



## Civilization or Barbarism



**January 2023**

**Pascal Bruckner**

French Philosopher and Novelist  
Professor at Sciences Po (Paris)  
Visiting Professor in NYU, SDSU, TAMU

Translated by Nathan Bracher

For more information: [bush.tamu.edu/Scowcroft/](http://bush.tamu.edu/Scowcroft/)



## Civilization or Barbarism

By: Pascal Bruckner

Translated by: Nathan Bracher

But the war in Ukraine and Putin's despotism, which stifles all opposition, muzzles the press, rehabilitates Stalin in the name of the Great Patriotic War, and has opponents murdered, shows the "Russian democracy" to be a farce.

### The Lesson of Vassili Grossman

In 1960, writer Vassili Grossman submitted the manuscript of his masterpiece *Life and Fate* to the journal *Znamia*. Editor in chief Vadim Kojevnikov read it: horrified by what was written, however, he sent it over to the KGB headquarters in the Lubyanka Building in Moscow. The work was immediately confiscated, even kidnapped. For the lesson of this very thick, 1,200-page book, was unbearable for the Soviet regime: Grossman, who had been present at Stalingrad, explained that Nazism and Communism were twin enemies who clashed with each other all the more precisely because they were in agreement on the essential points. Their rivalry was basically mimetic, and we now know how fascinated Stalin was with Hitler, his exact likeness that he admired as much as he abhorred before Stalin in turn fascinated the Führer as the Red Army kept on pushing back the Wehrmacht and began to invade Eastern Prussia. The fanaticism of race was as deadly as the fanaticism of class, since they were both conveyors of mass murders. Those who believed they were each other's enemy were thus twins.<sup>1</sup> However, the crushing defeat of the Third Reich by the

USSR and especially by the Allies concealed this terrible truth for a long time. The Cold War and the victory of the Free World over Communism in 1989 contributed a bit more to masking that convergence. Another illusion then arose, which would have had Russia following the way of the West, with the major differences born of the monstrous communist interlude being smoothed over with time.

But the war in Ukraine and Putin's despotism, which stifles all opposition, muzzles the press, rehabilitates Stalin in the name of the Great Patriotic War, and has opponents murdered, shows the "Russian democracy" to be a farce. There again Vassili Grossman understood one of the laws of the Russian empire: while the history of the West is one of a progressive expansion of freedom, Russian history tells the opposite story, that of the progressive expansion of servitude: "For a thousand years, progress and slavery have been linked to each other in Russia." There we have it! Already in 1839, the Marquis de Custine, who is to Russia what Tocqueville is to the United States, wrote: "Russians rich or poor are drunk with servitude." After over twenty years of prevarication, Vladimir Putin and his team of oligarchs, wild-eyed visionaries, and ideologues, eager for revenge against Europe and the West, launched the war in Ukraine, certain that they would crush Zelensky and his coterie of "Nazis" regime in a matter of days. The military setbacks suffered by his great army and the awakening of Europe and the United States also prove that despotism's only future is in the slumber of democracies. We overestimated the power of the former Red Army and underestimated the deep state

of barbarism in which the eternal Russia dwells.

### **The European Denial**

Things had gotten off to a bad start. Up until February 24, 2022, diplomatic services, as well as Zelensky himself, did their utmost to minimize the Russian menace. Only the British and American intelligence services kept warning of an imminent invasion and evacuated their embassies beginning on January 25. But having been burned by the lies about the much-ballyhooed arms of mass destruction that Saddam Hussein supposedly had before the Second Gulf War, Western capitals were not overly concerned by this information, assimilated to hysteria (the head of France's military intelligence has himself since been fired). And the tensions having arisen from Brexit did not make it possible for continental powers to grant the least importance to the British intelligence services, which had been very alert ever since the attempted poisoning of former Russian agent Serguei Skripal in Salisbury in 2018. According to the experts, this war was unthinkable, contrary to Moscow's interests: therefore, it was neither thought through, nor even imagined. Especially since countless politicians in France as in Germany had taken a salaried role on the administrative boards of major Russian companies: such was the case for former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who joined Gazprom's oversight council, and for former French Prime Minister François Fillon (who has since resigned from all of his positions with Russian companies). Moscow had very skillfully bought off or attempted to buy off

part of Europe's elites in the worlds of business, the media, and the intelligentsia.

