

## Vladimir Putin



**THERE IS MUCH SPECULATION** about his mental state and his physical health. In fact, Vladimir Putin is something of an enigma, a puzzle. It is pointless speculating and trying to unravel his meaning and his intentions. All we can do take him as we find him, judge him on what he says and does. In February when he launched the invasion of Ukraine, he prepared his soldiers and political police for a short campaign, maybe four or five days, in which he would capture the Ukrainian government, arrest or kill the nationalist and Nazi ministers, and replace them with pro-Russian ones. He imagined that he could remodel the Ukrainian state within a week or so. We know this because he equipped his invasion force to do just that.

He did not understand that Ukrainian nationalism has developed a democratic outlook since the country left the Soviet Union, and particularly since the events of 2013 and 2014. This was when Moscow's puppet government was overthrown, and replaced by

democratic Western-facing governments. It was these events which started the war in the Donbas, and prompted the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea. Indeed, it was the ease of the seizure of Crimea – little or no fighting or organised resistance – which encouraged him to equip his attack on Ukraine’s capital city for a swift and almost effortless lightening strike. Putin’s military planners and logistics experts imagined simply mopping up Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s government and taking over the state within a week.

This miscalculation was prompted by Putin’s belief that Ukrainian nationalism is profoundly reactionary; it is rooted in a misunderstanding of Ukrainian history, and given over to the belief that Ukrainian nationalists are committed entirely to embracing Russia’s enemies. Putin sees this as part of the twentieth century experience in which Ukrainian nationalists have at different times since 1917 associated themselves with Imperial Germany, Josef Pilsudski’s Poland, ethnic cleansing, and the Third Reich. Now they are lining up with NATO. In Putin’s world this is a coherent historical pattern in which Ukrainian nationalists are the inveterate enemies of Russia and her people.

It does not seem to have registered with Putin that Ukraine is a new state informed by entirely new priorities. Olena Zelenska, the president’s wife, and ‘first lady’, put it like this;

“People who were born in independent Ukraine are now in their thirties. It’s a new generation, so nobody in Ukraine can understand their pretext or reasons for invading us.”

The routine use of “Nazi” and “fascist” to describe Ukraine’s politicians and public, is a graphic example of how Putin and his advisers are informed by a history that has been overlayed and overtaken by novel developments and new generations.

The language question – who speaks Russian as their mother tongue – is another peculiarity of Putin’s misreading of Ukraine. He seems to believe that Russian speakers are routinely oppressed and discriminated against by the Russia-phobic state in Kyiv. This is manifestly absurd because Zelenskyy and his wife were both raised speaking Russian in Russian-speaking homes. An enormous number of Ukrainians have grown up speaking Russian and will no doubt continue to do so. People speaking Russian is not a problem in Ukraine – although the brutality of the Russian forces in the present war cannot be doing much for cultural diversity.

So, what is Putin about, what’s he up to? For this we must turn to his recent diatribe on the annexation of the Donbas territories. His speech ended in the following manner:

“We are fighting for a fair world for our country. The idea of exceptionalism is criminal and we must turn this shameful page. The breaking of the West’s hegemony is inevitable.

“There is no going back. We are fighting for our ‘vast historic Russia’. Our values are love of our fellow man, compassion and mercy. Truth is with us. Russia is with us”

[A full English text of Putin’s speech is printed at the end of this article: pages 7 to 9.]

Russia’s commitment to love, compassion, and mercy, do not spring readily to mind when contemplating the present war. But it is a war, so perhaps it’s unfair to criticise Putin on the apparent contradiction. Better, by far to think about truth and whether two plus two equals four.

For this it is instructive to turn to Xi Jinping's speech to the United Nations last year. This was when the general secretary of the Communist Party of China, asserted that "Democracy is a right for every country to enjoy" because "Democracy and freedom . . . are the common values of humanity". Now, coming directly from the mouth of the dictator, I found this sentence somewhat discombobulating. Clearly Xi Jinping lives in another world, a world in which democracy, freedom, and the common values of humanity, mean something completely different from the world in which I live.

The East German police state, you'll remember was styled as the "German *Democratic* Republic" so in the mouths of Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin, whether we're talking about love, compassion, and mercy, or democracy and freedom, these words mean something different from how they're usually interpreted in the West. They must mean one thing in the mind of Putin and another in the mind of Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy, together with most of us in NATO aligned countries.

