BALTIC RIM ECONOMIES

SPECIAL ISSUE ON UKRAINE'S INTEGRATION TO WEST

February 2024
ISSUE no. 1

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Centrum Balticum

ISSN 1459-9759

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(responsible for writer invitations)

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Data protection description

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URPO KIVIKARI

Ukraine allying with the West

Expert article • 3536

Ten years ago – shortly before the unpredictable and aggressive Russia attacked Ukraine – I publicly put forward the idea of Ukraine as the "the Switzerland of Eastern Europe". I believed, naively and referring to many kinds of evidence, that a democratic Ukraine outside any Western alliances and protected by definite international security guarantees could be an acceptable alternative for Ukraine itself, for the West and also for Russia.

Ukraine might never have accepted such a status. However, in any case, the decisive factor turned out to be that due to Russia, which has proven to be a completely unreliable party to any agreement and a ruthless aggressor, Ukraine can only develop into a democratic state governed by the rule of law as a member of the EU and NATO.

The road to the membership of alliances is long and winding. If two NATO member states, Turkey and Hungary, have managed to delay the accession of the fully NATO-compliant Sweden, we can hardly imagine the kinds of delays and obstacles Ukraine will face.

Ukraine's political, social and economic development will re-commence once the country returns to peace. Only time will tell when and how this will happen. Settling for any kind of temporary peace is not possible; what is needed is lasting stability that will guarantee Ukraine's viability as a state, secure its borders and ensure support from international politics.

The country's physical reconstruction and the development of its institutions to meet the requirements of the EU and NATO will require huge efforts from both Ukraine and the two alliances preparing for its membership. One can be certain that many non-EU and non-NATO democracies and international organisations will also come to Ukraine's aid.

And what about the root of all evil, Russia, guilty of countless war crimes? Russia has hardly ever met its responsibility for the damage it has caused; quite the contrary, it has made the innocent opponent pay for the costs of the war. As an innocent victim of the Winter War of 1939-40, Finland had to agree to cede parts of its territory and, after the end of the Second World War, pay heavy war reparations.

According to Russia's narrative, the country's legacy of the wars it has been involved in only consists of heroic deeds. Eastern European countries were severely disciplined and exploited by the Soviet Union for decades. It will not be a bad solution for Ukraine if Russia is successfully kept apart from the country's future development.

For the EU Member States, Ukraine's membership preparations and actual membership will mean a major re-direction of financing flows. Almost all net recipients of EU funds will become payers, which will definitely influence the realisation of Ukraine's membership. Non-financial rules and practices also need to be reformed.

In connection with previous expansions, the EU has been far too trusting, even gullible, in accepting the status of new Member States as "democratic states governed by the rule of law". At the turn of the 1990s, Hungary called its preparations for the transition "Blue Ribbon", once held by the fastest transatlantic ocean liner. Indeed, Hungary's Ship of State moved faster than its peers from socialism to democracy and capitalism and earned its imaginary ribbon.

Twenty years later, from 2010 onwards, Hungary's position began to change radically. The country's development with regard to democracy, the rule of law and the media environment has been in a downward spiral. Confrontations with the EU are commonplace. Hungary is generally opposed to assisting Ukraine and is the only EU country to openly present itself as a friend of Putin and Russia.

Once established, liberal democracy is not something that continues to exist without any effort but rather a delicate system that requires constant vigilance and reinforcement. Perhaps the EU will come to fully understand this and set requirements, for both new and old Member States, that in practice correspond better with the EU's values and practices.

Among the member states of NATO, Ukraine's bid to join the alliance is probably of particular interest to Turkey, which is located across the Black Sea from Ukraine. If Georgia's long road to NATO leads the country to its intended destination, the Black Sea would become a NATO sea like the Baltic Sea, with the exception of the Russian coastal area. This is hardly what Russia expected from its so-called special military operation in Ukraine.

Urpo Kivikari
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KATERYNA RASHEVSKA

Special demographic operation: Ukrainian children for Russia

Expert article • 3537

As of the end of December 2023, according to the National Information Bureau, at least 19,546 Ukrainian children were deported to 57 regions of the Russian Federation. In contrast, Russian senior officials claim that over 730,000 minor citizens of Ukraine have crossed the border towards their State since the onset of the full-scale invasion. The situation concerning the forcible displacement of Ukrainian children remains dynamic and complements the policy of Russification of the civilian population in the occupied territories.

The actions of the Russian Federation, pursuing *de facto* appropriation of Ukrainian children, have elements of wide scale and systematic violations. These are not sporadic side-effects of the armed conflict but rather a State policy aimed at achieving several goals simultaneously.

In the short term, Russia is interested in using Ukrainian children as a bargaining chip, a means to manipulate Ukraine and compel it to engage in the negotiation. In the medium term, the objective is to plant a delay-action bomb by indoctrinating children under Russian control and stimulating internal conflict in Ukraine through their unsystematic return. On the strategic front, the goal of the Russian Federation is to re-educate Ukrainian children and mold them into Russian patriots, addressing both demographic and geopolitical challenges.

Children as bargaining chips

The repatriation of Ukrainian children deported by Russia is a key element of the Ukrainian Peace Formula and a central objective of the Bring Kids Back UA State plan. As of the end of December 2023, official data indicates that Ukraine returned 387 deported children from Russia. In each case, parents, assisted by competent Ukrainian authorities and non-governmental organizations, encountered a series of obstacles deliberately imposed by the Russian Federation for family reunification, including refusals to recognize Ukrainian documents, coercion for Russian citizenship, genetic tests, and arbitrary detentions. Orphans face further challenges as Russia insists they are now Russian citizens.

Faced with these circumstances, Ukraine is actively seeking a unified legal mechanism for the repatriation of deported children with the support of the international community. Such a mechanism would accelerate the pace of returns and mitigate potential violations of the rights of legal representatives.

Today, the return of children remains almost the only area where an *ad hoc* negotiation process occurs between Ukraine and Russia through a third party, namely Qatar. Consequently, the Russian Federation is achieving its short-term goal. While some Ukrainian officials view these negotiations as a foundation for potential agreements in other areas, Russia appears to maintain a position of imposing its own conditions. For Ukraine to safeguard children and fulfill its own obligations, it must accede to some conditions.

Source of internal conflict

The return of children abducted by Russia is in the focus of attention of Ukrainian society and the international community. Consequently, the Russian Federation plans to exploit the sensitivity of this topic to incite new riots and anti-government actions.

At the same time, challenges arise after the children's return, particularly concerning their rehabilitation and reintegration. Those who have been under the influence of Russian propaganda for almost 10 years face the task of integrating into Ukrainian society, ensuring the avoidance of stigmatization by compatriots. On the other hand, there is a risk of spreading the influence of the Russian Federation through these children and their parents, impacting political processes within Ukraine. Currently, the state lacks a well-developed mechanism to respond to the outlined challenges, and the responsibility for rehabilitation and reintegration falls on the shoulders of the non-governmental community.

Special demographic operation

The Institute of Demographic Policy named after D. I. Mendeleev insists that the question of the size of the [Russian] population has transformed into a challenge for the country's ability to manage the increasing intensity of international economic, political, and military conflicts. In 2021 President Vladimir Putin identified demography as the primary problem facing Russia. In response, new federal programs are being introduced, interdepartmental cooperation is being established, and thematic conferences are being held to address this pressing issue.

One of the factors contributing to the demographic crisis in Russia is the male excessive mortality, influenced, in particular, by significant losses during the full-scale invasion. Furthermore, the birth rate in the Russian Federation has steadily decreased since 2015. According to the UN, if the current demographic conditions persist, the population of Russia is predicted to decrease by approximately 17% in fifty years. The top leadership of the state cannot allow this, as the main national idea is the multiplication of the people of Russia. Therefore, plans for national strengthening involve leveraging deported Ukrainian children, who, through transfer to Russian families, political indoctrination, and militarization, have their Ukrainian identity eradicated, transforming them into Russian patriots. These actions, potentially accompanied by arbitrary changes in personal data the child's place of detention, exhibit elements of genocide against the Ukrainian nation.

Melting pot

Exploiting the vulnerability of children, Russia eradicates their identity and pursues its own national interests. Ukrainian minors are viewed as a human and economic resource for the Russian Federation, a potential future mobilization reserve. Allowing Ukrainian children to remain under the control of the aggressor State implies permitting it to commit new international crimes with impunity. Time is working against Ukraine. Given the current dynamics, it would take 90 and a half years to return only the identified minors. This underscores the urgency of international cooperation to compel Russia to adhere to the norms of international law and to save Ukrainian children.

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ELINA VALTONEN

Ukraine has the right to determine its own future

Expert article • 3538

Ukrainians have bravely kept on defending their country and independence for almost two years. Russia's illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine has permanently changed the European security order. Ukraine is fighting not only for its very existence and freedom but also for our common values: democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for international law.

Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine was preceded by a long period of flagrant violations against Ukraine's sovereignty and integrity. Today we understand that the international community should have reacted earlier and in a more determined manner. It is now our utmost duty to remain committed to the Ukrainian cause and to support Ukraine by all possible means, including economic, humanitarian and military assistance.

Ukraine has shown strong commitment to Western integration as the country has applied for membership in both the European Union and NATO. The Orange Revolution in 2004-2005 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 clearly illustrated the will of the Ukrainian people: a deepened European integration and a stronger adherence to the values that we cherish in Europe and share with our partners. Thousands of Ukrainians, both civilians and soldiers have given their lives defending these values.

Finnish people were shocked when Russia started its full-scale aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. Our history enabled us to empathize with Ukraine's plight. 84 years ago the Soviet Union attacked Finland in the same way: an unprovoked aggression against a peaceful neighbor, legitimized with disinformation and trumped-up accusations. During the Cold War, Finland had to balance between the East and the West, constantly striving to avoid falling into the Soviet orbit. For Finland, much like for Ukraine, membership in the EU in 1995 signified an important step in European integration. In 2022, the Russian war in Ukraine provided the catalyst for the Finnish people to turn in favour of NATO membership and in April 2023 our membership was finalized. It finalized once and for all our integration to the West.

Like Finland, every nation, including Ukraine, has the right to independently determine its own security solutions and the development of its society. Ukraine and its people have chosen their path and embraced European values and norms - an open source recipe of successful societies and economies. In turn, we have welcomed the sovereign choice of Ukrainians. The European approach involves being open to new states that wish to join, supporting them in the development of their societies until they reach the expected standards. This is exactly how the EU now proceeds with Ukraine. We provide support and assistance for Ukraine to bring about the societal transformation required to embed European democratic values into the structures of society. Ukraine has acknowledged this understanding and taken its task seriously.

It took Ukraine only days to submit the official application for the EU membership after the start of the full-scale war. This illustrates the importance of the European Union for Ukraine. Fast forward to December 2023, the European heads of states made the historic decision to open accession negotiations with Ukraine on the premise that Ukraine has made substantial progress on meeting the required steps of reform.

During the decades of its independence, Ukraine has been a country often characterized by a relatively weak state, but a vibrant civil society. The ongoing reforms aim to improve the quality of public administration and thus make the state stronger. In the process, the rights of the individual must be duly taken into account. The de-oligarchisation and anti-corruption measures need to be accompanied with reforms strengthening the rule of law. These changes will not only help Ukraine progress on its path towards the EU and NATO but, above all, improve the lives of Ukrainians. Reforms embody the very ideals for which Ukrainians fight. Finland stands firmly with Ukraine and supports Ukraine on its EU path and further Western integration. This means cooperation and sharing of experience towards meeting the requirements. A strong democracy and rule of law represent the very essence of European integration.

Elina Valtonen
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Finland

MARGUS TSAHKNA

The world has the power to help Ukraine win the war

Expert article • 3539

The people of Ukraine are right now bearing the brunt of Russia's horrific violence in the large-scale aggression that has lasted for two years.

However, Russia's wider war is against all of us who wish to live freely in a rules-based world of sovereign states. This war did not start in Ukraine and, if the world makes the same mistakes it has previously made in its dealings with Russia, then it will not end in Ukraine either.

The war is already not confined to Ukraine. Russia has been waging a global hybrid war, weaponizing everything from energy to human trafficking while seeking out any opportunity to polarise, corrupt, and undermine free societies. This war is in every domain, including online where every country has a border vulnerable to Russia.

Russia's war in Ukraine and its impact on us all is a challenge we cannot opt out of facing. Countries in the region, in Europe and all over the world are realising more and more clearly that the end of this war will determine the future security architecture of Europe and the world we continue to live in. Contrary to what we hoped in the early 1990s, Russia will not return to being a peaceful state within our rules-based international system if only we ignore its atrocities and let it keep its latest gains from its aggression.

The only way to end Russia's aggression is to continue supporting Ukraine with all possible means until the war is won. We have more than enough power to achieve this.

An analysis by Estonia's Ministry of Defence shows Russia can be defeated if the nations of the free world allocate just 0.25 per cent of their GDP towards military assistance to Ukraine per year. Estonia has already decided to do so for the upcoming years. We will all always pay a bigger price in the future if we delay this.

Across our country right now, I see the incredible energy of people working together through both the state and civic society to support our Ukrainian friends to victory and beyond. Over this winter, we have been working to keep the power on with supplies and aid to Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Our people have also been donating and delivering everything from warm clothing to frontline saunas.

Just recently, we also established the Tallinn Mechanism as a coalition of allies to help strengthen Ukraine against cyberattacks. Along with our efforts to boost military cyber defence through the IT Coalition, this will ensure Ukraine's civilian cyber defences are systematically supported by donor countries and their own tech industries both in the short and long term.

In addition, Estonia has already started and continues to reconstruct Ukraine. It is of great importance that the rebuilding takes place as a joint public, private and civic initiative. From the entrepreneurs' perspective there is a fascinating outlook for establishing long-term connections, and opportunities for innovating designs and granting jobs. We have partnered with the Zhytomyr region where we recently helped re-open the Malyn Bridge and complete a kindergarten. Work is underway to build family homes for large foster families taking in children orphaned by Russia's attacks.

Helping Ukrainian children is vitally important, as they are among the most vulnerable and are suffering immensely under the horrors of war. Russia's aggression has left many of them without a family, a home and friends. No child should bear those losses and suffer under such fear. It is our duty in the international community to do everything at our disposal to bring back more than 20 000 deported Ukrainian children as well as to ensure that the criminals who are responsible are brought to justice. I am proud that there are Estonian civil society activists who have played an active role in returning Ukrainian children from Russia – every child reunited with their parents brings immeasurable joy.

At the same time, the international community must ensure that Russia will be held accountable for all the crimes it has committed in the war, including the crime of aggression. Russia's leadership has to face an international special tribunal.

It was Ukraine's political vision to live in a democratic, free Europe. That goal is what prompted Russia to invade Ukraine – the fear that Ukraine will be lost forever for the Russian empire. However, Ukraine has chosen its path. It is a path that is firmly anchored in the European Union. The recent decision to start EU accession negotiations with Ukraine is historic and a step towards victory.

The world did not give up on the Baltic States when we were occupied. It never recognised Moscow's illegal annexation of the Baltic countries. We knew that there were friends in the free world who did not give up supporting us. Fortitude brought us out from the swamp of occupation. Just as we are free today, so too must be all of Ukraine. Making sure that it will happen sooner rather than later is very much in our hands as supporters of Ukraine.

Margus Tsahkna
Minister of Foreign Affairs
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KRIŠJĀNIS KARIŅŠ

Ukraine forging its future towards the EU

Expert article • 3540

A decade ago, Ukrainians took to the streets in protest of the decision to abandon the EU–Ukraine Association Agreement, aimed to forge closer political and economic ties. The Euromaidan events clearly manifested the "European choice" and how the people of Ukraine see themselves and their country. The historic decision by EU leaders at the December European Council to open accession negotiations with Ukraine is not just a mere gesture of goodwill or a geopolitical signal to a country holding out against Russia's aggression. It is first and foremost the EU's response to the Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations of Ukrainians and our acknowledgment of the solid progress made by Ukraine in implementing a broad reform agenda.

The "European choice" manifested at the Euromaidan stands even stronger today, ten years later, when Ukrainians are bravely fighting the unjustified and unprovoked Russia's war of aggression. This bloody war has not prevented Ukraine from successfully implementing the necessary reforms to move even closer to the EU. On the contrary, Russia's war has further highlighted the profound need for Ukraine to be a part of the European Union and has driven decision-makers to step up the reform agenda. Ukraine has already implemented a vast amount of reforms in very complex areas, not least in the judicial sector, the fight against corruption and the protection of national minorities.

The reality of the EU enlargement is that it is a Union for the willing. The country acceding is the one that expresses its determination to join. By taking over the common set of rights and obligations that constitute the body of EU law, the country demonstrates its readiness to accept and its capacity to implement values, norms, and standards of the European Union.

As one of the countries that experienced the transformative EU integration process and joined the EU 20 years ago, Latvia has been a staunch supporter of EU enlargement. That is why I am particularly proud of the European Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. The EU's decision is important not only for Ukraine, but also for the EU itself. With a clear track-record, enlargement has played a crucial role in political stabilization and promoting the values of democracy, justice, and the rule of law in the acceding countries. It is in the wider interest of Europe to support Ukraine's efforts to strengthen those values as well. Furthermore, with Ukraine joining the EU's Single Market we will become even more competitive on the global stage.

2024 will be another important year for Ukraine in stepping closer to the EU. We have taken a historic decision; nevertheless, there is still work to be done to fully launch the negotiating process. This will include a screening to assess the level of alignment with the EU legislation as well as the preparation and adoption of the negotiating framework. The accession process takes time and a lot of reform and therefore it will require constant attention and commitment from both Ukraine and the EU.

From its part, Latvia will continue to fully support Ukraine in this process and share our own experience and expertise. Over two decades, Latvia has developed itself as a strong advocate for democratic transition processes, modern and smart governance solutions, socio-economic change and gender equality. We will continue to share our own transformation experience through joining the EU, NATO and OECD, as well as our innovations and best practices. Latvia is already one of the biggest assistance providers to Ukraine, our support reaching almost 1 % of GDP. Among many other activities, our development cooperation projects aim to foster Ukraine's EU integration process in fields such as agriculture, SMEs and good governance.

Accession of any new Member States also initiates internal processes within the EU. It will be necessary to adapt EU policies, institutions and budget to ensure continued effective functioning of EU institutions and the effective integration of the new Member States. This is not a new process and the EU has managed to adapt to major changes throughout its history, including the simultaneous accession of ten countries in 2004. The existing Treaties of the EU, which prepared the Union for its last rounds of enlargements, are fit to successfully welcome Ukraine into our club as well.

The EU and the Member States individually have their role to play in supporting enlargement. We have been working on the Ukraine Facility – an instrument that would provide predictable financial support for short-term State and recovery needs, as well as for Ukraine's medium-term reconstruction, reforms and modernization. This work needs to be finalized without delay and brought to life by approving the necessary funding for the Ukraine Facility.

To fully realize its vision for the future, Ukraine is defending and liberating its territory every single day. The year 2023 ended with increased illegal and brutal attacks by Russia on Ukraine's territory, including targeting and killing civilians and destroying homes and civilian infrastructure. 2024 has begun in the same way. EU Member States must provide all necessary military assistance until Ukraine's victory.

With this EU enlargement we are forging Europe's future, and now is the time to take confident decisions. We owe it not only to the founding fathers of the EU who built it as a peace project but to our future generations, who deserve prosperity, peace and security in Europe.

Krišjānis Kariņš
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Latvia

ANDRIUS KUBILIUS

Why is Ukraine's membership needed for the EU itself?

Expert article • 3541

The decision of the European Council last December to open accession negotiations for Ukraine' EU membership is of particular historical significance because Ukraine's accession to the EU fundamentally changes the long-term development perspective of the whole European continent.

The enlargement process of the EU depends largely on the political will of the European Union itself: in the late 1990s, the EU negotiations with the Central European and Baltic countries lasted just 3-4 years and were fruitful, while the integration process of the Western Balkans, which began almost 20 years ago, is not moving at all, because the EU has declared that it is "tired of enlargement" and no longer has a "hunger for enlargement".

Ukraine's integration process can and must bring back to the EU the "hunger for enlargement". The strategic importance of such an enlargement for the EU should be made clear by Russia's war against Ukraine, which started two years ago. Lasting peace on the European continent can only be achieved if the EU's efforts fulfill two essential conditions: a) that the EU has the political will to provide sufficient military support to Ukraine, and b) that the EU has the political will to do all it can to ensure that Ukraine becomes a member of the EU by 2030.

There are three main reasons why the European Union should see Ukraine's membership by 2030 as its key strategic objective:

1. The only way to build Ukraine's economic success

The history of the successful economic development over the last two decades of the Central European and Baltic countries as EU members is a clear evidence that in the post-Soviet space, economic success can only be created if a country has the potential to become an EU member state and, at the same time, part of the EU's rich Common Market. My country, Lithuania, started negotiations for EU membership in 1999. In 1999, Lithuania's GDP per capita in PPP terms was only 36% of the EU average. After Lithuania became the EU member in 2002, its economic development has been so rapid that nowadays the same indicator of Lithuania's economic development already reaches 90% of the EU average

Ukraine's economic development is now only at the level Lithuania had reached in 1999: Ukraine's GDP/capita in PPP terms is now only 36% of the EU average. For various geopolitical reasons, largely beyond Ukraine's control, the country has not been able to join the European Union at a time when the Central European and Baltic States have successfully followed this path. This has led to the current enormous economic gap between Ukraine and Central Europe. However, it is necessary to remember that Ukraine in the 1990s was equal in economic development to its neighboring Poland. There is a clear evidence that if Ukraine were to become a member of the EU, it would very quickly replicate the path of Central European successful economic development. This means that over the next 20 years upon becoming an EU member, Ukraine would practically catch up with the EU's average level of economic development. It also means that EU businesses investing in the economy of Ukraine, as an EU member state, would have made huge profits and increased the value of their investments several times over 20 years. An economically wealthy Ukraine would also increase the EU's own economic power. And of course, an economically successful Ukraine, as a member of the EU, would extend European success and stability far to the East. This would also be a clear strategic benefit for the EU.

2. Elimination of security grey areas on the European continent

One of the reasons why Putin decided to wage the war against Ukraine was that the West had for decades left Ukraine in a "security grey area" with no clear prospects of becoming a member of the EU or NATO. This created a temptation for Putin to believe that the West would not defend Ukraine, leaving it in Russia's "zone of interests".

Today it is clear that peace and security on the European continent can only be realized when Russia ceases to be a source of neo-imperialist aggression. There is a famous quote by Z. Brzezinski that Russia, which has the opportunity to control Ukraine, will always remain an empire, and only Russia, which loses this opportunity, will have the chance to become a normal European state. Ukraine's accession to the EU is therefore also important in the sense that it will remove one of the most dangerous "security grey areas" on the European continent. This will also, in the long term, help Russia to become a normal state. Achieving such a change on the European continent should be the EU most important long-term strategic objective.

3. An inspiration for change in the wider post-Soviet East

After the 1990s, the post-Soviet space, separated for decades from the democratic Western world by the Iron Curtain, is undergoing huge transformation: the values of democracy and the European rule of law are slowly but surely spreading from the western fringes of this space to the eastern side, still riddled with authoritarianism and underdevelopment. Central Europe and the Baltic States at the beginning, now Ukraine and Moldova and Georgia (Sakartvelo) are following the same path. Armenia is rushing to follow the example, since it is attractive and contagious, because it is the only way to create success in the post-Soviet space.

By helping Ukraine to become a member of the EU and thus a successful country, the European Union will also inspire positive change in the populations of Russia and Belarus, South Caucasus and Central Asia, who also want to live in their own normal countries. The window of opportunity for the EU to make such an impact on a broad region has a very clear name: "Ukraine's success". And such an Ukrainian success can only be created by the European Union realising the ambitious plan of "Ukraine becoming a member of the EU".

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ARTIS PABRIKS

The value of Ukrainian EU and NATO membership

Expert article • 3542

In December 2023, the EU Council approved beginning of accession talks with Ukraine. It required more than 10 years and sufferings of Russian invasion for Ukraine to reach this historic moment. In 2012, immediately after EU-Ukraine Association agreement was drafted, it was met by harsh objections from neighbouring Russia. Moscow saw Ukraine as its colonial property and Ukrainian attempts to forge closer ties with EU was correctly interpreted in Moscow as an end to Russian domination over this country.

Several steps were taken to punish Ukraine and reverse its attempts of European integration. **Economically**, Russia chose to target Ukrainian pro European camp. For instance, future President's Poroshenko business of Ukrainian chocolate products were prohibited to import to Russia. **Politically**, Russia also warned Ukraine about possible social and political unrest in country and threatened Ukraine that any attempts to integrate closer with the rest of Europe would violate Russian-Ukrainian Strategic partnership and Friendship Treaty (2000). It would mean dire consequences.

Soon Russia moved to implement these threats in order to halt Ukrainian sovereign decision to move Westwards. In early 2014 it started **military** intervention in Ukraine. In early 2014 Russia occupied several Ukrainian territories in the eastern part of country and annexing Crimean peninsula. The war between countries has started. In February 24, 2022 Russia initiated a full scale invasion in Ukraine aiming to occupy whole country but have met fierce Ukrainian resistance.

Up to this moment this is the largest war in Europe since WW2. It has claimed lives of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and forced millions of civilians to become refugees. However, Russia failed to subdue Ukrainians and failed to break their will to exercise their sovereign right to choose ones own way of life as well as freely choose alliances.

Moreover, Russian invasion and its unprecedented brutality against Ukrainian civil and military personal, countless war crimes have set apart both nations, homogenised Ukrainian population in defence of their freedom and strengthened country's pro European choice. On February 28, 2022 Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky submitted a letter of application for EU membership.

Ukrainian EU accession is difficult to compare with other accessions due to different circumstances and very high stakes un Ukrainian and EU side. For instance, country has to implement all EU criteria and simultaneously fight a war against Russian invasion, something unseen previously. At the same time Ukrainian EU membership would be highly important for the European Union itself, since it would determine Union's geopolitical future, may be even the geopolitical future of the whole Western society.

Similarly to other accession cases, Ukrainian EU membership would bolster internal reforms, open doors for investments and cooperation, and give Ukraine a vote in Brussels where most of decisions regarding contemporary Europe is taken. EU membership would also make Ukrainian post war recovery from Russian destruction much faster, and hopefully give slightly more security against future Russian invasion which will remain the threat for all its neighbours in the foreseeable future.

However, the European Union would greatly benefit from Ukrainian membership in a different way. Namely, Ukrainian EU membership might reverse the negative trend of EU global geopolitical decline. Also it would be prove that European nations can stand against Russian or any other totalitarian threat and counter it. Therefore its important that EU is using all its capacity to assist Ukraine to win the war against Russian aggressors and after the war reconstruct Ukraine in a speedy manner. It would serve as an example to Russian and Belarusian society proving that democratic freedom and economic prosperity are mutually intertwined. Along with that Ukrainian membership might bring additional economic growth to Central, Eastern and Northern Europe, thus decreasing the differences between EU Western and Eastern regions. Additionally, Ukraine would be a great contributor to continental security. After the war with Russia it would have one of the largest, experienced, and technologically developed military force and military industry in Europe. But most of all Ukrainian society would have a political will to defend European values, if needed, with arms in their hands. Something, what modern European societies might have lost.

Finally, Ukrainian EU membership is closely associated with country's NATO membership. Statistically, most of the latest EU members have joined the Union **after** they joined NATO. Besides, without NATO membership Ukraine and in fact the whole Europe will never be whole and safe from its totalitarian neighbour. Therefore, if the Western world wants to increase its security, bolster economic prosperity and strengthen its geopolitical positions, speedy Ukrainian accession to EU and NATO is the only correct answer to Western political and economic and security challenges.

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Rt Hon CHARLES CLARKE

Challenges to face

Expert article • 3543

The Russian attack on Ukraine 10 years ago was a turning point in post-World War 2 European history and geopolitics. It set in motion a series of events, as yet incomplete, which are changing the whole balance of European power and forcing a number of unexpected conclusions of which I identify four here.

