

A Summary of Russian History with Focus on Geopolitics (or the long history of Russian brutality). Key Knowledge for Decision Makers.

Out of personal interest and current events I am reading about Russian and Ukrainian History. Sources are newspaper articles, radio, TV, internet, and several history lexica books and maps, referenced at the end of this article. Why did I document? I noticed there are always shades of differences between various sources. When I read a newspaper or online article with snippets of historical news, I go back to good old history books and compare, to document from what I think is the most reliable source, which are books. Such, I documented the Russian history with focus on geopolitics as brief as possible to make it clear for myself. And I hope for you too.

The second main reason for my activity was the question, why is Putin invading the Ukraine? The short answer is after having studied all these sources, is because Russian political government always has done this and in the case of Ukraine control over the corn chamber of the world is a second driving force¹. Ever since 1283 Russia has led 88 wars. Over the last 300 years alone Russia has led in total over 180 years of conquest wars and 5 years of defense wars².

I believe you as decision makers need to know, since similarities to other countries like China are evident. Geopolitics is and will affect your business decisions.

Here a first question from an interview with **Prof. Dr. D. Neutatz** Professur for Modern and East European History at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany³:

“ How does Vladimir Putin define Russia's imperial role domestically and externally?

Putin's vision is the restoration of Russia as an empire. In doing so, it is less oriented towards the Soviet Union than towards the Russian Empire. He rejected the federalism of the Soviet Union because he sees it as the basis for nonsensical nation-building and the germ for independence movements. Domestic political thinking in centralist and autocratic categories. In foreign policy, it is guided by imperial and geostrategic principles. This amounts to a tiered system of domination typical of empires: direct rule through annexations and, moreover, indirect rule through the creation of dominance and dependence. Where the border between these two ruling zones will be is still unclear and will depend on the outcome of the war against Ukraine. “

Second: In all the sources I did not detect a development in Russia towards facilitating a development of free and independent strong institutions forming a balance of power, like two chambered parliament, or a free press, for the last 75 year. In other words unfortunately a tissue of democratic, market-based economy, humanistic education, freedom of speech, diversity, autonomy to develop and voice a free opinion never emerged. An idea like the Enlightenment never took roots in Russia, although Emmanuel Kant was born and lived all his life in Königsberg, which is in today's Russia.

Every Russian leader, except for Gorbachev **and** his wife Raisa (who never abused their power), has been and is inclined towards inhuman ideas like, secret service serving the

¹ Juri Audruchowitsch. Artikel in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 9. June 2022 page 31. Translated by author.

² https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_Russia a website with all wars, and Artikel in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung 16. June 2022 from Christoph Brumme.

³ Published in Aktions Kreis Freiburger Schule Newsletter No 4 April 2022. Translated by author.

leaders, disbelieve in people, power, force, centralism, socialism turned into communisms, which turned into inhuman developments like aggression towards other peoples, starvation, imprisonment, fear, labor camps (where Navalni is now) and killing different thinking individuals.

The West was watching this for too long and too naïve, thinking that Russia could change by doing business with them. The issue: Focus on oil, gas and coal only, because that benefits the top politicians (in any country) and his little entourage only, but not the (Russian) population.

Third: As Dr. Josef Joffe, chief editor of the ZEIT say, there is an End of the “ End of History”, like so many in Europe thought after the wall came down, including many overseas intellectuals.

The question is, once this war is over, how to change? I don`t know, but I do three things for lack of better ideas: First: I write and share. Second support independent Russian people, who are openly against this war by giving little donations. Third donate to the few remaining Russian media channels, that report the facts about the war. I believe Individuals living in free countries need to support any Russian [democratic movements](#).

Below now a brief history outlines the 1000-year-old expansion of Russia ever since Moscow was founded. It does not claim to be complete but gives a flavor and hopeful the reader gains somewhat a better understanding of the developments around the Ukraine conflict.

In the Beginning

Migration of the Rus, Vikings from Sweden, to today`s territory of Belorussia, Ukraine, and Eastern Russia. Empire of Kiev Rus 892 – 1124. Two Mongolian Invasions 1237/38 and 1239/41. The devastated villages, cities, Kiev and its inhabitants. Their rule lasted until 1480. Interested in gold and me for their armies. The Mongolians introduced the death penalty and a ruthless tributary system. Of course, the Russian Dukes played the game abusing people and land. The local emerging Russian Dukes reported to the Mongolian Kans. Jörg Himmelreich ⁴believes that today`s Russian Culture and Putin`s Kleptocracy is a social and political heritage on this violent, brutal culture of Dschingis Khan. Even Marx mentions this in his work “ Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century”.

