

PEACE POLICIES IN THE SHADOW OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND THE LIMITED POSSIBILITIES OF NON-VIOLENT POLICIES

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Abstract. The ceasefire in eastern Ukraine agreed in 2015 in Minsk did not put an end to the war in Europe. On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military offensive aimed at “demilitarising” and “denazifying” Ukraine, i.e. establishing a regime closely aligned with Russia and ceding Ukrainian territories to the aggressor. Ever since, a military direction in internal politics has dominated in both the aggressor state and victim state, as well as the supportive policies of NATO, the EU, and other democratic partners of Ukraine. The vehement resistance of the Ukrainian army and population prevented the rapid capture of Kyiv and other large parts of the country. Since the sixth week of war, Russia has focused on conquering eastern and southern Ukraine. A very long war is now to be expected, in which neither side is likely to achieve its most lofty military aims.

The peace policy (*Friedenspolitik*) has two aims. First and foremost, a ceasefire must be reached, and only then can a new international security apparatus and order of peace be conceivable. We can only expect to see any kind of fatigue in either party after hundreds of thousands of people fall victim to the war, and only then could we expect a ceasefire along the southeastern frontline in Ukraine – which line exactly is, today, impossible to determine. Such a ceasefire will likely be achieved by strong national-conservative politicians, while only a small contribution can be made by the peace movement. Thus, once again, a “frozen conflict” is expected along a changed line of military demarcation. It is unlikely that a democratic, peace-demanding popular movement would change the regime in Russia. The removal of Putin from the presidency by the Russian power elite is conceivable but would not fundamentally change the Putinist autocratic system, i.e. Russia will certainly not give up its positions in Crimea, nor is it likely in the Donbas either.

The assumption that all post-communist countries will gradually become democratic after being integrated into the capitalist world economy and its institutions has proven to be wrong. Some countries have spawned new autocratic regimes and consider themselves threatened by Western democracies, which is why they ally with other autocracies. This will lead us to a new global conflict between political systems, which will be somewhat different from the historical East-West conflict. In it, new military demarcation lines are being drawn between democracies and autocracies. International politics is once again faced with the task of establishing a peaceful

coexistence between them. To this end, this text¹ will present a few seemingly feasible proposals.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, War, Military Stalemate, Armistice

1. From a policy of war and supporting war to a policy of ending war and building peace

War has been raging in Europe since 2014. Eight years of a relatively low-intensity and spatially limited war in eastern Ukraine had cost 14,000 lives by 2021. The ceasefire brokered in Minsk could not end it. It changed nothing about the bloodless, illegal annexation of the previously Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, nor their illegal and forced integration into the Russian Federation. It also changed nothing about the constitutions of the Donetsk and Lugansk “People’s Republics”,² which remained internationally unrecognised even by Russia, and constituted roughly one third of the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts controlled by eastern Ukrainian separatists with the help of unofficial Russian soldiers and their supply of arms.³

¹ The article “Friedenspolitik im Schatten des Krieges in der Ukraine einschließlich der geringen Möglichkeiten gewaltfreier Politik” was originally published on 25 April 2022 in *Frankfurter Montags-Vorlesungen. Politische Streitfragen in zeitgeschichtlicher Perspektive* (Fourth series, 12) at the Frankfurt am Main Goethe University. The text has been revised by the author and translated into English by Lance Bradley.

² The Donetsk “People’s Republic” was proclaimed on 7 April 2014 and had around 2.2 million residents, the Lugansk “People’s Republic” was proclaimed on 28 April 2014 with around 1.4 million residents.

³ **Mitrokhin, N.** 2015. Bandenkrieg und Staatsbildung. Zur Zukunft des Donbass [*Gang Warfare and State-Building. The Future of the Donbas*]. – Osteuropa 65, Heft 1–2: Zerrissen: Russland, Ukraine, Donbas, pp. 5–22; **Malek, M.** 2014. Moskaus Schlachtpläne. Hintergründe zu Russlands Krieg in der Ukraine [*Moscow’s Battle Plan. Background on Russia’s War in Ukraine*]. – Osteuropa 64, Heft 9–10: Gefährliche Unschärfe, pp. 97–117; **Portnov, A.** 2016. Ausschluss aus dem eigenen Land. Der ‘Donbass’ im Blick ukrainischer Intellektueller [*Exclusion from One’s Own Country. The Donbas from the Point of View of Ukrainian Intellectuals*]. – Osteuropa 66, Heft 6–7: Sinnbild. Zur Zerstörung von Menschen und Gesellschaft, pp. 171–184; **Micheeva, O.** 2016. Selbstbild im Wandel. Die ‚Volksrepubliken‘ Donec’k und Luhans’k und ihre Kämpfer [*Self-image in Flux. The “People’s Republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk and their fighters*]. – Osteuropa 66, Heft 6–7, pp. 185–203; **Aljukov, M.** 2019. Von Moskaus Gnaden. Genese und Geist der Volksrepublik Donezk’ [*By the grace of Moscow. The genesis and spirit of the “People’s Republic of Donetsk”*]. – Osteuropa 69, Heft 3–4: Schlachtfeld Ukraine, pp. 123–131; **Saval’eva, N.** 2019. Autonom gestartet, gesteuert geendet. Von Russland unterstützte bewaffnete Gruppen im Donbass [*Autonomous beginnings, controlled endings. Armed groups in the Donbas supported by Russia*]. – Osteuropa 69, Heft 3–4, pp. 133–147.

On 24 May 2014, the two “People’s Republics” united to form the “State of New Russia” (*Novorossiya*), which, according to the ideas of the Donetsk “People’s Governor” Pavel Gubarev, was to be joined by six other Ukrainian oblasts in southeast.⁴ After 1764, the territories north of the Black Sea, which Catherine the Great had won in the war against the Ottoman Empire, were designated as ‘New Russia.’ To describe the Ukrainian territories just to the north, the Russian Empire used the term ‘Little Russia.’

On 21 February 2022, one day after the Winter Olympics in Beijing, Moscow recognised the two “People’s Republics” and their borders, which constituted the entire territory of the two oblasts. Each has an area of around 27,000 km² (combined, they are larger than Estonia) with 4.1 and 2.1 million residents, respectively (2021). At the same time, Moscow announced a “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Assistance” with the two “People’s Republics”, which stipulated deploying a “peacekeeping” group (*po podderzhaniyu mira*) to the region.⁵ Three days later, Russia launched the war against the entirety of Ukraine, but downplayed it as a “special military operation”. President Putin’s aim was to “demilitarise” and “denazify” the country because it had been carrying out a “genocide” against Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians in eastern Ukraine for eight years. He claimed that the U.S. and NATO had established a “neo-Nazi junta” in Kyiv, following the “coup” on behalf of the “Maidan regime” in Kyiv in 2014. This transformed Ukraine into an “anti-Russia”.⁶ The special operation was intended to liberate ethnic Russians, Russian-speaking Ukrainians, and all other Ukrainians with a non-Ukrainian native language from the “drug-addicted” neo-Nazi junta. Russians and Ukrainians (and, of course, Belarusians) are all part of the (pan-)Russian

⁴ **Korrespondent.net** 2014. Donetskaya i Luganskaya narodnye respubliki obyedinilis v Novorossiyu. – Korrespondent.net, published on 24 May. <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/3368163-donetskaia-y-luhanskaia-narodnye-respublyky-obedynyls-v-novorossyui>.

⁵ **Putin, V.** 2022. Rede an die Nation am 21.2. [*State of the Union Address on 21.02.*]. <https://zeitschrift-osteuropa.de/blog/putin-rede-21.2.2022/>; russian: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/page/8>; english: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>; **Ofitsial’nyi internet-portal pravovoi informatsii** 2022. Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 21.02.2022, № 71, O priznanii Donetskoi Narodnoi Respubliki. <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202202220002>, and O priznanii Luganskoi Narodnoi Respubliki. <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202202220001>.

⁶ **Putin, V.** 2022. Kriegserklärung. Die Ansprache des russländischen Präsidenten am Morgen des 24.2.2022 [*Declaration of War. The Russian President’s Speech on the Morning of the 24.02.2022*]. <https://zeitschrift-osteuropa.de/blog/vladimir-putin-ansprache-am-fruehenmorgen-des-24.2.2022/>; russian: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>; english: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

people, meaning that the Ukrainian state (whose right to exist Putin does not deny) can only maintain a close relationship with Russia and can never, under any circumstances, join the Western Bloc – neither the EU nor, especially, NATO.⁷ Throughout the course of the war, however, Russia's ideological objectives have become more radical. Dmitry Medvedev, currently serving as vice-secretary in the Russian Security Council, has publicly questioned if the country of Ukraine will continue to exist.⁸ Ria Novosti, a Russian state news agency, has openly spoken of the de-ukrainization and russification of Ukraine within the “Russian World”.⁹

On 7 July, President Putin stated that “the so-called collective West led by the United States /.../ has been pursuing an extremely aggressive policy towards Russia for decades.” In 2014, the West “organised and supported an unconstitutional armed coup in Ukraine /.../ and subsequently fuelled and justified the genocide of the people of the Donbas”. The West, he said, wants to fight Russia with “every last Ukrainian”. The special military operation, as it were, is supposed to mark the beginning of the end of the American world order which is currently based on a “model of totalitarian liberalism”.¹⁰

At the moment, there is no public discussion about Europe's peace policy. Constant global appeals that Russia must immediately stop the war of aggression and withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine cannot replace real peace-building policies. In fact, throughout the last months, the policy of war has largely dominated in global affairs. First and foremost,

⁷ **Putin, V.** 2021. Über die historische Einheit der Russen und der Ukrainer [*On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*]. – Osteuropa 71, Heft 7: Der Geist der Zeit, pp. 51–65. In 2022 there were further official statements that Ukraine, as an independent state, should be wiped out.

⁸ **ntv.de** 2022. Medwedew stellt künftige Existenz der Ukraine infrage [*Medvedev questions the future existence of Ukraine*]. – ntv.de, published on 17 June. <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Russlands-Ex-Praesident-Medwedew-zweifelt-Zukunft-der-Ukraine-an-Nicht-mehr-auf-Weltkarte-article23401168.html>; **Reinvere, J.** 2022. Russlands Grenzen sind grenzenlos [*Russia's Borders are Endless*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 3 August, p. 13.

⁹ **Venjavkin, I.** 2022. Der De-Ukrainisator. Tomofej Sergejcew: „Methodologe“, Polittechnologe, Kriegspropagandist [*The De-Ukrainisator. Timofei Sergeitsev: „Methodologist“, Political Technologist, War-time Propagandist*]. – Osteuropa 72, Heft 4–5: Aus ganzer Front, pp. 59–77; **Wede-kind, K.** 2022. Russische Nachrichtenagentur ruft zum Völkermord auf [*Russian News Agency calls for Genocide*]. – ntv.de, published on 6 April. <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Russische-Nachrichtenagentur-ruft-zum-Voelkermord-auf-article23245751.html>.

¹⁰ **Putin, V.** 2022. Die herrschenden Klassen der westlichen Länder sind ihrem Wesen nach übernational und globalistisch [*The ruling classes of Western countries are in essence supranational and globalist*]. – Osteuropa 72, Heft 4–5, pp. 45–48, here pp. 46 and 47.

Russia's aggressive war policy and Ukraine's defensive war policy are having a catastrophic effect on the world's energy supply, financial markets, and, above all, on the vital supply of grain transported from both warring countries to countries across Africa and Asia. However, thanks to the mediation of the United Nations and Turkey, an agreement was reached between Russia and Ukraine on 22 July for an initial period of four months, which allowed to export grain and fertilizer from both countries with ships.¹¹ The agreement has since been extended repeatedly. The war has also been increasingly influenced by NATO's support for Ukrainian defence, as well as support from the EU and other democratic states. This includes intense political and moral support, extensive supply of arms, satellite and aerial imagery of Russian army positions, a wide range of financial and other assistance to the Ukrainian population, and harsh sanctions that are severely damaging Russia's economy. The substantial Western support to Ukraine's defence¹² is, without a doubt, an important factor in Ukraine's ability to militarily resist Russia after over a year of war (as of 18 March 2023, a year after the full-scale invasion). Neither Russia nor the West expected that. The Ukrainian society's will of resistance and the military resilience of the Ukrainian armed forces have been the decisive factor in the continuation of the war, and for now, the aggressive drive of the Russian state remains incessant.

Any discussion about options for a potential peace policy must start from an assessment of the further course of the war and its causes. There are two tasks that need to be completed. The first is to end the war, which is probably only possible in the form of a ceasefire, not a peace treaty. The second is to restore a lasting international security structure and peaceful order. The future course of events in the war remains entirely unknown, therefore several scenarios are imaginable in this regard.

¹¹ **Fahim, K.** 2022. Russia and Ukraine agree to release blockaded grain exports. – The Washington Post, published on 22 July. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/kareem-fahim/>.

