

UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Issue 1 (30), 2023

MEP BIOLOGICAL
HYBRID NATION SECURITY STATEMENTS
MISINFORMATION WEAPONS
DISINFORMATION
MANIPULATIONS PROPAGANDA
NARRATIVES TELEGRAM MEDIA NUCLEAR
WAR RUSSIA WMD

- DISINFORMATION STRATEGIES
- WMD THREATS
- RUSSIA'S MANIPULATIONS

DISINFORMATION

Editors

Dr. Hanna Shelest
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

Publisher:

Published by NGO "Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation" (Ukraine),
Centre of International Studies (Ukraine), with the financial support of the
Representation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine, International
Renaissance Foundation and RAND Corporation

UA: Ukraine Analytica is the first Ukrainian analytical journal in English
on International Relations, Politics and Economics. The journal is aimed
at experts, diplomats, academics, students interested in the international
relations and Ukraine in particular.

Contacts:

website: <http://ukraine-analytica.org/>
e-mail: Ukraine_analytica@ukr.net
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ukraineanalytica>
Twitter: https://twitter.com/UA_Analytica

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors
and do not necessarily reflect the position of UA: Ukraine Analytica,
its editors, Board of Advisors or donors.

ISSN 2518-7481

500 copies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHY DOES RUSSIA DISINFORM ABOUT BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS?	3
<i>Hanna Shelest, John V. Parachini</i>	
RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION GOES NUCLEAR	18
<i>Polina Sinovets, Khrystyna Holynska, John V. Parachini</i>	
RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION STRATEGY IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR SECURITY: EXAMINING KEY NARRATIVES	27
<i>Oleksandr Yaroshchuk</i>	
UKRAINIAN NUCLEAR PLANTS IN THE FOCUS OF RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE	37
<i>Volodymyr Solovian</i>	
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AS A TARGET AND A TOOL IN RUSSIAN INFORMATION AND MANIPULATION CAMPAIGNS.	46
<i>Olga Chyzhova</i>	
"WE ARE INTERFERING:" THE INFORMATION WAR FROM NATO ENCIRCLEMENT TO A COUP D'ETAT	57
<i>Carl Mirra</i>	
EXPOSING THE ROOTS OF DISINFORMATION ABOUT NATO ENLARGEMENT	71
<i>Iryna Bohinska</i>	
NATO RESPONSES TO DISINFORMATION	80
<i>Ahan Gadkari</i>	
ACCESS TO OFFICIAL INFORMATION FOR COUNTERING DISINFORMATION: KEY FINDINGS AND STEPS FOR UKRAINIAN POLICY MAKERS	88
<i>Tetyana Oleksiyuk</i>	

“WE ARE INTERFERING:” THE INFORMATION WAR FROM NATO ENCIRCLEMENT TO A COUP D’ETAT

Dr Carl Mirra
Adelphi University (USA)

Russia’s interaction with NATO includes concerns that its expansion is a security threat. Despite its opposition, Russia has accepted NATO enlargement for political and financial gain. This paper examines Kremlin disinformation concerning two of the alleged leading causes of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014: NATO encirclement and the US “overthrow” of Ukraine’s president. It documents how Russia’s claim that the West provoked it to defend its sphere disintegrates when compared to a historical timeline of paired examples concerning Russia’s response to NATO expansion. A related aim is to illustrate, also through a timeline, that the overthrow of Ukraine’s president was the consequence of a popular uprising.

Introduction

This paper explores the influence of Kremlin narratives regarding two of the alleged leading causes of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014: NATO encirclement and the US “overthrow” of Ukraine’s president Yanukovich. It will document how Russia’s claim that the West “provoked” it to defend its “zone of responsibility” collapses when subjected to a historical timeline of paired examples concerning Russia’s response to NATO expansion. A related aim is to illustrate, also through a historical timeline, that Yanukovich’s departure was strategized among Russian officials before Maidan, and that his ouster was largely the result of a popular uprising, regional economic and political discontent regarding local Party of Regions (PoR) oligarchs, including among some separatists, and Russia’s coercive economic policies.

It will conclude with a brief statement on how an accurate understanding of the causes of war is related to formulating a desirable and lasting conflict settlement.

Russian disinformation became well-known surrounding charges that the Kremlin interfered in the 2016 US presidential elections. The US government indicted some twenty-five Russian citizens and intelligence operatives associated with the Internet Research Agency (IRA), including Putin associate, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who allegedly funded the agency. In November 2022, Prigozhin, acknowledged on his *Telegram* channel, “we interfered...we are interfering.”¹

Russia’s interference in the US is a concern, because it provides the majority of aid to Ukraine. Research indicates that the US far right and left are both susceptible to this

1 Кепка Пригожина [Prigozhin’s cap] “Telegram,” 7.11.2022, https://t.me/Prigozhin_hat/1978.

interference. There is a debate concerning the effect of Moscow's falsehoods, but there is an agreement that at minimum it has contributed to undermining citizens' trust in US institutions. A US government report identifies how Kremlin propaganda techniques are organised around master narratives. They include the contention that Russia is a victim of both Western provocations (NATO encirclement) and destabilisation activities, such as that the US "led a violent coup against Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich."² This paper evaluates these two master narratives, because they distort the causes of war and frustrate efforts for a stable conflict settlement.

A related goal of Kremlin propaganda is to weaken the resolve for Ukraine's defence.³ The gradual ascendancy of far-right and far-left politicians in the US Congress, as well as reports of declining weapon stockpiles, present a potential threat to US resolve in maintaining significant levels of aid. A US Senate Committee on Appropriations in May 2022 noted that, "our missile

stockpiles... are stretched very, very thin," while "one third of our stockpile" of Javelin anti-tank weapons has been depleted.⁴



Comparisons of NATO expansion with Moscow's response illustrate how claims that NATO enlargement led to Russia's invasion of Ukraine are misleading

US support remains strong. But polls indicate a 19 percent increase in the population agreeing that the US provides too much aid to Ukraine since the start of the war. More than 1/3 also disapprove of the Biden administration's handling of the war. A press conference by Republican Congressional representatives in November 2022 cautioned that "the days of endless cash and military material to Ukraine are ending." Elsewhere, leftist Senator Sanders

