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FALK AUDITORIUM  
THE TWO WORLD WARS, GENOCIDE, AND THE UKRAINE WAR  
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INTRODUCTION:

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FEATURED SPEAKER:

ANNETTE BECKER  
Professor, Paris Ovest Nanterre La Défense  
Senior Member, Institut Universitaire de France

DISCUSSANTS:

MODERATOR: TARA VARMA  
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OMER BARTOV  
Samuel Pisar Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Brown University

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**SUZANNE MALONEY:** Good afternoon to all those of you who are joining us here at Brookings in our Falk Auditorium, and hello to those of you who are joining us virtually from around the world. I'm Suzanne

Maloney, the vice president of Foreign Policy here at Brookings. I'd like to welcome you today to our 18<sup>th</sup> annual Raymond Aron Lecture. The Aron lecture series brings together leading French and American scholars for critical dialogue on Europe and the trans-Atlantic relationship. I'm particularly looking forward to this afternoon's discussion with our distinguished speakers, and I'd especially like to thank the French Foreign Ministry, the French embassy here in Washington D.C. for their continued support of this lecture series, and for their abiding respect for the independence of our scholarship here at Brookings. [Inaudible] The Deputy Chief of Mission Aurélie Bonal is here with us today. Thank you for joining us, and I look forward to hearing from you in just a few moments.

This year's Aron lecture is focused on two world wars, genocide, and the war in Ukraine. Over 15 months ago, Russia launched a full-scale invasion on a sovereign neighbor that has devastated millions of Ukrainians' lives and resulted in major global consequences. Since the beginning of the war, the atrocities committed by the Russian army have sparked accusations of war crimes. And in March, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children. Some voices are going further than this, saying that a genocide is being perpetrated by Russian forces with Putin seeking to inflict terror and destroy any remnants of Ukrainian culture and society. This conflict may be the most significant challenge to the international legal order since World War Two and marks the return of war to the European continent. Looking back to history and how the trauma of genocide and of two world wars has shaped the subsequent European and international order is crucial to prepare for our common future.

I'm delighted to welcome our keynote speaker here today who will offer her expertise on these issues. Professor Annette Becker. Professor Becker is a French war historian and expert in genocide studies and the two world wars. She's a professor of contemporary history at Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. Her research focuses on the wars and genocides of the 20th and 21st centuries, their memories and their omissions. She also works on artists, writers and intellectuals in the time of war, and on history museums where violence and war crime narratives are depicted and sometimes instrumentalized by memorial tourism. Professor Becker is one of the founders of the Museum of the Great War in the north of France and of the historic route of the memorial of the Shoah in Paris. She's an administrator of the national museum, Les Invalides, in Paris, and her latest books include 14 to 18 Understanding the Great War and Messengers of Disaster.

Following Professor Becker's address, she will be joined by Omer Bartov, the Samuel P. Hays professor of Holocaust and Genocide studies at Brown University, who will respond to her remarks. They will be joined by my colleague Tara Varma, who is a visiting fellow in the Brookings Center on the United States in Europe for a brief, moderated conversation, and many thanks to my team here on foreign policy and especially in the center on the United States and Europe for the work that has brought this event to life. After the conversation, among the panel will open. The floor to questions from the audience online and in the room. Microphones will be passed around the room here at Falk Auditorium for any questions from individuals here. And for those who are online, please submit your questions by email to [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu). A final reminder that we're streaming live, and if you're using social media, you can share this event by using the hashtag [Aron lecture](#). I'd like to now offer the deputy chief of mission, Aurélie Bonal, an opportunity to come to the stage and to deliver some opening remarks.

**AURÉLIE BONAL:** Hello. Thank you very much, Suzanne. Good afternoon, friends and colleagues. I am delighted to introduce this, your 18th Raymond Aron lecture organized and hosted by the Brookings Institution. As you know, France and all of us at the embassy attach great importance to this annual event. This lecture offers a unique opportunity to exchange views on issues that are at the forefront of world affairs and to promote the sharing of ideas and French-American friendship. I would therefore like to warmly thank the Brookings Institution and all those who helped to organize this discussion with a special word of appreciation to Tara Amo coordinated today's event. This lectures are more than a symbol of the friendship and an honor for the French speakers who've taken part in them. Actually, two of them are, two of them are now government ministers. So says something about about the Brookings. As you said, Suzanne, we have a long standing relationship with the Brookings, and Tara is an embodiment of this relationship. And I'm thrilled that this is continuing.

While Raymond Aron was a philosopher, sociologist, political scientist and journalist. It is his work as a historian that we are focusing on today, and I would therefore like to give a special welcome to, as you did a special welcome to our two speakers. Dr. Annette Becker, distinguished professor at Paris Ovest Nanterre La Défense and senior member of the Institut Universitaire de France. And of course, and to Dr. Omer Bartov, who is a Samuel P. Hays professor of Holocaust and genocide studies at Brown University. Thank you so much for joining us today. We are really fortunate to have you here as you are both world renowned academic authorities who have earned great admiration for your work on the two world wars, genocide and more broadly, the importance of memory. I'll just say a few words on your respective careers, but I want to have a look, because, Suzanne, you already did it. Professor Becker. Actually, I learned that you once taught at the hospital in New York, and you've been teaching at the university level since the late 1980s, and you've been a visiting scholar at numerous universities, including Princeton and the Institute for Advanced Studies, Yale, Berkeley and Rutgers. You have written extensively on the two world wars and the extreme violence they fueled with an emphasis on military occupations and genocides. Your research also has focused on humanitarian politics, trauma and memory, particularly among intellectuals and artists. And your biography of Guillaume Apollinaire earns you the de la Sorbonne. You have yet to hear from the Académie Française. And I really love Apollinaire for you, and I can. There's a connection there. Professor Bartov, you were a junior fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows, a visiting scholar at Princeton University's David Center for Historical Studies, and the whole Wallenberg professor at Human Rights at Rutgers University's University Center for the Study of Human Rights. Before joining Brown University, where you have taught Holocaust and gender genocide studies since the year 2000. Before, you were a leading expert on genocide and the political role of the Vermont during World War Two. And I've also heard more than ten books. The most recent one, *The Butterfly on the AX*, was published this year, and it is set in Ukraine and addresses the vital need to learn the stories of those who were murdered during the Holocaust without leaving any documentary trace. Professor Becker, almost 16 months after Russia's illegal and horrific invasion of Ukraine, you will examine the connections between this new war in Europe and the two world wars. In other words, it is history and its inexorable influence on present day events that we are going to be discussing today. Every day we all receive masses of information on the latest developments in Ukraine, images of war and destruction, testimonies from displaced civilians, and accounts from soldiers who are fighting to defend their territory. It is very important to be aware of these realities and equally essential to put them into historical perspective. History not only helps us to understand a war's root causes, but to anticipate its various possible outcomes. I want to wrap up this brief introduction with a quote by Vermeulen, which I think is quite appropriate to our conversation today. [Speaking French] it is men who write history, but they are unaware of the history they're writing. Without further ado, please give a warm welcome. To Professor Annette Becker. Thank you very much.

