

August 2022-

The Russia/Ukraine war. Russia is the invader, Ukraine is the defender. I am an amateur commentator, I am not a scholar. I rely on Scholars to help shape my views. I check and double check sources for background, biases etc. and will still make mistakes.

Putin and his spokespeople told everyone for months that the massing of troops around Ukraine was for exercises only. They were not going to invade Ukraine. "They are not a threat to any other country" <https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-crisis-putin-says-military-drills-purely-defensive-and-not-a-threat-as-western-leaders-warn-invasion-imminent-12545284>

John Pilger called it "war hysteria" to claim otherwise. <https://independentaustralia.net/politics/politics-display/john-pilger-war-in-europe-and-the-rise-of-raw-propaganda,16065>

This was echoed many times by many pundits. Even after the war started Putin calls it a "special operation", and if you call it a war in Russia you might be jailed for 15 years.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-introduce-jail-terms-spreading-fake-information-about-army-2022-03-04/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/4/russia-prison-media-law-fake-reports-ukraine-war>
<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-military-false-news/31737627.html>

Bernard Keane wrote about John Pilger after the invasion - <https://www.crikey.com.au/2022/03/03/vladimir-putin-john-pilger-ukraine-war/> "For veteran left-wing journalist John Pilger, Vladimir Putin is the innocent victim of Western aggression. It's par for the course in a world where the West is always evil."

The media in Russia general is under extreme pressure to the point of complete repression. No protests are allowed.

<https://theconversation.com/putins-russia-how-the-ex-kgb-strongman-has-gradually-turned-the-clock-back-to-soviet-repression-179127>

Putin's Russia invaded Ukraine.

If you say something like "I am against all wars..... but Putin had no choice", you are definitely not against all wars. You are a hypocrite. If someone can't cope with being called a hypocrite while they justify this war, what a weak thin skinned person they are.

Defending the Putin/Russia invasion/war against Ukraine is not a peaceful position, it is a defence of warmongering position.

If NATO had invaded Russia because they were fearful that Ukraine was going to be invaded, the peaceful position would be against that invasion/war against Russia because it would have been wrong. The irony is the truth of the invasion by Russia.

The John Mearsheimer position that the West caused the war due to NATO expansion is backed by many commentators, including Stephen F. Cohen back in 2015 (deceased 2020) and refuted by many others. I have not come across one dissident Russian who agrees with that position. It is a flawed position that ignores the fact that Putin is a professional liar. The only evidence that John Mearsheimer has presented is that Putin and his loyal officials have said it on a number of occasions. That is nonsense evidence if it is coming from a professional liar. Yevgenia Albats 2017 interview

Putin and his spokespeople have said many things about why they "had no choice" but to invade Ukraine. How would anyone know what was true from the man that is Putin?

Take the Poland experience <https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/poland-in-nato-20-years#:~:text=Since%201996%2C%20first%20as%20a,14%20missions%20and%20Allied%20operations.> It's been in NATO since 1999, and there were concerns from some about the effect it may have on Russia. <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/13/world/expanding-alliance-the-overview-poland-hungary-and-the-czechs-join-nato.html> - 23 years later John Mearsheimer basically says I told you so. He says Russia (Putin) sees the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO as an existential threat. What's the proof of this? Putin and his spokespeople's words, amongst their



other words like Ukraine is a natural part of Russia, it really does not have a right to be independent, it's full of Nazis, a theme that has been exaggerated in the State controlled media for a couple of decades at least. (everyone is a Nazi in Ukraine basically)

The actual threat from NATO for Russia is non-existent. Not because they don't get involved militarily around the world, but because they do not take on strong powers, especially nuclear powers. They never have and there is no sign that they ever would. The bigger NATO is the less likely that they will get involved, the bureaucratic decision-making process of coming to agreement for interventions is getting harder.

And now, what has the war against Ukraine by Russia achieved? More NATO membership from countries that were not that keen before, Finland and Sweden. If Putin is existentially fearful and therefore he had no choice but to invade, that's a big backfire isn't it.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finland-sweden-set-join-nato-soon-summer-times-2022-04-10/>

Thousands of Russians and Ukrainians are dying, including domestic and foreign journalists, cities are being destroyed, millions of refugees being created by a single man's decision.

Another interesting thing about Mearsheimer's views is that he believed that Ukraine should not have given up its nuclear weapons, to keep a deterrence in place. How does that fit in with the idea that NATO expansion is an existential threat to Russia? Nuclear weapons in Ukraine isn't an existential threat to Russia?

"Thousands of nuclear arms had been left on Ukrainian soil by Moscow after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. But in the years that followed, Ukraine made the decision to completely denuclearize.

In exchange, the U.S., the U.K. and Russia would guarantee Ukraine's security in a 1994 agreement known as the Budapest Memorandum.”

<https://www.npr.org/2022/02/21/1082124528/ukraine-russia-putin-invasion>

More disagreement with Mearsheimer - Alexander Motyl |Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University-Newark

31 October 2014.

The last part

“Mearsheimer thinks his solution would require a change in the West’s thinking about Ukraine. In reality, since the United States and its allies never had a “plan to westernize Ukraine,” there is nothing for them to abandon. Since “Western leaders” have comfortably coexisted with every Ukrainian administration, there is no reason to think that they would “support an anti-Russian regime” in Kyiv. Since Ukraine’s governments have always sought good relations with both Russia and the West—Mearsheimer’s ignorance of the fact that no Ukrainian government has ever been anti-Russian is shocking—Ukraine has been, is, and will be amenable to some form of neutral or non-bloc status, as long as its security is guaranteed. Ukrainians’ skepticism about any such status derives primarily from the fact that they believe, correctly, that Russia—and especially Putin—cannot be trusted. Since Putin tore up the Budapest Memorandum, it’s obvious to Ukrainians that no document could possibly suffice to provide security guarantees. Hence their current interest in NATO membership. Hence their belief that Ukraine must enhance its own armed forces as the only long-term guarantee of its security.