-
- 2 A study frequently cited to debunk claims of Russian influence on the US electorate indicates the Kremlin's impact. "It would be a mistake to conclude," the researchers write, that Russian disinformation "did not have any impact" because those efforts did indeed contribute to the erosion of "faith in electoral integrity." G. Eady, T. Paskhalis, J. Zilinsky, J. et al., *Exposure to the Russian Internet Research Agency foreign influence campaign on Twitter in the 2016 US election and its relationship to attitudes and voting behaviour*. "Nature Communications" 14, 62 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-35576-9>. See also D. Freelon and T. Lokot, *Russian Twitter disinformation campaigns reach across the American political spectrum*. "Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review," January 2020, <https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/russian-disinformation-campaigns-on-twitter/>. Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States, *Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for National Security*, 10.01.2018, <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CPRT-115SPRT28110/CPRT-115SPRT28110/context>.
 - 3 S. Ritter, *Ukraine is winning the battle on twitter but not in the real world*, "RT," 1.05.2022, <https://www.rt.com/russia/554729-us-ukrainian-perception-donbass/>. RT has enlisted Ritter, a former US marine intelligence officer, who was convicted in 2011 of unlawful contact with a minor.
 - 4 The Javelin remark is from US Senator Roy Blunt and the missile statement is Senator John Boozman's, both supporters of aid to Ukraine. *A review of the President's Fiscal Years 2023 funding request and budget justification for the Department of Defense*, "United States Senate Committee on Appropriations," 3.05.2002, <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/a-review-of-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2023-funding-request-and-budget-justification-for-the-department-of-defense>. The US Secretary of Defense told committee members that they can "rest assured" stockpiles will never fall to dangerous levels, but replenishment is a "challenge."

demanded diplomacy, while admonishing NATO “intransigence.”⁵

These observations often arise from misrepresentations of the causes of the war. Russia’s master narrative that the US/ NATO provoked it to invade Ukraine has been popularised by University of Chicago Professor, John Mearsheimer’s “Why Ukraine is the West’s Fault,” a video lecture with 28 million views. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) featured the article version on its Telegram channel.⁶

Comparisons of NATO expansion with Moscow’s response illustrate how claims that NATO enlargement led to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine are misleading. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) in December 1991, Moscow considered a range of options in dealing with NATO. Reactions ranged from joining NATO, to forming an alternative security alliance, to diplomatic confrontation, to outright acceptance of NATO enlargement for political or economic

gain. Russia has generally been opposed to NATO enlargement, arguing that it must safeguard its neighbourhood and promote a balance of power (multipolarity) against the weight of US unilateralism. The Kremlin’s cooperation with NATO, the narrative goes, was undermined by a more powerful, deceitful opponent. NATO in turn followed a “neo-containment” policy in case a resurgent Russia emerged, an “open door” that welcomed post-Soviet states.⁷

Eichler classifies this period as “expansion by invitation.”⁸ Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries overwhelmingly supported NATO membership during the 1990s. A summary of public opinion polls from the 1990s consistently show that CEE states favoured NATO membership. Moreover, Gallup surveys illustrate that the vast majority of CEE nations viewed Russia as “the biggest threat.” Simply put, CEE leaders and the public “invited” NATO as a protective alliance, because Russia represents a security threat.⁹

-
- 5 *House Republicans on Funding to Ukraine*, “C-Span,” 17.11.2022 [<https://www.c-span.org/video/?524346-1/house-republicans-seek-audit-ukraine-funding>]. The quotation is from Representative Matt Gaetz. The main focus of the press conference was to demand oversight of aid, but the larger context is the reactionary Republican resistance to President Biden’s policy, in addition to their America First ethos. A. Dunn, *As Russian invasion nears one year mark, partisans grow further apart on US support for Ukraine*, “Pew Research Center,” 31.01.2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2023/01/31/as-russian-invasion-nears-one-year-mark-partisans-grow-further-apart-on-u-s-support-for-ukraine/>. B. Sanders, *Prepared Remarks*, 10.02.2022 [<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/prepared-remarks-sanders-senate-floor-speech-on-ukraine>]. Sanders cited the W. Burns memo analysed in this paper that is circulated in Russia media outlets.
 - 6 J. Mearsheimer, *Why Ukraine is the West’s Fault*, [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrMiSQAGOS4>]. The Russian MFA posted his article, *Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault*, “Foreign Affairs,” September-October 2014, 28.02.2022, <https://t.me/MFARussia/11881>.
 - 7 M. Sarotte, *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021.
 - 8 J. Eichler, *NATO’s Expansion After the Cold War*, Springer: Cham, Switzerland: 2021, p. 3.
 - 9 J. Morrison, *NATO Expansion and Alternative Future Security Arrangements*, Washington, DC: National Defense University, April 1995, p. 80. T. Kostadinova, *East European Public Support for NATO Membership: Fears and Aspirations*, “Journal of Peace Research,” March 2000, v. 37, n. 2, p. 246; The *NATO Review* cautioned in 1997 that Eurobarometer poll data did demonstrate strong support for NATO, but large majorities in Poland and Bulgaria shifted the balance of the results. There was, however, “no majority against NATO.” G. Cunningham, *EU and NATO enlargement: How public opinion is shaping up in some candidate countries*, “NATO Review,” May/June 1997 <http://www.bits.de/NRANEU/docs/EnlargementPublicOppinion.htm#FN1>. J. Esipova and J. Ray, *Eastern Europeans, CIS Residents See Russia, U.S. as threats*, “Gallup,” 4.04.2016, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/190415/eastern-europeans-cis-residents-russia-threats.aspx>

NATO Expansion and Russia's Military-Industrial Complex

In this context, the following timeline demonstrates how Russia's confrontation-collaboration with NATO undermines its claims that NATO encirclement is an existential threat.¹⁰ It establishes how Moscow's confrontation with NATO is frequently followed by a reset, and one that intersects with political and financial dividends. The paired examples of this timeline occur with enough regularity, and at critical moments of expansion and war, to avoid the immediate charge that it is a selective presentation of the record.

