



Putin x Tucker

In the 2 hour rare interview that Putin allowed to happen in the Kremlin on February 9th 2024, Putin shared his ideas on the discussed topics, which mainly focused on Ukraine's sovereignty, which he illustrated from his historical perspective, then on global cooperation and the state of the international order. I want to briefly summarize the most important highlights.

First Hour

I would divide the interview into two parts. The first half was basically Putin providing a historical lesson for Tucker in which he summarized the entire history of Ukraine. Putin repeatedly propagated some of those parts, some of which were new. I will share what I think were the most important conclusions and add *my own comments* to some of them.

- **Ukraine is an artificial state comprised of Russians and Hungarians.** Putin illustrated his claim by telling a story about his trip to the western part of Ukraine, where all village names were Russian or Hungarian. None were Ukrainian.
- **NATO expanded five times, albeit it promised not to do so at all.**
- **The Clinton administration assured Putin they couldn't join NATO, even if they wanted to.** Putin explicitly said that Russia was thinking of joining the organization. I found that unfortunate. Putin said Clinton would approve of his claim since it was true. The USA "ignored" and "refused" Russia's proposals many times; he elaborated on those even more. *Though I believe he didn't include many important details, I came to understand his position slightly.*
- **Putin repeatedly mentioned that the USA has other states as satellites that must be obedient.**



Putin during the interview with Tucker Carlson.

Historical window:

Putin had a monologue for most of the interview focusing on the history of Ukraine. He started in the 8th century and went almost century by century until he came to the world wars. During the second war, in which Nazi Germany went against Russia but previously formed a pact Molotov-Ribbentrop, dividing Poland in half. In Poland, a man named Stepan Bandera was born into the family of a Ukrainian priest.

Later, Bandera became involved in many nationalist organizations in Ukraine, settling as a leader of a far-right wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B). The day Germany attacked the USSR, he formed the Ukrainian National Committee. The head of the Committee announced the creation of the Ukrainian state. The Germans disapproved of the proclamation, and for his refusal to rescind the decree, the Gestapo arrested Bandera. He was later released in 1944 in the hope that he could fight the Soviet advance alongside Germany. Bandera negotiated with the Nazis and collaborated with them to create the Ukrainian National Army and the Ukrainian National Committee. His followers were then responsible for the notorious killing of Polish citizens and Jews.

Bandera's figure plays an important, though controversial, role today. To understand it, I want to briefly introduce the Ukrainian politics of the 21st century after it proclaimed independence in 1991.

What Putin didn't mention:

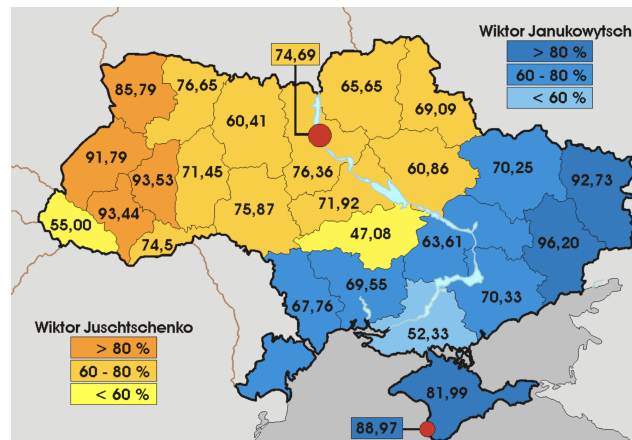
Before the Second World War, Ukraine was a part of the USSR. By the year 1933, it was fully taken down by the Holodomor, the famine that was ordered by Stalin in which more than 3 million Ukrainians died. No wonder that Ukraine hated the USSR. No wonder they parted with Hitler; they didn't know Hitler, but they knew Stalin. Suddenly, there was hope.

After I dove deeper, I realized that Putin didn't mention information that wasn't in his favor. That is not surprising in any sense. After all, we all perform in such a manner sometimes. But Putin has mastered comprehensively sharing; he is a master storyteller. One

feels "that makes common sense" when he doesn't know more than Putin. And Putin knows a lot.

Orange revolution 2004

In the 2004 presidential election, the sitting president Kuchma's nominee was Viktor Yanukovich. The other most prominent candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, runs the opposition. The second round of the election turned out for Yanukovich. Still, the election was seen as a fraud that played in favor of the candidate whose intentions were in proximity with Russia, and nationwide protests began. The "Orange Revolution" resulted in a third round of elections where pro-western Yushchenko won.