Mearsheimer’s plan requires little change in the West’s and Ukraine’s thinking. But it would require Putin to think differently and abandon the very predilection Mearsheimer pooh-poohs: his “long-standing desire to resuscitate the Soviet empire.” Whether or not Putin can do so will be the test of realism’s persuasiveness as a theory and the major challenge for the West’s ability to cope with Russian imperialism.”

<https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/the-ukraine-crisis-according-to-john-j-mearsheimer-impeccable-logic-wrong-facts/>

Previous wars involving the “West” are no justification for not condemning this war. They stand alone to be condemned, if they deserve to be condemned.

If you say you are against this war in a single statement, and spend 99% of your time giving reasons why this war is justified you are not a defender of peace, you are an enabler.

This war has no justification, it achieves nothing but disaster for Russia and Russians, Ukraine and Ukrainians. NATO will expand because of it, non NATO countries have extremely elevated fear of them being next to be invaded.

What can be done to help the dissident journalists from Russia who have been completely shut down.

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1523018579012055040>

The bizarre Russian security council meeting. I watched about an hour and a half of this 4 hour or so meeting. it was just a procession, one by one, 20 or so men, one woman, scrambling to say what Putin wanted them to say. One, Naryshkin, (1 minute 38 secs to 2 minutes 32 in the clip) faltered extremely badly and was put in his place. Most of them looked anything but comfortable. I’ve seen a similar clip from much earlier on in Putin’s presidency where he treated a bunch of oligarchs with such a menacing manner that it made me feel a sense of dread. I can’t find a link.

The Iraq war/invasion of 2003 by the US and the “coalition of the willing” I branded as a preemptive war, as many objectors did. If Putin’s reason for invading Ukraine is fear of being invaded/attacked by NATO, an existential threat, (I don’t think for a moment that’s true) it is also a preemptive war. I don’t know any preemptive war that I could justify.

If it’s about denazification, that is just BS. If it’s about some historical connection where Ukraine is just meant to be part of Russia, that is also BS, and historically inaccurate.

Timothy Snyder, a Russian/Soviet scholar is an interesting source for understanding so much of this. Many hours of enlightenment ahead if you search on YouTube.



I would also recommend watching all the Frontline PBS Putin docos and the full interviews especially with the dissident Russians. Mesha Gessen, Julia Ioffe etc.

And when the background of where all the Russian information is coming from we must consider the underlying system - theconversation.com/yes-putin-and-russia-are-fascist-a-political-scientist-shows-how-they-meet-the-textbook-definition-179063

Journalists can be captured. Who is captured this time - <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/08/1097097620/new-york-times-pulitzer-ukraine-walter-duranty>

Useful Idiot - The curious case of Max Blumenthal - Bruce Bawer - Max Blumenthal is a founder of the Grayzone <https://www.commentary.org/articles/bruce-bawer/useful-idiot19/>

an excerpt -

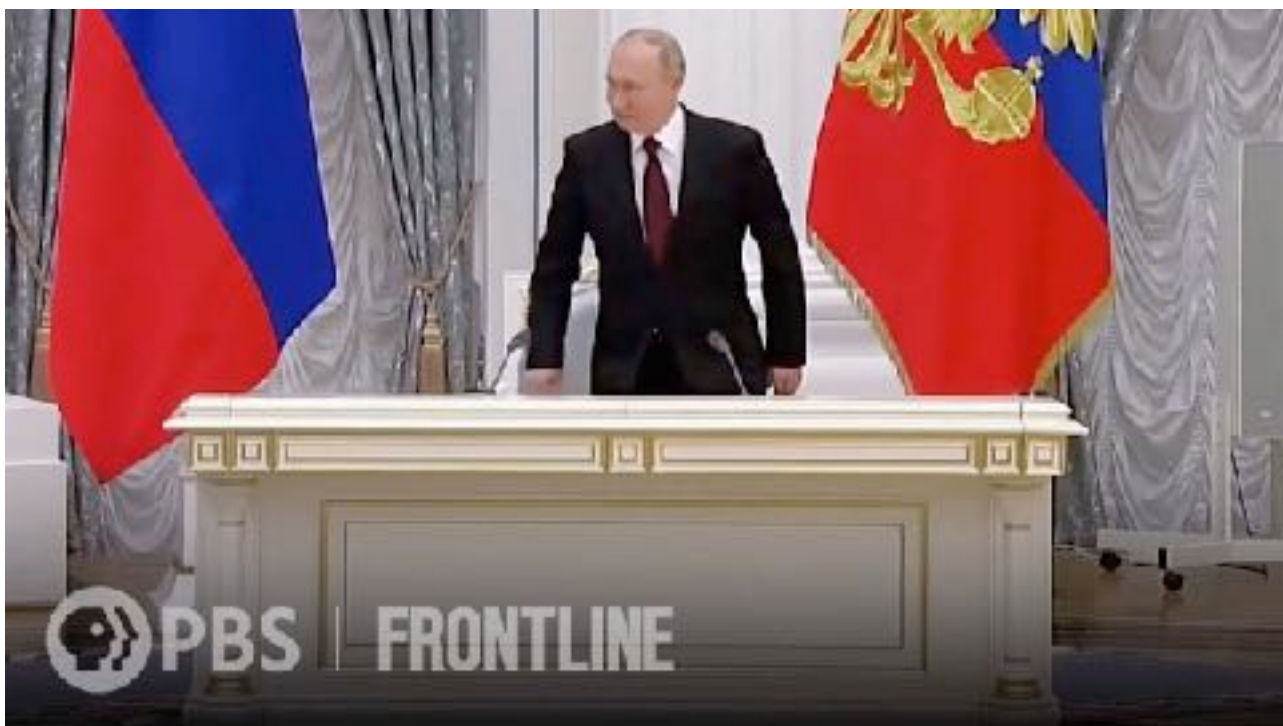
"In a column for the Nation headlined "The 'I-Hate-Israel' Handbook," Eric Alterman, himself a frequent and severe critic of the Jewish state, wrote that the book would "likely alienate anyone but the most fanatical anti-Zionist extremists." Goliath "could have been published by the Hamas Book-of-the-Month Club," Alterman said, while declaring that Max Blumenthal "shames all of us with his presence in our magazine."

