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Putin's War Continues in Ukraine



From Crimea, Russian soldiers on an armored vehicle enter mainland Ukraine, Photo Credit: EPA-EFE

Gerry Janco
The Eurasia Center
International Security Program

www.eurasiacenter.org

Putin's War Continues - Ukraine Fights Back.

A World at War?

The Eurasia Center's International Security Program



Russian invaders fired from the air at the village of Yakovlevka, Merefyansky community, Kharkov region.

Putin's Self-Declared War on Ukraine Continues

Despite the devastating damage wrought by Russian missiles, bombs, artillery, and tanks upon Ukraine and its people, its heroic leaders and its citizens have not surrender. They may become occupied, but they will never surrender, as attested by the two thousand brave townspeople of Kherson, who defied Russian soldiers and tanks and protested in the city center. They remained firm in their defiance, despite Russian soldiers shooting their machine guns in the air to disperse them. Ukraine's tough citizenry have repeated these protests in other cities and towns that have fallen under Russian control while the major cities like Kyiv, Kharkov, and Mariupol remain under siege, bombarded indiscriminately by Russian missiles and artillery. Russian troops have targeted civilian areas and zones of agreed civilian evacuation routes. The World Health Organization has confirmed that the Russian military has attacked 14 Ukrainian health facilities resulting in more dead and wounded. A tactic Russia has used in the Syrian civil war.

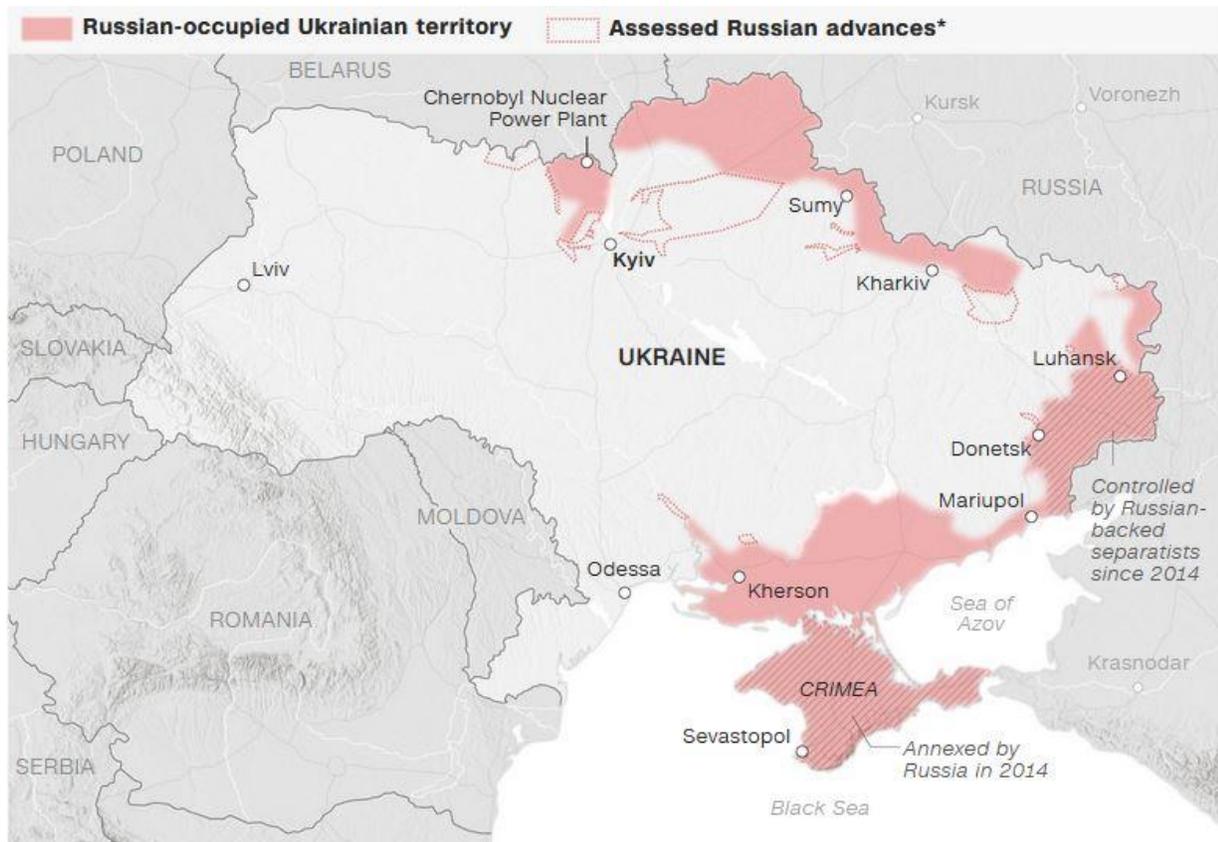


President Zelensky takes a selfie in Kyiv after deciding to stay and defend the city. Twitter Zelensky