The source and origin of Ukraine and the Russian Empire is clearly coming

out of the Kiev Rus. Moscow was only founded 1125. Fact is the Russian Kingdom, and the St Petersburg Imperia had its roots in the Ukraine. Then in the 14th century Russian Kingdoms started to expand around Moscow. In other words, one could easily argue, Russia belongs to the Ukraine and one can equally argue also that Russian history starts only with the victory of Duke Dmitri Donskoi over the Mongols in the 14th century. From then on Russia expanded east, and the Ukraine looked towards the west, meaning Poland and today`s Baltic States. Equally intense is the dispute called Normannism debate whether the Russians descent from the Scandinavian immigrants or the tribal population from the East.

Middle Age

1462 Iwan III expands Russian territory four times the initial size.

⁴ Jörg Himmelreich. Article in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 30. August 2022. Page 31.

Kingdom of the Zars: Iwan the terrible, expansions wars with Poland, Lithuania, Sweden (big Nordic War from 1700 to 1721) conquer Siberia in 1584. Nikolaus the 1st created a police state and started lots of other wars. Today's Russia is a mix of over 120 ethnics and tribes because of these expansion wars. Peter the Great 1682 – 1725. After his death Russia is considered a European Power, but two third of fiscal spending is for military purpose. Taxes increase five times and the Russian farmers impoverished. Founding of St Petersburg. More victories over Poland, Sweden, Baltic. Seven Year war of Russia, Austria, France with Prussia 1756 – 1763. 1770 Russia destroys the Osmania fleet at Cesmo. 1877 – 78 War with the Osmania Empire. Osmania must recognize the independence of Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria. Russia captures the Krim in 1783. 1773 – 1775 Pugatschow Rising Russian Framer wars. Army beats them in a bloody war. Katharina the great 1726 – 1796 kills her husband with the help of Russian officers. She took the last remaining autonomy from the Ukraine in 1775.

19th Century

1808/09 Sweden had to cede after centuries of wars with Russia its eastern territories (Finland, which was part of Sweden for a long time) to Russia. Finland gained independence only in 1917. 1812 Napoleon`s invasion of Russia. Alexander I. Victory of Prussia, Austria, Russian Coalition over Napoleon. 1000 men of the 30 000 survive. 1813. French are chased out of Russia. Remember Russian Elite spoke French, read French books, and dressed French before that.

1853-1956 Krim War. Russia loses. Today, Grecs, Skythens, Sarmatens, Tataras, Russian live on the Krim.

1862 – 1888 Russian Imperialism going east, captured Manchuria. Which had to be given back years later to China.

1867. Russia sold Alaska to the US.

1874 – 1914 Decline of Zar Kingdom. Zar Alexander II is killed.

1884 Turkmenistan surrenders.

1896 During the coronation ceremony of the last ZAR close to 1400 people were killed (mass panic). Unrest in Finland, Poland, Ukraine, Baltic States against Russification.

1898 Lenin founds the DFSPT party from aboard.

20 Century

1905 St. Petersburg Bloody Sunday. 150 000 workers' protest. Russian Army shoots into the crowd.

1914 – 1918 First World War. Germany attacks Russia for the first time.

1917 – 1921 Russian Revolution and Civil War. Bolsheviks kill Russian Czar Nicolas II and his family. Communists fight against the Whites. Killing, murdering, raping women, looting, torturing, 50 000 Jews are killed. Some 200 000 foreign troops were sent to Russia to help the whites.

The Communists won. According to Antony Beever 12 million killed.

Imperialism toward Balkan and Japan. In this clash of visions, the unresolved tensions in Russian`s history still casts a long shadow. ⁵

1917 – 1919. Short episode of a Ukrainian independent state. The red army took power and end of 1919 and founded the Ukraine Sowjetrepublik.

1918 Foundation of USSR. Poland is at war with USSR in the shadow of the civil war, today territory of Belorussia.

⁵ The Atlantic, November Edition 2022. Artikel from Adam Hochschild. The long History of Russian Brutality.