Newsguard assessment of 'Commentary' - <https://api.newsguardtech.com/label/commentary.org?cid=ce6fd87c-1465-4980-8e18-cdef2cb9933e>

The website of Commentary, a conservative monthly magazine V 92.5 / 100 founded by the American Jewish Committee, whose editors helped found the neoconservative movement. This website mostly adheres to basic standards of credibility and transparency

My quick overview of 'Commentary.org' is that I doubt that I'd agree with much, but I am a bit of a glutton for reading things I don't agree with much. The Jewish connection is irrelevant to me, but I'm not a 'conservative'.

Bruce Bawer looks interesting though. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Bawer<https://>



www.thenation.com/article/archive/i-hate-israel-handbook/

An excerpt -

“Alas, his case against the Jewish state is so carelessly constructed, it will likely alienate anyone but the most fanatical anti-Zionist extremists, and hence do nothing to advance the interests of the occupation’s victims.”

<https://api.newsguardtech.com/label/thenation.com?cid=ce6fd87c-1465-4980-8e18-cdef2cb9933e>

The website for The Nation, a magazine founded by abolitionists in 1865 that provides reporting and commentary from a left-wing perspective.

5 92.5 / 100

This website mostly adheres to basic standards of credibility and transparency.

<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/the-nation/>

Bias Rating: LEFT

Factual Reporting: HIGH

Country: USA

Press Freedom Rank: MOSTLY FREE

Media Type: Magazine

Traffic/Popularity: Medium Traffic

MBFC Credibility Rating: HIGH CREDIBILITY

The Grayzone -

Questionable Source

Reasoning: Propaganda, Conspiracies, False Claims

Bias Rating: FAR LEFT

Factual Reporting: MIXED

Country: USA
Press Freedom Rating: MOSTLY FREE
Media Type: Website
Traffic/Popularity: Medium Traffic
MBFC Credibility Rating: LOW CREDIBILITY

<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/the-grayzone/>

And then there is Glenn Greenwald - "Obviously, when you look at a war that involves one country invading another, bombing it, shelling it, flattening buildings and neighborhoods, it's horrific to watch. And nobody that's a decent person would say, they're happy to see Russia do it, they think it's justified for Russia to invade, or anything like that."
And - "There's nothing that justifies an invasion of Ukraine the way that Russia did it."

<https://wisdomofcrowds.live/transcript-glenn-greenwald/>

Now, I have been selective, cherry picking, these two statements.

He also said "But it's still worth asking whether America and NATO expansion up to the Russian border, and then kind of insinuating that Ukraine, the most sensitive area of the Russian border, could actually become part of that NATO expansion, was provocative. It's something that for 20 years, not Noam Chomsky only, but US officials, very mainstream ones, including the current director of the CIA said would be highly provocative not just to Putin but to any Russian leader."

And this is an item of valid discussion. My conclusion is that it is all wrong. And that is expressed in my reaction to the John Mearsheimer doctrine.

The Putin mindset - We wondered at first, then the tv stations were taken over by the state, the anti corruption police were neutralised, the opposition figures were managed, controlled, jailed, fled, poisoned. Independent media shut down. Fearful Russians flee and Putin's reaction ""The Russian people will always be able to distinguish true patriots from scum and traitors and simply spit them out like a gnat that accidentally flew into their mouths," Putin said.

"I am convinced that such a natural and necessary cleansing of society will only strengthen our country, our solidarity, cohesion and readiness to respond to any challenges," he said in remarks that more broadly addressed Russia's efforts to counteract Western sanctions.

<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/17/1087287150/putins-warning-to-anti-war-russians-evokes-stalinist-purges>

The website for National Public Radio (NPR), the Washington-based producer of news programs distributed to over 1,000 public radio stations in the United States.

100 100

This website adheres to all nine of NewsGuard's standards of credibility and transparency.

<https://api.newsguardtech.com/label/npr.org?cid=ce6fd87c-1465-4980-8e18-cdef2cb9933e>

Bias Rating: LEFT-CENTER
Factual Reporting: HIGH
Country: USA
Press Freedom Rating: MOSTLY FREE
Media Type: Radio Station
Traffic/Popularity: High Traffic
MBFC Credibility Rating: HIGH CREDIBILITY
<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/npr/>

Noam Chomsky - The interviewer describes Chomsky's view thus "At the same time, our guest Noam Chomsky says that this was an act of aggression, state-sponsored act of aggression, that

belongs in the history books alongside the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, as well as the 1939 invasion of Poland by both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.”

<https://theintercept.com/2022/04/14/russia-ukraine-noam-chomsky-jeremy-scahill/>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov Warns Ukraine Against Provoking World War III
The Invader (the main provocateur) is trying to prevent provocation?

<https://time.com/6170616/russia-ukraine-world-war/>

The Russian ‘Troll Factory’ - <https://www.rferl.org/a/russian-troll-factory-hacking/31076160.html>

<https://theintercept.com/2022/03/09/russia-dissidents-ukraine-invasion-navalny/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/20/world/europe/navalny-poison-russia-kremlin.html>

<https://www.thebulwark.com/the-redpill-grifter-who-became-an-anti-ukraine-propagandist-gonzalo-lira/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gonzalo_Lira

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/gonzalo-lira-is-a-pro-putin-shill-in-ukraine-and-a-sleazy-manosphere-dating-coach>

The Atlantic - Harlan Ullman getting it so wrong on the invasion - Feb 16, 2022

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/why-putin-wont-invade-ukraine/>

With alarms sounding much like Paul Revere alerting the colonists in 1775 that the Red Coats were coming, the White House is warning that war in Ukraine is imminent. Should an attack not come, the White House and NATO will deservedly take credit for deterring conflict by taking the strongest possible diplomatic stands and remaining unified throughout this crisis.

