

Ukraine and the Oligarchs - Denis Pilash Part 1 & 2

Friday 1 April 2022, by [JAY Paul](#), [PILASH Denis](#) (Date first published: 24 March 2022).

The Oligarchs of Russia and Ukraine are destroying the country and the wealth they stole from the people should be expropriated. First, Russia must withdraw its troops, and Ukrainians will fight until they do. Imperialism in all its forms must be fought, says Denis Pilash on theAnalysis.news.

Paul Jay | Hi, I'm Paul Jay. Welcome to *theAnalysis.news*. As you can see, I have a kind of screwy setup. I'm not in my studio, I'm out visiting with Daniel Ellsberg in California, but I'll do my best to make this work. I'll be back in just a few seconds, we're going to talk to a Ukrainian member of the Socialist Left in Ukraine about the current situation and ask him some of the questions people have been asking here in North America and around the world. Be back in just a few seconds.

The considerations when one talks about the Russian invasion of Ukraine are different. If you're in Ukraine and you're dealing with an aggressive invader, or you're in North America, or United States in particular, where you're facing the center of the Empire, which has its finger on everything. Although perhaps not as much as or in control of as much as they would like to be or as some of the American Left and others think they are, but we're going to get to that in just a bit. First, we're going to talk with our guests about what the conditions are now in Ukraine, and then we'll get into some of the other questions.

So now, joining us from Western Ukraine, I'm not going to say what city it is. That's out of his own safety concerns is Denis Pilash. He's a political scientist, a historian, a translator. He's an activist of the Ukrainian Democratic Socialist Organization, *the Social Movement*. A member of the *Commons a Journal of Social Criticism*, he's on the editorial board, and he's co-author of the book *Europa, The Left: Europe*. Thanks very much for joining us, Dennis.

Denis Pilash | Thank you for inviting me.

Paul Jay | So you're in Western Ukraine, which you've told me is relatively safer than certainly most of the rest of Ukraine. First of all, what's it like for you? What are you doing day-to-day? Then tell us a little bit about what you know of what's happening in the rest of the country.

Denis Pilash | Now, we are deeply into the war, and it has affected tens of millions of lives. Thousands of civilians have been killed, and millions had to relocate. Many of them have already crossed the border into Poland, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and so on. Many millions more are relocating within Ukraine to safer places. Actually, I would say that now we have an existential horror when you are thinking about the plight of those people who are now under the shelling and the airstrikes in Kyiv and Kharkiv, in smaller cities, towns and villages in the Eastern, Northern and Southern parts of Ukraine. So many people couldn't leave their homes, they couldn't leave their elder relatives, they couldn't leave their relatives with disabilities, and they couldn't leave their pets. Actually, in some places, the situation is really bad.

So some of the towns have been destroyed almost completely, like Kalynivka, Donbas and Schastia. Some of Kyiv's suburbs, like Rubizhne, Hostomel' and Bucha. The city of Mariupol' is now under siege, and there are certain humanitarian disasters there, and there are estimated thousands of civilians who have probably perished in this catastrophe. As for me, the first days were really horrific, really terrible, when you tried to track where your friends are and whether all of them are in safety. Then you start to get news that someone you used to know is killed, for instance, an anarchist guy in Kharkiv and a physicist near Kyiv.

So now I'm in one of the Western cities of Ukraine where we have relatively less air alerts, and you don't live in constant fear of being attacked and bombed, but you still feel there is a war going on, and you have thousands of refugees fleeing to the West. Also, you have an influx of humanitarian aid coming through the city. So now I'm trying to volunteer at the local University to help transport and disseminate this aid for the refugees, the relocated people, the people near the front line, and the people who, in one way or another, are trying to resist.

Actually, we had hundreds of thousands of people who enlisted in this voluntary tutorial, self-defence units. You actually have millions of essential workers and volunteers, humanitarian volunteers, people who are trying to aid others who try to escape and who try just to survive. Actually, we have to give huge respect, especially to the healthcare workers who are working relentlessly to save human lives, and for the transportation workers, actually, again, they are also risking their lives. Some of them have been killed. For instance, the employees of the state-run railroad companies managed to evacuate an enormous number of people. So they are one of the biggest heroes of this situation. Again, you have lots and lots of these people who are working-class people who are usually not so visible as the front line, essential for the resistance and for survival. They are the ones who keep things running.

Paul Jay | So what is the role of the Left, the workers movement, trade unions? What role are they playing in the context of this invasion? Also, what about this law that was just passed by the Ukrainian government outlawing various parties, including some Left socialist parties? And was your party affected at all?

Denis Pilash | I would probably start with the general context. In Ukraine, like almost everywhere in Eastern and Central Europe, the so-called post-socialist States. Well, you have a rather poor situation for the Left as the progressive forces in the labour movement, lots of things that are paying into this situation, like starting with this really wild capitalism that was unleashed in the '90s and the market reforms that led to the impoverishment of people and dismantling social safety nets. Also, of course, part of this comes from the discreditation of the Leftist and socialist and Communist ideas by the experience of colonialism and the hunger, the repressions and so on. So obviously, it's not something that is boosting so much a progressive alternative here.

Actually, in central Eastern Europe, you have several countries where the new Left parties have been prominent, like Litija in Slovenia or Poznań in Poland, but in the rest of these places, usually, you have difficult conditions for the Democratic Left. So this was the situation for Ukraine as well. Our group called [foreign language 00:09:42], the social movement, Leftist organizations organized to bring together people from trade unions, from the student movement, from the feminist movement, from the ecological movement, from other social movements and to try to articulate Democratic socialist agenda, an anti-capitalist agenda to constitute real grassroots political subjects that would voice for the working-class people.

We felt the necessity for this after we experienced in Ukraine a number of mass protests, usually called maidan's, due to the biggest square in Kyiv. Well, actually, they were really popular movements, joined by a huge number of people, but these people were driven by the same problems

that are usually protested throughout the world, starting with poverty, inequality, lack of [inaudible 00:10:57] representation, police brutality and so on. Every time the only result was probably some change of politicians, some change of geopolitical orientations, but never the change of the system. That is a system of nefarious oligarchic capitalism that flourished in Ukraine and elsewhere in our region. So we felt that we needed to propose this kind of alternative and to challenge this oligarchic system — actually, all mainstream political parties are rooted in these oligarchic financial and industrial groups, and they are representing them.

So that was the reason why our group then called the Left [inaudible 00:11:53], then The Assembly for Social Revolution, and ultimately we created this NGO social movement with the perspective to become a political party. In Ukraine, we have probably more than maybe 300 registered political parties, but they are no more than some kind of electoral vehicle that are sometimes bought by some capitalist actors and then resold after the elections.