One episode that highlights Russia's recognition that NATO membership for nearby states was not a threat occurred in August 1993. Polish president Walesa convinced Russian president Yeltsin to issue a joint statement that Polish entry into NATO was not against Russia's interests. Yeltsin, facing a domestic backlash, tried to recant. His strained position was in part

the result of the tension between Russian "moderates" and hardliners. Anti-NATO officials were angered at Yeltsin's apparent concession.¹¹ Yeltsin's revised position was that Poland had the right to a security arrangement of its choice, but options other than NATO, such as a Pan-European alliance were needed.¹²

Moscow's public presentation of NATO as an existential threat, what Russia's former foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev calls the militant's "favourite canard," must be weighed against closed-door deals with the West. Consider a meeting between Yeltsin and US president Clinton in May 1995. Yeltsin protested that NATO expansion was a humiliation for Russia. The solution was to "postpone NATO expansion for a year and a half or two years," Yeltsin surmised. Clinton made clear that he was not bargaining on NATO expansion or appearing to "slow down" that process, because Republicans in Congress were championing enlargement. Why would a delay of a few years make a difference to Russia if that expansion is a

10 Outspoken Russian journalist, Oleg Kashin, who supports the annexation of Crimea, points out the deceptive quality of Russia's presentation of the NATO threat. "Every Munich speech," is "followed by the inevitable reset, and even without resets, any anti-Western rhetoric in Moscow...always gave the impression of something pronounced purely for...internal use," a form of "cinema" where the space between the "pretend" and real is blurred concerning fears of the West. O. Kashin, *How to distinguish a real Cold War from an imitation*, "Republic," 16.10.2016, <https://republic.ru/posts/74672>

11 The Yeltsin statement is often portrayed as a capricious act, as a result of either drunkenness or Walesa's cunning, but Foreign Minister Kozyrev and Defence Minister Grachev had Yeltsin take a "soberer look" at the statement and "milder language" was used. Yeltsin's late-night agreement with Walesa was already leaked to the press, who sensationalised the incident. A. Kozyrev, *Russia and NATO Enlargement: An Insider's Account* [in] D. Hamilton and K. Spohr, (eds.) *Open Door NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security after the Cold War*, Washington, DC: Foreign Policy Institute, p. 454. During the visit, Yeltsin placed flowers at Katyn, a signal that the historical memory of Soviet tyranny mattered to Poles seeking a security alliance.

12 *Retranslation of Yeltsin letter on NATO expansion*, "US State Department declassified memo," <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16376-document-04-retranslation-yeltsin-letter>. Stature was also a concern. US/NATO should understand that Russia was a privileged state in the region and deserved an elevated place that was a "few degrees warmer" than other nations, in Yeltsin's words. Yeltsin was also trying to slow down what would be called "hasty enlargement." Yeltsin stated that he objected to NATO expansion, yet his approach indicated it was negotiable. Even the hardliners understood that CEE states justifiably sought NATO entry. "The leaders of Central and Eastern European countries," Primakov, an anti-NATO hardliner who replaced Kozyrev as Foreign Minister in 1996 discloses, "declared their firm desire to join NATO." In fact, "their populations—the majority—supported that position." Y. Primakov, *Russian Crossroads: Toward the New Millennium*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 130. The controversial former Duma member Konstantin Borovoy reports he created a pro-NATO group of 40 deputies against some 350 in the anti-NATO camp in 1995. K. Borovoy, *Russia against the USA, Book One*, Self-published manuscript, 2023, p. 61.

humiliation and threat to its existence? It turns out Yeltsin's concerns over his re-election displaced security goals. "We need to hold back [NATO enlargement]," the Kremlin leader explained "until after the elections."

The two leaders' public presentation of NATO expansion differed from their confidential diplomatic agreement. "We need to be careful that neither of us appears to capitulate," Clinton notes, "For you, that means you are not going to embrace expansion; for me it means no talk about slowing the process down." This agreement – support for Yeltsin's re-election by delaying NATO expansion in exchange for Russia agreeing to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) – is "something we should not tell the press," Yeltsin underscores. "When the elections are completed, we can tell the Eastern Europeans and Central Europeans," Yeltsin adds, "the time will come for expansion."¹³ Yeltsin willingly accepted NATO expansion for an electoral boost.

In March 1999, NATO admitted three new members: the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Russia's objections were eclipsed by NATO's bombing of Kosovo. An enraged Yeltsin severed relations with the alliance.¹⁴ Tense negotiations over Russia's military role in Kosovo were temporarily relieved when Moscow agreed to operate its forces

under a NATO umbrella, an arrangement backed by Russia's then director of Federal Security Services (FSB), Vladimir Putin, who in August as acting Prime Minister, insisted that the "civilised world" would indeed "cooperate with NATO."¹⁵

The Kosovo crisis strained Russia-NATO relations, while Moscow's struggling economy offered an opportunity for rapprochement. Three months after the Kosovo conflagration, Yeltsin announced at the G-8 Summit that "the fight is over we need to make friends again." Russia's friendly disposition was inseparable from its quest to secure credit from the West. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) soon granted Russia the equivalent of \$4.5 billion in credit.¹⁶ It turns out that Russian officials were illegally laundering billions of dollars in IMF loans. The scheme involved skimming funds "to boost Yeltsin's chances for re-election."¹⁷ Here again there is confrontation, accompanied by reconciliation, in which financial schemes displaced strategic imperatives concerning NATO encroachment.

Against this backdrop, in May 2002, the NATO-Ukraine Commission announced a "qualitatively new and deepened relationship." Later that year, an action plan promoted Ukraine's "aspirations to

13 *Memorandum of Conversation – President Boris Yeltsin of Russia*, "Clinton Presidential Library and Museum-Clinton Digital Archives," 10.05.1995, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/101423>.

14 D. Montgomery, *Angry Yeltsin cuts ties to NATO*, "Philadelphia Inquirer," 25.03.1999, p. A01.

15 *Putin pledges cooperation with NATO*, "Agence France Press," 15 August 1999. *Putin: Russia won't enter into hostilities in Balkans*, "Xinhua News Agency," 13.05.1999.

16 *G8 Leaders Promise to Help Russia Deal with Its Debt* "CNN Worldview," 20.06.1999; S. Hedlund, *Russia and the IMF: A Sordid Tale of Moral Hazard*, "Demokratizatsiya," v. 9, 2001, pp. 104-136.

