

Hansen | Husieva | Frankenthal [Eds.]

# Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine

“Zeitenwende” for German Security Policy



**Nomos**



Institut für  
Sicherheitspolitik  
an der Universität Kiel

## ISP-K-Studien zur Konfliktforschung

edited by

Institut für Sicherheitspolitik  
an der Universität Kiel gGmbH (ISP)

Volume 5

Stefan Hansen | Olha Husieva  
Kira Frankenthal [Eds.]

# Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine

“Zeitenwende” for German Security Policy



**Nomos**

The open access publication of this title was made possible by the umbrella initiative “Hochschule.digital Niedersachsen” of the German state of Lower Saxony.

**The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek** lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN      978-3-7560-1159-9 (Print)  
            978-3-7489-1720-5 (ePDF)

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN      978-3-7560-1159-9 (Print)  
            978-3-7489-1720-5 (ePDF)

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Hansen, Stefan | Husieva, Olha | Frankenthal, Kira  
Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine  
“Zeitenwende” for German Security Policy  
Stefan Hansen | Olha Husieva | Kira Frankenthal (Eds.)  
359 pp.  
Includes bibliographic references.

ISBN      978-3-7560-1159-9 (Print)  
            978-3-7489-1720-5 (ePDF)

1st Edition 2023

© The Authors

Published by

Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG  
Waldestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden  
[www.nomos.de](http://www.nomos.de)

Production of the printed version:

Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG  
Waldestraße 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden

ISBN      978-3-7560-1159-9 (Print)

ISBN      978-3-7489-1720-5 (ePDF)

DOI      <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748917205>



Online Version  
Nomos eLibrary



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

## Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	9
Foreword <i>Stefan Hansen, Olha Husieva, and Kira Frankenthal</i>	13
<b>I. Background and Causes</b>	
Chapter 1: The Ukraine War as a Result of Geopolitical Rivalry? <i>Joris Van Bladel</i>	19
Chapter 2: The Ukraine War as a Regional Confrontation <i>Jakob Wöllenstei</i> n	31
Chapter 3: Russia’s Narratives and Disinformation in the War on Ukraine <i>Susanne Spahn</i>	47
Chapter 4: Russia’s Foreign Policy Determinants: Expansionist Policy and “Imperialism” since 1991 <i>Olha Husieva</i>	71
Chapter 5: Russia’s Dictated Non-Peace in the Donbas 2014–2022: Why the Minsk Agreements Were Doomed to Fail <i>Hugo von Essen and Andreas Umland</i>	95
Chapter 6: Germany’s “Ostpolitik” until Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine <i>Joachim Krause</i>	119

## II. War Events and Developments

Chapter 7: Russia's Strategy in the Ukraine War: Restoring Russian Greatness by Any Means <i>Johanna Möhring</i>	157
Chapter 8: Operational-Tactical Approach of the Russian Army in the 2022 Ukraine War <i>Markus Reisner</i>	179
Chapter 9: Ukraine's Defense against Russia's War of Aggression in 2022 <i>Oleksiy Melnyk and Olha Husieva</i>	197
Chapter 10: The Russian War of Aggression against Ukraine: A Classification under International and Human Rights Law <i>Christina Binder</i>	223
Chapter 11: The Cyber Dimension in Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine <i>Arthur de Liedekerke and Kira Frankenthal</i>	239
Chapter 12: The Ukraine War as an Exogenous Shock for the Image of Russia and Alliance Solidarity in the German Population <i>Timo Graf</i>	251

### III. *Zeitenwende* for Germany's Security Policy

Chapter 13: Implications of the Russian War of Aggression against Ukraine for German Foreign and Security Policy <i>Tobias Lindner</i>	279
Chapter 14: Europe's Response to the Russian War of Aggression in Ukraine and Germany's Place in the European Security Architecture <i>Angela Mehrer and Jana Puglierin</i>	287
Chapter 15: The Security Autonomy of Europe and the Hegemonic Shadow of NATO <i>Markus Kaim and Ronja Kempin</i>	299
Chapter 16: China's Role and Strategic Choice in the Ukraine War <i>Sarah Kirchberger</i>	311
Chapter 17: <i>Zeitenwende</i> Without Strength? Strategic Mirror Axes of Vital German Security Interests: Eastern Flank and East Asia <i>Maximilian Terhalle</i>	325
Chapter 18: Realignment of the German Security Architecture after 2022 <i>Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann</i>	349
List of Editors and Contributors	355



## List of Abbreviations

BMI	Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (Germany)
BMVg	Federal Ministry of Defense (Germany)
BND	Federal Intelligence Service (Germany)
BSI	Federal Office for Information Security (Germany)
BTG	Battalion Tactical Group
CAESAR	Camion Équipé D'un Système D'artillerie (Truck equipped with an artillery system)
CCP	Communist Party of China
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CERT-UA	Computer Emergency Response Team of Ukraine
CFE	Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CSU	Christian Social Union in Bavaria e. V.
DDoS	Distributed Denial-of-Service
DNR	Donetsk People's Republic
EC	European Community
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EDIRPA	European Defense Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act
EEAS	European External Action Service
EMEA	Europe, the Middle East and Africa
ENISA	European Union Agency for Cyber Security
EPF	European Peace Facility
EU	European Union
EUMAM	EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine
EW	Electronic Warfare

