



CHAPTER 1

Introduction: From the Maidan to the Russia-Ukraine War

It is often said that truth is the first casualty of war. The Russia-Ukraine war and the preceding conflicts in Ukraine, such as Euromaidan, the Maidan massacre, the Odesa massacre, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas, produced divergent narratives by governments and the media in Ukraine, Russia, and the West. However, politicians and the media are often unreliable sources. They often disseminate propaganda and disinformation during such armed conflicts. The task of scholarly studies is not to rely on such propaganda and disinformation produced by the governments and frequently repeated by the media but on reliable evidence to examine wars and other conflicts in non-partisan ways.

This applies to this book, which examines the Russia-Ukraine war and its origins. It analyzes the involvement of different conflict parties, such as the Ukrainian, Russian, and Western governments, Donbas separatists, and the far right, in this crucial war and in Euromaidan, the Maidan massacre, the Russian annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbas, and the nature of these conflicts. This book also examines support for pro-nationalist/pro-Western and pro-Russian political parties and presidential candidates and attitudes towards separatism and joining the European Union, NATO, and the union with Russia in regions of Ukraine in parliamentary and presidential elections and surveys since Euromaidan.

This open-access book is one of the first books examining comprehensively the Russia-Ukraine war and its origins in the preceding conflicts in

Ukraine, namely Euromaidan, the Maidan massacre, the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Odesa massacre, and the civil war and Russian military interventions in Donbas. It traces how these conflicts, which started with Euromaidan, along with NATO accession, the far right, and Russian imperialism contributed to the Russia-Ukraine war.

The Russia-Ukraine war is the most important war in the twenty-first century in the entire world, and it at least matches the Korean War and the Vietnam War as the most important armed conflicts since World War Two. The Russia-Ukraine war is also the most significant armed conflict in Europe since World War Two (Correlates of War Project; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2024). Russia and Ukraine, the two largest countries in Europe, are involved in this war directly, while the United States, other NATO countries, and EU members are involved in the war indirectly in various ways. The war is the most significant conflict involving main nuclear powers in the world, specifically Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, as well as nuclear North Korea possibility of this war escalating into a nuclear war is the highest since at least the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. In addition, the war has major political, economic, and financial impact on Ukraine and Russia, and many other countries of the world, in particular the EU members. The outcome of the Russia-Ukraine war will affect the world order (Hill & Stent, 2022).

Most of the previous studies concerning the Russia-Ukraine war, Euromaidan, and the war in Donbas largely relied on secondary sources, primarily by the Ukrainian and Western media and governments. Such secondary sources include interpretative statements by government officials and politicians, interpretative media reports, articles, books, other publications, and blogs produced by people who were not present or not involved in specific events. They were often uncritically taken at face value without determining their validity and reliability and without corroborating them.

For instance, a book written by a leading historian of Ukraine focuses on history of Ukraine and Russia since 1991, including the initial part of the war (Plokhyy, 2023). However, its examination of the war is based on secondary sources, primarily the Ukrainian and Western media, and the author declares that he is openly partisan. Another book on the same subject is written by a fellow from the Atlantic Council, a NATO-linked partisan think tank, who also provided PR service for Serhii Liovochkin, who headed the presidential administration of Viktor Yanukovich at the start of Euromaidan. It also uncritically relies on such secondary sources

and often lacks any sources at all for many of its claims (Karatnycky, 2024; Katchanovski, 2025a).

The Western media coverage of conflicts in foreign countries, including Ukraine, often follows or indexes the narratives of their own governments and the political elite (Bennett, 1990; Boyd-Barrett, 2016; Katchanovski & Morley, 2012). The media representation of Ukraine, Russia, and other countries is also often biased for political reasons or factually incorrect. For instance, post-communist countries with pro-US/pro-Western governments generally received relatively much more favorable coverage compared to countries which are adversaries of the United States or the West or are neutral. Ukraine and Georgia received relatively more positive coverage by the US TV networks after respectively the “Orange Revolution” and the “Rose Revolution” then before (Katchanovski & Morley, 2012).