17 US House of Representatives, *Committee on Banking and Financial Services, 160th Congress, Russia Money Laundering Hearing*, 21-22 September 1999 http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/bank/hba59889.000/hba59889_0f.htm; S. Pirani and P. Farrelly, *IMF knew about Russian aid scam*, "Guardian," 16.10.1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/oct/17/russia.business>.

full membership.”¹⁸ Of special importance is that Putin, now president, did not issue a dreadful warning about bringing NATO to Russia’s border. Instead, he declared that “the decision is to be taken by NATO and Ukraine. It is a matter for those two partners.” Two years later, NATO added seven new members, all from eastern European states. Certainly, this was the moment to draw a line in the sand, to prohibit further encirclement. Yet when asked what he feared most concerning NATO expansion, Putin replied that he “always viewed this process in a positive light,” and again asserted that it was the right of these countries to select their own security alliance.¹⁹

Tensions erupted in 2007-2008, because the US recognised Kosovo’s independence, and announced plans for Georgia’s and Ukraine’s NATO entry. Putin’s respective Munich (2007) and Bucharest (2008) summit speeches issued a stern warning regarding their possible membership, and Russia invaded Georgia in August.²⁰ The Russia-

NATO council was suspended. Putin’s combative mood over NATO encroachment at Bucharest was contradicted by Russia’s agreement at that summit to support a NATO/ISAF war in Afghanistan, a country it once bordered. Russia already provided essential fuel supplies for NATO – 50 percent of the “critical” Regional Command (RC) South, a leaked 2008 cable notes.²¹ (Note that the Russia-NATO council was restored roughly seven months after the Georgia crisis in a period of President Obama’s “reset,” and the then President Medvedev’s overtures, but distrust lingered).

Combating terrorism was the stated strategic imperative for this support, but financial rewards were involved. Russian disinformation sheds light on its stated strategic objectives. Russian technologists circulated a 2008 leaked cable from the then US ambassador to Russia, William Burns.²² This cable is framed as definitive proof that the US was fully aware that Ukraine’s NATO accession was a red line for

-
- 18 *Opening Statement by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson at the Ministerial Meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission*, “NATO Press Release,” 15.05.2002, <https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s020514b.htm>. *NATO-Ukraine Action Plan adopted at Prague*, 22.11.2002, <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2002/11-november/e1122c.htm>. In 2002, NATO participated in joint training exercises at Yavoriv training centre in Ukraine, which Putin did not frame as a security threat at a time when he publicly accepted Ukraine’s cooperation with NATO. The context included a NATO-Russia Council in December 2001 during a post-September 11 posture of cooperation to combat terrorism, *Cooperative Adventure Exchange*, “NATO Press Release,” 17.09.2002, <https://www.nato.int/ims/2002/p021007e.htm>.
- 19 The European Union also added 10 new countries from central and eastern Europe that year along with the European Neighbourhood Policy and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA). *Press Conference following Talks with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi*, “The Kremlin,” 12.04.2004, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22434>, *Meeting with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer*, 8.04.2004, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/224>.
- 20 Two months before the Bucharest summit, Putin told Ukraine’s president that Russia “had no right to intervene” in Ukraine’s security arrangements. But the stationing of bases there would “force” Russia to take countermeasures. Ukraine’s then president, Viktor Yushchenko, reminded his Russian counterpart that its constitution prohibited NATO bases on Ukrainian soil, and that public opinion was not in favour of joining the alliance. *Press Conference following Talks with President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko and the Second Meeting of the Russian-Ukrainian Intergovernmental Commission*, 12.02.2008, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24833>.
- 21 K. Volker, *Russian Support for Afghanistan: Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff*, “US State Department, secret memo,” 3.10.2008, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08USNATO357_a.html, Russia indicated “it will continue to support NATO in Afghanistan.”
- 22 For example, *Secret Cable warned US in 2008 Meddling in Ukraine could split the country*, “Sputnik International,” 13.05.2014, <https://sputniknews.com/20140513/Secret-Cable-Reveals-Russia-Warned-US-in-2008-Meddling-in-189793988.html>, *Ukraine: US Ambassador to Moscow’s 2008 Cable: Nyet means Nyet*, “Prada.ru,” 13.05. 2014, https://english.prada.ru/opinion/127556_ukraine_cable/

Moscow. What is omitted intersects with the antagonism/rapprochement pattern. Burns certainly warned that Russia objected to NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine. But, just as Foreign Minister Kozyrev complained about hardliners magnifying the NATO threat, Burns concludes that it is “politically popular to paint the US and NATO as Russia’s adversaries and to use NATO outreach to Ukraine and Georgia as a means of generating support from Russia nationalists.”²³ Another overlooked cable expands on why nationalists seized opportunities to drum up threats. Burns observes an increase in Russian arms sales, an industry propelled by defending against enemies, real or imagined. “It is an open secret that the Russian defence industry is an important trough at which senior military officials feed,” Burns wrote, “and weapons sales continue to enrich many.” For these militarists “the primary goal is profit.”²⁴

It is difficult to measure with precision whether profit or concerns over terrorism drove Russia’s strategy to provide military aid for a US/NATO war. Dmitry Rogozin, Russian ambassador to NATO 2008-2011, discloses an economic motive. “Launching defence industry cooperation with NATO

in many areas, especially helicopters, is one of our priorities,” Rogozin explains in 2011. This defence industry collaboration also strengthened the military readiness of CEE states that were, or were soon to be, NATO members. “NATO now has about 400 Russian made helicopters owned by eastern European nations that require upgrades,” Rogozin continues. Contracts were indeed issued to eastern European NATO countries, such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria, who upgraded both helicopters and MiG fighter jets.²⁵ Before Rogozin broadcast that defence industry cooperation was a strategic priority, military-industrial cooperation with NATO was under way. In July 2008, the head of Rosoboronexport, a Russian state-run armaments manufacturer, considered the arms trade “the most promising line of cooperation between Russia and NATO,” including in the post-Soviet space. In fact, Russia’s leading defence industry company in 2006 similarly felt that NATO expansion in CEE states presents “new opportunities” for modernising armaments there.²⁶

Industry cooperation is further evidenced in a 2011 US Army contract with Rosoboronexport. A US Senate Committee

23 W. Burns, *Russia’s NATO Enlargement Redlines*, “Memorandum to Joint Chiefs of Staff,” 1.02.2008, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08MOSCOW265_a.html

24 W. Burns, *Addressing Russian Arms Sales*, “Secret cable,” 26.10.2007, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07Moscow5154_a.html.

