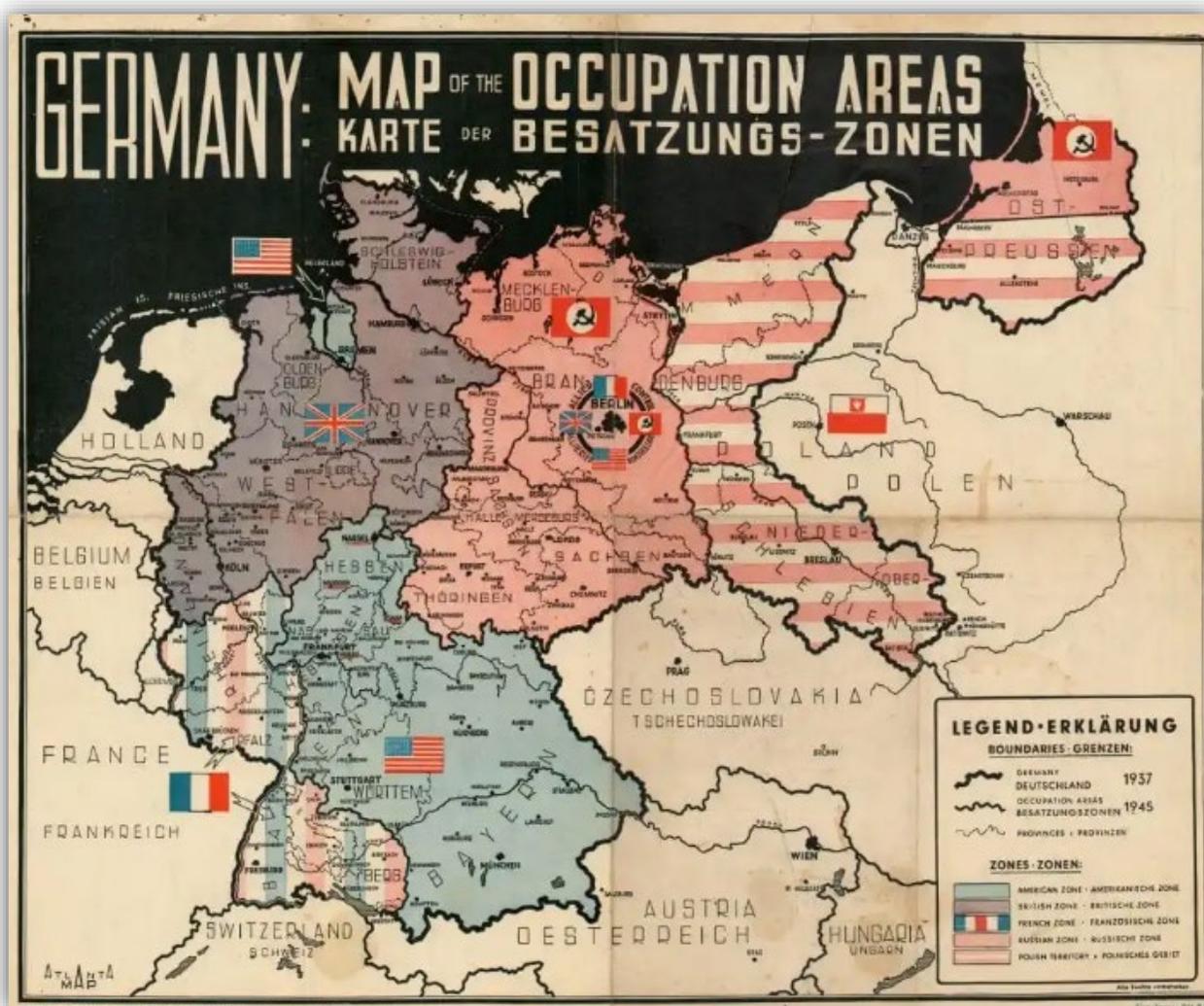
Ukraine and the beginning of the Cold War

The end of one war saw the opening of another, the Cold War. Throughout the years until the fall of the USSR, clandestine jousting of sensitive activity groups and the overt use of conventional militaries brought the world to the brink of war on many occasions whether we know about the events or not. Great decisions had to be made with sometimes little information. We enter here the beginnings of the U.S. CIA and their handling of OUN nationalists to combat the Soviet Union. This is an under reported and under studied topic which we will cover. Documents supporting this section are Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) documents taken directly from the CIA archives. Let us dive in.

