

<p><b>A. 'Unprovoked':</b> The invasion of Ukraine was unprovoked, so there can be no deal with Russia which involves loss of Ukrainian territory, which has been acquired by the illegal use of force. Any such deal will encourage Putin to take more land and other countries, because his real plan is to expand Russia by force (and therefore Europe is threatened by Russia).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 may have been illegal, but it was a reaction to real threats from the US/NATO and from Ukrainian ultranationalists which we will describe below.</li> <li>2. Because we can show the invasion was therefore provoked, it doesn't mean we are justifying it, but it does mean the war can only be ended by taking Russia's demands into account. These demands are: neutral Ukraine and protection for Russophone citizens of the Crimea and Donbas (following two and a half years of war, Russia in addition claimed possession of the Donbas territory in July 2024, as noted in section B below).</li> <li>3. The following events show provocation of Russia beyond reasonable doubt, working back in time from the invasion of 24/02/22 (in Section B we will show the West's policy of obstructing peace negotiations since then): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>February 2022:</b> The Special Monitoring Mission of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) counted 1,481 heavy artillery and drone attacks on Donetsk and Luhansk by the Ukraine Armed Forces on February 21, and 1,420 the following day. This was the culmination of the escalation of the war on the Donbas by Kyiv, and caused Russian President Vladimir Putin to recognise the separatist republics, having given up any hope of Kyiv honouring the Minsk II Agreement, which had offered protection for the Donbas within Ukraine.</li> <li>- <b>December 2021:</b> US &amp; NATO rejected Russia's offer of peace in Donbas in return for neutral Ukraine (Russia thereby admitted it was a party in the Donbas war, while the West continues to claim it's merely 'supporting Ukraine'). Russia had been massing troops on the border, so Western sources (including Wikipedia) refer to this as an 'ultimatum'. Indeed Western commentators routinely invalidate the Minsk II agreement as having been achieved by Moscow using force, which is the same logic which says that there can be no deal with Russia since February 2022, as though no peace agreement can ever be made after hostilities have broken out.</li> <li>- <b>November 2021:</b> Russia published telegram exchanges with the German and French sponsors of the Minsk II agreement, asking them to try to convince Kyiv to negotiate with the Donbas separatists, but Berlin and Paris refused to intervene.</li> <li>- <b>January-November 2021:</b> In January Zelensky signed Decree 117 claiming full repossession of Crimea, even by force; in August US and Ukraine signed a Strategic Defence Framework, in which the US pledged 'to work together to advance Ukraine's military capabilities,' including its 'interoperability with NATO'; in September the White House publicised a joint declaration with Ukraine of 'resistance to Russian aggression'; in November a Ukrainian-American (security) Charter was adopted, promising full NATO accession.</li> <li>- <b>2019-2021:</b> Extreme escalation of Kyiv's 'anti-terror' shelling of the Donbas separatist republics, which Russia perceived as an threat to itself (statistics of the OSCE from 2017 to 2020 showed that two-thirds of the civilian deaths in the Ukraine civil war were caused by Kyiv's forces).</li> <li>- <b>April-October 2019:</b> President Volodmyr Zelensky was elected in April with a massive 73% mandate promising to 'continue in the direction of the Minsk [peace] talks and towards concluding a ceasefire'. He was immediately threatened by both liberal NGO's funded by the US (the so-called 'red lines memorandum' of May 2019 declared that 'conducting separate negotiations – without the participation of Ukraine's Western partners – with the Russian Federation will inevitably lead to political instability') and Ukrainian nationalists (Dmytro Yarosh of Right Sector said he'd hang Zelensky in October 2019 if he dared to make concessions to Moscow). He didn't pursue peace until 2022.</li> <li>- <b>2014-2019:</b> Kyiv launched 'anti-terror' attacks against the Donbas separatist republics, passed extreme anti-Russophone laws and viciously cracked down on any dissent. Ukrainian civil war began between nationalists determined to make Ukraine a homogenous nation and separatists in the Donbas aiming to</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