¹² With its increasingly larger arms deliveries, the West is assuming a growing responsibility for ending the war and should also exercise this responsibility diplomatically vis-à-vis Ukraine and Russia. For a long time, the West hesitated to supply tanks and aircraft to Ukraine out of concern for an escalation of the war. It was wise, for example, that the deployment of battle tanks was decided jointly by the major Western powers at the end of January. As guarantors of the Budapest Memorandum, the United States, and Great Britain had a special obligation. Germany delivering alone would have been counter-productive, since the images of German tanks in Ukraine would have served Moscow's psychological rearmament of the Russian population, which claims that Russia is defending itself against a new Nazi aggression against Russians and Russian-speakers along the lines of the Great Patriotic War from 1941–1945.

Due to the drastic difference in the military potential, including both human and material resources, between the two countries, both Western and Russian leadership underestimated Ukraine's defensive readiness and capabilities leading up to 24 February. It is true that a protracted partisan war was expected, especially in western Ukraine, following the establishment of a Moscow-oriented puppet regime. However, that would not have prohibited the inclusion of Ukraine in Moscow's imperial sphere of control. The only uncertainty seemed to be about whether or not the two Donbas "People's Republics" would be reincorporated into a Russia-dependent Ukraine.

Months ago, President Putin boastfully claimed that Russian troops could be in Kyiv within two days and oust the "Nazi junta". As it turns out, he was planning for a victorious blitzkrieg. Accordingly, despite months of fighting and the deployment of up to 150,000 Russian troops on the northern, eastern, and southern borders of Ukraine, Russian logistics were poor. Not having planned for a prolonged war, there were failures in supplying the invading troops with fuel, ammunition, clothing, and food in the first weeks following 24 February. Ukrainian officials also thought that it might be a short war. In a video call with EU leaders on 28 February, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, "This could be the last time you see me alive."¹³

In the sixth week of war, Russia began to withdraw its troops from around Kyiv in northern Ukraine after they failed to seize the Ukrainian capital. They suffered significant material and personnel losses. The first few weeks also revealed poor combat morale among Russian troops, some of whom assumed they were taking part in a military manoeuvre in Belarus. Since mid-April, the Russian forces shifted their concentration to conquering the entire Donbas. By early July, Russian troops had occupied the entire Luhansk oblast and shifted their focus onto the Donetsk oblast. On 30 September 2022, Russia created new 'facts on the ground' by formally annexing four Ukrainian oblasts – Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson –, making it much more difficult to end the war.

At the beginning of the war, many Western military experts also assumed that the war would only last a few days or weeks and by no means several

¹³ **Trtdeutsch** 2022. Selenskyj nimmt Abschied von Staats- und Regierungschefs der EU [*Zelenskyy says goodbye to heads of state and governments of the EU*], 26 February. <https://www.trtdeutsch.com/news-welt/selenskyj-nimmt-abschied-von-staats-und-regierungschefs-der-eu-8069826>; **Brzozowski, A.** 2022. Wenn Kyjiw fällt, droht ‚Dominoeffekt‘ in Europas Nachbarländern, warnt Janša [*If Kyiv falls, Janša warns that Europe's neighboring countries will face a 'Domino Effect'*]. – Euroactiv.de. <https://www.euroactiv.de/section/eu-aussenpolitik/interview/wenn-Kyjiw-faellt-froht-dominoeffekt-in-europas-nachbarlaendern-warnt-jansa/>.

months or even years as in Afghanistan or Syria because of the overwhelming superiority of Russia's military potential.¹⁴ The U.S. and NATO had already warned of an imminent Russian aggression in the final months of 2021 since the Russian troops had lined up along Ukraine's border, supposedly as part of a manoeuvre. At the same time, the West declared that it would in no way be prepared to support Ukraine militarily in the event of Russian aggression since Ukraine was not a member of NATO and, therefore, not entitled to military aid under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. This was in spite of the fact that the United States and United Kingdom, together with Russia, had agreed in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum to guarantee Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (as well as of Belarus and Kazakhstan) in return for transferring the Soviet nuclear weapons stationed in Ukraine to Russia. Admittedly, at the time, no specific measures were defined for the event of violating the territorial integrity of any of the three countries.

In 2022, NATO also declared that their non-interference policy in the bilateral war was to avoid the risk of it escalating into a world war or a nuclear war. At the same time, however, the West publicly warned Russia of severe economic and political sanctions if it were to opt for military aggression. Later, these were imposed, strengthened on several occasions, and supplemented by a large-scale arms supply to Ukraine. Some commentators have carelessly described this as an 'economic war'¹⁵ of democratic states against Russia which blurs the lines between the essential differences of an *actual* war and non-aggressive forms of dealing with a conflict.

2. Scenarios for ending the war

The following scenarios ought to be considered for the successive course of the war; it should be noted that each scenario expects an intensification and brutalisation of the war, which will result in an ever-higher proportion of civilian victims in Ukraine.

In March, the Ukrainian troops largely succeeded in halting the advance of Russian forces and, on isolated occasions in the north of the country, pushed them back. This increased the confidence of Ukrainian politicians in being victorious. Initially, it remained unclear whether they wanted to, or believed

¹⁴ **Hemicker, L.** 2022: Wie stark sind die ukrainischen Streitkräfte? [*How strong are the Ukrainian armed forces?*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 15 January, p. 5.

¹⁵ **Braml, M.; Felbermayr, G.** 2022. Die Logik des Wirtschaftskrieges [*The Logic of Economic War*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 18 March, p. 18.

they could, recapture the occupied Donbas, Crimea, and Sevastopol or restore the Minsk Agreement ceasefire line in the process. President Zelenskyy has since repeatedly stressed that Ukrainian troops will retake hold of the country's entire territory.¹⁶

By now, it seems rather unlikely that Russian forces could or should occupy all of Ukraine, or at least not the major cities. This means that the old scenario from 2014, or even 1991, that foresees a Ukraine being divided along the Dnipro River has once again become topical. It entails Russia annexing the territory east of Dnipro and giving up on the rest of West-oriented Ukraine, in line with the region's Polish-Habsburg past.¹⁷ Evidently, Putin's minimal goal is to take over the entirety of the four annexed Ukrainian territories to secure a land bridge to Crimea. Another goal could possibly include the Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts, often jointly referred to as "New Russia".¹⁸ Odesa, however, is also being bombed. Conquering the Odesa oblast would mean creating a land bridge to the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic, a separatist region within the Republic of Moldova where the Soviet army and later the Russian army has been stationed. If Russia was able to take over all of southern Ukraine, then the Republic of Moldova would also be in danger. It was for this reason that the country formally applied for an EU membership on 3 March. It was granted candidate status on 23 June; however, this in no way implies that the EU will provide it with military aid in the event of Russia's attack.

Currently, it seems unlikely that the war will end with one side claiming victory. Russia cannot occupy all of Ukraine and transfigure it according to its own will, and Ukraine will not be able to regain all of the internationally

¹⁶ **Selenski verspricht Rückholung der Krim** [*Zelenskyy promises to get Crimea back*]. – Handelsblatt, published on 10 August. <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/ukraine-die-lage-am-morgen-selenski-verspricht-rueckholung-der-krim/28591328.html>; **dpa** 2022. Ukraine betont bei Gipfel Anspruch auf die russisch besetzte Schwarzmeer-Halbinsel Krim [*Ukraine emphasizes its Right to the Russian-occupied Black Sea Peninsula of Crimea at Summit*]. – Neue Zürcher Zeitung, published on 23 August. <https://www.nzz.ch/international/ukraine-betont-bei-gipfel-anspruch-auf-die-russisch-besetzte-schwarzmeer-halbinsel-krim-ld.1641731>.

¹⁷ **Jahn, E.** 2019. Die Zuspitzung der Integrationskonkurrenz zwischen Brüssel und Moskau um die Ukraine [*The Peak of Competition between Brussels and Moscow in Integrating Ukraine*]. – Jahn, Egbert. Politische Streitfragen, Bd. 5: Krieg und Kompromiss zwischen Staaten und Nationen. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 133–164, and pp. 153–154.

¹⁸ For further reading, see the second part of the book from Aleksandr Dugin with the title *Bitva za Novorossiyu* (The Battle over New Russia). – **Dugin, A.** 2015. *Ukraina: moya voyna, Geopoliticheskii dnevnik* (Ukraine: my War. Geopolitical Diary). Moscow: Centropoligraf.

recognised territory that it has lost. Even after the West has sent tanks and planes to Ukraine, there is not much hope for an outright military victory on Ukraine's behalf. Especially an attempt to regain Crimea and Sevastopol would, without a doubt, provoke a new wave of social support for Russia's troops, something which is currently quite low and dwindling. Presumably, the next months will lead to a military stalemate of repeated advances and retreats in Ukraine from both sides. Only then, at the earliest, will both sides' fantasies of victory fade and a widespread combat fatigue set in. There will be demands to end the war regardless of who and where has the military upper hand. Only then can there be a lasting ceasefire along any particular front in southeastern Ukraine. At present, it looks very much as if the war will continue for many more months, perhaps even years as in Syria.

An end to the fighting depends not only on the course of the war but, above all, on political developments in Russia and Ukraine. Despite a sharp increase in combat casualties among the Ukrainian civilian population, the willingness of Ukrainians to maintain defence will probably not diminish for quite some time. Before a military stalemate, no Ukrainian politician would dare to agree to a ceasefire that would not push Russian troops at least back to the territories that they had already previously occupied, if not out of the entire Donbas. The idea of reconquering Crimea and Sevastopol is likely to fade from Ukrainian calculations for military-geographical reasons alone, but also for political considerations regarding Russia's stance on the Crimean question. However, as soon as the population's willingness to continue suffering diminishes, heated debates among Ukrainian leaders are likely to take place over a ceasefire *without* forcing Russian troops to completely withdraw.

As it pertains to the Russian side, experts have discussed many more political scenarios. One scenario assumes that President Putin himself recognises that increasing economic losses, subsequential social discontent, and high death toll will force him to scale down his lofty imperial objectives and to confine himself to a more modest goal which he can still sell as a success. This way of "saving face", i.e. preserving power, could be achieved by expanding the Donetsk and Lugansk "People's Republics", possible gains in eastern and southern Ukraine, as well as the claim that he prevented a "genocide" of ethnic Russians in Ukraine. In doing so, he would conceal the fact that his troops have killed the same ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians who make up a large portion of the population in eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, worst hit by the war. A diminished Ukraine assuring that it will seek international neutrality instead of NATO membership could also be sold as a worthwhile outcome of his "special operation".

A second scenario assumes that parts of the military and security services, in one way or another, will abdicate Putin¹⁹ because the war would ruin Russia economically, threaten to plunge the country into a social domestic turmoil, make it internationally too dependent on China, and, above all, threaten the power of the entire elite. A few weeks prior to the war, retired colonel general Leonid G. Ivashov, a right-wing nationalist, monarchist, author of a widely known book on geopolitics,²⁰ former secretary of the CIS Council of Defence Ministers (1992–1996), and current chairman of the All-Russian Officers' Assembly, warned of the devastating consequences of war for Russia and demanded that Putin resign.²¹

A third scenario speculates on a popular uprising against Putin and the rest of the elite after the high social costs of war become unbearable, the huge loss of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers and civilians becomes undeniable, and the propagandistic lies about the “special operation” become implausible. Currently, however, support for President Putin and approval for the “special operation” remains extraordinarily high.²²

Of these three scenarios, the third is the least likely. The Russian population is much more accustomed to suffering than Western populations, so that an intensification of Western sanctions, such as an embargo on all energy imports, would have more serious political consequences in the West than in Russia. Even tens of thousands of Russians dying in the war is unlikely to reduce the support for and acceptance of Putin's military tactic. Only a much more profound shake-up of Putin's system – years of famine, crumbling state structures, and hundreds of thousands of fallen soldiers – could trigger a revolution of the likes of February 1917.

¹⁹ Some Western commentators, such as Republican Senator Lindsey Graham from South Carolina in the USA are calling for a Brutus that should assassinate the Caesarist tyrant or for a “more efficient Stauffenberg”. **Schmoll, T.** 2022. „Gibt es einen Brutus in Russland“ [*Is there a Brutus in Russia*]. – ntv.de, published on 1 April. <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Gibt-es-einen-Brutus-in-Russland--article23240969.html>. Others call upon Putin to kill himself, following the example of the warlord of a war of aggression, Adolf Hitler.

²⁰ **Ivašov, L. G.** 2000. *Rossiya i mir v novom tysyachiletii. Geopoliticheskie problemy* [*Russia and the World in the New Millenium. Geopolitical Problems*]. Moscow.

²¹ **Galeotti, M.** 2022: Anti-War Broadside Highlights Nationalist Critique of Putin. – The Moscow Times, published on 7 February. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/02/07/anti-war-broadside-highlights-nationalist-critique-of-putin-a76280>; **Schmidt, F.** 2022. Alte Kämpfen gegen Putin [*Old Fighters against Putin*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 10 February, p. 4.