The most important lesson of all is the clarification that the future of Ukraine lies in its European relationships, notably with the European Union and NATO, with Europe's norms of democracy and society. This was not clear before 2014. Ukraine's geopolitical alignment was very much a contested area within Ukrainian politics and national life. There was a genuine dispute. On one side were those who believed that Ukraine's future lay with its historic relationship with Russia, even if not actually as part of Russia, as Putin and his colleagues preferred. On the other side many Ukrainians shared the ambition that Ukraine should be part of the European Union and NATO.

Putin's assault upon Ukraine in 2014, reinforced by the further invasion on February 22nd 2022, has categorically resolved that conflict within Ukraine, and not in his favour. Putin's aggression, cynicism and the destruction he wrought has made it absolutely clear – inside and outside the country - that Ukraine's future does not lie with, still less within, Russia. This clarity has come at great cost to the Ukrainian people though a national Ukrainian unity has undoubtedly been created, which has become the pro-European, pro-internationalist path for the country's future. This destination has become inevitable, even though the tribulations on the path to achieving it remain great and the exact process cannot be predicted.

Second, as a result of these events, the rest of the world is increasingly incoherent in working out how best to deal with contemporary Russia. Trust, which, even in the depth of the Cold War still existed, has now disappeared completely and other powers simply do not know how to set about dealing with Russia, at least under its current leadership. Fantasies of leadership change in Russia abound but there is no confidence that such fantasies can come to pass at a time of uncertain American leadership reinforced by worries about a second Trump presidency uncommitted to NATO and its doctrines. It is now urgent for the rest of the world and particularly for Europe to work out the security framework which is likely to be most successful in containing an unreliable Russia.

Russia has never gone through any process of coming to terms with its own past in the 20th century in relation both to Ukraine and to other parts of Europe, such as the Baltic states. It is very difficult to see how a stable future can be created until Russia does come to terms with its past in the way that Germany has successfully been able to do in relation to its Nazi history and to find a very successful means of moving forward.

Third, the Russian invasion forced, and increasingly drives, re-examination of the world's post 1945 international arrangements, based around the United Nations and Security Council. These lasted fairly successfully for over 60 years but it is now clear that the UN system has been unable either to prevent or to heal conflicts such as that between Russia and Ukraine. This is also true in other situations around the world, but nowhere more seriously than those areas which involve Russia, which remains a member of the Security Council. We are still a long way from finding mechanisms of international cooperation to reinforce or replace the UN arrangements, but if the UN is not to follow the fateful path of its predecessor League of Nations, new creativity will have to go into forging institutional frameworks which can be successful in practice.

This all takes place at a time when US hegemony around the world is far weaker than it used to be for a variety of reasons. This means that the different approaches which will have to be developed to deal with Russia will also have to be applied to threats in other parts of the world such as those in the Middle East and in relation to China and Taiwan.

Fourth, it has taken a long time, but Europe, whether through the prism of the EU or of NATO, is gradually being forced to the realisation that it needs a stronger and more coherent political, diplomatic, military and industrial focus upon its security needs. The full implications of this are not yet clear, but it is now certain that this reassessment has to take place and that the traditional Franco – German alignment will not suffice as a means of addressing these questions. The countries of eastern and central Europe, including those that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, will have an increasing voice in determining how Europe secures itself against an unpredictable Russia, with whom there are few functioning relationships.

These are all major challenges which the events of and since 2014 have sharply clarified. Over the next 10 years we will have to find answers, none of which are at all easy.

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PEKKA TOVERI

Integrating the Ukrainian military to the West

Expert article • 3544

As the Russian aggression and attack on Ukraine moves to its third year, it has become very clear that President Putin has not given up his ambitions. He still aims to stop Ukraine´s integration to Western Europa and make Ukraine Russia´s vassal state. Final aim seems to be to destroy Ukraine as culture, language, and nation. Since the war has not been too successful for Russia so far, hurting its economy and military very hard, Putin may be willing to accept some delay in his plans. A temporary peace in Putin´s terms would give Russia time to rebuild its military force and prepare for a new offensive in suitable time.

The acceptable terms would probably mean area concessions from Ukraine, restrictions on the size and capabilities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and a Ukraine´s neutral status without integration to EU or NATO. This would be only a temporary peace aiming to give Russia time to recover from the huge losses it has encountered during the war and to continue to isolate Ukraine from its Western supporters through hybrid operations especially on the information sphere. Same time the seeds of the next war would be spread, because even a limited win would empower Putin and his closest supporters. They would see the West´s actions as signs of weakness and as permission to handle the Ukraine issue as Kreml wants.

All this would be a grave mistake from the Western leaders. Conquering Ukraine some years later would just empower the Russian leadership to challenge West directly. In Putin´s mind, there is really an ideological war going on between the West and Russia, and the real threat to his regime are the western values, such as personal freedoms, democracy, functioning independent legal system etc. To weaken the West is what Putin craves, Ukraine is only a sidestep. Russia wants to dominate the Europe and it wants to have a European security system without USA.

Therefore, the only way to have lasting peace in Europe, is to support Ukraine so that it can push Russian armed forces from its areas, followed by integration of Ukraine not only to the Western democratic values and systems, but also to our economic and defence systems through membership in EU and NATO. That would show Russia that the Ukraine´s eastern border is the limit of Russia´s power, and that challenging that border would come at cost that Russia couldn´t afford.

Since Russia doesn´t hesitate to use military power to reach its aims, crucial part of that Ukraine´s integration will be the military integration. Whether the war ends to Russian withdrawal or temporary peace on Russian terms, Ukrainian armed forces will probably emerge from the war as the most battle hardened and experienced force in Europe. It´s size will make it probably even after de-mobilization one of the biggest if not the biggest in Europe, and it will be supported by very strong and innovative domestic defence industry with capability to produce high-technology systems and weapons.

Integration of Ukraine´s Armed Force to NATO would be mutually beneficial. Ukraine could get the needed support to train its forces and leaders capable to conduct complex joint operations and combined arms combat in fluid fast moving operations. NATO could learn how to fight the Russian forces and weapon systems and how to fight the tactical fight in modern demanding battlefield infested with electronic warfare capabilities, mines, artillery, and drones. NATO could help Ukraine to build modern Navy and Air Force and Ukraine could teach NATO how to utilize Uncrewed Surface Vessels and other innovative technologies in modern naval operations plus how to defend against complex missile and drone attacks.

With Western support Ukraine could become the military power of Europe, which Russia couldn´t ignore when planning to challenge West. Ukraine in NATO would mean that the strategic balance in Black Sea region would tilt strongly to NATO´s favour. Same way as the Finnish and soon following Swedish NATO membership has changed the strategic balance in Baltic Sea strongly against Russia. This would force, if not Putin, at least his follower, to accept that Russia´s possibilities to challenge West are very limited and hopefully it would guarantee long lasting peace.

Integrating Ukrainian Armed Forces would be a huge task. The mere size of the force combined with some old Soviet style structures and culture are big challenges. On the other hand, many of the Ukrainian officers and NCO´s have already been trained by NATO armies. Ukrainian military has also learned to use modern Western weapon systems during the war and Ukrainians have shown to be fast learners. And what is most important, the Ukrainian military is willing to change. Naturally this would be a two-way street. There is also lot that NATO armies can learn from the Ukrainians. Faster the integration happens, the better. Ukraine in NATO will make Europe safer.

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Victory of the European idea: Ukraine on the way to the EU

Expert article • 3545

Perseverance through challenges

After the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, Ukraine chose a European integration path.The will of the Ukrainian people was expressed in the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union. However, imperial Russia stood in the way. February 24, 2022 the Russian Federation began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russia's aggression takes people's lives every day, destroys housing and infrastructure, destroys the environment, and causes countless people's suffering. Ukraine defends itself and perseveres. We will protect our Independence and Freedom.

Despite these challenges of the war, Ukraine has not only maintained its course towards European integration but has also continued actively and confidently going to join the EU. My country has shown resilience and will in addressing internal challenges, particularly in the area of democratic European reforms.

Ukraine, which is currently fighting for its independence, also continues to make significant progress on its path to the EU.

We are implementing reforms in the judiciary, fighting corruption, and development of civil society. These steps clearly demonstrate Ukraine's determination to achieve European standards. We certainly share European values.

Despite the difficulties caused by Russia's invasion and hostilities on our territory, Ukraine maintains its ambitious national goal of becoming a full member of the European Union.

That requires a lot of effort, but it also gives the country the opportunity to change itself for the better and take a worthy place among the European nations, in the European community.

Opening the door to Europe: Start of accession negotiations

December 14, 2023, was a day marked by the historic decision of the European Council to start negotiations on the accession of Ukraine and Moldova to the European Union. This is an event that opens a new stage in Ukraine's history.

The negotiation process on Ukraine's accession to the European Union will begin with the approval of the negotiation framework in March of this year. This stage involves approval by all EU member states. This will be followed by the first intergovernmental conference for shaping the negotiation strategy.

The realistic date for Ukraine's accession to the EU - several years. This is how we are adjusted and ready to work.

We understand that this process includes full acceptance of the EU acquis communautaire and constant assessment of what Ukraine has achieved.

An essential aspect of this process is the harmonization of approximately 3,000 regulations to the European legislation. Ukraine will have to catch up with what the EU has been working on for years as well as adopt new regulations. Of the 4,400 regulations that need to be implemented, Ukraine has already fulfilled 1,400 and we continue to work.

Ukraine is on its way to joining the EU, but challenges and tasks motivate us to a nationwide effort. And we have enough confidence, perseverance, and a constant willingness to change.

Economic and market opportunities

The start of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the European Union is of great economic importance. This opens the path to significant opportunities that will contribute to the country's economic development and modernization. One of the initiatives that is actively operating is the "Ukraine Facility" program.

"Ukraine Facility" is a major government reform plan for which the European Union plans to provide €50 billion over the next four years. This program is aimed at supporting reforms in Ukraine. Among the priorities - fighting corruption, modernizing infrastructure, judiciary, developing education, healthcare and environmental protection.

Ukraine's accession to European economic markets offers many benefits and opportunities. The basic principle is the free movement of goods, capital services, which is mutually beneficial for Ukraine and all EU member states. Accession to the EU means greater access to European investments in green energy and introduction of modern environmental protection technologies in Ukraine.

These economic benefits are a significant incentive for Ukraine on its way to EU.

Steadfast faith and perseverance: Ukraine on its way to the EU

Ukraine continues its persistent path to the future. We have great faith in its success and European perspective.

Daily struggle for our future is a reality for Ukrainians. It is a continuous process of change, where every day civil society, parliament and government focus on reforms, on the development of civil society, the fight against corruption and the implementation of the rule of law.

Moving through the backdrop of challenges and difficulties, Ukraine is showing strength of spirit and unwavering will to achieve its goals. We do not stop on our way to the European Union. We are not alone. We are together with European partners. And that's why we are sure of victory.

I want to emphasize that Ukrainians are Europeans in spirit and outlook. Our place is in a united Europe, we have no doubt about that, and we are fighting for it now, shedding the blood of our best sons and daughters in the war against the Russian aggressor!

We are sure that the mosaic of the European community, complemented by Ukrainian yellow and blue colors, will become brighter and more complete.

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TYTTI TUPPURAINEN

Ukraine, Russia's war, and the Global South

Expert article • 3546

Since 2014 Ukraine has been fighting for her sovereignty and since February 2022 for her existence. Ukrainians' will to fight has astounded many outsiders. The country is, after all, one of the poorest in Europe. And its political system is unstable, and it is, by Ukrainians own admission, badly corrupted. Yet, Ukrainians are determined to fight, because whatever flaws their country has, it's citizens think it is still better alternative than to be sucked in the vortex of oppression and violence that is the Muscovite Russia.

Despite the fact that the war is about Ukraine, it has wider implications. Both Russia and Ukraine present it to outsiders as a war of the worldviews, two visions of the future. From the European Union's perspective this big picture of events is easy to accept. Indeed, for most Europeans the Russian aggression is seen as a historical landmark: it is the first time since the WWII when an aggressor's obvious goal is to conquer its neighbour completely or for the most part. (Iraqi dictator Saddam's hapless efforts in 1980's and 90's notwithstanding.) Also, seen from the West, Russia represents an authoritarian model of society forcing itself to its liberal neighbour.

The silence of the non-western world is for Europeans hard to understand. Yes, most of the world voted in the UN General Assembly to condemn Russian aggression. But after that gesture, nothing has happened: no political action, not to mention participating in sanctions against Russia. To the contrary, many countries buy Russian oil, naturally at a discount, and by doing that finance the Russian war machine. Moreover, the so-called BRICS block of which Russia is a founding party attracts more members and is about become a serious international organisation. Between the fight between good and evil, is it a draw?

The reason, or reasoning, behind many African, Asian, and Latin American political leaders' fence-sitting is said to be rooted in Europeans' past sins of colonisation. Ever since the 2014 Maidan revolution Ukrainians have declared that membership in European Union will anchor their country to the free world. Thus Ukraine is striving to become part of the Global West and sharing that moral burden. And Russia as a successor state of Soviet Union is remembered as a supporter of anti-colonial struggle.

For some the above-mentioned narrative is somewhat convincing, but in fact it has serious flaws. Firstly, the dismantling of Western European colonisation in Africa and Asia was to a large part peaceful and happened without Soviet Russian involvement. The second, and more serious flaw is that it is completely blind to Russian role in colonialism. Soviet Union was a colonial empire. Its successor state Russia is a prime example of neo-colonialism in its relationship with Central Asian and Caucasian states. And Russia's ambition vis-a-vis Ukraine is a classic example of old-school colonialism including restoration of past empire, emphasis on natural (agricultural) resources. Even the ideological component of colonialism is there: Russians concocting mythical history, seeing Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian people less valuable.

If one takes anti-colonialism as its face value, it does not begin to explain the so-called Global South's opinion regarding Russia's aggression. Simple and cynical calculations are a somewhat better explanation. Some countries may reap economic benefits as they can buy Russian energy or Russian raw materials at a discount price or smuggle western technology to Russia cutting their share of the sales. And, in the case of China, there may even be a future prospect of having war-weary Russia as a tributary state.

Yet these calculations are only a partial explanation. There are countries that may have some short-term benefits from continuation of the conflict. But then there are others that are clearly paying the price of war and even among those there is some aversion to Ukrainians' fight for freedom. In explaining these policies, one has to take the role different world views and ideologies into consideration: perhaps the Moscow's autocratic worldview has some resonance.

Thinking that ideologies have some influence in statecraft goes against the so-called realist approach to international politics. As the saying goes, states have no ideologies, only interests. Yes, perhaps, but then one has to see all existing state entities as being ideal polities, i.e., seeing that in these countries political leaders mostly represent the interests of their people. If instead there are states where interests of the political elites are not aligned with the interests of the general population, the state interest loses explanatory power. The case in point: is it really in the interest of an average Russian to close the borders with the Western Europe, to use the Russian industrial capacity for armament production, and risking being drafted into bloody war in Ukraine?

Taking ideologies as factors in states decision-making helps us to understand the significance of ongoing war in Ukraine. Parties of that war do represent opposite worldviews. Muscovite Russia does represent an autocracy, a system where nations leadership, and eventually its sole leader, guides the nations with a strategic vision. And Ukraine in turn is really an example of the opposite. It is a country whose political leadership has changed quite unexpectedly and whose national strategies have made a few 180 degree turns. Moreover, the grandiloquent position of the current US government, and equally noble EU's political declarations have a merit.

It is actually quite obvious that the autocratic model of government and autocratic ideologies appeal political elites around the world. In turn democratic systems and liberal values are labelled as "Western", idiosyncratically Euro-Atlanticist. Especially the Chinese government is consistent in its message: the democratic system of government may or may not fit Europe, but it does not help developing countries. The Chinese leadership is not alone, instead there is growing disbelief that idea of democracy is truly universal.

While Ukrainians fight for themselves their struggle has outsized geopolitical influence. If the political elites across the world find out that despite the overwhelming economic and technological superiority of the democratic nations, they are not able to support Ukraine, these elites surely draw conclusions. The only viable explanation must lie in the weakness of democratic political system: if really the attention span of democracies is just few months or few years, then autocrats do look like visionaries.

Blaming the whole of the Global South of their peoples' indifference only strengthens the position of antidemocratic leaders. It is most important to emphasize that democracy is not a western system of government and liberal values are not western values. They are universal. They are universal formally because they have been accepted by United Nations' decisions and documents. They are universal in substance: the silent women and men around the world are more likely than not to embrace a political system giving them right to decide their fate.

In the recent past the rivalry between liberal and autocratic systems was seen in the arena of the world economy. Today the battle between these worldviews is unfortunately very real. It is being fought on the plains and skies of European Ukraine.

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ROMAN SOHN, ARIANA GIC & HANNA HOPKO

The world needs an international "Justice Coalition" for Russian genocide against Ukrainians

Expert article • 3547

From the very onset of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in 2014, its criminal actions went beyond a war of territorial conquest, and pursued a genocidal objective.

Russian political and military leadership, and ordinary Russians in uniform and without them, have been committing deliberate, organized, systemic, and conscious actions, directed by the Russian state, to exterminate Ukrainians as a group with a shared collective national identity. For Moscow, genocide is the means of destroying the Ukrainian sovereign state.

For a decade, the criminal state of the Russian Federation has acted with impunity in its pursuit of the destruction of the Ukrainian nation. Rather than making the legal prosecution of perpetrators a cornerstone of the international response, the international community is dragging its feet on Russian genocide.

Many think of genocide as the brutal slaughter of helpless victims. When they see Ukrainians defending themselves and surviving, they often do not perceive Russian crimes as genocide.

But resistance does not make the crime of genocide any less real or true. In fact, the sites of Russian massacres which were carried out during occupation indicate that the fall of Ukraine would have resulted in a much higher death toll than the casualties Ukrainians are suffering while mounting their resistance.

Many also mistakenly believe that the crime of genocide was designed to capture mass killings. However, genocide is not so much about the number of victims being targeted, but about the perpetrator's intent to destroy a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

The international community has two main reasons for affording protection to such social groups.

First, the protected group itself is the subject of autonomous legal rights. By destroying the group, the perpetrator is eliminating the legal entitlements of that group.

For example, the existence of the Ukrainian national identity breathes life into the legal right of self-determination. By pursuing destruction of Ukrainians, Russia is, among other things, seeking to eradicate their entitlement to self-determination in order to create the conditions for the assimilation of the remaining denationalized people into Russians.

Second, we safeguard protected groups because the destruction of their collective identity as such is a distinct loss for humankind. A victimized group can be destroyed not just by physical elimination alone, but also by extermination of the shared identity of people, like, for example, through forcible transfer of children to another group.

There is widespread understanding that atrocities committed by Russians in Ukraine fall into the legal categories of actions which qualify as acts of genocide.

The systematic pattern of criminal actions, their targeted nature, and extensive evidence of incitement to genocide by public figures and state propaganda, leave no doubt that we can also attribute the intent to destroy Ukrainians as a group to those actions.

This intent to commit genocide did not start in Bucha or Irpin. Those massacres were the outcome of genocidal conditioning by the Russian state of its citizens to deny the existence of the Ukrainian identity, and to dehumanize and vilify Ukrainians in order to portray them as unworthy of existence.

The pattern of Russian genocidal crimes has not changed since 2014, only the scale has. It was in 2014, not 2022, that Ukraine filed its first submission with the European Court of Human Rights against Russia regarding the forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russian territory.

It is also evident that since 2014, Russia has been pursuing a directed strategy, underpinned by the ideology of ruscism, of destroying the national character of Ukrainians in all occupied territory through a coordinated plan of eradicating essential foundations of life within the group: national feelings, shared values, language, culture, history, religion, political, and social institutions. Instead, the Russian state has been forcibly replacing them with the totalitarian, chauvinistic, and imperialistic pattern of Russian society.

The world had been turning a blind eye to the genocidal objective of Russia's undeclared war on Ukraine until 2022, when seven countries – Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Canada, Lithuania, Czechia, and Ireland – made political declarations recognizing Russian genocide.

We call on these nations to lead a "justice coalition" that would drive legal and political action in international courts and organisations to stop Russian genocide, and bring its perpetrators to responsibility.

The crime of genocide is an attack on humanity, and the international community must employ the full force of law to help defend humankind from the Russian rogue state.

Expert article • 3547

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Social Resilience: Ukraine and Finland in the new era

Expert article • 3548

Over the past two years Ukraine and Finland emerged as close natural partners and allies. Winter war of the USSR against Finland in 1939-1940 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, started on the 24th of February 2022, are two examples of strong commitment of the Finnish and Ukrainian nations to freedom and "sisu" in different eras. In both cases the most critical factor that provides the foundation for Ukraine – Finland special closeness and friendship is social resilience.

In the times when we need to restore the rules-based international order, such societal resilience model could be an inspiration and a core idea.

In the 3rd year of illegal full-fledged Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and in the 10th year of Russia's brutal war against Ukraine **we have witnessed crucial transformation of economic and security landscape**. The international law and international institutions as well as basic principles of international coexistence is challenged by Russia and its proxies.

The positive news is that **we have been able to keep focus on true goals of Russia and its elites**, which includes deconstruction of democratic rules-based international order and division of the world into spheres of influence. It means reverting the world into XIX century model of balance of power. **Ukraine with partners on all continents kept a firm unity**, securing a massive resource to maintain the ability of Ukraine to survive and fight, as well as opening the doors of the European Union for Ukraine. Upcoming Global Peace Summit aimed at paving the way for implementation of all 10 points of the Peace Formula proposed by the President Zelenskyy in 2022 will be a crucial test to affirm commitment to true just and lasting peace by all members of the international community.

The bad news is that a just and lasting peace will be decided on the battlefield only. More than 500 missiles and drones fired by Russia against Ukrainian cities and towns in the end of December 2023 and in the first days of 2024 have clearly shown that Russia wouldn't stop until it is fully deprived of the ability to continue violence. Over two years of full-scale war of aggression **we have not been able to isolate Russia fully and swiftly, politically and economically from the international system**. As a result it continues to sit at the table of the UN Security Council, sell fossil energy resources, and has access even to chips for producing high-precise warfare needed to prepare new waves of missile attacks against Ukraine. However, the most challenging finding for all of us is **insufficiency of will or ability of the partners to invest in defense industries to the level which provides Ukraine promptly with necessary number of weapons and ammunition to secure effective liberation of all territories**. It gave Russia in 2023 a real chance to prepare an effective defense, deprived Ukraine of ability to gain substantial success on the battlefield and save thousands of lives.

The cost of strategic mistakes and delays is unbearable. It provides Russia with strong incentive to work hard with the Western audiences and elites planting seeds of so-called war fatigue, and ignite powerful and constant anticipation of violence in the Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world aiming at distraction of the focus from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The eventual goal of Russia's efforts is to fragmentize the world system, and undermine the trust of societies to the national governments and rule of law.

In this gloomy picture, one can see very bright glimpses of hope, generated by some of the closest Ukraine's partners and allies, including **Finland, which has proved to be a moral compass of Europe** in the sense of solidarity with Ukrainians and a role model in creating comprehensive vision of long-term political and practical assistance for Ukraine, which has been enshrined in Petteri Orpo's Government Program. Finland's posture is based on outstanding support and solidarity with Ukraine in all parts of the Finnish society and unanimous political consensus on the critical necessity to provide Ukraine with everything, needed for full restoration of sovereignty and territorial integrity, effective post-war recovery and modernization, as well as full integration of Ukraine to the EU and NATO as a key prerequisite of a just and lasting peace in Europe.

Finland's strategic and long-term approach to helping Ukraine is rooted in holistic resilience enshrined in the Finnish Comprehensive Security Model.

On the way to full restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and rebuilding a just and lasting peace in Europe, **the main prerequisite of success is strong and comprehensive resilience of our societies, capable to maintain internal stability, rule of law and true transparent competitiveness based on commonly accepted international rules in all spheres**. In this regard, Ukraine relies on the Finnish knowledge, experience and expertise for shaping together a new future, restoring security on the basis of the Peace Formula of President Zelenskyy as universal algorithm for a just and lasting international peace.

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VITALY CHERNETSKY

Ukrainian cultural diplomacy: Countering epistemic injustice as part of the war response

Expert article • 3549

Ukraine's spirited resistance in the face of Russia's full-scale invasion after February 24, 2022, came as a surprise for many international analysts. Many in the global expert community had to admit they knew little about Ukraine and had a habit of recycling uncritically absorbed stereotypes and ideological talking points, many of them of Russian imperialist origin. This realization prompted serious reflection, reckoning with the fact that the broader field of global and international studies, in all its aspects, from politics and economics to the cultural sphere, had a long history of marginalizing Ukrainian topics and ignoring or dismissing Ukrainian voices. In other words, the failure to understand Ukraine and appreciate its concerns testified to the existence of an entrenched pattern of epistemic injustice towards Ukraine.

Epistemic injustice is a relatively recent term in philosophical discourse that has been receiving an increasingly broader application, including situations related to colonialism and its aftermath. With advances in critical epistemology, we have become much more sensitive to the ways in which structures of knowledge systems and social power can marginalize or silence some perspectives or reveal gaps in collective interpretive resources. Within the discourse on epistemic injustice, pre-emptive testimonial injustice is identified as a particularly problematic variety. It describes the situations when it does not even occur to those in privileged positions that somebody speaking from a different position has anything of value to contribute; they pre-emptively dismiss the viewpoints and knowledge production stemming from that position. This is something that both Ukrainians and representatives of other cultures that were oppressed and marginalized within the context of the Russian and Soviet Empire had been dealing with at length.

The shocked realization, in the tragic circumstances of the war, of the extent of this problem led to spirited efforts to bring about change. These efforts came from both directions. In countries all over the globe, multiple events and projects were organized with the goal of listening to, platforming, and centering Ukrainian voices. Within this trend, countries of the Baltic Rim and East Central Europe have been the clear leaders. On the Ukrainian side, writers, filmmakers, musicians, visual artists, and other cultural producers, as well as intellectuals inside and outside academia embraced the responsibility of serving as informal ambassadors of Ukraine as a culture with rich historical heritage and contemporary innovative practices.

As the global community learns more about Ukraine and its recent cultural renaissance, the lessons of the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity stand out in prominence. Those months of protest highlighted the remarkable capacity for horizontal self-organization. Ukrainian civil society, in its rapid maturation, showed abundant energy deployed in volunteerism and crowdsourcing of intellectual efforts, fundraising, project planning and execution. In the cultural sphere, it included efforts across multiple artforms to document, reflect, and analyze the experiences of the revolution and of Russia's subsequent invasion of Ukraine that began in late February 2014 in Crimea. Among the most impressive developments was a flowering of new Ukrainian cinema that began with the efforts to document the revolution. Over the subsequent decade, cinema has been at the forefront of transformative global recognition of the importance and value of Ukrainian voices.

In the internal transformation of the Ukrainian public sphere, the influx of experts with volunteer and NGO background into state cultural institutions, such as the Mystetskyi Arsenal, a museum and exhibition complex, and the Dovzhenko Centre, Ukraine's premier film archive, has been a crucial factor. Many of these new cultural initiatives have also faced unfortunate and damaging pressure from the entrenched parts of state bureaucracy resistant to change. But notwithstanding those obstacles, these institutions' impact, both domestically and internationally, through their research activities, public programming, and publications has been extensive. For instance, the Dovzhenko Centre's efforts led to a profound rethinking of the place of Ukrainian cinema within twentieth-century film history, from the silent film era onwards.

One of the greatest successes in the global-facing efforts of Ukrainian cultural sphere is represented by the Ukrainian Institute, a new cultural diplomacy institution founded in 2017. Its robust efforts kicked into an even higher gear in the face of Russia's full-scale invasion. Among its most memorable successes has been the series of public events at the 2022 Venice Biennale that placed Ukraine and its war resistance in the broader context of decolonization and war's impact on art and society, as well as the Carnegie Hall concert marking the centenary of Shchedryk, the celebrated Ukrainian choral composition.

The efforts of new Ukrainian institutions also led the older diasporic Ukrainian organizations to find new voice and mission in stimulating public awareness of the richness of Ukrainian culture past and present, indispensable for developing and maintaining broad and lasting public support for Ukraine assistance efforts. Among the most impressive examples of such reinvigoration are the Ukrainian Institute London and the Shevchenko Scientific Society in the US. Recognizing and supporting this effort also meaningfully counters anti-intellectual messages that sometimes arise in the context of supporting Ukraine; while direct and concrete military assistance is indispensable, cultural diplomacy makes global integration of Ukraine stronger and long-lasting and is crucial for assuring its future victory.

