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Purpose

This document suggests strong arguments and narratives for use in debates and discussions related to the Ukrainian War of Independence.

Key Narratives = these are points you want to discuss.

Italic = can be used verbatim

Examples = strategy/sub-narratives for posting short content, like on Twitter. Can be used wherever short content works better than long-reads.

General Tips

When debating it is important to understand your goal: are you trying to convince your opponent, or is there an audience (reading or listening) who you seek to win over?

In most cases your goal should be to convince the audience. Your opponent is typically one person and is unlikely to admit being wrong, the audience is numerous and easier to sway.

However, if your opponent argues in good faith, or has a large public platform from which he shares his views, it might make sense to attempt to shift his views.

Never try to convince Russians. Only debate them with the audience in mind. Try to get Russians to voice narratives that will seem repulsive to a Western person.

Since your goal should mostly be convincing the audience, keep short attention spans in mind. Be succinct, you'll reach more people that way.

0. Key Narratives for US

These are intended to target those unsure of whether the US should pass additional funding for Ukraine. A very comprehensive study of what works can be found here:

<https://www.razomforukraine.org/research-project-championing-freedom-increasing-popular-support-for-pro-democracy-causes/>

Short and effective:

- 1. Ukraine is in a fight for its freedom, independence and existence. Ukraine has already liberated over 60% of the territory captured by Russia since the start of the war. There is no support within Ukraine for a ceasefire with Russia; doing so would condemn Ukrainians on occupied territory to rape, torture and deportation, while rewarding tyrants around the world and signaling that Western resolve is weak. Ukrainians intend to keep fighting.*
- 2. US aid overwhelmingly consists of weapons from American stocks. **Almost 90%** of the funds allocated for supporting Ukraine are then spent with US manufacturers for replenishing American stocks. The total of this amount is approximately 5% of America's annual defense budget. Without additional funding from Congress to replenish American stocks for weapons sent to Ukraine, there will be no more military aid to Ukraine.*

3. *Europe has provided [more aid to Ukraine than the US](#). The narrative that Europe is not doing enough is false. However, Europe alone does not have sufficient weaponry, while Russia has placed a huge portion of its economy on war-footing and is being supplied with weapons by China, Iran and North Korea.*

Optional arguments:

- European safety is imperative to the American economy. 46 of America's states' biggest trade partners are Europe. As a result America has a direct interest in Europe's continued prosperity and purchasing American goods, and arming Ukraine is an incredibly cheap way of ensuring this.

1. Key Narratives

1.1. The West should not fear Russia

The Russia people in the West thought existed, was never real. Russia is much weaker than most in the West believe.

Many were raised or educated by people from a time when the Soviet Union was a competitor to the West. But in 1960, the USSR was still larger than the US:

- USSR's 214m vs US 179m. Today Russia has 142m and the US 332m.
- USSR consisted of many countries and land, now it's only Russia
- During WWII the USSR only won because it was provided with aid by the West (sources Stalin, Khrushchev, Zhukov)

Today's Russia is not a competitor to the West.

- Russia's GDP is smaller than Canada's or Italy's
 - US GDP 14x Russia's
- It has no strong allies. Very clear from UN voting. China is not an actual ally and refuses to support Russia beyond buying Russian natural resources.
- The US and Ukraine have the entirety of the developed world on its side.
- Russia is incredibly corrupt and only projects the image of being powerful
- It uses threats because it can't back them up with actions
 - When called out, it backs down; Finland & Sweden NATO

Refer to [Russia can lose](#) if needed.

The West believed Ukraine would fall in several days, and that there was little hope. But Ukraine chose to fight for its freedom, and now Russia is losing. The charade of Russia's military might has disintegrated.

Examples:

Use memes that mock Russia. Images will work best here, you want to portray Russia as something the West laughs about.

- Ukrainians don't fear Russia, Russia is a joke. So why does the West?

Ukrainians are making extraordinary sacrifices for freedom and democracy. Every single one of them. I often wonder if Westerners would be capable of the same.

How do we get it into our western brains that showing weakness towards Russia makes the use of a nuclear weapon MORE likely, not less?