So they lack any kind of ideology and philosophy and so on. They don't really represent some social groups besides, of course, the capital that runs them. So these were the prerequisites for the establishment of our group. Now in these conditions, we are trying to do our best to both help the people who are in need. Also to prevent some cuts to social and labour rights. Of course, in any situation, any government operating this neoliberal shock doctrine will grab the opportunity to somehow have the rights for the majority, especially the social and economic rights somehow, to benefit the ruling class. So it was again the same.

Now here we have some neoliberal members of Parliament who tried to actually pass a law that is still waiting for the signature by the President. We are calling [inaudible 00:14:03] a law that makes it easier to sack workers, and it's quite cynical in the situation when workers are the backbone of the resistance today. So again, they are thinking of this purely, of course, in categories of what's good for the business, not what's good for the workers.

So then we have the situation with the trade unions in Ukraine. Again it's like elsewhere in the region. It's also a bit complicated. So we have two big Union entities. So the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine. The first one is a continuation of the official pro-governmental old Soviet unions, and in many cases, it was perceived as really an ally of the management and something that is not representing its membership at all.

The second one emerged from the big Miners Movement at the end of the '80s. So it was one of these reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union when the workers had economic demands, and they felt that the system that calls itself working class is actually run by bureaucracy, not by the people. So they emerged as independent unions, and they are smaller, but now we had the situation when in both these entities you could find both some bureaucrats aligning with management. At the same time, you can see like really militant branches, and in our organization, we have organizers and people who are active in both this Federation, the people who work with construction workers, with crane workers, minors. This independent minors Union, especially in the city of Yenakijeve, that's a kind of industrial heart of Ukraine, it's in the center of Ukraine. It's an extremely long city, with ore mines and ore refineries. Interestingly enough, it's also the birthplace of the current President [Volodymyr] Zelenskyy.

Many of these people are now involved in all kinds of activities. Actually, many workers enlisted for the military resistance, but many are doing their jobs to keep things going. Well, now again, we try to gain more international tension and solidarity, especially for the plight of Ukrainian workers in the situation of war, and to also find international solidarity for the demands that would benefit the working class in Ukraine. Starting from an obvious one, we need to stop the war and withdraw all Russian forces from Ukrainian territory and continue with the specific ones that needed to recover

Ukraine after this ravaging war. So we need to cancel the Ukrainian external debt and get the country out of this vicious circle of debt of the IMF [International Monetary Fund] austerity policies and so on. Again, we need to confiscate as much assets and property of oligarchizing, both Russian and Ukrainian, because again, this war has shown that the class war has no ending and no truth. Even in situations when you have an international war, you could see the Ukrainian oligarchs who were fleeing from the country prior to the invasion and who tried to rob the people in a way that makes them pay for the damage caused by the war.

Of course, you have the Russian ruling class that again was robbing its own people, other people throughout the post-Soviet space who were concentrating their enormous wealth and [inaudible 00:19:21] it off in safe havens buying property in London, the Netherlands, Switzerland and being an organic part of the global ruling elite. Of course, Ukrainian and Russian oligarchs are the same as any other capitalists. So they do the same thing, and they are the same way, criminals. In our case, they are usually also criminals in a direct sense because it was how this accumulation of capital in the '90s was conducted, with criminal activities, literally.

To turn all this money for the reconstruction of the economy, of the infrastructure, for rebuilding the apartments and providing help for the people who were [inaudible 00:20:33] out by this war. So probably we will also go back to these specific demands, but I will also comment on the question about this decree that was banning [inaudible 00:20:46] of [inaudible 00:20:46] parties. It was about temporarily stopping the activity of several political parties that are deemed as pro-Russian. So, the biggest pro-Russian parties, one of them is one of the main oligarchic parties in Ukraine. Another one is the personalized party of YouTube blogger who, like many YouTube bloggers in this part of the world, made his name with lots of hate speech and things against each other.

But really, there is also a number of parties that have the word socialist or something like that in their names and well, the majority of them don't even exist actually. There are some mutual entities. For instance, once it was well known and once it was respected, the Socialist Party of Ukraine. In the '90s, it emerged as some kind of hope for the Democratic Left here, and it was [inaudible 00:22:17] opposition against the regime of President [Leonid] Kuchma, who was the architect of this Ukrainian oligarchy capitalism. The Socialist party was one of the main forces behind the protest against it. Then it started to sell off to different groups of local bourgeoisie, either pro-Western or pro-Russian.

So it became very discredited, and at some point, it was hijacked by some very strange people. The last of them was a curious case, a guy who started as a far-Right activist and he was an aide and advisor to Minister [Arsen] Avakov, the Minister of Interior who was again [inaudible 00:23:11] to be the patron of the Ukrainian far-Right and this very brutish guy from the police who was notorious for his remarks against no separatism and he was promising to kill drug addicts and so on with his rhetoric. Then at some point, he becomes one of the most pro-Russian [Vladimir] Putin members of Parliament, and now he's outside the country, and he's leading the Russian invasion. So this guy, actually with the support of the Minister of Interior, actually hijacked the party and threw out all the remaining real activists from there.

So you can say that these parties weren't actually really Left. For instance, the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine was more about being some kind of Right-wing populist. It was deeply into some conspiracy theories about how some plots against the Orthodox Christian civilization and our values and so on. They were of no significance, and they aren't somehow being some big obstacles for the existence of Ukraine. So I think that this decision, it was not just these facts are unnecessary and stupid, but it was also setting a dangerous and Democratic precedent when some kind of activity of political parties and organizations are stopped, not by the decision of the court due to some due process, but by unilateral decision by the central authority. So again, we can say that we have no

sympathy towards its parties, and they are not representing the real Left at all. The way they were outlawed, at least for the time of war as it was declared, is worrying because it can be used against any other political group. You just need to message them and say that they are somehow unpatriotic.

Paul Jay | So let's deal with sort of the main argument that Putin has been giving for why this invasion was necessary. Then there are certain sections of the Left in the United States, and I guess other places that have some sympathy for this argument, essentially that the Ukrainian government since 2014 has been launching attacks on the Russian speaking people in Donbas and that there was a sort of progressive character, to some extent of the forces that emerged in Donbas and eventually declared independence. That over the last years since 2014, as many as eight to ten thousand people may have been killed by the Ukrainian government forces in Donbas, and that for Russia to defend the people of Donbas, which Putin says at least is his main mission, I believe. It was necessary not just to protect the people of Donbas by having 150,000 troops on the border, but they had to actually quote "demilitarize Ukraine."

Now, I've talked to some friends in the Russian Left who apparently are also split on this question, and there's a section of the Russian Left that sympathizes with this need to defend Donbas. Certainly, in the earlier years, some members of the Russian Left even volunteered to go defend and fight in Donbas. There was a feeling of apprehension leading up to this recent conflict that the Ukrainian government was planning some kind of assault on Donbas. There's a lot of questions all in there. I know. So break it down, but let me just start with this. Is it not true that thousands of people were killed by Ukrainian forces in Donbas? And then two, was there a reason to believe this massive military build-up over the last year? Assuming that's correct because I don't know exactly who to believe about anything these days, that the Americans and NATO Fort countries had put a lot of weaponry into Ukraine, which created a legitimate sense they argue, the Russians and some of the Left, that they were in fear of an imminent attack on Donbas. So what's your take on this?

