



**A US-BASED ANTIFASCIST PERSPECTIVE
ON A POTENTIAL WAR IN UKRAINE
FEBRUARY 15 2022**

War in Ukraine... where are the fascists?

The answer is that fascists are present on multiple sides. While none of the states involved are ruled directly by open fascists, there are fascist adventurers present in Ukraine, Russia, and also within the US military. This short presentation will outline their involvement.

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HOW PAST WARS INFLUENCE THE PRESENT (1)

Ukraine has a complicated history. So do most other nation states, but this needs to be stated because US observers so often overestimate our understanding of this history. As onlookers from an imperial core, we need to be extremely careful not to ignore and speak over the actual living people in countries more peripheral to power.

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HOW PAST WARS INFLUENCE THE PRESENT (2)

One thousand years ago Russia and Ukraine were both part of "Kyivan Rus". This was not a nation state as we understand it today, but a federation of ethnically and linguistically related Slavic peoples. The Mongol empire ended Kyivan Rus. Nation states began to form in the aftermath, leading eventually to modern-day Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Ukraine was not independent for much of its modern history. Austria ruled western Ukraine for around 150 years. Ukraine was briefly independent for two periods between 1917-1920, then absorbed into the Soviet Union. Ukraine declared independence again in 1991.

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HOW PAST WARS INFLUENCE THE PRESENT (3)

What the US calls "World War II" was fought heavily on Ukrainian ground. As in other European countries, there was collaboration with the Nazis. There were also many who fought the Nazis. 4.5 million Ukrainians joined the Red Army to fight Nazi Germany. 16% of the Ukrainian population died during WWII, as compared to a rate of 13% for the overall Soviet Union.

These facts are important to note, since some US onlookers treat the achievements of the Soviet Red Army as belonging to modern-day Russia alone.

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2014: RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONS IN CRIMEA AND DONBAS (1)

The Crimea and Donbas region of Ukraine contains a mix of ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians. Like many border regions, there is potential for both coexistence and conflict. After Ukraine's Euromaiden protest movement culminated in the ousting of Ukraine's president in February 2014, Russia invaded then annexed Crimea. Russian proxies also led separatist movements in Donbas, eastern Ukraine, resulting in two Russia-backed quasi-states.

Russian leaders claim that Crimea belongs to Russia: it was bought by Russia from the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century. Many Ukrainians see the loss of Crimea as another land grab in a long history of land grabs by stronger neighbors.

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2014: RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONS IN CRIMEA AND DONBAS (2)

The Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine are nominally independent but receive major support from Russia in terms of material and also media. This media pushed different justifications for the invasion towards different audiences.

Within Russia, it pushed the invasion as necessary to protect ethnic Russians from genocide. To left-leaning Europeans, it pushed the invasion as attacking fascism.

Russian media is well funded and heavily state controlled, as opposed to Ukrainian media, which is fragmented and lacks resources.

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2014: RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONS IN CRIMEA AND DONBAS (3)

The Ukrainian state during this time and also today is weak. During the invasion, it relied heavily on volunteer militias for defense, some of whom were openly fascist, such as the Azov Battalion and forces linked to Right Sector.

Ukraine also relied on US and NATO member support in the international arena. However, Russia supplies much of Western Europe's energy needs with natural gas delivered by pipelines that run through Ukraine: this means that Western Europe has a strong interest in maintaining neutral relations with Russia. The balance of interests has led to stalemate in eastern Ukraine.

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FAR RIGHT MILITIAS IN UKRAINE (1)

Ukrainian politics are characterized by conflict between diverse groups and a push-pull relationship with Russia. There are numerous political parties: the dominant ones are generally centrist economically and pro-Western-Europe in orientation. The left is fragmented whereas the right is more unified.

Despite the operation of openly fascist and Nazi militias in Ukraine, in 2019 Ukrainians elected a Jewish president (Zelensky) who won on an anti-corruption platform. This sort of inconsistency confuses US onlookers accustomed to our strong militarized state, not a weak militarized state.