The once Allied forces began to poise themselves at each other almost immediately. Though the major conflict ceased, Ukrainian's fight for independence carried on under Soviet and Polish rule once again. The UHVR, *Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council,* released a statement to the Ukrainian people calling for their perseverance, endurance, and support of the UPA and OUN. These organizations were still conducting terror like operations against all forces that stood in their way of independence. Revolutionary actions were conducted under their council's watchwords such as, the destruction of the Muscovite Bolshevik Imperials, the overthrow of the Stalin Regime, and the realization of a self-determined political nation. With these statements, the guerilla war waged on, Soviet

troops coming home from the war were pushed into MVD, *Ministry of Internal Affairs,* security units to fight the UPA across the same regions claimed by the Ukrainian Nationalists 30 years before. Other Soviet soldiers made contact with the OUN and joined them in the fight against Russia.

Having occupied lands abutted with each other, the U.S. intelligence organization known as the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), pre-cursor to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), had the opportunity to discover the extent of dissent that was manifesting inside the Soviet Union. In April of 1946, SSU officers learned about the Ukrainian anti-Soviet resistance groups and with the thought that another war possibly breaking out investigated more into their size and capability. the SSU understood the importance of sourcing recruits for paramilitary operations and covert intelligence gathering as had just been done across Western Europe. There were several arguments internally when discussing the use of Ukrainian Nationalist Groups. The SSU looked at the history of these groups and quickly learned of the war record of the Ukrainians. The ancient hatred of Poles, Jews, and Soviets was of initial concern along with the atrocities conducted by UVV. Next concern was reliability, though they were initially used by Germany for anti-Soviet purposes, the different organizations fell fighting against the Nazi handlers in the end.

(Above) KARTE DER BASATZUNGS-ZONEN. Frankfurt am Main: Atlanta Service, [late 1945].

By October 1946, the UHVR convinced the SSU that the UPA was still invested in fierce

resistance against the Soviets, and so the first stage began of, in the words of the CIA, the

earliest and most controversial covert action projects of the Cold War. Though there were

more figures that worked regularly alongside the SSU, Stepan Bandera was considered

"The" embodiment of the Ukrainian independence movement, this plays a role into the

calculus of Russian messages and modern pro-Ukrainian groups. His reputation was built

by his actions in declaring an independent state and being more so for a sovereign Ukraine than his competitor/compatriot Melnik. The OUN-B had the best claim to legitimacy and popular support by the Ukrainians at large. For this, he was deemed important enough to the image of the groups, the SSU worked to protect Bandera for a time. Even though the SSU by their own definition, that the nationalists were primarily terrorists, intelligence operations continued to be funded and recruiting efforts carried on. The operations were not large or overt in nature due to the still lingering still light capacity and informal training of the UHVR groups.

This changed in December of 1947 when NSC 4-A was passed, a bill pertaining to the "Immediate strengthening and coordination of all foreign information measures of the U.S. Government," this expansion of operations allowed the now named CIA to operate in a capacity it hadn't previously been authorized to. The CIA then began to plan operations in supporting "Courier" operations codenamed APOSTLES on missions to the Ukrainian groups behind Soviet lines with supplies and training. It was noted several times by CIA officers working in Munich that the operations conducted by the military groups under the UHVR were considered illegal under U.S. Government regulations. Planning had finished and the first airdrop of Apostles into the USSR was executed and met with disaster as the agents were quickly discovered and killed. It was shortly after that the KGB learned that the Ukrainians were being used by "Capitalist intelligence services."

The U.S. CIA was not the only organization supporting Ukrainian Nationalists, the British Secret Service (SS) was working to support the OUN-B, as they determined they were better fit for the task and the SS reportedly had less reservations on the history of the

Ukrainian groups they supported. All operations being conducted behind the Soviet lines were eventually brought under the name REDSOX. According to the CIA, as the years went on the war record of the Ukrainian Groups became "blurred" as their existence became more vital to CIA operations. In 1951, when questioned about working with the OUN, the Agency excused the actions of the group by using the statement "Cold War necessity." Leaving it on the table that the actions of these groups in the past does not harm the U.S. image. While the CIA was running their activities, Russian MVD operations continued to hunt the OUN and UPA throughout the regions under Soviet control and even into U.S. occupied Germany.