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MYKHAYLO KOMARNYTSKYY

City diplomacy amidst Russia's war in Ukraine

Expert article • 3550

Russian invasion of Ukraine has emerged as a significant driver of global change, delineating a clear divide between the civilized and uncivilized realms represented by Ukraine and Russia, respectively. In the realm of international relations, the civilized world adheres to a rules-based order, while the uncivilized world operates within a polycentric framework based on a balance of power. This confrontation spans various dimensions, encompassing traditional battlegrounds as well as battles in the media and communication channels. Amidst these developments, city mayors and heads of regional state administrations have assumed a crucial role, not only in regulating and supporting local entities but also in the international arena of municipal centers. Their responsibilities have expanded beyond domestic governance to address the global implications of the ongoing conflict. Several cities abroad and influential international networks of cities have actively engaged with the issue of the war against Ukraine. Consequently, the concept of "city diplomacy" has gained renewed significance in the current geopolitical landscape.

Following the incursion of Russian troops into Ukraine, numerous cities across Europe, the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and Latin America have strongly condemned what they perceive as intolerable aggression. These cities have unambiguously embraced stances in favor of peace and opposition to the war, actively endorsing sanctions and advocating for the expulsion of Russia from multilateral forums, orchestrated large-scale demonstrations where thousands of citizens congregated in front of major city halls. Additionally, these cities have rallied behind political declarations, which call upon European states and institutions to escalate their endeavors in bringing an end to the ongoing war.

The international activity of individual Ukrainian cities and their mayors as public figures and diplomats has also increased tremendously. The growth of local activity of Ukrainian cities occurred as a reaction to the need to defend their own statehood and even the question of the survival of the local center, which was sought through increased diplomatic pressure and cooperation with the closest partners.

Presently, Ukraine and its regional centers receive support from more than 30 countries and 120 cities, with Poland and Germany actively leading the efforts. European Union cities have joined in, enlisting their counterparts to contribute to this cause. Notably, western Ukrainian cities receive the largest share of aid, attributed to logistical and security considerations. The personal connections and the initiative of mayors are pivotal factors, surpassing the significance of formal twinning agreements. Several cities have expressed their willingness to offer shelter to refugees, both independently and through the Solidarity Cities movement. In a display of unity, cities from New York to Sydney illuminated prominent structures in yellow and blue, synchronized bell ringing with Ukrainian cities, and undertake other symbolic gestures.

EU cities exhibit diverse involvements, including calls for an end to the war, humanitarian aid, and refugee assistance. Within the last two years prominent networks such as United Cities and Local Governments, Mayors for Peace, The European Committee of the Regions, Eurocities, and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions have collectively condemned actions in Ukraine. In an open letter endorsed by 102 EU cities and city networks, including Los Angeles and Taipei, cities advocated for discontinuing all trade with Russia and addressing the energy crisis collaboratively. The #CitiesWithUkraine movement, initiated by the Committee of the Regions, drew participation from more than 170 cities. Demonstrations of solidarity unfolded in more than 50 cities worldwide.

While cities must respect the boundaries of national diplomacy and foreign policy, they possess the agility to advance international causes more swiftly than the federal government by capitalizing on their international connections, pragmatism, and expertise. This capacity makes city diplomacy a valuable and supportive force in times of aggressive international conflict. In the current scenario, exemplified by the situation in Ukraine, city diplomacy is particularly relevant.

Beyond merely condemning the attack and advocating for a peaceful resolution, metropolises are collaborating to support their counterparts in Ukraine. They are mobilizing resources, rallying solidarity from their communities, notably the diaspora, and providing refuge to those fleeing the conflict. However, the true test for cities, and thus city diplomacy, lies in the reconstruction phase for Ukraine. Cities like London, Madrid, Berlin, or Warsaw will need to leverage their urban intelligence to address the extensive challenges and ensure comprehensive human security. Failure to do so, as witnessed in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, may lead to the prevalence of violence and the emergence of a new failed state.

Recognizing this critical role, the international community must actively involve cities and engaged actors in discussions aimed at shaping the reconstruction roadmap. It is imperative to strengthen the connection between city diplomacy and national foreign policies, enhancing cities' capacity to participate effectively in the international relations system. This involves fortifying the bonds that unite cities, empowering them to devise solutions by leveraging the knowledge, innovation, and intelligence of their leading actors. Such comprehensive approach unlocks the full potential of cities on the global stage, aligning them with principles of democracy, peace, and the aspirations of their citizens.

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Ukraine´s favour to EU´s enlargement policy

Expert article • 3551

When President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the 5th day of the full scale war signed Ukraine´s application to join the EU, he achieved more than just opening the door for his own country.

Before February 24th, 2022 there was no willingness whatsoever in most of the EU capitals even to discuss opening the EU´s membership perspective beyond the Western Balkans countries. Russia´s invasion changed that, the EU rose to the occasion and Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are now EU´s candidates.

The process with 7 EU recommendations that were linked with the 2022 European Council decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine is a good showcase for a merit based, motivating enlargement path. The recommendations were strictly speaking not meant to open a way for next steps but merely to underpin the candidate status. Instead, the Ukrainian leadership´s determination in implementing the recommendations, supported by smart but insistent diplomacy gradually shifted the mood and positions in Brussels and EU Member States´ capitals. By the fall of 2023, it was all natural that the full implementation of the recommendations is the precondition for the next step, opening of the accession negotiations – as was then decided by EU leaders last December.

This offers two valuable lessons. First, the motivation in an enlargement country is key to any progress on its EU path. Second, the motivation indeed must be supported and encouraged by the commitment on the side of the EU. Successful enlargement process takes two to tango. The Central and Eastern European countries learned this well in 1990ies. We felt that the EU really wants new members, that the wind of history is in our sails, that we are reuniting the continent that had for too long been divided by the Iron Curtain.

After the 5th enlargement round, the process slowed down. Whatever the particular circumstances or reasoning in Brussels, in EU Member States or in any particular enlargement country, the decrease of motivation both on the EU´s side and in the enlargement countries has meant that the accession train has moved very slowly over the last 10 years.

It would be tempting to say You know well what needs to be done, the EU law, *acquis communautaire*, is publicly available, implement it - and then we take our steps. But it just doesn´t work like that. The enlargement countries need to see and feel that the EU really wants new members and is ready to engage – with funds, advice, but most importantly, politically. It may be surprising, but there are still politicians in those relatively poor and small enlargement countries who would rather go on being the big fish in their small ponds, using all possible arguments to convince their electorate that „the EU just does not want us."

One may ask what´s so terribly wrong with this situation? Isn´t it true that the EU has more burning challenges to address, from the war in Ukraine to irregular migration to rebuilding its economy´s competitiveness? Isn´t it true that the EU supports the enlargement countries with billions of euros yearly anyway? Isn´t it true that nobody from outside can conduct reforms, adopt laws in a sovereign country? All of it is true but it misses the bigger point. Namely that grey zones at EU´s borders are simply not in EU´s interests. These zones tend to be open for malign interference from outside powers, willing to invest in painting the grey zones red. Ukraine that was lacking any membership perspective until 2022 and is now under a full scale military invasion is the most telling case in point but the tensions in the Western Balkans region and within the countries there - often foreign-incited - are clearly visible as well.

Therefore, a reinvigoration to EU´s enlargement policy is a must, and Zelenskyy´s audacious move back in February 2022 opened the door for this reinvigoration. The enlargement policy is prominent again, and the EU is preparing itself for next steps.

The European Commission is working on an assessment of the impact of the next enlargement on EU´s policies. This is crucial to mitigate fears of future unhealthy competition that we are seeing already at Ukraine´s borders with Poland – fears that resemble the anxieties for the „Polish plumber" 20 years ago.

Another crucial element is leaving bilateral political issues out of the accession process. The EU must collectively rise to the occasion, the EU institutions and Member States alike.

But most important is to upgrade the EU´s offer by giving the enlargement policy new prominence, to increase reform-related, smartly conditioned assistance to enlargement countries and to rethink some aspects of the procedures of the process in Brussels. This would prove to the enlargement countries that the EU means business, that their efforts pay off and the EU´s door is open. Pushed open again by President Zelenskyy in the darkest hour for Europe since World War II.

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Civilian security and Ukraine's EU accession

Expert article • 3552

The European Council's decision in December 2023 to open negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU is nothing less than historic. Ukraine is still reeling from Russia's full-scale aggression and is fully engaged in decisively repelling it. On this backdrop the decision reflects the strong will of the Ukrainian Government and people to become member of the European Union as soon as possible. It also reflects the strong resolve on the side of the European Union to counter Russia's blatant aggression and see Ukraine fully embedded in the Union.

Ukraine must now embark on a comprehensive process of aligning to European legislation and standards covering a wide range of negotiation chapters grouped in six "clusters". In Cluster 1 of the so-called "fundamentals" (encompassing among others the rule of law, justice, freedom, and security), the reform of the civilian law enforcement sector plays a central role.

The road to deep and sustainable reform will not be easy, but it will bring Ukraine fully out of its past and into the European family. The most impressive thing is that civilian law enforcement agencies (LEA) will be engaging in these reform processes even as they are sending units and thousands of officers to assist in fighting the war, have to engage in investigating the vast number of war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine, and have to deploy thousands of officers to stabilize areas as they become liberated from Russian occupation.

Ukraine adopted already in May 2023 an Overarching Strategic Plan for the Reform of the Entire Law Enforcement Sector (OAS) and will in 2024 start implementing an Action Plan to reach its strategic objectives. This process covers all the civilian security agencies including notably the Police, the National Guard, the Security Service, and the Border Guard Service.

If implemented in full and as planned, the effect will transformational and will be a considerable step towards getting Ukraine ready for EU accession.

It will modernize the agencies, increasing their effectiveness and efficiency through digital transformation and a result-oriented management system focussing on setting priorities and achieving results.

It will strengthen the rule of law by reforming the criminal justice system, ensuring compliance with international standards and rule of law principles.

It will lessen the distance between LEA and the population and make the agencies open for scrutiny by civil society and the public by strengthening openness and transparency of the agencies.

It will build accountability and independence of the institutions, both through introducing internal control mechanisms, by ensuring that they can function independently of political or other pressure, and by institutionalizing external democratic oversight.

And it will help to delineate the competencies between various agencies, avoiding overlaps and exploring synergies through improved interagency interoperability. As one example, the implementation of the Integrated Border Management Strategy and Action Plan will strengthen the interoperability and the operational coherence between the agencies responsible for various aspects of border operations, such as Customs, Border Guards, and the Migration Service.

A reformed, more transparent civilian security sector with stronger internal control and external oversight mechanisms and procedures will not least be a major step towards underpinning the fight against corruption. Corruption must be fought by strong political leadership and resolve top down through Ukraine's dedicated anti-corruption agencies, in particular NABU and SAPO (the National Anti-Corruption Bureau and Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office respectively), but it must also be entrenched at all levels in all institutions and work bottom-up to become really effective. Ukraine has adopted crucial directives such as the National Anti-Corruption Strategy and State Anti-corruption Program. The implementation of groundbreaking IT tools such as the Unified Whistleblowing Portal, the Anti-Corruption Program Implementation Monitoring System, and the re-opening of the e-declaration register showcase Ukraine's commitment to transparency and accountability. Now is the time to build anti-corruption into the very systems of the agencies. Systems of accountability, of external and internal control measures, and systems transparency systems are key to this. Now is also the time to work hard to change hard the very mentality that allows corruption to thrive.

The European Commission and the European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine (EUAM) are key partners for Ukraine and Ukrainians to achieve their goal – EU membership as soon as possible. EUAM will strengthen its support to Ukrainian partners in implementing the OAS, but in the end, it will be the Ukrainian resolve to implement the necessary reforms to the full that will set the pace towards EU membership!

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SALLA NAZARENKO

Press freedom in Ukraine needs to be protected

Expert article • 3553

On 14 December Ukraine heard the long-awaited news: the EU agreed to start accession talks with Ukraine. "History is made by those who don't get tired of fighting for freedom", President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was quoted as saying.

Zelenskyy is not alone. Freedom is a word our leaders love. It is a word packed with different meanings: for a society, it means opportunities for all, it means human rights, equality and free enterprise. Contemporary Russia is seen as the antithesis of freedom and of Europe's core values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. In fact, since the start of the war, Russia has destroyed nearly everything related to freedom of opinion and speech, from criminalizing peaceful anti-war demonstrations to introducing unprecedented censorship laws.

Freedom of the press is essential for the realization of all other freedoms. Only a free and uncensored media allows people the opportunity to make informed decisions about their lives. It is the cornerstone of the rule of law, of free and fair elections, of justice for all.

Despite the war, Ukraine has managed to remain a country with a relatively free press. In Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index 2023 Ukraine was ranked 79th out of 180 countries. This is not a great rating, but it is a rise of 37 places since 2022, when Ukraine was ranked 106th. The situation is not easy, but it is far from hopeless.

Most importantly, Ukrainian journalists have been able to monitor the press freedom. There are several journalists' trade unions that are members of international umbrella organizations, and numerous smaller press freedom watchdogs, media development agencies, fact-checkers and many others. The government's attempts to control the media do not go unnoticed.

In June 2023, the Human Rights Centre Zmina conducted a small opinion poll on the state of press freedom in Ukraine. The participating journalists gave Ukraine a score of 6,4 points out of 10 on a scale, where 1 is non-existent and 10 is very good. (The amount of respondents was small, but the results are indicative). One in five journalists said that civil servants refuse to disclose important information, there is censorship and there are situations where journalists are denied accreditation. Sounds bad, but happens everywhere: here in Finland a survey conducted by the Union of Journalists in September 2023 revealed that over fifty percent of journalists in Finland feel that it has become more difficult to get information from civil servants. The rampant misinformation and disinformation, sometimes spread by our politicians, has lead to a decline in trust in the media everywhere.

War is a situation in which all states censor. Military secrets are protected by national laws. Disclosing strategically important information can jeopardise national security, so a certain amount of military censorship is acceptable. But even in war what we need is transparency and openness about the extent of censorship and the relationship between journalists and military authorities.

After the war began, President Zelenskyy signed a decree on a unified information policy, based on martial law. A singleTV platform was created bringing together important national TV channels, the oligarch-owned "1+1 media", "Starlight media" and "Inter media group", and the public service broadcaster and parliamentary channel "Verhovna rada" was created. These channels broadcast a unified programme that is officially approved by the state.

Understandably, the platform has been criticized by journalists. Opposition TV channels are not included. At the same time, according to press freedom watchdogs, President Zelenskyy and senior officials in Ukraine have prioritized giving interviews to the international media rather than the local media. The reason for this is the need for military and humanitarian aid: appeals to the international press make public opinion in other countries more sympathetic towards Ukraine's needs.

This is understandable, but in order to be fit for EU membership, Ukraine's leaders needs to take press freedom, access to information and journalists' rights seriously. Corruption, although being tackled, remains a major problem in Ukraine. War brings new problems: illegal weapons, unclear money flows, possible lack of transparency in the delivery of aid and reconstruction funds. Zelenskyy became president thanks to television: now it's time for him and others to see the value of the free and unbiased flow of information that only a vibrant professional media can provide. The media law was reformed at the end of 2022 to meet EU membership criteria. However, the legal environment is only the foundation. Ukraine's private media has suffered greatly from the financial hardship caused by the war: rebuilding the media must be part of rebuilding Ukraine.

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Russia's war against Ukraine: Fallacies and falsehoods

Expert article • 3554

The unity and confidence that characterised the West's initial response to Russia's full-scale invasion on Ukraine in early 2022 is rapidly disappearing. As pessimism grows, so does the influence of misconceptions and poor analysis. Memory of protracted, high-intensity war at industrial scales has all but vanished in most of the West, and that is also true of its surprises, its hardships and its reverses. The paradox is that Ukraine, the country bearing the rigours of this war, is resigned to them, whereas the United States, which devotes less than 4 percent of its defence budget to the war and has yet to suffer a single fatality, increasingly doubts its necessity and is losing faith in its outcome. What fallacies, false expectations and falsehoods lie behind this response?

1: Ukraine's position is doomed to deteriorate

For now, broadly speaking, the war is in a state of deadlock. But that is not the same as stalemate. A deadlock can be overcome; a stalemate cannot. Today, it is evident that the differential in respect to several key capabilities lies in Russia's favour, and this discrepancy is likely to worsen this year if US and EU funds are not unblocked. But Russia has lost half the territory it occupied after February 2022, and it has recovered very little of it. It lacks the force levels required to accomplish most of its operational objectives, let alone succeed strategically. In the Black Sea, on the other hand, Ukraine has partially turned the tables and might do so completely given adequate provision of long-range strike systems. Today, Russia's Black Sea Fleet is damaged; tomorrow it can be crippled. As maritime cooperation increases between Bulgaria, Romania and Türkiye, Ukrainian grain exports, now resumed, should steadily increase.

Not least important, Ukrainians accept the necessity of a long war. They never expected a fairy tale and are not crushed by the absence of one. The dominant sentiment is: 'things are bad but far from hopeless'; the mood of decision-makers, military commanders and state experts is sober but very far from defeatist. The priority for 2024 must be transition to the strategic defensive and, on the part of Ukraine's partners, adequate provision for that strategy.

The beginning of wisdom is to recognise that static analysis cannot provide a basis for long-term prognoses. Were it otherwise, the 1942 Dieppe raid would have demonstrated the impossibility of an allied invasion of Europe, Operation Barbarossa would have persuaded the UK and USA that the USSR would collapse in a matter of weeks, and Britain's financial and military dependence on the US would have shown that it was a 'basket case'.

2: Russia cannot be defeated

This is a doctrine, not a truth. The incessant urgency of Russian military operations, the reinforcement of failed attacks with fresh ones, the proclamation and revision of unrealistic deadlines, the discrepancy between plans and results point to less confidence in the Kremlin than appearances suggest. Russia has formidable strengths and, against the expectations of many, has amended and adapted in response to failure. Yet it also has endemic vulnerabilities that will prove increasingly telling if the West is willing to play the long game.

First, there are the fraying elements of the Kremlin's contract with the core Russian population, which is deeply attached to its peacetime way of life. Hence, Putin has deferred any second mobilisation since the levy of 300,000 in September 2022. Numbers have been increased by doubling conscription terms, conscripting 'expendables' and by other 'creative means'. There is little reason to suppose that the mandated force level of 1.32 mn will be met.

Second, the defence sector suffers from constraints and ills endemic to the current administrative model. According to the law adopted in November 2023, spending on national defence, security, intelligence and law enforcement, will increase to 38.7 percent of the 2024-6 budget. In practice, much of this increase is evaporating under the impact of inflation and accounting tricks. Russia's vaunted advantage in artillery is insufficient to maintain the current level of operations, which continue to draw down on pre-2022 stocks. If the West meets its own planned expansion of artillery production, a number of Russia's advantages will contract and possibly disappear in 2025.

Third, the decline of the energy sector is not being reversed. Russia's efforts to compensate for the loss of European markets may have defied Western expectations, but they fall well below Russia's needs. Its western Siberian fields are exhausted, China refuses to finance Russia's Power of Siberia-2 pipeline (which it needs far less than Russia); it pays half the former European price for imports from Power of Siberia-1 and is pressing for further price cuts. Even at current prices, Russia's revenues from the latter are below the costs of extraction and transport. The increasingly onerous tax burden on the energy sector and the transfer of critically important revenue to the defence-industrial complex are sharpening tradeoffs. The tighter the squeeze on energy, the harsher these tradeoffs become.

These are secular, i.e. systemic, ills and trends. The picture of limitless Russian resources, widely internalised in the West, is built on embroidered truths and artful lies.

3: There is no alternative to negotiation

This is an adage at odds with experience and evidence. Russia's 'minimal' terms, mooted in informal channels, are not only unacceptable, but derisive. They not only include recognition of annexed territory, but territory yet to be annexed; they call for compensation for bombardment of *Russian* territories, a 'statute of neutrality' (hence an absence of guarantees for Ukraine's security), the effective reduction of Ukraine's armed forces to constabulary levels and full 'de-Nazification'. There is no reason to suppose that such concessions as might be extracted from Russia will be observed any more than they were after the Minsk accords.

Instead of pipedreams masked by denial, it would behove the West and profit its interests to assist Ukraine in developing a strategy for a long war and providing the resources required to wage it. Time will only favour Russia if we allow it to. If we decide to abandon the struggle, we should do so honestly and take full credit for the consequences.

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Several historical remarks on Russian application of force Ukraine

Expert article • 3555

Since 2008 Russian military forces went on the large scale armed forces reform and modernization process, but only part of the new weapons platforms, organisational developments, operational and tactical inovations were tested in occupation of Crimea 2014 and Syria civil war. Unfortunately Russian agression in Ukraine offers us possibility to observe actions of conventional military forces of Russia in sense of full spectrum war.

The first days of war and Russian forces attempts to capture Hostomel airport and attack on Kiev, not only remained Soviet army operations in Hungary 1956 (Budapest), Czechoslvakia 1968 (Prague) and Afghanistan 1978- 1979 (Kabul), but also inspired a question has the reform/ modernisation of Russian military forces made affect on application of forces in regime change/regime support operations? Do Russian military science and operational art trie to learn and integrate new aspects from Western way of warfare? In order to answer it comparative analysis of Soviet military interventions to support pro communist regimes and to suppress democratic oposition in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and Ukraine and Western military operations to destroy Taliban regime in Afghanistan and change Sadam Hussein regime in Iraq must be made.

The selection cases for comparative analysis were made on several criterea: a) Successfull regime change operation as „model to follow", because historically military forces learn from successfull events; b) military operation had to be made in „perceived soviet space", because Russia understands Ukraine as it's own territory or at least as it's own geopolitical zone. c) Western regime change operations were based on effect of revolution in military affairs (RMA), because Russia included some technological aspects of RMA recently.

Research revealed several strong tendencies how Russia use it's forces in all analyzed cases, they are: a) From 6 to 12 months lasting assembly of Russian military forces covered by excersises in all cases before beginning of active military campaign. b) Efforts to destabilize governmental structures and military forces from inside before military invansion and efforts to legitimaze invasion by „political request for assistance" (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Ukraine). C) Balistic missiles attack on strategic military installations prior to invasion (Ukraine); d) Special and airmobile/airborne forces open (Budapest, Kabul, Kiev) or covered (Prague) assault on airport within the close distance from capital and fast attack on govermental institutions, major communication centers, such as radio and TV, political institutions, private property of rulling politicians, ministry of interior and security offices; e) Multidirectional ("multifrontal") ground forces invasion on main axis of advance in order to block military forces in order to paralyze defence (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine and partly in Kabul - limited due to constrains of terrain); f) Reinstalation of former regime supported by soviet/Russian military forces and violence against society to punish it for support to "opposition".

If we analyze Western military operations: a) assembly of force is much faster and takes up to 3 - 4 months (Afghanistan, Iraq); b) Western forces make huge emphasis on long lasting air forces bombing campaigns guided by special forces (Afghanistan,Iraq) and cyber attacks to create multidimensional crise for defending state (Iraq); c) Special forces and local militia operations (Afghanistan, Iraq) or conventional attack to destroy enemy military forces and capture capital and vital centers of power (Afghanistan, Iraq); d) Efforts to separate political regime from society providing humanitarian assitance for society and wining potential support for new democratic government; e) After the war Western way of warfare transfers power from military to provisonal government in order to establish civil governed democratic rule.

General conclusion would be that Russian way of regime change operations prioritize covert and fast attack on political regime, then legitization of new goverment and attempts to suppres society for support of oposition. While Western way of regime change operations focuses more on defeating it's military forces as basis of the regime, trie to separate society from the political regime and establish democracy in post operational phase.

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ANDRZEJ FAŁKOWSKI

The importance of reforms of Ukraine's defence system in the times of war

Expert article • 3556

There are as many supporters of reforming the armed forces during war in Ukraine as there are opponents. The former claim that without reforms the war will not be won, while the latter claim that reforms are impossible while it lasts. It is to be hoped that the first option will prevail.

The situation in Ukraine, its aspirations towards NATO and EU and in addition general security issues on the eastern borders of NATO and EU are extremely important for the entire globe. Especially now, when doubts have arisen whether the world, surprised by the new war in the Middle East, will not shift its attention to this region. All this is made worse by the lack of US will to financially support Ukraine next year and the general impatience and tiredness of this war in the world.

After the illegal annexation of Crimea and the occupation of the eastern part of Ukraine in 2014, Ukraine decided to start in 2015, with the help of six NATO allies, intense reform its military more transparently. Ukraine MoD established the DRAB - Defence Reform Advisory Board. This board of strategic advisors consists of high-level representatives (mainly retired three-star generals) of the defence sector of six allied countries such as the US, the UK, Poland, Canada, Germany and Lithuania.

DRAB, when it was still regularly present in Ukraine, monitored and observed the course of reforms. It had knowledge of what was happening, what was planned and how the plans were implemented. In fact, it even had an influence on the pace and shape of their implementation. One of the Ukraine's Minister of Defence, wrote in his letter to other ministers that assistance, both individual and through the DRAB, helped introduce significant changes in the field of defence policy, strategic communication, resource planning and management and many others, and also contributed to the "Ukrainian miracle" of successfully repelling Russian aggression.

Despite economic difficulties and demographic pressure, during the ongoing war, Ukraine is making progress in modernizing its Armed Forces, which is extremely difficult, but also necessary. It is important to maintain the continuity of the defence reform process and ensure transparency in the use of various resources provided by other countries. Despite this, both in the past and currently, Ukraine is also plagued by many scandals related to the misuse of funds. Sometimes it is intrusive corruption, sometimes it is fraud. Ukraine must deal with this on its own. This situation must be corrected quite quickly, because the country is in a state of war and without repairing the internal situation it will fall into stagnation, and the Euro-Atlantic aspirations enshrined in the Ukrainian constitution may be seriously delayed or thwarted. Countries helping Ukraine must be convinced that their aid is not the subject of various shady interests, including those on the fringes of war.

Although Ukraine already ranks high in terms of military strength (according to Global FirePower 2023 - globalfirepower.com - Ukraine ranks 15th in the world out of 145 countries), this does not mean that further reforms, even in times of war, are not necessary. This will be equally important after the war, if only to prevent Russia from trying to commit aggression again.

Support for Ukraine comes to the fore and should be continued and increased. This includes providing weapons, equipment and training, as well as financial assistance. Ukraine's support in the fight against Russia's aggression is crucial to the final resolution of the conflict.

It is necessary to continue reforms of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, which is not free from challenges. This will not be easy, as the current reform is characterized by a lack of continuity, as everyone responsible for defence started the reforms from scratch. Equally important will be reforms throughout the country and the need to fight corruption, which seems to be a key aspect not only in the defence sector.

This will also be important in Ukraine's negotiations with the EU. It should be remembered that Ukraine's membership in the EU cannot be seen as a substitute for joining NATO. It is true that the European Union has made some commitments more quickly, which may give the impression that negotiations will be easier than if it had joined NATO. Nothing could be further from the truth. Additionally, the EU does not guarantee military security, although some of its countries would have such ambitions.

The decisions that may soon be made in Washington during the NATO summit will have an impact on the shape of the international security order. Merely inviting Ukraine to NATO would have a huge deterrent effect.

However, the path to achieving this goal is difficult and requires further reforms. Why are they so important, especially in times of war?

Reforming Ukraine's defence system is crucial for several reasons.

Such reforms help modernize and improve defence forces, making them more effective and able to respond to evolving Russian threats. Improved training, equipment and tactics contribute to the military's effectiveness by increasing its ability to counter aggression. We often forget that the Russians also do not sleep and adapt to changing conditions, perfecting not only tactics, but also quickly modernizing and rebuilding their forces. The reforms enable the Ukrainian military to adapt to changing security challenges. As warfare changes, a flexible and adaptive defence system becomes essential to effectively address new threats.

Reforms are often associated with the professionalization of military personnel, emphasizing training and discipline, because the human factor is the most important. Here the situation is more complicated. It's not just about the demographic crisis in Ukraine. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were drafted into arms. They received weapons, often for the first time, and they were Western-made, with which even experienced professional Ukrainian soldiers had no previous experience.

