

# **Jens Jørgen Nielsen: Baggrunden for krigen mellem Ukraine-NATO og Rusland. Background of the war between Ukraine-NATO and Russia. Speech at the Schiller Institute's seminar May 25, 2022.**

Jens Jørgen Nielsen er uddannet i idé- og kommunikationshistorie, Moskva-korrespondent for dagbladet Politiken i slutningen af 1990'erne, forfatter til flere bøger om Rusland og Ukraine, leder af organisationen Russisk-Dansk Dialog og lektor i kommunikation og kulturforskelle ved Niels Brock Handelshøjskole i København.

Mange tak for invitationen. Jeg synes, at denne konference er meget aktuel og yderst relevant, for jeg har levet i mange år – man kan se på farven på mit hår – og man kan være sikker på, at jeg har levet i flere årtier. Jeg kan ikke huske, at vi i alle disse år efter Anden Verdenskrig har befundet os i en situation, som den vi befinder os i nu. Jeg var en lille dreng under Cuba-krisen i 1962 og vidste ikke særlig meget om den, men erindrer, at mine forældre og alle voksne var meget nervøse over situationen. Men alligevel vil jeg sige, at jeg nogle gange ser tilbage på denne tid under Den kolde Krig, og finder at tingene var meget bedre på dette tidspunkt. Jeg havde aldrig troet, at det skulle komme til dette punkt. Nogle gange vågner jeg op om morgenen og håber, at alting var et mareridt, men er bange for, at det ikke er tilfældet. Er bange for at være i live, og sover ikke, drømmer ikke; det er virkeligheden lige nu. Jeg vil blot sige om Cuba-krisen, at Khrusjtjov og Kennedy fandt et fælles sprog, som man siger på

russisk [sætning på russisk 57:01], og de kom godt ud af det sammen, og de fandt en løsning ret hurtigt. De respekterede på en eller anden måde hinanden. Tænk på Nixon og Brezhnev; deres forhold var – selvfølgelig var de modstandere, konkurrenter – selvfølgelig var de det, men de havde en vis respekt for hinanden. Det samme gælder for Reagan og Gorbatsjov osv. Så derfor mener jeg, at tiden lige nu er forfærdelig, fordi vi ikke har denne respekt. Hvis man ser på, hvordan de beskriver Putin i alle medierne, og det har de gjort i de 15, næsten 20 år, så er det som nedgørelse, åbent had, foragt og den slags ting. Jeg synes, det er et meget dårligt varsel, det er et meget dårligt tegn på, at vi går nogle meget besværlige tider i møde.

Jeg vil gerne tale lidt om to spørgsmål, som meget sjældent bliver stillet, og som meget sjældent bliver besvaret. Det første spørgsmål, som jeg vil tale lidt mere udførligt om, er: "Hvordan er vi endt der? Hvordan er det sket, at vi nu, 30 år efter Sovjetunionens opløsning, er endt i denne situation, hvor vi faktisk er tættere end nogensinde før på menneskehedens udslettelse?" Jeg synes, det er et meget grundlæggende spørgsmål. Det andet spørgsmål er naturligvis: "Hvad gør vi? Hvordan skal vi komme ud af dette? Hvordan kommer vi til forhandlingsbordet for at forhandle om fredsbetingelser og den slags forhold?" Og måske et tredje spørgsmål er naturligvis: "Hvordan opbygger vi en ny verden? Det er ikke lige nu, for nu handler det om, hvordan vi forhindrer en atomkrig?"

Jeg vil behandle disse to spørgsmål. Hvordan nåede vi dertil? Jeg tror, Jan Øberg vil tale lidt mere om, hvad vi skal gøre, eller måske snarere, hvad vi ikke skal gøre. Jeg har været med i næsten 30 år, faktisk også i denne årrække hvor jeg arbejdede i Rusland, jeg arbejdede på nogle ambassader i de tidligere sovjetrepublikker, og begyndte at lære det russiske sprog allerede før det. For det andet blev jeg gift med en russer for 30 år siden, i 1992. Vi havde håb om en ny verden, vi havde lige forladt Den kolde Krig, og vi havde håb om, at vi skulle leve i en fredelig verden. Og her er vi så, 30 år senere. Men der er noget håb; vi er ikke blevet skilt, vi har ikke planer om at blive skilt, så der er lidt håb, vil jeg

mene.