**ANNETTE BECKER:** Thanks so much to both of you for this very, very nice introduction. Thanks to the Brookings in general for the invitation. Thanks to Omer Bartov to have accepted to be my respondent. And thanks to Raymond Aron, who I knew as a teenager, and to Fritz Stern, who was a great friend and who is very missing. He would be great to explain the situation. I begin also by a quote by Raymond Aron that you have here. "The history of mankind tramples the corpses of cultures as well as those of men. Where is it going? The facts of tomorrow will be ever justifying the sufferings of those who fell in the way. Again, no one can answer."

On March 15, 2022, three weeks after the Russian aggression of Ukraine, the great Ukrainian writer Andrey Kurkov wrote in his diary of invasion about the strata of war. I quote him: "All along my life, war has never been very far." His grandfather was killed by the Nazis near Kharkiv, buried in a mass grave, quote, "Somewhere above his grave, Russian soldiers kill Ukrainians." It doesn't say Ukrainian soldiers, but Ukrainians. Civilians have been immediately targets in the invaded territory at the point he said a few days later. "All this begins to give the impression of a genocidal will."

War, hate, cruelty, invasion, occupation, crime of aggression, crime against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, imperialism, reprisals, mass graves, ethnic cleansing, war, cultural propaganda, fake news, bombardment, camouflage, trenches, front, fear, refugees, rape, denial; a semiotic of war has been back, which looks like a reenactment of the entire 20th and 21st centuries from 1914 to 2014, one century since the beginning of the First World War, to the war of occupation of Donbas in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Russians against the independent state at the border since 1991. Ukraine,

what Timothy Snyder has rightly called “bloodlands” as circle blood for much longer than the thirties and forties he wrote about. And it goes on till this minute. So we have to replace this war in the long century: First World War in 1917, civil war and huge pogroms; thirties, Holodomor and Great Terror, the Second World War and Holocaust; and 2014 and the “special operation” of 2023.

How would the world war wars and the genocides which we are part of them, show analogies with the present war and are used by the propaganda? In the same time, we should be aware that if the past finds its roots in very long strands of events and memories, this history is taking place today in the present time and analogy should be used to understand, not to give eternal truths. Marc Bloch, my personal hero, historian, combatant, assassinated by the Nazis as a resistance, wrote, “we think always too late.” Let's try not to and grounds a short time of this war. Six months, as you just said, in four days, in the long time of history, in the long time of living through bombings, missiles, winds, drones, violence, torture, crimes, genocides and now ecocide. We have to think about it in the long time of mature history. Take seriously the myth, the heroic figures which are built and unbuild. The truth and the lies. We should stand not only the speeches but the war strength. And this, because the Russians have put history at the heart of their war. A false history full of omissions and distortion. But the heart of their aggression will. As the French historian Nikola Versteeg, put it very well, he wrote a book called “Putin: Historian in Chief” and the Belgium historian Antoon De Baets speaks about crimes, about history. You have it here, Putin saying if history is any guide. So he puts history in the middle. But everything he says later is not true. And the best proof, he says that there are no plans to occupy Ukrainian territory, but it is what has been done two days after the speech. You can see it here in this very interesting painting by Vassili Neterensko, “We are Russians God with us,” which is exhibited now in Moscow, is a favorite painter of Putin. And you can see the soldier in the middle. You can see the religion aspect. I'm not going to do too much about it, but you can see the soldier in the middle with the Z on his uniform. Actually, the first light of Putin in this way of seeing history is to forget completely or nearly completely about the beginning of the century. It's like if this story was beginning somewhere in the Second World War, during the Patriotic War, but there was something before. And it is what I will begin by saying the First World War as a laboratory for total war. I think that the philosopher Lithuanian, then French Emmanuel Levinas, said it very well. You have it here. It spoke about the unrest which began in 1914 and never stopped. He points out that to understand well this century we have to go back to the past of the First World War and also to a world that really unites all this time the world of total war. Facts and statistics are needed on a now numerous scale to assess the war, but geography and statistics do not believe. We have to understand the blood and the tears by looking at the face of war on both the military and the home front. President Zelensky, when he came to France, compared the horror of battle and the strength of Ukraine to the Battle of Verdun. It was very good propaganda, but also good history, he had good counselors. The German generals, Hindenburg and Ludendorff coined in 1916 the term “battle of material” to describe the Battle of Verdun and the Somme. But the soldiers described it as devastation or butchery. But the general and the soldier were right. And it is true still today, at the moment I am speaking to you. Battles at the time became a series of sieges. Long lines of trenches like this one were extending so far that it was very difficult to break the enemy lines. The result was like in this painting of Paul Nash, that I like very much, “Void of War” 1918. No men in the work of Nash. How many were killed or wounded? How many were made prisoners of war? How many were declared missing or used sometimes as human shield? All these worlds belong also to today.

When you look at this photo on Instagram account by Ukrainian soldier in Bakhmut, you wonder if it is First World War or Ukraine today. A new front had just been added in 1917. The Belgian used the water to stop the German invasion and did harm their own country in order to stop the invasion. This time it is the Russians who tried to break the Ukrainian by the catastrophe of the dam of Kharkhova. Just a little parenthesis. It was done exactly the same by the Russian and Syrians in Euphrates. And so the modus operandi is obviously exactly the same.