Denis Pilash | First of all, I would say that almost all words of Putin are a cynical lie. Even if we start with the War in Donbas, there were around 14,000 people killed. They were people killed from all sides. Actually, if we break down who killed more, we can find that, first of all, the number of military casualties is bigger than the civilian ones. Then again, this view that it was just the Ukrainian Army unilaterally shelling the cities of Donbas. It's again not true because it was done by both sides, and actually, just a part of these people were killed by the Ukrainian forces while you still have a big responsibility of Russia and its proxies.

So actually there was a lot of mythology, and I would say some kind of romanticizing what was happening in Donbas and what was particularly striking is that the Kremlin didn't even try hard to paint itself as some kind of anti-fascist force, but it was bought so easily by large sections on the Left because again if we speak about the nature of Putin's regime in Russia, it's a conservative Right-wing authoritarian regime that is serving the interest of this Nexus. It's a Nexus of the oligarchs the [foreign language 00:31:11] that are like the people from the security services and so on and in general bureaucrat bourgeoisie. All this together it constitutes the Russian ruling elite. While Russia was and is not just an authoritarian and non-Democratic state, increasingly authoritarian, especially after this invasion started, they passed a number of legislation that is really outlawing even calling this war. You can get fined, and then you can get imprisoned for many years for not calling it a special military operation and so on.

It was also deeply antisocial. It conducted the neoliberal reforms from monetization of some benefits to education reform and to pension reform even faster than many of the countries that are seen as more Liberal in Eastern Europe, definitely faster than in Ukraine. So again, there is nothing progressive, and nothing socialist in Russia and the modern Russia became a beacon for the far-Right in Europe. I would say that the majority of Europe and far-Right were really modelling after

this Putin system that is the best in Europe and possibly in the world. So Russia was supported by the majority of far-Right parties in Europe, from Marine Le Pen in France to Chrysí Avgí, Golden Dawn in Greece and first Jobbik's and Fidesz in Hungary.

So really you could say how much Putin is an anti-fascist from even how he was building up to this invasion and his notorious war-mongering speeches when he was constantly attacking the Russian revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks and [Vladimir] Lenin for the mere existence of Ukraine as a separate Republic and separate entity. He was clear he's continuing this Tsarist imperialist Grand Russian chauvinist narrative, and he was meeting with such prominent anti-fascists, Jair Bolsonaro from Brazil and Viktor Orbán from Hungary just prior to the invasion. So actually, nothing anti-fascist at all, but they were extensively using and trying to somehow accommodate this legacy of the victory against fascism and Nazism in the Second World War as something that is legitimate Russian official propaganda.

So again, many, many in the West and generally abroad, they tend to associate everything that is [inaudible 00:34:48] to the Soviet Union and to the victory in the Second World War just to Russia. So I have to remind you that it was the Soviet Union. It was a Federation, at least nominally a Federation of lots of Republics, and only half of its population was Russian. If we speak about, for instance, 27 million Soviet citizens who perished in the horrors of the Second World War, they were not just Russians. They were Ukrainians, Belarussians, [foreign language 00:35:24], [foreign language 00:35:24] people, Caucasus, Siberia and Central Asia. Again in the Red Army, you also had a proportion of these people, and from a quarter to a third of the Red Army and of the Soviet casualties were actually coming from Soviet Ukraine. So it was again a contribution of all the people of the Soviet Union, not just Russia and Russia cannot just —

Paul Jay | Let's go back to Donbas for a second. I want to ask you about something you said. At least a significant number of people in areas Donbas, if they don't want to be part of Ukraine, don't they have that right? Shouldn't the Ukrainian government, one of my understanding originally in 2014 and so on the demand was a kind of federal system. Later there was the Minsk agreement for allowing autonomy. Shouldn't the Ukrainian government have actually lived up to the Minsk agreement? Wouldn't that at least helped to avoid this situation?

Denis Pilash | To speak about the Donbas conflict, it was very complex on several levels. So, yes, you had a popular sentiment behind the anti-Maidan local movement in 2014. It was really a tragedy that the people protesting in central and Western Ukraine and people protesting in the Eastern part of Ukraine were actually driven by the same problems, the same demands. Still, they were given this opposing agenda in terms of some kind of identity, language, etc. This made it possible to [inaudible 00:37:27] these people against each other. Actually, a worker in Kyiv, Donetsk and Lviv have the same grievances, and it is the same problem. So again, these questions that were artificially cracking the Ukrainian people, like the language, geopolitical orientation, some others, were used by the local and foreign politicians for their own sake. This brought this lack of understanding between different regions of Ukraine. It was an unfortunate tragedy.

At other levels, you also had a play of local oligarchs, who tried to preserve their control on these regions. You also had some intentions of Russia, obviously, that started this. They kicked the conflict with the annexation of Crimea that was done. One cannot argue that it's not like a real referendum when you have armed people occupying the Peninsula, and everything is done in a mess under the barrel of the gun. Even if lots of people there were really eager to switch to Russia. Again, it was also ignoring what the others in the local population, for instance, the Crimean Tatars and other people who have been deported during the Stalinist times, how they felt about being annexed by Russia.

Now we turn to Donbas. So, yes, you had different views in the local population how to leave afterwards. Again, it wasn't that there was an overwhelming majority for breaking from Ukraine. Instead, you can check how many people left the region due to the war. There were a lot of them who went to Russia, and there were a lot of them who went to other regions of Ukraine. So it was like a million and a half IDPs internally displaced persons inside Ukraine. So, again, obviously, these were people who were more comfortable with staying in Ukraine than going to Russia, for instance.

In any case, neither of the then authority that was this post-Maidan Ukrainian authority nor those Russian and pro-Russian forces that tried to start a violent confrontation because actually there were people like Igor [Ivanovich] Strelkov and [Igor] Girkin, who is a former Russian Special Services guy with a monarchist worldview from this riot guards nostalgia and so on. He was a very important player in starting the military escalation in 2014 in Donbas. He with his unit made of so-called Russian volunteers from Russia itself. They took a local city Slovansk and then they started this military confrontation with the Ukrainian state.

So we could say that there were lots of wrong steps from both sides. At the same time, you had a clear intention of Russia and some Russian nationals stir-up a real conflict there. Actually, for many of these people, the people in the Kremlin and people like this adventurer Strelkov, they weren't caring about the population of Donbas. They cared about their own imperialist ambitions, and it was so easy for them to sacrifice the lives of the local population. Now we can say that this conflict led to the cleavage between that part of Donbas that is now controlled by this pro-Russian.

