

Ukraine

Putin did not thrust into Ukraine to reconquer this fabled "breadbasket."

The quest was for a certified sphere of predominance from the Caspian to the Baltic Sea.

Unopposed for years, he did it because he could, and he could because the West had cashed in its peace dividends after the suicide of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The American military in Europe, once at 300,000, had dwindled into 65,000 before Putin pounced. Germany's 3,000 panzers had shrunk into 360. Opportunity, not acreage, beckoned.

**Josef Joffe,
New York Times Book Review, April 4, 2022,
review of *Blood and Ruins* by Richard Overy**