## *List of Abbreviations*

FDP	Free Democratic Party of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GRU	Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie (Foreign Military Intelligence Agency of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation)
HIMARS	High Mobility Artillery Rocket System
HR	Human Rights
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security of the Soviet Union)
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LNR	Luhansk People's Republic
MLRS	Multiple Launch Rocket System
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons
NSS	National Security Strategy
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PLA	People's Liberation Army (China)
PMR	Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic
RT	Russia Today
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
SSR	Security Sector Reform
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
SWIFT	Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
TCG	Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine
TDF	Territorial Defense Forces (Ukraine)
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the Soviet Union)
VGTRK	Vserossiyskaya gosudarstvennaya televizionnaya i radioveshchatelnaya kompaniya (All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company)
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force of NATO
ZMSBw	Bundeswehr Center of Military History and Social Sciences



## Foreword

*Stefan Hansen, Olha Husieva, and Kira Frankenthal*

As early as April 2021, Ukraine's then-Ambassador to Germany Andriy Melnyk stressed that the Russian troop concentration on the Ukrainian border was much more than a mere “saber-rattling or war drums, as many in Germany believe”.<sup>1</sup> He noted these were Russia's most massive troop movements since World War II<sup>2</sup> and a very real preparation for attack, which is why more than nice words were needed. However, in Germany, as in several other European countries, fear of infuriating Russia by supporting Ukraine and thus potentially provoking an escalation prevailed. Consequently, people closed their eyes to the increasingly obvious reality that Russia, for its part, had long been deliberately driving the escalation, and that European inaction had made this possible in the first place.

The morning of February 24, 2022, brought forth a new reality: a brutal, full-scale conventional war of aggression in the middle of Europe, the like of which had not been seen since World War II. The pseudo goal of “liberating” supposedly oppressed Russophone Ukrainians in self-proclaimed republics of Donbas through annexation, as pushed by Putin's propaganda, and the pretext of “denazifying” and “demilitarizing” Ukraine through a “special military operation” could not conceal the reality that Russia, driven

---

1 Müller, Dirk: “Russlands Truppenverlegung. Ukrainischer Botschafter: ‘Wir brauchen militärische Unterstützung’”, Deutschlandfunk, 15 April 2021, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/russlands-truppenverlegung-ukrainischer-botschafter-wir-100.html>, 01.12.2022.

2 Importantly, this statement by Andriy Melnyk is, however, not factually correct. Firstly, it was not the Russian Federation but the Soviet Union together with other Warsaw Pact countries who invaded Czechoslovakia. Secondly, that invasion totaled 250,000–500,000 troops in 1968, meanwhile, as for the time of Melnyk's statement in April 2021, Russia concentrated between 100,000 and 120,000 troops on the Ukrainian border: McEnchroe, Thomas/Ayzpurvit, Kateřina/Pohanka, Vojtěch: “It still impacts Czech opinion on Russia: The 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia”, Radio Prague International, 20 August 2022, <https://english.radio.cz/it-still-impacts-czech-opinion-russia-1968-invasion-czechoslovakia-8759138>, 01.07.2023; Bielieskov, Mykola: The Russian and Ukrainian Spring 2021 War Scare, Center For Strategic and International Studies, 21 September 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-and-ukrainian-spring-2021-war-scare>, 01.07.2023.

by revisionist great power aspirations, was inflicting a humanitarian catastrophe of large-scale destruction, atrocities and war crimes on Ukraine. While denying Ukraine any right to exist, the U.S., NATO states, and “the West” in general are being painted as enemies. For Europe, this means nothing less than the end of the security order that had emerged after World War II, and it marks the end of any “peace dividend” reaped since the end of the Cold War.

For the past few decades, Germany had assumed a leading role in rebuilding bridges between the former Cold War rivals, describing this as its “historic responsibility towards the Russian people”. Today, however, this perhaps well-intentioned, yet too far-reaching concession to an increasingly authoritarian leadership in Moscow is mostly seen as a naïve policy of “appeasement towards an aggressor”, which had apparently overlooked the fact that there is also a historical responsibility towards the Ukrainian people. In effect, this policy has massively endangered the security of Europe.