Over and over, Russia lies to make itself seem powerful, we believe the lie, and are too afraid to fully commit to defeating Russian fascism. Russia has always been much weaker than it seemed, and it took the Ukrainians to show this to the world.

1.2. Russia's crimes

- Murdering civilians (well documented examples such as Bucha)
- Routine torture and executions. Torture chambers, mass graves with people with hands tied behind their backs. Hangings.
- Deportation and forced adoption of children as a means of depopulation
- Destruction of Mariupol: over 100,000 deaths according to Snyder (+theater)
- Targeting civilian infrastructure.
- Torturing and murdering Ukrainian protestants and evangelicals. ([Why this matters](#))
 - [Good example](#)
- All of this is standard practice for Russia. Before Ukraine, Russia did the same in Georgia, Syria and Chechnya.

These acts of terror shouldn't surprise anyone. In Syria, Georgia, and Chechnya Russia did the same: there too, it bombed, tortured, and raped, as the world watched in horror -- but did little. For the past 20 years Russia under Putin has bathed its neighbors in blood.

Countries that designated Russia a state sponsor of terrorism since the start of the war: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czech, Poland, European Parliament, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, NATO Parliamentary Assembly

Examples:

No jokes, focus on imagery. Mass graves, victims with signs of torture, destroyed cities. Again, be current! Focus on what happened recently. If a new atrocity is discovered, flood social media with the news. Express outrage and ask for more aid to Ukraine/more sanctions against Russia in light of new atrocities.

Every day Russian forces remain in Ukraine, people are deported, raped, and murdered — an ethnic cleansing in the 21st century.

Russian forces have murdered, raped and deported tens of thousands of Ukrainians - in a systematic effort to terrorize an entire nation into submission. This should not stand. This CANNOT stand.

In Bucha, over 1300 bodies of civilians were recovered. Many tortured and shot execution-style, with hands still tied behind their backs. In Mariupol an entire city with over 100,000 civilians wiped out. Russia is sheer evil.

Russian acts of terror shouldn't surprise anyone. In Syria, Georgia, and Chechnya Russia did the same: there too, it bombed, tortured, and raped, as the world watched in horror but did little.

1.3. The Future of World Peace Rests on Ukrainian Victory

We are at a point in history similar to pre-WWII. Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and other authoritarian states have formed an alliance to challenge the West. If Russia is once more allowed to redraw its neighbors' borders, as it sees fit, by force, the world opens a floodgate of violence that will shatter the architecture of world security. The next stage will be China invading Taiwan, while Russia will regroup, rebuild, and attack another one of its neighbors in a couple years. Dictators only understand force, and Putin not suffering consequences led him to invade Chechnya in 1999, Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014, and again in 2022. Ukraine's War of Independence is now the biggest war in Europe since WWII, and whether the world will descend into WWIII or not rests on its outcome.

If Russia is allowed to come out undefeated, if a country is once more allowed to redraw its neighbors' borders, as it sees fit, by force, the world opens a floodgate of violence that will shatter the architecture of world security.

- Ukraine is fighting for Western values of liberty against authoritarianism and tyranny [very important for targeting conservatives opposed to spending money on war]
 - "Give me liberty or give me death"
- Refer to the war as Ukraine's War of Independence. Instantly communicates what the war is about and draws parallels to other countries' own wars of independence
- Ukraine is fighting against a bloodthirsty dictator, good must triumph over evil
- A precedent must be set that invading your neighbor will not end well. This will result in less wars in the future. The world must be united in this view.
- Arming Ukraine for victory is an incredibly cheap and efficient way to combat evil, disinformation, and sending a message to authoritarians everywhere for generations to come.
- If Russia is not defeated, countries will know that the only true deterrent is possessing nuclear weapons

1.4. Ukraine can win

- Ukraine has already liberated over 60% of the territory Russia originally captured
- Russia was only able to capture one regional capital, Kherson, and Ukraine has already liberated it
- In December 2023 a declassified U.S. intelligence assessment, shared with Congress, estimated 315,000 Russian personnel had been killed or injured since the start of the invasion, amounting to 87% of Russia's prewar force.
 - This includes the majority of Russia's best trained troops and its most modern equipment, which were used in its failed attempt to take Kyiv
- On the Black Sea, Ukraine has destroyed such a substantial number of Russia ships that it has lifted Russia's blockade and is now able to freely export grain and other agricultural products on which its economy is reliant
- Major Ukrainian victories:
 - Battle of Kyiv
 - Kherson counter-offensive
 - Kharkiv counter-offensive

Refer to [Russia can lose](#) if needed.