Tilbage til det, der er sket. I 1991, da Sovjetunionen blev opløst, og Warszawa-pagten blev opløst, rejste jeg meget i Rusland. Jeg var meget i Rusland, og jeg havde russiske venner. De var alle entusiastiske, de var alle optimistiske. "Nu går vi ind i en ny verden. Nu har vi en harmonisk verden præget af harmoni og fred og udvikling og den slags ting." De sagde, at de udtrykkeligt ønskede at være en del af Vesten; de ønskede at dele vores værdier og den slags ting. Hvis man har dette billede i begyndelsen af 1990'erne, var det meget svært at leve i Rusland, fordi alt brød sammen, og der var kaos. Men de ønskede at være en del af Vesten. Så det interessante spørgsmål er, hvad skete der egentlig? Hvorfor gik det ikke sådan? Der er flere trædesten i dette, vil jeg sige, for allerede i begyndelsen af 1990'erne kom Bill Clinton til magten i USA. Han støttede først en plan om, at de østeuropæiske lande skulle blive en del af NATO og lade Rusland stå udenfor. På den måde vil jeg påstå, at han afviste Gorbatsjovs forslag om at opbygge et europæisk hus. Der var faktisk en plan om at opbygge et europæisk hus, men det var et europæisk hus baseret på militæret, og Rusland stod udenfor. På dette tidspunkt advarede mange folk i FN, selv i Europa, om, at det ikke ville fungere; det ville helt sikkert ikke fungere, for selv de liberale i Rusland, og mange af disse pro-vestlige liberale sagde: "Det er en meget dårlig idé".

Men det fungerede på denne måde, fordi Clinton insisterede ihærdigt på dette. Det startede på dette tidspunkt. Så havde de, jeg ved ikke, om det var uheld, måske var det med vilje, at de godkendte Polen, Ungarn og Tjekkiet, samtidig med at man begyndte at bombe i Serbien. Serbien er en meget tæt historisk allieret for Rusland.

Så på dette tidspunkt var jeg journalist. Jeg talte med en masse mennesker. Jeg talte med Sakharovs enke, Jelena Bonner; jeg talte med alle de liberale – hvem talte jeg ikke med på dette tidspunkt? Og alle var meget skarpt imod dette. På dette tidspunkt, jeg tror, hvis man skal sætte et årstal, var det 1999, et år hvor splittelsen faktisk begyndte; måske begyndte den lidt tidligere, men på dette tidspunkt var den åbenlys. Så

kom Putin ind i billedet; han skabte ikke denne situation. Mange mennesker tror, at russerne var liberale, og at den onde Putin kom til. Nej! Det er den anden vej rundt. Faktisk fulgte Putin det russiske folks dagsorden, og endda ikke kun det, for sjovt nok var Putin meget ivrig efter at komme med i NATO. Det er meget interessant at tale om dette i dag. Han ønskede, at Rusland skulle tilslutte sig NATO, det sagde han i hvert fald i et interview med BBC i 2000, da han først blev præsident.

Men selv i Afghanistan støttede Putin Vesten. Han hjalp Vesten i Afghanistan. Han gjorde alt for at opnå venskab. Han holdt en tale i Forbundsdagen i Berlin, og han gjorde alt, hvad han kunne. Men han fandt ud af, at det var forgæves, fordi Rusland var dømt til at blive udelukket fra denne nye sikkerhedsarkitektur, fordi den europæiske sikkerhed bestod af NATO uden Rusland.