²² **Gudkov, L.** 2022. Phasen der Gewöhnung. Russlands Krieg im Meinungsbild [*Phases of Habituation. Russia's War in Public Opinion*]. – Osteuropa 72, Heft 4–5, pp. 29–43, 34–36, 43.

The second scenario is not entirely out of the question. Nevertheless, replacing Putin as president will hardly change the Putinist system of rule. Presently, it remains unclear, probably even in the Kremlin, who could be Putin's successor.²³ Let us therefore call him Bezputina (*without Putin*). Even a Bezputina can, at best, bring about a withdrawal of troops to the line of contact created in Minsk, but in no case could it mean abandoning Crimea and Sevastopol.

For now, Putin is expected to remain in power, which means that peace, in the sense of ending the war, can only be established with Putin, not without or against him. However, it will probably take time before the West, and particularly Ukraine, consider this a possibility, let alone a necessity.

3. Causes of Russia's war against Ukraine since 2014

As for the rationale behind Putin's and the Russian leadership's decision to launch the war of aggression in February 2022, one can only speculate. It can be assumed that the government does not believe in its own propagandistic claim that drug-addicted neo-Nazis have gained power in Kyiv. This only serves to justify their war of aggression and sell it as an anti-fascist defence to the Russian population with deeply rooted convictions stemming from memories of their defence in the 'Great Patriotic War' against the Nazi aggression from 1941–1945 and the collaboration of many Ukrainians with the Nazis.²⁴ This, however, neglects the facts that most Ukrainians, communists or not, fought for the Soviet Union.

It is always necessary to distinguish propaganda from ideology, or the body of thought which ideologues themselves actually believe.²⁵ Vladimir Putin's realm of ideas has been studied in detail for years. He himself has repeatedly presented his view of history and the conclusions to be drawn

²³ **Weimer, W.** 2022. Das Kriegs-Quintett: Das sind die engsten Vertrauten Putins [*The War-Quintett: These are Putin's Confidants*]. – Web.de/Magazine, published on 19 March. <https://web.de/magazine/politik/russland-krieg-ukraine/kriegs-quintett-fuenf-engsten-vertrauten-putins-36704504>; **Gallyamov, A.** 2022. Time to think about a successor. – Russia Post, published on 18 July. <https://www.russiapost.info/politics/successor>.

²⁴ **Kasianov, G.** 2022. Ukrainian Nazis as an invented enemy. – Russia, published on 8 June. https://www.russiapost.info/politics/ukrainian_nazis_as_an_invented_enemy.

²⁵ In my opinion, the insights gained from the intense study of Soviet ideology and propaganda are still relevant today: **Jahn, E.** 1986. Der Einfluß der Ideologie auf die sowjetische Außen- und Rüstungspolitik [*The Influence of Ideology on Soviet Foreign and Armament Policy*]. – Osteuropa 36, Hefte 5, 6, and 7, pp. 356–374, 447–461, 509–521.

from it politically. His ideas became particularly clear in his article from July 2021.²⁶ His account certainly also contains propagandistic elements, a deliberate falsification of history, but it can be assumed that the main features of his published view of history are believed by him to be true and represent his orientation in decision-making. There is no indication that Putin regrets the demise of communist rule. In his frequently quoted statement to the Duma on 25 April 2005, that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century,”²⁷ he was mourning not the Soviet Union, but rather the “thousand-year-old Russian Empire”.

He considered the Soviet Union, or a union of national republics in its historical form, to be a disastrous misconception of Lenin. Ukraine, too, was a creation constructed by the Bolsheviks.²⁸ The border of Ukraine, as well as of the other national republics, had all been arbitrarily established by the Bolsheviks, which is certainly true in some cases. In the constitution of 1924, as in Stalin’s constitution of 1936, it was even stated that all national republics were sovereign and had the right to leave the union. Obviously, Putin deliberately conceals the fact – one cannot credit him with ignorance in this matter – that there was already a powerful Ukrainian national movement in the 19th century which attempted to create a Ukrainian nation-state after the February Revolution²⁹ and before the Bolsheviks succeeded in creating the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Soviet Union was not understood as the successor state of the Russian Empire, but as the centre of a global union of national republics.³⁰ The slogan “Proletarians and oppressed peoples of the world – unite!” aptly expressed this Leninist objective. As for tactical political considerations and social-revolutionary aspects in the struggle against imperialism of great and powerful peoples, especially the Russians, Lenin and the Bolsheviks created national republics to link the national-revolutionary aspirations of many peoples. A mere transformation of the Russian czarist empire into a single Russian communist empire would have been unfeasible.

²⁶ See **Putin** 2021 (Anm. 7).

²⁷ **Schuller, K.** 2013. Im Osten nichts Neues [*All Quiet on the Eastern Front*]. – Internationale Politik, Heft 2. <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/im-osten-nichts-neues>.

²⁸ **Putin** 2021 (see note 7), p. 57.

²⁹ **Kappeler, A.** 2022. Der lange Weg zur Unabhängigkeit [*The long path to Independence*]. – Die ZEIT, published on 10 March, p. 19.

³⁰ This continues to be widely overlooked, see **Goodman, E. R.** 1960. *The Soviet Design of a World State*. New York/ London: Columbia U.P., and **Jahn, E.** 2012. *Die Außenpolitik Russlands [Russia’s Foreign Policy]*. – Staack, Michael (Hg.). *Einführung in die Internationale Politik [Introduction to International Politics]*. 5. Aufl., München: Oldenbourg, pp. 275–277 (pp. 269–305).

As for Putin's opinion, Stalin is viewed in a much more positive light than Lenin for five reasons: (1) Due to the failure of the 'global revolution', Stalin faced the consequences and established socialism in one country, largely on the territory of the former Russian Empire. He thus replaced Lenin's universal internationalism with a new vision of Russian greatness based on the tradition of the czarist empire. (2) This went hand-in-hand with the policy of linguistic-cultural Russification oriented towards non-Russian nationalities, practiced since the 1930s. (3) By transforming the Communist Party into a single tightly centralised and dictatorial party, he undermined the federalist state constitution. Putin, following this model, also undermined federalism soon after assuming the office, despite it being foreseen in the constitution of the "Russian Federation". This disempowered the federal subjects (i.e. the constituent states). Furthermore, the Putinist Party "United Russia" is also a united state-wide and autocratic party. (4) Stalin is celebrated as the primary victor in the Great Patriotic War against German Nazism, a tradition that Putin claims to follow against the alleged Ukrainian Nazism. (5) Stalin reconquered large territories of the czarist empire that had been lost after 1917: the Baltic states, eastern Poland, Bessarabia. In addition, he also annexed northeastern Prussia, Carpatho-Ukraine, and southern Kuria, which have never belonged to the Russian empire. Only Finland could not be taken back. Putin recalled Finland's membership in the Russian Empire in connection with the warning that, just as Sweden, Finland should also refrain from joining NATO. A spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs threatened with "retaliatory measures" and "serious military and political consequences" if Sweden and especially Finland ever became NATO members.³¹ These threats were repeated by Dmitry Medvedev, the former Russian president, prime minister, and current vice secretary of the Russian Security Council, when the heads of governments of the Nordic states publicly contemplated such a move.³²

³¹ **Naumann, F.** 2022. Schweden und Finnland im Nato-Dilemma: Kreml droht offen mit 'Vergeltung' [*Sweden and Finland in NATO-dilemma: The Kremlin openly threatens with 'Retaliation'*]. – Merkur.de, published on 17 March. <https://www.merkur.de/politik/grenze-ukraine-konflikt-schweden-finnland-russland-nato-beitritt-gotland-aktuell-91409040.html>. See also: **Ålander, M.; Paul, M.** 2022. Moskau bedroht die Balance im hohen Norden [*Moscow is threatening the Balance in the high North*]. – SWP-Aktuell A 19. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/moskau-bedroht-die-balance-im-hohen-norden>.

³² **til/dpa/Reuters** 2020. Medwedew droht Nato im Fall von Aufnahme Schwedens und Finnlands [*Medvedev threatens NATO in the case of Sweden's and Finland's acceptance*]. – Der Spiegel Ausland, published on 14 April. <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/dmitrij-medwedew-droht-nato-im-falle-von-aufnahme-schwedens-und-finnlands-a-1495e71a-6cba-42cd-867e-027c74dd456c>.

Ideologically, Putin does not derive much from Bolshevik Communism and the Soviet Union, but rather primarily draws influence from the religious, Russian-orthodox-based czarism of the thousand-year-old Holy Russian Empire. The ideas that shaped him³³ were not Marxist-Leninist but rather staunch critics of Soviet power, such as Ivan A. Ilyin (1883–1954),³⁴ Vladimir S. Soloviev (1874–1948),³⁵ Nikolai A. Berdyayev (1874–1948),³⁶ and Aleksandr Dugin (b. 1962).³⁷ Thus, his ideas are not rooted in Soviet nostalgia, as often assumed in the West, but in Russian imperial and clerical nationalism for which Putin successfully maintains a strong grip on the head and large swaths of the orthodox clergy.³⁸ The consequences of this, however, is that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which has been autonomous since 1992 while still remaining under the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, has largely emancipated itself and is moving closer towards an autocephalous ‘Orthodox Church of Ukraine.’³⁹

³³ **Assheuer, T.** 2022. In Putins Weltbild ist Russland ein Reich des Widerstands gegen den Westen. Das zeigen auch seine bizarren Lektüren [*In Putin's World View, Russia is an Empire of Resistance against the West. This is also shown by his bizarre Lectures*]. – Die ZEIT, published on 2 March, p. 59. Assheuer draws on a thorough study of Putin's thinking: **Eltschaninoff, M.** 2016. In Putins Kopf. Die Philosophie eines lupenreinen Demokraten. Updated new edition 2022 under the title: In Putins Kopf. Logik und Willkür eines Autokraten [*In Putin's Head: Logic and Arbitrariness of an Autocrat*]. Stuttgart: Cotta-Tropen.

³⁴ **Iljin, I.** 2016. Wesen und Eigenart der russischen Kultur. Drei Betrachtungen [*The Essence and Peculiarity of Russian Culture. Three Observations*]. Wachtendonk: Edition Hagia Sophia; **Iljin, I.** 1956. Nashi zadachi (Our Tasks). Paris 1956. New editions: Jordanville 1991, Moscow: Ozon 2014.

³⁵ **Solowjew, W.** 1976. Die Rechtfertigung des Guten. Eine Moralphilosophie [*The Justification of Good. A Moral Philosophy*]. München: Erich Wewel Verlag.

³⁶ **Berdyayev, N.** 2015. The Philosophy of Inequality: Letters to my Contemners, Concerning Social Philosophy. Frsj Publications (Original edition: *Filosofiyaa neravenstva. Pis'ma k nedrugam po sotsialnoi filosofii*, Berlin 1923); **Berdjajew, N.** 2018. Das Schicksal Russlands. Versuche über die Psychologie des Krieges und der Nationalität [*Russia's Fate. Experiments on the Psychology of War and Nationality*]. Baden-Baden: Academia Verlag; **Berdjajew, N.** 1957. Wahrheit und Lüge des Kommunismus [*The Truth and the Lie of Communism*]. Baden-Baden: Holle.

³⁷ **Thumann, M.** 2022. Wer ist Alexander Dugin? [*Who is Alexander Dugin?*]. – Die ZEIT, published on 25 August, p. 6.

³⁸ **Pollack, D.** 2022. Der heilige Krieg des Patriarchen [*The Patriarch's Holy War*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 14 March, p. 11; **Flogaus, R.** 2022. Die Propaganda des Patriarchen [*The Propaganda of the Patriarch*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 3 August, p. 12. Generally, in regard to the church, see **Bremer, T.** 2016. Diffuses Konzept. Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche und die ‚Russische Welt‘ [*Diffuse Concept. The Russian Orthodox Church and the "Russian World"*]. – Osteuropa 66, Heft 3, pp. 3–18.

³⁹ **Mitrokhin, N.** 2022. Endgültig zerbombt. Die Scheidung der Ukrainischen Orthodoxen Kirche von der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche [*Bombed to Pieces for Once and for All: Between The divorce oder separation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Russian Orthodox Church*]. – Osteuropa 72, Heft 4–5, pp.79–98.

The unity of the great Russian people, to which Putin also includes ‘little’ Russians (Ukrainians) and ‘white’ Russians (Belarusians), is not only based on state history or ethnic-linguistic commonalities for him, but also religiously based on orthodoxy.⁴⁰ After all, the last czar, Nikolai II, who was murdered by communists, was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in the year 2000. The late Stalin had already known how to use the Orthodox Church in the Second World War, launched by the Soviet Union in alliance with the Third Reich as a war of aggression against Poland and Finland. A year later, the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states and Bessarabia followed without a fight, and eventually, the country was forced into a defensive position against Hitler’s Germany in 1941. Stalin and the CPSU were far more important and powerful collaborators with German Nazism between 1939–1941 than the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) could have ever been in 1942–1943.