During the years attempting to suppress the groups, thousands of operations were conducted to root out the fighters. Soviet police and security forces were well organized and, simply put, their sheer force of control over the populace due to Soviet policies made them effective. The term "Banderite" became a term used colloquially by the security forces. It was a broad name for those resisting the Soviets whether under Bandera himself or not. Though bolstered with CIA support, the UPA and OUN numbers began to dwindle. Arrests and displacement operations conducted by the Soviets led to 2.3M Ukrainian civilians being deported into greater Russia and across the USSR. All of these activities were under the Russian order to "Russify" and "Sovietize" the people of Ukraine. Former writers and artists who once wrote stirring patriotic songs during the Great Patriotic war were now persecuted and considered part of the Nationalist movement. Even the churches were accused of aiding the Nationalist, the complete destruction of the Ukrainian culture was taking place once more. Of the fighting, metrics and numbers of combatants and deaths were seemingly muddled until 1996 when the Russian Federation released documents

stating that the Soviet MVD Forces had approximately 10,500 killed or wounded fighting

the UPA insurgency. The OUN and UPA forces reportedly suffered over 12,000 casualties,

24,000 arrested, and another 40,000 surrendering voluntarily. By the mid-1950s, the

Ukrainian Nationalist movements were physically destroyed. Stepan Bandera was killed by

a KGB agent in Munich, the OUN recruitment pool dried up and some of the final "battles" of

the OUN/UPA being last stands of groups of two or three men against dozens or more of

Soviet MVD forces.

The significance to this chapter of resistance not only lies within the highly motivated

and stalwart embodiment of independence by any means from the USSR, but more so the

West's involvement. We look back to the previous chapters and once again, if we sit in a

Russian seat, we see the West fueling these resistance groups and involving themselves

directly in training and operations. Assassinations, ambushes, destruction of national

critical infrastructure, *I am using the 2023 DHS definition,* and other irregular warfare

functions all sanctioned and supported by the West. It is not to say that Russia is justified in

this view, but merely it is easy to see how a Russian could absolutely feel threatened by the

idea and reality of an anti-Russian independent Ukraine supported by NATO. Chief of

Mission Gordan Stewart in 1996 stated that the sacrifice of the Ukrainian agents and U.S.

Case Officers directly contributed to the destruction of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine 1950 - 1989

We will be blending a few years over from the previous section to bring us into the

next decades of the Ukrainian SSR. There seems to be no break the endless destruction

between Ukrainians and Russians, even if the conflict isn't open warfare or sabotage. These next decades bring a continued struggle for identity until Stalin's eventual death, which brought some relief from the oppression.

    After Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Krushchev eventually won a struggle for power over the USSR and took his place as First Secretary of the communist Party of the Soviet Union. This was a good omen for Ukraine, as he had been First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Though born Russian, there was at least some affinity their as he held that post in Ukraine. Having seen the brutality and suffering under Stalin, he would eventually implement a de-Stalinization plan. Ukraine was able to begin rebuilding itself as a culture, it had already become the manufacturing, natural resource refining, and agricultural powerhouse of the USSR. In 1954, a celebration on the 300th anniversary of the reunification of Ukraine and Russia saw the Crimean Peninsula given to Ukraine. Decentralization to an extent was used for economic management and release of several hundred thousand Ukrainians from prisons and work camps. The rehabilitation of the Ukrainian identity was growing under Krushchev until 1959. Russification movements restarted, educational reforms were implemented, and the idea of a fusing of the Soviet Republics emerged. This backward slide immediately triggered unease for the Ukrainians. Soon small groups formed spreading dissent and Nationalist ideals once again, these groups were quickly discovered and arrested.