In this case, the reformed defence system must take into account improved international cooperation and support. Allies and partners are willing to provide assistance, both in terms of resources and expertise, to a military undergoing wartime modernization and reform, but the Ukrainian side must know how to use such assistance.

Further reforms are needed to build resilience to complex and evolving hybrid threats. A modernized defence system is usually better prepared to meet these multi-faceted challenges.

Changes in times of war must lead to improved command and control structures, ensuring better decision-making processes and speed of response.

The reformed Ukrainian defence system must place greater emphasis on intelligence collection and analysis. Accurate and timely intelligence is critical to making informed decisions and effectively responding to threats.

An effective STRATCOM is also necessary. Reforms must include improvements to provide accurate information to both the Ukrainian population and the international community, and even Russians.

Modifications are necessary to improve logistical and medical capabilities. As the war has shown, this is crucial to maintaining military operations during a prolonged conflict and saving countless lives not only among the military but also among the civilian population.

Transformations must also focus on creating strategic reserves and effective mobilization plans so as not to wake up with empty warehouses and large shortages in reserves, not only in personnel. Thanks to this, the military will be able to quickly respond to escalating threats and, if necessary, strengthen key areas.

Reforms of the Ukrainian defence system must inevitably include supporting cooperation between military and civilian institutions. This integration is important for a comprehensive approach to the country's defence, involving not only the armed forces, but the entire nation, including other sectors of society, in the war effort.

There are many other examples of potential further reforms.

It is worth mentioning that post-war reforms will also be of key importance for reconstruction and stabilization, for which Ukraine must now prepare. It will be important to prepare for demilitarization and disarmament efforts, demining and even derussification, reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, reintegration of displaced people and many other directions of reforms in which the armed forces will be involved. It may be the subject of a separate study.

In summary, further reforms of Ukraine's defence system are necessary during (but also after) war to ensure that the Ukrainian defence system is well prepared, adaptable and able to meet constantly changing challenges. This will not only increase the country's defence capabilities, but will also contribute to stability and security in the region.

The examples presented indicate the multidimensional nature of defence reforms, covering not only hard military capabilities, but also aspects such as intelligence, logistics and cooperation with various sectors of society. To address the complex and dynamic nature of the war with Russia, a comprehensive approach to defence reforms is necessary.

Only a strong and well-reformed defence system deters the aggressor. The perception that a nation has a capable and well-prepared military may discourage it from further involvement in warfare.

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Ukraine's long and winding road

Expert article • 3557

Already in 2014, Ukraine made it clear to the Western community, to the whole world, that it wants to integrate into Europe. But it took one war to make this wish heard and possibly even understood in Brussels. A brutal war of aggression launched by Russia against its neighbour on 24 February 2022. One of the objectives of this attack, among many, was to stop Ukraine's pro-Western approach and, in particular, its integration with the West. They are a threat to it. But the attack did not dissuade Ukrainians from that dream, however distant it may seem. On the fourth day after the attack, the Ukrainian President formally signed the application for membership of the European Union. This was finally understood in Brussels. Things then moved forward at a rapid pace. Ukraine (and Moldova) became candidates for EU membership in June 2022, and in November this year the Commission finally proposed to open accession negotiations with the countries.

Ukraine's aspirations for closer integration with the West are essentially very similar to those of Finland. As the wall dividing Europe came down, Finland very quickly saw the window of opportunity and opened it and applied for EU membership. It wanted to be officially part of the Western democracies, economically, to a large extent for security policy reasons, and ideologically, to which it had claimed to belong and to which it wanted to belong throughout the post-war period.

The same reasons have driven Ukraine towards the European family. First of all, it is economic. EU membership will open the doors to the world's largest single market and is expected to fuel economic growth. Diversification of trade relations will also help Ukrainians resist Russian influence. Secondly, the pursuit of EU membership is also expected to strengthen the country's independence. It is also hoped that it will bring security against Russia. The same increase in security is also at stake in Ukraine's quest for NATO membership. Unfortunately, however, that objective must now be seen as a possibility only after the guns have fallen silent, as the war continues. Ultimately, it is also about the desire to belong to the European political and ideological community. Russia's atrocities against Ukraine and Ukrainians in Ukraine have only strengthened that view. Ukrainians do not want to belong to Russia's ideological reference group and the world it shapes. Ukrainians want to emphasize the country's historical roots as part of the European community. Joining the EU is not a turning point, but a natural continuation of a centuries-old trajectory in which a power-hungry, brutal and ruthless Russia wanted to intervene.

It is very important that the European Union has made such a strong promise to Ukraine, a promise of a brighter future. It will not be an easy journey and the road will be very rocky. However, Ukraine will soon have to start the tough economic reforms that the EU is demanding, and the challenge is to do it in a time of war. While Ukraine has already shown impressive political will and ability to promote the reforms proposed by the Commission in the midst of war, it has one fundamental challenge on its hands, to tackle widespread corruption in different sectors and levels of society. For continued Western support, Ukraine must prove that it is committed to Western values, including the fight against corruption. In comparisons made before the Russian invasion, Ukraine was the second most corrupt country in Europe, just behind Russia. In Transparency International's 2022 comparison, the country was ranked 116th. Ukraine's dreams of EU membership are tied to progress in eradicating corruption. This is necessary because without tackling corruption, Ukraine's westernization will be jeopardized, and without western integration, Ukraine's independence will be threatened.

In any case, the strong signal sent by the EU Commission to Ukraine makes sense on many levels. Ukraine has already jeopardized its existence because of its reputation as a liberal democracy; it was also, as noted earlier, a key reason for Russia's attack on Ukraine. A decent democracy, which is more in favor of Western Europe than Russia, undermines the kind of illiberal and authoritarian state that Russia and its satellite states represent and wish to preserve. Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity in 2014 and its stubborn defence of its territory after Russia's invasion in 2022 show how seriously Ukraine is committed to becoming a Western democracy. The Euro-Atlantic alliance has recognized this ambition through military and humanitarian assistance, international diplomatic engagement and the granting of EU candidate status.

As a Finn, it is easy to identify with the Ukrainians' dream of EU membership. For the same reasons, we too sought our own integration with the West. For us, achieving membership required a persistent and patient struggle on the diplomatic stage. Nor did we experience a direct military threat during the NATO membership negotiations. The starting point for Ukraine is quite different. It is fighting a bloody battle for its existence under the harsh conditions of war. That is why it is important for the Ukrainians to feel and sense that the West is on their side as a united front.

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Ukraine and its integration towards the West

Expert article • 3558

Ukraine's Western vocation

For two centuries, Ukrainian efforts to build a state with its own identity were strangled by Russia, later the Soviet Union. In 1991 finally a sovereign and free Ukrainian state emerged from the demise of the latter. Its security was guaranteed not least by Russia in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. In parallel with the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997 a "Distinct Partnership" between NATO and Ukraine including a NATO-Ukraine Commission was established. Military reform had its ups and downs, because, just as in the field of corruption, the Soviet legacy remained strong. The" Orange Revolution" of 2004 demonstrated the desire for lawful politics, but unfortunately the bearers of hope - President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Timoshenko - through their constant rivalry contributed most towards destroying the hope.

However, after President Yanukovych's refusal, ceding to Russian pressure, to conclude the association agreement with the EU, the Euromaidan ("revolution of hope") starting in November 2013 wiped him away and firmly set Ukraine on the course towards the West. President Putin, already extremely concerned by the mass demonstrations in Russia 2011/2012 after his return to power and the fraudulent Duma elections, now added external aggression to domestic repression. In spring 2014, Russia illegally annexed Crimea and started, using proxy "separatists", the covert war in the Donbass.

The "ceasefire" according to the Minsk I agreement (which saw 12.000 dead in eight years) was used by the Russians for preparing the final onslaught, the subjugation invasion against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. This at last ended illusions about cooperation with Russia in many Western governments and societies, although it may not have broken the temptation to "look at Ukraine merely through Russian eyes" (the German Eastern Europe historian Karl Schlögel). But it has set Ukraine even more firmly on the Western course, for its existentially threatened survival depends at present on Western military assistance, and in future on EU and NATO membership. Apart from all that, Ukraine's experience with Communist and Nazi totalitarianism speaks for a solid anchoring in the free world.

Character and State of the War

Thus, if the West remains firm, Putin will already have achieved at least partly the opposite of what he was and is aiming for. His objectives are very clear, openly stated in many speeches as well in his article about "the historic unity of Russians and Ukrainians" in July 2021, and in his letters to NATO and the US Administration in December the same year: Revisionist "roll-back" of the changes in Central and Eastern Europe since 1990/91 with satellite states in a zone of exclusive Russian influence. For Ukraine, "de-Nazification", "de-Ukrainisation" and de-militarisation are declared goals, which means, perhaps via temporary neutralisation, subjugation and finally annexation of the neighbour country, to which Putin has denied for some time the right to be a sovereign country.

What happens to Ukrainians under Russian occupation we have seen: murder, torture, rape, liquidation of local politicians, forced russification, deportation of children by the tens of thousands. It is clear that they will never agree to live under the power of Russia – or to "cede" parts of Ukrainian territory, which is not abstract lands, but the home to millions of Ukrainians who would suffer the abovementioned fate. This is one of the aspects where Putin has totally miscalculated – besides Western unity and support and the performance of his own troops: the bravery and determination to survive of the Ukrainian people. Putin has not achieved his strategic aims, he has united the EU to an almost unknown extent, he has caused a spectacular further enlargement of NATO, and he has welded together the Ukrainian nation. To top this off, the flimsiness of the reasons he gave for the war was exposed by, of all people, his criminal crony Prigozhin.

Having gotten used to this war, which has now entered its third year, people tend to overlook its character. There are not "two warring parties", but a totally criminal, unjustified war of subjugation and destruction. If Russia stops fighting, the war ends. If Ukraine stops fighting, that is its end.

Negotiations to end the war?

Indeed, the real motive behind Putin's revision, imperialism, revanche, flawed history interpretation is retention of power. He is not afraid of NATO, but of his own people, should it be infected by the democratic virus. Putin rules *with* fear, but also *from* fear. His pretended security "interests" vis-`vis a totally defensive Atlantic alliance are politico-psychologic sensitivities which he has been rubbing in to Russian elites and people in over 20 years of propaganda: the victim and humiliation complex (loser of the Cold War, in a phase of weakness abused by the West), imperial phantom pain (the dissolution of the Soviet Union the "largest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century"), frustration about not longer being regarded as a world power.

For these reasons, speculating about negotiations to end the war are futile as long as he keeps confirming the irrevocability of his destructive goals. Those must be thwarted. If he wins, he will not stop at Ukraine; at the Valdai conference he boasted that he had "only started to transform the world order". The cost for us in the West would be much higher than what we have to endure at present regarding recession, inflation, energy prices, military aid, refugees. Next targets would be Georgia and Moldova. And provided he perceives the European Union as disunited and NATO as weak (perhaps after an election victory of Donald Trump) he could be expected to test NATO in the Black Sea countries Romania and Bulgaria or at the North-eastern flank with the Baltic countries Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia.

Stopping Russia in Ukraine is in our genuine interest. Western weapon deliveries are the "life artery" of the attacked country – not only "as long as it takes". This constantly repeated assurance must be completed by "with everything necessary" and "timely". This support is not charitable deeds or "favours" to Ukraine. It serves our own security and the re-establishment

of Europe's security order codified in Helsinki 1975 and confirmed in Paris 1990: sovereign equality of European nations, territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, peaceful settlement of disputes, free choice of security arrangements.

Of course, the West and some other countries have given to Ukraine important weapon systems, but in most cases too little too late and "with the handbrake on" regarding numbers and also certain systems. Had there not been much hesitation in the case of armoured personnel carriers and main battle tanks (in Germany 9 months between a clear parliamentary vote and the positive decision), and had Ukraine in time received the means to exploit the momentum of the successful counteroffensive at Cherson and Kharkiv in late summer 2022, the Russian forces would not have had half a year to dig in with three-echelon defence systems, mining the terrain in great density.

Avoid self-fulfilling prophecies

The situation as a whole is not as hopeless as it is often portrayed. There are many Ukrainian successes: strikes against Crimea, keeping the Russian Black Sea Fleet away from the coast, grain exports without Russian approval, immense Russian losses of men and material, recapture of large areas around Kharkiv and Kherson. In addition, a number of Western weapons systems (F16 fighter planes, more Leopard main battle tanks, and more Patriot air defence systems) are expected.

However, the situation on the fronts in the South and North-east must currently be seen as a stalemate, with the danger that the Russian side will regain the initiative, at least locally, and increase its personnel in the war of attrition, apart from the boost in arms production. At the same time, Western military support is crumbling dangerously: in the USA - long before the threat of another Donald Trump presidency - aid to Ukraine has become a pawn in political battles, and the Putin-friendly Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is blocking EU aid. Some are showing defeatism in view of the lack of counter-attack successes in the summer and autumn – without acknowledging their failure to make them possible. If this mood leads to more war-weariness and a further reduction in support, this could result in a "self-fulfilling prophecy".

If the half-heartedness is not reversed, bloodshed and destruction will continue, and at his press conference the smirking Russian warlord displayed confidence of victory, of having time on his side and of being able to outlast the West.

Europe's responsibility

What must be expected of European leaders, not least the German Chancellor?

The publics must be informed in a much more active way about the criminal character of this war, about what is at stake for us and that Europe may soon be in a situation to make up for cancelled US support for Ukraine.

They must lift the handbrakes on weapon numbers and types. A case in point is the German cruise missile Taurus, of which the German air force has hundreds in its inventory. This stand-off weapon with a range of 500 km, very suited for the extremely important task to hit from a safe distance high-value targets behind the Russian lines and on the Russia's "power centre", the annexed Crimea, such as command posts, depots, bridges and transport routes, whereby Russian command and logistics could be decisively impaired.

"Ukrainian victory", to which, in contrast to the Foreign Minister and Defence Minister, the Federal Chancellor has never committed himself, does not necessarily mean physical reconquest of every square kilometre. But the Russian armed forces must be withdrawn because their position becomes untenable. As the British "Storm Shadow" and the French "Scalp" have shown, far-reaching long-range cruise missiles are very effective in this regard. The Taurus has been under discussion for almost six months now, and we see the same scheme as with the armoured combat vehicles: "very German excuses".

It is important not to give Putin the impression that Western political leaders are susceptible to blackmail. He escalates independent of any specific weapon system delivered by the West. The terror attacks around the turn of the year against over a hundred Ukrainian towns and against critical infrastructure, using cold and darkness as weapons to wear down the people's resistance must be answered in a language Putin understands. That is not appeasement or conciliatoriness but strength and determination. And between the will to destroy and the fight for survival a "compromise" is not imaginable.

So, the right things must be delivered in sufficient numbers and on time. Air defence systems from Germany are extremely effective, but supplying them *instead* of other urgently needed systems is not acceptable. Ukraine needs even more air defence, as it is not only the cities that must be protected, but it also needs more combat, infantry and armoured transport vehicles, mine-clearing equipment, artillery, ammunition, spare parts, maintenance capacity. NATO and EU members could supply all of that in sufficient quantities.

Furthermore, European governments should support Kiev's appeal to hundreds of thousand young Ukrainians to return and join the defence effort of their nation. And it is right for the EU and its members to join the reconstruction efforts already going on – not least as a signal of hope and confidence. In the same vein, the European Union has decided to start accession negotiations with Ukraine. Everyone knows that these will be long, but Kiev's efforts to increasingly meet the criteria must be wholeheartedly supported.

Ukraine's and Europe's future security requires leadership

NATO, for its part, should do at its 75th anniversary summit meeting in Washington what it failed last year in Vilnius: send out a clear signal that after the war Ukraine will become a member of NATO – and that Russia has no *droit de regard* in that matter. For effective security guarantees no other scheme is imaginable. It is understandable that Ukraine wants to join the only security guarantee that works – the Transatlantic Alliance. Only this can make sure that after the expulsion of the Russian troops Russia can never again attack Ukraine.

What is needed is leadership by European politicians without false considerations for Putin and his hollow threats. As a German one would like to see such leadership by Chancellor Scholz, who at the recent convention of his party said that President Putin "must not expect us to let up", and that Germany must be prepared to do even more "if others show weakness". A few days later in the Bundestag he added: "It is about whether Putin will get his way with his imperialist plans, which he is still openly pursuing. It is about whether borders in Europe will be secure in the future or whether land theft and occupation will once again become the European norm. This question is fundamental for the security of Europe and for the security of Germany."

Scholz should join Prime Minister Tusk of Poland who has vowed to "demand loudly and resolutely the full mobilisation of the free world ... to support Ukraine in this war". He should show the good example by finally making a positive Taurus decision and win important countries like France and Great Britain to substantially step up their military support for Ukraine. An all-out effort is needed now, including boosting arms and ammunition production.

24 February 2022 indeed marked an epochal rupture, but the "Zeitenwende" the Chancellor proclaimed three days later must still fully arrive in many people's minds. The third year of this war must bring about the turning point for Ukraine in the interest all Europe's security and as a precondition for its firm anchoring in the Western community and alliance.

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ANDRII DAVYDIUK

Collaborative strategies: Fortifying nations in the cyber battlefield

Expert article • 3559

Ensuring cybersecurity is a top priority for Ukraine's national security. With the onset of Russian armed aggression in 2014, the significance of the cyber domain in military operations acquired new importance, leading to a significant increase in cyberattacks. In 2015, Ukraine experienced the first electricity blackout due to a cyberattack, leaving over 230,000 residents without power in certain areas of the western part of the country for up to six hours. With the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, the approaches and tactics of the adversary became even more effective. Actions in the cyber domain complement information-psychological operations and kinetic attacks, and vice versa.

Since 2014, Ukraine has been a testing ground for cyber weapons that were subsequently utilized by countries in the EU and worldwide to gather intelligence and exert pressure on their political and economic activities. Today, Ukraine has gained a unique experience in countering cyberattacks and has become a strong partner for the EU and NATO in cyberspace, evidenced by the decrease in the number of cyberattacks in 2023 compared to 2022 and the commendable positions of Ukrainian representatives in the international cybersecurity competitions. However, the decrease in cyberattacks is not solely due to the enhancement of experts' competencies and cyber defence capabilities in the security and defence sector. It also stems from the adversary's concentration of efforts on more sophisticated and qualitative cyberattacks. It's essential to understand that Russia's continuous buildup of potential for cyberattacks is perpetuated through its allied countries, compounded by the inadequacy and inefficiency of sanctions in the information and communication technology sphere.

Russia's tactics, taking into account information exchange with partner countries since the beginning of 2023, are starting to change. Cyber weaponry testing is now being carried out on the nations with lesser cyber defence potential than Ukraine, aiming to conserve resources for developing zero-day vulnerabilities and avoiding their premature detection within Ukraine. This affirms the absence of cyber boundaries and risks for several countries during this war.

Ukraine's alignment with the EU and NATO isn't limited to its political, economic, and security interests; it also prioritizes enhancing collective security and resilience among partner nations. To ensure collective security, Ukraine actively collaborates with international cyber security organizations such as ENISA. Key areas of cooperation involve increasing awareness and capacity building to bolster cyber resilience. This includes involving representatives from third countries in EU-level cyber security training or workshops, potential deployments, exchange, and promotion of tools and programs to raise awareness in the field of cyber security, sharing best practices to harmonize legislation and implementation (including NIS2 in the cyber sphere and sectors like communications and energy), knowledge and information exchange regarding the cyber threat landscape to enhance overall understanding of situations, among other aspects.

CERT-UA actively participates in the FIRST forum for computer incident response teams and exchanges cyber threat information with NATO's MISP. Ukraine's security and defence sector are engaged in cyber security training alongside NATO countries. Ukraine's interaction with world nations is not confined to the aforementioned examples but continues to grow, allowing Ukraine to more rapidly integrate into the EU and NATO's cyber security processes, thereby enhancing the maturity of its processes and contributing to collective cyber resilience.

Moreover, the war in Ukraine presents a unique opportunity to practise collaborative actions among partner countries in case of cyber aggression by involving their representatives in military missions, as observed in conditions of combat on the front lines.

The importance of such developments is exceedingly significant, given the rapid advancement in quantum computing and artificial intelligence technologies over the last five years. To better prepare for future challenges associated with aggression in cyberspace, it's pertinent to elevate the maturity of cyber resilience processes and widen the technology gap. Achieving such a disparity can be accomplished through software and hardware updates, systematic training and workshops for strategic-level professionals and technical personnel, organizing and conducting command-staff exercises with international participation, especially in Ukraine's regions, supporting project teams and analysts by establishing project offices, training international law experts in cyber security, and fostering cyber diplomacy. These capabilities will significantly enhance Ukraine's potential in cyber defence, fostering rapid technological progress and elevating the maturity of cyber resilience processes.

As Ukraine faces an increasingly complex and dynamic cyber landscape, the support of strategic allies becomes paramount. Collaborative strategies, especially within frameworks like the EU and NATO, provide Ukraine with essential resources, shared expertise, and a unified front against cyber adversaries. In an era where cybersecurity is a shared responsibility, the collaboration is not just beneficial but imperative for each country to navigate the challenges of the cyber frontier with strength and solidarity.

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10 years of war in Ukraine: Perspectives on demining territories

Expert article • 3560

I am a journalist from Ukraine who grew up in the Kherson region, amidst endless fields and winding rivers. Most of all, in my childhood, I loved collecting wildflowers and walking near the Ingulets River, which stretches across the entire Right Bank of the Kherson region. Now all my memories are shattered. My native land is one of the most mined territories in the world.

When Russia began the war in Ukraine in 2014, I was 17 years old. I was finishing school and preparing to enter university. It was difficult to realize that my country had started a struggle to preserve independence, that is, was in a war with one of the largest countries in the world.

30% of Ukraine's territory is mined

It was from that time that the mass mining of the territory of Ukraine began, and since the early months of 2022, it has reached the largest scale in world history. According to the head of the Ukrainian government, Denys Shmyhal, about 30% of the country's territory - approximately 174,000 square kilometers - is potentially mined. Significant parts of the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Mykolaiv, and Kharkiv regions remain heavily mined. The problem of mining is especially acute for the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions, where active combat operations continue to this day.

When I first came to the Kherson region since the beginning of the large-scale invasion to visit my parents, we drove along the fields familiar to me. It was the beginning of summer, and poppies were blooming on the edge of the road. There I saw white ribbons attached to trees or bushes, and my father explained to me that only 2 meters from the edge of the road were demined; stepping beyond that could cost you your life.

Engineers clear up to 500 hectares per day

Kherson region is a territory of fields and agriculture. People living in this region make a living by growing wheat, barley, and sunflowers. As soon as the Right Bank of the Kherson region was de-occupied, people began to take risks and independently explore their fields. During that time, almost every day, there were reports in the news about people being blown up in the fields.

According to the head of the press service of the Kherson Regional Military Administration, Alexander Tolokonnikov, by mid-December 2023, 155,000 hectares of land in the Kherson region had been demined. In other words, the corresponding brigades clear approximately 500 hectares per day.

"For now, we cannot work on the coast because it is dangerous. When we push the Russians (the Russian army - ed.) back at least 30-50 kilometers from the shore on the Left Bank, then our explosive experts and sappers will be able to work on the coast as well. There is a lot of work there, very dense minefields, including many blown power lines that need to be restored," the official said.

Currently, approximately 25% of the territory of the rightbank of Kherson has been demined; before the sowing campaign, this figure will reach 30-35%, Tolokonnikov predicts. In total, it will take 4 years to demine this part of the region if current rates are maintained.

The profession of a SAPPER

The profession of a sapper has gained popularity in Ukraine due to the need to demine territories. Currently, there are four training centers in the country where anyone can take specific courses and help the country in the demining process. Training at the center takes one month.

Anna Anisimova also completed such courses. Before the large-scale invasion, she worked as a graphic designer, but with the start of hostilities in her native Chernihiv region, she decided to change her profession.

"At some point, I realized that if I made the decision to stay in Ukraine, I needed to do something useful. Humanitarian demining is gaining momentum; everyone can retrain and become a sapper. That's why I decided to help the country in this way."

Anna shares that she has already worked in the territory of the Kharkiv region.

"My first day as a sapper was very intense. We arrived at a specific location and were briefed. There was a small exam, and then we were taken to the field. We watched how more experienced sappers worked and then started exploring the field ourselves."

I asked Anna how long she plans to stay in the sapper profession and if she has any desire to return to her work as a graphic designer.

"It's a tough question. Right now, it's very difficult to plan my future and my life. In the next 3-5 years, I plan to stay in this profession, maybe I'll start teaching for people who also want to become sappers. I think I'll stay in this field as long as I can."

757 years for complete demining of the territory

The contaminated territory of Ukraine is so vast that, according to some experts' estimates, it will take about 757 years for a complete demining of the territories, as reported by The Washington Post.

Furthermore, when demining lands, it is essential to consider the economic feasibility of this process, as explained by the head of the mine clearance operator company, Ukraine Demanding Services, Alexander Liev.

"In France, there are still lands that remain mined and contaminated from the First World War. Economically, it is considered impractical to demine them because the cost of demining one hectare, for example, through mechanical demining, is approximately 250,000-300,000 hryvnias (6,500-8,000 U.S. dollars) per hectare. The cost of manual demining, considering the average wage and equipment depreciation, ranges from 3 to 5 million hryvnias (80,000-130,000 USD) per hectare. When agricultural land in Ukraine is worth 1,500 to 2,000 dollars, spending over 6,000 dollars for mechanical demining or nearly 100,000 dollars for manual demining is a substantial expense," explained Liev.

According to the World Bank's estimates, demining Ukraine costs between 2 to 8 dollars per square meter. In other words, complete demining over the next 10 years will cost approximately 37.5 billion dollars.

For the people in our village, waiting another 757 years is not an option. The seeds will have to be sown again in Spring.

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Naval drones and 'Mosquito Fleet' as a strategic concept for Ukraine's maritime security

Expert article • 3561

The Ukraine has a difficult task of liberating 80 percent of Ukraine's coast, now controlled by Russia, including the Azov Sea region and Crimean Peninsula. The country also needs to restore navigation from its Black Sea ports blockaded by Russia as well as clear mines and ensure freedom of navigation throughout the Black and Azov seas. It is becoming apparent that, to liberate its coastline and seas, Ukraine will have to rely on its own naval capabilities to conduct sea-denial and sea-control operations in the restricted waters of the northern Black and Azov seas.

At the outset of Russia's February 2022 invasion, the Ukrainian Navy consisted of four Island-class patrol boats, seven Gyurza-M river gunboats, as well as 18 obsolete Soviet-era ships and boats alongside a dozen support vessels. Such a flotilla presented little deterrence, let alone defense, capabilities and was only able to provide limited port protection. Enjoying 12-fold dominance in forces at sea, Russia quickly captured the entire coastline of the Sea of Azov from Henichesk to Mariupol, blocked Ukraine's Black Sea ports and seized Snake Island. During the first week of the war, several civilian vessels were destroyed or damaged while navigating to Ukrainian ports. Almost 40 foreign ships remain trapped in Ukraine's ports—now for almost 24 months. Russian ships have also approached and shelled the Ukrainian coast and ports with naval artillery. The Ukrainian Navy's only effective operation has been the installation of defensive mine barriers in the territorial seas from Odesa to Ochakiv, preventing an enemy amphibious landing in March 2022.

Only after months of fighting did missiles deliveries to Ukraine begin to change the naval balance of power: The addition of Neptune (officially put into service in August 2020) and Harpoon missiles resulted in the destruction of the Russian flagship cruiser *Moskva*, the tugboat *Vasily Bekh*, offshore drilling platforms and the liberation of Snake Island. As a result, the Russian military command withdrew its surface fleet to areas around the Crimean Peninsula.

The rapid development and use of naval drones against Russian surface ships in areas beyond the reach of coastal missile systems have recently proven effective and efficient within the "mosquito fleet" concept and have partially compensated for the lack of strategically needed vessels. Over the past few months, the Ukrainian Armed Forces have relentlessly suppressed Russia's military presence in the Black Sea and Crimea. Without access to substantial surface warships, Ukrainian forces have instead carried out a series of high-precision missions using air and naval drones as well as cruise missiles to penetrate Russian defenses and strike multiple targets at sea. Although Ukrainian kamikaze drones cause limited damage to most warships, Russian naval forces are gradually losing their combat potential to block Ukrainian grain shipments leaving Odesa and to conduct missile strikes against targets within Ukraine. Since this past summer, a series of Ukrainian attacks on Russian forces in the Black Sea has pressured Moscow to reconsider its strategy at sea.