I'll go back on the nature of these so-called republics, and the Ukrainian authorities control the other part because again in these Eastern Ukrainian cities that were under Ukrainian control until they were occupied this month, in this year, you could see that there is an almost complete rejection of the Russian invaders. The local people who are primarily Russian speaking, who used to vote, primarily for the parties deemed as pro-Russian, are the same people who are now going on the streets standing up to these armed Russian soldiers and saying, "we are not inviting you here. This is our city, this is our land, and you are the Occupiers. Go back, you say that you are liberating us, but actually, we see you as fascists. You brought more war to us."

The tragedy is that these days — we have had less than a month of this war now — especially in the Donetsk region, the same Donetsk region, when you have, like the city of Mariupol', the number of civilian casualties is bigger than it was throughout all these eight years of this protracted war in Donbas. This is a result of a unilateral decision made by Russian leadership, who are steering a full-scale invasion against Ukraine.

Paul Jay | So I don't want to minimize what I think is not just a violation of international laws, this invasion of Ukraine is a war crime. I don't want to minimize that. That being said, shouldn't have Ukraine have allowed a referendum in Donbas and let the people decide what their fate will be?

Denis Pilash | So now let's get to, for instance, the issue of the Minsk agreements. So the Minsk agreement has been violated by both sides because they were written in a way that each side was somehow reading it in its own way. So, for instance, there was a big dispute whether the new elections. This special status for the Donbas it is some kind of autonomy. Whether it has to be inducted after the control over the border and will it be resumed by Ukraine or by some kind of international peace-keeping force or something else, that the sides will agree to, first, we have elections, and then only we have the returning of this control.

Again, there were arguments on both sides and, for instance, we cannot have free and fair elections in these so-called people's republics, because, again, if we speak about these, Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics. They were actually some kind of [inaudible 00:46:44] down military dictatorships

because they didn't allow any kind of independent activity, independent organizations in trade unions. Even the political parties that they sanctioned, there were some political groups that had no real entities. What they claimed to be an election was just made up. So it was a complete falsification.

So there was no even if we speak about the problems that we have with the electoral process here and even with Russia. Still, in Russia, you have some [inaudible 00:47:31] controlled but are not ruling they are oppositional. In these regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, there was even no kind of emulation of a proper process. Again, how the current leadership of these so-called republics got into power, though just another military coup, they had killed the previous leader in Donetsk, and somehow chased off the leader in Luhansk and installed new people who are members of the ruling party in United Russia, and [inaudible 00:48:19] people who again, have no reputation among local people. So the problem, they were arguing that we cannot have real elections there until we have this kind of Russian military control over this land. So this was what Ukraine was arguing. Russia was arguing, but if we [inaudible 00:48:50] over the border and [inaudible 00:48:52] back to Ukraine, then Ukraine will do some kind of cleansing and so on. So, again, both sides weren't really into —

Paul Jay | And wasn't given the strength of the far-Right in Ukraine and the even armed far-Right, if I understand it correctly, with a certain strength in the armed forces. Wasn't that fear of some kind of cleansing of Donbas had some merit?

Denis Pilash | Actually, the Ukrainian side was clearly sabotaging some parts of the political agreement of Minsk. Then the Russian side and the pro-Russian side doing lots of violations of the security part of the Minsk agreements. They didn't even [inaudible 00:49:54] and demilitarize what was described by this agreement, all the parts of this front. Again, lots of violations from both sides, and ultimately, it was the Russian side that completely destroyed means by acknowledging this Republic prior to the invasion. Now to get to the issue of the far-Right.

Paul Jay | But hang on, let me just say I got to give the counter-argument here. They're saying Minsk was already dead by that point.

Denis Pilash | Minsk wasn't dead at that point. I think that actually many thought that actually what with Russia's power-building prior to the invasion, that many people argue that actually, it's some kind of pressure to get some concessions and then to have some negotiations. Ultimately, when everyone was thinking that, okay, now they will have some negotiations, then Russia went on a full-scale invasion. So again, it seems as not a rational decision that would really pressure for —

Paul Jay | Okay, let me follow up, and again, I'm going to keep saying this because I'm pushing you on issues of what Ukraine could have done, and I don't in any way want to mitigate the crimes and horror of this invasion, but there were voices in Ukraine leading up to the invasion when the Russian forces started gathering. There are significant voices in Ukraine saying take NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] off the table, declare neutrality now. The truth is, as far as I understand, the politics of NATO, yes, there's that Buckhurst agreement, but I think many NATO countries have made it clear that decades before Ukraine would ever be allowed into NATO, meaning probably never. Why didn't Zelenskyy just declare neutrality before the invasion?

Denis Pilash | I don't think that it was really a question about NATO. Well, actually, it was part of his political platform that he would do a referendum on such issues, including this NATO membership. Though he inherited from the previous President [Petro] Poroshenko, who had already, under his leadership, this membership in NATO was engraved in the Constitution in some amendments that Ukraine is aspiring for Euro Atlantic integration and so on. Actually, I think that it

could easily become a part of some kind of deal.

If Russian leadership did really want to contact with Zelenskyy for two years, he was trying to get on the presidential level, personal negotiations with Putin, probably to discuss these questions as well. However, he had no chance because the Russian side said that we are not going to speak with you, we are only going to speak with Washington. Again this is some kind of very Imperial thinking that big grand Imperial powers have to decide the fate of smaller ones. I don't think that really Zelenskyy was really sticking to this issue of NATO membership. Now, he's clearly also saying that we understood back then, and we understand now that many in NATO member States don't want Ukraine in. So we can speak, we can negotiate on this issue. But why don't you go on these direct negotiations?

So, I wouldn't say that it was oppression. Back to this issue of the far-Right, the question as you put it. Well, again, the far-Right is the pressuring issue for Ukraine. We have two main imperatives also, which are too simplistic. The first one is if you read Western scholars, usually they are playing the importance of the influence of the far-Right in Ukraine, and they are rightly [inaudible 00:54:55] electoral is a coalition of the major far-Right groups, has just like 2% on the election, like the last [inaudible 00:55:10] elections and maybe a percent it half as [inaudible 00:55:14] presidential election.

Paul Jay | So they're very weak electorally.

Denis Pilash | So they are weak electorally as they have no popularity among the population. So actually, the population is rejecting this kind of very nationalist rhetorics. It's saying that the previous presidential elections, when the incumbent President Poroshenko was defeated, he was running on an increasingly nationalist conservative platform. At the same time, Zelenskyy, he was actually an empty signifier, he had no clear program at all. Still, he was perceived as some kind of uniting figure comes from the city of Kryvyi Rih, from a family of Soviet intelligent, some rather cosmopolitan figure, Russian speaking, who has this message of uniting and inclusive vision of Ukraine instead of some kind of these nationalist plugins of Poroshenko that were army, language, and face. So this was his triad in the elections. While Zelenskyy was really speaking about uniting all people, including bringing peace to Donbas. Actually, after his election, the ceasefire in Donbas was much more effective. So there were much less violations of the ceasefire and much less casualties, you could say, and actually, he had this mandate from the people to try and force some kind of deal on this.