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<p><b>A. 'Unprovoked':</b> (cont)</p>	<p>preserve their Russian character. If this could not be preserved within the centralised Ukrainian state they wanted some form of autonomy / integration with Russia, and Russia offered assistance from the start, which has been interpreted by Western commentators and politicians as part of its 'revanchist' policy (regaining Soviet territories lost in 1991 etc.) In 2018 Poroschenko signed a Decree claiming full reintegration of the Donbas. In 2014 Benoit Paré read a report from the Kramatorsk Human Dimension office of the OSCE about the large number of abductions, by hooded men, of people, many of them teenagers who were suspected of having sympathies with separatists. The people who were abducted were tortured and often disappeared without trace. The report stated that the hooded men were invariably hard-line Ukrainian nationalists, acting outside the law. The OSCE, which wanted to preserve a pro-Kyiv narrative, buried the report because it conflicted with what they wanted to publicise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>August 2015:</b> a grenade was thrown outside the Rada Verkhovna parliament in Kyiv killing 4 people in protest at the holding of the second vote on autonomy for the Donbas pursuant to the Minsk II agreement signed by Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany in February; President Poroschenko abandoned any attempt to do a peace deal with Russia based on Donbas rights and Ukrainian neutrality, and Kyiv never granted the general amnesty under Art.5 of Minsk II.</li> <li>- <b>February 2014:</b> Russia's annexation of Crimea and incursions in Donbas (beginning with Igor Strelkov's rogue capture of Sloviansk) occurred immediately after the Maidan Massacre of February 18-20, which led to the coup and ousting of President Viktor Yanukovytsch, and which has been shown to have been a 'false flag' carried out by Ukrainian ultranationalists (the government investigation, the Maidan massacre trial and the Yanukovych state treason trial did not reveal any evidence of orders to massacre the Maidan protesters by Yanukovych or his agents, and analysis of hours of footage by Ivan Katchanovski found that the deadly shooting of 100 protestors and 15 police came not from the police but from a hotel occupied by ultranationalist snipers). Russia knew then that any hope of maintaining formerly cooperative relations with Ukraine were over because Ukraine had been effectively taken over by violent pro-Western factions, and Russia feared the threat of NATO from the west and was determined to prevent Ukraine becoming an enemy base on its border. The influence on Putin of popular Russian ultranationalists like Alexandr Dugin and Sergei Karaganov shouldn't be underestimated, and while it is chauvinistic it's not irrational in the light of events.</li> <li>- <b>November 2013:</b> The Maidan protests of 2014 were sparked by President Viktor Yanukovych's opting to continue the existing Russian-Ukrainian trade arrangement rather than accepting the EU's Ukraine Association Agreement, which would have decimated Ukraine's industry and led to tariffs with its major trading partner Russia (under Western sanctions since 2010, Russia would have to put up barriers between itself and Ukraine if the latter joined the EU). The protests were initially held by pro-European and anti-corruption citizens, but soon became infiltrated both by violent ultranationalists (as detailed above) and by US and EU officials, keen to capitalise on the unrest (the activities of the US regional representative Victoria Nuland have been widely documented).</li> </ul>

<p><b>A. 'Unprovoked':</b> (cont)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>April 2008:</b> The Bucharest NATO summit declared support in principle for Ukraine and Georgia joining, despite US Ambassador to Moscow William Burns noting to Secretary of State Condi Rice that Ukraine joining NATO was 'the brightest of all red lines' for the Russian elite. Putin told George W. Bush that his main disagreement was 'cementing Ukraine's status in the Western world' and that he was ready to 'create problems' to prevent that.</li> <li>- <b>February 2008:</b> Russian commentators denounced the Kosovan declaration of independence and Western recognition of it (the Russians would use this to counter Western condemnation of Russia's interventions in Georgia in the summer).</li> <li>- <b>February 2007:</b> Putin declared at the Munich Security Conference that 'NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders ... a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust'.</li> <li>- <b>Late 2004-2005:</b> The Orange Revolution protests led to the result of the Ukrainian presidential election between Russia-backed Viktor Yanukovich and pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko being overturned in favour of the latter (the previous president Kuchma had been discredited in a scandal involving the murder of a journalist). Support for each reflected ethnic division in the country, with Yushchenko's coming mainly from the (Catholic &amp; Ukrainian Orthodox) west/north and Yanukovich's from the (Moscow Orthodox) east/south. Reliable sources estimate that the US spent \$65 million 'supporting democracy' in Ukraine by backing Yushchenko and organising the Orange Revolution. The Russians saw this as a major reversal of their influence in the country (where Putin had enjoyed huge popularity since 1999).