25 Dmitry Rogozin: *Russia Wants More Tangible Cooperation with NATO*, “Security Index,” n. 1 (94) v. 17, 7.03.2011, p. 7 DOI: 10.1080/19934270.2011.553117 E. Teslova, *US Allies Continue Buying Weapons from Russia*, 24.11.2019, Anadolu Agency, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/us-allies-continue-buying-weapons-from-russia/1653985#>. It took until the summer of 2022 for Russia to terminate these contracts, because these NATO countries were aiding the supply chain to Ukraine. *Russia suspends certification of Czech, Bulgarian aircraft plants – Foreign Ministry*, “TASS,” 14.07.2022, <https://tass.com/politics/1479885>. Several NATO countries have longstanding business and military collaboration with Russia. For example, the head of Russia’s state-owned defence conglomerate is a member of the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce. *Rosoboronexport signs five agreements with Italian companies*, “SKRIN Market & Corporate News,” 4.09.2013, <https://advance-lexis-com.adelphi.idm.oclc.org/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:598P-CH41-JCMC-POJ1-00000-00&context=1516831>

26 I. Chernyak, *Sellers of Fire; General Director of Rosoboronexport, Anatoly Isaikin, is convinced that Russia will retain the leading positions on the international armament market*. “Defense and Security (Russia),” 11.07.2008 <https://advance-lexis-com.adelphi.idm.oclc.org/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4T07-R7P0-TX4V-P1BM-00000-00&context=1516831>. *Rosoboronexport hosts 6th meeting of Weapon System Modernization Round Table*, “SKRIN Market & Corporate News,” 14.12.2006, <https://advance-lexis-com.adelphi.idm.oclc.org/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4MK0-8MC0-TXDS-035Y-00000-00&context=1516831>

on Armed Forces probed this deal that had the potential to reach \$1 billion. It uncovered that the US “directly purchases” military-use Mi-17 helicopters from the Russian arms conglomerate, and its aircraft were in use since 2005 in the Afghanistan War. Russia’s “priority” to enhance arms deals with NATO continued in 2013, with Sputnik news reporting “Pentagon to buy Russian helicopters despite ban.”²⁷ In September 2013, Russia and NATO performed a joint exercise, what a Russian general described as part of a “trusted relationship” with NATO.²⁸ Defence industry contracts appear as the strategic priority, rather than containing NATO outreach.



Russian leaders’ willingness to welcome NATO expansion for unprincipled motives (election favours, loan schemes, armaments profits) suggest security threats were either inflated or sacrificed for personal ambition. In this way, Russian policymakers are responsible for their (poor) security calculations

The pattern of hostility followed by a reset from 1993 to 2013 was disrupted by Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russia’s cooperation with NATO should be

evaluated in terms of its costs/benefits to national security. What core interests were served or how was Moscow managing the predictable outcome or even worse case scenarios of abetting NATO’s enlargement?²⁹ The shifting international architecture following the end of the USSR lent itself to some degree of cooperation and exploration of alternative alliances. Moscow’s desire to secure IMF loans, enter the WTO, combat terrorism, and deflect criticism from the Chechnya wars contributed to its cooperation. However, Russian leaders’ willingness to welcome NATO expansion for unprincipled motives (election favours, loan schemes, armaments profits) suggest security threats were either inflated or sacrificed for personal ambition. In this way, Russian policymakers are responsible for their (poor) security calculations. That these leaders, including Putin, accepted NATO expansion for political and economic benefits, sold NATO military equipment, and assisted in NATO wars, cast serious doubts on their claims that NATO encirclement is an existential threat.

The Guns of April or August? The Russian Question and the Origins of War

Defence industry cooperation and joint military manoeuvres continued just five months before Yanukovych’s removal in February 2014. Russian disinformation misrepresents his overthrow as a Western

27 *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, US Senate, 112th Session*, February–November 2012 <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112shrg80073/html/CHRG-112shrg80073.htm>. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to Congress, 30.04.2011, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA584474.pdf>. *Pentagon to Buy Russian Helicopters Despite Ban*, “Sputnik International,” 4.04.2013, <https://sputniknews.com/20130404/Pentagon-to-Buy-Russian-Helicopters-Despite-Ban-18045138.html>.


28 *NATO and Russia hold joint counter-terror exercise Vigilant Skies*, “NATO Press Release,” 26.09.2013, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_103663.htm.

29 L. Freedman, *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 9–19.

plot to bait Moscow into war.³⁰ Consider the release of an intercepted January 28, 2014 phone call between US undersecretary of state Victoria Nuland, and the then US Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt. The two discuss how to “midwife” Yatsenyuk into power. At first glance, the exchange appears suspicious, because the Ukrainian politician would become prime minister soon after Yanukovich’s departure. A simple timeline, however, dispels this myth. Yanukovich, on January 25, 2014, proposed to Yatsenyuk that he serve as prime minister before the Nuland call.³¹ And again, he agreed, during February 20, 2014 negotiations in the presence of Russia’s representative, to a power-sharing arrangement with Yatsenyuk.

Russian disinformation deploys the master narratives of NATO encirclement and Western destabilisation to deflect attention from their own interference. The cause of Yanukovich’s flight was largely internal. The massive protests that started in November 2013, known as Maidan or the Revolution of Dignity, railed against Yanukovich and

his PoR corruption, “dictatorship laws,” and militarised police violence.³² By the time Yanukovich sought compromise, the popular uprising had boiled over to the point where hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, could settle for no less than his removal.



Russian disinformation deploys the master narratives of NATO encirclement and Western destabilisation to deflect attention from their own interference

The well-known, but largely understudied Surkov, Glazyev and Frolov leaks, as well as leaked US State Department cables, uncover how Russia destabilised Ukraine before Maidan. Vladislav Surkov was Deputy Prime Minister of Russia from 2011 to 2013, and assistant to the president, who Russia state media described as “in charge of Ukraine and the Donbass.”³³ Sergey Glazyev, a veteran politician, served in the Duma, and

30 For Russia’s “master narrative” of the US coup and NATO encirclement, see *Address by the President of the Russian Federation*, “TASS,” 21.02.2022, <https://tass.com/politics/824413>. *Putin weighs in on root cause of Ukrainian conflict*, “RT,” 25.11.2022, <https://www.rt.com/russia/567197-putin-ukraine-operation-avoided/>. Earlier versions on the coup include, *US spend up to \$5 billion to overthrow Viktor Yanukovich – Putin*, “TASS,” 28.09.2015, <https://tass.com/politics/824413>. Russia’s representative to the United Nations mentioned before a Security Council inquiry: the “well known Russophobe, godmother of the anti-constitutional coup in Ukraine Ms. Nuland,” *Statement by Permanent Representative Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations*, 21.02.2022, https://russiaun.ru/en/news/210223_n.