- On July 13, the Kerch Bridge was attacked. The Security Service of Ukraine reported that a new type of kamikaze naval drone was employed during the operation. The two drones used carried around 1 ton of explosives each. As a result, two sections of the bridge were damaged, and its use was restricted for three months.
- On August 4, a Project 775 *Olenegorsk Hornyak* landing ship was attacked during a raid on Novorossiysk, 5 kilometers (about 3 miles) from the port's central infrastructure. The attack was carried out by the same type of kamikaze naval drone used in the attack on the Kerch Bridge. No personnel nor advanced weaponry were visible on the ship, which implies that the Russians felt they were not at risk of an attack at Novorossiysk. The attack itself was catastrophic. With another Russian naval base on the Black Sea compromised, Russian military officials were forces relocate some vessels. The landing ship suffered a large roll to the port side and had to be towed to the port for repair. Full repairs will likely be delayed due to a lack of spare parts on the Russian side.
- On September 13, the Ukrainian Air Force attacked the dry dock of the Sevastopol shipyard with Storm Shadow missiles. The attack resulted in heavy damage to the Project *775 Minsk* amphibious ship and the Project 636.3 *Rostov-on-Don* submarine. Russian mass media reported that 10 cruise missiles were used in the airstrike. It is unlikely that both ships will be fully repaired in the near future.
- On September 22, Ukrainian Special Operations Forces and the Ukrainian Air Force attacked the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol with Storm Shadow missiles. Operation "Crab Trap" took place during a meeting of the Black Sea Fleet's senior leadership. The headquarters was significantly damaged and images of the building on fire spread all over Russian and Ukrainian social media. Shortly before the attack on the Russian fleet's headquarters, its command post near Verkhnesadove, located 30 kilometers (over 18 miles) outside of Sevastopol, was hit by Ukrainian missiles.
- On November 5, Ukrainian forces seriously damaged the Project 22800 *Askold* missile corvette with French-supplied SCALP cruise missiles. The ship was moored at the Kerch Shipyard's Zaliv pier and was being prepared for transfer to the Black Sea Fleet in December. Knocking this vessel offline was a major success, as it can carry eight Kalibr missiles at once and was equipped with the Pantsir-M anti-aircraft system.
- On November 10, Ukrainian naval drones attacked and sunk two Project 11770 Russian landing crafts with armored vehicles and military personnel on board at the Chornomorske Port in western Crimea. These vessels had the capability to deliver armored vehicles and personnel up to 600 nautical miles away at a speed of 30 knots.
- On December 26, the Ukrainian Air Forces attacked Russian landing ship Project 775 *Novocherkassk* in port of Feodosiya with two cruise missiles. Ship was totally destroyed with the most of the crew and sunk.

A common strategy appears to undergird all these Ukrainian attacks. Swarms of drones and missiles penetrated Russian defenses and hit numerous targets, including warships, ammunition depots, air defense systems, radars, and even the Black Sea Fleet Headquarters. The successful use of naval drones against Russian military targets has compensated at least somewhat for the lack of strategic combat vessels in the Ukrainian Navy. As a result, Russia has withdrawn its newest ships, including two frigates, four corvettes, and two submarines carrying Kalibr missiles, to Novorossiysk. The Russian Navy was also forced to allocate scarce resources to strengthen the protection of all its Black Sea bases.

Ukraine will likely continue to engage Russian forces in the Black Sea and Crimea with an effective combination of drone and missile attacks. Ukraine still needs to develop surface fleet capabilities to completely break Russian maritime dominance and re-take control of its sovereign waters. Without the urgent development of the Ukrainian Navy's surface fleet, it will be difficult to liberate the coastline and impossible to control maritime infrastructure, territorial waters and exclusive economic zones. Moreover, given that both Ukraine and later Russia in 2023 have effectively nullified the 2004 bilateral agreement on use of the Azov Sea (which had declared this maritime area as the "internal waters" of both states), Kyiv needs a postwar naval strategy to deal with contested areas. Thus, the so-called "mosquito fleet" tactic represents one of the few, if not only, viable way to secure Ukraine's permanent maritime rights and effectively counter current and future Russian military threats, including naval, marine and long-range aerial attacks.

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Danube, eurointegration and Russian naval aggression

Expert article • 3562

Danube navigation, safety and environmental issues now are under two key influence factors: Russian maritime aggression, while it used Crimea as key naval lodgment, and European integration of two Danube states – Moldova and Ukraine.

Danube Commission's (DC) activities in such conditions reflect the maximum role of Danube shipping as a key tool of Ukraine's European trade and acquire special importance.

Since 1991, Russia remained a DC "member" and a "participant" in the Convention concerning Regime of Navigation on Danube (Belgrade Convention, BC) as the USSR's "successor".

After the Russian aggression begun, Ukrainian state bodies and NGOs, including our Association (ARC) appealed to DC with requests to assess the Russia's participation, which is incompatible with principles of international law, maritime and river safety, and interstate transportation.

On March 17, 2022, the DC's approved decision DC/SES-XII Extr./3 in connection with the Russian military aggression against Ukraine and it rejected the Russian representatives' and deputies' powers in the DC, it removed aggressor's representatives from participating in DC meetings and bodies until the restoration of peace, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

DC recommended that the contracting states begin preparations for the revision of the BC with a request to check whether Russia, as a state without a bank of the Danube, can be a member of the Convention.

Later, on June 15, 2022, at a regular session, the DC dissolved the BC Review Diplomatic Conference Preparatory Committee, to which Russia was also a member, and created new Preparatory Committee composed exclusively of the Danube states, without Russians.

Then, DC also reduced the diplomatic post of its Secretariat adviser, which was held by the Russian representative, and made changes to the DC Rules of Procedure and its internal regulations, according to which no aggressor's citizen will be able to claim for the Secretariat positions.

A month before, in May 2022, DC launched the Danube Solidarity Line, on the European Union's initiative, to promote the export of agricultural products of Ukraine and entrusted the corresponding functions to the Danube Freight Information Bureau.

ARC continued to inform DC and other authorized structures about the main risks for merchant shipping that arise due to the Russian aggressors' criminal actions from the occupied Crimea. Relevant aspects were discussed by ARC experts in cooperation with representatives of the EuroCommission's Department of Energy, UN and OSCE structures, of the International Commission for Protection of Danube River and other international platforms, including meetings on the PABSEC 62nd General Assembly sidelines.

DC discussions regarding countering the occupation of Crimea had practical results, as in April 2023, DC's representatives, including Director-General Manfred Seitz took part in the International Crimean Platform's First Black Sea Security Conference. In August 2023, DC delegation took part in the International Crimean Platform's Third Summit.

On June 24, 2023, DC President Lyubov Nepop emphasized in separate official statement that Russia's attacks on Danube ports pose a security threat to the freedom of Danube navigation, and they can be assessed as a consistent attempt to disrupt global food security.

DC President also recognized Russia as responsible for the economic losses caused to Danube transport and cargo activities due to the military danger in the Danube Delta and the Black Sea.

So it is not surprising that the DC adopted decision at its 100th anniversary session in December 2023, in which the Danube states called on Russia to be responsible for the attacks committed in the Lower Danube, and indicated the form of such responsibility, namely Russia's withdrawal from the BC due to its significant violation.

DC noted that such a decision was approved after the legal and technical working groups' debates where Russia's systematic attacks on the Lower Danube region, which constantly violate the BC fundamental principles, were investigated.

The interstate agreements' termination due to Russian maritime aggression, taking into account the relevant prescriptions of the Vienna Convention on Law of International Treaties, has already been reflected in the procedures, connected with bilateral acts, such as Treaty on Cooperation in Use of Sea of Azov and Kerch Strait, 2003 and Agreement on Fisheries in Sea of Azov, 1993.

The duty to implement Vienna Convention's demands for termination of bilateral Azov Agreement, 1993 was established by Ukrainian court in 2023, in administrative case 420/8381/20.

Next DC's steps are expected at the spring 2024, they remains undeniably relevant for processed of Ukraine's eurointegration and counteraction the Russia's maritime aggression.

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JAMES RODGERS

Crimea a 'terrible mistake'?: Perhaps not the first

Expert article • 3563

It was a moment that defined Ukrainian nationhood. In the late summer of 1991, I stood among a crowd in Kiev (as the Ukrainian capital was almost always referred to then) as they watched the flag of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist republic being taken down from its place on top of the building that housed the *verkohvna rada*, the parliament. The crowd cheered. From time to time, they broke into patriotic song. The biggest cheer was a response to the appearance of the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag, so familiar today, rising to replace the Soviet one, and flying above the city the west now knows as Kyiv.

For me, a young tv news producer, that day journalism really did offer a front row seat as history was made. It was not my first assignment to the Ukrainian capital. I had been there a few weeks previously to cover the visit of President George H. W. Bush. It was the final leg of what would prove to be the final visit of a president of the United States to the Soviet Union, which, by the end of the year, had ceased to exist.

Bush's visit was notable then for the way it seemed to suggest that Ukraine enjoyed a separate identity in the eyes of the United States—but the speech disappointed Ukrainian nationalists because it did not offer Washington's support for Ukrainian independence. *The New York Times'* columnist, William Safire, derisorily dubbed it 'Chicken Kiev'. What was less well know at the time, and has much more bearing on the last ten years, is the fact that the Kremlin was opposed to Bush's trip to Ukraine going ahead at all, with Gorbachev, in the words of the historian Serhii Plokhy, 'having done his best to block the visit.' As Vladislav Zubok wrote—adapting a Biblical metaphor Plokhy had originally used to describe Yeltsin's leading the Russian Federation out of the Soviet Union==of the situation later that year, as the end of the Soviet Union approached, 'No one in Moscow could imagine that the Ukrainian Ark would leave the Soviet-Russian dock—and sail without sinking immediately.'

In short, it is a departure that no late Soviet, or post-Soviet, occupant of the Kremlin could ultimately countenance, even if they appeared grudgingly to go along with it. It took Vladimir Putin to make that point with military force, annexing Crimea ten years ago, and supporting those forces in eastern Ukraine who were ready to take up arms to defy the Kyiv government.

Putin used the techniques that the Kremlin had been working on since Chechnya's attempt at winning independence from the Russian Federation in the 1990s. In our 2021 paper, 'Russia's rising military and communication power, from Chechnya to Crimea' my co-author Dr Alexander Lanoszka and I argued that since the first Chechen war, 'Russia has developed its military and media policies in a coordinated manner: learning from its mistakes and failures as it went along, and becoming more efficient each time.' We cannot claim to have foreseen the escalation of Russia's war in Ukraine that was to follow the year after our paper was published, but it did fit the pattern of what we had observed going before: not only in Chechnya, but especially in Russia's war with Georgia in the summer of 2008. Intervention—intervention that determined the outcome—in the Syrian civil war the following year also fitted the pattern: lessons learnt in one place, methods refined, then applied in another.

If this pattern existed, though, why did the collective West not formulate a more robust response to the annexation of Crimea? The then British prime minister, Boris Johnson, wrote in March 2022—shortly after Russia's escalation of its war in Ukraine—that the West had made a 'terrible mistake' in letting Putin 'get away' with the annexation of Crimea. It is a sentiment that has been echoed many times since. We can never know for certain that the war would have been averted had the response have been stronger. The EU, which then included the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada all imposed sanctions, after all.

Perhaps the mistakes with Russia did not begin with Crimea, but much earlier. The 1990s are remembered in Russia as a chaotic decade during which Russia was weak on the international stage. The Putin administration has always been content with this interpretation, using it to portray what followed in a favourable light. In the West, the Yeltsin era has tended to be seen as one of economic hardship, yes, but also political freedom. The Kremlin's actions during the events of October 1993, and in the two Chechen wars, suggest a different interpretation is possible. For domestically the Kremlin was extremely strong on dissent: not flinching from using military force against opponents, or to enforce claims of sovereignty over territories that sought self-determination. While the West may indeed have made a terrible mistake in March 2014, it was perhaps not the first in interpreting post-Soviet Russia's ambitions, and determination to achieve them.

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NATALYA BELITSER

Liberation of Crimea: A path to win the war

Expert article • 3564

The year 2024 marks the tenth anniversary of the Russian-Ukrainian war and two years of the 'Big War' after the full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2002. This war – the longest and bloodiest in the post-WWII Europe – began by the occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in February – March 2014 and must end by its liberation.

Unlike the successful ground operations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) in 2022, the 2023 counteroffensive is considered a failure. Against this background and without dwelling on its causes and the objectivity of such an assessment, it is worth paying attention to the obvious successes of Ukraine in the Black Sea and in the Crimean 'stronghold' of the Russian army.

Among the outstanding AFU achievements there is the flagship Moskva destroyed by the Ukrainian 'Neptun' missiles yet in April 2022. This event is also notable for the almost mystical coincidence: just before, a postal stamp appeared with the Moskva image and the already well-known meme sending Russian warship… far away (the words of a defender of the Snake Island). Was it a prophetic vision of the Russian BSF fate?

Indeed, by the end of 2023, 26 Russian warships had been hit by missiles and/or naval drones; 10 of them were destroyed and sunk, and 16 seriously damaged. For a country having practically no fleet this result is truly extraordinary… The last strike on December 26, 2023 hit the large landing ship Novocherkassk; since its original mission of invading Ukrainian ports proved unavailable, it was used to deliver munitions and transport personnel. Iranian drones and/or explosives on board caused a powerful detonation that destroyed the ship. According to data from various sources, up to 74 crew members may have been killed, and 27 wounded.

As a result of the successful targeting Russian warships, its Navy was driven out of Crimean ports (mainly to Novorossiysk) and practically deprived of the possibility to launch missiles, thus slightly reducing the threat of constant alarms in Ukraine. Ensuring a free passage of ships carrying grain and other cargo through the Black Sea 'humanitarian corridor' created by Ukraine after Russia's withdrawal from the 'grain deal' in summer-23 is also a big achievement. The sea blockade attempt failed, and by the end of December over 300 ships with 10 ml tons cargo moved safely to their destinations.

The increased attacks' efficiency has become possible due to the British cruise missiles Storm Shadow provided in early 2023, and its French SCALP version first delivered in August-23. Particularly important were the strikes on the Kerch Bridge, the dominant link between Crimea and the mainland Russia, built in 2018. The most powerful were in October 2002 using a truck with skilfully hidden explosives and in July 2023 by the 'Sea Baby' drones designed and produced in Ukraine. These attacks lead to frequent bridge's malfunctions but not to its final destruction, which, if combined with cutting of the 'land corridor' connecting the peninsula with the occupied part of southern Ukraine, will make Crimean military base practically untenable.

To achieve this ambitious purpose, Ukraine needs more advanced, precise and long-range missiles like the US ATACMS and German TAURUS. This should bring the end of the war decidedly nearer, become an important element of the new Black Sea security strategy and therefore, be in the interest of the civilized world. However, only a few ATACMS were delivered so far, while the US has a huge stockpile of them, and Germany still refuses to provide TAURUS despite the increasing pressure on government from MPs, experts and public figures. Moreover, AFU are prohibited from using weapons supplied from the West to attack the territory of the RF. Not having an opportunity to fight on equal footing with Russia, which bombs and shells civilian population and critical infrastructure throughout Ukraine, our army can be compared to a boxer who is forced to "fight with one hand whereas his other hand is tied behind his back". Such an adverse situation looks even more embarrassing given the fact that Russian stores of weapons are replenished by the Iranian drones and ballistic missiles from North Korea. Although formally this ban does not apply to Crimea recognised as Ukraine's territory, the shortage of munition and delays in supplies seriously complicate the main task of de-occupying the peninsula. The main reason for this indecision and hesitation is fear. Fear of 'escalation', of crossing one more 'red line', of a nuclear war, of NATO involvement, etc. While all the experience gained during this war clearly shows: these threats will not be realised. And since Putin's Russia, with its centuries-old chauvinist-imperialist mentality, understands only the language of force, this is high time to demonstrate it not only in words, but also in deeds.

The best examples of such force and resilience are given by the Ukrainian people and, in particular, our Crimean compatriots. In the occupied Crimea, the initial determination to use only peaceful means of resistance was gradually supplemented by more active forms, including sabotage, reconnaissance of military facilities, location and movement of troops, etc. Encouraged by Ukraine's successes in the Black Sea and on the peninsula, covert warriors, such as members of the Crimean Tatar-Ukrainian 'Atesh', are of great help to AFU, GUR, SBU and other structures. An important role in the revived hopes was played by the change in ideology and strategic planning for the Crimea's liberation. Until 2002, reliance on the political-diplomatic path prevailed; now more and more policymakers in Ukraine and abroad are convinced that this goal cannot be achieved without a military component. This changing trend can be traced by analysing, for example, the dynamics of sentiments, discussed topics and planned activities during the 'Crimean Platform' events, starting from its first summit in August 2021. Reforms in the Ministry of Defence, now headed by Rustem Umerov, are also promising, in particular, for the Crimean Tatars – both servicemen of the AFU and those who live on the occupied peninsula but long its liberation and participate in the resistance movements.

Although actual liberation is still far ahead, strategic and practical planning of the future reintegration of Crimea is already underway. There are huge problems and challenges yet to be solved and overcome, starting from the administrative issues, deciding what to do with traitors, collaborators, bearers – voluntarily or not? – of Russian passports, property acquired by the illegally arrived citizens of mainland Russia, and much more. Let's hope that by keeping our unity and doing everything possible to win this war, these difficulties will be overcome, too.

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GALINA YAVORSKA

Global (dis)order and options for Russo-Ukraine war endgame

Expert article • 3565

The endgame in the ongoing war of aggression that Russia wages against Ukraine is shaped not only on the battlefield but also in the cognitive domain. Conflicting interpretations of what would constitute a victory or defeat reflect the changing landscape of current geopolitical contradictions and global instability. Ambiguous pledges by partners to support Ukraine *for as long as it takes* raise doubts as to whether the West fully realizes the fact that victory or defeat in this war will define the future global order.

For Ukraine the victory is defined as the liberation of its occupied territories and reliable future security guarantees, the right to an independent foreign policy, including joining the EU and NATO. For Russia, it is the elimination of Ukraine as a sovereign nation and constraining the global reach of the U.S. and NATO. For Moscow the ultimate goal is to return to the club of the global superpowers, which entails reformatting in its favor the international order.

Ukraine's western partners' goals include preventing a direct confrontation between the Russian Federation and NATO countries and eliminating the possibility of a nuclear conflagration. Russia's defeat is seen as a strategic one, it would prevent its re-entry to the global political 'premier league', meanwhile, the attitude to Ukraine's victory is determined by the perceived need for de-escalation.

The interests of the presumably neutral countries (China, the Global South), vary according to prospects at achieving their own goals in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. For this reason, the outcome of the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine has no independent significance for them. Aside from the risks of an uncontrolled escalation, they would accept both Ukraine's victory and its defeat within a whole range of options between compromise and capitulation.

Ukraine's dependency on the Western support requires coordinating its victory strategy with the partner nations. The issues arising from any (mis)understanding between Ukraine and its partners are of a crucial importance. In this regard, the main obstacle is the fact that the partners are coming from the logic of conflict resolution, predominant in NATO since the end of the Cold War. This involves seeking a compromise, in which both sides presumably would come out as 'winners'.

A compromise requires concessions from both conflicting sides. As Russia has always made clear that no one should expect it to voluntarily pull-out its troops from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine, the space for a compromise has reduced to unilateral concessions on territories illegally seized by the aggressor. Consequently, that would be a step towards legitimizing Russia's violations of international rules, the UN Charter and, ultimately, a step towards a greater global disorder.

The notion that all wars end at the negotiating table is erroneous in relation to Russia's war against Ukraine. It draws on improper analogies and disregards the nature of this war as an existential one for Ukraine and affecting what Russia deems to be its vital interests. A strategy aiming at reconciliation with the aggressor is tantamount to a prologue for defeat and will predictably fail to win domestic support on both sides of the frontline.

In discussions regarding the endgame options for the Russo-Ukrainian war, the true stumbling block appears to be not so much the admission of a Ukrainian victory and means available to achieve it, but the acceptance of Russia's defeat. For many politicians outside Ukraine, the image of a defeated Russia, a world without Russia as we have known it, appears so unthinkable that it undermines the very notion of Ukraine's victory.

If Ukraine loses, Europe and the global order will face unforeseen consequences. Meanwhile, behind the possibility of Russia's defeat there looms the specter of a collapsed major nuclear power and Russia is stoking up this fear by its persistent nuclear blackmail. Russian threats of further escalation of the war by resorting to nuclear weapons feed into the perception of Russia's apparent invincibility. This is augmented by the narrative of Russia's presumably inexhaustible resources – human, natural, economic and, by extension, military. Against this backdrop, the gloomy post-war scenarios emerge, where the authoritarian Russia is preserving in full its traditional global role along with the ability to impose its will by aggression and terrorist methods. Proliferation of these scenarios is instrumental in creating a greater uncertainty and serve a concrete purpose of undermining the international support of Ukraine and preventing it from accession to NATO.

Ukraine's and Russia's goals in this war are asymmetrical. Ukraine fights to liberate its territories, while Russia is aiming to proceed with its land grab, enlarging its territory and expanding its sphere of influence, while simultaneously diminishing the geopolitical weight of the West.

The Russia of today has neither capacity nor appetite for a good-faith agreement. By the same token, there is no sense in hoping that delaying Ukraine's accession to NATO could be a bargaining chip in negotiations for peace. Today both adversaries seek only victory, which for the other party will turn into defeat. *This war offers no option for a win-win solution. Consequently, it would be futile for all parties involved, including Ukraine's supporters, to hope for avoiding the risks by trying to slow down the pace of the military activities.* Such strategy is prone to fail, as it stands to reinforce the destructive processes in the global security environment and increase the likelihood of a direct confrontation between NATO states and the Russian Federation.

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NATO should talk accession with Ukraine

Expert article • 3566

Two things have become clear since the beginning of 2022. First, Europe will not be stable and secure unless Ukraine is stable and secure. Second, even when the current war ends, a Ukraine left on its own will remain a temptation for an aggressive Kremlin. NATO membership could change that. While an invitation to join NATO now would be a bridge too far, Alliance leaders should use NATO's July 2024 summit to launch accession talks with Ukraine.

Russia's February 2022 assault on Ukraine turned a war that began in 2014 into the largest and bloodiest that Europe has seen since World War II. Stripping away the Kremlin's pretense and propaganda, the conflict results primarily from Vladimir Putin's neo-imperialist desire to regain parts of the former Russian Empire that Moscow lost when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. While a tragedy for Ukraine, Putin's unjustified war has also proven a military and geopolitical disaster for Russia; it could rank among the greatest blunders in modern European history.

NATO members and Ukraine's other partners should focus on the urgent task: providing Ukraine the weapons and other assistance it needs to win—either by driving the Russian military out of all its territory, or by achieving such success on the battlefield that a negotiated settlement becomes possible on terms the Ukrainian government and people can accept. While focusing on the immediate task, NATO also should consider how to ensure a stable and secure Europe once the current war is over. That will mean avoiding lingering long-term tensions around Ukraine and a possible renewal of fighting if—or when—an aggressive Kremlin might choose.

Doing nothing is not the answer. A Ukraine by itself and bereft of Western support would all but invite a new Russian attack. Commitments to provide Kyiv with arms, ammunition, and other support, as the G7 and other countries have offered, in the final analysis, still leave Ukraine alone. Given Russia's larger population, larger military, and larger industrial capacity, the Kremlin might well decide to resume hostilities at a future point, assessing that the risks and costs of a new war with just Ukraine would be manageable.

The answer for ensuring long-term security and stability is to bring Ukraine into NATO. Over the past 30 years, Russia has supported separatists in Moldova and Georgia, fought Georgia, and used its military to seize Crimea and support conflict in Donbas before launching its 2022 invasion. In those same 30 years, Russia has not attacked a NATO member.

A number of NATO members wanted the Alliance's June 2023 Vilnius summit to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join, but allies could not reach consensus. The question could well arise again with the approach of the July 2024 summit in Washington. NATO members should prepare now so that meeting can announce the launch of accession talks with Kyiv, with a view to extending an invitation for Ukraine to join at an early point in the future.

This approach offers a logical compromise to the differences that emerged in the run-up to Vilnius. This is not the process for membership that the Alliance has used since 1997. Typically, an invitation was extended, and the aspirant formally joined NATO once current members had completed their internal legal processes to approve accession. However, that process is not fixed in law. NATO and Ukraine could launch accession talks, just as the European Union and Kyiv did last December. Those talks, conducted in the NATO-Ukraine Council, would identify the steps Kyiv needs to take to secure an invitation and otherwise prepare for membership.

Bringing Ukraine into NATO while it remains at war with Russia poses a steep challenge, because it would immediately raise the question of the application of Article 5 of the NATO treaty (an attack on one is considered an attack on all). Alliance members have declined to commit their forces to join Ukraine's current fight against Russia. While a way might be found to bring Ukraine into NATO even absent peace with Russia, the "how" of doing so and what it would mean for Article 5's application remain unclear.

On the other hand, the question is much more straight-forward if a Ukraine at peace joins NATO. In that case, Moscow's calculation regarding launching a new war would have to weigh the risks and costs of a fight against Ukraine *and* NATO, with all its conventional and nuclear capabilities. The onus for initiating a direct clash would rest with the Kremlin.

In any event, beginning accession talks would set a definitive membership path for Ukraine. It would send strong signals to Kyiv—that NATO countries are serious about Ukraine's security—and to Moscow—that the Alliance's commitment to Ukraine will endure.

Ukraine's partners must ensure Ukraine's military has the weapons and other support needed to continue the fight. At the same time, NATO allies should begin preparing the ground so that Alliance leaders and President Zelensky can announce the launch of accession talks in July.

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Role of Ukraine integration into EU and NATO for supporting economic development and national security

Expert article • 3567

The integration of Ukraine into the European Union and NATO holds significant implications for both its economic development and national security. Economically, EU integration offers Ukraine access to a larger market, fostering trade and investment. Membership in these organizations provides Ukraine with access to substantial financial resources, expertise, institutional support, crucial for reconstructing war-affected regions. This financial support can be channeled into infrastructure projects, job creation, and the revitalization of industries.

And the amount of funds for the support of the national economy during military operations and post-war reconstruction is growing significantly and rapidly. The World Bank has put the cost of reconstruction and recovery at $411bn (£323bn) on February 2023. But this sum increased sharply. According to the United Nations (March 2023) report, poverty in Ukraine has risen in a year from 5.5 percent to 24.1 percent, and Ukraine's GDP reduced on 29.2 percent. Also 5.4 million Ukrainians internally displaced and 8.1 million moved abroad.

Ukraine during almost two years of war demonstrated unpredictable level of sustainability. In March 2022, 79% of businesses in Ukraine stopped their activity, but by the end of 2022 this figure had been reduced to just 32%. Given the scale of the destruction caused by the war, this is a remarkable achievement. Similarly, Ukraine was able to avoid bureaucratic failure due to digitalization of public services.

To start the rebuilding process, investing in robust digital infrastructure becomes imperative. Digitalization creates opportunity for economic diversification, allowing Ukraine to reduce its dependence on traditional industries. Embracing technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things can catalyze the creation of a more dynamic and resilient economic landscape.

Efficient governance is crucial for post-war recovery, and digitalization plays a pivotal role in achieving this objective. Implementing e-governance solutions enhances transparency, reduces bureaucratic hurdles, and promotes citizen engagement.

The European Union is one of Ukraine's strongest supporters. Since the start of Russia's war against Ukraine, the EU made available close to €83 billion in financial, humanitarian, and military assistance to Ukraine. This includes €18 billion in macro-financial assistance only in 2023 and €814 million in grants. On 20 June 2023, the Commission proposed to set up a new €50 billion Ukraine Facility to support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernization, and reforms needed for EU accession. The Ukraine Facility will provide coherent, predictable, and flexible support to Ukraine for the period 2024- 2027, adapted to the challenges faced by a country at war.

NATO's role in post-war rebuilding is equally significant. Military cooperation with NATO allies can help in securing and stabilizing conflict-ridden areas, facilitating the return of displaced populations, and ensuring a safe environment for rebuilding initiatives.

