

## **Trust, Mistrust and broken Promises**

How to make sure we do not understand each other.

### **Introduction**

Belonging to the generation who have grown up and lived through the post WWII years I have – for the most part - come to respect the world order established in that period, in particular the United Nations with all its secondary organisations such as WHO and FAO.

Maybe it is clever propaganda, but we of that generation have believed and trusted that that world order was (or still is?) beyond reproach; it would endure as long as everyone kept to the rules and regulations built into it; that it would ensure that all nations and all people could live together and share this planet in peace and harmony. Indeed it is my conviction that that has been so until perhaps the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It has therefore come as a shock to me to see how Russia find it has to use military power to force its will onto its neighbours. Russia invaded Ukraine on the morning of Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> of February this year (2022) probably with a view to sub-due the country fully and put a puppet government in power. I set out to try to understand what lies behind this action.

Researching the common history of Russia and Ukraine and reading news reports over the past 6 months or so, I have come to the view that they have been closely intertwined for centuries in terms of politics, religion, economy, culture and more at all levels personal, local, national even international level. So much so that it is difficult to tell them apart. I therefore find it difficult to grasp why the Ukrainians now find it so abhorrent to be in a union with Russia or conversely why Russia – as the big brother - find it necessary to bring the smaller partner to heel by such a ferocious display of military might.

In addition I have felt that the issues have not been fully, fairly and objectively represented in the media.

I am not an expert on the affairs of Ukraine and even less those of Russia, but I hope that others can benefit from my findings, which is why I have decided to do this essay.

### **Sources and References**

The main source for the general historical information is the 'Wikipedia' free dictionary found on the internet.

The description of the history is therefore a collection of edited extracts from Wikipedia without any reference to specific details. All other sources have been appropriately referenced.

## Early history

Prehistoric Ukraine, as part of the Pontic steppe, played an important role in



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Eurasian cultural contacts, including the spread of the Chalcolithic, the Bronze Age, Indo-European expansion and the domestication of the horse.

In the migration period, Ukraine is the site of early Slavic expansion, and enters history proper with the establishment of the medieval state of Kievan Rus, which emerged as a powerful nation in the Middle Ages but disintegrated in the 12th century. After the middle of the 14th century, present-day Ukrainian territories came under the rule of three external powers:

1. the Golden Horde (a Mongol, later Turkicized khanate established in the 13th century but largely disintegrated by the end of the 14th century)
2. the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland – during the 15th century these lands came under the rule of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland, then of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (from 1569)
3. the Crimean Khanate (from the 15th century)

After a 1648 rebellion of the Cossacks against the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, agreed to the Treaty of Pereyaslav in January 1654. The exact nature of the relationship established by this treaty between Cossacks and Russia remains a matter of scholarly controversy. The agreement precipitated the Russo-Polish War of 1654–67. In consequence, by the Eternal Peace Treaty, signed in 1686, the eastern portion of Ukraine (east of the Dnieper River) were to come under Russian rule, 146,000 rubles were to be paid to Poland as compensation for the loss of the Right Bank of Ukraine. The treaty was strongly opposed in Poland and was not ratified by the Sejm (parliament of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth) until

1710. The legal legitimacy of its ratification has been disputed. According to some the treaty was not confirmed by a resolution of the Sejm until 1764.

After the Partitions of Poland (1772–1795) and the Russian conquest of the Crimean Khanate, the Russian Empire and Habsburg Austria were in control of all the territories that constitute present day Ukraine for a hundred years.

### **Building an empire**

**Peter the Great** ruled the Tsardom of Russia and later the Russian Empire from 7 May 1682 until his death in 1725, jointly ruling before 1696 with his elder half-brother, Ivan V.

Through a number of successful wars, he captured ports at Azov and the Baltic Sea, ending uncontested Swedish supremacy here, laying the groundwork for the Imperial Russian Navy, and the fulfilment of Peter's own dream of making Russia a maritime power.

It was the beginning of the Tsardom's expansion into a much larger empire that became a major European power. He led a cultural revolution that replaced some of the traditionalist and medieval social and political systems with ones that were modern, scientific, Westernised and based on the Enlightenment.