However, another reason may have carried greater weight—one that so far has not been properly considered in the West.

Vladimir Putin faces a Ukrainian paradox he cannot resolve by unleashing his army on the former Soviet republic. By conflating three vital Russian national-security interests into four demands, Putin created internal contradictions and conflicts that will make a military intervention in Ukraine as disastrous for Russia as the invasion of Afghanistan was for the Soviet Union.

What does Putin want? A security framework in Europe favorable to Russia based on pre-1997 conditions, in which NATO agrees to cease all expansion and Ukraine remains well disposed to Moscow. Why, then, did he not say that and thus avoid antagonizing NATO and uniting it in powerful opposition?

Instead, Putin issued unacceptable demands, including a requirement that NATO reposition its forces and weapons systems away from eastern members of the Alliance who joined after 1997. He specified a legally binding, enforceable agreement that NATO will cease its “open door” policy and all further expansion. Putin also demanded that Ukraine never join NATO nor have nuclear weapons stationed on its territory

Had Putin looked closely at these demands, he would have found them riddled with enough contradictions to delight any confirmed Marxist or Leninist.

The demand for a pre-1997 security framework would significantly affect Russia as well. It had no forces in Ukraine or Georgia at that time. Would it withdraw its forces from those countries now? Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave on the Baltic Sea bordering Poland and Lithuania, would likewise be affected as Iskander and other more modern missile systems would have to go under the terms of Russia’s proposed treaty with NATO.

As for NATO, Putin, trained as a lawyer, knows that no legal agreement will guarantee NATO foregoing expansion. The litany of abrogated US-USSR-Russian Federation treaties drives this home. The Anti-Ballistic Missile, Open Skies, and Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaties are no longer in force. This pursuit of an unenforceable agreement is a contradiction. What is Putin’s solution? Someone should ask.

A backfiring invasion

In regard to Ukraine, Putin also knows that an armed attack or aggressive use of force will make any chance of his achieving both his priorities even less likely than landing an astronaut on the sun. He also knows that the costs to Russia and to him personally will be high and possibly unaffordable. Sanctions and further isolation will hurt.

Going to war, no matter the scope, or using cyber and influence operations to cripple Ukraine, will absolutely foreclose any chance for even part of Putin's demands being considered by NATO. The Alliance's response to a major attack will make the actions it took after Russia's 2014 Crimean annexation appear anemic. It will expand its military capability and the number of forces stationed in Europe—exactly the opposite of Putin's intent. NATO members will develop and deploy more advanced weapons, including new classes of missiles with low-yield nuclear warheads. NATO badly needs a new strategic framework (here, ironically, Putin is right for the wrong reasons). If war breaks out in Ukraine, the Alliance will certainly move to a new framework incorporating some of the actions mentioned above and announce it during the Madrid summit in June—another outcome Putin won't like one bit.

In an escalation, the West will impose sanctions more strictly and robustly than before. How much this will dent Russia's economy or Putin's inner circle is uncertain. But the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline will almost certainly be cancelled, denting Russia's energy sector. Whatever credibility Putin may have gained will be lost given the "big lie" of his assurances that force would not be used in Ukraine. Of course, Russia will have accused the West of provoking violence requiring an "appropriate response."

If a subsequent occupation of Ukraine were required, even of just a portion of the country, body bags could be flowing back to Russia. And what is Putin's exit strategy? No such plan following a Russian attack is obvious for Moscow other than a prolonged twenty-first century version of the Cold War, but one in which Moscow uses substantial force resulting in even greater isolation. And that could doom Putin's rule in a way similar to how Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev got fired two years after the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

An advantageous stalemate

The billion-ruble question is: How does this crisis end? Speculation over invasion scenarios has ranged from a massive, overwhelming air, sea, and land assault to a mix of cyber, special-forces, and influence-based non-kinetic operations. Should Putin not grasp the predicament he has imposed on himself, a limited move in the Donbas or seizing a land bridge into Crimea would seem to be the lowest-risk and lowest-cost option. He could then judge how NATO chooses to respond and wait. But Putin would almost certainly suffer the same consequences as if he took Kyiv and occupied much of the country.

Assuming there is no military action, Putin has two choices.

First, he can prolong the crisis and maintain the buildup on the Ukrainian border. That would be expensive and wear down his forces. Staying on constant alert takes a toll on people and pocketbooks.

Or Putin could terminate the exercise with Belarus on February 20 as scheduled, draw his troops back from the Ukrainian border, claim victory, and continue to push for negotiations—arguing that as the West wrongly predicted an attack, it continues to fail to recognize Russian security interests and needs.

Russia will no doubt continue political and psychological pressure on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to make concessions, either to accept the Minsk 2 agreement (despite its grant of semi-autonomy to the Donbas) or to suspend any request for NATO membership. And Russian "active measures," such as disinformation campaigns, will continue to target Ukraine with the aim of eroding Zelenskyy's standing and NATO solidarity by claiming "hysteria" over an invasion that never occurred.

This scenario suits Putin's interests far better than an uncertain military adventure, which is why he will choose it—and not because of anything uttered from a White House podium, no matter how much credit the administration will take for deterring a war.

Harlan Ullman is an Atlantic Council senior advisor and UPI's Arnaud deBorchgrave Distinguished Columnist. His latest book is *The Fifth Horseman and the New MAD: How Massive Attacks of Disruption Became the Looming Danger to a Divided Nature and the World at Large*.

John Roskam view in *Fin Review* - <https://www.afr.com/policy/foreign-affairs/ukraine-war-spells-the-end-of-the-golden-arches-peace-theory-20220302-p5a15h>

Everyone is a Nazi - <https://theparadise.ng/russian-state-tv-just-blew-up-putins-nazi-ukraine-bullshit/>

Canadian left wing apologists for Putin -

“It was provoked by NATO, the U.S. and even Canada sending lethal weapons,” wrote Woodsworth on Twitter, something espoused by Kremlin cretins and other Putin apologists to justify the invasion.