Angela Merkel, though lucid as to the nature of Putin's political regime, nevertheless managed to commit a major mistake in tying Germany's energy future to that of Russian gas. That was a case of ideological foolishness stemming from the German Greens' aversion to nuclear energy following the Fukushima "catastrophe" (which nevertheless did not cause a single fatality if one looks solely at what occurred at the nuclear power plant). In France, President Macron, in spite of an intensive online campaign of denigration against him from Russian hackers at the time of his election in 2017, undertook shortly after that election the task of maintaining a strong line of communication with Vladimir Putin, despite the reticence of his partners in the European Union. Persuaded that it was necessary to reassure the boss of the Kremlin, the French President was therefore determined, and remained so even a few months before the outbreak of the war, to build a personal relationship with Putin, inviting him in August 2019 to the Brégançon fort, a vacation residence for French presidents on the Mediterranean coast. Taking note of the shabby state of NATO that he saw as being "brain dead," Macron turned toward Moscow in order to decrease France's dependence on Washington.

Totally preoccupied by the fight against the Islamic State and the tensions between Paris and Ankara, the European leaders (with the notable exception of François Hollande) did not react, or reacted very little to the twin annexations of the Donbass and Crimea in

2014, telling themselves that this was about lands that had always been Russian. They persisted in refusing to let Ukraine enter NATO in order to avoid provoking Putin's ire, an attitude that proved to be ill-considered, since in the end Putin went to war against Ukraine in February 2022. In spite of the ever more virulent cyber attacks, the increasingly aggressive proclamations of the Slavophiles close to the Kremlin and against the West, European heads of state refused to pay attention and offered outstretched hands to the Russian bear, certain that it was imperative to woo him over rather than isolate him.

Taking over from Angela Merkel, the new German Chancellor Olaf Scholz tried for a long time to maintain the project of the new gas pipeline Nordstream 2, against the advice of the Greens and the liberal democrats, who were more critical of Moscow. He would only suspend the notification procedure for Nordstream 2 on February 22, two days before the start of the war. As for Emmanuel Macron, he persisted in speaking with Putin, certain that there would be "no security for Europe if there is no security for Russia." The Kremlin boss, who did not deviate one iota from his strategy of aggression, was not to clasp Macron's outstretched hand, and would go on to lie shamelessly to the French President while insisting in public that he had told him the opposite. Russian media made fun of Macron by dubbing the art of blowing smoke, executing verbal minuets "macronite." Yet today Macron is the only president in office in Western Europe along with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz who makes phone calls to Putin for long monologues with no result. It almost gives

one the same impression as the conversations that SWAT teams undertake with maniacs holding hostages that they are threatening to kill, while negotiators try to cajole them with words of consolation. The fact remains that, coming from a French President who believes that his speech can work wonders even though everything points to the opposite conclusion, such fruitless verbal exchanges point less to a pragmatic approach than to a policy of continuity. When in May 2022 Emmanuel Macron expressed the desire not to see Russia humiliated, he drove this point home.

### **The European Fairy Tale**

Europe's error after 1945 was to have mistaken the exception for the rule, to have confused 70 years of peace with the perpetual course of events. Peace was only a parenthesis, and nothing allows us to foresee the gradual extinction of conflicts, which are neither climatic or economic, but indeed ideological. In its worst moments, Europe sought peace at any price, peace that confirms an established order of injustice and arbitrary rule, a peace with deadly consequences as we saw in the conflict in our continent in 2012 in the former Yugoslavia, in the form of a moral agent bearing a double-edged sword of praise and irony. We thought to have said it all in expressing our awe and wonder that France, Germany, and England no longer clash on the battlefield. A magnificent achievement, indeed, but one that simply amounts to a grandeur of absence. Europe is this territory that has banished armed conflicts, nationalisms, and borders from its mental perimeter, and only knows men of good will. This disappearance of a scourge is