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FAR RIGHT MILITIAS IN UKRAINE (2)

The Azov Battalion is the most notorious example of a Ukrainian far right militia. Its insignia contains clear Nazi imagery. The Right Sector is another militia containing open Nazis. These militias also recruited foreign fighters. Nazis from Europe and the US traveled to Ukraine, attracted by violent Azov propaganda and the perception that their ideology could seize power in a Ukrainian power vacuum.

When the political situation in Ukraine stabilized slightly, these militias were folded into Ukraine's military and regulated. The Ukrainian state also deported some foreign fighters.

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FAR RIGHT MILITIAS IN UKRAINE (3)

Azov is still active, and far right militias with ties to far right political parties still operate. In 2022 far right militias have led some civilian training exercises in preparation of a Russian invasion.

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FAR RIGHT MILITIAS IN RUSSIA (1)

The Russian Imperial Movement is a far right group based in St. Petersburg. Its politics are Russian monarchist, Ultra-Orthodox and pro-Nazi, and its focus is international in scope. RIM cultivates ties with Nazi groups in Europe and also the US: this includes US-based Nazis such as the Traditionalist Worker Party (now defunct). In 2014, RIM began training fighters and sending them to Eastern Ukraine.

Putin's government does not officially support the RIM. However, its presence is tolerated as long as its focus remains international and not domestic.

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FAR RIGHT MILITIAS IN RUSSIA (2)

The Wagner Group is a Russian mercenary organization with ties to the Russian state. It is headed by a wealthy businessman friendly to Putin and operates in Syria and several African countries. The Wagner Group contains a subgroup, Task Force Rusich, which is openly Nazi. Task Force Rusich has gained a reputation for war crimes in Donbas and Syria.

The relationship of the Wagner Group to the Russian state is not unlike the relationship of Blackwater mercenaries to the US state during the US invasion of Iraq.

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FAR RIGHT MILITIAS IN RUSSIA (3)

Why does the Russian government promote a narrative of antifascism in the Ukrainian conflict while also providing cover to openly fascist groups? Simply put, Russian state media is full of cynical disinformation. Putin's government is authoritarian capitalist, neither communist nor fascist, and is concerned with power, not ideology.

Rightwingers are given a narrative that Russia is upholding tradition and religion against decadent progressives. Leftists are told that the US, NATO and Ukraine are forces for fascism and that Russia is their victim.

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THE US AND THE LEGACY OF THE COLD WAR (1)

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the US was left in search of an ideological enemy to define itself against. Several generations of anti-communist propaganda evolved a culture in which economic imperialism is expected to be justified ideologically somehow.

The WTC attack in 2001 promised a new enemy, and a surge of US Islamophobia resulted. Neoconservatives took control of foreign policy and called for US intervention in many states. Despite popular anti-war demonstrations, the neoconservatives continued the occupying wars for yet another generation.

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THE US AND THE LEGACY OF THE COLD WAR (2)

Trump's election marked a reaction against neoconservatism and corresponding move towards paleoconservatism. The paleoconservative approach to wielding imperial power is often called isolationist, but this is not exactly true: paleoconservatives support wars that are punitive or transactional.

Charles Lindbergh, Donald Trump, Tucker Carlson and the America First movement led by Nick Fuentes are all examples of paleoconservatives. The Republican Party is now split between neoconservatives or "Reagan Republicans" who support intervention in Ukraine and paleoconservatives who support Russia and nonintervention.

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THE US AND THE LEGACY OF THE COLD WAR (3)

The Soviet empire fell rapidly in 1991 while the US empire has decayed at a slower rate. Liberal and centrist power figures such as Biden operate with diminished certainty and looser alliances than in the Cold War. In February, some Biden statements regarding imminent Russian invasion may have inflamed the situation more than necessary, but he has also stated he will not send US troops.

On the Russian side, the legacy of the cold war allows Putin to rally domestic support in Russia by invoking opposition to the US and NATO.

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WHAT DO U.S. FASCISTS THINK? (1)

Fascists in the US have moved on from the cold war era in a way that liberals, centrists, and many leftists have not. Many realize that Russia is not communist in any way, so their usual anti-communism does not apply. They are emboldened by the successes of mainstream paleoconservative cryptofascists like Tucker Carlson. A slogan called "No More Brother Wars" is increasingly popular, and calls back to the idea that white people should not fight other white people, but rather band together in order to subjugate racial enemies. The explicitly Nazi variation of this slogan is that all wars between white people are caused by Jewish influence.