This is also what is going on now. And then the camouflage tanks, which is now very important in Ukraine. I particularly like the one on the right because it's an old tank from the Second World War, which is Russian, which has been these disabled by the Ukrainians. The Germans took it to the Russian Embassy in Berlin. And it is like menacing the Russian. It is the war of propaganda going on. Again, you have the false tank, which is used now in Ukraine, which is the inflatable and the false cannons of 1915. It's unbelievable how the two wars can coincide this way, even with the new ways of doing war. So some rules apply, actually.

And again, Vasily Nesterenko, thanks to you, I've met this painter and it's really fascinating to see how he points to the this is a gas attack to show how the Russian were extremely courageous during the First World War. Suddenly it arrives. And the fact that it was on the battlefield of Ukraine at the time is not by accident. But, you know, the rest of the battlefield, it's actually the battlefield for civilians. The destructions, which affect civilians are the first during a total war. And I put together the destruction of Reims by a painter was how is it self was destroyed in front of Kherson under water. The other victims of the war is obviously the refugees, the refugees, which are actually the first victims of the war. And it's how we find out that the war was coming because the refugees were already there. And they are here in welcoming, if we can see in Venezia last year. It was the same during the First World War and during all the war was actually which was going on. So the specialty of the First World War was occupation for the first time in huge territory, there was occupation. And you have, *ici*, Otto Dix showing what happened to the civilians who are in their normal villages in 1917, in their normal towns, whose territory is now occupied. And it is at the time that the idea of crime of war was already a crime. The last thing I want to say about the First World War, we can think about it. Extreme nationalism, which was at stake. And there was during the First World War, for the first time, a huge bases like that, the internment of the enemy aliens. And it's till now, it's a big thing in Canada --I don't know if some Canadian are listening-- because huge community of Ukrainians was supposed to be enemy because Ukraine was a cut between Russia and Austria-Hungary. And the Austro-Hungarian were the enemy of the Canadian were in the British Empire, obviously. So there were internment camps, but they cannot do too many camps. So they were in the middle of mountains where it was impossible to live. It means at this point men were the main targets, who were at the fighting age and seen as potential spies. It was still reserved to the men. What is going on at the same time for Ukraine? I go back to the best historian, Putin, who speaks about it in a speech one day before. And there is a speech against the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the treaty which ends the war by the Bolsheviks. So it kills two birds with one stone. He speaks a little bit about the First World War, and it says that all is the fault of the Bolsheviks. So it will be finished for all the Bolshevik. The answer is really interesting. He goes on denying Ukraine, which is a Bolshevik invention, so it should not exist because the Bolsheviks are bad. And I love the fact that the nationalist Ukrainian painted the colors of Ukraine on the Lenin statue. Then they take out all the Lenin statues. But it's it's another step. And they say, Glory to Ukraine, glory to heroes since 1921. So it will be enough for the First World War. But in the work of the First World War, there was the invention of a concept genocide invented by Raphael Lemkin you had here in the US Holocaust Memorial, and we have to see how it links to the First World War. I am going to skip because it has become too long. So I come to Lemkin and I begin to think about what you said, about the deportation to Russia of Ukrainian children taken from their parents or taken from orphanages. And there it is in the convention of '48 on genocide. So we are, legally, in the possibility to say that there is a genocide going on in Ukraine, but it is obviously open to discussion. It's difficult to know is there is a genocide now in Ukraine. We have to think that the word was not invented before 1943 and we have to know on what historical basis. Churchill in August 24, 1941, speaking about the invasion of the Soviet Union, sorry, by the Nazi, said "We are in the presence of a crime without a name." And it is Rafael Lemkin who gave that crime a name. Why did he call this crime genocide? It compounded it from the Greek genus, which means people, but also family or lineage, and with a word in Latin, *occidere*, killing, and it published it in his work called *Axis Rule in occupied Europe* in '44. So he founded it in '43 and published it in '44.

This polyglot knew at least ten languages, chose to create what we call barbarism because he mixes Latin and Greek, and obviously he does it on purpose because this this crime is a crime of barbarity. And I think we have to move to the prehistory of the concept and think about the First World War to understand what he was doing at the time. I think we have to go from who knew what in 1942, '43, '44, and who denied what to why was it impossible to believe? Because by 1941, slowly and in 1942 fully, in both Britain and the United States and Palestine, the truth was known about the extermination of the Jews. But no one knew that they knew. It is where my experience of the First World War, its so false an real atrocities took all their sense. Contemporarily, well in effect, still in the grip of the propaganda, lies and exaggeration of the First World War, which was finished only 25 years ago. Some of this false atrocity, the one of the German soldiers being cutting babies in pieces or cutting their hand. Oh, German soldier as you see here, torturing people by torturing them at the end of their horse cart and they even did not have horse carts at the time. So you see, I took two of them. There are millions of these atrocity pictures which shows that they were absolutely, absolutely everywhere. And at the same time there was real atrocities, like this one, everybody so to have forget them then, not Lemkin. Lemkin saw that violence against civilians in 1914-1919 had been grossly