nevertheless not the sign of the blossoming of something good. Prior to 2013, when French troops were sent to Mali, we no longer had any desire for war and left the task of waging it to others, all while constantly criticizing them when they went astray, as did the United States in its haste to intervene militarily. This was the paradox: with the exception of France and Great Britain who maintain respectable armies, we Europeans had delegated to the United States the responsibility of protecting us via NATO. Why did we still depend on our Yankee big brother for our defense, why had we laid our capacities for action at the feet of our allies? Up until recently, the soldier was an archaic figure scarcely tolerated in our lands except in the form of a toy, while we favored medics, doctors, and rescuers using softer methods. This refusal of armed conflict is directly linked to the development of individualism and the decline of nationalism. The present-day individualist, at least in Europe, does not want to be dispossessed of his death in the flare-up of a collective military conflict that neither government nor military command centers can control. To die for a country, an ideology, in other words for a principle higher than my own private existence, seemed inconceivable in a hedonistic society whose message is the love of life and self-fulfillment.

Everything changed in France with the terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2016: what had seemed impossible was dictated by the course of events. Though terrorism frightens us, it awakens our spirit of resistance. It unwittingly restituted the living flesh and fervor of the old European nations, and restored the value of patriotism and our way

of life. It even made it possible to display the French flag in our windows, which shocked the medievalist Patrick Boucheron, the stern moral judge of a France that was proud of itself.<sup>2</sup> These mass murders remade soldiers and police into positive heroes serving their community, wiping out the humiliating defeat of 1940 and the colonial wars: the number of those applying to the professional army, the corps of gendarmes, and the police testify to that change of image. The vocabulary of all-out war became part of everyday life: we no longer speak of killing, but of “neutralizing” jihadists, and that element of neutrality is in itself symptomatic. We are indifferent to death of the terrorist, even rejoicing in it, and French President François Hollande admitted to have ordered targeted assassinations in Iraq and Syria carried out by the DGSE (Direction générale de la Sécurité extérieure, General Directorate for External Security) without provoking any particular outcry.<sup>3</sup> “No mercy for those who threaten France,” exclaimed Hollande, speaking in the presence of the leaders of the military command in 2015. Since death was everywhere on the prowl, in our cities, streets, train stations, schools, airports, and places of worship, there could be only one response to the emissaries of the green plague: a sharp rejoinder and a cool head. In spite of the terrorist attacks, life went on, even stronger than before. Barbarity kills but does not shatter. However, our intransigence in the face of jihadism afforded a strange indulgence to Putin’s Russia, seemingly pardoning everything since the second war in Chechnya.

Modern military glory is no longer that exalted by Alfred de Vigny or Alfred de

Musset, who explained that all children after the death of Napoleon “were drops of a burning blood that had inundated the earth; they had been born in midst of war, for war. They had for fifteen years dreamed of the snows of Moscow and the sun of the pyramids; they had like young swords been soaked in the indifference to life.”<sup>4</sup> We find a present-day echo of such thought in the reflections of the late General Qassem Soleimani, leader of the legendary Quds Force in Iran who was killed on January 3, 2020 by an American drone strike. For him, “The battlefield is humanity’s lost paradise. The paradise where virtue and the acts of man are the most elevated.” Our armies have to deal first of all with the transnational networks whose methods they use in order to thwart them: special operations, deliberate disinformation, increasingly virtual combat, programmed eliminations involving ruse more than force.<sup>5</sup> The career of modern arms blends the drive to serve, the taste for adventure, but also knowledge of the horror ever since the two world wars of the twentieth century. The modern soldier is a shackled hero who must control his emotions and make a measured use of force. The awareness of past abominations refrains bellicose urges, even in the United States, which over the past 20 years has gone astray in countless engagements. The Bush Administration’s compulsive interventionism in early years of the twenty-first century, though not without paternalism and perverse effects, nevertheless does not invalidate the necessity of interference when there is no other solution. The intelligence of modern armies is not to start wars but to avoid them or make them shorter, to strike

and leave as quick as possible, leaving the path open to diplomats and politicians. But the conflict in Ukraine seems to have resuscitated all forms of modern warfare used on the European continent over the last one hundred years, from urban guerilla fighting to trenches not to mention the scorched earth approach, massive bombardments and the total destruction of urban centers. What has been happening in Ukraine since February 2022 is a great recapitulation of the horror of the twentieth century.