He began building a large navy and launched about thirty ships against the Ottomans in 1696, capturing Azov in July of that year. On 12 September 1698, Peter officially founded the first Russian Navy base.

In 1697, he traveled "incognito" to Western Europe on an 18-month journey with a large Russian delegation – the so-called "Grand Embassy" visiting among other countries the Netherlands where he met Nicolaes Witsen, mayor of Amsterdam and an expert on Russia. Thanks to Witsen's mediation the Tsar was given the opportunity to gain practical experience in the largest shipyard in the world, belonging to the Dutch East India Company, for a period of four months. The Tsar helped with the construction of an East Indiaman ship specially laid down for him: *Peter and Paul*.

Peter's great rival was the Swedish king Charles XII who in the year 1700 had been attacked on three fronts by a triple alliance of Denmark, Poland and Russia of which Denmark and Poland were quickly vanquished while Tsar Peter survived even after Swedish victories over numerically superior Russian armies in 1700 and 1706.

In 1708, Charles XII ordered a general invasion of Russia, and he decided to ally with the rebellious Cossacks who had revolted against Peter in Ukraine. Ivan Mazepa of the Ukrainian Cossacks, managed to secure a vast area independent of the Russians.

Peter withdrew his army southward, employing scorched earth, destroying along the way anything that could assist the Swedes. Deprived of local supplies, the Swedish army was forced to halt its advance in the winter of 1708–1709. In the summer of

1709, they resumed their efforts to capture Russian-ruled Ukraine, culminating in the Battle of Poltava on 27 June.

However, it is worth noting that in the year 2008 an original of 'Pylyp Orlyk's Constitution' (Pylyp Stepanovych Orlyk (October 11, 1672 – May 26, 1742) was a diplomat, secretary and close associate of [Ivan Mazepa](#)) of 1710, also known as 'The Constitution of Bendery' in the old Ukrainian language was found in the 'Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts'. It was signed by Polyp Orlyk and confirmed by the Swedish king and also names the king 'Protector of Ukraine'. On constitution day (28<sup>th</sup> of June) in 2008, the president Petro Poroshenko remarked that the 1710 Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk is the predecessor of Ukraine's current constitution.

The invasion of Russia had been a disaster for Sweden, spelled the end of its Empire and marked the entrance of Russia onto Europe as a major power and as the founder of this achievement Peter the Great also known as Peter I is admired even by the governors of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

“(H)e did bring up several times his admiration for Peter the Great, so much so I was convinced he sees himself as his incarnation ....(P)ortraits of Peter the Great hung in several important meeting rooms there.”<sup>1)</sup>

Peter continued with his reforms of Russian society especially at government level also after he had had his second wife Catherine crowned as Empress in 1724. He died on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1725.

A bewildering succession of suitors to the Russian imperial crown followed this Catherine I (as she became known) until in 1762 a little known Princess Sophie Friederike Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst-Dornburg came to power following the overthrow of Tsar Peter III to whom she had been married as Empress Consort. Sophie has since been known as Catherine the Great.

Russia colonised the territories along the coasts of the Black and Azov Seas. In the west, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned, with the Russian Empire gaining the largest share. In the east, Russians became the first Europeans to colonise Alaska.

Catherine reformed the administration of Russian guberniyas, and many new cities and towns were founded on her orders. An admirer of Peter the Great, Catherine continued to modernise Russia along Western European lines. However, military conscription and the economy depended on serfdom, and the increasing demands of the state and private landowners intensified this. It was one of the chief reasons behind the large-scale Pugachev Rebellion of Cossacks and others.

Peter the Great had succeeded in gaining a toehold on the edge of the Black Sea, in the Azov campaigns and Catherine completed the conquest of the south. She made Russia the dominant power in south-eastern Europe.

Having procured access to the Black Sea Catherine's government was able to incorporate present-day southern Ukraine. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) gave the Russians territories at Azov, other places, and a small strip of Black Sea coast. The treaty also removed restrictions on Russian naval or commercial traffic in the Azov Sea, granted to Russia the position of protector of Orthodox Christians in

the Ottoman Empire, and made the Crimea a protectorate of Russia. Russia's State Council in 1770 announced a policy in favour of eventual Crimean independence.

