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## *Two perceptions of the war in Ukraine*

The military intervention in Ukraine is not at all interpreted in the same way in the West and in Russia. It is a school case. This difference of representation does not come from antagonistic material interests, but from different conceptions of what makes Man and what is Life. For some, the enemy is trying to restore the grandeur of the Tsarist Empire or the Soviet Union, while for others, he imagines himself to be the embodiment of Good.



In all wars both sides suffer. This picture was taken in Ukraine, but it has a different meaning if it is in the West or in Novorossia. One cannot and should not judge who is right by seeing people suffering. During the Second World War, the

**suffering was the same among the victims of the bombing of Dresden, London, Tokyo or Le Havre. This does not tell us who was right, the Axis or the Allies.**

The conflict between the advocates of "a world based on rules" and those who advocate a return to "a world based on international law" continues. It began with the Russian military intervention in Ukraine and will last for years.

The military situation on the ground is blocked, as always in winter in this part of the world. The supporters of "a world based on rules" still refuse to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 2202, while those of "a world based on international law" are conducting a special military operation to implement it. In the end, they gradually moved away from it and stabilized the situation of the people of Novarusia.

The transition from a war of movement to a war of position allowed each protagonist to reflect on the reasons that pushed him into the battle. From now on, it is no longer two visions of international relations that face each other, but two conceptions of Man.

Among the troops of Kiev, we must distinguish the "integral nationalists", always ardent in the fight, from the professional soldiers and the citizens mobilized for the occasion. The former are ideologically trained men who consider that killing Russians is a sacred immemorial duty. They refer to the writings of Dmytro Dontsov and to the example of Stepan Bandera. The former was the administrator of the Reinhard Heydrich Institute in Prague and, as such, was one of the designers of the "final solution of the Jewish and Gypsy questions", the latter was the leader of the Ukrainian collaborators of Nazism against the Soviets. The other group of Kiev soldiers, which made up two-thirds of them at the beginning of the Russian intervention, is in no mood. They see that Western weapons are being delivered to the "integral nationalists," but not to them. They are considered as cannon fodder and suffer very heavy losses. Social networks abound with video messages of units protesting against their officers. There was a first wave of discontent in the fall. This is the second. If they thought they were defending their homeland against an invader, they now know that their country is in the hands of a clique that has purged the libraries, taken control of all the country's media, banned 13 political parties and the Orthodox Church, and is ultimately establishing an authoritarian regime. Last week, President Zelensky's former communications adviser, Colonel Oleksiy Arestovich, told them that Ukraine was fighting the wrong battle and wrongly considered six million of its citizens as "Russian agents". They know that most of the journalists have been arrested and most of the lawyers have fled abroad. They therefore feel threatened by both the Russian military

and their own government. The multiple corruption scandals, which broke out last week, confirm to them that they are only pawns between the United States and Russia.

On the Russian side, the opposite is true: the professional troops who were deployed at the beginning of the special operation obeyed without understanding why the Kremlin sent them to Ukraine, the region that gave birth to their homeland. The Russian population feared a return to the massacres of the past. Little by little, things calmed down. The bobos went into exile. I was very surprised when a Russian friend commented to me: "Good riddance! He didn't seem worried about their departure, but relieved not to have to face them anymore. The population, which was very shocked by the Western measures against its artists and against its past glories, became aware that Ukraine is only a pretext for something else. It was also surprised to see the alignment of the populations of the European Union with Washington. It is, in its eyes, a war against its civilization, a war against the heritage of Tolstoy and Pushkin, not against the policy of President Putin. This proud people, always eager to evaluate its ability to defend its own and its honor, observes with sadness the arrogance of the West, their feeling not to serve the Good, but to embody the Good.

The political arguments that President Putin set out in December 2021, when he published his draft bilateral US-Russia Treaty on Security Guarantees [1] are outdated. This is no longer a war to defend interests. If the Russian protagonists understand that they are not fighting for something, but for survival, the West does not interpret the conflict in this way. For them, the Russians are blinded by the propaganda of their regime. They are unknowingly fighting to restore the greatness of the Tsarist Empire or the Soviet Union.

This type of conflict is extremely rare. One thinks of the conflict between Rome and Carthage, which ended with the destruction of all vestiges of Carthaginian civilization. To the point that we ignore today almost everything of it. At most we know that it was built by people from Tyre (now Lebanon, the stronghold of Hezbollah) and that its leader, Hannibal, sought refuge in Damascus and other Syrian cities when his city was destroyed. We also know that it had developed in good understanding with its neighbors and partners, while Rome had conquered its empire by force. I had already made this connection with the war against Syria when Russia intervened. The parallel is becoming more and more obvious. The two blocs have nothing in common anymore.

In the West, the events in Ukraine are seen as a war between the United States and Russia, through Ukrainians. The "integral nationalists" are certain, not to resist the one

they consider the invader, but to defeat him, today or in the "final battle". This is their destiny, they think. But leaving aside the mystical delusions of Dmytro Dontsov, how can one imagine that 40 million Ukrainians could defeat 140 million Russians, knowing that the latter have weapons that are twenty years more modern than those of the West?

The members of the Ramstein Group, i.e. in practice the United States and the European Union, have already spent more than 250 billion dollars on this war, i.e. as much in one year as for the ten years of war against Syria. If we are to compare the two conflicts, we should note that in international law, Russia is right in both cases, while the United States has assembled a larger coalition against Syria, but has considerably more involved its allies in Ukraine.

Unlike Hannibal, President Putin has no intention of taking the capital of his adversaries, Washington. He is aware of his military superiority and will not alienate the people of the West by bringing the war home, except perhaps against their "elites" at the Foreign Office and the Pentagon.

Translation

Roger Lagassé

[1] ["Draft Treaty between the USA and Russia on Security Guarantees"](#), *Voltaire Network*, 17 December 2021.

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