1.5. Conclusion: The West should arm Ukraine to its fullest

This is the key goal: arming Ukraine to the fullest. Use narratives #1-4 to arrive at this call-to-action.

The fastest way to end this war is to commit to a Ukrainian victory and arm Ukraine for victory. Delaying key weaponry only emboldens Putin to continue his war of aggression. Western military aid works: it is because of it that Ukraine has already liberated over 60% of the territory Russia initially captured, and destroyed 87% of Russia's prewar force.

In particular highlight how arming Ukraine is good for the US:

- Great investment: <https://cepa.org/article/its-costing-peanuts-for-the-us-to-defeat-russia/>
US aid is just 5.6% of US defense yearly spending

US military aid is just 5.6% of US defense yearly spending. This war provides an excellent opportunity for the US to erode Russia's military, with no boots on the ground and little risk to US lives.

Spending 5.6% of its defense budget to destroy Russia's conventional military capability is an absolutely incredible investment. If we divide out the US defense budget to the threats it faces, Russia, being the US's #2 geopolitical opponent, is ~\$100bn-150bn in spend-to-threat. So spending just \$40bn a year erodes a threat value of \$100-150bn, a return of 2x-3x. Meanwhile the US can pivot to Asia as it wanted, leaving Europe capable of defending itself from a Russian threat for the foreseeable future.

Ukraine has proven incredibly efficient at using Western weapons. This is not Afghanistan's army. Ukraine wants to fight. Ukrainians are dying for their freedom.

By withholding tanks, armored vehicles, and ATACMS from Ukraine, we are submitting to nuclear blackmail. We are thereby signaling to all dictators that as long as you have nukes, you can do whatever you want

Putin only understands strength. He must be defeated. Arm Ukraine for victory, not survival.

Fighter jets, tanks, and long-range missile systems that are sitting idle in the inventories of Ukraine's peer democracies are useless. They should be deployed to fight the Russian fascists – who are at war with Western civilization – now.

2. Anti-narratives: Responses to Russian Lies

2.1. Whataboutism

Typically this is done in the form of “The US has been invading countries or doing X for years...”

Don't engage in this discussion. Focus on Ukraine. Your viewers have limited attention spans, spend time wisely.

Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it. Evil in one place is no excuse to commit evil elsewhere. Moreover your parallel is a strange one; your argument is that because the US invades a country, Russia can also invade a completely different country? Are you sure that's the logic and moral standard you want to follow? That's like hearing of a guy who beats his elderly parents, so you decide to beat your elderly parents too.

- I'm Ukrainian; I'm here to discuss Russia invading my country. If you wish to discuss the US, France, China or Zimbabwe, I welcome you to do so separately.

2.2. Ukraine has Nazis

- All countries have some portion of the population with extreme far-right views, but Ukraine actually has far fewer of them than most
- Ukraine is the only country in Europe whose head of state is Jewish (elected with 73% of the vote)
- In the last election, a coalition of all far-right parties won 2.15% of the popular vote, and since that didn't meet the threshold of 5% failed to gain any parliamentary seats
- From 2016-2019 the Prime Minister of Ukraine was Jewish (Groysman)
- Already in 2018, Ukraine was the least antisemitic country in Central and Eastern Europe:
https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/03/28/most-oles-accept-jews-as-fellow-citizens-and-neighbors-but-a-minority-do-not/ft_18-03-26_polandholocaustlaws_map/
- If you believe Ukraine is full of nazis, you're falling for Russian propaganda

2.3. Azov

Don't bring up Azov - let your opponent do it.

