

ZELENSKY'S ZAUBERER ZONE: QUO VADIS, UKRAÏNA?

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Once again a major question of international affairs fell on Germany to decide. After the [denegation of overflight rights](#), [prohibiting the use of weapons](#) systems containing German-supplied components, and [turning down a meeting](#) with the White House in DC (which Berlin subsequently accepted), it is safe to say the *status quo ante* remains extant for Germany's governing class where NATO is concerned. Seven years after the Obama administration delivered the NATO Wales summit commitment for the member states to spend no less than 2% of GDP on defense, Germany remains the biggest laggard in bringing to bear the full weight of its mighty economy for Allied priorities. Scholz's [recent promise](#) to bump up spending is a welcome development, but being ready for this moment would have been better—and given years of broken promises on this same subject, no shortage of reasons for the subject to remain sore.

The Ukraine, on the other hand, would *love* to be in NATO; [they said so themselves](#). The sticking point—a “Russian veto”—has already been applied not only De Jure but on the De Facto grounds of the [Cypriot Precedent](#): A candidate country mustn't have ongoing territorial conflicts (Sorry, Georgia, having a border with Russia is a hard lot). Let's hope our rules-loving Kantian friends have considered the possibility of a Belarusian veto on the Ukraine. Dare one invoke a Polish veto on Belarusian membership? One does pray a Finnish veto on Russian membership may yet be stilled.

[Developments in the nuclear domain](#), a more proximate cause of this back-and-forth, are welcome: Intermediate-range Nuclear weapons (IRBMs), the sort that the defunct INF treaty covered, combined with the hypersonic sleeve of recent vintage, deliver a new strategic situation wherever the feared THAAD (USA) and S-400 (Russia) air defense systems are deployed. Nuking a sky full of hostile warheads was always the best Moscow could come up with to counter Reagan's “star wars.” A new INF treaty seemed inevitable, given the implications of the reduction of the nuclear response window to less than 10 minutes, to say nothing of the potential ballistic missile defense possibilities given hypersonic IRBMs in range of hostile nuclear delivery systems. As ever these developments augur more advances in spaceflight, it is safe to assume (and necessary to consider in strategic scenarios) that every advantage they provide will be brought to bear. If [North Korea got them so quickly](#), they can't be that hard to make.

Will Germany really deny any country the means to repel active nuclear aggression? Perhaps they should specialize in SAM battery manufacturing. But in the spirit of a recently uttered French argument ([Britain's economy should be less attractive to migrants](#)) perhaps it is time to persuade Berlin to be less invadable. If America sank into the sea tomorrow and the law of the jungle returned to International

Relations, Germany's rich, technologically advanced, and militarily weak state would be one of the ripest plums for the picking by whichever barbarians decided to do so. But Germany insists on toxically holding America's will live against it. Very sad!

The specter of Finlandization has often been summoned into the Ukrainian conversation, always with a negative declination. This attitude betrays the heroism behind Finnish independence, when most of "Eastern" Europe and the Baltics were absorbed into the Soviet empire after Lenin's takeover of the Czar's security state and Stalin's creation of facts on the ground during the Great Patriotic War (WWII). Finland won its war against Communist imperialism by force of arms and maintained its independence in an extremely sticky situation (having a border with Russia is not something you volunteer for). Finland hasn't joined NATO yet because it hasn't *needed* to—it provides for its own defense (Germany, please take notes). Berlin's "encirclement by friends" allows it to treat nations like Poland as buffer states for its own security, making everyone regret having allowed their reunification—we could have had a second Poland, inoculated against both Nazi and Soviet excesses by the long martyrdom of its people and their freedoms under both regimes.

As part of his justification for invasion, a highlight of Moscow's propaganda was a live speech by President Putin where he [surprisingly denounced](#) (as communists, no less) Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev in terms general and with specific regard to their records on the Ukraine. Insofar as "Self-Determination of People's" was a rhetorical backbone of the post-1917 revolutions, we see here a slow-motion repeat of Hungary's 1956 uprising—Kiev turned away from Moscow in 2014 and the tanks have rolled in, dropping any pretense. The Spanish civil war tie in—international brigades come to the aid of both Stalinism and Franco's Fascist *Falange*—put us in context. In the end, [Kissinger's position](#)—Finlandization is the best Kiev can hope for—will remain the realist's default.

And so we come to the Kabbalah which Prime Minister Zelensky—[Tarot's Jester](#) risen to Emperor, as he must in our times—has to perform for his people. The only Jewish Head of Government outside of Israel, Zelensky must find the *Zauberer* (that's German for Magician) within him to repeat the Finnish feat of the Winter War. Though most analysis considers all Russian intervention in the Ukraine (and places like [Transnistria](#)) as co-terminous, important distinctions must be drawn: Moscow had not claimed the Donbass as its own territory (the way it has with Crimea) and the forces it backs remain "little green men," in that no state claims them. No less than the pacification Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics," restoring Kiev's sovereignty (read: Monopoly of Force) over its own territory, is necessary precondition to its ambition of joining NATO—it is the assertion of its statehood analogous to Finland's

own victory which Kiev requires to win the day.

Should *Zauberer* Zelensky manage to cast Kiev's spell over the now-occupied Zones once again, the wind would be at his back. Whataboutism unfairly equating Moscow and Kiev will be quieted by the most certain guarantee of Good Government: true love for the people one is responsible for, which Putin has definitively renounced by resorting to force. The inhabitants of the areas currently ruled by the sort of rent-extractive, barbarous warlords Moscow backs have always deserved better. At that point, the Ukraine may well remain "Finlandized," or it could trade victory on the battlefield—facts on the ground—for Moscow's veto-abstention on Kiev's EU and NATO memberships. With a bit of the Jester's special Providence, Kiev might even carry the day for Helsinki and Stockholm to join as well.

It is too early to predict what new realities can be summoned into existence—first, these political questions must be settled by transmuting them into reality through other means than the *Logos*. To ascend fully into his role of *Zauberer*, Zelensky must get into the Zone—And stay there.

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[Featured image](#): "Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine," by Garyck Arntzen, 2021.