This viewpoint ignores that Putin’s obsession with Ukraine is an irredentist plot to ensure Russia’s historic sphere of influence does not slip away. It is why he invaded Georgia in 2008, and why he invaded Crimea in 2014. If Ukraine’s neutrality was somehow guaranteed, does anyone truly believe that would satisfy Putin, and that he wouldn’t seek to install a pro-Russian puppet regime, as in Belarus?

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/geoff-russ-no-love-like-first-love-for-canadas-left-wing-putin-apologists>

<https://api.newsguardtech.com/label/nationalpost.com?cid=ce6fd87c-1465-4980-8e18-cdef2cb9933e>

92.5/100

Conservative leaning opinions.

March 3 2014

Isaac Chotiner - pushback against Stephen Cohen

<https://newrepublic.com/article/116820/vladimir-putin-defended-american-leftist>

<https://api.newsguardtech.com/label/newrepublic.com?cid=ce6fd87c-1465-4980-8e18-cdef2cb9933e>

92.5/100

Liberal and occasionally contrarian - founded 2014

The ABC on Nazis in Russia and used by Putin

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-22/putins-fascists-russias-home-grown-neo-nazis/100927582>

from here

<https://theconversation.com/putins-fascists-the-russian-states-long-history-of-cultivating-homegrown-neo-nazis-178535>

A suggested way out -

[https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2022-05-24/how-build-putin-gilded-bridge-out-ukraine?](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2022-05-24/how-build-putin-gilded-bridge-out-ukraine?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_campaign=How%20to%20Make%20Biden%20Free%20World%20Strategy%20Work&utm_content=20220524&utm_term=FA%20Today%20-%20112017)

[utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_campaign=How%20to%20Make%20Biden%20Free%20World%20Strategy%20Work&utm_content=20220524&utm_term=FA%20Today%20-%20112017](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2022-05-24/how-build-putin-gilded-bridge-out-ukraine?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_campaign=How%20to%20Make%20Biden%20Free%20World%20Strategy%20Work&utm_content=20220524&utm_term=FA%20Today%20-%20112017)

Excerpt -

“The West, after all, doesn’t need to humiliate Russians to achieve its aims. Symbolic concessions will not stop the war from being widely seen as a defeat for Putin—including within Russia itself. Putin controls the Russian media, and he will declare victory no matter what happens. But Russians cannot forever be blinded to the stark costs of the invasion, and they will slowly come to realize that they have lost thousands of soldiers for no real gains. Russians will feel the massive economic damage wrought by global isolation, and they will be aware that the war pushed Finland and Sweden to join NATO. Indeed, there are already signs of mistrust within Russia about official narratives. After Ukraine sank the Russia Black Sea flagship Moskva, Moscow claimed that no Russians (or at most one) had died. The parents of missing sailors nonetheless expressed anger and grief.

If Ukraine ultimately emerges as a stable democracy, rebuilt with billions of dollars in foreign funds and frozen Russian assets, bonded together by narratives of a great patriotic war, then the country will stand as a living testament to Putin’s recklessness. Ukraine will be a beacon of freedom, and its heroic resistance may dissuade other countries from acts of aggression. And

memories of a failed war in Russia could spur doubts about the Kremlin's judgment that, in time, undermine Putin's regime—just as Afghanistan helped bring down the Soviet system."

Inside Putin's propaganda machine -
Masha Gessen - excerpt

"Before I dived into watching Russian propaganda, Lev Gudkov, an independent sociologist, told me that television rhetoric was based on "ascribing their own traits to the opponent." It really is that simple. Solovyov and his guests, along with the other news anchors, reporters, and hosts on Channel One and Russia One, sound like aggrieved kids on a playground: "No, you are the Nazi!"; "You are shelling residential neighborhoods!"; "You kill journalists!"; "You rape and kill civilians!"; "You are genocidal!" (I asked Solovyov and Simonyan for interviews; Solovyov didn't respond, and Simonyan used her Telegram channel, which has about three hundred thousand subscribers, to announce that she would not speak to me.)

The Yale historian Timothy Snyder has coined the term "schizo-fascism" to describe actual fascists who call their enemies "fascists." Snyder has said that the tactic follows Hitler's recommendation to tell a lie so big and outrageous that the psychic cost of resisting it is too high for most people—in the case of Ukraine, an autocrat wages a genocidal war against a democratic nation with a Jewish President, and calls the victims Nazis. The talking heads on Russian television regularly acknowledge the apparent absurdity of the situation they claim to describe. "The world has gone mad," Dmitry Drobnitsky, a political scientist, said on Solovyov's show, on April 29th. "Russians are Russophobic, and Jews are the worst anti-Semites." A few days later, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, in an interview on Italian television, repeated the same canard about anti-Semitic Jews, adding that Hitler was part-Jewish. Solovyov, who is Jewish, has referred to Zelensky as "a supposed Jew."

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-communications/inside-putins-propaganda-machine>

The Coup in the Kremlin - Nina Khrushcheva May 10 2022
Excerpt -

"As the shock wears off, fear has taken its place. In a televised address in mid-March, Putin insisted that Western countries "will try to bet on the so-called fifth column, on national traitors," implying that all opponents of his "operation" are the unpatriotic enemies. The government's security branches had previously announced a new law: spreading "fake information," or any narrative that contradicts the Ministry of Defense's official story, is a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Independent media outlets were blocked or disbanded, including the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, liberal radio Ekho Moskvyy, and Dozhd TV, all of which regularly criticized the government until two months ago. The New York Times, the BBC, CNN, and other foreign media packed up and left the country. Since the end of February, more than 16,000 people have been detained, including 400 teenagers. People have been arrested for just being near a protest. For one Muscovite, merely showing up at Red Square holding a copy of Leo Tolstoy's novel War and Peace was enough to warrant detention.