Here we have the issue of the far-Right. So when they are done playing them, they say only about the electoral results, but we understand that the real power of the far-Right here is not in their elections, it's in their armed resource because in countries like France when some kind of Le Pen and [foreign language 00:57:31] get 20% and 30% of votes or in Italy with [Matteo] Salvini and Lega or some alternative for [inaudible 00:57:44] and so on. These far-Right parties have no military means, they obviously have no armed groups.

Here we come to another view that since Ukraine has something synonymous to fascism, all Ukrainians are fascists, and the only thing you know about Ukraine is as an old Battalion. It has not been a Battalion for many years but is now a Regiment. By the way, not in the army but in the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard. Many again spoke about this link between the original leader of the Azov Battalion, that was [Andriy] Biletsky, who hails from a real neo-nazi, very small organization and with his link to former Minister of Interior [Arsen Borysovych] Avakov. I would say that yes, we have this huge challenge of how to deal with the existence of this armed group.

Paul Jay | How strong are they in the military?

Denis Pilash | I would say that Azov are probably connected with some groups, it was called a national militia, Natsionalni Druzhyny. It's several thousand people with weapons, so compared to the entirety of Ukrainian armed forces, they are again only a small faction, but they also have this kind of mythology that surrounds them that they were so efficient as defenders of Mariupol' and so on and so on. So this, of course, boosted their legitimacy and this, for instance, made it not so easy if the political leadership had enough political will. For instance, to say we have to disband this Battalion or Regiment at this point because it's dangerous for the citizens of Ukraine and it's dangerous for the public image of Ukraine. It was clear though many politicians here seemed completely blind to this problem, but internationally everyone was speaking about this problem. So in order to somehow disarm it and probably disperse it, it wouldn't be so easy as well. Now, this so-called Nazification intervention by Russia, it would be even less possible because it gave them new justification for their existence and new legitimacy.

In any society, the majority of people don't want to wage war. It's this tiny group of the far-Right who are really eager for war, who dream about getting to Valhalla, and there's some kind of specific mindset. They see any war as an opportunity. You could see that it was not just this one Battalion and some splits from it that benefited from this war but also other far-Right groups both on the Ukrainian and on the Russian side. So you could see that many international far-Rights they came to the war in Donbas and some training camps. Then on both sides as an opportunity to take part in a war and to get some training. So you had a number of, for instance, Scandinavian or Croatian far-Right coming to Azov, and you had Serbian and again Scandinavian and also some other European far-Right coming to fight for the separatist side, the pro-Russian side.

There were, again, you mentioned that there were some Russians Left who went to defend Donbas, and there is a lot of mythology, for instance, around one of these warlords in Luhansk [Aleksey] Mozgovoy, that he had under his command. There was even a unit with communists and so on. But under the same command, there was a unit of far-Right like the Russian Neonazis from Rusich and so on. You have, of course, lots of far-Right among different mercenaries and different Wagner groups that are Russian government-affiliated. So if you see the tattoos on some Azov and some Wagner militant, it would be pretty much the same. So these are people —

Paul Jay | One on Ukrainian right and one on the Russian right.

Denis Pilash | Yeah, and they are really parasitic in this war and parasitic on the tragedy of an enormous number of people, while these people see this as an opportunity. I'm afraid that with this invasion, we got, of course, that all nationalist hysteria throughout the region will only increase. It's increasing here, of course, as any war brings this, it's increasing in Russia. You could again even see in literal Nazis doing some [foreign language 01:04:19] events with all the stuff like the Russian National Unity, the Neonazi group and lots of course dehumanization [inaudible 01:04:29].

We were brought to an even more dangerous situation now, and I would say that what was the opportunity to the majority of the Ukrainian society, including the majority in the Ukrainian armed forces? Again, if you listen to the current commander of the Ukrainian Army's illusions. He was in this previous month going up to this invasion. He was constantly making the point that in no case Ukraine should wait for Donbas and try to reintegrate it in a military way. The only option is some kind of peaceful and civic solution. So I would say that the majority of the people could stop these far-Right groups from doing some atrocities. In the case when you have another escalation and more and more confrontational situation, this amplifies the voices of the extreme, and it really waters down the voices of the reasonable majority.

Paul Jay | All right, so we're going to do a part two of this interview where we'll talk more about the role of the United States and NATO expansion and the bigger picture of the geopolitics and this

moment and the crisis of global capitalism because that's really what this fundamentally is about. I don't think we should ever stop talking about how this is a manifestation of what I would say is sort of an uneven development of capitalist countries, which is precisely what happened before World War II. I'll sort of use this in my introduction, but I'll just tease it a little bit now. You can't expect the country, the size of Russia — when I say you, I mean the United States — not to have regional power. To think that a country that size is just going to play ball and not be a regional power is ridiculous. On the other hand, if you like to sell arms, it's pretty good to try to stop them from being a regional power and for many other reasons. None of that justifies the invasion. That being said, there's a lot of onus on U.S. policy within the context of how global capitalism works.

So we're going to talk about that in part two. Denis, thanks very much, and thanks to everybody watching on theAnalysis.news.

Part 2

The invasion of Ukraine is a reflection of the crisis of global capitalism. That said, Putin may have believed he would face the same impunity that was the case with the Western imperialist powers after invading Iraq, says Ukrainian activist Denis Pilash on theAnalysis.news.

Paul Jay | Welcome back to *theAnalysis.news*. I'm Paul Jay, and I'm continuing my discussion with Denis Pilash, who's in Ukraine and about the situation there and the geopolitics of this. In this episode or segment, we're going to talk more about NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. We'll be back in a second.

So now joining me again is Denis Pilash. He's a political scientist, historian, and translator. He's an activist of the *Ukrainian Democratic Socialist Organization of the Social Movement* and a member of *The Commons*, a journal of social criticism. He's on the editorial board. He's co-author of the book *The Left Europe*. Thanks again, Denis.

Denis Pilash | Thank you for inviting me.

Paul Jay | So let's go into this issue of NATO, NATO expansion. Let me just put this as a thesis out there. Some people are arguing that the Americans have created in Ukraine a kind of Afghanistan. In other words, suck Russia into an invasion of Ukraine. Now Russia has its own agencies. They don't have to get sucked into anything. If they didn't have their own ambitions, they couldn't get sucked into something. [Vladimir] Putin is, I'm sure, a better chess player than most of the other people on the other side, at least he had been. That being said, did the Americans want this catastrophe? Did they arm Ukraine to the teeth as a provocation? Everyone knew that there wasn't a serious possibility of Ukraine being in NATO, certainly not any time soon, but they wouldn't take it off the table. Did Putin step into something that will be a disaster and catastrophe both for Ukraine and for Russia?