underestimated. And I believe that one of the reasons for the impossibility of understanding the extermination of the Jews in real time was in part, it was not really a reason, there was an epistemological blockage which arose during the previous year. They delivered too much with the atrocities. They are not going to tell us again, there are atrocities now against Jew. I cannot believe it. When he began his work as a law student at Lviv just after 1919, Lemkin was particularly unsettled by two war crimes: the extermination of the Armenians and the Pogroms in Ukraine. Soon, he thought about this extermination, and he said that it was not accidental, but that it was at the heart of the war, which was definitely against civilians. During 1914-1918, it had been by far the worst in the Ottoman and Russian empires, where population displacement took the shape of social or ethnic reconstruction. It resulted in the extermination of the Armenians and the deportation of the suspect population of Russia, the most suspected being the Jews. We have the drawing of Abel Pann, which are 40 of them, which show the situation of the Jews in 1916. And actually, when you discover this open train, you think it's crazy and you cannot believe it is in 1916. But it is 1916. The young lawyer Lemkin was fascinated by two assassinations and two trials, which for him, I think, and encapsulated the two crimes of the Great War. The first one was an Armenian *[inaudible]* who killed the responsible of the extermination of the Armenian West, as it was said at the time. And the second was Simon Bethelerois [sp?], I do a little parenthesis here is who is now back as a hero by some Ukrainian nationalists. So we have to know that. And he was assassinated because he was a big chief of the Pogroms by a Jew, probably an agent of the NKVD. So it's more complicated than it looks in 1926. And Lemkin thought about these two crimes, and he saw that these victims who had lost their family could not give justice themselves. You have to have an international law to take care of this kind of crime. He went to work and in 1933, very early on, he was ready to present a report to the international conference taking place in Madrid called the Unification of Penal Law. And there it put together two notions: the notion of barbarism, destroying a national religious collectivity and the notion of vandalism, destruction of works, of culture. So you see everything on nearly everything was already there in 1933, but nobody thought that this conceptual innovation should be pursued. Lemkin thought the precise opposite as a Pole and as a Jew who had lived a long time in Ukraine, he was convinced that this type of crime would repeat itself. I can say that the cynical suppression of memories belonged obviously to totalitarianism. But democracies knew about it and let it go. If you look at these unbelievable cartoons about the genocide of the Armenian, called at the time, extermination, or annihilation, you see that people could laugh about the extermination of an entire people. And when the war was over, they didn't care at all. It was important during the time because they said the Germans did the thing. But, when it was attacked, nobody, nobody cared. It's interesting to know that because you are also here what they will call a mirror effect. In fact, the Turks were the first to say that the Armenians were the perpetrators, and they were the victim in a kind of mirror effect. When we hear Putin saying that he wants to denazify Ukraine and protect the Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine against the genocide, I'm not inventing, he does exactly what the Turks did during the First World War and after. And that does exactly the same thing that the Nazis did during the Second World War. And it's really terrifying to see that all the time, every time, the perpetrator thinks they are victim. And it is true still today. Lemkin was prevented to see the concept of genocide, the just invented use and incrimination in the Nuremberg Trials. Nevertheless, an Armenian survivor called Chavarche Missakian, you are with his paper here, understood that it was important for him. And as of late December 9th, 1945, it took the word genocide for what happened to the Armenians between 1915 and 1918. Missakian very well understood the genocide, why was really the deaths of the people in itself, not simply what we could call collateral damage due to the war, especially by destroying the families and the children with no more hope of reproduction of going on with families, culture or religion. As you can see here about this, these women and and kids in Alep, this total destruction. As said by the the Ukrainian Nobel Prize winner, Aleksandra Mattituck, receiving her prize this fall. "We should not be stuck in Nuremberg and go forward. We live in a new century. Justice cannot wait. And also war transforms people and figures. We have to know the names of all the victims." Lemkin conceptualized three types of techniques of genocide: physical genocide, immediate murder, biological genocide, which suppresses the right to exist in the future by killing women, babies and so on. And finally, cultural genocide, which was very important for him, but with the idea of reunification of culture and civilization, which is central today, if you think about Ukrainian language, Ukrainian literature, but at the time in '48, then you don't want to hear about it, they were absolutely against it. To conclude, how all this goes into Ukraine. I leave obviously the bulk of the Holocaust to Omer, who is a great specialist of Ukraine genocide. I just want you to see a little bit of one of, I think, the most atrocious and most beautiful text about the Holocaust from Vasily Grossman titled "Ukraine Without Jews," which he wrote in 1943 and was abruptly rejected by publication. And we know only since the 1990s. It is four pages of the disparation of an entire people in Ukraine. There are no Jews nowhere. And then it goes about all the

possibilities you had to be an Ukrainian Jew, which is everything in life. And all these disappeared obviously with this definitive and amazing text, it doesn't take care all of the problem of the Holocaust in Ukraine. And the Ukrainian nationalists, by heed of the Soviet, did collaborate very much through the killing of the Ukrainian Jews. This doesn't make Ukraine a nation of Nazis today. Even if Bandera became too much of a national figure because after being an anti-Semitic and a killer, he was himself assassinated by the Soviets. All this comes from the biggest lie of Stalin, followed and enlarged by Putin, the total denial of what the Ukrainian call to today, Holodomor, the murder by hunger.

Lemkin, again, he has called the genocide the repression and killing by hunger of certainly four million Ukrainians. In a seminal text of 1953 called "Soviet Genocide in Ukraine." What I want to speak about describes the classic example of Soviet genocide. I don't know if there is a non-classic example of Soviet genocide, but we can discuss about it. Lemkin obviously, had seen correctly, the famine sponsored by Stalin, the Holodomor was a genocide. No doubt about it. Prominent historians are unanimous on this fact today, even though the debate over the legal qualification of the crime of genocide continues. But I will plagiarize Hitler here, a little bit around Stalin. Hitler was saying the Jewish people has to disappear from the earth. Stalin said something like the Ukrainian people has to disappear from the earth. That's why the Ukrainian parliament voted to recognize the Holodomor as a deliberate act of genocide in 2006, and you have here President Zelensky and his wife in front of a memorial. Obviously, the Ukrainians are very grateful to Lemkin. They are now, they have not been for a long time, they were not when they were Soviets. Still Soviets, obviously. Lemkin was not known, as it was not known, about the extermination of Jews. Now it is everywhere. You have it on the left, on his own university. You are right there on the right, actually, in Ukraine Institute in New York. And obviously Lemkin has become a great hero in Ukraine. But it came very, very late. I conclude. This doubt and sometimes denial history has been the aim of war for the Russians, going back to the czars because of their huge Russian empire and to Stalin without communism, but with the Great Patriotic War, which was won and has to go on against the to the Nazi, the Ukrainian and the Russian dissidents about the past, particularly the one who fight against the disparation of the memory of the gulag. It's not by accident that the Association memorial was dissolved one month before the special operation in Ukraine. And these days, just when I speak to you, it is a trial of Oleg Orlov, one of the founders of memorial. That's why the Ukrainian fight for that nation right in the borders as a state. They were in 1921, a republic inside the Soviet Union. In 1991, an independent republic, and they fight also to stop the lies about the past and the present. Particularly, I like very much cartoons, because I think there's a great way to see history and to see history in its time without anachronism. And all these cartoons of Hitler and Stalin posing with Putin are absolutely interesting, if they are not at all funny. The idea also is to bring the aggressor to justice. And there is this very interesting site about Kharkiv where they take you around Kharkiv and they show you the evidence of crimes which can be crimes against humanity are perhaps crimes of genocide. But the fake news are all over and I know that the French Foreign Service was impacted by false news from the Russians. And here it's an Israeli magazine that I found, which is an Israeli magazine, a fake one faked by the Russians. And you have the Israeli, which is bearing the heavy swastika, which is a Ukrainian one. And I've heard that it was so well done that for a certain time people thought it was it was a real Israeli magazine and not a Russian fake, a fake news.