In the face of such onslaught, President Volodymyr Zelensky has braved all types of intimidation from Russia, despite his name and members of his Government being on a Russian hit list. He decided to remain in Kyiv and defend his nation. Zelensky, an actor turned President, who just months ago was increasingly unpopular, has become the hero of Ukraine, inspiring millions of its citizenry to face all odds and defend their country. This conflict has created more than 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees to date and the number of refugees will increase exponentially, as many have fled to Poland, Slovakia, and Romania.



The bridge over the Irpin River, near Kyiv, destroyed by a Russian air strike. Photo Credit: AP: Emilio Morenatti



*Assessments by the Institute for the Study of War show that Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks in these areas, but they do not control them.

Note: Data as of March 6, 2022 at 3 p.m. ET

Source: The Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats Project
Graphic: Renée Rigdon, CNN

Kyiv, Odessa, and other cities in Ukraine are being surrounded by Russian troops and artillery. These are the same Russian troops that were just conducting war maneuvers in Belarus, Western Russia, and Crimea according to Putin and his Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. As President Biden National Security Team warned of Russia's eminent invasion, they feverishly denounced such warnings and even cracked jokes. Russia's Foreign Ministry wrote on Twitter on February 16, 2022: "Today we mark another day of the 'start of war with Ukraine,' which did not happen again, to the Western media outlets' regret, no matter how hard they whip up the hysteria."

Even Belarus' Alexander Lukashenko, who has become a servant to Putin, and allowed Russian troops and missiles to be a launching pad for the invasion, continued the big lie by saying:

"You have to admit — if you have any shame at all — that you missed this period under the eyes of the whole global community. You accused Belarus and Russia that we were to invade Ukraine yesterday. We did not. So, your intelligence and billions of dollars that you are spending on it are useless. At least admit this!"

Ukraine showed incredible restraint by not mobilizing its forces or giving Russia one reason to invade, despite false flag operations on the Russian side to promote a justification for the invasion. In the end, Putin just order the invasion on February 23, 2022, ironically on the holiday for the “Defense of the Motherland Day” in Russia. After claiming independence for the two self-proclaimed "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk, in the breakaway Ukrainian region of Donbas, he further justified his invasion of Ukraine in an unexpected broadcast on Russian state television. He claimed that Russia had no choice but to defend itself because "NATO supports Ukrainian neo-Nazis ... our actions are self-defense against threats."

Putin and his rubber-stamped Duma, which he populated and cloned with his sycophants, all the while stealing democracy and robbing the Russian people of any sort of choice while crushing a democratic opposition and silencing an independent press in Russia. The sad reality is that a free Ukraine was not a threat because it would join NATO or become a future missile base; for there were no such immediate plans for its acceptance in NATO, nor were there ever plans for any future missile base. A free Ukraine threatened Russia, Belarus, and Putin’s state of kleptocracy and KGB democracy, the Party of ‘Crooks and Thieves,’ simply because it offered people an alternative, an example of freedom, like West and East Germany.



A section of a Russian convoy, Rudnya-Shpylivska, north of Kyiv. Photo Credit: Maxar Technologies/Reuters

We now know that Putin planned this invasion, perhaps several years in advance, given the yearly large buildups of Russian troops deployments near Ukraine’s borders. We now know that China had

surmised that Russia was going to invade Ukraine, and persuaded Putin postpone the invasion until after the Olympics in China were over. In fact, in the February 4, 2022, Putin-Xi declaration - Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development: Russia and China opposed...

“the further enlargement of NATO and call on the North Atlantic Alliance to abandon its ideologized cold war approaches, to respect the sovereignty, security and interests of other countries, the diversity of their civilizational, cultural and historical backgrounds, and to exercise a fair and objective attitude towards the peaceful development of other States. The sides stand against the formation of closed bloc structures and opposing camps in the Asia-Pacific region and remain highly vigilant about the negative impact of the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy on peace and stability in the region.”

If China could support Russia's dream for a multipolar world opposed to Western hegemony, Russia would support China's ambitions over Taiwan and China's expansion in the Indo-Pacific region. A free Ukraine, Maidan, was also as an example, a threat to China's corrupt authoritarian regime.