### **19<sup>th</sup> Century and the end of the Romanov Dynasty**

After the death of Catherine the Great followed the short reign of Tsar Paul I, subsequently assassinated in 1801. He in turn was succeeded by his son Alexander I and subsequently 4 more tsars until the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century may be described as a period of expansion and consolidation with the Russian empire acting as one unit without any part such as Ukraine playing a unique part or having any influence on any outcome. By the end of the reign of Tsar Nicholas I Russia reached its geographical zenith, spanning over 20 million square kilometres (7.7 million square miles).

Several attempts at governmental and administrative reform were made, but without any lasting success. About Tsar Nicholas II it is argued that "Ultimately progress was undermined by Nicholas's commitment to autocratic rule (and) strong aristocratic opposition. It is possible that similar could be argued in reference to the earlier tsars.

### **The Bolshevik Revolution**

The Russian Revolution was inaugurated with the February Revolution in 1917, this first revolt focused in and around the then - capital now St Petersburg. After major military losses during the war, the Russian Army begun to mutiny. Army leaders and government officials were convinced that if Tsar Nicholas II abdicated the domestic unrest would subside. Nicholas agreed and stepped down, ushering in a new government led by the Duma. It became the Russian Provisional Government dominated by the interests of prominent capitalists, as well as the aristocracy.

In response to these developments, grassroots community assemblies (called Soviets) were formed. They were led by soldiers, urban industrial proletariats, and farmers. The Soviets initially permitted the new Provisional Government to rule. However the Soviets did insist on a prerogative (privilege) in order to influence the government and to control various militias. Russia was locked in a dual power as neither government trusted the other. The Provisional Government held state power in areas such as military and international affairs, whereas the network of Soviets took control of domestic affairs. Critically, the soviets held the allegiance of the working-class as well as the growing urban middle class.



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Many socialist and other political organizations were engaged in a daily struggle and vied for influence within the Duma and the Soviets. One of these factions were the Bolsheviks ("Ones of the Majority") led by Vladimir Lenin. Lenin campaigned on a slogan of peace, land, and bread and promised to cease war with Germany, give land to the peasantry, and end the famine caused by Russia's involvement in WWI. These slogans had a direct effect on the growing Bolshevik popularity.

The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR) was one of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union from the Union's inception in 1922 until its breakup in 1991. In the anthem of the Ukrainian SSR, the republic was referred to simply as Ukraine. The republic was governed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union through its republican branch, the Communist Party of Ukraine, as a union republic of the Soviet Union. It was established by the Bolsheviks following the defeat of the Ukrainian People's Republic in the Soviet–Ukrainian War during the Russian Civil War.