Jeg tror, at alt begyndte at forværres fra dette tidspunkt. Man kunne foretage nogle tiltag. Jeg vil blot nævne nogle få. Man kan sige, at der i 2008 var et NATO-topmøde i Bukarest i Rumænien. På dette tidspunkt var George W. Bush præsident, og han inviterede Georgien og Ukraine til at blive en del af NATO. Frankrig og Tyskland var ikke så begejstrede for dette, så de afviste det faktisk. Men det blev holdt på dagsordenen, at disse to lande fik en invitation. Putin var til stede på denne konference, og han var meget, meget vred. Men der skete ikke rigtig noget. Man kan sige, at løsningen på NATO-topmødet var den værst tænkelige løsning, fordi man for det første fik ukrainerne og georgierne til at tro, at de ville få opbakning fra NATO, hvis de angreb Rusland, eller som Saakashvili i Georgien gjorde i 2008. For det andet øgede den russernes mistanke, og det løste ikke noget. Ud fra det blev det endnu værre. I Ukraine havde man selv på dette tidspunkt en meget russofobisk regering. I Ukraine er der ca. 50 % russisktalende personer, som ikke ønskede at tilslutte sig Rusland, men at have venskabelige forbindelser med Rusland og i det mindste være neutrale som en stat. Mange mennesker i de vestlige dele af Ukraine mente noget andet, nemlig at de skulle tilslutte sig NATO og EU. Så det er på mange måder et splittet land.

I det mindste blev Ukraine på dette tidspunkt i 2008 inviteret

[til at blive medlem af NATO]. Det er interessant nok, at 17 % af den ukrainske befolkning ønskede at tilslutte sig NATO, mens 66 % ikke ønskede at tilslutte sig NATO. Jeg synes, at det er meget interessante tal, for det siger alt om, hvordan USA havde en dagsorden om at trække Ukraine ud af den russiske sfære, og de skjulte det ikke engang. Zbigniew Brzezinski, som var national sikkerhedsrådgiver, skrev en bog om "det store skakbræt" {Grand Chessboard}: han skrev åbent, ja, vi ønsker at rive Ukraine ud af Ruslands område. Så hvor meget stabilitet kan man opbygge der? Og tingene blev endnu værre.

Interessant nok blev Viktor Janukovitj fra Regionernes Parti i 2010 valgt til præsident, og i 2012 havde hans parti og nogle andre partier flertal. De gik ind for, at Ukraine fortsat skulle være et neutralt land, og for det andet gik de ind for et tæt samarbejde med Rusland med hensyn til gasleverancer og leje af flådebasen i Sevastopol og på Krim osv. Derefter havde de en diskussion – Helga har allerede nævnt det – om associeringsaftalen med EU. Janukovitj læste den meget omhyggeligt og fandt ud af, at den ikke var særlig velgørende for Ukraine, og han afviste at underskrive den.

Så kom Maidan og alle den slags ting, og i februar 2014 var der faktisk, hvad jeg ville kalde et kup. Efter min mening kan man ikke kalde det andet end et kup. Det var ikke i parlamentet. Der var ikke nok stemmer i parlamentet, og det var et militærkup, intet mindre end det, vil jeg påstå.

Derefter kom ødelæggelsen af Ukraine, for i den østlige del havde de stemt i byer som Lugansk, hvor næsten 90 % havde stemt på Regionernes Parti, i Donetsk var det 85 %, og det samme på Krim, 85 % havde stemt på dette parti, som netop var blevet smidt ud af regeringen. Så de reagerede naturligvis på dette. Og på Krim skete der en løsrivelse fra Ukraine, og de blev i sidste ende en del af Rusland.

Herefter startede krigen: Den ukrainske hær begyndte at angribe de republikker, der havde erklæret sig uafhængige. For man kan sige ud fra et juridisk synspunkt, at hvis man kan lave et kup i Kiev, kan man også lave et kup i Donetsk. I Donetsk og Lugansk havde de i det mindste folkeafstemninger.

De valgte nye regeringspartier i disse to republikker. Så, sanktionsregimet begyndte allerede der, og der skete en endnu kraftigere forværring af forholdet mellem NATO og Rusland, meget voldsommere. På dette tidspunkt var der faktisk en reel krig i gang i Donbass, den østlige del af Donbass, som er en region i Ukraine.