In this atmosphere of complete repression, political figures who once seemed to offer alternative ideas now echo Putin's uncompromising words. Former President Dmitry Medvedev has insisted that criticism of the operation amounts to treason. Even Naryshkin, a skeptic in February, has found his war footing and now faithfully parrots the government line. People no longer speak with their own voices; the shadow of Putinist Chekism now covers the entire country.

THE NEW SECURITY STATE

The journalist and writer Masha Gessen once dubbed Putin "the man without a face." Today, however, his is the only face, sitting atop an anonymous security bureaucracy that does his bidding. Another coup, either in the Kremlin corridors or on the streets of Moscow, is not likely. The only group that could conceivably unseat the president is the FSB, which is still technically run by nationalist siloviki who understand that some foreign policy flexibility is necessary for internal development. But such officials are no longer the FSB's future. The indistinct body of security technocrats now in charge is obsessed with total control, no matter the national or international consequences.

The last time the Kremlin built such an all-controlling state, under Andropov's leadership in the early 1980s, it unraveled when the security forces relaxed their grip and allowed reform. Putin knows that story well and is unlikely to risk the same outcome. And even without him, the system

he built would remain in place, sustained by the new security cohort—unless a 1980s Afghanistan-style debacle in Ukraine destroys it all. With this bureaucracy holding tight to power, Moscow’s foreign adventurism might abate. But as long as the structure holds steady, Russia will remain oppressed, isolated, and unfree.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/node/1128879>

A food crisis -

“By invading Ukraine, Vladimir Putin will destroy the lives of people far from the battlefield—and on a scale even he may regret. The war is battering a global food system weakened by COVID-19, climate change and an energy shock. Ukraine’s exports of grain and oilseeds have mostly stopped and Russia’s are threatened. Together, the two countries supply 12% of traded calories. Wheat prices, up 53% since the start of the year, jumped a further 6% on May 16th, after India said it would suspend exports because of an alarming heatwave.

The widely accepted idea of a cost-of-living crisis does not begin to capture the gravity of what may lie ahead. António Guterres, the UN secretary general, warned on May 18th that the coming months threaten “the spectre of a global food shortage” that could last for years. The high cost of staple foods has already raised the number of people who cannot be sure of getting enough to eat by 440m, to 1.6bn.”

https://www.economist.com/leaders/2022/05/19/the-coming-food-catastrophe?utm_content=ed-picks-article-link-1&etear=nl_weekly_1&utm_campaign=a.the-economist-this-week&utm_medium=email.internal-newsletter.np&utm_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm_term=5/19/2022&utm_id=1173292

Who is Graham Phillips? - Youtuber accused of war crimes

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/20/who-is-graham-phillips-the-youtuber-accused-of-war-crimes>

<https://www.spisok-putina.org/en/personas/phillips/>

Graham Phillips video of Mariupol victory day parade May 9 2022



Wider reference to same victory parade - most residents appear to not be joining in.

“An adviser to the mayor of Mariupol, Petro Andryushchenko, described the atmosphere on his Telegram channel: “No excitement or joy on the street along the procession was particularly noticeable. People are lured to the square because of the promises of a field kitchen and additional supplies of food.”

He added, "Putlerjugends (a reference to Putin and Hitler Youth, or "Hitler Jugend") are in place. The eternal flame from Moscow itself is in place. The occupiers are in place. Collaborators are in place. The only ones who are not present are Mariupol residents. Something went wrong with the holiday. Because Mariupol is Ukraine, not Muscovy."

<https://www.rferl.org/a/mariupol-victory-day-devastation/31842549.html>

This gives an overview from 2014 -

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/conflict-ukraines-donbas-visual-explainer>

And here -

Excerpt - "While the conflict that has beset Ukraine's Donbas region has certainly added to its troubles, some of those woes long predate the conflict. For decades this corner of south-eastern Ukraine has struggled with a decaying industrial economy, out-migration and a growing sense of frustration among the population. Consisting mainly of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (administrative units akin to provinces), Donbas was responsible for roughly one quarter of Ukraine's industrial production in the decades before the war. But its people had precious little to show for it. Wage arrears were the worst in the country, life expectancies were low, carbon emissions were through the roof and – thanks in part to lagging birth rates and high infant mortality – the population was ageing. A handful of powerful businesspeople with ties to President Victor Yanukovich and his party were riding high, but their good fortune hardly compensated for the sense of alienation and grievance among those who were not so lucky.

It was this frustration with the status quo that helped set the stage for the region's division in 2014. While mistrust of both Moscow and Kyiv ran high, some locals were especially concerned that the pro-West Maidan movement that drove Yanukovich from office in February of that year would tether the country more tightly to Europe and sell short their regional identities and economic interests. Some worried that if Ukraine grew closer to the West, Russian markets might shut out Donbas goods; they were optimistic that, if it stayed closer to Russia, Moscow might better protect their wages and more generously support their industries' modernisation. Others pinned few hopes on their eastern neighbour. Personal views notwithstanding, many simply kept their heads down when forces crossed the Russian border to join local separatists in forcibly dividing the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts."

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/261-peace-ukraine-iii-costs-war-donbas>

More from Victory day in 2014 - Mariupol and Crimea

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/09/ukraine-putin-crimea-victory-day-mariupol>

Lists of Putin propagandists -

<https://www.spisok-putina.org/en/>

INTERNATIONALUKRAINE INVASION

Russian TikTok influencers promote the war in Ukraine with a hypnotically repetitive message

BY

SOPHIE MELLOR

March 8, 2022 5:16 AM GMT+11

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Never miss a story: Follow your favorite topics and authors to get a personalized email with the journalism that matters most to you.

Days before TikTok suspended all live-streaming and new content from Russia on its platform, videos of Russian influencers supporting the war on Ukraine circulated online.

In the videos, the influencers mention the eight-year genocide by the Ukrainian people in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, for which there is no reported evidence. When seen one-by-one, the TikTokers seem to be independently reiterating Putin's rallying cry for invading Ukraine more than a week ago.