31 For a day-by-day outline of events that pinpoints Yanukovich’s power sharing offer on 25 January 2014 that followed a 22 January meeting, see M. Wynnckyj, *Ukraine’s Maidan/Russia’s War: A Chronicle and Analysis of the Revolution of Dignity*, Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2019, pp. 105-107. Zygar reports that Putin pressed Yanukovich to sign the 20 February agreement, M. Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*, New York: Public Affairs, 2016, pp. 262-264, 267. Nuland states that the call occurred on 27 January 2014. *Interview of Victoria Nuland*, “Frontline,” 14.06.2017, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/interview/victoria-nuland/>. Russia propaganda also positions former US President Obama’s 2015 statement that the US “helped broker a deal” on Ukraine’s transition as proof of a coup, but Obama’s remarks reflect the well-known 20 February deal that Putin endorsed. *President Obama’s interview with Fareed Zakaria*, “CNN,” 1.02.2015, <https://ru.usembassy.gov/president-obamas-interview-fareed-zakaria-cnn/>.

32 A. Kurkov, *Ukraine Diaries: Dispatches from Kyiv*, London: Penguin, 2104, pp. 82, 121, 123-24, 133. M. Shore, *The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Much has been written about ultranationalists at Maidan, and the following documents the left currents, E. Channell-Justice, *Without the State: Self-Organization and Political Activism in Ukraine*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022.

33 *Russia and Ukraine are negotiating with the negotiators*, “Kommersant,” 12.02.2020, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4251496>

was an advisor to Putin 2012-2019. Kirill Frolov, a lower-level functionary, assisted Glazyev.

There is considerable debate in the scholarly literature concerning the degree of Russian influence on the separatists before the outbreak of war. Moscow's interference is indisputable, and debates centre on whether Russia's involvement was the catalyst for war (interstate conflict), or if internal grievances were the primary cause ("civil war").³⁴ There is sufficient evidence in the aforementioned leaks and eyewitness accounts that Russian intelligence and military personnel incited rebellion. Moscow disinformation and some leading researchers minimise this intervention as by rogue actors³⁵, or that

Moscow had limited control over the separatists.³⁶ The concern here is how Moscow's support incited armed conflict. Russian intervention in Crimea and Donbas was clear from the start, and even before the outbreak of war. Moscow indisputably selected the separatist leadership, provided money and arms, and launched cross-border missiles in June 2014.³⁷ Much of the scholarly literature on the origins of the war take the position that Russian involvement prior to August 2014 lacks evidence and remains unproven. But the installation of several key separatist leaders, leaked emails and phone calls, as well as artillery shells fired from Russia before it openly deployed soldiers in August 2014, indicate that Russia played a significant role in the origins of the armed conflict.

34 The International Criminal Court (ICC) describes it as an "international armed conflict in eastern Ukraine from 14 July 2014," International Criminal Court, Office of the Prosecutor, *Report on Preliminary Activities*, 5.12.2019, p. 68.

35 Two key actors, Surkov and Glazyev, have served as long term advisors. Surkov was chief of staff, deputy prime minister, and presidential advisor who presided over "managed democracy," Ukraine policy and negotiations. Glazyev was also a long-term advisor and Duma member. He received a medal for the liberation of Crimea in 2014. That these two figures acted entirely on their own strains credulity. *Medal for the liberation of Sevastopol and Crimea*, 3.04.2014, "Sevastopol News," <https://sev.news/2014/04/sevastopol/sobytiya/069218099/>. On Russia instigating conflict, N. Mitrokhin, *Infiltration, Instruction, Invasion: Russia's War in the Donbass*, "Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society," v. 13, 2015.

36 Arutunyan provides extensive examples of Moscow's meddling, based on field research, but concludes that technologists like Surkov and Glazyev acted independently of the Kremlin. A. Arutunyan, *Hybrid Warriors: Proxies, Freelancers and Moscow's Struggle for Ukraine*, London: Hurst & Company, 2022, pp. 154-55. Arel and Driscoll also document Russia's role in the east in the months before deploying Russian soldiers in August 2014, but insist that "there is no compelling evidence that Russian actors controlled events on the ground until August," and that Girkin was acting at this point as a "freelancer," not a Kremlin-controlled intelligence operative. D. Arel and J. Driscoll, *Ukraine's Unnamed War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 3-4. My goal is not to prove the Kremlin directed all events as if it was a controlled experiment or that there were not domestic sources of rebellion, but that at minimum external forces (Russian citizens tied to Moscow) set in motion armed hostilities. Mateeva, who tells the story from the perspective of pro-Russian separatists likewise states, "without question, Russia exploited these events, but did not define them" and argues that the causes are many, largely emanating from internal, regional politics. A. Mateeva, *Through Times of Trouble: Conflict in Southeastern Ukraine explained from within*, London: Lexington Books, 2017, pp. 2-3, 297. Kudelia challenges "monocausal" interpretations that attribute the war to a Moscow plot, because it displaces the domestic sources such as the violent overthrow of Yanukovich, and state fragmentation as much as internal political-emotional conditions. S. Kudelia, *Domestic Sources of the Donbas Insurgency*, "PONARS Eurasian Policy Memo no. 351," September 2014.

37 A. Nikolsky, *The Russian Ministry of Defense announced the conduct of exercises on the application of combined missile strikes*, "Vedomosti," 3.06.2014, <http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/27286071/ukraine-grozyat-raketami> access: 24 February 2023]. S. Case and K. Anders, *Putin's Undeclared War: Summer 2014 – Russian Artillery Strikes against Ukraine*, "Bellingcat," 21.12.2016, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2016/12/21/russian-artillery-strikes-against-ukraine/>. M. Czuperski, J. Herbst, E. Higgins, A. Polyakova, and D. Wilson, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine*, Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2015, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/HPS_English.pdf.