Ukrainian presidential election, 2004 - by Oblast - Image made by Sven Teschke, Germany

Election in 2010

"Yushchenko soon found himself beset by infighting and could not lead Ukraine decisively towards Euro-Atlantic integration during what proved to be a hugely frustrating five-year term in office. This paved the way for Yanukovich to mount an unlikely comeback and win the 2010 presidential election race." 1

2014 - Euromajdan

Yanukovich fails to bring new, quickly evolving freedom of the press and speech back to a halt. Instead, his trying to bring Ukraine closer to Russian influence sparked an uprising that led to demonstrations. The name of the revolution comes from a square on which many of these protests took place, Majdan. The events led to Yushchenko's end as president. During the interview, Putin repeatedly said that this "coup" was the trigger for Russia's first sizeable military action – the annexation of Crimea. The newly elected president, Petro Poroshenko, finally links back to the previously discussed Bandera situation.

Poroshenko introduced a new legislation, so-called "memory laws." The laws have raised some concerns about freedom of speech, as well as international concerns that they honor some organizations and individuals, including Bandera, that participated in the mass murder of Jews, Poles, and Communists during the Holocaust in Ukraine and massacres in Volhynia. For example, Lenin's statue in Kyiv was put down and replaced by a statue of Bandera.

Let's repeat the facts:

- **Bandera was a mass-murderer**
- **Bandera is a hero to millions of Ukrainians today, serving as a role model for the nationalistic movements in Ukraine.**
- **Because of the two points above, Russia proclaims its aim to "denazify" Ukraine. During the interview, Putin says that before that is done, he won't stop.**

Now we have some background, and we understand Putin's point about what he means by "denazification." As an example of what he fears, he mentioned the Canadian Congress that applauded Bandera's legacy after Poroshenko came on a presidential visit to Canada. However... **It is worth mentioning In the election of 2019, only 2% of all electorate voted for the farthest-leaning far-right movement, Svoboda. Meaning that the "de-nazification" would comprise of one single seat in the the Ukrainian unicameral parliament, Rada. 2**

Second Hour

- Putin is not interested in attacking other countries, such as Poland or Latvia; he would only reciprocate if such action was taken by other land first.
- Putin doesn't remember the last time he spoke to Biden and doesn't want to share any details about their talk.

At one point in the interview, Tucker asks Putin about his opinion on the polarized world and how he thinks that might spread into war in the future. He gets a surprising answer from the Russian president as he compares the world to the brain – two interconnected hemispheres that cannot work without each other.

International cooperation

Toward the end of the interview, the conversation transferred to the topic of the declining power of the United States. Putin illustrated his point using these statistics: in recent years, dollar usage in foreign transactions accounted for only 13% compared to 50% in the past. At the same time, the usage of Chinese currency – the yuan – surged from 3% to 34%. The global change that is happening is apparent. He adds that the US is destroying itself by limiting trade and partnership with China.



The BRICS leaders holding hands at summit. From the right: Xi Jin Ping, Vladimir Putin, Jair Bolsonaro, Narendra Modi and Cyril Ramaphosa.



"It is [BRICS] like a rising sun. You can not prevent it. You have to adapt to it,"

Putin didn't stop with China. The organization that initiates economic cooperation of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as the founding countries, BRICS, is a growing group comprised of quickly developing nations. To illustrate its size, the total GDP of BRICS surpasses the G7s'. "It is like a rising sun. You can not prevent it. You have to adapt to it," says Putin. Finally, addressing European and American leaders, he claims that sanctions against Russia didn't affect the country.

I felt like the interview was carried in a weird atmosphere. There was something in the air. It is not surprising since it was the first talk that Putin had given to an American since the beginning of the Russian invasion. I also felt Tucker wasn't ready to ask the right questions, and his reactions were sometimes exaggerated. For example, when Putin said he didn't remember when he spoke with Biden the last time, Tucker reacted loudly, "WHAT?" I thought that was unnecessary and that it would be better if he didn't make it sound like the most essential thing in the universe. That is the American culture.

Although I believe I pinpointed the most important points of the interview and added more background to what Putin said, I recommend you watch it and form your own opinion. Short videos don't make up for a more extended period of listening to a person. Because when you give time to listen, you will understand the thoughts better. And if you manage to keep your critical thinking, you will have the time to make your own opinion. I find it invaluable.

Barbora Jelínková, February 9, 2024

additional sources

1 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/how-ukraines-orange-revolution-shaped-twenty-first-century-geopolitics/>

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