    Non-extremist cultural revitalizations attempted to carry on by those who had suffered Stalin's reign of terror, books news outlets, and publications found there way into society. As the years went on the growth and subsequent destruction of Ukrainian traditions and

identity would pass. Purges of institutions and universities and the slow degradation of economic output by Ukraine led to increased anti-Soviet rhetoric. The representatives of Ukraine would seem to alter in favorability towards Russia. A representative would be loyal to Russia then the next Party favorite would enter, and "less oppressive" time would come for Ukrainians. A welcomed relief that lasted a short while and then would see the leader removed, imprisoned, and replaced. The political turmoil in the USSR was filled with power grabs, murders, and imprisonments. As soon as the iron grip of communism loosened, Nations throughout saw a dramatic push towards a democratic system in 1989.
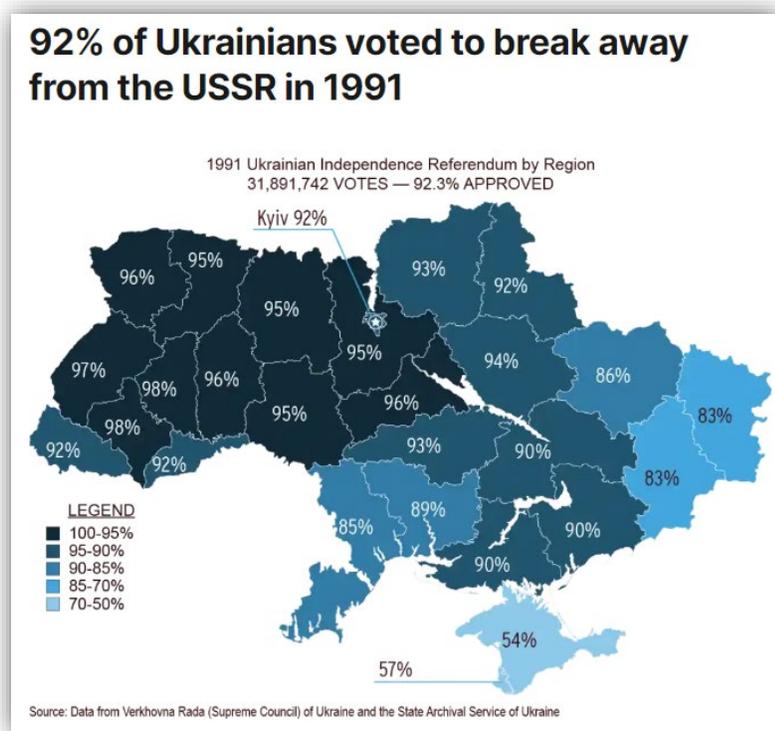
This chapter is a period generally overlooked when discussions of Russo-Ukrainian relations take place. Its importance lies in not only the government enacted oppression, but the strength and survival of the culture through it, a blemish on the Russian past as they failed to fully dominate Ukraine through "Russification." Those years saw more famine and oppression with intermittent periods of cultural growth and wealth. Witnessing those gains drove narratives and hope for the future. Those that suffered under Stalin continued to persevere with their culture and language ensuring it lasted for their posterity until eventually their independence was achieved. The weight of the Cold War and the continued political force both outside and within helped end the USSR and to the eventual independence of Ukraine we will read about in the next section.

The Fall of the Iron Curtain

We now find ourselves at a momentous point in history, significant for millions of people across the globe. The West had one against the Soviet might, the U.S. would press to

work with a capitalist friendly Russia instead of against them. We will be covering the period from 1989 to 2014 in this section.

Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to go forward with a presidency and a multi-party system rapidly led to the dissolution of the USSR. His rival Boris Yeltsin wanted a breakup of the Soviet Union while Gorbachev was attempting to maintain a Union but with increased democratic proceedings and removal of communism. With the increased democratization of the governing bodies and political proceedings came extreme destabilizing activity by the Communist Party executing violent actions to maintain control. The U.S. had been working with and backing Gorbachev but an unsuccessful coup in August of 1991 by the communists weakened his authority. Here we see the emergence of a Ukrainian Independent Soviet Republic state on 24 Aug 1991, just a few days after the coup. The now-independent Ukrainian SSR held a vote in December of 1991 in which 92% of the participants voted to remove themselves from the

Vote for Ukrainian independence by region (1991)

USSR.