- When Russia first invaded in 2014, Ukraine had fewer than 7,000 combat-ready troops
- In order to stop the Russian advance, Ukrainian volunteers of all types were accepted to fight for their homeland, primarily funded by donations from wealthy Ukrainians
- One such group was Azov, a volunteer paramilitary militia under the command of Andriy Biletsky, who was indeed a neo-Nazi, and with a significant portion of it composed of Dynamo football fans. At its peak in 2014, it is estimated that 10-20% of the group identified as Nazis.
- The group proved effective in the early stages when all help was needed
- Six months later Biletsky was removed from its command, the unit was integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard. By the end of 2014, most far-right fighters left the regiment. Those that remained who openly articulated their views were deliberately cleansed by the new regiment command in 2017

However, because in war:

- demonizing your enemy is essential
- Russian government draws legitimacy and inspiration from the fact that it defeated Nazis in WWII
- Nazis are universally despised as one of the most evil forms of humanity

Russia created a false narrative that Ukraine has been taken over by Nazis, and that Ukraine needs to be rescued from them.

Refer back to Ukraine having [comparatively few Nazis](#) if needed.

2.4. Ukrainians and Russians are one people

This is a very long discussion that would require extensive knowledge of the region's history.

- If you have to indulge this conversation: While Kyiv was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Moscow's rulers made no claim that Kyiv or Kyivites were part of Muscovy/Russia. It was only after Russia's imperial expansion into those territories that it began to claim it as the historic reunification of the East Slavic world, and that Ukrainians, Russians and Belarussians are one people.
- This position was subsequently taught to youth: in the Russian Empire's educational curriculum and in the most popular history textbook (Nikolay Ustryalov)

What is important is understanding to what lengths Russia has gone to erase the notion of a separate Ukrainian identity throughout history to get us to where we are now:

- 1804: under the Russian Empire all Ukrainian schools were banned
- 1881: ban of Ukrainian in official use, church sermons, and baptisms with Ukrainian names
- 1892: ban on translating from Russian to Ukrainian
- 1914: full prohibition of the Ukrainian word, education and church
- Soviet Union.
- 1922: the Communist Party declared that Ukraine was embroiled in a battle between two cultures: between the city-dwelling Russian culture and that of peasants (Ukrainian). Various attacks on "Ukrainization" followed, culminating in Holodomor, which took the lives of roughly 3.5 million Ukrainians.
- 1944: Stalin deported the native Crimean Tatar population along with various other ethnicities in Crimea to Uzbekistan, leading to over 100,000 deaths, and an increase in Crimea's Russian population from 49% to over 70%. Russia's subsequent ability to take over Crimea is a direct consequence of this.

Has this resulted in Russians and Ukrainians being one people? It certainly converted some, and increased the percent of Russians in Crimea. But it's important to look at the overall results:

- When the USSR dissolved, with 84% of electorate participating, 90% voted in favor of independence (incl Crimea and Donbas)
 - This referendum was accepted by all countries, including Russia
- The percent of people speaking Ukrainian, and % wanting closer relations with Europe over Russia, has only increased since then

2.5. Russia has nukes

- Superpowers have been losing wars for years yet nobody has used nukes (RU's Afghanistan, First Chechen War, US's Vietnam).

- Unlike before, Russia's nukes can be shot down. Ukraine was the first country to successfully shoot down Russia's most advanced missile, the Kinzhal, with the American-provided Patriot missile defense system. Russia uses the Kinzhal to carry nuclear warheads (in addition to conventional). Russia, on the other hand, cannot counter America's technological advantage.

Russia has threatened time and time again that if a line is crossed, there will be terrible consequences:

- If Russian territory is attacked
- If Crimea is attacked
- If any more countries join NATO
- If Ukraine is given Western tanks
- If Ukraine is given long-range missiles

All of these red lines have already been crossed.

After the US outlined what it would do if Russia used nukes (even tactical ones) in Ukraine, Russia has stopped threatening to use nukes.