But when overlaid on top of each other, the Russian influencers seem to have the same exact speech condemning Ukraine for murdering children, down to the very word.

They all note the Alley of Angels, a memorial erected in 2015 for the children who died in the war in Donbas, where "hundreds of innocent children were killed," and the shelling of residents continues. "We do not want to install new memorials and cannot allow the death of innocent children, Russia wants to stop the eight-year genocide in the Donbass and return the peaceful sky over their heads to children," they all say in unison.

Most of the videos have since been taken down, but some can still be found online.

The videos may well be Russian propaganda, given their eerie similarity, and many on TikTok are alleging the Russian government has been bribing influencers to post videos and convince the country's youth that its "special military operation" is the right way forward.

TikTok exit

TikTok on Monday announced it would suspend livestreaming and new content in Russia after a law took effect that had passed the lower houses of parliament on Friday that would increase jail time to up to 15 years for anyone intentionally spreading "fake news" about the military.

In a statement posted on the company's Twitter and website, TikTok noted, "We have no choice but to suspend livestreaming and new content to our video service while we review the safety implications of this law."

This is not the first social media platform to cut the lights in Russia. On Friday, Russia's communications censor Roskomnadzor blocked access to Facebook throughout Russia. The country has also been slowing down social-media services, including Twitter and YouTube, to make them harder and more frustrating to use, after the two platforms banned some Russian content on their platform.

TikTok did respond to a request for comment.

<https://fortune.com/2022/03/07/russian-tiktok-influencers-propaganda/>

The Fakery of videos?

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/21/dumb-and-lazy-the-flawed-films-of-ukrainian-attacks-made-by-russias-fake-factory>

<https://theconversation.com/a-historian-corrects-misunderstandings-about-ukrainian-and-russian-history-177697>

UNICEF does not attribute blame to any side for deaths in the Eastern Ukraine 2014-2019

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/430000-children-continue-bear-brunt-eastern-ukraine-conflict>

War Crimes?

https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/interactive/ap-russia-war-crimes-ukraine/?utm_source=lterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tune-in_New&utm_content=2020yearinreview

Police: More than 900 civilian bodies found in Kyiv region

[https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-business-black-sea-22d7279f32c15d4a7037a2195113fb57?](https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-business-black-sea-22d7279f32c15d4a7037a2195113fb57?user_email=94b9136773806bf32df78b79e6e1693f4a7d7864ebe91fa187176fac00d7ecf1&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=April15_MorningWire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers)

[user_email=94b9136773806bf32df78b79e6e1693f4a7d7864ebe91fa187176fac00d7ecf1&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=April15_MorningWire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers](https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-business-black-sea-22d7279f32c15d4a7037a2195113fb57?user_email=94b9136773806bf32df78b79e6e1693f4a7d7864ebe91fa187176fac00d7ecf1&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=April15_MorningWire&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers)

The Liberation argument - Ukrainians escaping to Russia from the war
<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/04/13/if-you-re-not-afraid-of-the-snipers-go>

Bucha -
<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/04/04/they-gave-their-rations-to-the-people-in-the-basement-then-threw-down-a-grenade>

A view about the 8 years war then the escalation -
“Actually, until mid-February 2022, the situation in the Donbas was calmer than before [the] July 2020 [ceasefire].”
<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/03/06/from-frozen-conflict-to-full-scale-invasion>

Brandolini's Law -
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brandolini%27s_law#:~:text=Brandolini's%20law%2C%20also%20known%20as,it%20in%20the%20first%20place

Scott Ritter - Brilliant or a complete blowhard idiot?
Feb 11, 2022

“I must have been misunderstood because under no circumstances is Russia going to invade Ukraine in the near term. There’s literally nothing for Russia to gain from this. Yes, I mean, it’s common knowledge in Russia that they can crush Ukraine like a bug any time they want to. I mean, you know, people can say whatever they want about, about Ukraine, its military capabilities, they’re non-existent, nonexistent. In a modern, combined arms setting, Russian artillery will devastate Ukrainian command and control. All these javelin missiles that we’re sending to them and are operated by infantry in the open, who will die instantly and suddenly. And then the Russians operate massed armored formations better than anybody. They will penetrate the Ukrainian defenses, destroy Ukrainian logistics, and any war with Ukraine will be about more about processing prisoners than about killing people. Because Ukrainians will surrender in mass. It is what you do when you have overwhelming force. It’s one thing to sit there and stare at the CNN TV camera. Talk about how bravely you’re going to fight the Russians. It’s another thing to be confronted by 170 Russian armored vehicles. You realize you’re going to die unless you put your hands in the air, which they’re all going to do. But Russia doesn’t want that because, let’s say they’d defeat Ukraine. Then what? It’s a disaster for Russia. It’s a disaster for Ukraine. It’s a disaster for Europe. That’s not the endgame Russia wants. Russia wants Ukraine and NATO to say Ukraine will never be a part of NATO’s, and they have a plan for this.”

More on Chomsky -
<https://blogs.berkeley.edu/2022/05/19/open-letter-to-noam-chomsky-and-other-like-minded-intellectuals-on-the-russia-ukraine-war/>
fbclid=IwAR3oKDGlyHArvYVZMNMtc3z8JTFNLbjpby7rhw1WtLxwr2E1VJbLPYORBAk

Excerpt - “While you admittedly call the Russian invasion of Ukraine a “war crime,” it appears to us that you cannot do so without naming in the same breath all of the past atrocities committed by the U.S. abroad (e.g., in Iraq or Afghanistan) and, ultimately, spending most of your time discussing the latter”

Georgia invasion 2008 - not really over.
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/10/russia-invasion-georgia-12-years-no-end-ambassador-david-bakradze-interview/>
“But far from being intimidated, Georgia’s envoy to the United States says Russia’s intervention has only redoubled the country’s desire to join NATO and the European Union.”

Where does Putin stop?

