

From Words to War

Ukraine in the Russian Press, 2014-2022

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This book proceeds from a simple question - "What prompted the Russian-Ukrainian war?"

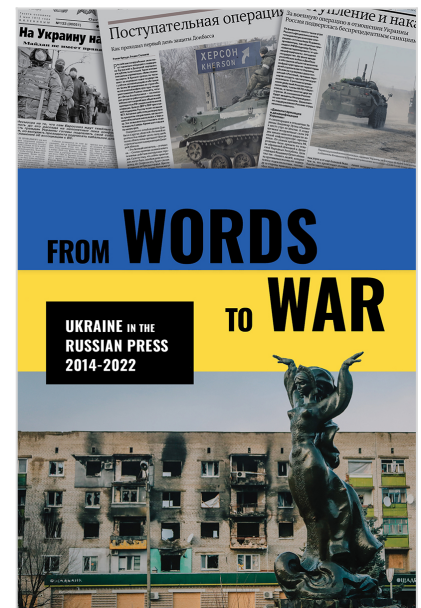
The answers are presented here in the words of primary sources: public statements and reporting from political actors, journalists and commentators addressed to Russian-speaking audiences. Much of this content is published in book form in English for the first time.

The picture that emerges is that the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 was preceded not just by preparatory actions of the Russian military - joint exercises in post-Soviet space and the buildup of troops at the Ukrainian border - but by years of propaganda and persuasion targeted at the Russian elite and ordinary citizens. These rhetorical efforts emerged particularly strongly with the outbreak of the "Revolution of Dignity" (2013-2014) and continue with increasing insistence to this day.

Our aim is not to espouse or glorify the narrative of the Putin regime. Instead, we present it for academic study, along with immediate reactions to it, both laudatory and critical.

Most of the articles, speeches, interviews and reports featured here originally appeared in East View's English-language periodical *The Current Digest of the Russian Press*. Coverage starts during the 2014 Russian occupation of the Crimea and continues right up to the invasion.

We hope that this compendium of primary sources - many of them published in English for the first time - will offer scholars and other interested readers fresh insight into the power of words to move nations.



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Advance Praise for *From Words to War*

“The editors of this book should be commended for assembling the voices of hate and imperial domination, both from the state propagandists and genuine imperialists and war-mongers across the right- and far-right side of the Russian political spectrum. It is these voices that primed Russian people to fight and die in Putin’s criminal war against Ukraine, provided cover for the atrocities committed by Russian occupation forces in Bucha and Irpen, and justified political repression, in the name of war support, inside the country. The collection provides ample research material for students of state propaganda and functioning of authoritarian regimes, as well as a source of documentary evidence for a new Nuremberg tribunal for Putin’s propaganda workers.”

– Konstantin Sonin, John Dewey Distinguished Service Professor,
Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, University of Chicago

“*From Words to War: Ukraine in the Russian Press, 2014- 2022* may quickly establish itself as a veritable handbook helping experts and lay persons gain a better understanding of the causes, actual and perceived, that culminated in the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. It is a forceful reminder of the maxim that although occasions for wars may be trivial, causes never are. One of the virtues of this “anthology” of items from the Russian press and of official documents featured in the Appendix, is that it does not limit itself to military developments of the last three years. Instead, it masterfully recaptures causes with roots in the entire Putin reign, indeed the immediate post-Soviet era and the so-called “new world order.” Added to the psychological embarrassment experienced by the world’s largest country in the wake of the “geopolitical disaster” of the Soviet Union’s dissolution were growing concerns over national security issues, raised largely by the decisions of Western policy makers during the Yeltsin years (1991-99); the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004), followed by complex political developments in that country; steady NATO expansion to Russia’s borders; questions of historical and cultural identity; and of course, the Russian annexation of the Crimea in 2014. This is precisely the universe that the items marshalled in *From Words to War* reveal so brilliantly. For nothing reveals the mood of a people and its government, especially in an authoritarian regime, as its press. One could argue that, despite some protests, the Russian press became a school for the whole nation to inform itself about ugly realities, and even uglier perceptions, that drove Russia’s compulsion to act in a grand manner in Ukraine. One could also argue that if Western analysts and designers of international policy were better versed in the emerging mood in Russia regarding Ukraine as revealed in the Russian press, Western policy might have been less provocative and more committed to a peaceful diplomacy. In the final analysis, the bankruptcy of diplomacy is more lamentable than the bankruptcy of war.

Thematically and conveniently arranged, the contents of *From Words to War* reveal a panoramic view of historical, political, cultural issues, and political actors not easily accessible in other comparable publications on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is a volume that deserves a place in every research library and on the desks of students seriously interested in a broader comprehension of one of the most complex political imbroglios of our already ravaged century. Finally, the volume could provide a refreshing dimension to the issues under consideration if used as supplementary reading for courses on Central and East European history and politics, foreign relations, communications, and, above all, the role of the press and social media in our fast growing digitized age.”

– Theofanis G. Stavrou, Professor of History, University of Minnesota

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