If relevant, use arguments from [Russia cannot be defeated](#)

2.6. Maidan was a coup

Maidan was a protest against government actions that were deeply unpopular and deemed corrupt, that the government tried to crush by having riot police open fire at protestors. When this failed, the President fled to Russia, and enough members of the president's party fled or defected for the party to lose its majority in parliament. The parliament was then able to pass a series of laws that canceled anti-protest operations, restored the 2004 constitution, freed political detainees, and removed President Yanukovich from office. At its peak Maidan had over 1 million people protesting in Kyiv.

Even if you think Maidan was a coup (which it wasn't), since Maidan, Ukraine has had two free, fair and internationally recognized elections that elected new governments.

2.7. NATO Expansion is a threat to Russia

NATO is a defensive and voluntary alliance created exactly because Russia has for hundreds of years subjugated the nations around itself.

- 1918: After WWI and the collapse of the Russian Empire numerous ethnic groups declared independence: for example, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan.

- Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania all fought wars against Russia, which they won, and as a result became independent states, which Russia officially recognized in writing as independent states "for all future time" as part of the ceasefire
- 1921: Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan invaded and become part of the USSR
- 1940: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania invaded and become part of the USSR.
 - USSR also annexes parts of Poland, Finland and Romania
- 1944, 1945: entirety of Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Yugoslavia, part of Austria occupied.
- More recently Russia invaded/continues to occupy parts of Moldova, Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine

The countries that were part of the Eastern Bloc were not willing participants, with repression and crushing of revolutionary attempts in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968). The Soviet Union became the prison of nations.

Put yourself in the position of a country bordering Russia. The choice to join NATO is an obvious one. If Russia doesn't want its neighbors seeking protection, it should consider the shocking revelation that countries and their populations prefer to not be murdered, raped, tortured and deported.

2.7.1. NATO Promised not to expand

Treaties are put in writing and signed. Ask to see where it was written.

This is a claim Putin likes to make, but you'll notice Putin's narrative changed:

- In a February 2007 speech to the Munich Security Conference, he asked where the guarantees are that there will be no further NATO expansion
- But in a March 2014 Kremlin speech: "...they [Western leaders] have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed before us an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO's expansion to the east, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders."

Don't take my word for it, take Gorbachev's from an interview in 2014:

http://rbth.com/international/2014/10/16/mikhail_gorbachev_i_am_against_all_walls_40673.html

The interviewer asked why Gorbachev did not "insist that the promises made to you [Gorbachev]—particularly U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's promise that NATO would not expand into the East—be legally encoded?" Gorbachev replied: "The topic of 'NATO expansion' was not discussed at all, and it wasn't brought up in those years. ... Another issue we brought up was discussed: making sure that NATO's military structures would not advance and that additional armed forces would not be deployed on the territory of the then-GDR after German reunification. Baker's statement was made in that context... Everything that could have been and needed to be done to solidify that political obligation was done. And fulfilled."

Gorbachev continued that “The agreement on a final settlement with Germany said that no new military structures would be created in the eastern part of the country; no additional troops would be deployed; no weapons of mass destruction would be placed there. It has been obeyed all these years.”

Gorbachev criticized NATO enlargement and called it a violation of the spirit of the assurances given Moscow in 1990, but he made clear there was no promise regarding broader enlargement.

2.8. Ukraine is corrupt, weapons are sold off

This is a popular Russian narrative spread with the intent of reducing the supply of Western arms. The fact is that Russia is incapable of winning the war as long as the West continues supplying Ukraine, so it's doing what it can to reduce the flow of arms through other means.

The US Department of Defense has repeatedly reported that there is no evidence of US weapons being sold off on the black market. Ukrainians are fighting an existential battle and are making incredible sacrifices. Our compatriots are being raped, murdered and tortured. We are not interested in selling off weapons that can save the lives of our families.

2.9. Why should we believe Western/UA news over RU?

Are you seriously comparing Russia's level of civil freedoms and democracy to Western freedoms and democracy?

Try criticizing Putin in Russia; whether in the press or in a public protest. Then try the same with the leader of a Western nation.

Let me illustrate my point: this very conversation would not be possible on a Russian news channel. The comparison is laughable.

The West has a breadth of media with different opinions that can be highly critical of government policy. Attempts to silence the media have been made, but are typically completely unsuccessful.