As someone sitting here in California right now, it's a disaster for the world. One, it has taken the climate crisis completely off the table. Everyone's getting back to fossil fuel, revving up fossil fuel production in order to replace the Russian fossil fuel. I got to say, I think one of the most dangerous things coming out of all this is the re-militarization of Germany. There is going to be a massive expanse in the German military budget. I mean, this is turning into a pre-World War I style shit show with nuclear weapons. If Putin thought that this had anything to do with defending Russian security, I can't imagine how he thinks Russia is more secure at the end of all this. It completely destroyed — if this goes on for weeks and weeks, and family after Ukrainian family leaves the country, and many of the men and boys are killed, what is left on Russia's border? And they're going to occupy this?

I mean, the whole thing is nuts, which is a reflection of the insanity of where global capitalism is right now. Anyway, it's a little bit of a rant on my part, but it doesn't ever take the attention off that there's an invasion right now. Civilians are getting killed. Soldiers on both sides are getting killed for no damn reason. What's your take on sort of the bigger picture of this?

Denis Pilash | I would say that I agree with the frame that this is a result of the crisis of global neo-liberal capitalism. Actually, what Russia has done with this Ukrainian invasion, in some ways, is a continuation of what the U.S. and its allies and satellites did with the Iraqi invasion. So I think that Putin, being a war criminal and doing this war crime of aggression, he following the steps of war criminals like [George W.] Bush, [Tony] Blair and others. It is possible he thought that he would face the same impunity that was the case with the Western imperialist powers doing pretty much the same thing.

So you have a unilateral invasion of the country, and then you are finding and faking some of the text and justification while you did it. Now they are even trying to do the same with — actually, if you know a bit about the situation in Ukraine, it's completely absurd claims of some kind of weapons of mass destruction, and it was the same with Iraq. Then you do this humanitarian disaster killing thousands of civilians immediately in the first weeks of the invasion, including many children and women and non-competent people. And then you create something that will ask for a huge disaster for an entire region.

So I'm afraid that yes, we will follow these steps. It's one of the worst-case scenarios, of course, after the full-scale world war with nuclear weapons or something like that. Again, a similarly terrible scenario is being stuck in a prolonged war with people's continuous suffering and deaths. So if we get these Russian Armys that will instantly try to siege and shell cities and so on, I think it's important from what perspective we are looking at the world system. There is too much concentrating on [inaudible 00:07:04] and seeing some of them as some kind of counterbalance while they are really interlocked. One could say that there are probably more German parts in Russian tanks than American rockets in the Ukrainian arms.

So actually, all these sites were cooperating. I would say that in the '90s, the new capitalist Russia under [Boris] Yeltsin and then under Putin, it was conducting equally horrible crimes. For instance, in Chechnya, the wars in Chechnya. It was tolerated by the so-called collective West. Again, when Russia was going into this authoritarian scenario, starting with President Yeltsin's shooting of Parliament and then falsifying the elections and then handpicking Putin, everything was okay for the West.

We also have this transcript of Yeltsin's and [Bill] Clinton's talks when Yeltsin says, "Just give me Eurasia, and you can do everything you want in the rest of the world." So again, it was this way of how do we shape these imperial spheres of influence? I think that it was ultimately a goal of genius leadership just to become this part of the club, part of the white colonizers club, and to do the same as what Americans, British and all the others can do in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Again, you see how all these imperialists and sub-imperialist smaller players tried to do in Syria. When Russia was bombing and Turkey was invading the Kurdish population, the Saudis and Qataris had their own agendas and some kind of jihadist groups linked to them. So they were all using this nation of Syria and Syrian people as some kind of battleground for their imperial ambitions and aspirations.

So again, there is a lot of talks, for instance, that Russia had legitimate security concerns. But when I see here something like legitimate security concerns on the left, I just compare it to some official [Ronald] Reagan administration saying that we have legitimate security concerns about Granada and we can invade it. So we have legitimate security concerns about Central America. We have to call

the Sandinista government and finance some far-Right governments here or squeeze Cuba —

Paul Jay | Hold on. As much as I don't agree with the NATO argument but just to be fair and what Russia is saying in terms of legitimate security concerns is not they're afraid of Ukraine in and of itself. They're afraid of if Ukraine became a NATO country if there were nuclear missiles on Ukrainian territory. That's what they're talking about.

Denis Pilash | It's what the U.S. was talking about, Cuba, was it Russian — Soviet missiles and so on, and Granada has some Cuban, I don't know, counterintelligence officers. So again, it explains the logic of each of these Imperial powers, but it isn't the perspective I think that we need to look from. We need to look from the perspective of the people of all these countries and how these smaller countries and their people have their own agency, of course, and they cannot be denied and seen as just some kind of pawns in this game.

But of course, the big players in both Moscow and Washington or Beijing or New Delhi, you can say more, Ankara and so on. They try to use every situation in their own interests, their political interests and their economic interests. So obviously, the Western government, the Western bourgeois governments, had no genuine interest in being real friends to Ukraine. Of course, they saw the situation as some kind of tool for their own dealings and foundations with Russia, while ultimately, Ukraine was sent on its own to deal with this invasion. So actually, I would say that there is some kind of proxy war between NATO and Russia because there are no NATO soldiers dying in Ukraine. There are Ukrainians dying in Ukraine.

Again, there is no Ukrainian offensive against Russia and all the prior military build-up, contrary to what Russia painted. The independent international observers were pointing out that there is build-up on the Russian side, but there is no Ukrainian build-up for some kind of invasion or some kind of provocation and so on. So it was some kind of result of the political dynamic or maybe something linked to some economic calculations because the economic situation in both Russia and Ukraine was going pretty bad, and the prospects were again rather bad for the continuation. So it could push the Russian leadership to these adventurous decisions.

Paul Jay | If you look at who benefits, it's all, as far as I can tell, sitting here, the U.S. and the West benefits is the one who benefits from all of this. They have a unified NATO, arms sales going through the roof, Germany practically doubling its military budget, but of course, the U.S. will greatly increase their military budget. The military-industrial complexes of many countries are just smiling ear to ear, so are the fossil fuel companies who love what's happened with the price of oil and this last year of a build-up of arms, if this is what's been going on, Americans helping the Ukrainian government build its arms. You don't think there was a deliberate provocation here? I'll say it again. Nothing made Putin fall for the provocation. That being said, given how much it seems to me the West benefits from this, you don't think there was some deleterious on their part? If they wanted to avoid this, they could have just declared Ukraine's not coming into NATO, period. They could have declared that a long time ago.

Denis Pilash | Actually, again, you can turn the game and pinpoint Russia saying that it was Russia that consolidated NATO. Why this decision? They could predict the result. So why were they going into this trap? Because it was so obvious.