So there is plenty of cartoons but I will stop there and finish with President Zelensky on May 8, 2023. Going back to the Second World War and explaining that if the Ukrainians do celebrate now the end of the regret of the Second World War on May 8th, it's because it belongs to the Democratic state, who together fighting the Nazis and finished on May 8. Ukraine doesn't belong to Soviet Union, then Russia, who thought they had won the war alone. And doing it in May 9th. And he finishes, obviously, by the victory of Ukraine and the free world, liberation of our lands, the return of our people, protecting our values, justice against the ruscist ideology of hatred. But this idea of ideology of hatred ruscist, which means racist and Russian, but the Russians and Ukrainians also call it the Ukrfascisty. Sorry, for my Russian. And this is not a great sign for our future. We have the present and we have the future. And in the future, an independent Ukraine, a free Ukraine, will have a long border with Russia. This will never stop. I quote again from the Nobel Prize Oleksandra Matviichuk, "Don't have to be Ukrainians to support Ukraine. You just have to be human beings." But what about the future? Raymond Aron did not stop thinking on these trends. About 1918, 1945, the Cold War. I quote him, "To kill the monster without letting him find in spilled blood and defeat a new strength." Can you find strength in defeat? It will be terrible for tomorrow. But I am afraid sometimes that Aron was right, and I can offer an answer with my favorite again, Marc Bloch. You have it here. "These badly extinguished ashes

burn hands.” They don’t only burn hands. And the last two Walter Benjamin, “The only writer of history with a gift of setting alight the sparks of hope in the past, is the one who is convinced of this: that not even the dead will be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.” I had prepared this lecture when the dead from a previous cemetery came back from the bottom of the Kakhovka Dam to inhabit the present war. And also the bombs are not falling very far from Babi Yar, the huge place where the Jews were exterminated during the Second World War near Kiev. On the other shore of the Dnieper, there is the forest of Bukovina. And in this forest at least 7000 people were killed by the NKVD in the thirties. Where are all these dead? Thank you.

**TARA VARMA:** Thank you so much Annette Becker for your remarks today. I am delighted to be moderating the second part of this event and will be engaging on the more salient points of your lecture and turn to Professor Bartov for his remarks. We will finally go to the to the to the audience for a Q&A session. And I think we'll be expanding, I guess, the scope of the discussion a little bit. Professor Bartov, I'm turning to you now. I'm guessing you have a few remarks, and I know that Professor Becker also wanted you to touch upon the salient points on World War Two. In particular, I was going to say World War three. I guess that's a Freudian slip. World War Two. Sorry. And so the floor is yours now. We're looking forward to it.

**OMER BARTOV:** Thank you and thank you for hosting this event. Thank you. And that for this wonderful lecture. And to the Brookings Institute, of course, I was asked to speak for about 10 minutes or so. I probably could speak for another couple of hours. But so just speaking some bullet points. I mean, the first thing I want to say is that for people like me, and I think that when the war in Russia began or the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, many of us felt that history has come back in a very strange and disturbing way. We've been teaching World War One, World War Two. And suddenly I remember standing in front of a class and showing them a map of southern Ukraine that I prepared for something that had to do with World War Two and the Holocaust. And I said to them a year ago, you would not have recognized any of these names of towns and cities. And now we know them from CNN or wherever you were getting your news. So it is a kind of shocking moment. And of course, we live in an era where this is not the only return. It's the war has returned, devastating war has returned, and it has returned to areas that had been destroyed in World War One and in World War Two. It's part of even a larger return of the repressed, if you like, in terms of the kind of political extremism of phobia, anti-Semitism, racism, populism that has come to inhabit so many political entities in the last few years.

So there may be one connection here that I would like to draw, which is between that war and its context. In some ways, the return of nationalism. 20 years ago, I remember the general convention, certainly among historians and other intellectuals, was that nationalism is gone. It's passé. We now live in a multicultural world. We know Europe is now one continent, and Germans and French, though, really know the difference. Who are they? They can live in one place to another and suddenly nationalism is back too. So various things are coming back. And I think that's something that we want to talk about a little bit more. I want to say also that for me, and I've written, as some of you may know, Annette knows I've written very critically about Ukrainian politics of memory and what when that war began, I did. And I continue to do whatever I can to encourage people to support Ukraine in its war, in its defensive war against an aggressive and illegal invasion by Russia, whatever that past is and whatever parts of it have remained and worked. And there are significant chunks of it. Helping Ukraine defend itself is crucial not only for moral or ethical or legal reasons, but also because the alternative will be a complete dismantling of the international order. And the outcome of that is largely impossible to predict. And so it is isn't. Comment on all of us, I think to support Ukraine and to do whatever we can and whatever governments can do in support of Ukraine.