Mange mennesker i Danmark, – jeg diskuterede på nuværende tidspunkt disse ting med mine danske landsmænd, og jeg sagde: "Måske ved du, at 14.000 mennesker er blevet dræbt i denne krig?" "Hvad? Nej, det er russisk propaganda." Jamen, det er det bestemt ikke, for det er en vurdering fra OSCE, Organisationen for Sikkerhed og Samarbejde i Europa, som jeg vil mene nok er den eneste kilde, vi har til den slags tal. Mindst nogle tusinde af disse 14.000 er civile mennesker, og blandt disse er der mange børn. Men russerne kan også se, at vi ikke græder over disse børn, og vi hejser ikke russiske flag for disse børn i vores lande i Vesten. Så mange russere har en tendens til at tænke "OK, så hvis vi ønsker at sikre de russisk talendes sikkerhed, bør det være Rusland, for EU er slet ikke interesseret." Den ukrainske regering er bestemt ikke interesseret i at beskytte menneskerettighederne for de mennesker, der ønskede at bevare deres sprog eller have nogle normale forbindelser med Rusland.

Dette er altså noget, der foregår i Rusland og i det mindste i en del af det opdeltede land, Ukraine. I februar 2015 var der en meget interessant konference i Minsk, og Lukashenko var vært. Der blev indgået en aftale mellem Frankrig, Tyskland, Rusland og Ukraine og også disse to republikker. De underskrev en aftale, ifølge hvilken Ukraine skulle have direkte forhandlinger med lederne af de to republikker – Donetsk og Lugansk – med disse to republikker. Ideen var, at Ukraine skulle ændre sin forfatning for at tillade autonome enheder i Ukraine. Tanken var, at Donetsk og Lugansk skulle være autonome enheder i Ukraine, der skulle bestemme, hvilket sprog der skulle være, og som også skulle bestemme, om de skulle have vetoret i spørgsmål om militærpolitik og lignende forhold. Jeg tror faktisk, at det var det bedste, man kunne opnå, og jeg vil gerne rose Merkel, fordi hun indgik denne aftale uden USA's umiddelbare støtte. Hun gjorde det på egen

hånd; hun tog Hollande fra Frankrig med sig og indgik denne aftale, som var det bedste, man kunne opnå på det tidspunkt.

Men meget hurtigt blev det klart, at den ukrainske præsident Petro Porosjenko ikke var herre i eget hus, som vi siger, fordi han ønskede at få det igennem i parlamentet. Hvad skete der? Nogle af disse højrefløjsgrupper, som Helga også omtalte, eksploderede. Medlemmer af parlamentet, tre mennesker blev dræbt på dette tidspunkt. De truede Porosjenko, og sagde at hvis han overhovedet ville fortsætte med at gennemføre disse bestemmelser i Minsk II-aftalen, ville han blive dræbt i en kælder. Han ønskede ikke at blive myrdet i en kælder, så han stoppede det. Senere, Zelenskij, gjaldt det samme for ham. Han sagde, da han stillede op til præsidentvalget, at han ønskede at skabe fred. Han ønskede også at opfylde Minsk II-aftalerne, og hvad skete der? Han blev også truet, og der skete ikke noget. Både Porosjenko og senere Zelenskij sagde, at vi ikke vil opfylde denne aftale. Det er klar tale, kan man kalde det.

Men på dette tidspunkt sagde Tyskland og Frankrig ikke noget. Man kunne have forestillet sig, at de ville have sagt til den ukrainske regering: "Vær nu venlige, I har underskrevet en aftale. Vi forventer, at I vil opfylde aftalens bestemmelser." Så meget mere, så denne Minsk II blev en del af FN's politik. Sikkerhedsrådet har vedtaget den som officiel FN-politik, men den ukrainske regering var ligeglad med den, og intet vestligt land ville nogensinde nævne, at de skulle opfylde denne aftale.

Nu kan jeg se, at jeg er ved at løbe tør for tid. Jeg vil blot sige, at hvis man går lidt længere frem, kom Zelenskij til magten – 70 % af den ukrainske befolkning støttede ham. Hvorfor? Fordi han sagde, at han var for fred; han ville gerne have en aftale med Rusland; han vil løse deres problemer med forhandlinger i Donbass, med Lugansk og Donetsk. Men han blev også truet, og han veg tilbage fra denne politik. I stedet inviterede han endnu mere [militær støtte fra USA] fra 2017-18, det var under Donald Trump. Ukraine blev bevæbnet mere og mere, og de begyndte at have fælles militærøvelser. De installerede også militær teknik i den østlige del, og også i Ukraine. Så man kan sige, at selv om Ukraine ikke var en del