Newly minted Ukraine had finally won its independence, but this was not the end of hardship for its citizens. Soon after, dire economic issues fell on the nation, when Ukraine declared independence, its GDP was merely ~1,300 USD per capita, (Pre-2022 it reached 10K USD). Inflation reached 3000% some points reportedly reaching upwards of 10,000%. This struggle of the people wasn't made any better by the political leaders, the system was in shock and the body politic had little prepared to meet the needs. As a result of the intense oppression from governments, the Ukrainian citizen held generally negative views and was hesitant to trust the political "elite." It faired no better to ease their concerns that tax evasion and corruption was spreading among local national representatives. Even as elections continued, the second President elected to office in 1994, Leonid Kuchma, would eventually be accused of media suppression, election rigging, Kleptocracy, and even the ordered murder of a high-profile journalist in 2000. This murder sparked the Orange Revolution a mass protest in the hundreds of thousands, the sentiment would be similar to the future Euromaidan protests. The journalist was reporting on the high-level corruption in the Ukrainian government. In 2004 Viktor Yanukovych won the Presidential election against his rival Viktor Yushchenko who held a pro-West stance and viewed as a Nationalist by Ukrainians. The election turned into chaos as information became known that there was voting fraud and eventually accusations that he had ordered the poisoning of his rival, Yushchenko. With the evidence mounting, a run-off election was ordered. Unfortunately, Yushchenko's presidency was too, marred with corruption along with ineffective policies and his time saw the rising of anti-Russian and Anti-Semitic organizations of Ukrainian society.

Repeated instances of corruption inside Ukraine were seen by President Putin, elected in 2000 for this term, and he believed that it was the U.S. that had helped install Yushchenko, as his wife is from the U.S. and worked for the State Department. 2010 saw Yanukovych win, a shocking blow to the West. His stance did not completely cut off relations, but it was a mild approach to the US/EU. Influence between the two became a power struggle, U.S. and Russia fighting over investments, institutions, and foundations. EU expansion and NATO expansion were already viewed as a threat by Russia, the intrusion of the U.S. into Ukraine, as it was viewed, assisted in destabilizing an already polarized government. Tensions snapped into protest in November 2013 when Yanukovych rejected a deal with the West to accept a 15 Billion dollar offer from Russia. The Euromaidan Riots were months-long anti-government demonstrations that ended around 22 February 2014. These protests brought hundreds of thousands of civilians to Kiev and saw the gathering of Nationalist and "Hyper-Nationalists" in support of the demonstrations. Though not the majority in numbers, there were many protestors identifying with the term "Banderites" to embody the independence ideas of the earliest Nationalists. Slogans from the UPA were used and large Photos of Bandera himself were carried in the crowds. Police and protesters were injured or killed in the violent outbreaks which led to around 110 deaths total. These protests successfully ousted Yanukovych who fled to Russia on 24 February. Taking his place, Pro-Western Yatsenyuk took control as a Prime Minister.
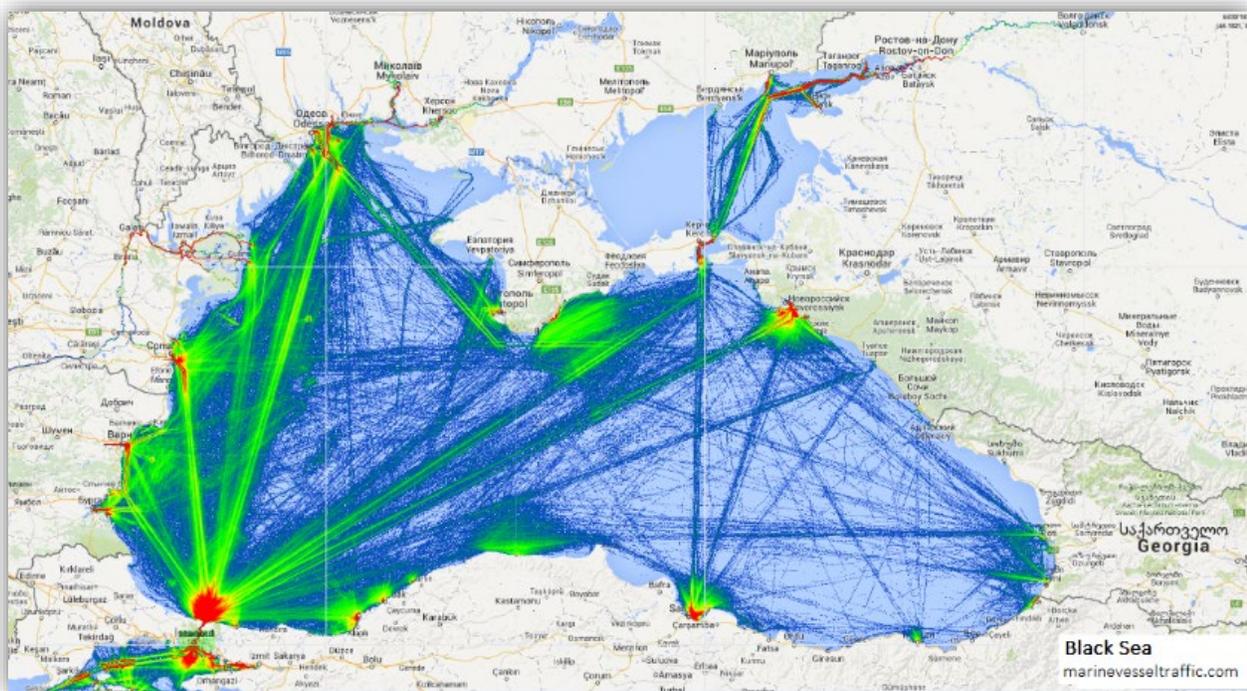
Ukraine was caught in a tug of war between East and West, the ideals it had sought to achieve upon its independence never came into fruition due to the spheres of power it was under. The actions of the West fit perfectly into Putin's Umwelt. As we view Russia to be the adversary to the U.S. and compete with them for influence and control, Russia does