The US media with some exceptions followed the narrative propagated by the US administration and the US Congress that Russia started the war with Georgia over separatist region of South Ossetia in 2008, contrary to primary evidence and an EU-appointed commission report on this war (Bahador & Katchanovski, 2010; European Union, 2009). Conversely, the Russian media generally followed the Russian government’s false narrative that Russia stopped the genocide of South Ossetians by Georgia. With limited exceptions, the media and governments in the United States, other Western countries, and post-Maidan Ukraine continued to propagate the fake news or disinformation about the start of this war even after admissions by the EU-appointed commission report in 2009 and by Georgian leaders in 2024 that Saakashvili started the war in South Ossetia in 2008 (see Georgia Today, 2024).

Similarly, the US media with some exceptions falsely reported Russia-gate or the non-existent collusion of Donald Trump with the Russian government and the existence of non-existent weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (See Bennett & Livingston, 2007; Sakwa, 2022).

Like the Russian media, the Ukrainian media is largely not independent. It is mostly directly or indirectly controlled either by the government or oligarchs, and generally follows the Ukrainian government or political elite narratives. Nearly 90 percent of the Ukrainian media since the Russian invasion were funded by the USAID, the European Union, and other Western agencies, organizations, and foundations (Oksana, 2025).

Representation of Ukraine and the conflicts in Ukraine was also often biased for political reasons. Many Western and Ukrainian politicians, journalists, and researchers openly expressed their partisan support of the pro-Western Maidan opposition in Ukraine during Euromaidan, and pro-Western Ukrainian governments during the Russian annexation of Crimea, the civil war in Donbas, and the Russia-Ukraine war. Such partisan support of political forces and governments and their policies and actions was presented as support of Ukraine, while any contrary evidence or deviation from such partisan stance was ignored, dismissed, censored, and falsely branded as pro-Russian.

Such partisan approach was politically convenient and equated political forces and governments with Ukraine and Ukrainians and involved witting or unwitting support of the violent overthrow of the Ukrainian government during Euromaidan, civil war in Donbas, and the war in Ukraine to the last Ukrainian, and opposition to prevention and peaceful resolution of these conflicts. As this book shows, these actions and policies in fact had extremely negative consequences to Ukraine and Ukrainians and ultimately resulted in devastating consequences to Ukraine and most of Ukrainians because these conflicts escalated to separatist conflicts in Crimea and Donbas and military interventions by Russia in Crimea and Donbas and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Such devastating consequences included loss of very large number of lives of Ukrainians during Euromaidan, the civil war in Donbas, and the Russia-Ukraine war, de facto break up of Ukraine and annexation of large parts of Eastern and Southern Ukraine by Russia, millions of people permanently leaving Ukraine, and economic decline and destruction in Ukraine. Possibility of such devastating consequences to Ukraine and Ukrainians was dismissed or ignored by such self-proclaimed supporters of Ukraine, even though such consequences and outcomes were predicted by the author and small number of other scholars and experts.

Such partisan approach and uncritical acceptance of narratives propagated by government officials and politicians also violated professional principles of journalism and scientific research. The equivalent was like judges issuing verdicts based on media reports concerning specific crimes and based on claims by either prosecution or defense without examining and evaluating all evidence and its reliability and validity. Another equivalent would be medical doctors issuing diagnoses outside of their specialization based on their political preferences and based on reports

of patients and media reports without doing any physical examination or tests.

These examples and studies show that the Western, Russian, and Ukrainian governments and the media are often unreliable sources when it comes to wars and other conflicts and that they often propagate politically convenient fake news or disinformation.

Wikipedia basically reproduces such partisan sources and narratives concerning the conflicts in Ukraine and is also generally unreliable source concerning this issue. Wikipedia editors edit anonymously and typically lack appropriate expertise and knowledge concerning the articles that they edit. They often push political points of view by selectively using and omitting sources. Wikipedia articles can be either edited by anyone or they can be blocked and only be edited by a small number of the most prolific editors.

This fits “the garbage in, garbage out” model. Unreliable, partisan, and biased sources concerning the conflicts in Ukraine produce unreliable, partisan, and biased output. Scholarly research needs to be based on reliable sources, be non-partisan, and avoid biases (See Weber, 2017). This especially concerns the Russia-Ukraine war and preceding conflicts in Ukraine which are highly politically charged issues.

However, Seymour Martin Lipset, who held chair positions at Stanford University and Harvard University and was one of the most cited political scientists and political sociologists in history, stated in a personal conversation that most research in the social sciences is “fraud” because research results are made to fit personal or political views of researchers. He said that if research results fit the researcher’s personal views, they need to be thrown in garbage. Research concerning the Russia-Ukraine war and other highly politicized conflicts in Ukraine is even more prone to this when politics trumps evidence and research results are made to fit personal and political views and biases.