Strategic coordination between Ukraine, the EU, and NATO is essential for optimizing the synergies between economic recovery and security stabilization in the post-war scenario. The alignment with EU standards can enhance the competitiveness of Ukrainian industries, leading to economic growth.

However, there are challenges, such as the need for structural reforms, the fight against corruption, a significant number of the population that fled the country due to military aggression. Balancing economic benefits with geopolitical complexities requires strategic policy. In general, the integration of Ukraine into the EU and NATO is a multifaceted process that can positively affect economic development and strengthen national security.

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YULIYA KAZDOBINA

Ukraine's integration with the west is about a new security architecture in Europe

Expert article • 3568

On December 14, 2023, most Ukrainians celebrated. The European Council decision to open Ukraine's membership talks was something we couldn't have even dreamed about 10 years ago, when the standoff between peaceful protesters in downtown Kyiv and the Yanukovych government over his attempt to turn the country east was in full swing. At that time, it was only the Association Agreement with no EU membership prospects that Ukrainians could hope for. Russian aggression has changed that. Today, Ukraine's integration into the EU and other western institutions is not only about the wish of the Ukrainian people to be a part of the European family where Ukraine rightfully belongs. It is also about the new security architecture on the continent.

The Russian war has taught us many important though unwelcome lessons. I would like to highlight just three of them.

1. The values and principles that have kept Europe and the western countries at peace after hundreds of years of constant wars are not shared by everyone. Russia sees itself as a separate civilization and explicitly rejects respect for human rights, international law, state borders and other countries' sovereignty as alien to it. "Russian borders do not end anywhere", President Putin claims. This renders the vision of "Europe Whole, Free and at Peace" with Russia as a part of it impossible. At least, not before Russia is genuinely changed.
2. Negotiations aimed at finding a middle-of-the-road solution with a deliberate and capable aggressor do not lead to peace. Ukraine had spent 8 years trying to settle the conflict caused by Russian hybrid aggression in the Donbas. The process involved more than 200 negotiation rounds and 20 ceasefire agreements and still ended with the war. Even more. Western leaders including US President Biden, French President Macron, German Chancellor Merkel had many phone calls and meetings with the Russian President attempting to assuage his alleged security concerns as he was getting ready for the full-scale invasion. These efforts lead only to accusations and escalating demands, the last of them being the retreat of NATO to the 1997 borders. We are learning the hard way that Russia perceives the willingness to compromise as weakness and this only stimulates its appetites.
3. Russia's perceived exercise of restraint construed by some in the west as an intention to avoid further escalation is, in fact, Russia preserving its escalation options for future use. Russia saves the options to apply them at a more opportune moment. This was the case during the Minsk negotiations when Russia stepped up its military pressure to extract concessions from Ukraine when it saw fit. This was the case with the full-scale aggression launched at the time of a comedian becoming President of Ukraine and changes in the leadership of some key western countries. This was the case with the Black Sea Grain Initiative, when Russia withdrew from the Grain Deal and launched a series of attacks on the Ukrainian port and grain storage facilities on the eve of the new harvest. In addition, Russia is showing no desire to stop and is clearly gearing up for another round of aggression.

In addition to the lessons above, there is an uncertainty about the role the US is going to play in European security with Donald Trump posed to become the next US President. His attitudes and statements during his first term and in recent months provide many reasons for concern. Although the Congress made a law that will prevent any U.S. president from unilaterally withdrawing from the Alliance, Article 5 doesn't call for an automatic response. In addition, the use of force by the US must be authorized by both, the President and the Congress. Nobody knows what Trump's decision is going to be.

Although it's tempting to frame the war in Ukraine as a "Ukrainian crisis" and concentrate on resolving it, one needs to watch Russian actions closely. Russian antiwestern and antidemocratic rhetoric as well as continued below-the-threshold aggression against Europe indicate that Ukraine is not the only target. Russia has moved its tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus. There are reports that it's setting conditions for an attack on the Baltics. In a recent EW testing incident, it left half of the Polish territory without GPS coverage. Although it's hard to imagine Europe being kinetically attacked, one needs to remember that Russia had taken 8 years to build up its military presence in Crimea before launching its full-scale attack on Ukraine. And it managed to do so while everybody concentrated on the Donbas and the Minsk "peace process".

There are no perfect historical parallels, but we now appear to be in the early days of the Cold War, when the west wanted to live in peace with the Soviet Russia, but the Soviet Russia was not interested. Just like then, Russia asserts its exceptionalism and uses force to subjugate its neighbors and deprive them of either their agency or the right to exist. Just like then, it continues to threaten western countries. The major difference is, though, that the US is not as strong a player while the European Union is. This leaves it first and foremost up to us Europeans to decide what happens on the continent.

Both Ukraine and the EU have decided that Ukraine should become a part of the Union. Ukraine is making bilateral security agreements with several European states. It's also posed to become a NATO member. This means the line is gradually being drawn, although, I am sure, nobody in the west wants to go back to the Cold War tensions. Russia, however, did not ask. It's Russia's actions that make a new version of the old security arrangements necessary and leave no space for peace and dialogue. To stop the war and live in relative prosperity and peace we Europeans need to join forces and give the aggressor a concerted answer.

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Ukraine and its integration towards the West

Expert article • 3569

Ukraine's integration story is unique in its essence. Not a single European country conducted integration in wartime. The genocidal war launched by Russia against Ukraine nullified any arguments of sceptics, both in Ukraine and in the West. According to the polls, the public support for joining the EU and NATO remains at the highest level.

Ukraine's path towards the West before 2014 was a twist. The Revolution of Dignity marked a new period in both Ukraine's modern history and its convergence with the West. The Association Agreement with DCFTA, the visa-free regime, created the preconditions for deepening cooperation. The life-changing decision of the Parliament of Ukraine in 2019, which fixed the course towards the EU and NATO in the Constitution, recorded the civilizational choice of the Ukrainians.

Ukraine has shown progress in implementing recommendations despite the war. When the Ukrainian leadership submitted the EU membership application on the fifth day of Russia's full-scale invasion (February 28, 2022), there was a considerable degree of pragmatism regarding the realistic outcomes of this action. With the granting of EU candidate status to Ukraine in June 2022, a strong political will from both sides to finish this marathon became obvious.

The Ukrainian government introduced an innovative approach to legislation assessment, conducting a 6-month self-screening even before the official screening of the European Commission. Such an approach justified itself, significantly accelerating the necessary steps towards reforms.

The European track became efficient due to the fundamental consensus between all stakeholders involved while being an indicator of good groundwork with the EU bureaucracy. The European Council's historic decision at the summit in December 2023 to open pre-accession talks with Ukraine advanced the preparatory work for the next stage. The first quarter of 2024 will be an intensive period for both sides.

The interdependence with the West is already unprecedented. The West's financial support ensures the country's economic resilience during wartime. By joining the EU funding programs, Ukraine received behind-the-scenes access. Last decade, the EU has invested its efforts in ensuring mutual energy security. The energy systems have been synchronized. Further reforms will strengthen Ukraine's capabilities to counter Russian aggression.

The country is committed to achieving membership in both the EU and NATO. To meet these key foreign policy goals, the Ukrainian team has enlisted the support of many European governments by signing relevant declarations.

The war became a stress test for Ukraine's partnerships both with Western and non-Western countries. For the next decades, security will define relations between Ukraine and the West. Integration into NATO is conditioned by other considerations. Since Ukraine's application for accelerated accession in September 2022, Kyiv's proactive integration approach ensured the NATO standards in the defence and security sector.

The West invested a lot in Ukraine's survival, but still not enough to end the war with Ukraine's victory. A counteroffensive without the required provision against the larger army is a knowingly losing option. The Ukrainian Defence Forces were able to gain some strategic advantages, including the expulsion of the Russian fleet from the western part of the Black Sea and the renewal of the BS Grain Initiative.

Entering the third year of war for Ukraine is important to keep the gains of the 2023 campaign. Innovative technological solutions with a sufficient amount of weapons are still required. The Western strategy evolved to invest in Ukraine's defence autonomy and self-reliance, which could be achieved with joint military production. Meanwhile, negotiations on security guarantees before NATO membership are in active mode.

The 2024 year is predicted to be more turbulent for world politics due to election campaigns in Europe and the U.S. Russia will hold a fake election just to reconfirm Putin's reign. NATO Washington summit in July 2024 will define the further configurations.

NATO membership remains the only solution. The political invitation could become an asymmetric response to Russia, a last chance to avoid such war and genocide in the future. Invitation would be an additional impulse for Ukrainians to win this war.

Putin's Russia will never change its attitude towards Ukraine's statehood. The combined air attacks during the 2023/24 winter season reminded there is no option for negotiations with Putin. The main goal is to restore territorial integrity while ensuring the complete defeat of Russia on the battlefield, which is the only precondition for lasting peace in Europe. The concept of Russia's defeat should be instrumentalized, otherwise, NATO will come face-to-face with Russia.

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VICTOR RUD

Can the West grow up?

Expert article • 3570

A century ago, Ukraine's integration with the West was refused. Brushing off Ukraine's warning about Russia's impending assault against the West, Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" of freedom and self-determination were myopically denied for the largest country in Europe. The U.S. reneged on contracted aid to Ukraine, and its participation at the Paris Peace talks was forbidden. Western pusillanimity and greed facilitated Moscow's slaughter of millions. And not just in Ukraine. In a generation's time, the West scarcely dared to breath lest an air current waft over The Button.

Today's seeming commitment to Ukraine's integration with the West will fail catastrophically—for Ukraine and the world -- unless (a) the West gets serious and hugely ramps up aid to Ukraine, for the purpose of (b) pulling the "international order" back from the brink. That means (c) Ukraine's recovery of its sovereignty pre- 2014. And that will not happen without (d) a brutally honest self-assessment of Western culpability in the growing cataclysm.

With exceptions, most notably those nations who have experienced the reality of Russian conquest, the West continues to suffer from the naivete and low frustration level of a child. Innocence is endearing for a toddler, but even a child grows up, learning from its experience. But we want none of that. We are self-inoculated against the lessons that that experience teaches us, and our predictive capacity is therefore exactly zero. We also pay no attention to our attention deficit disorder. Add to it glaring hypocrisy, a criminal compulsion to appease, political prostitution, corruption of our institutions and failure of political will. There never has been, nor can there be, any "strategy" under such circumstances.

Too strong?

Ukraine's recoupment of independence in 1991, was the tombstone for the USSR, regaining global primacy for the U.S. and the West, generally. Washington adroitly pivoted, taking unabashed credit for something it never sought (the dissolution of the USSR), ensured by something it actively opposed (Ukraine's independence). Where are we today? In 2004, a top U.S. Russia expert argued, "stop criticizing Putin and start helping him." In 2021, seven years after Russia's invasion, occupation and annexation of Ukrainian territory, the Biden administration's Interim Global Security Guidelines mentioned Ukraine exactly zero times.

More fundamentally, the West has neither deterred Russia nor stopped nor reversed its conquests. To the exact contrary, Russia has deterred the West. At issue are not "just" invasion, occupation and annexation, but the destruction of a nation where its genocide has never been so clearly and repeatedly stated and that we are obligated by international law to prevent and punish.

NATO is the greatest military alliance in history, comprising of three nuclear powers, with nearly a billion people and roughly half the world economy. Now add the non-NATO countries that are part of the democratic West and we have almost 2/3 of the global economy. Russia has only half the population of the U.S., and other than energy has nothing to offer, whether in terms of values or principles, or goods, services, human capital, or innovation. It can't produce a frying pan to compete with China. But it has wielded the very "rules-based international order" to shatter that same order and that gives meaning to the very idea of a "democratic West" in the first place. Why can we develop Facebook, Linkedin, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., but are hopelessly inept in preventing Russia from high jacking it all to implant malware into our cerebral cortex? It's not any lack of technical prowess on our part. Now add the lessons this teaches global tyrants.

The record of Western incoherence and strategic witlessness goes back further. Without even looking at the record prior to 1991, after the USSR imploded why didn't the West seek a demilitarized and de-communized Russia, but instead reinforced its economy and military? Andrei Kovalev was crystal clear: "It was under Yeltsin that the foundations for a new Russian imperialism were constructed." Why didn't we secure the independence of the erstwhile republic that ensured the dissolution of the USSR? We instead stripped Ukraine of its nuclear arsenal to better ensure that Russia would be the sole nuclear power so we would not have a "Yugoslavia with nukes." Someone forgot that it was Moscow that had pushed the world to the brink of nuclear incineration. Today, instead of mutual deterrence we have unilateral nuclear blackmail.

On December 20, 1999, Putin went to Lubyanka, the secret police headquarters, to celebrate the birth of the Cheka. The next day he held a reception in the Kremlin for Stalin's 120th birthday. We yawned. How about a former Gestapo officer heading up a resurgent Germany and reviving Hitler? Instead, Western leaders competed in a stampede of self-induced rapture to pay homage to Putin. This was as he was, with true Stalinist sadism, obliterating Chechnya despite a "Peace Treaty" between the Russian Federation and Chechnya. Putin also repeatedly decried the fall of the USSR. We remained catatonic.

Remember Georgia? Our demand that "Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected " promptly degenerated into happy talk, with a "reset" rewarding Russia's for its dismemberment of the victim. Little wonder Moscow was energized, yet we were now surprised by the resulting 2014 invasion of Ukraine. Again we whistled past the graveyard, endlessly reminding Russia (as if it didn't know) of its obligations, calling upon, warning, condemning, not tolerating, being loud and clear, making clear, clarifying, declaring as unacceptable, demanding, insisting, closely monitoring, taking note, affirming, reaffirming, demonstrating, meeting, conferencing, resolving, being committed, reiterating our conviction, remaining steadfast, sending a message, calling for restraint, standing firm, standing with, standing behind, standing alongside, urging, encouraging, expressing concern, utmost concern, grave concern. In the meantime, the West effectively imposed an arms embargo against Ukraine. It was an enticement for 2022.

Why have we been massaging sanctions for a full decade? Wasn't 2014 enough? Why are Russian ships allowed to continue visiting ports? We reprogram the technology restricting the range of weaponry provided Ukraine. Simultaneously, Russian, and Iranian, Chinese and North Korean war material and weaponry is stuffed with Western technology (no range limitations) and is **increasingly** pulverizing Ukrainian cities and human beings. And it's not as if we don't know. That makes the West an active participant in genocide. (And so much for President Bush sophomoric celebration of "working together [with Russia] in Iran and North Korea.") And why do we demand as a precondition for increased – even continued -- aid to Ukraine the existence of the very circumstances that that support is intended to achieve – "progress," "winning" – but then argue the absence of those circumstances as the reason to deny the aid?

Today, we're self-deterred, paralyzed over a possible "war with Russia." (Former U.S. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley said at the time, "Are we prepared to go to war with Russia over Georgia?") We can only imagine the Kremlin's reaction upon learning that sniper training was denied for Ukrainians because it was "lethal" and therefore "provocative."

Western caution (reasonable enough . . . to a point) long ago crossed the line into complicity. Why do we assess the risk and danger of "WWIII" as greater than the certainty and danger of that fear institutionalizing nuclear blackmail globally? Putin is not afraid of escalation, but we are, though he is the aggressor, the war criminal. Our nervous tick today is the same as it was in 1991, when we were paralyzed by the possibility of a "Yugoslavia with nukes." Now is better? Our sagacity on this point competes with our foresight in supporting and elevating communist China a few decades before.

As Ukraine does NATO's job for it, NATO has gutted mutual deterrence and disassembles NATO's credibility about "defending every inch" of territory. Why wouldn't NATO be afraid of WWIII and nukes in defending, say, Luxembourg, but not the largest country in Europe? How can one NATO member, Turkey, block Ukraine's transport into the Black Sea of two minehunter vessels donated by another NATO member, Great Britain? Why has NATO failed to act on its own strategic concept of stopping conflicts threatening the security of its member states? Moreover, why have we ignored the nuclear threats coming from Russia's waging war in a country of 15 nuclear reactors?

The West evidently still has not comprehended how hypocrisy destroys deterrence credibility. We lecture endlessly about the rules-based order but simultaneously endorsed the Minsk Protocols that negated that very order by imposing sovereignty limitations on the victim, not the invader. Today, we increase the same specter . . . that Ukraine surrender territory (and the humanity on it), when it is Russia that is to surrender territory to Ukraine as a security buffer. This is not logic. It's the acme of hypocrisy, converting deterrence into an invitation.

Similarly, we endlessly speak of "imposing costs" on Russia, instead of preventing and reversing Russia's international predation. We simply put a price tag on the "international order." What does that do to credibility? Why do we honor Russia's veto at the UN when its seat on the Security Council was the result of our own disregard of the very rules for admission of new members? Signaling his contempt for it all, Putin bombed Kyiv on April 28, 2022, as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was in Kyiv the day after a meeting in Moscow with Putin.

Where's "deterrence" in our vocabulary? It's not. Business, money, and corruption are. Three successive British Prime ministers looked the other way when Putin murdered a British citizen (Alexander Litvinenko) with a miniature nuclear device, Polonium 210, on British soil. We continue to be awash in Russian petro dollars and money from extortion, murder, drug and arms smuggling, human trafficking, outright theft, corruption and extortion. Our economic and financial universe has been converted into an endowment fund for yacht builders, journalists, lawyers, hedge funds, bankers, stock exchanges, nannies, investment advisers and real estate agents. (It will be a welcome aberration if the West finally attaches Russia's more than $300 billion in the West and dedicates it for Ukraine aid.)

Russian dirty money, blood money, also buys Western opinion makers, media, think tanks, lobbyists, and academe with the same alacrity as sports teams, condominiums in New York, Florida, London and Dubai, and Maybachs and Bentleys. They are the anointed ones, the witting and unwitting sales agents that Russia uses to occupy our brain. Each is both the target and the legitimizer.

We are in thrall of putative Russia experts who we can thank for yesterday's assurances. One was that "Ukraine's security problem will be solved once Ukraine gives up its nuclear arsenal" Another was "democracy was more likely to come from Moscow than from Kyiv." Now, their dog whistle is "negotiation," "agreement" and "settlement." It's an escape tunnel for scurrying away from professional malpractice and genocide complicity, and to maintain tenure. We continue to refuse to believe, to dismiss the warnings and advice of nations who have the experience that we do not and therefore know better than we. They categorically reject the West's paralyzing fear of "escalation," which is the very provocation that catalyzes Russia's predation. They know better than others that any "agreement" with Russia is a self-anesthetizing, lethal hallucination.

Growing up means the West understanding how its pathologies are reversing "never again" into a chimerical "peace in our time." We either admit Russia's success in hammering apart the international order . . . or we don't. We either admit our failures and frankly admit that our fecklessness has provoked Russia . . or we don't. We either understand that we are being outplayed, outsmarted and out maneuvered . . . or we don't. We either understand the genesis of our global floundering . . . or we don't. We either understand the existential threat . . . or we don't. We either act on that exigency . . . or we don't.

"Freedom is Our Religion," read the massive banner on the side of a building facing Independence Square in Kyiv a few years ago. "Maybe they [Ukrainians] won't resist, and maybe our problem will be solved," was the valorous declaration of a senior aide to German chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Choose.

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NATALIIA MELNYCHENKO

To East or to West, that was the question

Expert article • 3571

After declaring independence on August 24, 1991 Ukraine began to formulate its own foreign policy. The new state was partially the successor to the Ukrainian SSR. Ukraine's European integration has been one of the vectors of our country's development since the 1990s. However, the first stages of foreign policy development were characterized by multi-vectorism and a certain lack of independence due to the long period of being part of the Soviet Union. In the first years of independence, the country continued to be ruled by representatives of the Communist Party, which was used to following instructions from Moscow.

In 1991-1999, the concept of the foreign policy course of independent Ukraine was actively developed. The first document was the Parliament Resolution "On the Main Directions of Ukraine's Foreign Policy" of July 2, 1993. The document stated that "...the *dominant bilateral relations* with the border states are *Ukrainian-Russian relations* ... since their character will largely determine the fate of progressive democratic development of both Ukraine and the Russian Federation, stability in Europe and throughout the world. Ukraine will direct its foreign policy efforts to become a reliable *bridge* between Russia and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe." Para. b) referred to the development of relations with Western European countries, which "will create conditions for the restoration of Ukraine's *long-standing ... ties with European civilization*, acceleration of democratization, market reforms and recovery of the national economy."

In March 1994, Ukraine was granted the status of an associate member of the Central European Initiative. In 1994, the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed, which demonstrated the common intentions of the EU and Ukraine to promote mutually beneficial relations. Ukraine became a full member of the Council of Europe in November 1995.

On July 1, 2010, the Parliament adopted the Law of Ukraine "On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policy." As of today, the law has been amended 6 times, which concerned the priority direction of foreign policy development. The law was adopted during the presidency of pro-Russian President Yanukovych, and accordingly, in its 2010 version, Art. 11 of the Foreign Policy Principles stated that "Ukraine, as a European *non-aligned state*, pursues an open foreign policy and seeks cooperation *with all* interested partners, *avoiding dependence* on individual states, groups of states or international organizations."

The provisions on "ensuring Ukraine's integration into the European political, economic, and legal space with a view to gaining EU membership" were included in the first version of the law. One of the main outcomes of this process should be the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU by Ukrainian President Yanukovych at the Eastern Partnership Summit in the autumn of 2013. However, his refusal to sign the Association Agreement led to massive peaceful protests in central Kyiv, which went down in history as Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity. Yanukovych fled to Russia, and in March 2014, the Russian army occupied Crimea and began to seize parts of eastern Ukraine. Despite this, the economic part of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU was signed in March 2014, and the political part in June 2014. Moreover, in 2017, Ukraine received a visa-free regime with the EU.

In December 2014, on the initiative of pro-European President Poroshenko, Art. 11 of the Law was rewritten, removing the provision on non-alignment and adding a provision on deepening cooperation with NATO with a view to becoming a member of the organization (para. 8).

On February 7, 2019, the Parliament adopted the Law "On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine (regarding the strategic course of the state for Ukraine's full membership in the EU and NATO)" initiated by President Poroshenko. The Parliament and the President were determined to be responsible for this direction (Art. 85, 102).

The events of February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a large-scale offensive against Ukraine, caused dramatic changes in European and global security. The largest war in Europe since the World War II, with the killing and abuse of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war by the Russian army, shocked the international community. On February 28, Ukraine applied to join the European Union. Negotiations on Kyiv's candidate status were successful at the EU summit on June 23. It took three and a half months for Ukraine's application to be considered.

Today Ukraine continues to pay for its European integration course with the occupation of part of its territory, hundreds of thousands of killed and wounded soldiers and civilians, millions of internally displaced persons, refugees, and the destruction of infrastructure and homes. This is a very high price to pay. But for now, the compass of foreign policy is irrevocably pointing west.

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Ukraine's Western leap: Revolution and reform redefine a nation

Expert article • 3572

Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine has profoundly altered Eastern Europe's geopolitical landscape and accelerated Ukraine's integration towards the West. This new phase in Ukraine's modern history is closely linked to the events of 2014, when the Revolution of Dignity led to the ousting of Viktor Yanukovych's government. The revolution signified Ukraine's strong desire for European integration and a decisive rejection of Russian influence.

The Revolution of Dignity was an expression of the Ukrainian people's aspirations for democracy and closer ties with Europe. It catalyzed major changes in Ukraine's society and politics, setting in motion a series of reforms and a realignment of foreign policy towards the West. The revolution's legacy, advocating for transparency, accountability, and European integration, continues to influence Ukraine's political landscape today.

While Ukraine's journey towards the West presents significant opportunities, it also comes with a myriad of challenges. The commitment to democratic values is evident as Ukraine bravely and fearlessly confronts Russian aggression. The nation's resilience in the face of Vladimir Putin's invasion underscores its dedication to these principles.

Path to reform

Post-Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine has been on a path of significant reform. The country has focused on aligning with European standards in governance, rule of law, and human rights. These steps are crucial for deeper integration with Western institutions. However, this journey has been marred by Russia's unprovoked war, which began with the annexation of Crimea and continued with the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine.

Key to Ukraine's integration is substantial political reform. It is vital for establishing a stable, transparent, and accountable governance structure. Strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, alongside anti-corruption measures, is pivotal. Equally important is Ukraine's economic transformation, involving the adoption of market-oriented economic policies, improvement of the business environment, and alignment with EU regulatory standards. Security and defense alignment, especially with NATO standards, is also critical given the current security challenges.

Ukraine's path towards Western integration highlights the country's commitment to democratic values and European aspirations. This path, necessitating extensive reforms and international support, reflects the complex nature of modern geopolitics and the resilience of a nation forging its own path.

As Ukraine continues this trajectory, the support and cooperation of its European allies are essential for the stability and unity of the region.

Role of media

On this journey, the role of a free and independent Ukrainian media becomes increasingly vital. In the context of integrating with the West, the importance of freedom of speech cannot be overstated. It is a cornerstone of democratic institutions, and in Ukraine, it serves as a bulwark against the authoritarian tendencies observed in neighboring Russia.

A free media in Ukraine is essential for maintaining the transparency and accountability of authorities. It plays a key role in informing the public, encouraging open debate, and providing a platform for diverse voices. This is particularly important in a country where the government is undergoing significant reforms and facing the challenges of war.

In contrast, the Russian media landscape is characterized by heavy state control and censorship. Independent journalism is suppressed, and dissenting voices are silenced.

This dichotomy between Ukraine and Russia in terms of media freedom highlights the broader struggle between democratic values and authoritarian control. Ukraine's commitment to a free press not only aligns it with Western democratic ideals but also strengthens its institutions and society. It is through such commitment that Ukraine can continue to build a resilient, democratic state that stands in sharp contrast to its authoritarian neighbor.

Ukraine and its citizens' commitment to a free press will help it to navigate its complex political landscape, reinforce its democratic institutions, and differentiate itself from the authoritarian model exemplified by Russia. This commitment to freedom of speech and press freedom will be instrumental in Ukraine's journey towards a more democratic, transparent, and accountable society, deeply integrated with Western values and institutions.

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Challenges and opportunities in Ukraine's preparation for the EU accession

Expert article • 3573

Ukraine is facing a historical moment, at the crossroads of tragedy and hope. On one hand, the country is dealing with the brutal and unjustified war of destruction and submission brought on by Russia – an outright attempt, albeit unsuccessful, at erasing the Ukrainian nation and identity. On the other hand, the silver lining comes with the prospects of the long-awaited and much-desired European integration and EU accession – something that was previously denied and was considered unrealistic even as recent as 3-4 years ago.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine turned out to be a decisive factor in shutting out EU's hesitation and the "enlargement fatigue" narrative – the EU Member States have come to the realisation that staying within the vague terms of friendly neighbourhood will not suffice in these harsh geopolitically circumstances and that firm choices and decisions are needed. Neither it is a coincidence that such breakthrough determination comes at a time like this – the saying goes that the EU gets stronger and thrives particularly during times of crisis.

The EU candidacy and the eventual membership of Ukraine will still come with their own twists and challenges in the form of numerous reforms, entrance to the single market, and competition. In addition, there are political worries of a power shift towards the East once Ukraine would fully enter the EU family. This is not, however, a new matter to the EU, as every previous enlargement brought forth fierce competition in the economy of the entrant, as well as challenged the Member States' existing industry through the inflow of cheaper products and services entering the single market without limitations or tariffs. In all cases, these matters have been eventually worked out, and as for decision making, alternative ways, such as the qualified majority, have been introduced. Furthermore, once an EU member state, due to its vast territory and recovery needs, Ukraine would likely become the largest beneficiary of the EU's cohesion policy funds, considerable amount of the EU budget meant to eliminate the regional disparities. How to ensure that Ukraine, once joining the EU family, will not be a liability, but an asset? Ukraine is yet to fight its battle and prove its worthiness in purely economic terms, but no evidence is needed to realise Ukraine's potential as a powerful labour resource and a vessel for vast economic growth.