It is in armed struggle that a people reveals itself or disappears. Ukraine proved that it was a true nation whose birth was delivered by the forceps of an aggression that intended to wipe it off the map. The divorce from Russia, including Ukrainians who are Russian speakers, is irremediable. The conjunction of threats has the potential to destroy Europe but also to force it to take its destiny in hand and constitute a military force worthy of the name. Peace is indeed the entire set of forces that resist war all while preparing for it. But one cannot expect a hostile power to restore our cohesion and enthusiasm with a simple drumroll. Like Joe Biden’s America, European countries find themselves in a strange position: they are arming Ukraine, but not too much, for fear of being dragged into a conflict with incalculable consequences. They give Zelensky’s troops enough canons and munitions to hold up to the Russian army but not enough to push it back behind its borders. The future will tell if this was the right strategy.

### **Democracies: awakening or collapse?**

The promptness of Europe's reaction the day after February 24, 2022 nevertheless constituted a divine surprise. We were expecting a new Munich, we had almost a collective Churchill. Germany's about-face in spite of strong internal resistance was by far the most astounding. In recreating an army, our neighbor is probably going to abandon the metaphysical malediction that has heavily burdened it ever since 1945, forbidding it to commit itself to a military vocation. It took the blindness of Vladimir Putin for this miracle to happen, this stupefying historical event, Europe united like a single man. And this miracle is embodied in a little Jewish clown, who has become the De Gaulle of the Old World: Volodymyr Zelensky, a Russian speaker, part of whose family died in Nazi camps and whose life is threatened every day by the Kremlin's killers. For us who retain the vivid memory of the Occupation, the Ukrainian resistance at Kharkiv in February 2022 will remain in History like the Russian Pearl Harbor that tried to intimidate democracies and on the contrary awakened them. Putin like Milosevic in Serbia before him, practices rhetorical inversion, presenting executioners as victims and victims as executioners. Present-day fascism is anti-fascist in its semantics, vertiginous in its hoax. If Hitler returned, he would rally under the banner of anti-Nazism in order to impose his ideas for genocide. In order to gauge the enormity of what we are experiencing, we have to remember that present-day Europe did not originate out of a collective oath as did the United States: all is possible. Europe originated from another oath: never again.

No more destructions of cities, mass massacres, ethnic cleansings. But this negative wisdom is only valid for us, and European democracy has for a long time evoked this convalescence that in the past excessively turbulent peoples imposed upon themselves after having lost their taste for battles. Having fallen asleep due to half a century of security, we told ourselves a fairy tale until the terrorist attacks of September 11 suddenly put an end to our slumber. We had taken the post-1945 peace for the norm instead of seeing it like a long exception. The parenthesis is closed. The awakening is belated but exciting.

For too long, Europe had ceased to believe in evil, except that of its own past: it only knew misunderstandings, to be resolved by concertation. It thought of itself as the universal and apostolic depository of barbarism: it alone had committed crimes and had to answer for them, tirelessly. History was this nightmare out of which we had emerged with great difficulty, the first time in 1945, a second time after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We were insulating ourselves against this poison by means of rules, norms, procedures, presenting ourselves as a model of reason that all the continents should follow. After 1989, Western Europe entered with fervor into the era of "post": post-history, post-national, post-religious. Nations were an archaic form of bringing together individuals, borders were to disappear and religions dissolve like forms of superstition. The combined forces of the market and liberal democracy were to ensure peace, prosperity, and security. Such was the erroneous thesis of Francis Fukuyama. The disavowal was brutal: on the one hand,

millions of men proved themselves ready to die for their God or their country, while on the other hand, even in Europe, a popular movement was crying out loud and strong that peoples did not want to become extinct, that borders should protect before separating, that identity was not simply a matter of nostalgia but a fundamental concern.