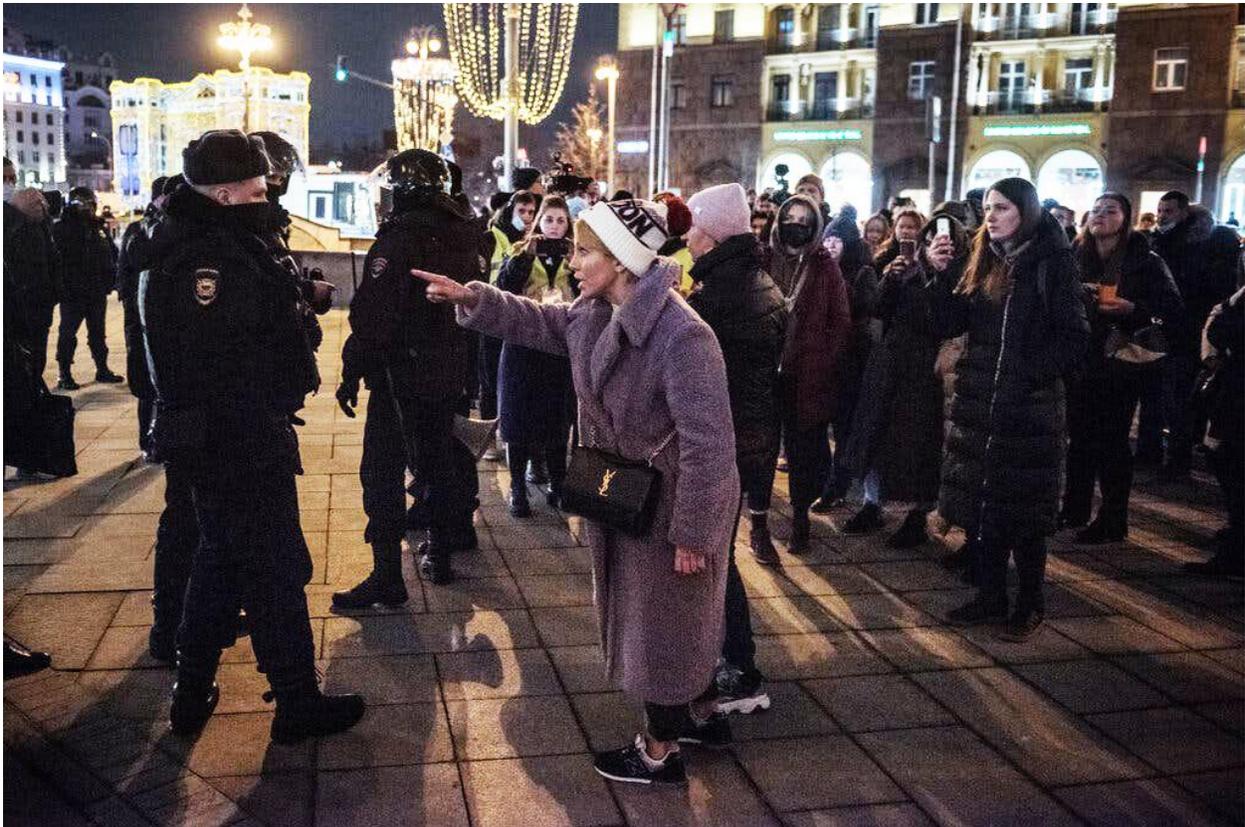
Will Putin Bankrupt Russia to Life below Soviet Standards

Despite heeding warnings that Russia would be severely sanctioned, Putin pressed ahead with the invasion, causing the Russian ruble to swan dive, losing 50% of its value. Russian companies have lost 80% of their value as the Russian Government has shut down the Russian stock market for over one week. In addition to losing over a trillion dollars, Russia's economy will shrink 7% on top of the 3% drop as a result of the pandemic. Now there are news stories that a number of Putin's senior Government officials opposed the war but felt it was their duty to support it. The West and international allies have effectively frozen credit, investment, access to financing and are even sanctioning Russia's central bank's efforts to obtain its reserves to prop up its currency. Belarus will also share this economic pain, as it too is being sanctioned. The Central Bank is forcing Russia's energy producers to sell their foreign currency reserves. In response to a French official stating that France was waging an economic war with Russia, current Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council, Dmitri Medvedev, remarked, “Watch your tongue, gentlemen. Do not forget that in human history, economic wars quite often turned into real ones.”