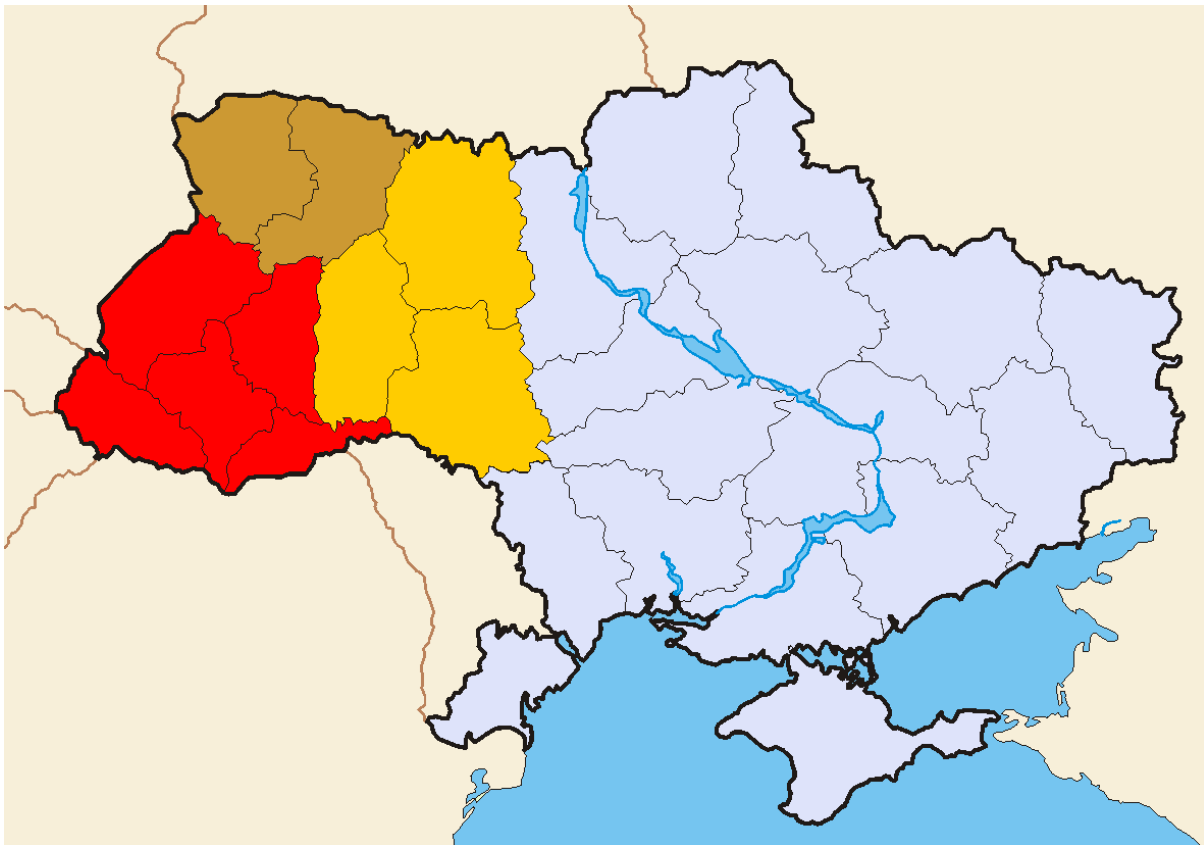
The seat of government was moved in 1934 to the city of Kiev, Ukraine's historic capital. Kiev remained the capital for the rest of the Ukrainian SSR's existence and remained the capital of independent Ukraine after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

## **Western Ukraine**

Western Ukraine is the territory of Ukraine linked to the former Kingdom of Galicia–Volhynia, which was part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Austrian Empire, Austria-Hungary and the Second Polish Republic, and came fully under the control of Moscow only in 1939, following the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. It takes its roots from the Kingdom of Galicia–Volhynia, a successor of Kievan Rus' formed in 1199 after the weakening of Kievan Rus' and attacks from the Golden Horde. As of 1349, both Kievan Rus' and the Kingdom of Galicia–Volhynia lost their independence and Ukrainian territories fell under the control of neighbouring states.

Firstly Ukraine was incorporated into the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, but was later divided between the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire. After the Partitions of Poland, western Ukrainian regions became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while central and eastern Ukrainian regions were still under Russian control.

In 1918, after World War I, Ukrainian territories that had been under Russian control proclaimed independence as the Ukrainian People's Republic, while western Ukrainian territories that had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire proclaimed their independence as the West Ukrainian People's Republic. On January 22, 1919, both states signed the Unification Act, but were divided again between Poland and the Soviet Union. Later, as a result of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union incorporated western Ukraine into the Ukrainian SSR. Ukraine did not gain its independence until the Declaration of Independence in 1991.



Western Ukraine. Copied from Wikipedia, March 2022.

## **Nazi-occupation**

The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was a non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union that enabled those two powers to partition Poland between them. Much to the surprise of the world the pact was signed in Moscow on 23 August 1939 by German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and was officially known as the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

However, less than two years later Nazi Germany enacted 'Operation Barbarossa', the invasion of the Soviet Union on Sunday, 22 June 1941. The operation was aimed at putting into force Nazi Germany's goal of conquering the western Soviet Union and repopulate it with Germans, **Generalplan Ost**. The plan aimed to use some of the conquered people as forced labour while acquiring the oil reserves of the Caucasus as well as the agricultural resources of these territories. Their ultimate goal was the extermination and enslavement of the Slavic peoples, and to create more *Lebensraum* for Germany.