the same. They view the U.S. as the "bad guy" and that we corrupted Ukraine. Russia isn't

entirely wrong when it accuses the West is meddling in Ukrainian affairs and when labeling

the Ukrainian government corrupt. Perception is reality, and the actions of all parties

involved validate those perceptions.

Russo-Ukraine Crisis

This is where most find themselves when discussing a beginning point of the

current conflict. Russian "Little Green Men" and the Black Sea Fleet took over Crimea, and

Russian FSB (Federal Security Services) agents assisted Russian Nationalists in the Donbas.

This action was given several different names, annexation, occupation, incursion, but

others may view this like the Ukrainians do, the invasion of their country once again by the

Russians, on the same ground we have been talking about since the beginning of this

article. Full circle back to Kharkiv separating from an independent Ukraine.

With the Ukrainian Government still picking up the pieces, a group of unmarked men seized control of the Crimean Parliament, installed a new Prime Minister, and held a vote to secede from Ukraine to join the Russian Federation. This act was extremely swift and well-timed, though Ukraine did not recognize the referendum there was nothing they could do about it. The country was toiling and divided from the Euromaidan. It also went under the radar to the public of the world. Governments spoke out against Russia conducting such action but there was no popular support form the West to do more than disagree. This could be based on several narratives. Putin understood the power of not only Naval Forces but the long-standing Russian Achilles Heel of poor access to warm water ports. the Sea of Azov and Crimea are of extreme strategic value for force projection into

Black Sea Shipping routes and density.

the entire region. If Crimea stayed in the hands of a Pro-West Ukraine, it could very simply choke off much of Russia's access to the Black Sea. The Kerch Strait handles about 30% of Russia's grain exports and 8% of its liquified petroleum Gas.

Another reason could be the view that Crimea was given away unjustly during the Soviet Era. We personally feel it is the former.