The West long avoided reacting to Russia’s threats toward Finland, a country that had belonged to the Russian empire until 1917, and towards Sweden, threatened by Russian generals who spoke publicly of occupying the Swedish island of Gotland.⁴¹ NATO confined itself to repeated assurances that it would defend every inch of all member states’ territory, including the Baltic states and Poland. Within this context, there have never been any discussions around the potential of a nuclear escalation.

In the unlikely event of Russian aggression against one of the two Nordic states, the West would undoubtedly make known that outside of the North Atlantic Treaty, the UN Charter warrants all sovereign states territorial integrity, the right to militarily defend itself and, according to Article 51, to join other states in their defence.⁴² Article 51 has already been invoked once when Kuwait successfully requested military assistance from numerous states, including the United States and Great Britain, after the attempted Iraqi conquest under Saddam Hussein in 1991. Without a public statement, NATO made it very clear, even before the end of 2021, that it makes a fundamental distinction between Finland’s neutrality and Ukraine’s neutrality and is not prepared

⁴⁰ **Putin** 2021 (see note 7), p. 52.

⁴¹ **Gutschker, T.; Wyssuwa, M.** 2020. Auf der Überholspur? Wie Schweden und Finnland in die NATO kommen könnten [*In the Passing Lane? How Sweden and Finland could join NATO*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 19 March, p. 10.

⁴² Art. 51 of the Charter of the United Nations: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self/defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member State of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain International Peace and Security...”; **Kappeler, A.** 2022. Kleine Geschichte der Ukraine [*A small History of Ukraine*], 8. Aufl., München: Beck.

to provide military assistance to the latter under Article 51 of the UN Charter. This is due to the realistic understanding that Russia is much more interested in preventing Ukraine's complete Western-democratic migration than in revising Finland's allegiance to it. The military alignment of the two Nordic countries and NATO has already been underway for years.

This seeming double standard from NATO can be easily explained by the different historical, political, and psychological situations in the two neutral countries. The Nordics have been considered part of the democratic West for decades. On the other hand, NATO sees Ukraine as a country that has only recently begun to break away from the post-Soviet and post-Russian orbit of the Commonwealth of Independent States, once named the Community of Russia-Dependent States by Marianna Butenschön. Though perhaps unspoken, there were more understandable reasons as to why Russia was granted a much more dominant influence over Ukraine than over Finland or Sweden. This, of course, did not grant Russia the right to militarily intervene or restrict Ukraine's freedom to seek an alliance of its own choice. Nevertheless, Ukraine arguably does not enjoy the same right to collective defence as Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, or Ireland. Thus, one of the central factors of the war is still the unclear boundary in the systems conflict between autocracy and democracy.

Many western authors see NATO's eastward expansion since 1999 as a central reason for Putin's change of heart since taking office in 2000 and, consequentially, also for the war in Ukraine. Apart from the limited validity of the argument that NATO "promised" not to expand eastwardly in February 1990 – neither Hans-Dietrich Genscher nor James Baker could have made such a legally-binding "promise" at the time⁴³ – Russia did accept NATO's

⁴³ **Creuzberger, S.** 2015. Die Legende vom Wortbruch. Russland, der Westen und die NATO-Osterweiterung [*The Legend of Breach of Promise. Russia, the West, and the NATO Enlargement to the East*]. – Osteuropa 65, Heft 3, pp. 95–108. See also: **Goldgeier, J.** 2016. Promises made, promises broken? What Yeltsin was told about NATO in 1993 and why it matters. – War on the Rocks. <https://warontherocks.com/2016/07/promises-made-promises-broken-what-yeltsin-was-told-about-nato-in-1993-and-why-it-matters/>; **Adomeit, H.** 2022. Die Nato habe versprochen, sich nicht nach Osten auszudehnen, sagt Putin – stimmt das? [*NATO promised not to expand to the east, says Putin – is that true?*]. – Neue Zürcher Zeitung, published on 20 February. <https://www.nzz.ch/international/hat-die-nato-bei-der-osterweiterung-gegenueber-russland-gelogen-ld.1669445?reduced=true>. For an early critique of the Eastern NATO-Enlargement in Russia and the West, see: **Westphalen, A.** 2018. Nato-Osterweiterung: ‚Das ist eine brillante Idee! Ein Geniestreich! [*NATO enlargement to the East: ‘This is a brilliant idea! A stroke of genius!’*]. – Telepolis, published on 16 May. <https://www.heise.de/tp/features/Nato-Osterweiterung-Das-ist-eine-brillante-Idee-Ein-Geniestreich-4009027.html?seite=all>.

eastward expansion by signing the NATO-Russia Founding Act of May 1997. At the same time, Russia became a member of the NATO-Russia Council which was meant to establish a closer cooperation between the two sides. President Clinton had even proposed NATO membership to Boris Yeltsin, but he rejected it.⁴⁴ In 1990, the only issue discussed was that neither NATO's troops nor nuclear weapons would be stationed in the territory of the former GDR. At the time, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were still indisputably members of the Warsaw Pact and not a single Western politician was thinking of the dissolution of the USSR.

The West has undoubtedly contributed to the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West with many of its actions. These include Western intervention in the civil war of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; the recognition of Kosovo under international law by most NATO and EU states in February 2008; NATO's offer to Georgia and Ukraine to join the alliance in Bucharest in April 2008 (not followed by any practical steps due to objections from France and Germany);⁴⁵ the United States' toleration of Georgia's aggression against Russian positions in South Ossetia after Russian provocations which resulted in a temporary occupation of large parts of Georgia by Russian troops and Russian recognition of South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence; the unlawful extension of the UN-authorized no-fly zone in Libya in 2011 by some NATO members to overthrow the Gaddafi regime; the installation of a missile defence system in Romania in 2016; and, finally, Western political and moral support for the Maidan coup in Ukraine in February 2014. The eastward expansion of democracy since 1989 in post-communist Europe,

⁴⁴ **Kornelius, S.** 2014. NATO und Russland. Szenen einer Ehe [*NATO and Russia. Scenes of a Marriage*]. – Süddeutsche Zeitung, published on 6 September. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/nato-und-russland-szenen-einer-ehe-1.2116164-0>; **Kornelius, S.** 2022. Wer hat Russland verloren? [*Who did Russia lose?*]. – Süddeutsche Zeitung, published on 5/6 March, p. 7; **Schmidt, H-J.** 2022. Vom Scheitern der Bündniskooperation mit Russland. Am 27. Mai wird die NATO-Russland-Grundakte 25 Jahre alt [*On the Failure of Alliance Cooperation with Russia. On 27 May, the NATO-Russia Founding Act will turn 25 years old*]. – PRIF Blog. <https://blog.prif.org/2022/05/24/vom-scheitern-der-buendniskooperation-mit-russland-am-27-mai-wird-die-nato-russland-grundakte-25-jahre-alt/>.

⁴⁵ Recently, it has been claimed that Ukraine's accession to NATO soon after 2008 would have prevented the current war in Ukraine, since the nuclear deterrent would have prevented Russia from launching a war of aggression against Ukraine as a NATO member (see interview with Michail Khodorovski and Thomas de Maizière: *Muss der Westen mitkämpfen? [Does the West need to fight?]*. – Die ZEIT, published on 31 March, p. 10). The argument neglects the fact that at that time, a large majority of Ukrainians was still opposed to joining NATO and voted, once again, for Viktor Yanukovich and the Party of Regions, which was linked to Russia, in the 2010 presidential elections.

which by all means was politically, economically, and propagandistically pursued by the West, was first and foremost a consequence of an autonomous political change in the hearts and minds of millions of people and the deficit of economic, political, and moral influence from Moscow's increasingly autocratic regime. Even though none of this can justify Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it still partially explains the war.

The decisive factor was undoubtedly that Putin and his entire regime in Russia felt threatened by the democratic movements⁴⁶ in Ukraine, South Caucasus, Arab countries, Belarus, and in Russia itself – and rightfully so. However, these movements were never a military nor any other type of threat to Russia's unity or sovereignty. The West long supported Gorbachev's efforts to preserve the unity of the Soviet Union and distanced itself from various national movements, especially in Russia under Boris Yeltsin, to dissolve the USSR. The West also showed great sympathy for Moscow's military intervention to prevent Chechen's succession, even though some did (carefully) criticise the brutality of Moscow's warfare.

It remains a mystery as to why it was not enough for Putin to assume that NATO would not accept a new member which had territories illegally occupied by Russia. Due to the current state of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, there was no real danger of them becoming members of NATO. An alternative to the autocratic grip on power can only be the political pursuit of economic modernisation and openness to world markets, following the example of China's communists. A pragmatic Western peace policy should not stand in the way of such developments. Putin's attempt to "make Russia great again" by waging a large-scale war of conquest is bound for failure.

4. The possibility of a changed "frozen conflict" in Eastern Ukraine

There is little to suggest that either warring party will achieve full victory. Neither Russia nor Ukraine seems capable of accomplishing their territorial goals: subduing and occupying all of Ukraine, or regaining all territorial losses including all of the Donbas, Crimea, and Sevastopol. Small territorial gains by one or the other warring party are constantly changing the course of war

⁴⁶ "Putin hat keine Angst vor der NATO... Er hat Angst vor der Demokratie" [*Putin is not scared of NATO... he is scared of Democracy*], stated Marc Polymeropolos, a former CIA employee. See: **Wetzel, H.** 2022. Wusste ich's doch [*I knew it*]. – Süddeutsche Zeitung, published on 22 March, p. 3.

along the frontline but these have been neither significant nor permanently in Russia's or Ukraine's favour. This all speaks to a protracted war lasting many more months, if not years. Even if the West were to arm Ukraine to the point that it can attack the two Donbas "People's Republics", Crimea, and Sevastopol, Ukraine would have to be prepared to reintegrate hundreds of thousands or even millions of people who still wish that Russian annexation would remain. Hundreds of thousands would presumably flee to Russia. Moreover, Russia would probably use tactical nuclear weapons in this case, and justify it with the need to defend its essential security interests. Whether or not the West is ready for a nuclear retaliation, it is likely to become a formidable political and moral challenge. A Russian-instigated disaster at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which would be attributed to Ukraine in Russian propaganda, would be an elaborate plan to cause nuclear devastation in Ukraine at the cost of radiation casualties among Russian troops. It would not prompt the West to militarily intervene. A nuclear catastrophe, however, is also possible as the result of a chain of several individual missteps without concrete malicious intent regarding the Ukrainian nuclear power plant.

In the event of a long war, there will be hundreds of thousands of casualties, just as in Syria and many other places after 1945. Only if Putin changes his mind or there is a change of power in Moscow – and if Ukraine becomes exhausted from the suffering and will, therefore, be ready to prioritise ending the war over regaining all territory – will there be a ceasefire along the south-eastern front. Such a ceasefire will likely not be negotiated by France or Germany due to their role as strong supporters of Ukraine. Other countries, such as Israel or India, may be more likely to mediate. Presumably, a ceasefire will not be the precursor to a peace treaty that legally fixes the military demarcation line as the new border between Russia and Ukraine. The outcome of the Korean War with a restoration of the pre-aggression border could become a model for the outcome of the war in Ukraine. Thus, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is likely to reach a freezing point just as many other conflicts, for example, in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Cyprus, Korea, China, etc. The best-case scenario would be a ceasefire that lasts for decades.

It will be extraordinarily difficult in both Ukraine and Russia to enforce a ceasefire that effectively divides Ukraine. It can only be domestically enforced once large portions of both countries' populations have grown weary of war. However, national extremists in both countries will interpret a ceasefire along any line that does not fit their own interests as high treason. This will be followed by threats against any politician who agreed to a *de facto* division of the country, even if the legal claim over all of Ukraine persists. This suggests that

only right-wing or national-conservative politicians in both countries will be able to domestically legitimise and enforce a ceasefire. Regarding political developments in Ukraine, it is important that a failure to achieve absolute victory and restoration of full territorial integrity will not be tied to insufficient Western military support (particularly the supply of heavy weaponry, including tanks, artillery, and aircraft). If this were the case, it would foster anti-democratic, autocratic, and nationalist positions in Ukraine. In Russia, even more extreme right-wing political positions could be brought to the forefront after the era defined by a failure Putin comes to be. These actors would advocate for even more radical and openly imperial great-power claims à la Aleksandr Dugin, particularly since by this point, most of liberal Putin critics will have already emigrated to all corners of the globe.