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WHAT DO U.S. FASCISTS THINK? (2)

Another important phrase to understand US fascism is “Bring the War Home”. Fascism perceives its main enemy as a conglomerate of liberalism, socialism and anarchism, and will oppose any war perceived to benefit liberals or fought for “liberal values”. Fascists also idolize war and promote participation in wars in order to gain military training.

As a historical example, the war in Vietnam in the 1970s led to a spike in white supremacist violence in the 1980s as some returning white veterans repurposed the military skills they had learned against Vietnamese to attack their enemies at home.

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WHAT DO U.S. FASCISTS THINK? (3)

In the early days of the invasion of Ukraine in 2014, US fascists were split between Russia and Ukraine. They determined support mainly for aesthetic reasons: whichever militia was most openly Nazi and posted the most extreme social media would win their support. Nazi troll “Weev” at the Daily Stormer was an early promoter of the Azov Battalion, for example.

Today, the balance has tipped towards support of Russia, which is seen as “strong”, or calls for nonintervention. The election of centrist Presidents in both the US and Ukraine probably tipped the balance. This could tip back in the future, however.

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THE GEORGIA CONNECTION (1)

Sam Dickson is a white supremacist and former Klan lawyer who lives in Buckhead and makes his money by exploiting working-class Black Atlanta residents in shady real estate deals. He runs a small but well-connected white nationalist group called the Charles Martell Society, with Martin O'Toole, the Georgia spokesperson for the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Sam Dickson has made several trips to Russia in order to conference with far right and Ultra-Orthodox groups. He attended a conference in 2015 in St. Petersburg that included both the Russian Imperial Movement and Greece's fascist Golden Dawn party.

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THE GEORGIA CONNECTION (2)

Ryan Burchfield is an example of a failed foreign fighter on the Ukrainian side. Burchfield was part of a small group of Neo-Nazis in Georgia, many of whom had US military connections. He joined the Nazi accelerationist group called "The Base" then traveled to Ukraine in order to fight for Right Sector. His exact activities in Ukraine were unclear, but he was deported by the Ukrainian government in 2020.

In this time period, many Nazis stated their intention to gain military skills in eastern Ukraine which they could then use for a race war once they returned home.

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THE GEORGIA CONNECTION (3)

In 2020, north Georgia members of "The Base" were arrested for (among other things) planning to assassinate a north Georgia family that they believed were members of our group (they were not). The assassination plot was in retaliation of our exposure of Base members such as Ryan Burchfield.

In the aftermath of The Base's downfall, it was revealed that the national leader was a wealthy former US military contractor known as Rinaldo Nazzaro. Nazzaro now lives freely in St. Petersburg. Nazzaro's ties to both the US and Russian states reveal fascist complicity on both imperial sides.

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ANTI-WAR, ANTI-IMPERIALIST... BUT NOT CAMPIST

What is campism? Campism is an approach to complicated political situations that basically says "pick your team and stick with it no matter what". Some leftists understandably disgusted by US imperialism have chosen to "stick with" any state which opposes the US, which means supporting Russia's interventions in Ukraine and ignoring all dissenting Ukrainian voices or writing them off as somehow "genetically fascist" or "not a real country".

We believe this plays right into fascist hands and allows for fascist entryism into anti-war movements. It also avoids addressing Russian responsibility for the situation.

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ANTI-WAR, ANTI-IMPERIALIST... BUT NOT CAMPIST

When we exposed Ryan Burchfield, a US Marine Corps dropout who went to fight for a pro-Ukrainian Nazi militia, we were targeted for murder by The Base, whose leader was provided cover by the Russian state. The situation is complicated to say the least, but becomes clearer once we treat the welfare of human beings caught in the crossfire as more important than the purity of states and borders.

We hope this presentation has been useful, and we encourage people to educate themselves further on the conflict by listening to the people who are most affected in the region.

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