

Ukraine

## Anti Russia

Why does Putin hate Ukraine so much? Because it shows him and the world that the Russians could also live in a completely normal, modern country.

By **Dmitry Glukhovsky**

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The Russian writer Dmitry Glukhovsky is a harsh critic of Putin. © picture alliance | Bernd Weißbrod/dpa

Nobody would have thought that such a war – a fratricidal war, a war of conquest under the pretext of cheap provocations – would still be possible in our century. But modern-day Russia is under the thumb of a man whose mindset and bizarre worldview seem capable of catapulting that same world back in time.

Putin expressed his hatred and contempt for the Ukrainian state as it is today early on. In a programmatic article from July last year, he described Ukraine as "Project Anti-Russia," as Russia's artificial antipode, which the EU and US had used as a testing ground for their anti-Russian campaigns.

The closed-mindedness, suspicion, absolute distrust of our President, his contempt for the mere idea of an equal partnership based not on self-interest but on values, his constant search for the guile of the "transoceanic partner", the USA - all of this leaves to a *professional deformation* return - the many years

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in the service of the KGB are noticeable. But maybe it's also because he has ruled for 20 years now, the last ten of them in fact as absolute monarch, surrounded by an entourage of parasites who owe him everything, whom he has learned to despise and whom he apparently no longer does familiar—a well-known fate of every absolute despot.

Today's Putin no longer leans on his people, whose hopes he is indifferent to. Nor does he speak in the interest of the big corporations, all of which are subservient to him. He offers both this and that not bread, but circuses: the enthusiasm after the annexation of Crimea was followed by the horrors of the civil war in Donbass, finally the drama of a new spiral of the Cold War and now the subjugation of

insubordinate Ukraine.

The best of Z+

**Wladimir Putin**

### How far will Putin go?

[<https://www.zeit.de/2022/10/wladimir-putin-russland-ukraine-krieg-atomwaffen>]

So Ukraine, says the Russian President, is "anti-Russia". But what is Putin's Russia in 2022? What kind of country is emerging under his leadership, what legacy does he want to leave behind for future generations? Putin continually accuses the Ukrainian rulers of abetting Nazism, calling them "heirs to the Ukrainian auxiliary police force" or *banderowtsy*, like the Ukrainian law enforcement units in the service of the German occupiers in World War II were called. He is cementing a system of rule that is literally based on "blood and soil": Like Hitler before the Second World War, he is bringing all areas in which former compatriots live "home to the Reich" - or as the Russian expression is, he "gather the countries". At the same time, the prophets of the so-called Russian world proclaim their gospel in propaganda talk shows on all Russian television channels. Resentment-based notions of imperial-nationalist Russian revenge, coupled with claims about the inferiority and dependent status of the former Soviet republics, have been incessantly promoted by the propaganda that has dominated the Russian mass media for the past decade or so.

Putin says Ukraine is corrupt through and through. At the same time in Russia corruption state institutions has reached such proportions that large corporations (which have long since belonged to the power elite via straw men)

can neither be separated from the secret services (which permeate the Russian authorities and the oligarchy like a mushroom network) nor from organized crime (which has services and employed the military instead of fighting them). Corruption is not a defect of the state apparatus in Russia, it is systemically important. Basically, Russia is administered by oligarchic officials, many of them veterans of the FSB, whose mentality and language stem from the criminal subculture. No wonder, then, that both our country's top leadership and diplomats sometimes resort to prison jargon and swear words in public.

Putin accuses Ukraine of attacking press freedom: After Russia annexed Crimea and started a hybrid war in Donbass with the help of pro-Kremlin partisan groups and soldiers without national insignia, the broadcasting of Russian media was restricted in Ukraine. At that point, our journalists acted towards the Kiev government like a special military propaganda that systematically discredited, even dehumanized, the Ukrainians and thus prepared the Russian TV audience for the "just" war against the "puppet regime". In recent years, Russian politics has disappeared from our television, so to speak. All programs either drag the political life of Ukraine through the mud or talk about a confrontation between Russia and the West. The tenor of these shows, which have been successful in manipulating public opinion in Russia, is in tune with Putin's rhetoric. So you don't have to ask long who is your most important viewer and at the same time source of ideas.

The few independent Russian media – especially those that dared to investigate corruption – were persecuted and repressed. The best of them have been declared foreign agents: now they are obliged to mark all articles and tweets with this disgrace. If they violate the draconian measures, they face criminal prosecution. Alexei Navalny was first punished for his anti-corruption investigations with a poison attack, but now he may remain behind bars for life.

## **Sanctions on Russia - Russian ruble falls more than 40 percent**

*Due to numerous economic sanctions against Russia, the Russian currency has fallen in value drastically. Long queues formed in front of ATMs.*

Putin speaks of the impoverishment of the Ukrainian population and the fact that almost every sixth Ukrainian has to earn his money abroad. But even in Russia, the people are sinking increasingly into poverty. The borscht index - a purchasing power indicator calculated using the ingredients for the popular beetroot soup - has doubled in five years, but the income level of the population has remained the same. Half of Russian youth want to leave the country.

It seems that Putin is not talking about Ukraine's problems, but about Russian ones. But whence then this implacable hostility, whence all the dislike and contempt for sovereign Ukraine, whence the steadfast refusal to believe in this country?

## **Ukraine is an example of a functioning democracy**

I have visited Ukraine many times, both before and after 2014. With each passing year, the difference between our two countries has become more and more clear to me. Ukraine was and remains a very free country. A country whose social and political life has always been characterized by chaos. It bears a strong resemblance to the Russia of before Vladimir Putin took office, and the longer Putin was in power, the clearer the differences became. From year to year in Russia order increased and freedom decreased. Today the difference to Ukraine is enormous. Russia is a police state with an almost dictatorial order. And there is almost as much freedom left here as in a dictatorship.

Ukraine, on the other hand, has actually become a kind of anti-Russia: despite the chaos and total corruption, it is an example of a functioning democracy. During the elections, power shifted from one political-financial conglomerate to the other. When one of the parties tried to usurp power, people took to the streets demanding justice. In contrast, no real opposition has been admitted to the Russian elections for 20 years.

In Russia, the choice has always been between the incumbent government and obvious bogeys on imperial nostalgia and nationalist revanchism. Meanwhile, the ruling power itself has become such a bogeyman, repeating these very slogans, that it has now begun to revive the Frankenstein monster of the Great Russian Empire by attempting to sew the remains of long-shed extremities onto the rump of the former motherland.

In Ukraine, attempts have been made to establish a modern nation-state. Ukraine has remained open-minded and has only lamented the skepticism of the West, which was reluctant to take it under its wing. Russia, on the other hand, has become more and more isolated and sealed off and increasingly believes in the assertion of an existential conflict with the West.

## **NATO - German naval ships are moving towards the eastern border**

*Three minehunters and a supply ship left Kiel for the Baltic Sea. They are intended to strengthen NATO against the background of the Ukraine war.*

It seems to me that Ukraine's main problem is that it is showing Putin and the world that we, the Russians, could also do things differently: that people who

are no different from us, who have the same background, the same mentality and culture, do not necessarily have to live in barracks, to patriotic drum rolls and church singing, but can live in a completely normal, modern country. That it is possible to resist an authoritarian regime. That political elites are accountable to the people – and can be replaced.

Allowing such a Ukraine to continue to exist and develop would bring the Russian model into disrepute. Consequently, our propaganda has spared no effort to denigrate and denounce Ukraine. And now that our own model is at an impasse, we have no choice but to destroy this anti-Russia. No to war.

*Translated from the Russian by David Dreves*