“Apartments and businesses were bombed, several hundred people were killed and hundreds more were displaced. The fighting lasted for five days. In the end, Russia gained control of two breakaway regions, Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia, which Georgians refer to as the Tskinali region. They are now separated by checkpoints and barbed wire from the rest of Georgia.

People who live in this part of Georgia are anxiously watching what's unfolding in Ukraine, because it reminds them of Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008. Many here worry that they could be next if Putin is successful.”

<https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2022/03/31/1088555609/russia-war-ukraine-georgia-2008>

August 7, 2021 -

John Herbst, Director, Eurasia Center, Atlantic Council: Thirteen years ago, Europe experienced major power aggression for the first time since Hitler's defeat in 1945. Russian troops attacked and defeated Georgian forces in a short war that Moscow and its proxies in South Ossetia provoked. The reaction of the West was slow and weak. French President Nicolas Sarkozy negotiated ceasefire terms that Moscow largely violated without consequence. The Kremlin learned that the West preferred to ignore or at least minimize Russian bad behavior in the so-called Near Abroad.

Moscow applies this lesson in Georgia today as it regularly moves the demarcation line between South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia a few meters further into the country. Russia also applied the lessons of 2008 in Crimea and Donbas. It took the West some time, and the July 2014 shooting down of the MH17 passenger airliner, to impose serious sanctions on Moscow for its aggression in Ukraine.

If US President Joe Biden would like to demonstrate the fresh resolve in dealing with Moscow that he promised as a candidate, he should announce contingency sanctions that the US will apply the next time Moscow “adjusts” that internal demarcation line in Georgia.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/the-2008-russo-georgian-war-putins-green-light/>

Alexander Mercouris Feb 11, 2022

“But I think we are much closer to a settlement of that conflict now than we have ever been, despite the fact that people are still sticking to these very hard line positions because behind them, you can see the cracks are growing.”

Food insecurity issues -

June 10, 2022

UN Says Up To 19 Million More Hungry People Next Year Due To Ukraine War

“Depleted food stocks caused by the dwindling exports of grain and other food commodities from Ukraine and Russia could leave between 11 million and 19 million more people suffering from chronic hunger over the next year, the United Nations' food agency said on June 10.

Moscow's war in Ukraine has sent prices surging for grains, cooking oils, fuel, and fertilizer. Russia and Ukraine account for nearly one-third of global wheat supplies.

Russia is also a leading exporter of fertilizer while Ukraine is a major supplier of corn and sunflower oil.

The impact of the war "could lead to anywhere between 11 to 19 million more hungry people -- that's chronic hunger for 2022/23," said Boubaker Ben Belhassen of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) on June 10.”

<https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-war-food-19-million-hungry-un-grain/31892710.html>

May 16, 2022

The Ukraine War is Deepening Global Food Insecurity – What Can Be Done?

“As the war drags on, already record levels of acute food insecurity are expected to sharply rise. In the 81 countries where the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) works, acute hunger is projected to increase by an additional 47 million people, from 276 million to 323 million — this is a staggering 17% jump, with the steepest rises in sub-Saharan Africa.”

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/ukraine-war-deepening-global-food-insecurity-what-can-be-done#:~:text=The%20latest%20data%20from%20the,from%205.6%25%20before%20the%20war>

Posted to Facebook up to here - on Saturday 18 January, 2022

January 21 Link -

The Cold War Never Ended

Ukraine, the China Challenge, and the Revival of the West

by Stephen Kotkin

May/June 2022

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2022-04-06/cold-war-never-ended-russia-ukraine-war?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fatoday&utm_campaign=Go%20Big%20in%20Saudi%20Arabia&utm_content=20220620&utm_term=FA%20Today%20-%20112017

The Price Of Hegemony - Robert Kagen - May/June 2022

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-06/russia-ukraine-war-price-hegemony>

For all those pro Putin, anti West, NATO, USA, people who think that Ukraine should not be supported in it's fight against the invading Russian army because it will prolong the war.....

Ask yourself this - should the USA have supported Russia, to the tune of \$180 billion in 2020 money, against the invading Germans in World War 2?

That part of the second world war would probably have been over a lot sooner without that support and Russia would have probably lost.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/did-us-lend-lease-aid-tip-the-balance-in-soviet-fight-against-nazi-germany/30599486.html>

Then there are those who claim the USA is only ever a destroyer, one described it as “in their DNA” (an insult akin to racism, very offensive).

The rebuild of Europe after WW2 was supported by the USA at about \$115 billion in 2021 value.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Plan

And the Japanese rebuild -

“After World War II, the United States also understood the strategic importance of using foreign assistance and other tools to aid and rebuild post-war Japan. Between 1946 and 1952, Washington invested \$2.2 billion — or \$18 billion in real 21st-century dollars adjusted for inflation — in Japan’s reconstruction effort.”

<https://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/06/06/the-lessons-from-us-aid-after-world-war-ii#:~:text=After%20World%20War%20II%2C%20the,inflation%20%E2%80%94%20in%20Japan's%20reconstruction%20effort.>

I'm a critic of the USA at times (often really, and my wife is American, so half my family) and it's foreign/domestic policies and Australia's toadying, but I am not an absolutist. The human condition of the love of war, or the love of peace crosses all boundaries and all peoples have engaged in both at many points in their history.

The extraordinary relative peace (of course there are exceptions, that is why it is relative) in Europe since 1945 was broken by this full scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and I am a lover of peace so I emphatically oppose the war and I am afraid, because there is so much more destruction to come, that the successful defence of Ukraine is probably the best way to obtain peace.

The alternative is for every country that is invaded just lies down and accepts the new rulers, the ultimate pacifist position, just accept subjugation.

What would you decide if your country was being invaded, fight, seek assistance or surrender, and accept your fate?

The NATO non- expansion promise as claimed by Putin - Debatable - <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/11/06/did-nato-promise-not-to-enlarge-gorbachev-says-no/?fbclid=IwAR1HLubBQIQKfrfyTvTnEHWTX-uN4ncvlfGIJn6Nr5MwHd3YHkKByUXFXuM>

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>