In the Donbass region, Pro-Russian protesters, and most likely military specialists, seized the government buildings in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk. In May 2014, these regions claimed to be independent states named the Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples Republics (DPR and LPR respectively). By this time Ukraine was able to form a military option to strike back in the Donbas. The Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) was initiated to stop the separatist governments. Russian equipment continued to flow to the border regions and new republics bolstering the military capability of the breakaway states. Balancing on a line not wanting to contribute too much towards the effort, the U.S. and EU had increased sanctions in an attempt help coerce Russia to stop supporting the conflict. Even with the overwhelming evidence of the direct action from Russian forces, Putin continued to deny any of it was happening. The war turned into mass artillery and rocket barrages destroying many cities and towns displacing millions of citizens and killing thousands. This also comes to another narrative point for the Russians, it is always claimed to be for their people. The civilians there were viewed as Russians to Putin and the indiscriminate tactics employed by both Russia and Ukraine caused the death of many. Nonetheless, the Russian military objective rides the coattails of "for the Russian people."

The war slowed into a trench-based standoff with paramilitary organizations taking over much of Ukraine's fighting in Donbas. Some of these groups are openly neo-Nazis or Ultra-Nationalists that are part of the legitimate Ukrainian military. Meaning they receive training, funds, and weapons from the Ukrainian and U.S. Governments. Ukrainians, to a

lesser extent, still support a Nationalist political party and allow openly ultra-nationalist military groups in their military. This fact allows Russia the appearance of being justified in "De-Nazifying" Ukraine, which many believe. Eventually, Germany and France were able to bring Russia and Ukraine to the table and discuss a ceasefire. Several rounds of the Minsk Agreements were signed to draw down action and release prisoners, but the agreements failed in 2015. A contention point of the Minsk Agreements were that the DPR and LPR would be allowed to vote on their special status and independence, an act that Ukraine absolutely refuses to allow to this day as they claim the land as rightly theirs. The Ukraine side the war was fueled by the illegal seizure of Crimea, the creation of Novorossiya, *New Russia,* where the LPR and DPR are located. For Russia, the Western leanings and fears of EU/US influence led to preemptive attacks to ensure that the U.S. kept itself removed. In the years leading up to Pre-2022 Invasion, it is estimated that in total casualties (dead and wounded) of Russians and Ukrainian forces along with civilians reached ~55,000.

Conclusion

Russia has attempted to prevent the influence of the West into many of the former USSR nations and works around the world to compete globally against the U.S. activities and interests. It is a constant joust on the strategic level between the U.S. When comparing history with the current Russian narrative we can absolutely see why they leverage the topics that they do. It is not some far-fetched idea when we have one hundred years of it available. Russia views itself as surrounded, which seems comical to think of a nation that spans 11 time zones, but nonetheless that is Russia's perspective. Allowing threats to encroach in the *Near Abroad,* a term used for the former USSR nations, is cause for alarm to

the Russian strategists. Its political and cultural investment into these regions creates a sensitivity for Russia, one that if entered, will be met with overt or covert action. Ukraine since its independence in 1991 has wished to be more European, to see itself respected and independent. Russia has historically feared an independent Ukraine, NATO or not, its idea has always been in direct opposition to the Russian strategy.

If the U.S. and Russia swapped places and the same events were occurring from a historical standpoint, we absolutely would have put a pro-US government in their country if not make it a pacified nation by force. It is difficult for Americans to understand the calculus of our adversaries, our nation is young, its borders are firmly protected against an enemy threat and we have not been invaded by a foreign force since the 1800's. When Mexico was against the US, we speared into their country taking Monterey, Mexico City, Vera Cruz, sailed around South America and attacked their periphery settlements in New Mexico and California, we wholly dismantled a neighboring country to ensure the safety of our citizens The enduring and extreme actions of Ukrainian Nationalists to gain independence have been the very tools used to create the narrative to suppress them through the decades. This doesn't mean Ukraine should submit, it is just a reality that is viewed by Russian decision-makers.

Ukraine is not unstained through its history; but this does not mean that all Ukrainians are evil or corrupt. Russia has one the most horrifying pasts, its accounts are filled with some of the most heinous actions intentionally done to humans I have ever read, the loss of life is astounding. Though Russia has many atrocities under its belt, we cannot be hypocritical, the actions of some are not a broad swipe to all who reside in the country.

This document isn't meant to justify either side, it is to lift the veil that has been in the way of truth. I hope that this inspires you to study more into the actions of these nations. Ukraine has wanted independence by nearly any means available and Russia has aimed to stop that by any means. A scenario as such will always lead to warfare.

UPA Recruiting Poster 1949

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