The majority of Western media belong to private corporations whose goal is to make money from their readers through subscription sales and advertising. The majority of Russian media is directly owned and controlled by the government.

- The Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, directly owned by the government, is by far the largest tv and radio distributor in Russia, and 74% watch TV (the most popular medium)
- The top news sites in Russia: Vesti and RIA Novosti are also directly state-owned

The majority of news content in Russia comes directly from the state.

2.10. This is Putin's war & most Russians don't support it

Independent polling shows 73% support the actions of the Russian military in Ukraine: <https://www.levada.ru/en/2022/11/01/conflict-with-ukraine-october-2022/> - and this number has only changed a little since the start of the war.

You can listen to what Russians have to say on the matter yourselves:

<https://www.youtube.com/@1420channel/videos>

The fact of the matter is that for the last 20 years, Russia under Putin has bathed its neighbors in blood, enabled by a population that is mostly fully supportive or apathetic. This is also why unless Russia is decisively defeated, unless fascism and tyranny are dealt a decisive blow, it will rearm to fight another day. Russia and Russians will invade again, and once again Ukrainians, Georgians, Chechens, Syrians or others will be raped, murdered, tortured and deported. Ukraine refuses to live in fear, and we will never serve as slaves.

2.11. 8 Years of Donbas Bombing

UN: During Russia's 2014-2021 military operations against Ukraine, 14,500 people died in the Donbas war. 3,404 were civilians, 4,400 were Ukrainian servicemen and 6,500 were Russian militants.

If we break it down by year the picture is even more striking.

Commissioner for Human Rights in the Donetsk People's Republic: military / civilian

2014: 2,546

2015: 1,395

2016: 348

2017: 278 / 32

2018: 154 / 19

2019: 160 / 9

2020: 44 / 5

This is an official pro-Russian source of the number killed. Draw your own conclusions. In contrast, during Russia's two months of indiscriminate bombing of Mariupol it is estimated that over 100,000 were killed.

2.12. Russia cannot be defeated

Russia does not need to be defeated in the sense that its army is completely wiped out. It has to get to a point where it becomes untenable or no longer in the interests of Russia to continue the war.

- Russia lost plenty of wars. Just in the 20th century: Russo-Japanese War, WWI, Finnish War of Independence, Latvian War of Independence, Estonian War of Independence, Lithuanian War of Independence, Polish–Soviet War, Afghanistan War, First Chechen War,
- One of the main reasons why the USSR collapsed was due to how much it spent on its military, and due to losing the Afghanistan War
- One of the main reasons why the Russian Empire collapsed was because of how badly Russia was faring in WWI

If relevant, use arguments from [Russia has nukes](#)

2.13 Russia won WWII

This point is crucial to Russians because their post-war identity is based around having emerged victorious in WWII. It's why they consider themselves to be liberators rather than occupiers of all the nations occupied by the USSR after WWII. So here's a response that will trigger Russians, show their selective ignorance of history, and be pleasant to read for an American audience.

The USSR would have lost the war without aid from the US. This is not up for debate, and is according to both Stalin, Zhukov and Khrushchev.

Here is a quote from the memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: "I would like to express my candid opinion about Stalin's views on whether the Red Army and the Soviet Union could have coped with Nazi Germany and survived the war without aid from the United States and Britain. First, I would like to tell about some remarks Stalin made and repeated several times when we were "discussing freely" among ourselves. He stated bluntly that if the United States had not helped us, we would not have won the war. If we had had to fight Nazi Germany one on one, we could not have stood up against Germany's pressure, and we would have lost the war. No one ever discussed this subject officially, and I don't think Stalin left any written evidence of his opinion, but I will state here that several times in conversations with me he noted that these were the actual circumstances. He never made a special point of holding a conversation on the subject, but when we were engaged in some kind of relaxed conversation, going over international questions of the past and present, and when we would return to the subject of the path we had traveled during the war, that is what he said. When I listened to his remarks, I was fully in agreement with him, and today I am even more so. "

Furthermore:

- *Stalin told Harry Hopkins, FDR's emissary to Moscow in 1941, that the USSR could not match Germany's might as an occupier of Europe and its resources.*
- *At the Tehran conference in 1943, Stalin publicly stated: "Without American machines the United Nations could never have won the war."*
- *Marshall Zhukov, who was the top commander for the USSR during WWII stated in 1963: "One cannot deny that the Americans shipped over to us material without which we could not have equipped our armies held in reserve or been able to continue the war."*

Boris Sokolov who reexamined the war effort after Soviet archives became public reached the same conclusion, not to mention others like Ian Kershaw, Mark Harrison, Wendy Goldman and Donald Filtzer.