Paul Jay | Yeah, it was so obvious. Every commentator was saying that as long as the 150,000 troops don't invade, he's dividing NATO. If they actually invade, he's uniting NATO. Everybody was saying that.

Denis Pilash | Sometimes some kind of decisions they aren't so rational in the perfect sense. They

can also stem from the nature of unchecked authoritarian powers that have no real feedback from below. That also really relies on the information which is delivered in a way that this leadership wants to hear. So analyzing why the Russian Army performed so poorly was because they had lots of problems with logistics and, in general, readiness. So many have this assumption that probably the picture of the situation and the readiness in the West, in Ukraine and in Russia that was presented to Putin wasn't adequate for the situation.

Paul Jay | It almost sounds like they really weren't planning to invade, and all of a sudden, they were told to go invade.

Denis Pilash | But they were concentrating these forces for months. It seems that they really thought that they will have a smooth blitzkrieg like in Georgia that went on for several days, and they capture some major cities, and then they can force Ukraine to capitulate, and everything is okay, and they don't have like a viable plan B for this.

Returning to the question, who benefits. In the same way, you could say that, well, at least in the part of its economic control over Russia, China is benefiting as well because now Russia has nowhere to sell its fossil fuels. So it will have to rely heavily on the Chinese side, and the Chinese can lower the price and also do some more economic concessions. Given that China has a powerful and dynamic economy and Russia under the capitalist development, Russia was going more and more into this kind of retro-state without — actually, it started already [Leonid] Brezhnev, but not on the scale that it is now. When they try to — any kind of war is also for any military complex, not just the Western ones, but the Russian one. Like they did in Syria, that is some kind of manifesting our weaponry that you can [inaudible 00:19:06] and so on.

But it seems like even this Russian high-tech military stuff isn't so high tech. So there are guys, employees of the state service in Ukraine who uses an old Soviet Igla grenade launcher from the '70s, and he's hitting this newest Russian [inaudible 00:19:38]. It seems that Russia's economy was really legging on, and now it will be even more dependent on China's primary partner in this situation.

Paul Jay | Yeah, it's kind of ironic because there's forces around Trump, whether it's Trump, the individual or not, but that are far-Right American Christian nationalist forces. Many who saw Putin as a defender of Christianity and an ally, which is why many of the people around Trump wanted to diminish the tension with Putin and Russia because they really want to target China. There's a very interesting speech that Steve Bannon gave to a group, a right-Wing group that had a meeting in the Vatican a few years ago, and he talked about how there's a coming bloody war with Islam and atheist China. But even that's fallen apart in the sense that all they've done now is push Russia more towards China instead of being the ally of the American Right, which against China, he virtually could turn Russia into like a satellite of China because where else are they going to go?

Denis Pilash | Again, there was a speech by a German Admiral who was ultimately sacked when it leaked, he said, I'm a Christian, and as a Christian, I think that we must rely on Russia to fight the non-Christian Chinese. So yes, there are also these kinds of thoughts.

Paul Jay | Let me just end for now, but I'd like to talk again in the future, soon. This is so insane on every side. There are so many forces, it seems irrationally, but I guess that's not unusual in wars because the only real rationality here is how much money all the oligarchs make out of war. That being said, what does it make you feel? There is serious conversation now about the use of tactical nuclear weapons. It's beyond insane that they're talking about nuclear weapons as if they're just another weapon. They're not even using it on — people who watch *theAnalysis.news* They know. I'm working with Daniel Ellsberg on this thing called based on his book *Doomsday Machine*, but you

don't hear the phrase *Doomsday Machine*. They're talking about as if you could have tactical nuclear weapons. One, it wouldn't cause devastation in the entire region and two, somehow, it gets contained and doesn't become out of nuclear war, it's beyond insanity. But you're there where they're talking about using tactical nuclear weapons.

Denis Pilash | What's one of the most tragic issues is what easiness some Western experts are speaking about it, as long as it concerns just Ukraine. So it may use nuclear weapons against Ukraine as if it's some kind of second-class people. As long as it's not us, it's not a problem. We had after the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there was almost a consensus that these weapons shouldn't be used in any case, and it was just some justification for the storage and amplifying the number of nuclear weapons as if they were some kind of containment. But now we see that the beast is unleashed and the beast of this nuclear war being possible, and nuclear non-proliferation is now also going to the dust bin.

It seems as if we speak about the context of the war in Ukraine, Ukraine and then Kazakhstan and Belarus, they give up the remnants of the Soviet nuclear Arsenal that were here, and we were like the third nuclear power accidentally. In exchange for this Budapest memorandum, in exchange for the guarantees of the security and editorial integrity and non-interference into the affairs of the country. Well, the President said that this memorandum went to the dust bin, and Russia did what it did, and it's unilateral aggression and Russia being a nuclear power, and this only shows all the countries throughout the world that you need the nuclear weapons to prevent some kind of intervention.

So I'm afraid that again, and we have lots of other conflicts. We have India and Pakistan over Kashmir. We have the case of Iran and Israel and so on. It may be like the start of a really terrible and disastrous way to help the world end.

Paul Jay | So shouldn't Ukraine — I know this is not a very popular position given Ukrainians are fighting and shedding blood right now, but shouldn't the Ukrainian government declare now, no, NATO, there will never be nuclear weapons on Ukrainian soil. Why not take those two things off the table? Not as part of negotiations, just unilaterally declare it. Otherwise, how does this war ever end? I mean, it could go on for months.

Denis Pilash | It was said in the words of the President and the Minister of foreign affairs these things can be taken off the table, but at the same time, they are afraid of doing this in a way that leaves Ukraine without any negotiating power. Actually, I'm afraid that people are not sure what the real intentions of the Russian side are, and all this stuff about demilitarization that can be given a range of meanings that completely differ from each other. I really think that in such cases, the optimal [inaudible 00:27:15] solution would demilitarize the aggressor as it was with the U.S. and Iraq, as Saudi Arabia against Yemen or, in this case, with Russia against Ukraine. So, of course, it's the victim who pays the price for this, not the aggressor, unfortunately.

So I'm really not sure. As if now [Volodymyr] Zelenskyy will say that we guarantee that we are outside NATO, and there were actually no real talks. It was more about some kind of rhetorical blackmail after the Budapest memorandum is turned off, and we can feel free, but no one was seriously considering that there can be any kind of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, especially given our history with Chernobyl and so on. So I would say that it was never on the table.

Paul Jay | The Americans want to fight for the principle to the very last Ukrainian life.