The *Reichskommissariat Ukraine* (abbreviated as RKU) was the civilian occupation regime of much of Nazi German-occupied Ukraine (including adjacent areas of Belarus and pre-war Second Polish Republic). It was governed by the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories with the task of pacifying the region and exploiting its resources and people.

By some, the Wehrmacht soldiers were initially regarded as liberators with a vague promise of a sovereign 'Greater Ukraine' as the Nazis sought to exploit anti-Soviet, anti-Ukrainian, anti-Polish, and anti-Jewish sentiments.

The same sentiments were also behind the numerous massacres and other atrocities committed throughout the occupied territories by various groups against other groups.

## **Post WW II (1945-91)**

In the wake of the Allied victory, efforts had begun to create a new world order with a view to make impossible further conflicts of the same magnitude and seriousness as the two World Wars. It is true to say that the Western social-liberal powers under the leadership of USA put their faith in strong international institutions underpinned by strongly worded treaties such as the United Nations (UN) and its subsidiary organisations, while in Eastern Europe the Soviet Union being the dominant power was seeking to create a zone of satellite states.

(They) "had begun shaping Eastern Europe in their image, bringing the governments of many nations into line with Moscow thereby avoiding what could be termed 'capitalist encirclement'. On February 9, 1946, Premier Joseph Stalin gave a speech in which he declared that war between the East and West was inevitable. On February 22, 1946, the American Ambassador to Moscow, George F. Kennan, sent the famous "Long Telegram" warning of the Soviet Union's perpetual hostility towards the West."<sup>2</sup>)

"Then, on March 5, 1946, at Westminster College in Fulton, Churchill's famous words "From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has



descended across the continent," ushered in the Cold War and framed the geopolitical landscape for the next 50 years."<sup>3</sup>)

The groundwork for the founding of the UN was worked out at an international conference of 51 governments and the UN Charter signed on the 26. of June 1946 and it is – perhaps surprising – to learn that the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was represented with its own delegation headed by Dmitry Manuilsky, an important Bolshevik revolutionary, Soviet politician and academic. However, it is not clear in what way he might have influenced the Charter.

The republic was heavily damaged by the war, and it required significant efforts to recover. Post-war ethnic cleansing occurred in the newly expanded Soviet Union. As of 1 January 1953, Ukrainians were second only to Russians among adult "special deportees", comprising 20% of the total. In addition, over 450,000 ethnic Germans from Ukraine and more than 200,000 Crimean Tatars were victims of forced deportations.

Following the death of Stalin in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev became the new leader of the USSR. He had served as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukrainian SSR in 1938–1949. He was intimately familiar with the republic and began to emphasize "the friendship" between the Ukrainian and Russian nations. In 1954, the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav was widely celebrated. Crimea was transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

By what right could the Crimea be transferred as up until this point it was regarded as an independent republic within the Soviet Union? It had been made a protectorate of Russia by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), but already in 1770 Russia's State Council had announced a policy in favour of eventual Crimean independence.

## **End of the USSR**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union (1988–1991) was the process of internal political, economic and ethnic disintegration within the USSR which resulted in the end of its existence as a sovereign state. It was an unintended result of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's effort to reform the Soviet political and economic system, in an attempt to end the "Era of Stagnation". In late 1991, the leaders of three of the Union's founding and largest republics (**the Russian SFSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the Byelorussian SSR**) declared that the Soviet Union no longer existed.

The process began with growing unrest in the Union's various constituent national republics developing into an incessant political and legislative conflict between them and the central government. Estonia was the first Soviet republic to declare state sovereignty inside the Union in 1988. Lithuania was the first republic to declare independence from the USSR in Act of 1990.