1920 Battle of Warsaw. The Red Army attacks Kiev and pursues Prime Minister Pilsudski until Warsaw. It is called the Miracle at the Weichsel because the Polish Army manages to beat the Russians. One of the most important battles in global history.

1922: Treaty of Rapallo between Germany and Russia. A treaty that is still influencing German Politicians up to this present day. It has been the basis for close collaboration between the two.

1924 Lenin dies.

1928 Stalin in power. Solidifies his power ruthlessly by executing political opposition up to 1938 (rings a bell?).

1939 – 1945 Second World war:

- Russia Army invades Poland from the East 1939 (parallel to Hitler`s invasion west).
- 1940 Stalin orders the execution of 22 000 Polish Officers in Katyn.
- 1941 Hitler invasion of Russia stops short of Moscow in 1944.
- Russian Invasion of Finland end of November 1939 and 1941-44. Winterwars. Finland was not beaten but ceded Karelia. Similar event like the invasion of Ukraine 24th Feb.
- Russian resistance. Red Army reaches Berlin 1945. Russia incurs the most human casualties of est. 20 million dead soldiers. Soldiers like today in the Ukraine are used as Kanonenfutter.
- Soviet Union occupies four Japanese Southern Kuril Islands during the last days of WW 2.
- Baltic States remain occupied by Russia, Russification until 1991.
- Former East Prussia remains a Russian enclave up to this present day.

1953 Stalin sits dead in his office for days because nobody dares to open the door.

1955 Foundation of Warsaw pact.

1948 Blocking of East Berlin.

1952 Ost Ausschuss of the German industry. CEOs of large companies became Kremlin`s lobbyists.

1955 the last German Prisoners of war return home.

1956 People rebellion in Posen Poland which Russian troops crush.

1956 National uprising in Hungary.

Russian invasion of Budapest.

1968 Invasion of Prag.

1979 -1989 Afghanistan war.

8. December 1991 USSR ceases to exist.

1994 the last Russian troops leave Germany, Hungary, Mongolia, Cuba, etc.

Former Warsaw Block countries regain their autonomy and turn towards Europe, making unilateral and free decisions to join the EU.

1994 First Tschetschenian war.

1997 Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldavia create military alliance GUAM.

1997 in May. [Founding Act](#) on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. President Jelzin signs this contract.

1999 NATO intervenes in Cosovo. Second Tschetschenian war.

21st. Century

March 2000 Putin President. 2001 he held a speech in the German parliament in German and explained already the new Role of Russia. Soon after the free press and the largest corporations became state owned.

2001 Poland joins Nato.

28 of Mai 2002. Nato Summit, where Putin was welcomed as a NATO partner.

See minutes of the [meeting](#). 5 days before this meeting Ukraine stated that it is its declared goal of Ukraine to become member of the NATO. Putin was okay with that.

2nd War of Tschetschenian. The German based appeasement politic continued up to the present day.

2004 Baltic States, Bulgaria, Romania join NATO.

2005 Failed Tulip Revolution in Kirghizistan.

2008 Russian Invasion of Georgia. 5 day war. Russia occupies Southossetia and Abchasia.

2013 Start of protest in Ukraine, because Lanoukovytch did not want to join the EU.

2014 Russian Invasion of the Krim.

Ianoukovytch is sacked as a president.

24. Feb 2022: Russian troops cross the border of Ukraine.

Parallel to all this aggressions Putin deals with political and business opposition in his specific lethal (shot, poisoned, missing medical aid) ways. Below is one case

[Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova](#), 2009. Stanislav was shot dead in Moscow. When Anastasia tried to help him, she was gunned down and mortally wounded. There are many more. [Sources](#) on the internet are full of Putin`s victims.

Outlook:

Many authors, Russians and Ukrainians are pessimistic about the future. Hate will continue for the next two three generations, because most Russians live in the mental putinistic Russia. But like Schischkin says: It is important to tell the world, that there is another Russia, that can bring culture and not rockets. We must defend the language against Putin. Being silent means, you are with Putin. But he says also that only mature citizens, who can decide freely in Russia, can change Russia. And that`s only outside Russia, virtually, the case. He is pessimistic. Let`s hope he is wrong.