af NATO, så var NATO selvfølgelig i Ukraine. Jeg vil gå endnu længere og sige, at der sidste år, i 2021, var flere interessante ting. For et år siden, eller endnu tidligere, det var i marts sidste år, hævdede Zelenskij, at han var nødt til at erklære krig. Han sagde, at han gerne ville tage Krim og Donbass tilbage med militæret og støttet af NATO, ikke med NATO-soldater, men med NATO-udstyr, NATO-træning og lignende ting.

I 2021 var der en flådeøvelse i Sortehavet med deltagelse af 32 lande. Yderligere kan man sige, at i februar 2022, den 16. februar, hvis man ser på OSCE's vurdering af, hvad der skete, hvor de tæller hvor mange eksplosioner, hvor mange skyderier, hvor mange drab, hvor mange dette og hint – det er deres job at gøre dette. De udtalte, at der fra den 16. februar var en stigning på næsten 30 gange flere eksplosioner. Hvad betyder det? Det betyder, at den ukrainske hær på dette tidspunkt allerede havde startet en krig! 110.000 ukrainske soldater var klar i Donbass og klar til at gå ind i Donbass. Desuden havde de som sagt hævdet, at de gerne ville indtage Krim.

Så nu er vi nået frem til den 24. februar. Putin var nødt til at forholde sig til situationen. Jeg billiger ikke Putins beslutning. Jeg er ikke sikker på, at det er rigtigt; jeg siger ikke, at det er rigtigt. Men han stod i en meget, meget vanskelig situation. Så denne situation kom ikke bare ud af det blå, ud af ingenting: Der er naturligvis en sammenhæng, der er en historie forud for dette. Hvis vi gerne vil løse problemet, bør vi finde måder at finde fredelige løsninger på. Jeg mener, at vi bør begynde her. Vi bør starte med "Hvorfor er vi endt her?" Vi er også nødt til på en eller anden måde at undersøge "Hvorfor endte vi her?" Måske har vi begået nogle fejltagelser, måske har vi gjort nogle ting her i vores del af verden. Måske har vi gjort noget, der kunne få Putin til at tro, at vi havde onde hensigter. For meget ofte siger vi, at NATO er en defensiv organisation, som ikke kunne drømme om at forstyrre noget som helst. Men hvis man ser på, hvad der sker i Ukraine i det sidste år, i hvert fald fra marts 2021 til februar 2022, hvis man ser på, hvad der skete der, hvis man sidder i Rusland og ser på, hvad der sker der, er det meget, meget tydeligt, at der er intentioner om at tage det tilbage.



Dette er en rød linje for Rusland. Det har de sagt. Der er ingen tvivl om, at Rusland har en rød linje, og på en eller anden måde er man nødt til at agere på den. Jeg siger ikke, at det er det rigtige at gøre, men at sige at Putin er en galning, at han bare er blevet skør eller noget, det synes jeg ikke er relevant. Jeg siger ikke, at han har truffet den rigtige beslutning, men han er ikke gal. Han ser faktisk på verden fra en anden vinkel.

English: Jens Jørgen Nielsen, degrees in the history of ideas and communication, a Moscow correspondent for the major Danish daily Politiken in the late 1990s, author of several books about Russia and Ukraine, a leader of the Russian-Danish Dialogue organization, and an associate professor of communication and cultural differences at the Niels Brock Business College in Denmark.

English:

Thank you very much for the invitation. I think this conference is both very timely and very relevant, because I have lived for many years – you can look at the color of my hair – you can be sure that I have lived for several decades. I don't remember during all these years after the Second World War, we are in a situation like we are in now. I was a small boy during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. I didn't know very much about it, but I remember my parents and all adults were very nervous about it. But still, I would say now I sometimes look back at this time of the Cold War, and I think things were much better at this time. I never thought I should come to this point. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and hope everything was a nightmare, but I'm afraid it is not. I'm afraid I'm alive and I'm not sleeping, I'm not dreaming; it is reality right now. I'll just say about the Cuban Missile Crisis, Khrushchev and Kennedy, they found common language like they say in Russian [phrase in Russian 57:01], and they got along and they found a solution pretty quickly. They somehow respected each other. Think of Nixon and Brezhnev; their relationship was – of course they were opponents, competitors – of course they were, but they had some respect for each other. Same goes for Reagan and Gorbachev and so on.