The failure of the 1991 August Coup, when communist hardliners and military elites tried to overthrow Gorbachev and stop the failing reforms, led to the government in Moscow losing most of its influence, and many republics proclaiming independence. The secession of the Baltic states was recognized in September 1991. The Belovezh Accords were signed on December 8 1991 by President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian SFSR, President Kravchuk of Ukraine, and Chairman Shushkevich of Belarus,

recognising each other's independence and creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In Ukraine the late 1980s appear to have been a period of considerable – and it seems hectic - renewal embracing both political and religious affairs. Numerous organizations took part all vying for the limelight, competing for recognition. Hardly a week went by without another rally, some small, some with thousands of people in attendance and all to the annoyance of the authorities striving to keep order.

Much of the political activity was happening in parallel with religious activities as both were seeking independence from larger established organizations. It is worth noting that the said rallies often took place in front of or near a cathedral or other revered monument and sometimes included an unauthorised religious service.

The 'Ukrainian Language Society' was founded in February 1989. On October 28, 1989, the Ukrainian Parliament decreed that with effect from January 1, 1990, Ukrainian would be the official language of Ukraine, while Russian would be used for communication between ethnic groups.

In March that year the 'Memorial Society' was founded followed later by a mass meeting at the site of a mass grave of Ukrainian and Polish victims of Stalinist terror.

In September 1989 RUKH (the People's Movement of Ukraine) was founded following a protest by tens of thousands across Ukraine against a new law that reserved special seats for the Communist Party and for other official organizations.

And in October the same year the Ukrainian branch of 'Friends of the Earth' (Zelenyi Svit) held its founding congress.

From mid-May to September 1989, Ukrainian Greek-Catholic hunger strikers staged protests to call attention to the plight of their Church. On August 19, 1989, the Russian Orthodox Parish of Saints Peter and Paul announced it would be switching to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. In February a program and statutes of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church had been published by the Writers' Union of Ukraine.

### **Independent Ukraine**

Ukraine officially declared itself an independent country on 24 August 1991, when the communist Supreme Soviet (parliament) of Ukraine proclaimed that Ukraine would no longer follow the laws of USSR and only the laws of the Ukrainian SSR, de facto declaring Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union. On 1 December, voters approved a referendum formalizing independence from the Soviet Union. Over 90% of Ukrainian citizens voted for independence, with majorities in every region, including 56% in Crimea.

Until 8 June 1995, Ukraine's supreme law was the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Ukrainian SSR (adopted in 1978). On 8 June 1995, President Leonid Kuchma and Speaker Oleksandr Moroz (acting on behalf of the parliament) signed the Constitutional Agreement for the period until a new constitution could be drafted.

The first constitution since independence was adopted during an overnight parliamentary session after almost 24 hours of debate of 27–28 June 1996, unofficially known as "the constitutional night of 1996." The Law ratifying the constitution, nullifying previous constitutions and the Agreement was ceremonially signed and promulgated in mid-July 1996. According to a ruling of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, the constitution took force the moment the results of the parliamentary vote were announced on 28 June 1996 at approx. 9 am Kyiv Time. Ukraine was the last of the post-Soviet states to adopt its own constitution. On Constitution Day 2018, President Petro Poroshenko remarked that the 1710 Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk is the predecessor of Ukraine's current constitution.<sup>4)</sup>

Relations between Ukraine and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) started in 1992. Ukraine applied to begin a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2008, but the question of membership was shelved in 2010.

An Association Agreement between the European Union (EU) and Ukraine establishing a so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) was initiated in 2012. It was intended to create a framework for co-operation between the partners covering such areas as the development of political, trade, social, cultural and security links.

However, the Ukrainian government suspended preparations for signing the association agreement in 2013, during the presidency of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich, who attended the EU summit in Vilnius on 28–29 November 2013 where the association agreement was originally planned to be signed but it was not.

On 7 February 2019, the Verkhovna Rada voted to amend the constitution to state Ukraine's strategic objectives as joining the European Union and NATO.

### **Understand the Mis-understandings**

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is a security organisation with 57 participating governments from Europe, Central Asia and North America including Ukraine, Russian Federation and Belarus. Founded in 1975 its activities include prevention of conflicts, crisis management and redevelopment.

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union and the gradual dissolution of the old security arrangements it was felt that a new arrangement was needed and at a summit meeting in Istanbul in November 1999 a "Charter for European Security" was drawn up.