Denis Pilash | Again, it tells a lot about the mood of Imperial power, but the issue is that it's not the Americans who are fighting. Unfortunately, we are pressured into the situation when it seems that

some reasonable negotiations from the side of the Putinist autocracy will only be allowed either in a case when they force a bigger invasion. Then they grab a bigger chunk of Ukraine, or when there are invasions that are already stalled, that will be going down. They will have no other option as to finally speak with the Ukrainians, whom they not so much brothers, but actually then unleash the bombs and airstrikes on their brothers' heads.

Paul Jay | Finally, what do you want from the international Left? What position should they take?

Denis Pilash | So I also wanted to address the issues that you also mentioned several times, and I think it's part of the solution that we also need on the international Left. The issue of fossil fuels and generally, if we look into the anatomy of lots of these aggressions, Saudi Arabia and its criminal war in Yemen or what fossil fuel companies, the role they played in the Iraq invasion. Or that Russia being a fossil fuel Empire, how it was intervening not just in Ukraine, but it also was using its fossil fuels as leverage against other Soviet States like Belarus, and then they're willing to suppress the protest in Kazakhstan, Belarus, and so on.

The outcome of this is more fossil fuels. At the same time, we need to push for the completely opposite, that if we had a Democratic green transition, more radical than the Green New Deal, a something real eco-socialist alternative to the existing fossil fuel capitalism, it would obviously dismantle this current architecture of fossil fuel companies and fossil fuel empires with their aggressive wars. So this is also a part of the solution in the long term that can be proposed. But here and now, again, I can speak on behalf of my comrades and the people here and the people in other countries. They can choose what suits them and what maybe isn't compatible with some of their convictions. But at this moment, it seems like Russia isn't going to stop even if Ukraine does some significant concessions and so on. So they are really pressuring and doing more and more excesses against the civilian population. There were reports of some random shootings of people and so on.

So we need this demand of the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Ukraine and to actually have a process but not the gun near your head. It pressures the leadership of Russia into this process. First, we need maximum support for the people of Ukraine. I mean the humanitarian aid for the people who were affected by the war. Help for the refugees from Ukraine, meaning all people who had to flee, notwithstanding their origin and citizenship. So again, this situation has already shown that there was more capacity in the West and in Europe to greet refugees, and it highlighted that refugees need to be treated humanely. This is what has had to be done with the refugees from fleeing from Afghanistan, from Somalia, from Syria, from all other conflicts, especially those conflicts where European powers had their hand as well.

I think that it should be now when we see obviously, for some obvious reasons, Ukrainians are the poorest country in Europe, but they are still in Europe, so they are treated more humanely by the Europeans. So this has to be a template for all other refugees and asylum seekers that we really need to receive this system and to guarantee open borders for people who try to flee war and misery and death. We have governments like Boris Johnson in the U.K., who is a big friend of the Ukrainian people. But due to their anti-migrant policies regarding refugees, it's quite hard for Ukrainian seekers of asylum and refugees to get into this country. So we can see this hypocrisy, and people on the ground have to help all the people from Ukraine and give their maximum assistance, and it also means helping all other refugees as well. So this is this issue.

I would also argue that I understand that many people with pacifist convictions and people who think that any kind of continuing Ukrainian resistance is somehow bringing some bigger conflict closer and so on, but I'm afraid that the case is when Ukraine ceases to resist, these people are under the threat of ceasing to exist as an entity like the Russian side is really committing atrocities that cannot be justified. So this is why all of Ukraine need assistance for their resistance, both

militarily and non-violent. If you feel that you cannot support any kind of weapons for Ukraine and so on, then you can concentrate on humanitarian issues. Still, you have to not just see Ukrainians who are teachers as living people. So you need to understand their fight and their suffering.

In order to rebuild and recover, reconstruct the country after the war, we need a complete rethinking again of these neoliberal capitalist dogmas, and we need a cancellation of Ukrainian external debt if we will succeed in this. Again, this can be a template used for other countries, especially in the global South, who have been victims of these traps by the international financial institutions. Then they can pressure for getting the same conditions they were forced in terms of war in times of complicated situations to get all these loans to pay off the previous loans and then all these fiscal austerity. This has to be stopped, and this has to be stopped in the case of Ukraine as well, and our organizations with our comrades and European Left parties are now struggling for writing off the Ukrainian debt and setting a precedent for all other people fighting against this.

And again, to rebuild the country, you need funds from the same people. We need to take them from the people who robbed Ukraine, who robbed Russia, who robbed all our people, the capitalist class in our state.

Paul Jay | To expropriate the Oligarchs.

Denis Pilash | I would say yes, that we need contrary to these neoliberal measures that are seen as something without alternative by all of our governments and the Ukrainian government specifically. We need to expropriate the oligarchs, expropriate their property and use it to recover and rebuild the country and also their property that is stored in tax havens and their assets these tax havens because even with these personal sanctions against Russian oligarchs and members of the Russian ruling class, they have lots of loopholes to use to get off with what they deprived their own [inaudible 00:39:57].

I would say that again, we need to check generally to challenge the system of imperialist powers. There is not one imperialism in the world, there are [inaudible 00:40:15] imperialists. One shouldn't expect from some of these imperialist powers to bring on a more just world they will just tare it apart into more spheres of influence, but it wouldn't mean something of a kind of Democratic and egalitarian world order. And we need to stop this aggression as we need to stop all other aggressions, and we need not differentiate and say this aggressor and this imperialist is better than that one.

So notwithstanding it beat the Western and American, beat Russian, beat Turkish beat Saudi Arabia, they are [inaudible 00:41:12] the Peoples whom they invade and whom they drive off their lands and their lives. In terms of people, of ordinary people throughout the world, of common people, of those people now in Ukraine, we have these striking pictures of ordinary common working-class people who try to stop Russian armed vehicles with their bare hands and who try to somehow resonate with those soldiers who were sent to kill them and say they don't have to be here and they have to go home and probably to deal with their problems at home. So we have to deal with our biggest problem, which is this neoliberal capitalism in all countries in our countries, obviously some kind of peripheral oligarchic capitalism, but I wouldn't say that Western capitalists are much nicer than our ones.

Paul Jay | It's not even the same in the sense that no oligarchy or country has committed war crimes on the scale of the Americans. Everyone else pails.

Denis Pilash | It's because they have the tools to do it.

Paul Jay | It's not because they have evil DNA. It's a process of history, the United States became the power, but they certainly have committed more crimes.

Denis Pilash | They weren't in the position. You have this —

Paul Jay | I'm a dual citizen. I have Canadian, and U.S. citizenship and I've said a few times if Canada could be the Imperial hegemon, they would jump at it, the Canadian elites. Just not the cards they have.

Anyway, Denis, thanks very much and we'll do this again. I hope soon.

Denis Pilash | Thank you.

Paul Jay | Please stay safe.

Denis Pilash | Thank you.

Paul Jay | While you're out there doing your work.

Denis Pilash | I'll try.

Paul Jay | Okay. And thank you for joining us on theAnalysis.news.

Paul Jay
Denis Pilash

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P.S.

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