There are just few political scientists, who specialize primarily in researching conflicts in Ukraine and are fluent in both Ukrainian and Russian, in the Western academia. For instance, there is only one established male Ukrainian political scientist, who was born in Ukraine, knows both Ukrainian and Russian, and specializes primarily in the politics and conflicts in Ukraine, in permanent faculty positions in the Western universities (See Katchanovski, 2025b). As a native speaker of Ukrainian and fluent speaker of Russian, the author is one of few political scientists in

Western academia conducting scholarly research on conflicts in Ukraine based mostly on primary sources in both these languages.

In contrast to already published and most other books that are likely to be published concerning the Russia-Ukraine war, this book provides comprehensive analysis of the Ukraine-Russia war and its origins based on the analysis of tens of thousands of primary sources in both Ukrainian and Russian and based on political science theories and concepts. Such primary or original sources include videos, photos, audio recordings, interviews, testimonies, surveys, trial broadcasts, and the texts of the verdicts and other court decisions containing original data or evidence. The authenticity, validity, and reliability of these sources are verified and corroborated based on scientific methodology and use of multiple independent sources. While most of the analyzed primary and secondary sources cannot be cited for space reasons in the book, it cites the most important and relevant sources and their examples.

This book also uses a large number of secondary sources, such as previous studies and government, NGO, international organizations, and media reports. However, it does not rely on interpretation provided by these sources concerning specific issues of the conflicts in Ukraine.

Most chapters examine major aspects of the Russia-Ukraine war. The remaining chapters examine the conflict escalation ladder that culminated in this war. The book traces a violent conflict escalation spiral which started with Euromaidan and the Maidan massacre, escalated to the Russian annexation of Crimea and the civil war and Russian military interventions in Donbas, and culminated in the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and the Russia-Ukraine war which also became the NATO-Russia proxy war.

The current chapter provides an introduction. The second chapter of the book examines Euromaidan in 2013–2014. The next chapter investigates which party of the conflict was involved in the crucial Maidan massacre of the protesters and the police in Ukraine during Euromaidan in February 2014. The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 is the subject of the following chapter. Chapter 5 analyzes the civil war and the Russian military interventions in Donbas in 2014–2022. The sixth chapter analyzes the far-right involvement in Euromaidan, the Maidan and Odesa massacres, and the Donbas war. The next chapter provides an examination of the regional political divisions in Ukraine in terms of support for pro-Western/pro-nationalist and pro-Russian/pro-communist political parties and presidential candidates in presidential

and parliamentary elections and attitudes towards separatism, joining the EU, NATO, and the Russia-led Customs Union in regions of Ukraine. Chapter 8 analyzes the causes and the origins of the Russia-Ukraine war. The next chapter examines the Russia-Ukraine war and its nature. Chapter 10 analyzes whether there have been genocides or war crimes during the Russia-Ukraine war. The following chapter examines the likely outcome of the Russia-Ukraine war and whether this war could have been prevented or could have been resolved peacefully. The far-right involvement in the Russia-Ukraine is the subject of Chapter 12. The concluding chapter 13 summarizes the main findings of the book and discusses their implications and prospects for the conflict resolution in Ukraine. The book also includes online video appendixes which are available on the author's YouTube channel.

The target audience for this open-access book includes scholars, undergraduate and graduate students, professionals, journalists, and the general public interested in the Russia-Ukraine war and its origins, in particular, the Maidan, Crimea, and Donbas conflicts, the far right, elections, and public opinion in Ukraine. The Russia-Ukraine war and the preceding conflicts in Ukraine became one of the top issues of interest in the United States, Canada, the UK, and other Western countries as well as many other countries of the world.

Parts of my articles from the European Politics and Society journal and Econ Journal Watch journal and parts of the "Crimea: People and Territory before and after Annexation" chapter from the open access book, *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives* are republished with permissions. Republished parts of these publications, the open access book, *The Maidan Massacre in Ukraine: The Mass Killing that Changed the World*, and open-access articles in Cogent Social Sciences, Journal of Labor and Society, Perspectives on Terrorism, and Russian Politics journals were updated, revised, and expanded in this book (Katchanovski & Abrahms, 2024; Katchanovski, 2015, 2016, 2020, 2023a, 2023b, 2024, 2025a).

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