

### **Volodymyr Artiukh - Upscaling the Russian invasion: A History of a Misrepresentation**

For many serious analysts of the Russian and Ukrainian history and foreign policy, a fully-fledged war of Russia against Ukraine has been impossible until, that is, it became inevitable. The missiles raining down on Ukrainian cities in the early morning of February 24 turned into rubble many established theories of post-Soviet political development and cast doubt on our understanding of globalization processes more generally. As scholars struggle to grasp the unfolding developments, peculiar theoretical structures appear that either ascribe the historical guilt for the bloodshed in Ukraine to essential features of Russian history or distribute blame for the violence evenly across the great powers.

This theoretical dilemma is familiar to those who studied and experienced the immediate pre-history of this war, which is the conflict in Donbas (2014-2022). I claim that it was a multi-scalar conflict that encompassed a civil war component, an inter-state component, and an inter-imperialist component. I propose that it was the highly dangerous concept of the ‘hybrid warfare,’ popularized and applied to that conflict by numerous scholars and policymakers, that obfuscated the ability to grasp the relations between these three components in the Donbas conflict. Moreover, the term hybrid warfare was integrated into the propaganda efforts of all parties in that conflict, thus perpetuating it and paving the way to the present Russian invasion. Finally, I contend that the two distorted explanations – the Russo-centric and the US-centric – reproduce key features of the confusion brought about by hybrid war.

### **Victoria Smolkin**

This talk will offer a genealogy of the ideology and worldviews operating in Russia and focus on the meaning of Ukraine in the political theology driving the war. How did the Russian state go from being grounded in “godlessness” to being defined and driven by an Orthodox political theology? Why did Russian Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church become the very centre of Russia’s political narrative and geopolitical imagination? And why does Ukraine matter so much for the Russian state and the Russian church? This talk will examine the work that religion is doing for Russia’s war and propose that Ukraine is absolutely central to the sacred history and sacred geography that underpin Russia’s political theology. It will also propose that, for Russia, this war is not about territory, resources, or even security—it is about salvation.

### **Olga Shparaga – War and Solidarity. A Belarusian Perspective**

*Presentation given in German*

Putin's war in Ukraine has not only shed a glaring light on the power asymmetries in Europe but also on symbolic and cultural asymmetries: in this war, Ukrainians are fighting for the recognition of their own state as well as of their own culture – a culture that includes practices of solidarity and the defence of their own human dignity. These practices were already established in Ukraine in 2014, and in Belarus in 2020, during our revolution-in-progress. My hypothesis is that it is precisely by grappling with these practices that Europe can be reconceived horizontally as a space that goes beyond the asymmetries of power, thereby creating the conditions for a future peace.

### **Nataliia Tomenko**

As Roma representative from Ukraine, artist, activist, cultural heritage expert and human rights defender, I consider myself a part of European society and fully share all its values. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the majority of my team, the Agency for the Advocacy Roma Culture ARCA, was forced to evacuate from their homes, lost almost everything and has few remaining resources for living. Some still remain in the embattled territories, continuing to work from underground spaces and shelters. Every day we are losing more and more friends, relatives and neighbors. In the current circumstances, the ARCA team provides financial support to Roma and Non-Roma families who find themselves in difficult situations, coordinates, funds and organises the evacuation process for civilians, raises money for frontline cities and dispatches deliveries to hot spots.

### **Volodymyr Ishchenko - Whither from post-Soviet Caesarism? The war and transformation of Russia's political regime**

This paper will discuss a possible transformation of the political regime in Russia resulting from the invasion of Ukraine. Many used a Marxist-Gramscian concept of Caesarism/Bonapartism to analyze post-Soviet personalistic dictatorships such as Putin's or Lukashenka's. These regimes relied on a combination of coercion, balancing, and passive consent. At the same time, they did not build stable institutional foundations for their rule and served only as a deficient solution to the post-Soviet crisis of political representation (crisis of hegemony). There are signs, however, that the war that started in February 2022 may be changing Russia's politics towards a more consolidated, more mobilisationist, more repressive, and, at the same time, a more hegemonic regime.

### **Tatiana Levina – Anti-War Resistance in Russia**

Many Russian opposition leaders were already in jail or prison when Putin launched the invasion of Ukraine. As a result, since the early days of the war, the Russian opposition has faced the problem of how to consolidate its dissent. The feminist anti-war resistance, which made its voice heard on the first day of the war in Ukraine, took a very active stance. Their organisers had previously also supported the Belarusian revolution, where women played a significant role as well. The feminist resistance grew out of the activist movement #TikhyPiket (SilentPiket), where messages were written on clothes, backpacks and other things. As of today, the activists amassed over 28,000 followers from around the world. They are putting up posters and stickers and sending out leaflets about the war every day to counter Russian state propaganda. They also channel the voices of Ukrainian women writing about the war, maintain close contact to them and exchange information with them. Rallies are held in different countries, and in Russia there are pickets or marches, at which many activists have been arrested, remaining in detention to this day.