I want to say a few things about other contexts. So one is in terms of historical narrative, and I spoke about how Putin has been propagating a particular historical narrative. Now, that historical narrative, of course, is not Putin's invention. He is borrowing from a much larger Russian discourse about Ukraine that is not even Soviet but goes back to the 19th century. And without getting into a great deal of detail, it is that Ukraine is part of Russia and in a sense that Russia cannot be Russia without Ukraine, because Russia can only be Russia as an empire that includes Ukraine as perhaps its most important non ethnic Russian component. And in that sense, Putin is not as often happens with propaganda when he speaks to Russians. Many Russians understand exactly what he's talking about. He's not saying something that is new to them when he speaks of Russia as being of Ukraine as being little Russia, many Russians, even Russians who may not at



all like his regime, understand that kind of language, that the alternative historical narrative is the Ukrainian historical narrative, which is a very complex one. And again, we don't have time right now to go into all the details of that. But the creation of Ukraine is really Ukraine as being the country of the middle, the country, the borderland country, Ukraine. And that borderline country is between Poland and Russia. Now, Poland now we think of as not a very large country in Eastern Europe, but it used to be a very large country that was Eastern Europe, all of Eastern Europe with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and much of it was Ukraine. And Ukrainian nationalism as it evolves, is one which has to do with separating Ukraine from these two great entities, the Russian the growing Russian empire in the East in the 17th, 18th century, and the diminishing but still powerful Polish empire west of Ukraine. And it has to do not only with politics, but also with the fact that the peoples are mixed. That is that in the West, Ukraine in large part is colonized and East Ukraine in large part is Russian. And how do you tell yourself out of of this mix, how do you create a and an independent Ukraine that is neither one nor the other?

And the third narrative is the Jewish narrative of Ukraine. And the Jewish narrative of Ukraine is important not only because large numbers of Jews lived in Ukraine, but because the conversation about atrocities, history, genocide includes very much the faith of Jews in Ukraine. And that too, has a long historical narrative that begins in very two different two very different perceptions of the early history of Ukraine, that is of the 17th century of the beginning, as it is seen in retrospect from the 19th century, the beginning of Ukrainian nationalism with the great uprising of the Cossacks led by Bogdan Magnitsky. So Magnitsky is seen in Ukraine as the first national hero and in Jewish law and Jewish memory, he is the massacre of Jews. He is the scourge of the Jews because that uprising included basically the destruction of Jewish communities in the areas at least east of the neighborhood. And so these three historical narratives are important to understand when we try to look at the deeper roots of what we are seeing right now and how they're being interpreted in various places, you may know that I come from Israel and I go there a lot and I follow the media there. And many Israelis have ill informed Israelis, as most people these days are think of. Ukrainians as being generally anti-Semites. Ukraine is hey Jews and therefore why should we support them? We should support the Russians. The Russians won the Great Patriotic War, which put an end to the Holocaust. So this this plays into a variety of understanding. So this is one context I wanted to just to talk about without delving too deeply into these different historical narratives.

The second. Very briefly, I'd say, you know, we're celebrating -- or not celebrating, exactly -- commemorating 100 years to Lausanne, to the international agreement in Lausanne, which was about the which ties into the story of the Armenian genocide. But in this case, in 1923, there's a decision to exchange populations between what becomes by then independent Turkey, the Turkish state and Greece. And about a million and a half people move from one place to another. Greeks are returned to Greece, where they had never lived for both two millennia. And the Turks are really Muslims who moved as Turks from Greece to Turkey, and that is seen subsequently by a variety of international bodies, including the Peel Commission, which is concerned with the partition of Palestine as a good example of how you can resolve these problems of mixed peoples. How do we unmixed people by forcibly removing them, by putting one in one nation state and another group in another nation state, which involves, of course, a huge amount of suffering, loss of property, loss of status, loss of memory, loss of culture, and in many ways can connect to the very notion of genocide only it is internationally agreed upon and forced on populations in decline.

**ANNETTE BECKER:** Legalized ethnic cleansing.

**OMER BARTOV:** Yes. Exactly. And so I think when we when we think of that context, the larger context of death is population displacement. And population displacement is one major feature of the 20th century. And what we see now in the 21st century is, again, this attempt to either change the identity of groups that you want to take over or displace them. We have to remember the one thing that has happened in this war in Ukraine is that the population of Ukraine has has dropped significantly. There were 40 million people living in Ukraine when the war began, and some estimates put the population now between 30 and 20. So millions of people and many of them, of course, children, not only those who were kidnaped by the Russians, but larger numbers that have escaped to the West from the war. That is a in a sense, a fourth displacement of populations. So I think it's very important to remember this.

And I'll say one last thing, otherwise I'll be going on too long. And that has to do with Ukrainian history itself. As I said, I was obviously involved for many years in studying the case of West Ukraine, which used to be East Galicia, and in between was the eastern part of resurrected Poland in the interwar period. And what is now is west Ukraine and that area, part of Ukraine, which had not been under Ukrainian rule and had not been of the Soviet rule until World War Two had a mix of populations. It had a majority Ukrainian or Athenian population. This is about 20% of the population of Ukraine that I'm talking about, these western provinces. So the majority were Ukrainians who were often called Fenians at the time for interesting reasons. The second largest group were Poles, and the third largest group were Jews, Jews, who about 10% of the population by the end of World War Two. That area is ethnically homogeneous. It basically has only Ukrainians in it. That was the goal of Ukrainian nationalism, which was created there and which in its more radical form as it develops because of not least very oppressive. Polish rule in the interwar period wants to create a pole free and Jew free Ukraine. And that is the core of the violence that occurs in that area and in part in cooperation with German policies and in part completely independently of these policies. That is that you that Ukrainians live, participate and assist in the genocide of the Jews in that area. They are engaged approximately with the murder of about 800,000 Jews in those areas in and in what is now parts of Belarus and parts of West Ukraine. And after that is over. By 1943, June summer, 1943, the same bodies of Ukrainian nationalists, the organization of Ukrainian nationalists, and later the Ukrainian, the UPA, the military arm of the Ukrainian Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists engage in ethnically cleansing the Polish population of that area, which is now considered officially by the Polish government, by law, as genocide. And so what you have is a moment of extreme violence, part of which is by a state that comes from the outside with particular target. In this case, the Nazis come in and the Germans come in and they want to kill the Jews and local national interests, which in that case are predominantly Ukrainian nationalists. Now, this history disappears after World War Two because the Soviets come in, they take over this area and they suppress this whole history. They say, yes, most Ukrainians fought bravely, which is, by the way, true that vast majority of Ukraine is served in the Red Army, not in these nationalist units. And there were some bad apples, some fascists who collaborated. But we won't talk about them. We already took care of them. And one cannot talk about these nationalist organizations until 1991. In 1991, Ukraine becomes independent. And as it becomes independent, those individuals, including of course, Stepan Bandera, was mentioned here, who was the head of the more radical faction of the Organization of Ukrainian nationalists, reappear in public memory and they shift it from West Ukraine also to central Ukraine. That is that they get to be also adopted by Kiev in part. And what is remembered about them is that they were freedom fighters. They were among the people who broke Magnitsky through World War One, through feudal to Bandera, fought for Ukrainian independence. And what is forgotten and suppressed is the fact that those organizations were also involved in and genocide and in ethnic cleansing. My own and I stop here my own sense and I've said that also to Ukrainian audiences and some don't love me saying it, and I know some other people have spoken similarly. My offensive, as I said, Ukraine must be defended now for all the good reasons. But have Ukraine done better in the years before the war to face up to its own dark past? And that's a very hard thing to do for Poland. This had a hard time with the Germany had a hard time with it. France had a very hard time with my country of Israel. Not only has a hard time with it, but doesn't do it at all. And you can see the results right now. But had Ukraine been able to do it, it would have given less ammunition to the kind of lying propaganda coming out of the Kremlin now about de-Nazification of Ukraine, whose president, as we all know, is not only Jewish, but most of whose Jewish family was murdered in the Holocaust. And maybe there's a lesson in there, too, that we should all also try to look back at the darker episodes of our history instead of trying to suppress them so that we don't become. Victims of those ghosts of the past once again. So thank you.

**TARA VARMA:** Thank you very much. I am mindful of the time. So I'll ask you one question and then we'll open to the audience. Coming back to the idea of total war that you mentioned. In many ways, the war in Ukraine totally confounded our assumptions of what war in the 21st century would be like. We would thought it would be more technologically driven, less human casualties, no state to state conflict anymore. And this war has proven us wrong in many ways. Can you explain maybe why this lack of study of history, or is there any other reason why we couldn't anticipate that actually this would be a conflict, as we had seen in actually in the previous years, In the previous centuries as well?

**ANNETTE BECKER:** Yes. I think it comes and I will join what was Omer saying about the Holocaust, the past, these heroes of the of the past, which are heroes on the nationalist side, but are killers at the same time. And this is denied. This is denied because you have to go forward. The same about the conventional

war. You have to go forward. So you think about the bombing and the missiles and you forget about the fact that on the ground, there is no other way. You have to fight man to man or tank to tank. And it's exactly what is happening now, you know, we have that too because look at the importance of the drones. The drones are the new technology and in fact, not mistaken, the Israeli were the first to use them in really huge fashion. Then it was taken all over. And it's very interesting that the Russians for that were late and they used the Iranian technology, who are very good at that. So we have that too. And I think we have to think about the denial of history not only for ideology but also for technology, because when you have the military, who are taking care of the battlefield and the armies, they have a lot of lessons of history, it's not that it is not told, but they have like their own agenda. And the agenda of history is very strict. You have to think that on the battlefield when you get to the cities, it is a siege, it's always done the same the same way. You could come from the top, but the only technology that would change everything of the time will be the nuclear menace. But all the rest has to go back to conventional because the technology has to be conventional on the ground. You cannot do anything else.

**OMER BARTOV:** You know, I mean, I'd say one just to add to this from a slightly different angle, there's been a lot about the use of social media, of fake news, of electronics of and I was thinking that that in some ways, just like in the case of actual warfare, you can make very clear analogies to past wars. You can actually in terms of the Russian manner of fighting, you can go all the way back to the seven year war. There was a great battle between the Prussian army, which was the best army in the world then and the Russian army, and nobody won. They just slaughtered each other because the Russians kept sending more and more people in. And it created the kind of image of Russia fighting wars that way. And it did so. It did so in World War One to the detriment of the SA, of course, because it did eventually lead to a revolution and it did so in World War Two. And by all appearances, this is what's happening now. But also in terms of propaganda, I actually find that not much has been invented and that was showing some of these cartoons. And in some ways the means have changed somewhat, obviously. But the attempt to manipulate. Opinion is very similar and it has to do with mass society. So it would have been very different in the Middle Ages, of course, because you're talking to different publics. But once you have this public from the 19th century on, I don't think it changes that much. And I agree that when you come down to say urban warfare, unless you blow up the whole city with a nuclear bomb, you destroy it. And the Russians are very good at just having a lot of artillery doing it on and on and on until finally there's no city to defend anymore. And they did in several cases, though, I just want to add one last thing. And it's sort of and that was talking about victims. And I think that's a really important element here, too, to emphasize that in this kind of 20th century, total war, genocide, ethnic cleansing, population, this displacement, this whole context, one fascinating aspect of it is that the people who victimize others see themselves often as their victims. And it's not completely wrong. There's always a kernel of truth in that, and that has to be understood. It's so when the Turks or the Ottoman authorities decide that, okay, they have to eliminate the Armenians, they say, well, there's a media nationalism within and within Anatolia. The Armenians are a threat to us because they're close to Russia and some of them are fighting with the Russians. Are empires falling apart and therefore we have to kick them out. The Germans, obviously, as that was saying, say that about the Jews. The Jews are the real internal enemy. We lost World War One because of the of the Reds and the truth because of the Socialists and the Jews. They stabbed in the back. And the Russians have, I think, have had a long standing complaint, which is not valid because it's not about Ukraine, but it's about the fact that the Soviet Union sacrificed more soldiers and civilians in World War Two than anyone else. Times a lot. Without the Red Army, World War Two would not have ended the way it did. It's there's one interesting statistic that even in June of 1944, after the Allied landing in Normandy, the vermouth is losing ten times as many men on the eastern front, then on the Western front, even as the allies have just landed, you know, the Americans, the Canadians, the Brits are all there. The Russians are causing ten times as many losses to the verna. And that, I think, is something that has remained for Russians, a sense of their own contribution, their own victim of this never being recognized. And it's part of how they perceive this world, the West to this day.

**ANNETTE BECKER:** I think I'd just add something. I totally agree with all of that. But there is also the lie, the lie left behind, because in 1939, they agreed with the German Nazis to take over a big chunk of Poland.