So, that's why I think that the time right now is awful, because we don't have this respect. If you look at how they describe Putin in all the media, and have been doing so for I would say 15, almost 20 years, it's like denigration, open hatred, scorn and such kinds of things. I think it's a very bad omen, it's a very bad sign that we are in for some very troublesome times.

I would like to talk a little about two questions which very seldom are being asked, and very seldom being answered. The first question, which I will talk a little bit more about at length is, "How did we end up there? How did it come to be that now, 30 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we ended up in this situation where we are actually closer than ever to the annihilation of the human race?" I think it's a very basic question. Of course, the second question is "What do we do? How shall we get out of this? How do we get to the negotiation table to negotiate peace terms, things like that?" And maybe a third question, of course, "How do we build a new world? It's not right now, because now is about how do we prevent a nuclear war?"

I will handle these two questions. How did we get there? I think Jan Øberg will talk a little bit more about what we should do, or maybe even more, what we should not do. Well, I can say that I've been around for almost 30 years, actually also this time I was working in Russia, I worked at some embassies in the former Soviet Republics, and started to learn the Russian language even before that. Secondly, I was married to a Russian, 30 years back, in 1992. We had hopes for a new world, we had just left the Cold War, and we had hopes that we should live in a peaceful world. And here we are, 30 years later. But there is some hope; we are not divorced, we are not planning to do so, so there's a little hope there I would say.

Back to what has happened. In 1991, when the Soviet Union was dissolved, and the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, I travelled a lot in Russia. I was very much in Russia, I had Russian friends. They were all enthusiastic, they were all optimistic. "Now we are entering a new world. Now we have a harmonious world marked by harmony and peace and development, and things

like that." They said they emphatically wanted to be part of the West; they wanted to share our values and things like that. If you have this picture in the beginning of the 1990s, it was very difficult to live in Russia because everything broke down and there was chaos. But they wanted to be part of the West. So, the good question is, what actually happened? Why didn't it turn out this way? There are several step stones in this, I would say, because already in the beginning of the 1990s, Bill Clinton came to power in the United States. He first endorsed a plan of the Eastern European countries becoming part of NATO, leaving Russia outside. In this way, I would say he declined the proposal of Mr. Gorbachev to build a European house. There was actually a plan to build a European house, but it was a European house based on military, and with Russia being outside. At this time in the United Nations, even in Europe, many people warned that it would not work; it definitely would not work, because even the liberals in Russia, and many of those pro-Western liberals said, "It's a very bad idea."

But it worked this way, because Clinton was very much insisting on this. And it started at this time. Then they had, I don't know if it was bad luck, maybe intentionally, that they adopted Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, at the same time as it started to bomb in Serbia. And Serbia is a very close historical ally for Russia.

So, at this time, I was a journalist. I talked to a lot of people. I talked to Sakharov's widow, Yelena Bonner; I talked to all the liberals—who didn't I talk to at this time? And everyone was very sharply opposed to this. At this time, I think if you should put a year, it was 1999, a year when the split actually began; maybe it started a little earlier, but at this time it was obvious. And then, Putin came into this situation; he didn't create this situation. Many people think that the Russians were liberals and that the evil Putin came along. No! It's the other way around. Actually, Putin took the agenda of the Russian people, and even not that, because funny enough, Putin was very eager to join NATO. It's very interesting to talk about this today. He wanted Russia to join NATO, at least he said so in an interview with BBC in 2000,

when he first became President.

But even in Afghanistan, Putin supported the West. He helped the West in Afghanistan. He did everything to become friends. He made a speech in the Bundestag in Berlin, and he did everything he could. But he found out that it was in vain, because Russia was doomed to be left out of this new security architecture, because European security was NATO without Russia.