That is the great lesson of Ukraine, which wants at the same time to exist as a free nation and to be integrated into the European Union in order not to fall under the control of its big Muscovite brother. As for Russia, it failed its emergence from communism because of the misdeeds of its elites, and is proving to be stubbornly resistant to democracy. It is not and perhaps never will be European. The legitimate critique of communism concealed from us the absolutist nature of the old Muscovite empire. We can legitimately hope that the date of February 24 may be the occasion of a veritable turning point for European nations: Moscow's series of provocations against Scandinavia, France, the United States, Great Britain, and the first invasion of Ukraine in 2014 along with the annexation of Crimea and the insurrection of the separatist republics of the Donbass region had not sufficed to open our eyes. For twenty years now, the Kremlin has been declaring its open hostility to the West, but our heads of state have continued to stretch out their hands and treat Russia like a somewhat touchy partner. Such blindness lasted for a long time, encouraged by America's discretion, George Bush's naive belief "to have read in the soul" of Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama's "reset," and the blatant complicity of Donald Trump, who found his own predatory narcissism in his Russian colleague.

At the outset of 2022, we found ourselves doing an about-face. The Kabul debacle of August – September 2021 had given a terrible lesson: Uncle Sam was no longer willing to fight even when he had military superiority. The terrible scenes at the Kabul airport, the criminal character of the backward Taliban gave us to believe that the United States had given up on defending its allies. The isolationism inaugurated by Barack Obama, and proclaimed long and loud by Donald Trump, was continuing under Joe Biden: stumbling over his words, this tired president might have for a time recalled Roosevelt, suffering illness at Yalta, facing Stalin and giving over too many territories. Putin was just going to eat his lunch. The war-mongers had become pacifists. Up until then, America mobilized its armed forces recklessly, favoring an all-out interventionism in Afghanistan and Iraq, with well-known calamitous results. The swaggering giant United States had for twenty years been paying a steep price for its simplistically pious dream of being the messianic nation, the naïve belief that all which was good for them was good for the planet. The sheriff was henceforth nowhere to be found. At the end of this month of February 2022, we were tormented by the question of whether NATO was still a life insurance policy for the peoples that it was supposed to protect or an outdated brand only suited to frighten birds and children.

There again the American reversal was surprising. Far from lying down, even though it had offered to exfiltrate Volodymyr Zelensky from Ukraine at the outset of the war, America stood up and, in view of the Ukraine's battlefield successes, massively



aided its army. For contrary to the deliberate lies about Iraq in 2002, the American intelligence services had from January on succeeded in delivering accurate information about Russia's intention to attack. A new coalition was formed, grouping together the Eastern European countries of Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Moldavia, the Baltic states, Great Britain, and the United States facing a more timorous Western Europe represented by the Franco-German team, overly concerned with trying to keep everyone happy. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's retractions, Angela Merkel's refusal to apologize for her policies toward the Russian big brother did not bode well for the future. As for Emmanuel Macron, who keeps on making a number of contradictory declarations in his own perfected manner of trying to straddle the fence, it is difficult to predict what he will or will not do, since he seems to be flying by the seat of his pants, incapable of setting a firm course. As we have seen, one day he states that Russia should not be "humiliated," and the next he affirms his desire to see Ukraine victorious. Understand if you can. He will in any case fail to convince or even shake the determination of Vladimir Putin, who seems impervious to Macron's rhetoric, giving little or no importance to his conversations with the French President.

### **Respecting one's enemy**

Vladimir Putin began his career as a low-level KGB agent in Leipzig: he experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall as a traumatic event, looking wide-eyed at the crowds booing communism and the Soviet Union. It is a mistake to describe him as a pro-

European driven by our errors to embracing the Chinese. Prince Otto of Hapsburg, who knew him in the 1990s, makes a parallel between the career of Hitler and that of the future leader of the Kremlin, whom he characterizes as "an enraged and very dangerous civil servant." Putin wants to punish Europe for having brought about the downfall of the USSR, to his mind the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century. He is a consummate actor, who took in a number of diplomats and intellectuals by serving up the discourse they wanted to hear, even going so far as to quote Immanuel Kant when he slammed the West in the presence of Asians! His attitude changed radically after the intervention in Kosovo and the "color revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine, which he saw as an encirclement and even a Western plot. Ever since, he has constantly condemned our moral decadence: all the evils that Russia suffers from supposedly come not from the twofold despotic heritage of czarism and communism, but from Europe's corruptive influence and the satanical NATO. What the boss of the Kremlin dreads in the West as a symbol of liberty and critical reflection is above all the contagion of democracy and the exportation of a new Maidan into Russia itself.