Russia's initial objective was the *Novorossiia* project, or the rebirth of a New Russia in eastern and southern Ukraine as part of the Russian World. That goal failed, and Russia's priority centred on the destabilisation of Ukraine through federalisation.³⁸ Covert operations prior to the cataclysmic events of 2014 were part of a spectrum of activities to destabilise Ukraine. Moscow anticipated that protests would erupt. Russia pressured Yanukovich to join the Eurasian Customs Union (CU) and to avoid signing the European Association Agreement (AA). From July to October 2013, Russia placed customs bans on Ukrainian agricultural and meat products, railway cars and deemed nearly all Ukrainian products "high risk." Russia has long used economic coercion to influence Ukrainian leaders who were attempting to find equilibrium between Western and Russian interests, such as "gas wars" that included a complete shut off in 2006 in one such confrontation.³⁹

The aforementioned Frolov leaks uncovered a summer 2013 Russian policy paper that discusses the "all-round pressure" required to prevent Yanukovich from signing the AA. Yanukovich's "ignorance" regarding the benefits of joining the CU, the document notes, is "provoking a large-scale protest

movement" of pro-Western elements. It will "be extremely difficult for Yanukovich to retain power" as he "is fuelling anti-Russian sentiment because his rule is perceived...as Russian-imposed." As we "wait for the collapse of the current regime," the paper states, the "immediate goals" include the "formation of an influential network of pro-Russian forces," to compel Ukraine to join the CU. This network can force Ukraine's economic dependence on Russia. It will require influence operations in the parliament, business, and media, without revealing "the hand of Moscow." The "personnel basis of this socio-political structure can be the regional leaders of Southern and Eastern Ukraine."⁴⁰

These tactics of fomenting opposition are also evidenced in the Surkov leaks. These email leaks expose how Russia funded local elections, bribed law enforcement and journalists, paid protestors and infiltrated NGOs. Consider also that separatists in Donbas submitted expense sheets to Surkov.⁴¹ Complementary tactics are evident in the Glazyev leaks, where Crimean separatists request payments from the presidential advisor. Glazyev at one point instigates the separatists to take "regional state administration" buildings, and then instructs

38 T. Kuzio, *Russian stereotypes and myths of Ukraine and Ukrainians and why Novorossiia failed*, "Communist and Post-Communist Studies," 2019, pp. 297-309. A. Shandra and R. Seely, *The Surkov Leaks: The Inner Workings of Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine*, London: Royal United Services Institute, 2019, p. vii.

39 D. Cenusă, M. Emerson, T. Kovziridse and V. Movchan, *Russia's Punitive Trade Policy Measures towards Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia*, "Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Working Document," September 2014, [https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/russias-punitive-trade-policy-measures-towards-ukraine-moldova-and-georgia/

40 *On a set of measures to involve Ukraine in the Eurasian integration process*, "Zerkalo Nedeli" 16-22 August 2013, <http://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/o-komplekse-mer-po-vovlecheniyu-ukrainy-v-evraziyskiy-integracionnyy-process-.html> access: 22 February 2023]. On the authenticity of the document, S. Hosaka, *The Kremlin's "Active Measures" Failed in 2013: That's when Russia Remembered its Last Resort: Crimea*, "Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization," 26, Summer 2018, pp. 329-330. The paper also identified the Ukrainian Choice party under Medvedchuk (Putin is godfather to his child) that "can play a leading role in consolidating these forces."

41 A. Shandra and R. Seely, *The Surkov Leaks: The Inner Workings of Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine*, London: Royal United Services Institute, 2019, pp. viii, 13, 22, 24, 28, 39-40, and 50. Author interview of A. Shandra, 31.05.2022.

them to call for Moscow's help, having stated that he had a direct order.⁴² The Kremlin's method is to provoke separatists to create conflict, and pledge to support them, while directing the rebels to appeal to Russia for help. This tactic allows Russia to maintain "plausible deniability", in that they were merely coming to the aid of local, Russian-speaking activists seeking freedom.



The aforementioned Frolov leaks uncovered a summer 2013 Russian policy paper that discusses the "all-round pressure" required to prevent Yanukovich from signing the AA

Pavel Gubarev, former Donetsk people's governor, is one of the "regional leaders" in eastern Ukraine whose first-hand account intersects with the revelations above. Gubarev explains that Yanukovich was "hated and despised not only in the Western parts of Ukraine, but also the southeast." It was no surprise he "brought everything to an explosion." Many in the east were frustrated with Yanukovich's regime. Consider reports of a spike in protests under Yanukovich's rule, and protestors occupying a town hall in the Luhansk region in June 2013, because PoR politicians failed to stop factory shutdowns in the "oligarch-controlled economy."⁴³

Separatists, of course, found no relief in the new government in Kyiv, who they viewed as Western-installed Nazis and "Russophobes." A complicated set of independent socio-political conditions (economic grievances, inflated fears over oppression, bitterness toward Kyiv, mining trade with Russia, the role of local and regional oligarchs in supporting or suppressing revolt, Donbas identity, aspirations to fill power vacuums) that are beyond the scope of this paper commingled with Moscow's clandestine activities to tilt grievances toward armed rebellion. The point here is that Russia's covert (and later overt) operations are a crucial factor in fomenting and maintaining armed conflict. The classification of Maidan and/or Yanukovich's removal as a Western plot not only minimises Ukrainian agency, it simplifies that agency.

Another piece of evidence that Moscow converted aggrieved, frustrated actors toward greater violence is evidenced in Gubarev's testimony. He reveals that there were "only a handful of fighters" and "people were still afraid to shed blood" or to even pick up guns in early 2014. "We did not understand that it was necessary," Gubarev writes, "to behave as in war." During this moment of uncertainty, Gubarev received a phone call from Glazyev. He told Gubarev that "he supported our actions in the anti-fascist struggle." Glazyev's "simple words breathed new strength into me," Gubarev exclaims.⁴⁴ He was now prepared to behave as in war.

42 H. Conyash, *Glazyev tapes debunk Russia's lies about its annexation of Crimea and undeclared war against Ukraine*, "Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group," 26.02.2019, <https://khpg.org/en/1551054011>. A. Umland, *The Glazyev Tapes: Getting at the root of the conflict in Ukraine*, "European Council on Foreign Relations," 1.11.2016, https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_glazyev_tapes_getting_to_the_root_of_the_conflict_in_7165/.