For dictators like Putin or Xi Jinping truth is always determined by political priority – the concept of truth has no independent vitality or status. This is why Putin insists that there are Nazis running Ukraine and that these fascists are oppressing Russian speakers even though we know that Zelenskyy, a Jew, was elected president in 2019 in a landslide on an anti-corruption ticket, and that the fascist parties in Ukraine failed to win any representation in the Kyiv parliament.

Of course, since the outbreak of the war, pro-Moscow parties have been broken up by Zelenskyy's government, and pro-Moscow politicians can no longer operate freely in Kyiv, for the simple reason that they are siding with the invaders. With martial law and wartime restrictions democracy and democratic rights in Ukraine are abrogated or squeezed. This is an inevitable consequence of the war and does not

undermine Ukraine's status as a democracy any more than similar restrictions in Britain in the early 1940s undermined our claim to be a democracy.

So, what emerges from Putin's speech on the annexations is his novel take on historical truth, and his focus on "breaking the West's hegemony" which he regards as inevitable. He wants a multipolar world in which Moscow, Beijing, Tehran – dictatorships, elective and otherwise – are treated as equal partners with those of the West because "Western elites are totalitarian, despotic, and apartheidistic. They are racist against Russia and other countries and nations. They discriminate by calling themselves the 'civilised world'."

Putin's outburst is then followed by observations about seventeenth-century anti-Russian mercantile policy, about the West's transatlantic slavery, the genocide of native Americans, the Opium Wars, about Air Chief Marshal Arthur Harris' carpet bombing of German cities in World War II, the conquest of India, and colonialism, whilst the Soviet Union is remembered as leading the anti-colonial movement. The Russian empire under the monarchy or the Bolsheviks was in Putin's mental universe, benign. However, anybody acquainted with Bolshevik actions and policies from 1917 up to the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, and then Joseph Stalin's subsequent wholesale deportations and massacres knows that Soviet anti-colonialism was firmly restricted to the West's colonial empires. The vast non-Russian territories held by Russia from the Baltic to the Caucasus, from Central Asia, and on to Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan do not register in Putin's view of history as colonial possessions.

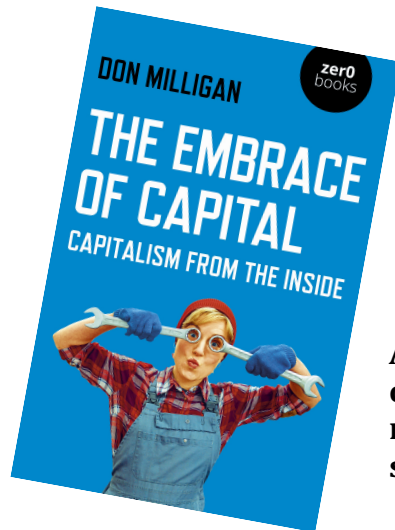
In this way, masked by historical slippages and partiality Putin is able to view Russian imperialism as the wholesome *raison d'être* of his policies with regard to Georgia, Ukraine, Belorussia, and many former Soviet territories. His desire to defend Russian-speakers wherever they are, and to use this as a pretext, or leading edge, for annexations and the

expansion of Russian territory is plain for all to see. His hatred for the West and his refusal to see anything real, actual, or genuine, in bourgeois democracy, has led Putin into the absurd position of describing Japan, South Korea, and Germany as 'occupied by the West', mere 'slaves' of the West's international order.

The elements of truth in what he has to say about the West and NATO are undermined by the absurd lengths he has to go to in order to justify his unilateral invasion of Ukraine's sovereign territory in 2014 and again in February 2022. Russia is not being threatened or attacked, it is simply being prevented by the Ukrainian armed forces, assisted by NATO and its allies, from expanding into the sovereign territory of a neighbouring state.

This struggle is clearly informed by Putin's rather florid description of Western imperialism, its financial and technological power, with which it is attempting to subordinate the whole world with its fictitious "rules-based" order. In this sense Putin is reaching for an explanation for Russia's economic and social weakness in the face of the West. NATO, and its allies like Japan, have manifestly stepped in to prevent Putin from simply rolling over Ukrainian sovereignty. His problem now, is that the weakness and disorganisation of Russia's armed forces' has been revealed as keeping close company with his country's paltry economic performance. For Putin this is a nightmare, from which he cannot awake.