From his stint in the KGB, Putin has retained one of the Soviet system's foundational principles: the strategy of making sausage, cutting things into slices before swallowing them up, as he does with the countries that he intends to reconquer, as in the case of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the Donbass region in Ukraine in 2014, Transnistria in Moldavia, and

tomorrow, perhaps, if we let him, the Suwalki corridor linking Belarus and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad on the border of Poland and Lithuania. All for the sake of the well-known adage: “What is mine is mine, what is yours is always negotiable. His aggressivity explains why all the perimeter countries have requested membership in NATO: no country can live in security on the present borders of Russia unless it becomes a doormat. Even the very pacifist-leaning Finland and Sweden have applied for NATO membership! The skill with which Putin has divided a number of EU countries and funded souverainist parties proves that his goal is indeed to avenge the affront of 1989. “Russia’s borders have no limit,” he quipped on November 24, 2016. The countless threats thrown at us, the interference in the French and American elections, the numerous cyberwars launched by his services have confirmed that ambition. On August 29, 2014, he confided to then-President of the European Commission Emmanuel Barroso in Brussels, who leaked the story: “If I want, I can be in Kiev in two weeks.” Everything had been stated and announced long ago.

The relentlessly vengeful Putin enjoys a surprising popularity here. The authoritarianism of the black belt in judo fascinates the weak: he likes to parade about barechested on horseback, to pilot a bomber, and to play all sorts of sports. His display of such hypervirility explains why the Muscovite Rambo enjoys the status of a cult figure on the extreme right as well as on the extreme left, both prostrate before this alpha male, now ailing according to rumors of his soon to come demise, unless he is taken out by his inner circle in the old Soviet way of

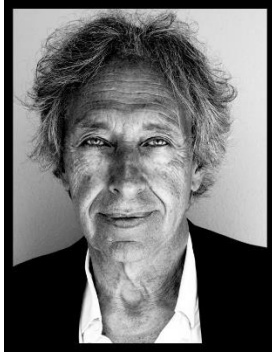
doing things. Being completely paranoid, however, he has surrounded himself with a praetorian guard of 30,000 men who are going to make it more difficult to eliminate him (unless they are led to turn against him by a more generous patron). The entry of killer president Kadyrov’s Chechen militias and their departure for battle with the cries of Allahu Akbar send shivers down the spine. Putin is deploying every resource of terror in order to crush the Ukrainians and intimidate us. We must continue to speak to him all while putting a loaded pistol to his head. In the person of Putin, we find hypochondria meeting with paranoia, the fear of illness tied to the venom of rancor. But he is less a madman than a fanatic, persuaded that the Russian nation is messianic. In a way, he has already lost: he has bonded Ukraine to Europe and reestablished the legitimacy of NATO. He is all the more dangerous because he is failing and can drag us into a sacrificial chaos. This great grandson of Hitler and Stalin mixes an aggressive imperialist doctrine with a veritable religious eschatology linked to Russian Orthodoxy. Did he not say in the manner of a jihadi leader in Sochi in 2018 that he was ready to die in a nuclear confrontation: “We will go to paradise as martyrs.”

In every conflict, it is necessary to distinguish the main enemy from the secondary one. Putin is now more dangerous than Erdogan, Daesh, or Al Qaida, who nevertheless remain real threats. The position of Turkey is interesting: an ally of Moscow in Libya, obsessed by the Rojava Kurds that it wants to wipe out, tormented by the hatred of Armenians, Greeks, and Christians in general, which it persecutes, supplying arms

to jihadist militias in sub-Saharan Africa, Syria, and Libya, it nevertheless condemned the annexation of Crimea, delivered drones to Kiev, and closed the Bosphorus straits to Russian ships. But it is blocking the membership of Sweden and Finland in NATO and supports Moscow in a number of matters. In particular, Turkey shares Putin's hatred of Europe, which contributed to the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire in 1922. Erdogan still dreams of reconstituting that empire, keeping the northern part of Cyprus, and reestablishing the Caliphate over the Sunnite world. Let's take advantage of that rivalry to put a dent in the relations between Ankara and Moscow, and let's persuade the Chinese, as pragmatic as they are cynical, not to ally with a leader who has gone wildly