Chapter II of the Charter "OUR COMMON FOUNDATION" included a paragraph (paragraph 8) as follows:

"8. Each participating State has an equal right to security. We reaffirm the inherent right of each and every participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliance, as they evolve. Each State also has the right to neutrality. Each participating State will respect the rights of all others in these regards. They will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States. Within the OSCE no State, group of States or organization can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining

peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence.”

When NATO and later the EU expanded their membership to include several countries which the Russians considered to be part of their sphere of influence. They will further argue that the involvement of NATO in strengthening the military defence capability of these countries has been at the expense of the security of Russia itself and that NATO therefore is in breach of the above paragraph.

Nevertheless, having worked in the office of the mayor of St. Petersburg to attract foreign investment Mr. Putin does appear to have been guardedly open to the West early in his rule. He apparently mentioned the possibility of Russian membership of NATO to President Bill Clinton in 2000, but the idea never went anywhere. He also maintained a Russian partnership agreement signed with the European Union in 1994 and a NATO-Russia Council was established in 2002.<sup>5)</sup>

The disagreement goes back to February 1990 and is rooted in a post-Cold War settlement that Vladimir Putin (Russian president since May 2000) sees as having been unfairly dictated to Russia. Claus Mathiesen (a Danish Academic) says: “Yes, Russia was included in an agreement that definitively declared the Union for dead. But it was not voluntarily. It was a situation when nothing else could be done. The dissolution of the Soviet Union happened within a framework of economic downfall, ideological ruin and call for independence from strong national movements, who fought to escape the Russian dominance.”<sup>6)</sup>

“Yeltsin expected that Russia would be welcomed into the ‘West’ with a massive aid package and NATO membership. Instead, it was left in the ‘East’ and received meagre humanitarian assistance. After decades of being told that they represented the world’s leading civilisation, Russians were reduced to eating expired US military rations. The Yeltsin administration’s economic ‘shock therapy’, carried out in consultation with Western advisors, brought an atmosphere of brutal lawlessness that enriched a few and impoverished many others.”<sup>7)</sup>

Looming most of all is the question of *NATO*: Putin considers the expansion of the alliance to Eastern Europe and the Baltic states a direct threat to Russia’s security, and the idea of Ukraine drawing closer to *NATO* an existential red line. In his mind, given that Western leaders once promised that *NATO* would not expand toward Russia’s borders, he is merely rectifying a geopolitical injustice. At his annual press conference last December (2021 ed), Putin made his version of events clear: “ ‘Not one inch to the East,’ they told us in the nineties. So what? They cheated, just brazenly tricked us!”<sup>8)</sup>

The phrase “not one inch” is a reference to a statement made by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and in the years since it has taken on the qualities of a geopolitical “Rashomon” moment. Who promised what to whom? At what cost? And who is to blame for the fact that a brief window of co-öperation between the West and Russia has turned into years of mistrust and recrimination?<sup>9)</sup>

Some has tried to belittle the significance of James Baker’s remark:

“(I)n an effort to persuade him to accept the reunification of Germany. Baker asked the Soviet president (Gorbachev ed.) whether he would prefer to see an independent Germany, outside NATO, or one inside it “with assurances that NATO’s jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position?”

“It was no more than a suggestion, not a promise or a guarantee, according to the Americans. But the subsequent expansion of NATO into the countries of the former Warsaw Pact was seen by the Kremlin as a betrayal of this “international agreement.” Whatever the reality of what was meant by Baker’s words, Putin’s version of this broken promise has since festered as an *idée fixe*, a source of grievance and resentment of the West, which has fuelled his foreign policy and anti-Western nationalism.”<sup>10)</sup>

“Most of us remember the end of the Cold War as a “a tale of victory, freedom, opportunity. Many millions of people saw their lives suddenly open up and expand. .... But what if, from the perspective of today, the impact that same story had on someone like Putin, who saw it as a catastrophe, is no less relevant? There is a non-insignificant chance we could see, in 2022, a massive European land war that is a result, at least in part, of the way Russia believes the West handled the end of the Cold War.”<sup>11)</sup>

## **Conclusion?**

Writing finished March 2022.

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