With the growing importance of arms deliveries and economic aid to Ukraine, the political responsibility of NATO and EU members in either continuing or ending the war is increasing.⁴⁷ At the same time, the public opinion in countries such as Hungary and Italy push the governments in the direction of supporting a ceasefire and a territorial compromise with Russia, while in other countries such as Poland and the Baltic states, public opinion encourages a sustained support for the Ukrainian war effort. It would be fatal for Western governments to publicly promote political goals in the war that are either harsher or more moderate than Ukraine's own. This would strengthen anti-democratic, radical nationalist, and anti-Western tendencies in Ukraine. The West must take many factors into account and, as a trustworthy partner, push the Ukrainian government and military leadership to eventually favour a ceasefire rather than a continuation of the war. These factors include Western socioeconomic interests, the domestic consequences of the war, the decisions surrounding the scope and nature of further arms supplies, their own assessment of the situation on the front as well as assessments from the viewpoint of global economic and political affairs. An estrangement in the trusted cooperation between the Ukrainian and Western governments would have fatal consequences not only for Ukraine but, above all, for the cohesion and global political position of the EU and NATO member states and for both organisations as a whole.

A stable ceasefire is, therefore, dependent on the ability of national-conservative politicians to successfully sell their own narratives of relative success.

⁴⁷ See the controversy between Peter Dausend ("The Dogma that only Ukraine should decide is wrong") and Simone Brunner ("Germany in particular should rein itself in when it comes to advice"). – Die ZEIT, published on 11 August 2022, p. 10.

They should leave the door open for either opposing goal to be realised in the future, meaning either a Western-oriented, liberal, and democratic Ukraine or Ukraine with close ties to Russia and its Putinist-autocratic regime. The political goal for achieving peace must be to convince both sides that their own goals can only be achieved by peaceful and diplomatic means. The ceasefire could be stabilised with a United Nations peacekeeping mission of soldiers and civilians, especially from countries like India that abstained from voting against the war in Ukraine. They would have to ensure that there are no continuous military incidents along the ceasefire line, unlike between 2014 and 2022 or, for example, along the post-1994 ceasefire line between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In any case, one can see that this war, since 2014 but even more so since 2022, has forged a strong Ukrainian nation out of a previously politically divided Ukrainian population, oriented either towards the West or the East. By now, most ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers in Ukraine have turned their backs on Putin's Russia and only a few million are willing to welcome or even tolerate a Russian annexation of their homeland. Thus, a significant depopulation of the Russian-occupied territories is to be expected. The war is likely to turn the Russians left in Ukraine into patriotic Russo-Ukrainians. This is also due to the fact that during their advance in eastern Ukraine, Russian troops were also killing, injuring and forcing to fight the people who previously identified as Russians and sympathised with Russia. This portion of the Ukrainian population is primarily located in the east, namely in the regions acting as a stage for particularly intense battles. Though the war has certainly strengthened the anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine, not only amongst nationalists but also more broadly,⁴⁸ it is still conceivable and to be desired that a new Ukrainian national identity that develops out of this war experience is one that appreciates the large share of ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers in Ukraine (to which Zelenskyy belongs to) and one with a more tolerant language policy towards Russian-speakers that counteracts any war-induced tendencies towards Russophobia. Ukraine's language policy, while not having yet been violently repressive of its citizens' use of Russian has certainly been somewhat discriminatory and hurtful.

⁴⁸ See the harsh example **Rafejenko, W.** 2022. Die Sprache Z. Warum ich nie wieder ein Wort Russisch schreiben werde [*The Language Z. Why I will never write a word in Russian again*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 9 August, p. 11; **Kissel, W.** 2022. Puschkin im Dienst von Putin [*Pushkin on Duty for Putin*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 11 July, p. 13.

5. Weaving a new iron curtain between autocracies and democracies

After the collapse of the single-party communist rule in Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the reforms of the communist rule in China towards autocratic state-capitalism, it was widely assumed in the West that in the midst of economic prosperity and the emergence of a flourishing middle class, democratic tendencies would begin to take hold in post-communist societies. Accordingly, these were integrated into the capitalist world economics and its international organisations, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Those that took democratisation seriously – though often with difficulty – aspired to become members of NATO and the EU. Russia was admitted into the circle of leading Western economies, the Group of Seven (G7), the Partnership for Peace, and the NATO-Russia Council. However, disastrous economic policies led to discrediting the liberal democracy as a system of chaos and impoverishment so much so that since 1993, new autocratic tendencies have predominated political developments. While Mikhail Gorbachev aimed to bring the Soviet Union into NATO, his successors began to view NATO and the spread of democracy as a threat to the non- or even anti-democratic Russia. China, North Korea, and Cuba did not even entertain the idea of democratisation and instead, with currently the only exception of North Korea, followed a path of post-communist autocracy. The post-communist state-capitalism that has emerged in Russia and China since the 1990s, dominated by state-owned enterprises existing alongside numerous private enterprises, differs in many respects from the neoliberal capitalism of the democratic countries but is still largely integrated into the global capitalist economy.

The existing autocracies of the world are not firmly bound together by any common political ideology but rather by their common opposition to democracy, their influence, and activities of state- and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which could undermine autocracy. In this respect, there are certainly some serious disagreements amongst the autocracies of the world, all of which have their own strong right-wing national patriotic ideology.

International alliances, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO, established in 2003),⁴⁹ the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU,

⁴⁹ Members include Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan. The precursor was the Collective Security Treaty, which Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan were also a part of until 1999, the later again being a member between 2006 and 2012.

established in January 2015),⁵⁰ and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO, established in 2001) also reinforce commonalities amongst autocratic states, including some weakening democracies such as Pakistan and India.⁵¹ While international alliances of democracies such as NATO and the EU include some states with autocratic tendencies, such as Turkey, Hungary, and Poland, their governments can still be replaced one day in elections. The election of an opposition that could peacefully re-democratise their respective country remains a possibility despite said oppositions' parties suffering from political repression and systemic disadvantages. Though differences exist between categories of countries being unequivocally democratic, democratic with autocratic tendencies, and autocratic with democratic left-overs, the contrast between democracies and autocracies still plays a highly significant role in international politics. Tactical democratic alliances with certain types of autocracies (particularly with traditional absolute monarchies as opposed to modern post-communist and Islamist systems) or other alliances between autocracies and weak democracies have both reinforced antagonism in the competition of systems between democracies and autocracies in recent years. For several years now, this has been intensified in East Asia due to the growth and spread of the Chinese navy in the South China Sea, China's military threats against Taiwan, the increasingly rigid and repressive domestic policies in China, particularly in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, and the buildup of a counterbalance including the United States, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia, and, to an extent, India. Russia's war against Ukraine is a pursuit to push the border between democratic and autocratic systems back further to the west after the previous eastward expansion. An awareness of the fact that the conflict of systems between democracies and autocracies is one of global dimensions can be seen in the fact that democracies in East Asia and Oceania, such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, also support the democratisation of Ukraine.

Out of all the world's autocracies, only a few refused to condemn Russia's aggression in the United Nations General Assembly on 2 March 2022, namely, in addition to Russia, Belarus, Syria, North Korea, and Eritrea. 34

⁵⁰ Members include Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan.

⁵¹ Members include China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan. They represent forty percent of the world's population. Belarus, Iran, Afghanistan, and Mongolia have observer status.

autocracies and weak democracies abstained, and 141 states supported it.⁵² Thirteen countries did not participate in the vote. A new vote on 23 February 2023 produced almost the same result.⁵³ It is likely that the democracies in East Asia and Oceania are on the same side as the EU and NATO in the war in Ukraine because they hope that the EU and the U.S. support them in their ongoing conflict with the expansion of Chinese economic and military power. The globalisation of the economy, media, and communication structures is unmistakably a part of the globalisation of the new conflict of systems between democracies and autocracies. An important consequence of the war in Ukraine has been that democracies have begun to reduce their dependence on goods and services from autocracies, just as autocracies have begun to do the other way around, both without completely removing global economic interdependence. As opposed to the rather one-sided dependence that has existed until now, both sides will strive to establish mutual dependency on one another. This will be done in moderation in order to allow for autarky if wartime economy becomes necessary. Far more emphasis will be placed on preventing the export of potentially militarily relevant technologies. Thus, in many small steps, a new ‘Iron Curtain’ is emerging, mutually shielding democracies and autocracies from one another.

6. Outline for a new order of peace and international security structure after ending the war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine, as the policies surrounding it, have been presented and analysed numerous times, but what kind of proposals based on a policy of peace have come out of this? A ceasefire agreement will presumably substitute

⁵² **Demircan, O.** 2022. Putins letzte Freunde – Diese Länder dulden oder unterstützen den Angriffskrieg [*Putin's last friends: These countries tolerate or support the war of aggression*]. – Handelsblatt, published 8 March. <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/ukraine-krieg-putins-letzte-freunde-diese-laender-dulden-oder-unterstuetzen-den-angriffskrieg/28117542.html>; **Focus** 2022. Abstimmung über Kriegsresolution. 4 Russland-Freunde, 34 Enthalter. Das sind die Abweichler [*Vote on the war resolution. 4 Friends of Russia, 34 abstainees. These are the deviators*]. – Focus online, published on 4 March. https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-krise/abstimmung-ueber-kriegsresolution-4-russen-freunde-34-enthaltungen-diese-un-laender-weichen-von-resolution-ab_id_61864292.html.

⁵³ Only Nicaragua and Mali joined the states who votes with “no”. See: **Spiegel** 2023. UNO-Vollversammlung fordert Russlands Rückzug aus der Ukraine [*UN General Assembly demands Russia's withdrawal from Ukraine*]. – Spiegel Ausland, published on 24 February. <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/uno-vollversammlung-fordert-russlands-rueckzug-aus-der-ukraine-a-09ca85e8-e37c-4d08-8ca7-2bf5c0415956>.

a wholesale victory for both the aggressor and of the defender but will have to be sold as a success of each sides' war efforts. Given the continuous antagonism of incompatible political systems throughout the world, proposals for a new European peace order and international security structure can only seek peaceful coexistence between democracies and autocracies. This is conceivable on the basis of the existing United Nations Charter, which is unlikely to undergo any substantial reform in the coming decades. Its core is the recognition of territorial sovereignty, integrity of states, and the right of self-determination of each nationality. This does not exclude considerations of security interests of neighbouring states. Finland, for example, as Austria, committed itself to neutrality after 1945 and thus responded to the interests of the USSR. Yugoslavia, too, decided in favour of non-alignment not only out of self-interest but also for the interests of great powers.

Despite the enormous increase in support for Finnish and Swedish membership in NATO, it would have been more favourable in terms of peace policy if these countries had not taken such a step because it strengthens Russia's determination to expand further into the post-Soviet space (with the exception of the Baltic states). Both countries applied for accession on 18 May and their applications were, after some initial objections by Turkey, adopted by NATO in Madrid on 29 June; the applications still need to be ratified by the member states.⁵⁴ In most cases, this happens quickly.⁵⁵ Sweden and Finland's non-membership did not change the fact that they, along with NATO, were carefully preparing their militaries for the possibility of Russian aggression and had made clear that they would ask NATO for assistance in case of such an event. NATO could have simply stated that it would provide military assistance to the neutral countries if asked to do so, even without a treaty obligation. The only, though very important, difference would have been that NATO troops could not be stationed in either country during peacetime. (This, however, is not planned for the time being, even after NATO's accession.) NATO's rapid intervention forces could have minimised this disadvantage. Nevertheless, the deterrent effect of such an arrangement would have been enormous. After all, in the foreseeable future, NATO troops will

⁵⁴ Köhne, G. et al. 2022. Schweden und Finnland auf dem Weg in die NATO [*Sweden and Finland on the way into NATO*]. – Deutschlandfunk, published on 8 July. <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/schweden-finnland-nato-beitritt-100.html>.

⁵⁵ The Turkish president agreed to the accession of Finland in mid-May 2023, but rejected Sweden due to their Kurdish policy. Furthermore, Hungary's approval of both Nordic countries joining is still pending.

not be stationed in the new member states. For the Baltic states, the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO has the enormous advantage of considerably improving their geostrategic position in the Baltic Sea.

After a ceasefire, the United Nations and the West could urge Russia and Ukraine to commit to only change the agreed-upon demarcation through peaceful and diplomatic means in accordance with the principles of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. This would be particularly difficult for Ukraine to stomach because it would likely have to carry on without the occupied and annexed territories for (at least) several decades. Moreover, it is uncertain whether or not the population remaining in Crimea or the extended territories in the occupied Donbas would be willing to return their territory to Ukraine. This is because many of the residents who felt a connection to Ukraine have already left their homes since 2014. Throughout the course of the invasion in 2022, they were joined by hundreds of thousands, if not millions of more residents. It will probably take decades for the Ukrainian national consciousness to adapt to the dramatically different national-territorial situation and to realise that the peaceful reclamation of territories where only a minority wishes to return to the Ukrainian state is impossible.