astray at the head of a country heading soon for ruin. There is a race underway between massive arms deliveries to the Ukrainians and the progression of the occupation troops. We have to take Putin at his word when he threatens us with nuclear war. Our first duty with respect to an enemy is to respect him: Putin says what he will do and does what he says. Putin's writings and speeches should be required reading in all of the West's diplomatic services and schools of war. In order to understand this era, it will be necessary to awaken the great anti-fascist memory of the Second World War and the anti-totalitarian memory of the Cold War. Putin's Russia has to lose this war: it's a matter of civilization.

## **Pascal Bruckner**



Pascal Bruckner is a French philosopher and novelist, one of the "New Philosophers" who came to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. Much of his work has been devoted to critiques of French society and culture. He has about 30 books published and translated in 30 countries. Bruckner is a Professor at Sciences Po (Paris) for twenty years and a visiting Professor in NYU, SDSU, and Texas A&M.

*Disclaimer*

*The views and opinions of the Scowcroft Papers do not represent the official views, opinions, or endorsement of Texas A&M University, the Bush School of Government & Public Service, or the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs.*

## **The Bush School of Government and Public Service**

*Frank B. Ashley III, Acting Dean*

The Bush School of Government & Public Service opened its doors on the Texas A&M University campus in 1997. The university's service and leadership ideals reflect those of our namesake, George H.W. Bush, whose philosophy that "public service is a noble calling" is a guiding force in our curriculum, research and student experience. In January 2021, the Bush School launched its Washington, D.C. teaching site to draw upon the wealth of resources in the nation's capital. Additionally, the Bush School's online certificate and degree programs offer the convenience of global access with the valuable connection and networking of in-person residency weeks. As a leading international affairs, political science, and public affairs institution, the Bush School prepares students to become principled leaders in their fields and to reflect the value of public service throughout their careers.

## **Texas A&M University**

*Mark A. Welsh III, Interim President and Holder of the Edward & Howard Kruse Endowed Chair*

Texas A&M University is a community of scholars dedicated to solving diverse, real-world problems through determination, innovation, and above all, fearlessness. Texas A&M opened its doors in 1876 as the state's first public institution of higher education and is today a tier-one research institution holding the elite triple land-, sea- and space-grant designations. Research conducted at Texas A&M represented annual expenditures of almost \$1 billion in fiscal year 2021. Texas A&M's 73,000 students and half a million former students are known for their commitment to service, as well as dedication to the university's core values and rich traditions.

## **The Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs**

*Andrew S. Natsios, Director and E. Richard Schendel Distinguished Professor of the Practice*

The Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs is a research institute housed in the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. The Institute is named in honor of the late Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.), who had a long and distinguished career in public service serving as National Security Advisor for Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush. The Institute's core mission is to foster and disseminate policy-oriented research on international affairs by supporting faculty and student research, hosting international speakers and major scholarly conferences, and providing grants to researchers to use the holdings of the Bush Library.

*"We live in an era of tremendous global change. Policy makers will confront unfamiliar challenges, new opportunities, and difficult choices in the years ahead I look forward to the Scowcroft Institute supporting policy-relevant research that will contribute to our understanding of these changes, illuminating their implications for our national interest, and fostering lively exchanges about how the United States can help shape a world that best serves our interests and reflects our values."*

– Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.)

**NOTES**

1. Vassili Grossman, *Vie et destin*. Preface by Efim Etkind (Lausanne: L'âge d'homme, 1980).
2. Patrick Boucheron, ed., *Histoire mondiale de la France* (Paris: Seuil, 2017).
3. Gerard Davet, Fabrice Lhomme, *Un président ne devrait pas dire ça: Les secrets d'un quinquennat* (Paris: Stock, Octobre 2016).
4. Musset, *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle* [1836] (Paris: Seuil, Ecole des Lettres, 1992), 12-13.
5. See Jean-Vincent Holeindre, *La ruse et la force, une autre histoire de la stratégie* (Paris: Perrin, 2017).