Sources:

- Interview with Lithuania President Egils Levits with Meret Baumann, Rewert Hoffer. NZZ 16. April 2022 page 2
- Artikel about treaty of Rapallo from Jörg Himmelreich. NZZ. 16 April 2022, page 27
- History Atlas
- La Revue. Bimestriel No 51-52. Avril – Mai 2015.
- dtv-Atlas zur Weltgeschichte. Volume 1 and 2. Pages:

- «Putin hat meine Sprache zur Sprache des Mörders gemacht». Interview with Michail Schischkin. Jonas Roth, Erich Aschwanden. NZZ, 20. April 2022. Page 10, 11.
- Jörg Himmelreich. « Russia`s Asian Violence Heritage » . Article in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung NZZ, 30. August 2022. Page 31.
- UA – Ukraine zwischen Ost und West. Vontobel Stiftung. Writen by Professor Ulrich Schmid 2015.
- Olivier Jens Schmitt, “Die Achse der Wehrhaften”. NZZ, 10. September 2022, page 21.
- NATO Website
- Interviews and publications of Igor Petrov.

Conclusions:

Russian governments have been and are pursuing a 1000-year-old imperialistic, aggressive Expansion. Greed and hunger for new and more territories, subjugation, using men (and women) from the Russian Confederation, from mostly poor provinces in Siberia as cannon food and applying brutal force against women, killing, maiming, and rapping, applying the destruction of food stocks to create artificially hunger, leading to genocide, killing, poisoning, and jailing people with different believes, and who are not Russians.

I am totally against Putin`s regime and the act of leading this war. I agree with Kaja Kallas, Estonia`s prime minister, whose family was **victim of the terror USSR in the 20th century**. She says: “Peace can’t be the ultimate goal,” she said. “We (Estonia) had peace after the Second World War, but the atrocities against our people started or continued then,” she said, citing mass deportations, killings of the elite and “trying to erase our culture and our language.” In the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, “we will see all of this” she said. So “a peace that allows aggression to pay off,” while the threat remains of more conflict down the road, is unacceptable, she said.

A notch more pessimistic is the Ukrainian Author and writer Wolodimir Rafejenko, who used to write in Russian. In his article in the NZZ 23. July 2022 page 32 and 33 in a conversation with Marci Shore he assesses that Russian Culture has a systemic error, consciously positioning outside and above all general human values. You cannot understand Russia and not even comprehend with mind and intelligence (Verstand). He writes that Russians have created Putin.

Arguments against Putin`s claim that the WEST is responsible for the attack: Putin knew since he was elected, that former USSR and East Bloc countries have the right to act as independent sovereign states and can join the NATO and/or the EU. First the [Charta of Paris](#) in 1990 was signed by Russia, the [Memorandum of Budapest](#) in 1994. This memorandum agreed that Ukraine is giving up its nuclear arms in exchange of security guarantees from Russia and the West. Theses independent and autonomous rights were also created and agreed to in the NATO Russia [1997 Founding Act](#) on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Signed by Yeltsin.

Putin participated yet in another peace-making agreement during a [NATO summit in Rome](#) on 28th of May 2002. **A key date.** The NATO General Secretary met with Putin afterwards 10 times. Putin never had an issue with NATO expansion at that time. Who broke all these agreements? Putin did on 24th of February 2022. Would you trust such a man?

All NATO related documents, including signed agreements and photos are available on the NATO website www.nato.int

How to end this war? Ilia Kukulin published early April 2022 in a newly

founded magazine “bulletin of the opposition Russian speaking Culture” an essay. He advocates a culture of dialogue of all Russians, those who feel not responsible for the crime in the Ukraine and those who do. He suggests a culture of a peaceful Russian community. The debate must start immediately he says. (Source NZZ 17. May 2022 page 31 Alexander Mishnev).

Somehow the liberal elements, hopefully emerging energies, and forces of the Russian society, and those who want to talk piece and support freedom of speech, deal and acknowledge the 1000 years of crimes of the Russian Armies. With the right intensions, these energies need to come together to accept and to make changes towards humanity happen.

However, the Russian people need to do that. Otherwise, we will have wars in Europe for another century.

Kant`s, Rousseaux`s, and Constant`s vision of global peace should become reality.

In the short term all global decision makers however should be aware of Russia`s ruthless, violent, distrustful, geopolitical history and, as Minna Ålander in the NZZ 23. January 2023 puts it, « its cold face of war », ever since Moscow was founded.

Updated 24. January 2023.