43 *During Yanukovich's rule, the number of protests increased by almost 60%*, "Ukrainska Pravda," 11.07.2013, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2013/07/11/6994098/>. *The Looming Revolt in Lysychansk*, "Ukrainian Week," 22.07.2013, <https://ukraineweek.com/society/85188>

44 P. Gubarev, *Факел Новороссии [Novorossiia Torch]*, Издательство «Питер», 2016, pp. 53, 72, 111-112. Y. Snegirev, *Gubarev: We need budgetary autonomy and our own humanitarian policy*, "Rossiyskaya Gazeta," 11.05.2014, <https://rg.ru/05/12/gubarev.html>; Gubarev was staunchly opposed to Maidan and blamed it on Western influence, and sharply criticised the Ukrainian government for marginalising the Russian language.

Another external source who set off conflict was retired FSB Colonel Igor Girkin, who infamously claims to have “triggered” the war in the east in April 2014. Separatist Alexander Zhuchovsky collected interviews with his comrades that corroborate Girkin’s assertions on inciting a small group of locals to violence. Of special significance is that Girkin also travelled with Kremlin-connected billionaire Konstantin Malofeev to Crimea in January 2014, where they were accompanied by a Russian parliamentarian, Dmitry Sablin and future Duma deputy, Alexander Borodai. Borodai, a Russian citizen who performed public relations work for Malofeev, was appointed prime minister of the DPR. He also advised Sergey Aksyonov, who soon became the PM of Crimea. In June 2014, Borodai acknowledged that Surkov “always provides the Donetsk People’s Republic with serious support” and “is our man in the Kremlin.” Girkin adds that, “Surkov enjoys the trust of Putin.”⁴⁵



Russia’s covert (and later overt) operations are a crucial factor in fomenting and maintaining armed conflict

Taken together, the Surkov and Glayzev leaks illustrate Russia’s active involvement in fomenting “the regional leaders of Southern

and Eastern Ukraine.” These destabilisation efforts were noticed in US State Department memos concerning Crimea as far back as 2006. One cable noted that the “GRU (Russian military intelligence) was active in deliberately fostering interethnic tensions in Crimea,” including providing “money to local groups” for “information campaigns,” such as “anti-NATO protests.”⁴⁶

Conclusion

NATO popularity has increased in Ukraine in recent years because of Russia’s invasion. The Kyiv Security Compact (2022) reasserts its right to self-defence from an aggressor, which entails defence preparation and serious security guarantees, because the 1994 Budapest “assurances” failed to protect Ukraine. Ukraine surrendered its nuclear arsenal in exchange for security commitments in that agreement. Moscow’s fabrication that NATO expansion threatens its existence, and that the West orchestrated a coup next door, aim to delegitimise Ukraine’s right to a viable security arrangement. In the fall of 2021, the US and Ukraine announced a strategic partnership. The Kremlin framed these critical preparations for self-defence as a “provocation.”⁴⁷ In the lead-up to the partnership, Russia mobilised additional forces on the borders of Ukraine, a country that was already under attack and occupation.⁴⁸ Kremlin narratives again reversed the roles of provocateur and reactive party.

45 Borodai: Surkov is our man in the Kremlin, “Actual Comments,” 16.06.2014, https://actualcomment.ru/boroday_surkov_nash_chelovek_v_kremele.html; Former DPR leaders spoke about the role of Surkov in the appointment of Zakharchenko, 11.05.2017, <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/11/05/2017/59144a319a7947212ee57035> access: 22 February 2023.

46 S. Gwaltney, *Ukraine/Belarus/Russia: GOU Views on Russia Defense Relationship*, “US State Department Confidential Cable,” 16.03.2006, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06KIEV1062_a.html

47 US-Ukraine charter aimed at escalating tensions, “TASS,” 11.11.2021, <https://tass.com/world/1359927>.

48 Russia deployed two armies and three airborne formations to the Western borders, “Interfax,” 13.04.2021, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/760994>; P. Shinkman, *Russia threatens US, NATO against action in Ukraine*, “US News & World Reports,” 2.04.2021, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world-report/articles/2021-04-02/fairy-tale-russias-new-threats-to-nato-met-with-dismissals>

It is of critical importance that policymakers, journalists and researchers comprehend how Moscow's magnification of the NATO threat serves its war objectives. A primary goal is to prevent Ukraine from forming an enduring security alliance, and aligning with the European Union.

A durable, stable conflict settlement will not occur under the conditions of a divided, federalised state as many propose. This scenario would allow permanent occupation, and a "frozen conflict" that perpetuates hostilities. To avoid future attack and/or sustained destabilisation, peace protocols must proceed from international norms that uphold territorial integrity and protective alliances, to safeguard that fundamental right in the international arena.

Carl Mirra (MA, MPhil & PhD, Columbia University) is associate professor and director of Liberal Studies-Social Sciences at Adelphi University where he teaches courses in global conflict. His articles have appeared in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *Journal of Applied History*, *Eurasian Affairs* and elsewhere. He has authored several books, including *Soldiers and Citizens: An Oral History of Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Battlefield to the Pentagon* (Palgrave). He travelled across Ukraine in the summer 2022 and Winter 2023 conducting oral history and a public opinion survey as well as providing small-scale humanitarian aid.

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Dr. Dimitar Bechev (Bulgaria, Director of the European Policy Institute)

Dr. Iulian Chifu (Romania, State Counsellor of the Romanian Prime Minister for Foreign Relations, Security and Strategic Affairs)

Amb., Dr. Sergiy Korsunsky (Ukraine, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Japan)

Prof., Dr. Igor Koval (Ukraine, Odesa City Council)

Felix Hett (Germany, Director of the Representation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine)

James Nixey (United Kingdom, Head of the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs)

Amb., Dr. Róbert Ondrejcsák (Slovakia, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Amb., Dr. Oleg Shamshur (Ukraine, former Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to France)

Dr. Stephan De Spiegeleire (The Netherlands, Director Defence Transformation at The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies)

Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (Ukraine, Head of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration)

Dr. Dimitris Triantaphyllou (Greece, Director of the Center for International and European Studies, Kadir Has University (Turkey))

Dr. Asle Toje (Norway, Vice Chair of the Nobel Committee, Research Director at the Norwegian Nobel Institute)

UA: UKRAINE
ANALYTICA

Issue 1 (30), 2023

ISSN 2518-7481