I think everything started to deteriorate from this. You could make some stepping stones. I'll just mention a very few. You can say that in 2008 there was a NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania. At this point, George W. Bush was President, and he invited Georgia and Ukraine to become part of NATO. Well, France and Germany were not that enthusiastic about this, so they actually turned it down. But it was kept on the agenda, that these two countries had an invitation. And Putin was present at this conference, and he was very, very angry. But nothing happened really. And you can say the solution at the NATO summit was the worst conceivable resolution, because first, they made the Ukrainians and Georgians think that they would have the backing of NATO if they attacked Russia, or like Saakashvili in Georgia did in 2008. And secondly, it raised the suspicion of the Russians, and it didn't solve anything. From that, it became even worse. In Ukraine, even at this time, you had a very Russophobic government. In Ukraine, you have approximately 50% Russian speakers, who wanted not to join Russia, but to have friendly relations with Russia and at least be neutral as a state. Many of the western parts of Ukraine, many people there thought otherwise, that they should join NATO and the European Union. So, it's a divided country in many ways.

But at least at this point in 2008, Ukraine was invited [to join NATO]. Interestingly enough, 17% of the Ukrainian population wanted to join NATO; 66% did not want to join NATO. I think those are very interesting figures, because it says everything about how America had an agenda to pull Ukraine out of the Russian orbit, and they didn't even hide it. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was National Security Advisor, wrote a book

about the {Grand Chessboard}: he openly wrote, yes, we want to tear Ukraine out of the orbit of Russia. So, how much stability could you build there? And things got even in worse.

And interestingly, in 2010, Viktor Yanukovych from the Party of Regions, was elected President, and in 2012 his party and some other parties had the majority. And they were in favor of Ukraine continuing to be a neutral country, and secondly, they were in favor of close cooperation with Russia in terms of gas deliveries and the rent of the naval base of Sevastopol and Crimea, and so on. Then, you had a discussion – Helga already mentioned it – about the Association Agreement with the European Union. And Yanukovych read it very carefully, and found out that it was not very benevolent for Ukraine, and he declined to sign it.

Then, came the Maidan, and all this kind of things, and in February 2014 there was actually what I would call a coup. In my opinion, you cannot call it anything but a coup. It was not in the Parliament. There were not enough votes in the Parliament, and it was a military coup, nothing short of it, I would say.

Then came the destruction of Ukraine, because in the eastern part they had voted in towns like Lugansk, almost 90% had voted for the Party of Regions; in Donetsk it was 85%; Crimea the same, 85% had voted for this party, which had just been kicked out of the government. So, of course, they reacted to this. And in Crimea, there was a secession from Ukraine, and they eventually became a part of Russia.

So, then the war started: The Ukrainian Army started to attack the republics that had declared themselves independent. Because you can say from a legal point of view, if you can make a coup in Kyiv, you can also make a coup in Donetsk. At least in Donetsk and Lugansk they had referendums. They elected new government parties in these two republics. So, at least there, the sanctions regime started and even much more deterioration between NATO and Russia, much more. At this time, it was actually a real war going on in Donbass, which is the eastern part of Donbass, which is a region of Ukraine.

Many people in Denmark, I would now discuss these matters with my fellow Danes, and I say "maybe you know that 14,000 people have been killed in this war?" "What? No, it's Russian propaganda." Well, it's definitely not, because it's the assessment of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which I think is probably the only source we have for these kinds of figures. At least some thousands of this 14,000 are civilian people, and among those, many children. But the Russians can also see we don't cry for these children, we don't raise Russian flags for these children in our countries in the West. So, many Russians tend to think "OK, then, if we want to secure the security of Russian speakers, it should be Russia because the European Union is not at all interested." The Ukrainian government is certainly not interested in protecting human rights for those people who wanted to keep their language or have some normal relations to Russia.

So, this is something which is going on in Russia, and at least in part of the divided country of Ukraine. In February 2015, there was a very interesting conference in Minsk, and Lukashenko was the host there. It was an agreement between France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine, and also those two republics. They signed an agreement according to which Ukraine was supposed to have direct negotiations with the leaders of those two republics – Donetsk and Lugansk. The idea was that Ukraine was supposed to amend its constitution to allow for autonomous entities in Ukraine. The thought being that Donetsk and Lugansk would be autonomous entities in Ukraine, deciding about which language there would be and deciding also about having veto in questions about military policy, and things like that. And I think it was actually the best you could achieve, and I think at this point I would commend Merkel, because she made this agreement without the immediate support of the U.S.A. She did it on her own; she brought Hollande from France with her, and made this agreement, which is the best you could achieve at the time.