For the moment, though, as the war of aggression is ongoing, a delicate matter remains the external support for Ukraine. Regardless of the will, preparedness, and sacrifices of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, it would be an extremely difficult task for Ukraine to defend its sovereignty without support from the outside. In pseudo-democratic or authoritarian regimes, such as Russia, mobilising financial and human resources is considerably easier, as decisions can be made quickly without relying on multiple actors and opinions. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Russia increased its military spending to 35% of the state's budget for the year 2024, while further decreasing health and social spending. On top of that, it also receives external support in different forms such as weapons, to continue its aggression. In contrast, Ukraine is fighting for its survival and for the defence of these exact values – democracy, freedom of choice, and the value of human life, which goes against mobilising warfare resources by fully neglecting the society's needs and wellbeing.

While the Union- or national-level support is the most important, the decisions at this level can experience delays and blockages and are very reliant on politics. Thus, the power of cooperation through more regional formats should not be underestimated – practical support can come uninterrupted from various bilateral and multilateral formats, such as twin-city- or municipality- cooperation or, for example, through the EU macro-regional Strategies. This support does not always come in the form of money, but also in addressing the very practical needs of the population, or the policy-related support – in the form of knowledge exchange and support in preparation of the Ukrainian legislation to come into the conformity with the EU's.

The sustainable rebuilding of the country is an important opportunity for Ukraine and the EU to converge faster than ever: damaged old buildings can be repaired or rebuilt specifically around energy efficiency; environment-damaging mines can be closed and reoriented towards renewable energy sources; wastewater facilities can be recovered or built anew by the EU standards. Although adjusting the legislation in non-military related sectors represents additional bureaucratic burden while the country is living in a permanent state of emergency, the perspective of EU membership acts as catalyst for effective and quality changes. For the EU, in turn, it is a decisive moment to further strengthen the Union and welcome to the team a strong and powerful ally supporting and defending the common EU values.

The level of support for Ukraine, both financial, political, and practical, is unprecedented compared to any other period of time since its independence. Together with developing further its resilience and defence capabilities, and, in parallel, further implementing the reforms and building capable and corruption-free transparent administration that are adamant for accession into the EU, Ukraine has a strong prospect of breaking free from the Russian coercion, empowered by the continued steady military support, and by the decisive acts to guarantee Ukraine's complete and conclusive victory.

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RIANA TEIFUKOVA

European integration of Ukraine amidst Russian intervention: Challenges and strategic shifts

Expert article • 3574

The European integration of Ukraine unfolds against the backdrop of extensive Russian intervention, presenting myriad challenges that influence the strategic landscape of the region. The war initiated by the aggressor state has showcased Ukrainians' determination to safeguard their country's independence and pursue the European path of development, fostering unity within the nation and bolstering public support for the Western vector of integration. Simultaneously, the war has heightened bilateral processes of European integration, bringing a new dimension to Brussels' policy towards Ukraine and necessitating a reevaluation of approaches and priorities in security. The war, during which Ukraine has endured substantial human and socio-economic losses, has shaped the trajectory of progress towards a united Europe, characterizing it as a form of "military" integration.

The decision to confer candidate status for EU accession upon Ukraine holds profound political and strategic implications. Ukraine, in its resolute defence against Kremlin's continental expansion, stands as a bastion safeguarding the EU from external threats. The political order and the very future of the European Union are linked to the actions and stability of the Ukrainian army. The significance of Ukrainian European integration transcends national borders; it is paramount for the collective security and prosperity of the European Union. This unique role sets Ukraine apart from other candidate countries, including Moldova, Georgia, and the Balkan states.

Russian expansion has cast a long shadow over Ukraine's European integration journey, inflicting significant human and financial costs on the nation. The war initiated by Putin's regime challenges Ukraine's territorial integrity and presents a formidable obstacle to its European integration aspirations. The substantial human and financial losses suffered by Ukraine as a result of Russian aggression underscore the severity of the challenges faced, marking this war as one of the deadliest in Europe since World War II.

The current state of war in Ukraine poses a threat not only to the nation itself but also jeopardizes the broader security landscape of Europe. The militarization of the European Union appears increasingly inevitable as the challenges faced by Ukraine extend beyond its borders, becoming threats to the entire continent. The war underscores the interconnectedness of European security and the urgency for a united response to counteract external aggression.

For Ukraine, European integration represents more than a political aspiration; it is a civilizational choice that underscores the nation's commitment to shared European values. Russian aggression, stemming from the signing of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), signifies an attempt to impede Ukraine's progress towards Western standards. Russia's opposition to reformative measures in the Ukrainian economy reflects its desire to maintain post-communist Soviet standards, diverging from the transformative path chosen by Ukraine.

Despite the ongoing war, Ukraine persists in pro-European reforms amid the challenges of war. The enactment of crucial European integration laws and enhanced cooperation with Brussels demonstrates a determination to align with European norms and standards, even in the face of adversity. While attaining candidate status is a significant milestone, it is essential to recognize that it is not the final stage. The process necessitates sustained momentum, leveraging the advantages of the new status to implement reforms essential for full EU membership.

In conclusion, the European integration of Ukraine is inextricably linked to the broader security and stability of Europe. The war-driven dynamics have reshaped the nature of European integration, necessitating strategic shifts and resilient efforts. The partnership between Kyiv and Brussels forged in the crucible of war, underscores the collective commitment to resist external aggression and uphold the values of the European community. The international community must acknowledge Ukraine's pivotal role in regional stability and security, actively supporting its ongoing struggle for a European future amid challenging circumstances. The sacrifices made by Ukraine in this endeavour contribute not only to its own resilience but also to the establishment of a future characterized by stability, peace, and shared prosperity for the entire European community.

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MATTI POSIO

How long can Ukraine keep supporting the West?

Expert article • 3575

Reverse mathematics is eye-opening. We keep statistics about how much the EU and each country have supported Ukraine, or not. It's a lot harder to calculate how much Ukraine has supported everyone else.

We say phrases like 'Ukraine is fighting for all of us.'

What if Germany would not have supported Ukraine by its 20 billion, or the EU institutions pledged 85 billion, and what if the much lesser contributors France, Spain and Italy would not have chipped in their euros, too? How much would it then cost, to pay for Europe's safety?

It's appalling that Sweden has given more than France. It's crazy that Finland has contributed to Ukraine's defense more than Italy and Spain combined. It's hard to fathom that in the U.S. Congress support for Ukraine can be tied to the funding of a non-related political issue.

Politicians shake the hand or even hug president Zelensky for any photo op. Even the most lenient of supporters realize what courage, and the actual hard labor of Europe's security look like.

The Ukrainians will finish the job

It's about our safety. Finland's safety contributes to Europe's and the West's safety. Ukraine's defense contributes to everyone's safety because the aggressor is a dangerous and blood-thirsty one.

Our leaders have often pledged to keep supporting Ukraine 'as long as needed' or 'until the end'. Sometimes it's 'until victory'. And the victory, of course, 'will have to be defined by Ukrainians'.

Many agree that 'Russia simply cannot win this war' because of the devastating blow it would render to the 'rules-based international order'.

All is well said, and it means nothing without the action to back up words.

So far, Ukraine has been fighting the fight and suffering the hits, with its sky closed for civil aviation during almost two years. We have hoped for a miracle on the battlefield, sometimes ignoring the realism and the famous quote from a WWII general: 'Amateurs talk strategy, professionals talk logistics.'

One of the most memorable comments was made in October 2023 by the UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak: 'If we give president Zelensky the tools, the Ukrainians will finish the job – Slava Ukraini!' In other words: our weapons, their dirty work. It's not a bad bargain, even if you only care about money.

By the enemy, a human life or a lost limb are not considered worth anything.

The Ukrainian army commander, Valerii Zaluzhny, reminded about the high price of war in his year-end press conference. He called it one of his main mistakes: 'I thought the number of losses we caused to the enemy, even a year ago, that they could stop it. Such number of losses would stop any country, but now I understand, not the Russian Federation.'

How much would Russia's victory cost?

According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, the military, financial and humanitarian aid given by governments to Ukraine amounts to far beyond 100 billion euros. The biggest supporters have been the EU, the United States and Germany.

Alternative to supporting Ukraine is not doing nothing. Russia would not suddenly become harmless, even if Ukraine was left alone and allowed to fall.

We all benefit from Ukraine's support to the West. It takes the shape of manpower, dedication to fight in the frontlines, lost lives and limbs, shattered families, 10 million displaced people, and children who grow up in exile.

What if we had to face Russia's aggression directly as EU, NATO, Finland? What if Putin was able to take his war to Moldova, and to the borders of the closest NATO countries?

It's not far-fetched. There already is a hybrid attack from Russia and its proxy Belarus towards the borders of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Finland.

Without Ukraine, we could not support Ukraine

In Russian military journals they have published articles that describe the formula of a 'future military conflict'. It includes eight stages beginning with hybrid harassment and upgrading to a full-scale invasion using armed forces. There's plenty of nastiness and cover up along the way.

Preparing for all of this means costs. Ukraine is not increasing these costs, but it's shouldering some of the burden.

Our NATO membership, bravery in facing Russia's border harassment, and the political and economic stands we take to support Ukraine, none of those would be possible without Ukrainians.

If Ukraine did not respond to Russia's war since 2014 and stand up to Putin's invasion plans since 2022, for us supporting Ukraine militarily would be unthinkable.

If not for Ukraine, we would still count on appeasing Putin's regime with non-allied status and deepening economic cooperation.

Instead, Finland has become a fierce critic of Russia. Finland has provided 2,2 billion euros of aid including 21 packages of military material. The Russian troops and equipment from behind our border are lambasted in places like Bahmut, and Avdiivka.

Costs of inaction and the benefits of action

Supporting Ukraine is not giving money away. It's an investment to our secure lives and to the weakening of our aggressive common enemy. Questions don't stop there.

What is the cost of one human life? A hundred lives? What about a hundred thousand? Your own life?

What is the gain in having a democratic, a culturally and politically healthy, economically open Ukraine in the heart of Europe? Of course, Ukraine's rebuilding will cost the EU. As a member state Ukraine can start contributing later, and the other alternative, staying out alone, would be pricelessly horrible.

How much would it cost to have only 'Russian world' where Ukraine is now?

In 2023, a Slovakia-based institute, Globsec, published a report called 'Ukraine: Costs of Inaction & Benefits of Action'. Their main finding was that the countries of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania benefited substantially more from their support to Ukrainians than not supporting.

Of the foreseeable future scenarios, both a 'frozen conflict' and 'Ukraine losing' would become far more costly than ramping up support for Ukraine until Russia loses its war.

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NATALIYA TERAMAE

Ukraine's European (re)integration

Expert article • 3576

Ukraine and its European integration. What does it mean? Presumably, it's about the future, it means progress, the path that my country is supposed to take in order to join the developed, democratic and prosperous world of the EU countries. Should it mean that Ukraine hasn't been European until some recent point?

Ironically, I've found the answer, witty but bitter, in the interview of Pavlo Makov, a 65-year old artist, who created Ukraine's project 'Fountain of Exhaustion. Aqua Alta' at the 2022 Venice Biennale.

"A German cultural journal asked me to answer 10 questions. One of them was: 'Tell, please, what can Western Europe learn from Eastern culture?' I answered: 'Excuse me, why do you ask me this? I am very much interested in Japanese, Chinese, Arabic culture, especially carpets. But I don't belong to the Eastern culture, and I don't know what you can learn from it. I live and work in the country that was baptized in the 10th century'. Do you understand? For Germans, we are still an Eastern culture, damn it."

Makov is from Kharkiv, a city in the eastern part of Ukraine. Probably, it should symbolize an Eastern culture, like Ukraine symbolizes the east of Europe, not that Europe that it needs to integrate into. However, 100 years ago Kharkiv was a melting pot of experiments and ideas that were European to the very core – there was the driving power of cultural avant-garde that demanded and provoked changes for better, for good. Similar processes took place in other Ukrainian cities – for example, Kyiv and Odesa.

Besides being provocative and bold, those poets, writers, artists, actors, theater and film directors dared to carry national traits. Their art was deeply rooted in Ukrainian history and culture, connected to its language, nourished by the movements in Italy, Germany or France, those European countries that Ukrainian people were in touch with for centuries. For being Ukrainians, Moscow sentenced these artists to death. Those who survived had to betray their identity and obtain a newly invented one – Soviet – that very soon became a synonym for Russian, surely, not European. Almost the whole continent forgot about us. One who remembered – the Polish publicist Jerzy Giedroyc – named them 'Executed Renaissance'.

Tomorrow, 11 January, I'm going to the memorial ceremony in Kyiv to say farewell to the 33-year-old poet Maksym Kryvtsov. He was among the most promising Ukrainian authors. Also, he was a teacher, and children adored him. A man with an iconic look. As a passionate person Kryvtsov was able to feel injustice and carry an obligation – he decided to defend Ukraine from Russian aggression in 2014. Russia killed him like it killed his colleagues a hundred years ago – for a desire not to become Russian.

The same way it killed poet Glib Babich (28.07.2022), film editor Viktor Onysko (30.12.2022), actor Pasha Lee (6.03.2022), ballet dancer Oleksandr Shapoval (12.09.2022) and writers Victoria Amelina (1.07.2023) and Volodymyr Vakulenko (spring 2022). These are just a few names. 'My biggest fear has come true – I'm inside of a new Executed Renaissance'. With these words Amelina made a connection between those killed almost a hundred years ago and now.

The daring and the talented are disappearing, a black hole is growing in their place. Ukraine is losing the voices that could prove its European identity on the literature, film, art, music, and theater platforms. They either fight or work in Ukraine suffering from the russian's attacks because, as Pavlo Makov says, 'if Ukraine doesn't exist, for which sake do I need all of this?'.

However, nothing threatens the Russian voices. Those who praise their bloody empire with the excuse 'it's my home country' are welcome on stages of different kinds worldwide. Russian money whitewashes the crimes – they present an appropriated Illya Repin as a truly Russian artist at Ateneum, push Chaikovskiy's ballets to prove a cultural background of the terrorist state and fake history presenting the medieval Rus state as a part of their identity.

'Finnish media are more focused on Russian topics', – a local PR expert explained to me in regards to why Ukrainian culture is not interesting for journalists.

Europe is still heavily poisoned by Russian propaganda and money. To see it, look at the Hungarian or Serbian governments, check the rhetorics in France or Germany. Who can guarantee that a populist pro-russian a la Trump scenario won't take place in Europe?

We Ukrainians are European mentally and culturally. Democratic changes that took place over the last 30 years prove that as well. The only obstacle that prevents us from being back in the European family is a Russian Golden Horde that has been trying to destroy Ukraine for centuries.

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MYKHAILO GONCHAR

Ukraine – EU: Integration under conditions of war in Europe

Expert article • 3577

In 2014, after the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine, the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU looked like an impressive success on the way to the country's return to Europe. In February 2019, the Parliament of Ukraine made amendments to the Constitution, which fixed the state's strategic course for membership in the EU and NATO.

But hardly anyone could have predicted that in 3 years, in June 2022, the EU will grant the country the status of a candidate for accession, and after another 1.5 years, in December 2023, it will open accession negotiations. In Ukraine, we remember with gratitude the neighboring Slovakia's government of Eduard Heger, which in 2022 made significant efforts to promote the idea of granting Ukraine the EU candidate status. This dynamic of the EU decision-making regarding Ukraine undoubtedly evokes positive emotions in Ukrainian society. It became even more united in the issue of European and Euro-Atlantic integration after the full-scale armed invasion of the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022.

The latest sociological data of the end of 2023 indicate that 78% of Ukrainians would vote for Ukraine's accession to the EU in the event of a referendum, while only 5% of respondents would be against it. Support for joining the EU has slightly decreased compared to July 2023, when it was 85%. It is obvious that some decrease occurred against the background of the Polish-Ukrainian dispute regarding Ukrainian agricultural products on the EU and Polish markets in particular. Polish fear of competition with Ukraine stimulated similar sentiments in some neighboring countries of Central Europe, in particular, in Hungary and Slovakia. Another blow from the side of the EU member state was the blocking of the important transport corridor Poland – Ukraine by Polish carriers.

These examples showed Ukrainians that the all-powerful European Commission was unable to ensure that the Polish government adheres to policies agreed within the framework of the EU. The weakness of the leading institution of the EU caused disappointment in the Ukrainian society. Skeptical sentiments regarding the capabilities of EU institutions are also strengthened by the activities of Russia's Trojan horse in Europe – Viktor Orban's regime, which opposes Ukraine's membership in the EU and tries in every possible way to develop relations with Russia despite the sanctions policy of the West. The change in Slovakia's political course after last year's elections, when another putinversteher Robert Fico returned to power, did not add optimism to Ukrainians.

Ukraine appreciates the position of the Finnish government in the context of providing rapid military aid to Ukraine, as well as the acceleration of the EU's decision on an aid instrument in the amount of €50 billions. Also, the decisions and steps taken by Finland to abandon the Russian nuclear power plant project and the import of fossil fuels from the Russian Federation do not go unnoticed in Kyiv. This is an important example for other EU member states.

The long-term delay in resolving the issue of transferring the frozen assets of the Russian Central Bank to Ukraine contributes to the decline of the EU's credibility. The European Parliament called for their confiscation and transfer to Ukraine, the European Commission advocated the transfer of profits from their use, and the European Central Bank categorically opposed both options.

Meanwhile, Russian missiles, Iranian-made drones, and shells from North Korea continue to destroy Ukrainian cities and villages. The small "coalition of evil" turns out to be more capable than the large European Union, which failed to provide the promised 1 million artillery shells for Ukraine, while North Korea provided the Russian Federation with almost 1 million shells only in the period from August to October 2023.

"Sustainable Peace Manifesto. Never Again 2.0," developed a year ago by the civil society of Ukraine clearly states that "*the risk of Ukraine's non-accession in the EU and NATO (maintaining a "gray zone", which creates a constant temptation for unpunished aggression from the Russian Federation) far exceeds the previously debated enlargement risks*". Ukraine is not a problem for the EU, but part of the solution for the future of Europe. A clear focus on Ukraine's victory and its integration into the EU is needed, because the rapid degradation of the EU's geostrategic environment requires an immediate strengthening of Europe's defense. This can best be done in the synergy of efforts with Ukraine to repel the "coalition of evil". The sooner this is realized in Brussels and the capitals of the member states, the cheaper the war in Europe will be for the EU.

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EU integration of Ukraine: Indicators and their further development

Expert article • 3578

Ukraine's integration into the EU has progressed exceptionally swiftly, especially during Russia's large-scale invasion. Decisions made on the status of an EU candidate country and the start of membership negotiations have kept the motivation of Ukrainians high. Ukraine has been able to quickly implement the changes required by the EU for progress in integration. But are these changes, which have been required so far, usually of a very technical nature, what is required of a future EU Member State?

At what stage and how will the progress of EU integration be measured in terms of the impact of changes? In my opinion, the appointments of heads of government organisations, organisational reforms, changes in legislation or the formulation of strategies, which have been required so far, are not good indicators for measuring the development of different sectors of society. It would be more important to know what is the impact of the leadership appointments or organisational reforms made on the functioning of society? How has the new legislation been implemented and what is its impact? How has the implementation of the adopted new strategy progressed and has it improved the efficiency of society in this area? For a credible development of EU integration, reliable answers to these questions are needed.

Reforms in Ukraine must enter a new phase. Until now, achieving results has largely depended on the decisions of politicians and legislators. It has been possible to make progress in reforms largely by leading things. In the future, more extensive commitment by society to reforms will be required. Leadership skills, management of people is emphasized. It will be more difficult to make progress. War fatigue must not be allowed to bother us. Luckily for Ukraine, their politicians and agency management are professional, youthful and fit people. They are looking to the future and the vision is clear! The difference with the greying authoritarian leaders in power in Russia, who have passed their best ability to act years ago and are aiming to regain the days of greatness of history, is like night and day.

From a management perspective, Ukraine's chances of success in reforms are excellent. The situation is made difficult by the fact that the reforms required so far, such as the appointment of directors or the approval of new ones by law, are cheap, but the operational reforms required in the future will also require significant financial resources. At least for the EU as well as the key supporters of Ukraine, this is very well understood. I am therefore convinced that these resources will be provided. One of the reasons for this is that there will also be some supporters for whom it is politically impossible to support the war effort.

Corruption is a key problem related to reforms in Ukraine, the second biggest enemy of society after Russia. The most important indicator of the level of corruption in Ukraine is Transparency International's ranking of the level of corruption in different countries of the world. This indicator, which is largely based on surveys and has been in use for a long time, certainly provides a reliable comparison result compared to other countries. However, more accurate and precise indicators are needed to measure the progress of Ukraine's anti-corruption reform. These indicators should be able to measure the effectiveness of key measures and reforms. What concrete results have been achieved in society with the reforms? Is the practical implementation of laws and other regulations appropriate? Ukraine's judiciary has so far been the weakest link in the fight against corruption. Thus, the ongoing reform of the judiciary has been identified as the mother of all reforms in Ukraine. Its success is a prerequisite for the success of other government reforms.

In addition to the right meters, the right measurement methods are also needed. In this regard, more transparency is needed in Ukraine. So far, the EU has assessed Ukraine's progress largely on the basis of documents or reports submitted by them. In the future, various assessment teams will be commonplace, for example, in the border security sector. Such teams require access to offices and premises, various plans and documents to see, and the opportunity to talk to officials and test their skills. In other words, these teams want to see with their own eyes how activities are organized and make their assessment of the level of activity based on their own observations. In wartime, restricting access to certain offices and information is partly understandable, but the lack of transparency is not only a problem caused by war. It is essential to understand that both evaluators and assesses always learn in these processes. It is a question of joint development and trust. This trust must be mutual.

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YEVHENIIA HORIUNOVA

Ukrainian Eurointegration: The price of the choice

Expert article • 3579

Ukraine obtained candidate status from the European Union in June 2022. The European Council agreed to commence negotiations on Ukraine's membership in November 2023. The outcome of this process remains uncertain. For instance, some European leaders may argue that either Ukraine is not adequately prepared or that the EU, grappling with internal issues, is not ready to expand. Given these uncertainties, Ukraine should prepare for various scenarios and challenges that may arise during the negotiation process.

Ukraine's path to the European Union began in the early 1990s. However, for an extended period, Brussels primarily perceived Ukraine through the prism of Russia, considering it as a country situated between its eastern neighbours and Russia. As a result, the European Union ratified the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Ukraine after four years. Despite this, Kyiv maintained a strong pro-European stance, which displeased Russia and its President, V. Putin.

The Kremlin resorted to blackmail related to gas and attempted to seize Tuzla Island in the Kerch Strait. Despite Ukraine's appeals to the international community and the guarantors of the Budapest Memorandum, satisfactory results were not achieved. Kyiv was compelled to resolve this challenging issue independently. While the Ukrainian government managed to retain control of the island, this incident prompted a shift in its integration focus from European to Eurasian.

The introduction in 2004 of the European Union's new "European Neighbourhood Policy" initiative proved to be a disappointment for Ukrainians seeking membership rather than just neighborhood relations. The victory of the pro-Western candidate V. Yushchenko in the presidential elections in 2004 revived the European integration process. Ukraine began preparing an Association Agreement with the EU, which did not include full membership but provided a chance for further rapprochement.

The launch of the European Union's "Eastern Partnership" initiative in 2008 can be viewed as a specific response to Russian aggression against Georgia. The EU chose to employ "soft power" to establish a circle of friendly states near its borders. These states also have varying attitudes toward Eurointegration. Nevertheless, Brussels' cautious policy has resulted in dissatisfaction in Moscow, which perceives it as an encroachment on its zone of influence.

Until 2013, the Association Agreement was prepared and initialed. The victory of V. Yanukovich in the presidential elections in 2010 did not change Ukraine's pro-European integration trajectory. Moreover, Yanukovich's policies resembled those of L. Kuchma, where the path toward European integration was forsaken in favor of a shift towards Moscow. In the fall of 2013, at the "Eastern Partnership" summit, Ukraine refrained from signing the Association Agreement due to economic pressure exerted by Russia.

The actions of the Ukrainian government triggered mass protests in support of the Eurointegration course, known as Euromaidan, which later evolved into the anti-government Dignity Revolution. Ukrainians took to the streets, advocating for the protection of the rights of the people, property, and businesses. "Nobody will beat our children" became the main slogan on the Euromaidan. The Ukrainian Euromaidan and Dignity Revolution were not only about the country's foreign policy choices but also reflected an evaluation of the future of Ukrainians and their values.

The victory of the Dignity Revolution symbolized the triumph of the European path for Ukraine, but the cost was exceedingly high. Some protesters sacrificed their lives (the "Heavenly Hundred"), and the country suffered territorial losses. The Russian occupation of Crimea was a response to Ukraine's pursuit of EU integration. Russian politicians had issued warnings on the sidelines and carried out their threats in 2014, resulting in the Kremlin's annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula. Following the conflict in Donbass, obstacles emerged, intensifying the ongoing conflict and impeding Kiev's journey toward European and Euroatlantic integration.

The trajectory of Ukraine towards the EU and NATO did not change after the presidential elections in 2019. This became the reason for a full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022. This invasion represents the latest attempt by the Kremlin to conquer Ukraine and deprive it of a European future.

In February 2022, the Ukrainian government took a risky step by applying for EU membership while the Russian army was stationed near Kyiv. Brussels faced a challenging dilemma: supporting Ukraine would demonstrate to Moscow that the EU is ready to provide significant assistance to Kyiv and disregard the geopolitical claims of the Kremlin. However, such a stance carried significant risks. Failing to support Ukraine would be a betrayal of the values that form the foundation of European integration.

After prolonged discussions, the European Council, during its March 2022 summit allowed the European Commission to initiate the monitoring process for Ukraine. In June, the European Council granted Ukraine candidate status for membership, contingent upon the completion of judicial reforms, anti-corruption efforts, and addressing oligarchic influences. In the autumn of 2023, the European Council approves the start of negotiations on Ukraine's membership. However, this will pose another test for both Kyiv and Brussels, having definitively overcome all geopolitical and economic hurdles.

Ukraine pays a very high price for the opportunity to be a free country and independently make its foreign policy choice, which is currently European integration.

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OLENA SNIGYR

Getting rid of illusions

Expert article • 3580

One often hears assertions that Russia has already lost by initiating a full-scale war with Ukraine or will inevitably face defeat in the future. Some argue that Russia lost Ukraine in 2014 when it occupied and annexed Crimea. However, this conclusion may be rooted more in wishful thinking than an accurate assessment of the situation.

The Russian authorities perceive victory and defeat through different lenses than the West. Following the shock of full-scale aggression against Ukraine, a subsequent realization might be that Putin's claim — that "everything goes according to plan" — holds some truth. The failures of the Russian military campaign in Ukraine could be seen as tactical loses rather than strategic defeats, considering that Ukraine might not be the ultimate goal for the Russian leadership in this conflict, and especially given that the course of this war directly affects the balance of power in the competition between the democratic and authoritarian world for what the new world order will be.

Since at least 2007, Putin has expressed intentions to reshape the world order based on Western rules and to divide the world into spheres of influence. In this envisioned order, international relations won't be governed by international law but by the "balance of power," making war a routine method for achieving foreign policy goals.

The West's restrained approach to providing military aid to Ukraine has inadvertently played into Putin's hands. The West's belief that it is exhausting Russia in the conflict may be misplaced; in reality, Ukraine is bearing the brunt, and Russia is swiftly adapting and preparing for future conflicts. War has become integral to the ideology and existence of the Russian regime, sustaining high ratings and legitimacy through constant acts of aggression against external "enemies." Even if the West were to consider Russian security concerns and adjust NATO's borders, Putin's Russia seems poised to engage in new wars.

Accepting the reality of NATO soldiers potentially facing Russians on the battlefield remains challenging for Western countries. In contrast, Russian society has long accepted this inevitability, with Russian schools teaching children that people in Western countries are their enemies. The Russian authorities have identified the West, not Ukraine, as Russia's main enemy. Russia's overarching geopolitical goal is the domination of the entire European continent.

The full-scale war with Ukraine has provided the Russian army with combat experience that NATO forces lack. Russia has realigned its economy, information policy, and propaganda to wartime needs. The quick authoritarian decision-making system and societal loyalty ensure the stability of the Russian political system. Additionally, Russia has allies providing military, technological, and economic support. Moscow's initiation of a new war hinges on a victory over Ukraine or the freezing of the ongoing conflict. Consequently, as long as hostilities persist, Russia is unlikely to open a second front. However, Ukraine, lacking the necessary weapons, may exhaust its human resources without international support.