It would help defuse the conflict if Ukraine was willing to extend its existing neutrality to perpetual neutrality, i.e. armed neutrality based on the Swiss model (which President Zelenskyy has occasionally hinted at but would require approval by the parliament and an amendment to the constitution which currently stipulates the NATO membership) in the event that Ukraine's territorial integrity is restored. In this case, too, NATO could commit itself to providing military assistance to Ukraine in the event of a renewed attack, as it would easily do for neutral Western states. Ukraine could make this proposal even more attractive to Russia by leasing the city and port of Sevastopol for an indefinite period, along the lines of Guantanamo in Cuba to the U.S. or Akrotiri and Dekelia in Cyprus to Britain. Crimea and Sevastopol were largely separate territories before 2014 and remain so today within the Russian Federation. Ukraine had initially leased Sevastopol to Russia until 2017. Thanks to the election of Viktor Yanukovich in 2010, this was extended until 2042. President Putin, however, thinks in terms of longer historical strides and reasonably speculated that the lease would not be renewed after 2042 if Ukraine were to be firmly linked to the West. The political decision to annex the territory in 2014 was not so much about Crimea, though its annexation was popular amongst the vast majority of Russia's population,

but about Sevastopol as a cornerstone of Russia's position as a great power. Ukraine could certainly take this into account.

However, it is to be feared that Putin is not at all primarily concerned with preventing NATO's eastward expansion into Ukraine, but with Russia's westward expansion to the point of considerably increasing the country's demographic, economic, and military potential. If Ukraine were to be partitioned after a ceasefire in the next few months (hopefully not years) and Russian troops were to remain stationed in southeastern Ukraine for a long time, then after a period of reconsidering and understanding the changing realities of power, Ukraine would have what is called the 'Adenauer Option'. This would allot Ukraine its own free (but smaller) provisional state, constitutionally establishing the claim to reunify with the Russian-occupied zone, and then joining the EU and NATO. This would provide a clear military line of division between allied autocracies in Eastern Europe and the Western democracies.

Moldova's fate largely depends on the course of the war in Ukraine. Should Russia be able to conquer all of southern Ukraine, it will probably annex Transnistria.⁵⁶ All of Moldova will possibly be occupied by Russia since this small country could hardly resist militarily. NATO has so far shown no willingness to assist Moldova militarily and is unlikely to change this stance. In this case, Russia's sphere of political power would extend to the Prut River. On Romania's eastern border, this new Iron Curtain would run from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Thus, Moldova can only save itself as an independent state through a strict policy of neutrality, in the worst case accepting the effective loss of Transnistria, which does not have a long historical connection to Moldova.

It is therefore not yet possible to predict whether the new Iron Curtain will fall on the Prut, Dniester, Dnipro, or in the vicinity of the Donets. After a few years of getting used to Europe's new military and security order, a policy of détente could then be initiated that would stabilise the opposing system. From a democratic point of view, the conditions for a *perestroika* of the Putinist system remain in place which and one day democratise Russia, Belarus, and southeastern Ukraine. South Caucasus could retain a non-aligned status until then, regardless of domestic political developments in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia – with or without a massive Russian interference. In China, too, the communist party's autocracy need not last forever.

⁵⁶ Transnistria already formally applied for admission into the Russian Federation in 2014.

A new policy of *détente* following the end of the war in Ukraine would mean a resumption and intensification of arms control, partial disarmament, and military confidence-building measures that began in the pre-war era. The development of economic relations across systems that would allow for a moderate economic interdependence would also be conducive to maintaining peace. Above all, it would be important to not only declare but also execute a renunciation of massive political or even military interference in crises in the opposing political system of other countries, i.e. refusal to externally force a regime change. At the same time, Western democracies will continue to sympathise with and show legal, political, and moral support to democratic developments in autocracies, just as Eastern autocracies will continue their efforts to undermine democracies. An international systems' conflict cannot be abolished but it can be steered into civilised and war-avoiding territory.

7. The helplessness of the global peace movement

The global peace movement, primarily organised in the West, is conspicuously at a loss as to how to act amidst Russian aggression. Many demonstrations calling for peace are being held, urging Russia to end its war of aggression and withdraw its troops, but leaving open to which territorial extent.⁵⁷ These demonstrations have far fewer participants than those that took place in reaction to American aggression against North Vietnam or Iraq. Even during the Western bombing of Yugoslavia, far more people took to the streets than at present. The lack of published thorough written statements and analyses on the situation is particularly striking. Apart from a handful of initiatives to support Russian deserters trying to reach the West, one observes little more than political pleas.

Above all, the peace movement criticises NATO countries and other neutral states for using the war in Ukraine as an excuse for large-scale rearmament. Parts of the movement disapprove of the Western arms supply to Ukraine as it prolongs the war and thus, in effect, sustains Russia's policy of conquest. Some even call on Ukraine to surrender in order to end the immense bloodshed.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ **Reden und Kundgebungsbeiträge der Ostermärsche 2022** [Speeches and contributions to the Easter rally of 2022]. – Friedenskooperative.de. <https://www.friedenskooperative.de/ostermarsch-2022/reden>.

⁵⁸ **Sawicki, R.** 2022. Zur Ethik und Moral im Ukrainekrieg [*On ethics and morals in the war in Ukraine*]. – Watson, published on 30 March. <https://politik.watson.de/international/die%20andere%20perspektive/440856125-ukraine-krieg-kapitulation-eine-frage-von-ethik-und-moral-im-krieg>.

The war in Ukraine should be an occasion to elaborate the fundamental difference between pacifism and non-violent resistance or non-violent politics. Conventional pacifism primarily opposes armament,⁵⁹ service in armed groups, and the glorification of success in war or militaristic mindsets. During a war, it advocates for a rapid peace agreement, usually meaning the restoration of the political and territorial status quo ante.

Non-violent policies,⁶⁰ on the other hand, primarily oppose the existing systematic injustice rather than armament or the military per se. Advocates of non-violent politics do indeed reject the personal use of violence and also campaign for others to behave in the same way, but they know that, as a general rule, almost everyone understands that some things are more important than peace, namely freedom, whatever may be understood by that. They do not want peace, but a peace in accordance with their own definition. In this respect, supporters of non-violent policies are forced to distinguish between some wars and other wars, depending on whether or not violence was used for a just or unjust cause. Thus, they are not going against war and armament per se, nor even against serving in the military. Mohandas K. Gandhi, for example, while personally always rejecting military service and the use of force himself (and recommending others to do likewise) still made the distinction between those who use force for a just cause and those who fight for an unjust cause.⁶¹ This prompted him, on several occasions, to volunteer for military service as a medic for the warring side fighting for what he considered to be a just cause, while at the same time, of course, providing care and humane treatment to the wounded of the other warring party. He even described the military resistance of the Poles against the German aggression as “almost non-violent”.

⁵⁹ See, for example, the statement on the Ukraine war from 3 March, by **Ohne Rüstung Leben** 2022: Militarisierung darf keine Antwort auf Putins Krieg sein [*Militarization must not be the answer to Putin's War*]. https://www.ohne-ruetzung-leben.de/fileadmin/user_upload/startseite/2022/2022-03-03-Stellungnahme-ORL-Ukraine-Krieg.pdf.

⁶⁰ **Jahn, E.** 2019. Historische Singularität oder universale Bedeutung der gewaltfreien Politik Mohandas K. Gandhis [*Historical Singularity or Universal Significance of Mohandas K. Gandhi's Non-Violent Politics*]. – Politische Streitfragen, Bd. 5: Krieg und Kompromiss zwischen Staaten und Nationen. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 111–132.

⁶¹ The priority of freedom and justice over peace is also aptly emphasised by Vladimir Klitschko, albeit in favour of a defence war: “The absolute good is not peace, but freedom and justice. To defend them, one must fight”, see: **Klitschko, W.** 2022. Wir werden nicht kapitulieren [*We will not capitulate*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 4 May, p. 13. Gandhi might agree with this, but at the same time he would say that he advocates for non-violent means and goals.

The vast majority of the Czechoslovak population chose not to resist the invading Soviet forces in 1968 and carried out a week of extensive non-violent resistance, which was then continued by upstanding minorities for years until, two decades later, a vast majority non-violently overcame the communist system altogether. Ukrainians overwhelmingly chose armed resistance on 24 February 2022 at the cost of the deaths of tens of thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousands of their own. Advocates of non-violent policies should not only respect this decision but also support it by non-violent means.⁶² They should not express neutrality by rejecting arms supplies to Ukraine or proponents of violent defence. Instead, they should look more determinedly and intensively than others for feasible ways to end the war and to subsequently come to a peace settlement and reconciliation between Russians and Ukrainians. During the war, it is necessary to counter all hateful, revengeful, and retaliatory approaches, as well the riling up of collective nationalist attitudes. Ukrainian advocates of non-violence who refuse military service can take the opportunity to perform numerous auxiliary services for defending their country.⁶³ The international peace movement should urge Ukrainian authorities, if it is even necessary, not to vilify or punish⁶⁴ those who refuse to take up arms. Courageous Russian advocates of non-violence are protesting their government's policy of aggression and risk years of imprisonment and social ostracism in doing so.

⁶² Even during the war there have been impressive actions of non-violent resistance, for example in the temporarily occupied city of Kherson, see: **Stadtman, U.** 2022. Alternative Verteidigung. Soziale Verteidigung in militärisch eroberten Städten [*Alternative Defense. Civilian defense in military occupied cities*]. – Bund für Soziale Verteidigung. Rundbrief 1/2022, pp. 3–4. This will possibly continue after the end of the war.

⁶³ **Wintersteiner, W.** 2022. Der unterschätzte Widerstand – Gewaltfreie Aktionen in der Ukraine [*The underestimated resistance – non-violent actions in Ukraine*]. – Lebenshaus Schwäbische Alb. <https://www.lebenshaus-alb.de/magazin/014176.html>.

⁶⁴ It is unknown whether there is a significant number of Russian and Ukrainian conscientious objectors who do not want or cannot flee to the West. There also appears to be no information to date about how the Ukrainian and Russian authorities and the vast majority of the population is dealing with them.

8. Controversies over Germany's policies towards Ukraine and Russia

Germany is one of those Western countries where the domestic approach to helping Ukraine has been the subject of particularly heated debates since February 2022, albeit still in a mostly civilized manner. Germany hesitantly abandoned its decades-long conduct of not supplying weapons to areas of instability or war zones, and since then it has also been sending increasingly heavy weapons to Ukraine in addition to considerable economic and humanitarian aid; this has been done cautiously but in accord with the U.S. and other NATO allies. Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke in his State of the Union Address on 27 February of a historical turning point (*Zeitenwende*) which prompted Germany to invest 100 billion Euros into modernising its armed forces and to increase its defence budget to more than two percent of annual gross domestic product, and to do so permanently. Previously, all parties in the German Bundestag had been reluctant to spend more than 1.5%.⁶⁵ After this, a debate began over Germany's Russia-policy and, in particular, over accepting such a high level of dependence on Russian energy (particularly gas) supplies. This was all done under the faulty assumption that Russia would pursue a long-lasting and peaceful policy in accordance with international law, and with the pursuit to take Russia's security interests into account in the ceasefire negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. With regard to the past, some authors have emphasised the aforementioned contribution of the West in the escalation of the Ukrainian war by disregarding Russian security interests, despite the fact that Moscow is holding primary responsibility for the aggression and for violating international law. Others stress that Germany's policy of détente and cooperation regarding Russia is naive and blind to reality, especially that of the SPD, but also of Merkel's CDU which resulted in Germany's high dependence on Russia and neglecting the Bundeswehr. This will not be discussed here in detail.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ **Die Bundesregierung** 2022. Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Scholz am 27. Februar 2022 [*Government Declaration from Chancellor Scholz from 27 February, 2022*]. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/regierungserklaerung-von-bundeskanzler-olaf-scholz-am-27-februar-2022-2008356>.

⁶⁶ A few indications should be enough, for example: **Winkler, H. A.** 2022. Als die SPD konservativ wurde. Die Sozialdemokraten müssen ihre Ostpolitik aufarbeiten [*When the SPD became conservative. The Social Democrats need to process their 'Ostpolitik'*]. – Der Spiegel, published on 11 June, pp. 42–45; **Amann, M. et al.** 2022. Schmerzhaftes Aufklärung [*Painful Reckoning*]. – Der Spiegel, published on 23 April, pp. 13–17; **Garbe, S.; Knobbe, M.** 2022. Schwerwiegendes

While a large majority of German citizens has supported the governing SPD, Greens, and FDP parties (with the approval of the CDU/CSU) in sending massive military, financial, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, there are, however, also important liberal and conservative figures who are calling for a policy of compromise towards Russia. Not to mention the pro-Putin policies of the right-wing AfD (10.1% of votes in the 2021 federal election) and the socialist party *Die Linke* (5.0% of the vote). Several collective open letters from numerous prominent intellectuals, including journalists, scientists, artists, writers, actors, former politicians, and military specialists have called on the German chancellor and his government either to stop supplying arms to Ukraine and to immediately negotiate a ceasefire with Russia or, on the contrary, to intensify the arms supply and sustainably support Ukraine's defensive efforts. A general consensus, however, was the unanimous condemnation of Russia's aggression. The open letters have prompted numerous individual statements, both pro and contra arguments, and their demands.