In order to correct previous mistakes in its Russia policy, the German government initiated a turnaround in security policy. On February 27, 2022, a realignment of Germany’s foreign and security policy was announced in a special session of the Bundestag. The announced permanent increase in the defense budget and a 100 billion euros special fund for the Bundeswehr were intended to usher in a turning point for German security policy – the so-called “*Zeitenwende*” (German for “end of an era”, “turning point”, “watershed moment”). In light of the 2014 Crimea annexation, however, many experts criticized these changes as belated and their implementation as too timid, especially since the Bundeswehr is in such a desolate state after more than two decades of disarmament that the 100 billion euros will largely be needed to fully equip the forces at the current target level. Any subsequent upgrade and training of the German armed forces to a higher level will take decades. In terms of security policy, this means that Germany is still lagging behind its allies rather than leading the way.

Compared to other EU and NATO member states, Germany has missed multiple opportunities to take a leading role in the resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Nonetheless, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022 represents a historic turning point for German security policy, which will not only significantly change Germany’s course *vis-à-vis* Russia, but also redefine Germany’s role in the future security order of Europe. It is yet to be determined in what way. In this context, it is of crucial importance that the envisaged reorientation of Germany’s foreign

and security policy is implemented on a sustainable basis, and that previous mistakes, including ideologically driven ones, are clearly recognized and addressed. What is needed to initiate policy corrections and sound security policy decisions is a timely and critical review of the course taken so far, coupled with foreign and security policy recommendations of practical value.

This anthology therefore aims to shed light on the causes and developments of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to systematically review Germany's policy towards Russia since 1990. Thus, new directions for German foreign and security policy will be identified. It will explain why timely corrections are imperative in order to be better prepared for future escalations and security challenges. It shall not only serve scholars as a basis for further research on the war and its impact on the new security policy course of Germany and Europe, but also aims to support the wider public in better understanding previous and current political situations and threats in order to facilitate societal support for a changed policy direction.

The anthology consists of three overarching sections that address *Background and Causes*, *War Events and Developments*, as well as the resulting "Zeitenwende" for *German Security Policy*.

In the *Background and Causes* section, motives for the Russian aggression against Ukraine are examined from a geopolitical and regional political perspectives. Furthermore, numerous determinants of Russian domestic and foreign policy as well as its active expansionist agenda are highlighted. The analysis of the narratives of Russian media – inside and outside the country – demonstrates the far-reaching nature of Russian propaganda and illustrates how the Kremlin used such narratives to justify its expansionism in the "near neighborhood"<sup>3</sup> for years. Considering the fact that Germany did not prepare an appropriate response to the ever-increasing Russian provocations – it even entered into closer inter-state cooperation and became ever more dependent on Russia, especially in the energy sector – Germany's *Ost- and Russlandpolitik* and the respective political mistakes are evaluated.

The section *War Events and Developments* provides an in-depth analysis of the Ukraine war. It is important to reconstruct Russian strategy and tactics, to illustrate the weaknesses of the Russian army and assess its

---

<sup>3</sup> Adomeit, Hannes: Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU, College of Europe, Natolin Research Papers, 04/2011, [https://www.coleurope.eu/sites/default/files/research-paper/adomeit\\_0.pdf](https://www.coleurope.eu/sites/default/files/research-paper/adomeit_0.pdf), 01.12.2022.

military potential. Furthermore, the Ukrainian defense system is analyzed to show how it is set up and where future assistance to Ukraine would be effective and necessary. Finally, it is emphasized that the Russian aggression in Ukraine poses an immediate threat to German and European security, which is why it is so imperative to initiate the “*Zeitenwende*” for German security policy and to efficiently remedy previous mistakes.

In the final section “*Zeitenwende*” for *German Security Policy*, perspectives for German foreign and security policy are outlined, especially with regard to the further development of the Bundeswehr and Germany’s role as a security actor in Europe. It is discussed how the war will change the strategies and security policies of NATO, the EU, and China, and what place Germany should take in the respective cooperation. Finally, the main pillars for an effective reorganization of German security policy are presented, and the most important recommendations for action are outlined.

This anthology was originally published in German in December 2022. It represented a first attempt at analyzing Russia’s 2022 war of aggression against Ukraine and therefore contains chapters written by leading experts in German and European security policy between August and November 2022. When preparing the English edition in the summer of 2023, the authors included only some minor updates to their original texts, so the readers have a unique opportunity not only to study the specifics of the first months of the war, as recorded *realis tempus*, but also to assess those preliminary analyses and estimates of future developments in retrospect.

Unfortunately, the war is still being waged at the time of this volume’s publication and will most likely continue to bring about further decisive changes, both on the battlefield and in European capitals. Nevertheless, the editors consider it important to present this first comprehensive, but at the same time only preliminary, scholarly analysis of what has happened so far and what needs to be done in the future.

In this sense, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all authors of this anthology, as well as to the NOMOS publishing house for the excellent cooperation and remarkably quick realization of this project. In addition, the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University (ISPK) would like to particularly thank *Das Niedersachsen-Konsortium* for sponsoring the open access publication of this volume, which we expect will greatly enhance the reach of this study and aid its reception within broader social and scientific circles.