2.14 Russia is winning

An answer in four parts.

1. Russia has not managed to make any significant territorial gains since May 2022 when it captured Mariupol. Meanwhile Ukrainian offensives have already liberated over 60% of the territory that Russia originally captured. Moreover, since the start of the war Russia only managed to capture one regional capital (Kherson), and Ukraine has already liberated it.

2. Russia is losing significantly more equipment than Ukraine. This is the most covered war ever fought, with tons of footage. If we only use open, verified data:

<https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-ukrainian.html>

<https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html>

you'll see the totals in red at the top, and broken down by category below (with a photo for each piece of equipment).

3. Russia is losing significantly more troops than Ukraine. The recent detailed analysis by **Russian** media: <https://en.zona.media/article/2023/07/10/stats> - shows that Russian losses are around 47,000 dead with another 125,000 severely wounded. By December 2023, a declassified U.S. intelligence assessment, shared with Congress, estimated 315,000 Russian personnel had been killed or injured since the start of the invasion, amounting to 87% of Russia's prewar force. Meanwhile Ukrainian losses are estimated at about a third of this. This alone however is not catastrophic for Russia since its population is about 3x that of Ukraine, and the Russian army has (both historically and currently) considered using soldiers as cannon fodder acceptable as long as this furthers its goals. However:

4. Russia lost its most experienced units and its most advanced equipment at the beginning. When Russia invaded in February 2022 it expected the war to end quickly with a clear Russian

victory. It invaded with ~200,000 of its most experienced troops and its newest equipment. A huge portion of this was destroyed in the first month of the war in the failed assault on Kyiv. If we again rely on open, verified data from Oryx, you'll notice that Russian losses in equipment in the first months were their new models of tanks. By July 2022, we started seeing unmodernized T-62Ms on the front (which is a tank designed in 1961 and built between 1961–1975). Russia has ramped up its production, but not sufficiently to replace losses, which is why we're seeing more and more ancient Soviet equipment on the front.

On the other hand the weakest that Ukraine has been was on the first days of the war. Morale was low since it was uncertain whether the capital would fall, equipment was old because the West had not yet started to provide military support, and the Ukrainian army was at its smallest size and most inexperienced state. Now Ukraine has already liberated over 60% of the land Russia originally captured, is continuing to advance, and is waiting for the delivery of F-16s (which will finally give Ukraine modern jets that it desperately needs).

2.15 Ukraine should negotiate a ceasefire with Russia

Negotiations are only in Russia's interests right now. Some in the West believe that Ukraine should negotiate to end this war. Indeed, in the end there will need to be negotiations and a peace treaty. The purpose of the war is to bring Ukraine into a more favorable position when negotiations, inevitably, begin.

Ukrainians support continuing to fight.

- A clear majority, 70% of all Ukrainians interviewed, said Ukraine should continue fighting until it wins the war with Russia. Just 26% favor negotiating to end it as soon as possible.
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/403133/ukrainians-support-fighting-until-victory.aspx>
- A later poll conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology said 85% of Ukrainians believe that no territorial concessions to Russia are acceptable, "even if because of this the war may last longer."

This should come as no surprise. After the torture, murder and rape perpetrated by Russians onto Ukrainians on occupied territories, Ukrainians do not want to condemn their fellow countrymen still living on occupied territories to this fate. Ukrainians choose to keep fighting for their freedom and independence.

Additionally if a peace treaty is reached now, without Russia being further defeated, Russia will rearm and launch a new invasion in several years. Currently the majority of the Russian population supports the war, and the notion that Ukraine should be part of Russia.