One of the first open letters by Daniela Dahn and others from 22 April called for a halt to the arms supply because they would prolong the war and the bloodshed and make Germany and other NATO countries de facto warring parties. This, they stated, threatens to escalate the war in Ukraine into another world war. The West should encourage the Ukrainian government to end military resistance and initiate negotiations on a rapid withdrawal of Russian troops.⁶⁷

The open letter from Alice Schwarzer and others to Chancellor Scholz a week later caused more of a stir and outrage, and soon had hundreds of signatories. It also called to refrain from supplying Ukraine with arms, which turns Germany into a warring party. The war in Ukraine cannot escalate into a "nuclear conflict", as it was stated in the letter. Scholz, as the letter demands, should take the initiative for achieving a ceasefire with "a compromise that both sides can accept," although, in principle, there is a duty "not to retreat from aggressive violence without resistance." One should not, however, give the "original aggressor" a "motive to act in a possibly criminal manner,"

Versagen. Interview mit Norbert Röttgen [*Serious Failure. Interview with Norbert Röttgen*]. – Der Spiegel, published on 21 May, pp. 26–27; **Bittner, J.; Machowecz, M.** 2022. Wie falsch war Angela Merkels Außenpolitik? [*How Wrong was Angela Merkel's Foreign Policy?*]. – Die ZEIT, published on 30 June, pp. 10–11.

⁶⁷ **Dahn, D.** 2022. Offener Brief fordert von Scholz Stopp der Waffenlieferungen an die Ukraine [*Open Letter Demands Scholz to Stop Arms Deliveries to Ukraine*]. – Berliner Zeitung, published on 22 April. <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik-gesellschaft/offener-brief-fordert-von-scholz-stopp-der-waffenlieferungen-an-die-ukraine-li.223704>.

namely create a “nuclear conflict.” (Implicitly, the “original aggression” of the present war is therefore not regarded as a criminal offense – E. J.) The decision on the “moral responsibility of the further ‘cost’ of human lives amongst the Ukrainian civilian population does not fall “within the responsibility of the government.” (The primary responsibility of the Russian government for civilian casualties in Ukraine is not mentioned – E. J.) After all, “morally binding norms are universal in nature.”⁶⁸

This provoked another open letter from Ralf Fücks and others to the German Chancellor as a response to the Schwarzer letter a week later. He demanded rapid arms supply, including tanks and howitzers, which in the hands of the attacked were not offensive but rather defensive weapons. Russia’s “ability to wage war” must be “weakened to the maximum” in order to make possible negotiations of peace that do not surmount to “Ukraine’s submission to Russian demands”. It is in Germany’s interests to prevent Russia from achieving even partial success in its “war of aggression”, which is, at the same time, “an attack on European security”. Putin’s success increases the danger that “the next war will take place on NATO’s territory”. Moreover, he said, it would also “be a serious blow to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons” if Ukraine, which surrendered its nuclear weapons in exchange for international security guarantees, were to be brought to its knees by Russia, a nuclear power. The danger of nuclear war cannot be “banished by concessions to the Kremlin”.

Moreover, Russian leadership “does not fear the fictitious threat of NATO” but rather “the democratic awakening in its neighbourhood”. Defending Ukraine’s independence and freedom also matters to Germany in light of the particular suffering that Ukrainians went through as a result of the German war of extermination between 1941–1945. Ukraine is also fighting for German security “and the basic values of a free Europe”.⁶⁹

Almost two months later, a renewed collective appeal by Jakob Augstein and others was published, calling for an immediate ceasefire and negotiations. Ukraine had been able to defend itself so far “thanks to massive economic sanctions and military support” but it was becoming increasingly unclear what the war’s aims actually are. “A victory for Ukraine, including recapturing

⁶⁸ **Schwarzer, A. et al.** 2022. Offener Brief an Kanzler Scholz [*Open Letter to Chancellor Scholz*]. – Emma, published on 29 April. <https://www.emma.de/artikel/offener-brief-bundeskanzler-scholz-339463>.

⁶⁹ **Fücks, R. et al.** 2022. Sehr geehrter Herr Bundeskanzler [*Dearest Mr. Chancellor*]. – Die ZEIT, published on 5 May, p. 5.

all of the occupied territories, including the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and Crimea” is unrealistic, he said, because Russia is militarily superior and has the capacity for further military escalation. Allowing the war to continue would also cause a “massive humanitarian, economic, and environmental plight around the world”. High casualty rates and destabilisation of the global situation are “to be expected”. The West must urge the warring parties to find a “negotiated solution in a timely manner” to prevent further military escalation “to the point of using nuclear weapons”. However, there must be no “dictated peace by Putin”. The West must launch “a major diplomatic offensive” to pressure the warring parties into a ceasefire and peace negotiations.⁷⁰

Two more public statements followed in mid-July. The one by Jan Asmussen and others placed the war within a larger global political context and particularly pointed out that the war in Ukraine was the result of a resurgence of the great Russian imperialism “aimed at the military subjugation of neighbouring states and the destruction of Western societies, democratic political systems, and international institutions (NATO, EU).” It is, therefore, not only about a bilateral conflict, but also about the Western liberal order and security. A Western strategy should be one that goes beyond the immediate war. “China’s barely hidden sympathy for Russia’s position” indicated that democratic states are facing “an alliance of powerful authoritarian regimes”. For this reason, transatlantic relations must be intensified. Europe must “take on a greater role in deterring Russian military power because the U.S. is increasingly needed in the Indo-Pacific region”. Among other things, a “strict maintenance of Western sanctions” must limit the “resurgence of a threatening Russian military power” and give Ukraine a military position “from which it can conclude a ceasefire on acceptable terms”.⁷¹

The second public statement by Vera Ammer and 95 others who call themselves Eastern European experts mostly criticised the fact that, so far, most of the people who signed the open letters were “intellectuals and artists with little knowledge of Eastern Europe” and no prominent research on the region, Russia or Ukraine. In response to the call for “Ceasefire now!” they demanded “Heavy weaponry now!” However, many well-known Eastern Europe experts did not participate in this public statement, either. This statement took the problem with the open letter from Alice Schwarzer and others, and criticised,

⁷⁰ **Augstein, J. et al.** 2022. Ein Appell. Waffenstillstand jetzt! [*An Appeal. Ceasefire now!*]. – Die ZEIT, published on 30 June, p. 48.

⁷¹ **Asmussen, J. et al.** 2022. Putins Politik nicht belohnen [*Do not reward Putin’s policy*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 14 July, p. 8.

in detail, its non-compatibility with the Western policy of “restricting their containment of Russian expansionism” since 1991. The letter’s authors are accused of not being well-versed in contemporary post-Soviet history. They exaggerate the role of the Western arms supply and sanctions in defending Ukraine in the first four months of war and then give credence to a “creeping disarmament of Ukrainians”. Furthermore, the authors were unclear about their position regarding the “possibly genocidal implications of the tacitly conceded Ukrainian territorial cessions to Russia”. This public statement does not contain any original or new ideas or suggestions for dealing with the war in Ukraine, except for the slogan in its headline “Heavy weaponry now!” and the emphasis on “measures necessary to deter the Kremlin”.⁷²

The opposition to Germany’s supply of arms received a new impetus on 10 February 2023 when a Manifesto for Peace by Alice Schwarzer and Sahra Wagenknecht received numerous signatures (by mid-March 2023, there were over 750,000).⁷³ Ukraine, the authors state, cannot win a war “against the world’s largest nuclear power”. They also state that a nuclear war and a world war would be imminent in the event of a Ukrainian attack on Crimea. Therefore, Chancellor Scholz must stop the “escalation of the arms supply” and initiate a ceasefire and peace negotiations.

These seven public statements and open letters have provoked a multitude of sometimes heated commentaries throughout the media, emphasising either the need for a rapid ceasefire and willingness to compromise – in effect, Ukraine’s willingness to relinquish part of its territory⁷⁴ – or the need to intensify the supply of arms and maintain tough sanctions in order to give Ukraine a “victory” or a more favourable position for a ceasefire.⁷⁵ Inevitably,

⁷² **Ammer, V.** 2022: Schwere Waffen jetzt! [*Heavy Weaponry Now!*]. – Focus.de, published on 19 July. https://www.focus.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-krise/96-osteuropa-experten-weltweit-fordern-schwere-waffen-jetzt_id_119428660.html.

⁷³ **Schwarzer, A.; Wagenknecht, S.** 2023. Manifest für Frieden [*Manifest for Peace*]. – Change.org, published on 10 February. <https://www.change.org/p/manifest-f%C3%BCr-frieden>.

⁷⁴ **Bahnert, P.; Kilb, A.** 2022. Die Pflichten der Ukraine. Interview mit Reinhard Merkel [*The Duties of Ukraine. Interview with Reinhard Merkel*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 5 May, p. 13; **Munzinger, P.** 2022. Der Traum vom Frieden [*Dreaming of Peace*]. – Süddeutsche Zeitung, published on 7/8 May, p. 53; **Lohr, M.** 2022. ‚Waffen sorgen für noch mehr Opfer‘. Interview mit Werner Ruf [*Weapons cause even more victims. Interview with Werner Ruf*]. – Hessische/ Niedersächsische Allgemeine, published on 26 April, p. 2. <https://www.hna.de/kassel/waffen-sorgen-fuer-noch-mehr-opfer-91500991.html>.

⁷⁵ **Witte, G.** 2022. Für das Recht des Stärkeren [*For the Right of the Stronger*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 4 May, p. 9; **Fastovskij, V.** 2020. Wer Putin nachgibt, ist tot [*He who yields to Putin, is dead*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 4 May, p. 13;

the military balance of power of the two warring parties has been assessed quite differently. The former tends to see an insurmountable weakness in the Ukrainian armed forces, and the latter rather sees tendencies of weakening capabilities of the Russian military power and its fighting strength. But these individual opinions have not yet produced any significant or new argument that vastly differs from those presented in the seven texts mentioned above. In part, they are merely a distraction, leading, for example, to a debate about the mental-moral generational conflict after the German Chancellor's policy triggered Jürgen Habermas to publish an article.⁷⁶

A fundamental shortcoming of the open letters and public statements is that they are not based on an analysis of military conditions, number of victims among the Ukrainian and Russian populations, economic disruption or social despair under which Ukraine and Russia would develop an agreeable interest in a ceasefire. This, however, is important because nothing currently points to a victory for either of the warring parties in a sense that they can defeat all the other troops on the territory of Ukraine as is recognised under international law. On the contrary, many things point to a long-lasting war. For the time being, both warring parties relish in the idea that they could still make substantial territorial gains in the near future. Only when something of the likes of a military stalemate takes hold, in which neither side sees even the slightest potential for military success, will there be a willingness to negotiate on both sides. The West, on the other hand, should always remain ready to facilitate negotiations between Ukraine and Russia.

Many of the open letters and public statements unintentionally serve as intellectual-moral support to Russia's war policy by bringing the idea of an early Ukrainian capitulation to the forefront. However, they do not point out any path towards peace, which, according to the views presented here, cannot be achieved by a victorious peace but only as a compromise peace that

Witte, G. 2022. Widerstand ist zwecklos [*Resistance is pointless*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 5 July, p. 9; **Hanfeld, M.** 2022. Frieden mit Waffen [*Peace with Weapons*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 5 May, p. 13; **Encke, J.** 2022. Schluss mit dem Zynismus! Ein Gespräch mit Marina Weisband [*An End to the Cynacism! A conversation with Marina Wiesband*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, published on 10 July, p. 39; **Bonacker, T.; Gawrich, A.** 2022. Wann ist die Zeit reif? [*When is the time right?*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 15 July, p. 11.

⁷⁶ **Habermas, J.** 2022. Krieg und Empörung [*War and Outrage*]. – Süddeutsche Zeitung, published on 28 April. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/projekte/artikel/kultur/das-dilemma-des-westens-juergen-habermas-zum-krieg-in-der-ukraine-e068321/?reduced=true>; **Strauss, S.** 2022. Hart verteidigte Illusionen [*Staunchly defended illusions*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 30 April, p. 11.

provides the greatest possible stability and the longest possible ceasefire, but is unlikely in the form of an actual peace treaty.

The open letters addressing the German Chancellor are curiously narrow-minded and nationally focused, as if Germany's refusal alone to either continue or intensify supplying arms in the spring and mandate or intensify a complete suspension starting today would have any significant effect on the continuation of the war. In any case, Germany's unilateral action on this issue could cause a major rift in the EU and NATO and ruin Germany's position in the West. The open letters would have made sense only if they had been addressed to the leaders of NATO and other governments, as well as the public of all NATO countries.