Putin's explicit desire to abolish Ukraine's state and language cannot be tolerated. What is abundantly clear is that Putin cannot be allowed to extend Russia into Ukraine. He must not be appeased, and democracy – bourgeois or capitalist democracy – must be defended against the dictators in Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran. The incipient desire for autocratic rule in Hungary, Turkey, India, and the *MAGA* United States must be drained away and defeated – and the frontline in this struggle is the battle for Ukraine.



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**The following comments and translation were posted on Facebook by Chris Sharp on 2<sup>nd</sup> October**

People who back the West's proxy war in Ukraine on the basis that Putin represents an existential threat to western civilisation, justifying their support for NATO and Western militarism, need to explain exactly how Putin and Russia represent such an existential threat. What is it about the values espoused by Putin that require Russia to be regarded as so significantly different to us that they constitute a threat to our basic survival? Or are these claims actually just delusional and seek to ensure that the war in Ukraine becomes a forever war?

As always, we don't have to be supporters of Putin to understand the importance in demanding answers to these questions in the interests of finding a peace settlement.

Here is the correct translation of Putin's recent speech:

The West uses the power of finance and technology to enforce its will on other nations. To collect what he calls the "hegemon's tax". To this end the West destabilises countries, creates terrorist enclaves and most of all seeks to deprive other countries of sovereignty.

It is this "avarice" and desire to preserve its power that is the reason for the "hybrid war" the collective West is "waging on Russia". They want us to be a

"colony". They do not want us to be free, they want Russians to be a mob of soulless slaves.

The rules-based order the West goes on about is "nonsense". Who made these rules? Who agreed to them? Russia is an ancient country and civilization and we will not play by these "rigged" rules. The West has no moral authority to challenge the referendums because it has violated the borders of other countries. Western elites are "totalitarian, despotic and apartheidistic". They are racist against Russia and other countries and nations. "Russophobia is racism". They discriminate by calling themselves the "civilised world".

They colonised, started the global slave trade, genocided native Americans, pillaged India and Africa, forced China to buy opium through war. We, on the other hand, are proud that we "led" the anti-colonial movement that helped countries develop to reduce poverty and inequality.

They are Russophobic (they hate us) because we didn't allow our country to be pillaged by creating a strong CENTRALISED (emphasis his) state based on Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. They have been trying to destabilise our country since the 17th century in the Times of Trouble Eventually, they managed to "get their hands on our riches" at the end of the 20th century. They called us friends and partners while pumping out trillions of dollars.

We remember this. We didn't forget. The West claims to bring freedom and democracy to other countries but it's the exact opposite of the truth. The unipolar world is anti-democratic by its very nature. It is a lie. They used nuclear weapons, creating a precedent. They flattened German cities without "any military need to do so". There was no need for this except to scare us and the rest of the world. Korea, Vietnam. To this day they "occupy" Japan, South Korea and Germany and other countries while cynically calling them "allies". The West has surveillance over the leaders of these nations who "swallow these insults like the slaves they are".

He then talks about bioweapon research (haven't heard about them for a while) and human experiments "including in Ukraine".

The US rules the world by the power of the fist. Any country which seeks to challenge Western hegemony becomes an enemy. Their neocolonialism is cloaked in lies like "containment" of Russia, China and Iran. The concept of truth has been destroyed with fakes and extreme propaganda.

You cannot feed your people with printed dollars and social media. You need food and energy. But



Western elites have no desire to find a solution to the food and energy crises they created.

They solved the problems at the start of 20c with WW1 and the US established dominance of the world via the dollar as a result of WW2. In the 80s they had another crisis they solved by "plundering our country". Now they want to solve their problems by "breaking Russia".

Russia "understands its responsibility to the international community" and will "do everything to cool the heads of these neocolonials who are destined to fail".

They're crazy. I want to speak to all Russian citizens, do we want to replace mum and dad with parent 1 and 2? They invented genders and claim you can "transition". Do we want this for our children?

We have a different vision.

They have abandoned religion and embraced Satanism - direct quote.

The world is going through a revolutionary transformation. A multipolar world offers nations freedom to develop as they wish and they make up the majority of the world.

We have many like-minded friends in Western countries. We see and appreciate their support. They are forming liberation, anti-colonial movements as we speak - direct quote. These will only grow.

We are fighting for a fair world for our country. The idea of exceptionalism is criminal and we must turn this shameful page. The breaking of the West's hegemony is INEVITABLE.

There is no going back. We are fighting for our "great (as in big), historic Russia". Our values are: love of our fellow man, compassion and mercy. Truth is with us. Russia is with us.

**Vladimir Putin.**

Moscow, 30<sup>th</sup> September.