But, very soon, it became clear that Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was not the master in his own house, as we say, because he wanted to get it through in the Parliament. What

happened? Some of these right-wing groups that Helga also talked about, exploded. Members of the Parliament, three people were killed at this point. They threatened Poroshenko, and said that if he would even go on and realize these provisions in the Minsk II Agreement, he would be killed in a basement. He didn't want to be killed in a basement, so he stopped it. Later on, Zelenskyy, the same goes for him. He said when he ran for President that he wanted to make peace. He wanted also to fulfill the agreements of Minsk II, and what happened? He was threatened too, and nothing happened. Both Poroshenko and later Zelenskyy said that we will not fulfill this agreement. It's clear speech, you would say.

But at this point, Germany and France didn't say anything. You could have imagined that they would have told the Ukrainian government, "Please, you signed an agreement. We expect that you will fulfill the provisions of the agreement." So much more that this Minsk II became part of the United Nations policy. The Security Council has adopted it as official UN policy, but the Ukrainian government didn't care about it, and no Western country would ever mention that they should fulfill this agreement.

Now, I see that I am running out of time. I'll just say that if you go a little further, Zelenskyy came to power – 70% of the Ukrainian population supported him. Why? Because he said he was for peace; he would like to have an agreement with Russia; he will solve their problems with negotiations in Donbass, with Lugansk and Donetsk. But he was threatened also, and he went back from this policy. Instead, he invited even more [military aid from the U.S.] from 2017-18, it was during the reign of Donald Trump, Ukraine was armed more and more, and they started to have common military exercises. They installed military technique also in the Eastern part, and also in Ukraine. So, you could say that even though Ukraine was not part of NATO, NATO was in Ukraine, of course. I would go even further, and say that last year, in 2021, there were several interesting things. One year ago, or even more, it was in March last year, Zelenskyy claimed that he had to declare war. He said he would like to take back Crimea and Donbass with the military, and supported by NATO, not with NATO

soldiers, but NATO equipment, NATO training, and things like that.

And in 2021, there was a naval exercise in the Black Sea with 32 countries participating in this. And further on, you could say that in February 2022, on Feb. 16, if you look at what the OSCE assessment is of what happened, where they count how many explosions, how many shootings, how many killings, how many this and that—it's their job to do this. They said that from Feb. 16th, there was an increase of almost 30 times more explosions. What does that mean? It means that the Ukrainian Army at this point already had started a war! 110,000 Ukrainian soldiers were ready in Donbass and ready to enter Donbass. Also, they had claimed, as I said, that they would like to take Crimea.

So, now we go to Feb. 24th. Putin had to deal with the situation. I'm not endorsing Putin's decision. I'm not sure it's right; I'm not saying it's right. But he had a very, very difficult situation. So, this situation did not just come out of the blue, out of nothing: Of course, there's a context, there's a history before that. And if we would like to solve the problem, we should find ways to find peaceful solutions. I think we should start here. We should start with "Why did we end up here?" And also, we need to somehow look into "Why did we end up here?" Maybe we made some mistakes, maybe we did some things here in our part of the world. Maybe we did something that could make Putin think that we had evil intentions. Because very often we say NATO is a defensive organization that couldn't dream of upsetting anything. But if you look at what is happening in Ukraine in the last year, at least from March 2021 to February 2022, if you look at what happened there, if you sit in Russia and watch what's happening there, it's very, very obvious, that there is the intention of taking this back.

This is a red line for Russia. They said so. There's no doubt that Russia has a red line, and somehow you have to act on it. I'm not saying it's the right thing to do, but to say that Putin is a madman, that he just became crazy or something, I think it's not relevant. I'm not saying he made the right



decision, but he's not a madman. He looks at the world from another angle, actually.

RASMUSSEN: Thank you very much, Jens Jørgen.