Companies with links to international brands are now closing their doors in Russia, laying off employees, with thousands of employees in the food, beverage, and tourism industry. Many oligarchs are coming out against the war as it will crater their finances and international holdings. Chinese banks will not accept Russian commodity credits. China's Silk Road Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), headed by China's Jin Liqun, has suspended all business related to Russia

and Belarus because of the crisis in Ukraine. The BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB) has also frozen new transactions with Russia, even though Russia is a member. The G7 sanctioned Russia's central bank, wiping away almost half of the country's foreign reserves held by their financial institutions. International companies have cut corporate and sales ties to Russia are now holding back tens of billions of dollars' worth of future investments in Russia. The nightmare for the Russian people is just beginning as they see their savings and economic future destroyed over a war that could have been avoided through diplomacy. One is not even calculating the severity of economic devastation Russian troops are inflicting on Ukraine's people, infrastructure, and environment.

The Risk of Following Putin



Russian women are bravely protesting the War in Moscow and other cities across Russia.

While the tragedy of this war is that needs both Western leaders and Putin to seek urgent compromises, the sad reality is that Putin has created his own separate reality, trapped in a Covid-19 bubble and left to dwell on his fears and fantasies, surround by an inner circle and Duma who enabled him for years. Whether he has risked nuclear war on the ground level and tested brinkmanship, he has remained for them and many of the older generation of Russians as someone to revere, yet a number of Russians are beginning to wake up and protest against the war. More than

5,000 Russian protestors against the war have been beaten and detained as protests are growing across Russia. These brave citizens have done so despite the threat of heavy penalties. Many brave journalists, actors, musicians have come out against the war and have lost their jobs. However, for many Russians, after absorbing years of lies from Russian state news channels about Ukraine, they remain frozen in the falsehoods and fabrications.

“They are all doing this without worrying about their own future and threats,” said Nobel prize-winning editor, Dmitry Muratov, of Novaya Gazeta. “These people have all spoken very clearly to say that they are against this bloodshed. And that is very inspiring for me.” Novaya Gazeta is printing in both Russian and Ukrainian what is really going on in Ukraine. Russia has blocked Facebook, Instagram, restricted Twitter and has blocked access to foreign media outlets including the Voice of America. Putin signed his Duma’s decree that will imprison journalists for spreading “false reports” about the military for 15 years.

The future of the Russian Dream is at stake, as Putin risks not only environmental catastrophes by attacking Ukrainian nuclear plants but threatening the West with nuclear war and escalating the crisis. The sad reality is that Putin keeps explaining that this is a war of de-Nazification, when there are over 100,000 neo-Nazis in Russia with headquarters in Moscow, and they have adopted the red and white swastika emblem and openly admire German national socialism. In fact, a number of Russian neo-Nazis That Ukraine’s President Zelensky’s family died at the hands of the Nazis, or his father was a colonel in the Soviet Army in WWII, means nothing to Putin, or that a number of politicians in Ukraine are Jewish? The reality of this conflict is that Ukraine, Maiden, its success was a thorn in Putin’s side and he sought to isolate it and weaken it through the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline, however, that project too became a victim of his obsession to control nations and peoples. Putin, in his own rambling speech to the Russian nation, blamed Ukraine for its corruption, for its oligarchs, for its lack of the free press, lack of democracy, in an attempt to justify the war, when in fact he outlined the sins of his regime. What is Putin’s endgame, as he is spending \$15 billion dollars a day to support his war in Ukraine, with no end in sight, to keep a nation and its people as hostages? It is not a war of liberation, no Russian tanks greeted with flowers, it will bring only devastation, ruin, and despair for both Ukrainians and Russians.

The Question Remains – War or Peace?

For the past several years, the Eurasia Center warned of this impending crisis, which could ultimately affect every citizen in this world. The fact that nations were rearming themselves, fighting wars against terrorism, wars to enlarge empires with access to larger resources, and disregarding the benefits of peace brought by the end of the Cold War. In the last decade there was no stress on arms control, but rather the steady buildup of nuclear forces by all nations. With the development of new types of missiles, nations such as Russia and China may become embolden to

use nuclear weapons. Putin has already placed his nuclear forces on alert, his Foreign Minister Lavrov has made implicit warnings about WWIII. A leader such as Putin, may go off course, lose a sense of reality and create a situation that could affect the world. The West has shown incredible restraint in not escalating this war or responding to Russian threats in kind. It is not too late to create a dialogue that can avert World War III, as the previous two World Wars originated in this region of the world. Everything is a stake and we must make it clear to all citizens of the world the future of the world as we know it, is on the line.



Image Credit DW/NATO



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