

5 Claims From Putin's Tucker Carlson Interview, Fact-Checked

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February 09, 2024



Vladimir Putin gives an interview to Tucker Carlson at the Moscow Kremlin. kremlin.ru

When Tucker Carlson announced his interview with Vladimir Putin claiming that “no Western journalist had bothered” to interview the Russian president, he was immediately corrected by not only other journalists but the Kremlin itself.

And when the interview was finally released, Putin spent the first 30 minutes explaining his false assertion that Russia has a historical claim over Ukraine. He also accused the West and Kyiv of starting the war in Ukraine in 2014, another inaccurate claim.

Here are just a handful of Putin’s statements from the two-hour interview, examined and fact-checked:

According to Putin, then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker’s famous 1990 assurance to Mikhail Gorbachev during negotiations over German unification that NATO would expand

“not one inch” east of Germany was a promise that no new member states would be admitted to the alliance.

However, the final text of the agreement signed at that meeting did not rule out NATO expansion.

At the 2008 Bucharest Summit, the U.S.-led alliance affirmed that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of NATO” — but it did not offer a clear roadmap toward membership after Putin lobbied alliance leaders not to admit the two states.

Just months later, Russian forces invaded Georgia, carrying out a five-day war in support of Georgia’s two separatist regions.

Putin characterizes Ukraine's 2014 Revolution of Dignity as a CIA-engineered coup and claims Ukraine started the war in eastern Ukraine against the backdrop of NATO opening its doors.

In reality, after the 2014 Maidan uprising led to the ouster of Ukraine's pro-Russian president, Russian troops seized Crimea and Moscow provided support to pro-Russia separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Furthermore, despite threats of “negative consequences,” Russia did not invade Finland after it became a member state in April 2023. “If Putin genuinely believed the NATO Alliance posed a security threat to the Russian Federation, he would at the very least have increased the Russian military presence close to the Finnish border,” [said](#) Peter Dickinson from the Atlantic Council.

Related article: [Kremlin Woos Ex-Fox News Star Tucker Carlson to Spite Biden, Boost Putin’s Campaign](#)

Putin told Carlson that he had warned Washington not to support “separatists and terrorists” in the North Caucasus. He claimed that in 2015 and 2017 Russia intercepted calls between Chechen separatists and United States intelligence based in Azerbaijan during Moscow’s war in Chechnya in the early 2000s.

Researchers at Harvard University’s [Belfer Center](#) were unable to find any evidence that the United States provided material support to Chechen separatists fighting against Russia.

According to Russian news sources, Chechen fighters were in possession of American-made stinger missile systems. Indeed, the president of the self-proclaimed Republic of Ichkeria boasted of having 50 of the weapons.

However, this does not mean they were supplied by the U.S. The weapons are thought to have originated in Afghanistan since Washington sent them to the Mujahideen in the 1980s to support their fight against the Soviet invasion.

Analyst Olga Oliker said Ichkeria’s claims were likely exaggerated to intimidate Russian forces. Moreover, the actual utility of these missile systems was limited as the decade-old weapons were in “disrepair and unusable.”

When it comes to diplomatic support, the situation is more complicated. Unlike Russia, the U.S. did not consider all Chechen separatists to be terrorists. Government officials met with Ilyas Akhmadov, foreign minister of the unrecognized separatist government, whom they considered to be a moderate. The Department of Homeland Security initially objected when Akhmadov was granted asylum in 2004, but [dropped their appeal](#) due to a lack of evidence he was involved in terrorism.

The former British Prime Minister was one of the first world leaders to visit Kyiv after the full-scale invasion in 2022 and has been one of the most vocal proponents of sending military aid to Ukraine.

Putin repeated a claim by David Arakhamia, Ukraine's lead negotiator, that Boris Johnson dissuaded Ukraine from signing a peace deal that would have ended the war in its first few months, saying it was "better to fight Russia."

Johnson has [dismissed](#) this allegation as "total nonsense and Russian propaganda." The British government said Johnson warned against negotiating with Russia "on terms that gave credence to the Kremlin's false narrative for the invasion, but stressed that this was a decision for the Ukrainian government."

Arakhamia says his comments have been distorted by the Kremlin, claiming his remark to "just fight" Russia was made in a discussion of how best to repel Russia's army. He also stressed that political decisions such as whether to sign a peace deal were the "sovereign right of the Ukrainian leadership."

In October 2022, the Ukrainian president [signed](#) a decree declaring that future talks with Putin were "impossible."

The decree bans negotiations with Putin specifically, saying he "does not know what dignity and honesty are," but left the door open to negotiations with a future president of Russia.

Putin is all but certain to win the presidential election in March. Two Russian officials involved in organizing the election [told](#) The Moscow Times that the Kremlin ordered the Central Election Commission to block the candidacy of pro-peace hopeful Boris Nadezhdin after the "unpleasant surprise" of thousands of people turning out to support his candidacy.

When Carlson asked Putin about the role of his Christian faith in his leadership, the Russian president returned to talking about Russia's history, describing the country's diversity as its "strength."

Scholars [have described](#) the Russian narrative about the country's colonization of Siberia, the Caucasus and Central Asia as a peaceful "voluntary unification."

However, there are numerous examples of conquered peoples being subjected to brutal violence by the Russian army.

Populations who refused to assimilate into the Russian state and culture have long been forced to leave their lands or massacred. Ivan the Terrible destroyed mosques in Kazan and forcibly converted Muslim Tatars to Christianity after the fall of Kazan in 1552. Between 95-97% of the Circassians of the North Caucasus are thought to have been expelled and over

1.5 million were killed in the 19th century in a systematic campaign of massacres.

Jews faced restrictions on where they could live under the Pale of Settlement, and vicious pogroms drove [2 million](#) Jews out of the Russian Empire. Many emigrated to the U.S.

Though present-day Russia presents itself as a multi-national federal republic, minorities continue to face discrimination. They were disproportionately affected by the Kremlin's September 2022 "partial" mobilization and are over-represented among wartime casualties. Non-governmental minority rights groups like [Free Buryatia](#) have also been declared "extremist," putting their members at risk of prosecution.

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