

EU: What everyone needs to know about Putin's interview and why ideology matters

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As evidenced by numerous public statements from Russian state officials, Ukraine holds a disproportionately important role in their worldview. Their narrative is the following one.

The distinct national identity of Ukrainians is an artificial construct created by the Western enemies (Poles, Austrians, Germans, Nazis, Americans) and their agents (Lenin and Bolsheviks).

Without Russian protection, this artificial and thus unviable Ukrainian state inevitably falls prey to the hostile forces who "implant pseudo-values in the minds" of Ukrainians, making them forget their Russian nature, and employ them as a "battering ram" against Russia.

Destroying the historical unity of Russian people, Ukrainians are part of it of course, the West prevents Russia from taking a rightful great-power position in the world. It is a zero-sum game: if there is an independent Ukraine, Russia cannot become a great power.

That means that Russia's mere existence is under threat, because in this worldview ONLY great powers have true political sovereignty, the only other option being to become someone's colony, like in the 19th century.

To survive in this world where the only right is the right of the strong, Russia must take control over Ukrainians. To liberate them from a false (Ukrainian) consciousness and let them rediscover their authentic (Russian) self — is a requirement for Russia's very survival.

A perfect summary was made by Dmitry Medvedev. « The existence of Ukraine is deadly for Ukrainians. And I do not mean only the current state, I am talking about any, absolutely any Ukraine. Why?

The presence of an independent state on historical Russian territories will be a constant reason for us to renew hostilities. ... But the Ukrainian population will eventually choose life and realize the fatality of Ukraine's existence for them.

Choosing between eternal war, inevitable death and life, the vast majority of Ukrainians (except for a minimal number of nationalists) will ultimately choose life. » (17.01.2024)

In his interview Putin repeated one more time that the initial war objective - "denazification", a Kremlin's term that simply means the total dismantlement of the Ukrainian statehood - have not changed and the war will continue till Ukraine is "denazified".

Once we make a tiny effort to actually HEAR what Russian ruling classes are saying to us, how can anybody still pretend that this war is about territories and propose Ukraine to give "land" (and millions of people living there) in exchange for "peace"?

The existence of an independent Ukraine, whether within its internationally recognized or significantly reduced borders, is unacceptable to a regime whose ruling classes are convinced that it is a creation of enemies who use it as a basis to destroy their political regime.

For the ruling classes of an autocratic “great power,” whose wealth is based on extreme forms of exploitation and who live in constant fear of popular revolution, the only way to ensure their regime’s security is a constant expansion and war.

A constant war of expansion in defiance of any “rational” strategies theorized by armchair western scholars. What is rational for democracy is not rational for an autocracy, that’s why it is important to take internal politics into account.

These are essential elements to keep in mind if we want to understand the logic behind Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and especially if we are pretending to propose solutions to end this war.

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