The debate in the West about the war is partly poisoned by the use of inappropriate and unrealistic terms that favour an uncompromising policy. This includes calling Putin "crazy" or "Hitler" with whom negotiations cannot be conducted. This is despite the fact that the agreement from 22 July on Ukrainian and Russian grain and fertiliser exports show that Putin can be convinced to negotiate and compromise on things he interprets as being in Russia's interest. Unrealistic terms such as "fascism" that are used to describe the Putinist autocracy⁷⁷ only signal irreconciliation. Russia is not committing a systematic "genocide," i.e. partial or total systematic extermination of the Ukrainian population. In this respect, the expression "war of extermination" is also inappropriate. However, the Kremlin is enabling and concealing countless war crimes. Such crimes are also committed in far smaller numbers by Ukrainian soldiers. "Genocide" is also understood as the elimination or damage of the linguistic and cultural identity of a nation, but nevertheless, one should not describe the tendencies towards a Ukrainisation of Russia-speakers in Ukraine or a Russification in Russian-occupied territories as a two-way "genocide".

The success of Russia's fight in Ukraine does not specifically threaten the security of the Baltic states or Poland since an attack on these countries will inevitably lead to a war between Russia and NATO. The specific threat is to all other former Soviet republics, primarily Moldova and Georgia, *but not* the

⁷⁷ **Snyder, T.** 2022. Falsche Erinnerungen. Warum fällt es Deutschland so schwer, von einem faschistischen Russland zu sprechen [*Wrong Memories. Why is it so difficult for Germany to speak of a fascist Russia*]. – Der Spiegel, published on 28 May, pp. 52–54; **Schulze Wessel, M.** 2022. Faschismus? Genozid? Vernichtungskrieg? [*Fascism? Genocide? Genocidal War?*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 25 July, p. 6; **Altwegg, J.** 2022. Mutmaßungen über den Faschisten Putin [*Presumptions of Putin the Fascist*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 25 July, p. 13.

Baltic states. Ukraine is not defending the freedom and security of the EU or Europe, but only its own. In the foreseeable future, freedom in the EU will only be endangered by the possible destabilisation of democracy due to member states' inability to cope with economic challenges and domestic social upheaval caused by the Ukrainian war. However, the current pan-European peace order has been broken since Russia began its war of aggression in 2014, not only since 2022, and must be replaced as soon as possible by a new peace-keeping security structure.

9. Similarities and differences of the new systems conflict between autocracies and democracies, and the historical conflict between East and West from 1917 to 1991

In the West, Russia's war against Ukraine is increasingly understood not only as a war between two states, but between two political systems.⁷⁸ It has even been said that Ukraine is fighting for the freedom of Europe and the West, which is why NATO and the EU must support Ukraine with any means necessary except their own soldiers. However, this is an ideological exaggeration of the conflict. If Ukraine had capitulated at the end of February 2022 or decided to resist non-violently, the freedom of EU member states would have been no more seriously threatened than it was after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Nor would Russia's victory in Ukraine change anything about freedoms in NATO countries, except the motivation to increase their security expenditures. Nevertheless, the war is increasingly becoming part of an international systems conflict over disputed countries that do not yet clearly belong to one system or the other. Russia already understood the conflict as a conflict between great powers since the "colour revolutions" in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004, and especially since the "Maidan Coup" in 2014, since it insinuated that the U.S. had established a "neo-Nazi regime" in Kyiv and armed it against Russia through the CIA. Other NATO countries were also instrumentalised as vassals to do so, so much so that the "special operation" is about Russian defence against NATO's expansion.

While there is much talk of a new Cold War, and indeed mutual nuclear deterrence plays a major role in the new systems conflict, it is necessary to

⁷⁸ This view is shared by Viktor Jerofejew, "The longer the war lasts, the clearer it becomes that it is not a war of two countries, but of two worlds..." (Jerofejew, V. 2022. *Tod durch Hass-philosophie [Death by Philosophy of Hate]*. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 26 August, p. 9.

note that there are important differences compared to the historical East-West conflict between 1917–1991 that became a conflict between nuclear powers after 1949. Firstly, the East-West conflict was essentially a conflict between two socioeconomic, not only political, systems, in which the West included numerous capitalist autocracies in addition to the dominant capitalist democracies. The East consisted of communist autocracies that were almost completely economically isolated from the capitalist world market. Today, the core of the conflict is between capitalist democracies and neo-capitalist autocracies.

The West views the rapprochement between Russia and China with great concern. While China does not openly support Russia's expansionist policy, it does not criticise it either. But the massive armament, the significant expansion of the Chinese navy, China's policy of military expansion in the South China Sea, and the repeated threats to forcefully unite Taiwan with the mainland in the event of a formal independence policy strengthen the relationship between the North Atlantic and East Asian democracies. Several security agreements between the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Japan serve this purpose, such as the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)⁷⁹ between the U.S., Australia, and Japan from January 2022 to facilitate joint manoeuvres, the Security Treaty between the U.S., Australia and the United Kingdom (AUCUS) from September 2021,⁸⁰ and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) between the United States, Australia, Japan, and India that advocates for a "free and open Indo-Pacific", i.e. against the idea that the South China Sea belongs to Chinese territorial⁸¹

⁷⁹ **Kölling, M.** 2022a. Japan, Australien und die USA rücken militärisch näher zusammen [*Japan, Australia and the USA are militarily moving closer together*]. – Neue Zürcher Zeitung, published on 10 January. <https://www.nzz.ch/international/die-usa-japan-und-australien-ruecken-militaerisch-zusammen-ld.1663807>; **Kölling, M.** 2022b. Japan und Australien stärken Militärkooperation – und legen so den Grundstein für ein weiteres Bündnis [*Japan and Australia strengthen Military Cooperation – and are laying the foundation for another alliance*]. – Handelsblatt, published on 10 January. <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/geopolitik-japan-und-australien-staerken-militaerkooperation-und-legen-so-den-grundstein-fuer-ein-weiteres-buendnis/27960528.html>.

⁸⁰ **Roggeveen, S.** 2021. Eine Frage des Interesses [*A Question of Interest*]. – IPG-Journal, published on 5 October. <https://www.ipg-journal.de/rubriken/aussen-und-sicherheitspolitik/artikel/eine-frage-des-interesses-5469/>.

⁸¹ On this topic, see **Jahn, E.** 2019. Inseln im Südchinesischen Meer als Konflikttherd für einen potentiellen Dritten Weltkrieg [*Islands in the South China Sea as Conflict Hotbed for a potential Third World War*]. – Politische Streitfragen, Bd. 5: Krieg und Kompromiss zwischen Staaten und Nationen. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 47–68.

waters.⁸² In the longer term, because of the continuing globalisation of economics and politics, it is conceivable that NATO could expand into a global security alliance which could be called the Democratic Treaty Organisation (DTO).

Due to its non-aligned policy and antagonism towards Pakistan, India had entered into closer relations with the Soviet Union in the 1950s and continued this relationship with Russia after 1991. Pakistan had been a member of the U.S. alliance against the communist states CENTO and SEATO which existed in 1955–1979 and 1954–1977, respectively. Pakistan was also important to the U.S. war efforts against Afghanistan between 2001–2014. As a result of India's ongoing conflict with China since 1962, with which Pakistan is allied, a cautious rapprochement between the United States and India took place. This process has been pushed further since the U.S. withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, because the U.S. is no longer so dependent on Pakistan. However, Hindu nationalist tendencies are undermining democracy in India, so it remains an open question whether India is more inclined to cooperate on the basis of commonalities with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or with the West in the long run.

The threat of a war between China and Taiwan, despite all the parallels often drawn to the threat of Ukraine's incorporation into Russia's area of control, is fundamentally different in two respects. Firstly, China has never recognised Taiwan's independence since 1949 and considers Taiwan a Chinese province. The United States and most members of the United Nations have also never recognised Taiwan as an independent state. In contrast, Russia had recognised Ukraine as an independent state in its borders since the end of the Soviet Union in several international treaties since 1991, therefore clearly breaking international law and violating the UN Charter with its war since 2014.

Secondly, the U.S. and NATO, in light of the deployment of Russian troops to Ukraine's borders, assured Ukraine on several occasions throughout the second half of 2021 that they would, under no circumstances, support Ukraine with their own armed forces in the event of Russian aggression. They stated that they would merely assist with economic and political sanctions. Meanwhile, on 21 October 2021, President Biden declared that the U.S. would

⁸² **Babst, A.** 2021. Die Quad will China entgegenreten, wenn auch nicht offiziell [*The Quad wants to counter China, even if not officially*]. – Neue Zürcher Zeitung, published on 14 March. <https://www.nzz.ch/international/asien-die-quad-gruppe-will-china-entgegenreten-ld.1606366?reduced=true>.

provide military assistance to Taiwan in the event of Chinese aggression,⁸³ although the U.S. neither recognises Taiwan as an independent state nor has it entered into a binding security treaty with Taiwan. This could have a certain deterring effect for the time being, at least as long as China is still militarily much weaker than the U.S. and future American presidents do not back away from the political security guarantee for Taiwan.

Conservative Republican and former national security advisor to President Donald Trump, John Bolton, accused President Biden and NATO of making a strategic mistake by declaring, months before Russia's aggression, that they would not stand by Ukraine under any circumstances, rather than using the effective deterrent of leaving their decision up in the air.⁸⁴ Indeed, these Western declarations acted as a *carte blanche* for Putin's aggressive plans as he felt he could handle the threatened sanctions. Under international law, NATO countries could have provided military assistance to Ukraine under Article 51 of the UN Charter, just as some of them did for Kuwait after Iraq's aggression against the small country in 1991. They did not do so because it seemed plausible that this could potentially escalate the war to a nuclear war. To be sure, a conventional war between nuclear powers need not escalate into a nuclear war, just as it did not in the case of the narrowly defined war between Pakistan and India in 1999. Despite the major powers' pre-1939 buildup of gas weapons, those weapons were not used in a protracted war causing millions of war deaths. But Putin's gesture that he is willing to deter using nuclear weapons increased the possibility of such a catastrophic development in the event of NATO's involvement in Ukraine's defence.

Undoubtedly, NATO would risk the escalation of a conventional war into a nuclear one if Russia were to launch an aggression against a Baltic country or Poland, as it has repeatedly made clear, and also if the aggression was aimed at Finland or Sweden.

What is the difference between Finland's neutrality and that of Ukraine, which has been a neutral state since 1991 (although it sought to join NATO after 2014)? The essential difference, although silent until the beginning of 2022, was that both Russia and NATO recognised both Finland's and Sweden's *de facto* membership in the West, but not of the eleven successor states of the

⁸³ Sattar, M. 2021. Biden: Würden Taiwan bei Angriff verteidigen [*Biden: We would defend Taiwan in an attack*]. – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published on 23 October, pp. 1, 2 and 8.

⁸⁴ Hano, J. 2022. Interview des Zweiten Deutschen Fernsehens mit John Bolton am 24. März [*Interview of the Second German Television with John Bolton on 24 March*]. <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/john-bolton-ukraine-krieg-trump-biden-putin-100.html>.

Soviet Union in Russia's neighbourhood. The Baltic states, on the other hand, belong to the West today, as do other former members of the Warsaw Pact, Albania, and the post-Yugoslav states. This means that the Yalta line, separating democracies from autocracies since 1945 has been shifted eastward from the Elbe River. How far it has moved depends on the point of view. There have been partial successes and partial failures in the "colour revolutions" in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia,⁸⁵ Belarus, and, to an extent, Russia. Putin's Russia is reacting out of political and economic impotence by intensifying internal repression, promising to assist Lukashenko, and expanding its military presence both westward and southward. Thus, Moldova, Georgia, and Belarus (if the Lukashenko regime was overthrown, which has become unlikely) as well as Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries have had to live with NATO's de facto military (not political or economic) *carte blanche* for Russia's aggressive policies until today. While the West constantly asserts that it does not recognise any spheres of influence that limit the rights of sovereign states to freely choose their alliances, its behaviour reveals a different mindset. There was never any doubt, for example, during the East-West conflict that the United States would not tolerate a communist party in Italy or Iceland coming to power in free elections and forming an alliance with the Soviet Union. Cuba's membership in the Warsaw Pact was, therefore, never seriously up for discussion.

Another essential difference between the new systems conflict and the historical East-West conflict is that the previous borders were clearly defined by the boundary between Soviet and Western troops at the time when the Third Reich and its allies surrendered. At least this was the case in Europe, if not in East Asia and the Third World. In contrast, the military boundaries between Russia's autocratic power sphere and the post-communist democracies have not been definitively determined for the time being. This substantially increases the threat of war in a zone of contested countries and requires differentiated deterrence mechanisms and a policy of *détente* of a completely new calibre.

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⁸⁵ Armenia, despite its strong democratisation tendencies, especially in 2018, is a special case as it relies on Russia's security guarantees due to its confrontation with Azerbaijan, supported by NATO and Turkey, over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.