</li> <li>- <b>March 2004:</b> Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO. Putin later said 'I do not really understand exactly how ... the expansion of NATO to take in our Baltic neighbours can bring greater security. If other former Soviet republics want to join NATO, our attitude will remain the same. But I want to stress that we will respect their choice because it is their sovereign right to decide their own defence policy and this will not worsen relations between our countries'.</li> <li>- <b>1990-2004:</b> During this period Russia was on friendly terms with the West. It joined the NATO Partnership for Peace in 1994 (Ireland joined in 1999). Both Yeltsin and Putin considered applying to join NATO, and during the 1990s Russia and NATO entered into cooperation agreements (including peacekeeping missions in Bosnia), and even though Russia condemned the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, both sides joined peacekeeping in Kosovo and formed a NATO-Russia Council in 2002, with Putin saying at the time he 'didn't see anything hostile in Ukraine joining NATO'. In 1994 Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum agreeing to give up nuclear missiles in return for Russian agreement to respect Ukrainian sovereignty. However Ukraine never had control of these missiles which were always under the command of Moscow, and had not gained control of them following independence in 1991. All of this shows (as does an open-minded reading of Putin's essay on 'The Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians' of July 2021) that Russia sought parity not enmity with the West following the demise of the USSR. For a clear reading of US strategy on the other hand, one should read <i>The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives</i> (1997) by Zbigniew Brzezinski (who once boasted of having 'lured the Soviets into the Afghan trap'), which makes explicit the long-term US plan of eastward NATO expansion to Ukraine in order to prevent Russian regional hegemony.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>B. 'No peace deal possible':</b> Russia must be defeated militarily because it's shown itself to be a completely unreliable peace partner.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Immediately after the Russian invasion of February 2022 peace talks resumed, with Zelensky saying these would be 'without conditions'. However US and Western policymakers categorically rejected peace, with former CIA director Leon Panetta admitting in March 2022 that 'we are in a proxy war' where the aim is 'to kill Russians'; Neil Ferguson citing US sources to <i>The Economist</i> that 'the endgame is to bleed Russia' to 'bring about the end of the Putin regime'; and Zelensky himself admitting at the time 'there are those in the West who don't mind a long war because it would mean exhausting Russia, even if this would bring about the demise of Ukraine, and the loss of Ukrainian lives'.</li> <li>2. Turkish and Israeli negotiators nonetheless tried to facilitate a deal, the structure of which was unveiled at Istanbul in April 2022. However Boris Johnson came to Kyiv and sabotaged the agreement by telling the Ukrainians that the West would not support a 'bad peace', instead arguing for what he called 'strategic endurance...which would end in Vladimir Putin's defeat'. The head of Zelensky's party reported that Johnson refused to sign anything and instead demanded a continuation of war. The Israeli negotiator Naftali Bennett later confirmed that both sides wanted peace based on Ukrainian neutrality but the West decided to 'keep striking Putin'. This has also been corroborated by the Turkish foreign minister. The West had trained and armed Ukrainians for this purpose and was not going to squander this chance to bleed Russia. Senator Richard Blumenthal said that 'we are getting our money's worth, because for less than 3% of our military budget we are helping Ukraine degrade Russia's military strength by half' (the fact that the opposite was the result doesn't take away from the truth of the plan).</li> <li>3. For 4 years the EU and NATO have boycotted diplomacy with Russia, with the NATO secretary general arguing that 'weapons are the path to peace'. Trump has dealt with the two sides separately but hasn't brought them together, making his 'negotiations' meaningless. In Istanbul Ukraine could have done a deal without loss of territory or much life, but now the Russians can't return to that position even if they wanted to. They too have paid a huge human cost, and it would be politically impossible for Putin (probably even without the influence of Dugin, Karaganov et al) to agree a peace treaty like Minsk II, where the Donbas would remain within the state of Ukraine. This is why Putin claimed possession of all territory acquired by war in July 2024.</li> <li>4. The Ukrainian-US destruction of the Nordstream II pipeline in September 2022 accelerated the pivot of Russia to the east and greater integration with the booming Asian economies, to which it is fast becoming the principal energy supplier. Western sanctions and sabotaging of Russia have had the opposite effect than intended. The result will be greater desperation and recklessness by the G7 bloc in its attempt to regain the temporary unipolar status it enjoyed at the end of the 20th century, by picking fights with Iran, China etc.</li> </ol>