Furthermore, there has been no indication that Putin is truly interested in peace, but rather is using the prospect of a ceasefire to divide the West and slow down aid to Ukraine.

Unless tyranny is dealt a conclusive blow, it will rearm to fight another day. Russia and Russians will invade again, and once again Ukrainians will be raped, murdered, tortured and deported. We refuse to live in fear, and will never serve as slaves.

Supporting Ukraine is both morally and pragmatically the right thing to do.

Politicians who argue that we should negotiate with Russia are either idiots, corrupt, or both

History has shown that we cannot show weakness with Russia and dictators, this only enables them and makes them stronger

Peace cannot be reached by a country under attack laying down its arms. This would not be peace, but occupation.

2.15.1 Russia regularly breaks agreements

There is no reason to believe Russia will respect any agreement. In fact, there is every reason to believe it won't. Here is short list of the results of negotiations with Russia in the last 30 years that it never respected:

1. The Budapest Memorandum of 1994. Russia agreed to "respect independence, sovereignty, and the existing borders of Ukraine" as well as "refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine". Breached by Russia invading Crimea in 2014.
2. The Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty of 1997. Russia agreed to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and "reaffirmed the inviolability of the borders" between the two countries. Russia breached it in 2014.
3. The OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999. Russia committed to withdrawing its troops from Moldova's Transdniestrian region and Georgia until the end of 2002. That never happened.
4. The 2008 Georgia ceasefire agreement following Russian aggression against the country. Russia agreed that "Russian military forces must withdraw to the lines prior to the start of hostilities". That never happened.
5. The Ilovaysk "Green Corridor" in August 2014 and other "humanitarian" death corridors. Russia pledged to let Ukrainian forces leave the encircled town of Ilovaysk in the east of Ukraine, but instead opened fire and killed 366 Ukrainian troops. In the following years, Russia attacked numerous humanitarian corridors in Syria.

6. The "Minsk" agreements of 2014 and 2015. Russia agreed to cease the fire in the east of Ukraine. There had been 200 rounds of talks and 20 attempts to enforce a ceasefire, all of which the Russian side promptly violated. On February 24th, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

7. The 2022 Black Sea Grain Initiative. Russia pledged to "provide maximum assurances regarding a safe and secure environment for all vessels engaged in this initiative." It then hindered the initiative's operation for months before withdrawing unilaterally a year later.

NB: I am only focused on deals made with Russia to address specific issues and conflicts. I am not mentioning almost 400 international treaties that Russia has breached since 2014.

There are no conclusions to be drawn here, except that no one can seriously use the words "Russia" and "negotiations" in the same phrase.

Putin is a habitual liar who promised international leaders that he would not attack Ukraine days before his invasion in February 2022.

Russia's tactic has remained consistent in its many wars over the last three decades: kill, grab, lie, and deny.

Why would anyone genuinely believe that Russia in 2023 is any different from Russia in 1994, 1997, 1999, 2008, 2014, 2015, and 2022?

2.16 Hunter Biden, Burisma

On Feb. 15, 2024, the FBI arrested Alexander Smirnov (note the name) for feeding the bureau false information about President Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden during the 2020 presidential campaign.

You can read the full indictment here:

<https://www.justice.gov/sco-weiss/media/1338741/di?inline=> but I'll summarize:

Smirnov told the FBI — falsely — that officials with Burisma had told him they hired Hunter Biden because he would "protect us, through his dad, from all kinds of problems." According to the indictment, Smirnov's claims to the FBI, which he first made in June 2020, "were fabrications," and, in truth, he only "had contact with executives from Burisma in 2017," when Joe Biden had left office as vice president and "had no ability" to influence U.S. policy.

The indictment also states that Smirnov "repeated some of his false claims" after being interviewed by FBI special agents last September, and "changed his story as to other of his claims, and promoted a new false narrative after he said he met with Russian officials."

2.17 Ukraine doesn't have enough men & soldiers too old

At least 400,000 people in Ukraine reach military age annually.

soldiers every year plus the number of men who have not yet been mobilized, in addition to those men who have not yet been mobilized.

The reason the average age in the Ukrainian army is 42 is easily explained by basic demographics:

