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# Shibboleths Of War: The Clash Of Old World vs. The New in Ukraine

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9–12 minutes

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The war in Ukraine increasingly takes on the form of a clash of generational zeitgeists, civilizational and spiritual ideals. One between the Modern and the Traditional. The foregone Old World vs. the New Age.

From root to branch, everything in the endogenous *aesthetic* of the Ukrainian Armed Forces teems with a kind of Gen-Z juvenilia. From the strident presentations of their propaganda and agitprop, to the endemic slogans and patriotica—it's all deeply rooted in a kind of adolescent, video-game generation *sturm und drang* veneer, which extends even to the very crown of the Ukrainian tree itself.

The boyish Zelensky—recently gym-buffed and striking his best JFK impersonation—struts around in his evergreen shirt and affected simper, surrounded by other youthful ministers who, too, attire themselves in modish chic—taking cues from Z and wife's ascendance as global fashion icons and cause célèbres to the stilted beau monde of plastic-faced, silk-gloved Euro-gentry. Ministers like the turtle-necked, jet-setting arriviste, Arestovich, and the gelled-and-pompadoured James Bond-Villain-stand-in, GUR head Kyrylo Budanov, and even the dashing Generalissimo Zaluzhny, with his randy sex-pest

penchant for [philandering](#).







The entire governmental structures of Ukraine and the AFU are modeled precisely to appeal to the glossy whims of Gen-Z—those pamphlet-waving college-aged liberals, thrumming with the flighty juvenile excesses necessary to attach themselves to any fashionable cause populaire.

Contrast that with the soft-spoken, paternalistic demimonde of Putin's [siloviki](#), that stour-faced, seasoned crop of old-fashioned bellwhethers representing a wholly different, bygone age.



You won't find them striking any goofy poses.

The spiritual core of the iconographies projected by the two opposing sides is likewise emblematic of this. One's aesthetic is angsty teenager, edgelord grunge. Marilyn Manson phase attention-seeking—replete with goofy 'NAFO' caricatures, stylized skulls, and assorted broody Goth meme-ware, all reminiscent of that woeful mid-2000's phase of tribal tattoos and the type of cry for attention it represented.

The other side adopts the devices of the Old World; religious imagery and symbolism, Soviet heraldry—things rooted and steeped in a true sentimentality, a looking *backwards*, rather than the irony-laden, giggle-stirring shibboleths and meta-jokes of the post-modern era. Even in interviews, the diametrics are observed: one side exemplifying composure and humility—a sort of studied, candidly mature mien. The other often resorting to smirking verbal darts, crude profanities, or juvenile chest-



beating. Sure, there are contradicting examples to be found on *both* sides, but the general strain is evident.



From Putin and Peskov, to the soft-spoken general staff, or the ever-urbane Lavrov, anytime a figure of the Russian leadership speaks, they exude a parental maturity. Patience. Restraint. Contrast that with the 'wired', unhinged, impulsive utterances that issue forth from a variety of Ukraine's leading figures. Whether it's the gravelly, methamphetamine-choked, sniffing exhortations of Zelensky. Or the reptile-eyed crudities of

Reznikov, the tipsy slurrings of Poroshenko, or the homicidal threats of Kuleba, every transmission from their end represents a sort of crassness unworthy of the Old World civilizational table chaired by the likes of Russia and China.

This diametrical grounding extends to various propaganda campaigns from both sides. Since the SMO's start, the [AFU has busily purveyed](#) a slew of slick, over-produced montages and patriotic 'ads' featuring the typical Gen-Z dogwhistles and visual tropes inherent to properties like Call Of Duty and [Michael Bay-era films](#). Russian attempts at such agitprop are decidedly ham-handed, old-fashioned, and clumsy by comparison, lacking the slick polish and ambition/desperation to appeal to the younger zeitgeist. But Russian multimedia typically aspires toward a different slant; old patriotic songs, the folksy and pastoral—in contrast to the blaring hip-hop and electronica personified in the AFU.



Rad, high-octane AFU ad.

It's obvious that Ukraine, with its youth-oriented ethos and urban sophistication, has mastered the digital domain; at least insofar as competently marketing themselves towards the Western ideal.



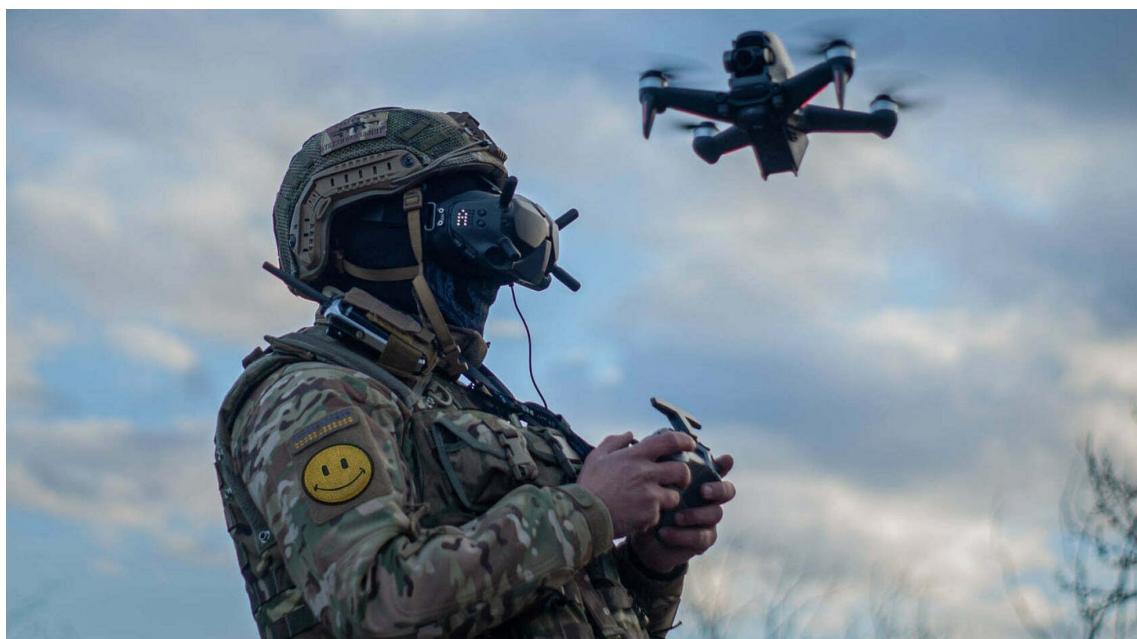
This further extends to the class of ‘warrior’ both sides continue to attract. In Ukraine’s case, the sort of adrenaline-junkie, low-impulse-control, risk-seeking, fast-twitch-gamer, bro-sint ‘cool-kids’ crowd. And the infamous Tacti-cool strain of tribal-tattooed Mall-Ninja mercs with their Acog forests and hip green lasers, who are one booty-photo shy of becoming Onlyfans-With-Guns. Ukraine famously attracts a lot of these, from the charlatans of [‘Forward Observation Group’](#), who’ve built an instagram ‘influencer’ empire with their stylish but perplexing marriage of fashion and weaponry, to the [endless other weirdly disinherited](#) ‘subculture’ junkies (tattoo and piercings covered burnouts) who flee their homelands for a chance at TikTok clout.



This famous Danish Tacti-cool merc is too cool for school with his tribal facial tattoos and I33t Acog.

In Russia's case, even the the types of mercenaries who've joined the Donbass are of an entirely different class. Lacking tattoos and piercings, soft-spoken and humble. Take, for instance, [Alexis Castillo](#), the famous Colombian merc who fought for years in Donbass. Gentlemanly and unquestionably of the 'Old World' traditional cast, compared to the Skid Row washouts that regularly flock to the AFU breadline.

In some ways, of course, it's benefited Ukraine. For instance, the Gen-Z steered, forward-thinking, twitchy tech-first gamer-minded brood who've come to dominate the base of the AFU pool have fostered an uncanny sense for technological innovation. Russian forces, by comparison, seem at times backwards and disinclined to embrace the futurism of the New Age.



Symbols of irony and the technologically savvy.

This has led to the AFU's initial drone warfare advantages, as they demonstrated a clearly superior aptitude and mastery of the video-game Zen of thumb-to-controller operations. And now that the Russian side has caught up, the AFU wizards continue pressing forward, particularly in the swift-footed utilization of FPV drones we're seeing now.



In fact, a lot of the soldiers on Russia's side are of the old school, family-oriented mold; men who grew up in conservatively traditional households, weened on outside play with friends, rather than the frenetic refresh-rates of videogames and computers. So their learning curve for the techno-age wizardry proves steeper. Ukraine on the other hand attracts the caffeine-fueled E-sports crowd, who take to the technical manifestations of drone warfare like glaze-eyed fish to water.

Of course, in the end, this only brings localized success, as the same impulse-driven, short-attention span video-game generation lacks the mental fortitude of strategic long-form thinking. This extends to Zelensky himself, who continually relies on short-term, impulsive diktats which provide a quick dopamine 'bump' (no pun intended) in the psychological arena, ("Yay, we held Bakhmut another 3 days!" - but lost another thousand soldiers) while disastrously driving the AFU into further ruin.

The truth is, Ukrainians are embarrassed and self-conscious of their perceived 'Old World' roots and Soviet times. In hoping to fit in with the 'modern' cosmopolitan longhouse of the EU, they rebel against their past, ineptly hobbling together some weird Frankenstein pastiche of their Kievan Rus traditions with a Euro-aligned bent, but only in an effort to distinguish themselves from the 'Muscovite' barbarians they're so ashamed to be kith and kin to.

In reality, it's known to all that the idea of a Ukrainian 'nationalism' is a factitiously modern contrivance. Ultimately, what they're fighting for is *not* to 'protect their sacred roots', but rather teleologically eke out a seat at that silver-plated European table, which to them represents a new, cultural 'way forward'—into the future, away from the true 'Old World' they view as

sclerotically hoary and obsolete.



(Parody of) “Ukrainian Culture”

After all, how else would one explain away the completely antithetical spate of European-appropriated perversions and cultural incongruities that now masquerade under the guise of ‘Ukrainian culture’? This is mere tokenization of ‘looking backward’ for the purpose of legitimizing the desperate scrabble towards European cosmopolitan degeneracy—and *acceptance*. It’s not a resurgence or renaissance of *culture*, but rather the bastardization and deracination of it.

As the terminal mania continues to seize Ukraine, driving it beyond the pale of a ‘failed-state’ into something heretofore unseen, the opposing poles of jarring incongruity will likely only grow farther in contrast. Ukraine, and in particular the AFU, will increasingly become the playground of the dispossessed and dissolute, the washed-up and washed-out, the lost and mentally broken generation of spiritlessly wayward, seeking quick adventure, or perhaps—subconsciously—a way out from life.

And while Russia, perhaps at times fustily slow to pivot, appears pushed to the back-foot by the youthful fanaticism and ideal-driven urgency of the AFU, the Old World’s roots are slung



deep, and its wisdom and strategic foresight is generational in scope. Its bark may be scarred, but the tree will stand long after the satyric howls of the 'New World' have faded away into the twilight.

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