**OMER BARTOV:** In fact, the agreement between Hitler and Stalin is what triggered World War Two.

**ANNETTE BECKER:** Exactly! This is what triggered World War Two. And it's also which made the fact that they were not ready to fight the Nazis. And they lost so much and they nearly lost the war in '41. And the incredible number of dead, which is atrocious. And it is true that it is not recognized enough by the West to allow this. I totally agree. But at the same time, it is the fault of Stalin. So there is always a lie inside the truth and the truth inside the lies. That's why it is so complicated on every side. And that now what you were saying about the cities is so true, that when the Ukrainian or the Russian who fight with Ukrainian, it's not very clear invaded lives are part of the western part of Russia, immediately the people in this area stop saying special operation and spoke about war because it was on their territory. So I just read it by accident and I thought it was really interesting to see what is a war or not and how do you feel it. But I began to say that the myths was very active. I mean, we have to think that there are myths everywhere all the time, and that's why we are historians. I am working for my profession. For our profession.

**TARA VARMA:** Thank you so much. We'll take one round of questions. If you can briefly introduce yourselves and have a very brief and clear question, the young lady here, please. We take, I think, to you the three that I saw just now.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hey, thank you so much for the lecture. My name is Anna and I'm Ukrainian. I'm from Kiev. I'm studying in university environment right now. And this summer intern with New Lines Institute here in D.C. But I'm from Geneva. I live in Kiev. My family is still in Kiev. Thank you for this lecture and discussion. I personally want to thank you and that for all the remarks he made about ecocide and previous century genocides. I want to start my question is going to be about historical narrations and their role in in this war and the role of Ukrainian agency, to be specific, the lack of Ukrainian agency in Europe and the US in telling this history. One very short question. So most of the Western world has been learning about Ukraine from Russian textbooks, from Russian experts, from Russian immigration, and not from Ukrainians. And it resulted it resulted in division that Red Army was Russian army, and it was not Red Army was the army of Ukrainians, Belarusians, Russians. And if we take a look at the loss of every nation, Ukrainians are going the first. Moreover, the battlefield was in Ukraine and Ukrainians were never given the credit for that. Instead, Russia took the role of the winner, the role of their in a rescue of the Europe and ended up right now say in motion of three two, which meant we can repeat this war once again. Ukrainians who were never given a chance to tell their own history, to speak out for their history here in the West from the word, are now also in the battle of proving that World War Two also was our war where we were killed and we were, you know, fighting. Do you have in your mind any mechanism how Ukrainian agency and noise could be empowered right now to shift it and to give more attention to Ukrainian historians and people? Thank you.

**TARA VARMA:** Thank you. And I think there was a question on the other side in the back. Yeah.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hey, guys, thank you so much for the lecture. My name's Jack Galloway. I just had a question about reconciliation in like a post Putin Russia. Would a future leader of Russia, would that be necessary for a centralized control of the Russian state to be able to understand Putin's flaws in the, you know, the Ukrainian invasion in a post Putin Russia?

**TARA VARMA:** Thank you. You have 2 minutes to answer these two questions. Do you want to start over and we will finish with then. Sure.

**OMER BARTOV:** Quickly on the on the Ukrainian narrative, I think now the number I just thought of the top of my head to American one is Ukraine. But as a professor at Harvard to very prominent voices, Timothy Snyder who has been writing and speaking a great deal about providing the Ukrainian narrative, I think quite effectively, it's recent. It's but it started before the war. And I think, you know, we can't say that there is no there are no voices in the West now speaking also or telling the Ukrainian narrative on reconciliation, I don't know. I think that everybody is thinking about what's going to happen after the end of the war. I just thought of something that I heard the former Russian foreign minister say about what would the end of Putin be like? So he said that in Russia, you don't just come to the head of state and say, you know, you may have made a mistake, maybe you're wrong. You either if you come, you come with a gun and you say either you're going to retire. Or we are taking you to the nearby cemetery. And so in that sense, it's impossible to tell. It seems to me where this would go in Russia and Ukraine. One hope very much that this war will end soon and that Ukraine will have the energy left and the support to rebuild itself as what it was becoming, which was a true

democratic civil society. Which is probably one reason, a major reason why Russia or Putin could not take it right on its border. That threat to show that the alternative of a society that had been under Soviet rule had been under Russian imperial rule and chose an alternative that is democratic and liberal.

**ANNETTE BECKER:** To answer very quickly to the first question. I remember that Kiev was a hero city in 65, and so under the Soviet rule, it was not true that the effort of the Ukrainians in the in the Great Patriotic War was not recognized. It was severely kept after the independence of Ukraine from the Russian history. It's part of the new narration of the of the Russians. But it is to the Ukrainians to work on it. And as I was saying about the heroes who are also killers, you have to do your own history. And this had begun. You were looking at my book on genocides. And the first edition in French was extremely critical of the Ukrainians about not recognizing enough the Holocaust and putting the whole all of them all too much. And the second edition, the English one. I've been cutting this much more in favor of the Ukrainians because the Ukrainian historians. I've been working extremely hard in the last 20 years to have a new history, a real story based on archives, to show the choice does not exist, but something which is nearer the reality of the history of the of the 19th and 20th century. And it is going really in the right direction about the postwar. I have no idea and I cannot read in the future. But I'm afraid of something. Is that like in the First World War, the Ukrainian people are extremely consented to the war. They are doing it really by patriotic fervor and by democratic fervor. It is something which is new in a world of post war, where everybody is for peace. They are not for peace because they are for the nation and they fight, fight at the same time. The news from Russia is sparse and a lot of people left Russia because they did not want to do this war. Some for political reason, some for some other reason because they do not want to fight the wrong war. But it's very few compared to the Russian population. It is a landslide population by a lot of ways. But you can leave the country and most people stay. And most people go and fight because they are very poor, and they are paid to do this war. So how you will become side after and make peace? I am very pessimistic.

**TARA VARMA:** Thank you. We will end on this then. Thank you so much for the audience and thank you so much to and then.

**ANNETTE BECKER:** Thank you to you.

**TARA VARMA:** Please give them a big round of applause.