The West's capacity to support Ukraine in an increasingly conflict-prone international environment is diminishing. The potential solution lies in consistency and solidarity, not just among Western nations but also involving a broader coalition, including countries from the Global South. However, this seems unlikely due to the erosion of Western leadership. The conflict between Israel and Hamas has heightened anti-Western sentiments in the Global South, driven by allegations of double standards and hypocrisy.

Additionally, the underestimated appeal of conservative, or in the Russian interpretation, traditional values, introduces an unexpected factor into the global context. Russia, in seeking allies, promotes the idea of impunity for authoritarian states, regardless of human rights violations. Russia and China jointly propagate the notion that authoritarian systems can be as stable and successful as liberal democracies. This propaganda resonates globally, with liberal democracy facing challenges. Western democracies are at risk if conflicts and wars escalate, leading to increased migration waves and a surge in external and internal challenges. People expect politicians to prevent crises and address problems without sacrificing living standards. In response, some politicians may offer simplistic solutions to assuage citizens' fears.

Through a prolonged war against Ukraine, Russia is shaping favorable conditions for international politics. Russian resilience sets an example of impunity and the use of war without severe consequences. It is likely that we will witness more wars and conflicts, as the world trends toward a power-based order. Countries globally recognize that military capabilities, including nuclear weapons, are more reliable instruments of security than international law. Moreover, despite assurances, the West seems either unable or unwilling to protect its allies. The next objective for Russia may involve challenging the myth of NATO's unity and effectiveness.

The old world order has vanished, and the competition for a new world order has already started. The Russian-Ukrainian war is not the inaugural battle in this competition, but the big one and the one that the West can still prevail in. If Russia is defeated in Ukraine and does not achieve its goals, the balance in the confrontation between the authoritarian and democratic world will change in favor of the latter. This change may lead to a moderation of geopolitical ambitions among China and other Russian allies, preventing future conflicts and creating favorable conditions for a global dialogue on a renewed world order based on rules rather than power.

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Values vs Realpolitik: The outcome of Russia's war in Ukraine and the science fiction

Expert article • 3581

In 2011, the Ukrainian scientist, writer, and diplomat Yuriy Shcherbak published a novel, *The Time of Christ's Death: The Mirages of 2077*. It is a political thriller, dystopian science fiction novel about the future, where superpowers fight to control Ukraine. The book was the first part of the trilogy. The author published two accounts in the next three years – *The Time of Big Game. Phantoms of 2079* and *The Time of the Tyrant. Insight 2084*. The trilogy got positive reviews from critics and Ukrainian intellectuals but, unfortunately, went almost unnoticed by the broad Ukrainian and international public.

The novel describes the world of 2077, shortly after the Third World War. Nuclear explosions destroyed a number of major cities. Nation states are in decline. Most of them either collapsed or joined unions. Russia disintegrated into small states that were absorbed by the Black Horde. Ukraine has remained outside the alliances. However, many superpowers consider it a valuable partner because Ukraine imports grain and weapons and has valuable mineral deposits. The oligarchs rule the country by electing the president. The criminalization and corruption caused deep social inequality in Ukraine.

The novel's plot unfolds on the eve of the Fourth World War. The climate has changed significantly, provoking the food crisis. Neighboring countries are preparing to raid Ukraine to seize food. The Black Horde seeks to assimilate the Slavs to oppose other alliances and achieve world domination. The Horde has numerous agents among Ukraine's authorities. It uses the dogma of the Christ's Death sect to spread its influence in Ukraine. According to this belief, Christ died and did not rise again. Therefore, people have lost their connection with God and are free from traditional Christian morality. The protagonist is Ukrainian intelligence officer Ihor Hayduk. He finds himself in a big game where the Black Horde is trying to occupy Ukraine and use it as a bridgehead for further advancement to the West.

The Time of Christ's Death is the darkest-ever novel in the Ukrainian literature. However, the author gives a roadmap for solving the global crises. The world revived Christian morality in the finale, and Ukraine became the cornerstone of the new international security system. The symbolic message of the novel is clear. If humankind wants to preserve the Earth for the future and have world peace, it should return to moral values and reject the concept of Realpolitik.

On September 02, 2014, Yuriy Shcherbak presented the trilogy's final part in Kyiv. The author noticed, he hesitated whether to do it because "World War III has started in Ukraine."

Of course, political analysts wouldn't agree with Shcherbak's assessment. Even now, most Western experts are not ready to call a spade a spade, preferring to consider the Russian all-out invasion of Ukraine as the second Cold War. Many analysts and politicians believe that avoiding military confrontation with Russia will help prevent World War III.

Unfortunately, the world order created after the Second World War no longer exists. The United Nations couldn't support the balance of power anymore. The collapse of colonial empires always entails World Wars, as it did in 1914 and 1939. The only difference in the Russian case is that it is delayed.

Political analysts never seriously considered the colonial nature of Russia / the Soviet Union. Classical European imperialism used to be predominantly 'economically-oriented', while Russian imperialism is 'politically-oriented', where prevails non-economic reasons such as 'glory or prestige of the nation or religious-ideological motives.' According to Oto Peralías and Romero Ávila, the style of imperialism depends on the imperial ruler's domestic conditions. The presence of such elements as ideology, religions, centralism, militarism, economic statism, interventionism, determines the 'politically-oriented' style. The decisive factor of Russian imperial expansion is the defense of the imperial domains against possible threats from rival powers. That's why the economic sanctions are not enough to stop the Russian war in Ukraine. 'Politically-oriented' imperialism is less sensitive to economic issues.

However, the main problem for the West is the lack of understanding of what Russia considers its domain. According to Dmitriy Medvedev, Putin's aspiration is "to build an open Eurasia – from Lisbon to Vladivostok." In other words, Russia wants to rule the Eurasia continent, which makes a big war in Europe a matter of time.

Putin has already started to test the water. The Russian missiles in the air space of Poland and Romania were not accidental. This political technology is known as 'salami tactics' - slice a small piece and see the reaction. Putin did in 2008 when Russia attacked Georgia and in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. The mild Western response encouraged Russia to continue.

Only a balance of powers can stop the further unfolding of World War III. This is terrible news for the West because confrontation with Russia and its allies is inevitable. The delay in military response only increases the number of Russia's potential allies since his success will encourage other dictators.

The other problem is less evident but still urgent. Humankind achieved its limits of growth. It means we face multiple challenges like climate change, food crises, and ecological calamities soon. These problems require global efforts. The new challenges require a new paradigm of international politics, with a place for moral standards, values, and mutual responsibility for the future. Sounds idealistic, but what are the other options?

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Ukraine's shifting geopolitical attitudes prior to 2014 and during a decade of war

Expert article • 3582

On September 20, 2018, during the presidency of Petro Poroshenko, the Ukrainian parliament approved amendments to the constitution that made the accession of the country to NATO and the EU a central goal and the primary foreign policy objective. In December 2023, after nearly a decade of Russian aggression against Ukraine, EU leaders took a decisive step by formally initiating accession talks with Ukraine. This long-awaited move marked a historic breakthrough, signaling the potential for Ukraine's eventual membership in the European Union. However, it is evident that Ukraine's journey to EU integration won't be swift or uncomplicated. Therefore, the decision is widely perceived as a symbolic gesture, intended to bolster the morale of the Ukrainian people who, in their self-sacrificing resistance, stand firm against Russian expansionist aggression along Europe's closest border.

On the NATO accession front, despite the escalation of Russian aggression leading to Finland, a previously non-aligned country, joining the alliance in 2023, and Sweden's ongoing application process in progress, Ukraine's path to NATO remains uncertain (although in 2024 according to the Global Firepower international company, Ukraine's army has been ranked 18th in the world's most powerful armies, and Ukraine is regarded as one of the most capable potential NATO members). In the July 2023 NATO annual summit in Vilnius, the alliance reaffirmed its position that Ukraine will become a member of NATO, but expediting the process requires a more resolute political commitment from Western decision-makers (and the lack of such commitment remains a significant obstacle). While public and policy talks around Ukraine's potential NATO membership are fluctuating from optimism to pessimism (as, obviously, the West remains highly responsive to Russia's threats of escalation and currently feels no comfort in getting Ukraine into NATO), within Ukraine, joining NATO is perceived as the sole means to ensure security in the face of Russian aggression or, at the very least, to prevent its further expansion.

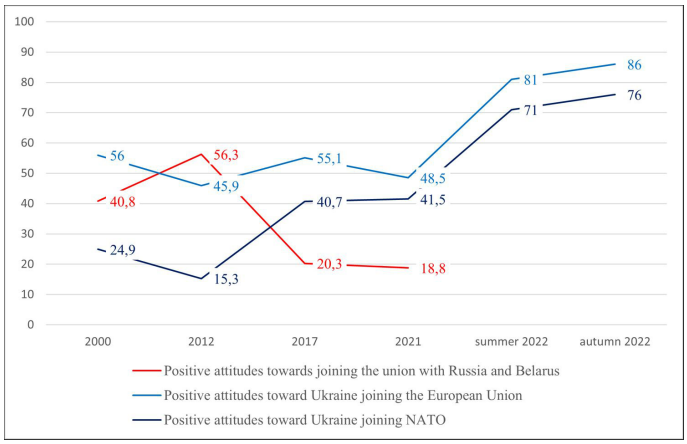
Amidst these uneasy diplomatic developments, it becomes imperative to explore how Ukraine's population attitudes towards geopolitical alliances have evolved over the last two decades, prior to 2014 and during a decade of war. These attitudes not only reflect the quest for security and stability but are also efforts to position Ukraine in the world matrix in terms of values and ideologies. Understanding the dynamics of public sentiment will shed light on the broader context shaping Ukraine's stance amidst ongoing geopolitical shifts.

Despite the widespread preconceptions that the crystallization of pro-EU and pro-NATO aspirations in Ukraine was a result of the Russian predatory policies against Ukraine (which started with the annexation of Crimea and occupation of the parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in 2014, continued through the next eight years, and escalated since the full-scale aggression in February 2022), Ukraine's path out of the 'post-Soviet' colonial woods has started much earlier than that. While Ukraine continued to contend with the lingering echoes of its geopolitical past, the nation's shifting attitudes toward its connections with the Western world, in contrast to its alliances around Russia, came to the forefront in the 2000s. The Ukrainian Society longitudinal survey data, spanning 2000 to 2022, offers a lens into the changing dynamics of public attitudes that have shaped Ukraine's trajectory on the global stage (see Figure 1.).

The start of the students' Euromaidan protests in Kyiv, November 2013. The inscription on the banner: 'Students for European Kingship'.

Photo courtesy of the Kyiv National Karpenko Kary University from the author's archive.

Figure 1. Geo-political attitudes in Ukraine (2000-2022, %)



Source: Ukrainian Society Survey, Institute of Sociology, NAS Ukraine.
** For ethical reasons, following the beginning of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in 2022, which included the active involvement of Belarus, the survey did not include a question measuring attitudes towards the union with these two countries.*
*** The recent survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in May 2023 reveals a continued increase in support. Presently, 92% and 89% of Ukrainians express the desire to see Ukraine become a member of the European Union and NATO, respectively.*

Traditionally, Ukraine was often perceived through the lens of a divided nation, split along regional ethnolinguistic lines, with the assumption that the Russian-speaking east leaned towards Russia, while the Ukrainian-speaking west sought European and NATO integration. The longitudinal survey data reveals a more nuanced reality, dispelling the myth of a deeply divided Ukraine. Covering the period from 2000 to 2022, the data shifts the narrative away from traditional dichotomies and highlights three key trends that, despite differing in pace and depth, apply to all regions of Ukraine.

First, after 2013 the once-popular idea of Ukraine joining a union with Russia and Belarus experienced a significant decline in all regions, including east and south. Pro-Russian sentiments, measured by support for such a union, plummeted from 56% in 2012 to a mere 19% in 2021. This dip, strategically aligned with Yanukovych's rejection of the EU Association Agreement, signifies a pivotal moment in Ukraine's geopolitical attitudes.

Second, parallel to the decline of "Slavic-partnership" project, pro-EU attitudes have been steadily strong since the early 2000s. With 56% of respondents in favor of Ukraine joining the EU in 2000 and 55% in 2017, the year when a visa-free regime with the EU was introduced, the shares of EU supporters remained robust in most regions (with a temporary drop in 2021 linked to both internal and external factors, including the growing threat of Russian invasion amid a lack of clear and unanimous response from the EU), and increased profoundly after 2022. The dynamics of pro-NATO attitudes, while slower and less straightforward, indicated an increase from 25% in 2000 to 76% in 2022. According to other reliable data sources, this upward trend appears to be continuing.

Third, post-Euromaidan Ukraine witnessed a transformative shift in national identity, challenging past historical affiliations. The survey data indicates a decline in regional divisions and a surge in national self-identification, where political identity, identifying as Ukrainian citizens first (as opposed to 'inhabitant of the region or oblast where I live', 'representative of my ethnic group or nation' or 'citizen of the former Soviet Union'), takes precedence, escalating from 49% in 2012 to a substantial 82% in 2022. This shift reverberates across all regions, challenging historical notions of ethnolinguistic affiliations and reinstating Ukraine's self-perception within the realm of the modern political nation tradition.

Ukraine's geopolitical journey unfolds against the backdrop of shifting attitudes during the two recent decades. The sharp decline in pro-Russian sentiments, coupled with a simultaneous rise in pro-EU and pro-NATO attitudes, signifies the shaping of a fully-fledged modern nation navigating a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. As Ukraine charts this course, the organic evolution of its geopolitical stance becomes a crucial focal point. To solidify these shifts and steer them towards permanence, a cohesive national development plan of reconstruction (which would be a priority after the devastating war) and democratic reforms are imperative. Aiming to ensure Ukraine's national sustainability and full integration into the democratic world is also crucial for the vital security interests of the West. Apparently, defending this interest requires greater determination and involvement from the Western allies. Whatever the plan of the key world decision-makers, Ukraine, it seems, is not merely adapting to global dynamics but actively shaping its geopolitical identity as history unfolds.

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EVHEN TSYBULENKO

We should say it! Russia and Ruscism must disappear!

Expert article • 3583

It is impossible to win a war without a clear understanding of how it should end. When we discuss the Russo-Ukrainian war, it is crucial to remember that this is not merely a conflict between two nations; it is a battle between civilization and new barbarians, a rising axis of evil (Russia-Iran-North Korea, with the lingering indirect backing of communist China) that repudiates not just the fundamental tenets of law of war but also the ruled by law world order and human ethics as a whole. When US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin asserts that "The United States aims for a free and sovereign Ukraine capable of defending itself today and deterring further Russian aggression in the future," this does not offer a lasting solution. Russia will recuperate and embark with renewed vigor, and the new objective will not only be Ukraine; it will be NATO territory, where they will test their strength. Additionally, this will serve as a green light to all dictators worldwide. We are already witnessing Hamas assaults on Israel, Venezuela's preparations to annex two-thirds of Guyana's territory, and the PRC's potential invasion of Taiwan, which could result not only in the collapse of the global economy but also a nuclear war.

Is this assertion an overstatement? Let's examine the facts. As of today, the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office has officially registered 111,996 (!) war crimes (yes, over one hundred thousand, and this figure continues to rise every day; by the time this article is published, this number will be much higher). The actual figure can be verified on the authority's official website, which provides an updated table with the number of crimes also in English: https://gp.gov.ua/. These crimes are primarily documented in liberated territories. The situation in occupied territories can only be speculated upon, but the number of crimes could easily be double or even triple the current figure.

The mass graves near Mariupol, which can be seen from satellites, speak volumes. This is not merely about supporting or opposing the war; it is about war crimes. It is impossible to accuse the Ukrainian prosecution of manipulation, as experts from the International Criminal Court and numerous international organizations are already involved in gathering evidence. Considering the size of the Russian military contingent, it implies that virtually every Russian soldier at all levels – from privates, sergeants, junior and senior officers to generals, and even the supreme commander-in-chief (conscripts, contract soldiers, regulars) – has individually or as part of their units committed war crimes. These are ordinary sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands.

Upon examining the list of war crimes provided in Article 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, it becomes evident that there is not a single war crime that has not been committed *en masse* by the Russian occupiers. These crimes range from the killing of civilians, rape, and theft of toilets and dog kennels (and this is not an exaggeration) by ordinary soldiers to the deliberate destruction of critical civilian infrastructure at the strategic level and the state policy of abducting children, for which, by the way, the International Criminal Court has already issued an arrest warrant for Putin.

Investigating such a vast number of crimes poses significant technical challenges. Therefore, it will require maximum coordination of efforts among Ukrainian courts, courts of other countries that operate based on the principle of universal jurisdiction, an international criminal court, and a separate tribunal for the crime of aggression, which I hope will be established.

Undoubtedly, the current Russian regime will go to great lengths to protect Putin and other criminals, making it imperative for the international community to provide unwavering support to Ukraine, ensuring that Russia suffers a decisive military defeat. If the West makes concessions at Ukraine's expense, it will not only make it challenging to punish criminals in the near future but will also lead to the complete collapse of the world order based on the rule of law.

That is why the West must forget about political strife and make every effort to ensure that Russia suffers a heavy military defeat and ceases to exist within its current borders. The country must be divided into small democratic states, nuclear weapons must be removed, reparations must be paid, criminals must be punished, and the population must undergo a de-ruscification procedure following the example of the de-nazification of Germany after the Second World War.

It is important to define Ruscism, which is finally mentioned and its practices condemned in an official NATO document: UNITED AND RESOLUTE IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE, DECLARATION 482. Many believe that Ruscism is Russian fascism. Meanwhile, I am sure that it is much deeper and more dangerous. This is a unique Russian phenomenon that was formed as a result of not even decades but centuries of negative selection on the territory of present-day Russia. This is a completely unique mixture of fascism, Nazism, communism, the imperial "Great Russian" mentality, and Orthodox obscurantism. That is why the term is absolutely accurate, and, as a purely Russian phenomenon, it should be called accordingly. And, yes, Ruscism must disappear like its predecessor, Nazism!

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SOLOMIJA BUK & OKSANA BABELYUK

Linguistic myths in Russian-Ukrainian war: Changes and challenges

Expert article • 3584

In the course of world history, different ethnic groups could often justify their right to constitute an independent nation by proving their national identity, cultural nationhood, speaking their own unique language. Sometimes, political ideology, rather than linguistic facts, can shape public opinion about how similar or different particular languages are. It is common wisdom that languages and how people use them represent personal national identities, as well as political and cultural histories of a definite country.

The impact of Russian-Ukrainian war on culture, communication and Ukrainian language is crucial. Full scale Russian invasion in Ukraine opened multiple questions not only in geopolitical and economical spheres, but in linguistic as well. Among them: language situation in Ukraine before and during the war, modelling post-war language situation; redistribution of language functions in a bilingual society; war migration and language; language problems of education in the conditions of war and post-war times; language of war, propaganda with linguistic myth for manipulation and the ways of their neutralization. This is not a complete list of the problems Ukraine is facing now.

Here is a brief overview of how similarities between Ukrainian and Russian languages are used by Russian propaganda to create certain linguistic myths for political manipulation.

The first myth is that the Ukrainian language cannot be regarded as a separate language as it is similar to Russian. The truth is that Ukrainian as a Slavic (Slavonic) language is related to other Slavic languages, such as Belorussian, Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, Slovak, Russian, etc. and shares some common features with them. Though for the Ukrainian language a version of the Cyrillic alphabet is basic, the Ukrainian also has a few unique letters to represent sounds specific to the Ukrainian language (ґ, ґ, є, і, ї). Hence, Russian and Ukrainian are separate languages with some sort of complete and clear division between them.

It is also worth mentioning that over time, under some historical conditions, forced political influence quite definite divergences appeared between these two languages. Ukraine became the eastern part of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, absorbing significant amount of Polish words into its language. Moscow united the cities of the north and east into an independent state, eventually called Russia. So its language was shaped by contacts and immigrations from areas to the east and the borrowing of foreign technical and cultural terms from western European countries like France, Germany and the Netherlands. As a result great shifts had emerged both in the languages' vocabularies, as well as in the sounds and grammar. One frequently cited figure is that Ukrainian and Russian share about 62% of their vocabulary. This is about the same amount of shared vocabulary that English has with Dutch, according to the same calculations. It means that a Russian with no knowledge of Ukrainian (or vice versa) would understand roughly five in eight words. To understand this, have a friend cross out three out of every eight words in a newspaper and see how much of the text you can follow.

Another linguistic myth is that the Ukrainian language is a dialect of the Russian language. The truth is that over a thousand years ago, there was a language spoken in central Europe that we now call proto-Slavic, an ancestor to all the Slavic languages spoken today. Speakers of proto-Slavic migrated across Europe, spread out, and settled down, and taught their children to speak their languages which were at the very beginning in the form of dialects. However, because they were so spread out into multiple communities, each community started doing things a little differently — and then, as time went on, things got more and more different, until eventually members of these communities that once spoke the same mother tongue became unable to understand one another. This divergence of dialects over time and distance is how many languages evolve. However this evolution of Ukrainian is often used as a serious argument that Ukrainian is not a separate language, it's a dialect of Russian.

One more rather common linguistic myth is the Ukrainian cannot be regarded as a separate language because most Ukrainians in Ukraine speak Russian, but Russians never speak Ukrainian. The fact that most Russians don't know or understand Ukrainian as it's a different language, and most Ukrainians know and understand Russian are not because of linguistic peculiarities of the languages, but as a result of forced russiafication and bitter history of Ukraine. As the Russian-speaking Soviet Union occupied Ukraine for almost 70 years, Russian was the only official language of Ukraine. Government, schools, and business were all required to only use Russian, so even though most families continued using Ukrainian at home, especially at the countryside, much of their urban public lives required Russian. Hence another myth, the persuasion that Ukrainian is the language that is spoken only in villages, at the countryside and it's a shame to show one's country roots. As a result, older generation of Ukrainians grew up around Russian.

Covering itself with a screen of protection of Russian language, Moskow's the so called "special operation" made the opposite effect on the sociolinguistic situation in Ukraine: Rusian-Ukrainian war discredited the perception of Russian language and culture in eyes of Ukrainians, moreover, even in its Eastern regions. De iure Ukraine has one official state language (Ukrainian), and de facto because of the long period of Russian colonization of Ukraine, Russian became very widespread in the Central and Eastern parts of Ukraine as a lingua franca needed to make career and to be seen as loyal to the ruling government. So, even here instead of strengthening the foundations of the "Russian world/peace", the full scale invasion activated the self-identification, nation-building, and unifying function of the Ukrainian, not the Russian, language. While Russian became to be seen as the language of the enemy, invaders, and occupants. Such the geopolitical and sociolinguistic situation in Ukraine had a huge impact on the perception of Ukrainian in eyes of many foreign citizens, in particular in eyes of people learning Ukrainian.

Expert article • 3584

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Economic ties between Ukraine and Estonia

Expert article • 3585

Recently the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Estonia announced a plan to provide annually 0.25% of the GDP of countries supporting Ukraine for that purpose. During 2022 and 2023, Estonia has provided 500 million EUR support to Ukraine, which is approximately 1.3% of the annual GDP of Estonia. In terms per capita, Estonia is the strongest supporter of Ukraine in the EU. Support to Ukraine raises broad questions of economic relationships between these two countries.

Estonia has exported goods to Ukraine between 130 and 180 million euros and imported goods from Ukraine between 80 and 110 million euros during the last five years, which is between 0.5-0.8% and 0.4-0.5% of Estonia´s total exports and imports respectively. In Estonia´s exports of goods to Ukraine, machinery and transport equipment with 43% contributed the largest share in 2022, the largest items being electrical equipment and road vehicles. Food products (mainly fish and products thereof) with 14% of the total exports was the second largest product group in 2022. In Estonia´s imports from Ukraine in 2022, machinery and transport equipment contributed 16%, steel and iron and products thereof 13% and food products (most important article being beverages and tobacco, animal and vegetable oils and vegetables and fruits) 10%. Foreign trade of services between Estonia and Ukraine was even more intensive. The value of Estonia´s exports to Ukraine was 146 million euros (1.5% of total exports of services) and imports from Ukraine 239.7 million euros (2.9% of Estonia´s total imports of services) in 2022. Imports of services was rapidly growing especially in 2021 and 2022. In Estonia´s exports of services the leading item was travel with 42% of the total services exports in 2022. In the context of Russia´s invasion into Ukraine, that item of services is first of all connected with migration of people from Ukraine and in some cases also returning of people to Ukraine. The second most important group of services exports from Estonia is other business services, which consists R&D, professional and management consulting services, technical and trade related services. The leading group of Estonia´s imports of services from Ukraine was telecommunication, computer and information services with 56% of the total of Estonia´s imports of services from. The other more important groups of services in Estonia´s imports were business services and transport.

Statistical figures on economic ties between Ukraine and Estonia demonstrate that the volumes of traded goods and services have been relatively limited. Under existing conditions these flows have been related first of all to provision of necessary services for people in the highly extreme and dangerous situation due to military actions. On the other hand the existing trade of goods and services flows demonstrate that there is already a substantial potential for much closer economic ties in future. From Estonia´s point of view, that concerns first of all trade of services. There is already a potential for providing R&D, professional and management consulting, technical and trade related services in private and public sectors, telecommunication, computer and information services. Presently these economic ties are in one or another way connected primarily to military actions in Ukraine

Estonia´s support to Ukraine is part of wider development, which is related to the Russia´s military invasion to Ukraine. We do not know currently what would be the solution in Ukraine during the next years, but it is quite likely that Russia will be a military threat for the Baltic Sea Region during a longer time period. That makes it to do substantial expenditures to create military potential necessary for deterring Russia from invading into the area. That deterrence would be provided first of all through the collective defense system of NATO, but that does not decrease the need for efforts by the countries in the region to provide economic resources for that. A positive solution for Ukraine in this military conflict would provide a basis for much larger cooperation between the two countries.

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TOMI TAIPALE

The role of the Finnish SME sector in the reconstruction of Ukraine

Expert article • 3586

Russia's two-year-long offensive war against Ukraine has caused significant damage every day. The greatest and irreplaceable harm is, of course, the war victims who have lost their lives. These sacrifices are priceless. The war also causes great mental suffering and trauma, which can hopefully be alleviated to some extent, but never completely eliminated. This burden will weigh on the hearts of Ukrainians for generations to come. The role of Western countries in the post-war period will be significant in the reconstruction of the country. The success of reconstruction will play a significant role in laying the foundation for Ukraine's future.

The reconstruction of Ukraine is already underway, and mechanisms for its implementation have been established and tested. Portals have been created around existing projects that allow all interested actors to participate, and project tenders are carried out among the participants who have registered through these portals. The reconstruction has mainly focused on the immediate infrastructure, such as the restoration of power plants, billions have been spent on reconstruction so far, while post-war reconstruction is estimated to cost between 500 and 1,000 billion euros, depending on the estimators. The sum is enormous and will have various effects on the entire Western world. It is already estimated that there will be a significant increase in the prices of construction materials and steel, as well as significant inflation in Ukraine.

Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the population of Ukraine was approximately 45 million. Up to 12 million Ukrainians have had to flee from the war, of whom some, of course, have already returned to their homeland. It is believed that a significant portion of those who fled the war represent the Ukrainian middle class, and their role in the rebirth of Ukraine is significant. In order to make Ukraine as attractive as possible for those who have possibly lived abroad for a long time as war refugees, successful reconstruction should create a safe and high-quality environment for returnees. It is strongly emphasized in discussions that the rebuilt parts of Ukraine will represent future construction, where environmental values are taken into account in every aspect. I believe that pleasant garden cities will play a significant role in raising Ukraine to a new level after the war, and Finnish timber construction expertise could have a strong role to play in this model.

The Finnish government has been actively assisting companies interested in participating in the reconstruction. In November 2023, a delegation of over 40 Finnish companies participated in the Ukrainian reconstruction fair held in Warsaw. In December 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with other ministries and representatives of the business community, published Finland's national plan for participating in the reconstruction of Ukraine. The plan proposes solutions for financing and the development of advisory services. Small and medium-sized enterprises cannot be expected to embark on projects without strong support, which the government can provide. The effectiveness of financing models will play a crucial role in activating the Finnish business community in reconstruction.

Only a handful of Finnish companies have been actively operating in Ukraine, estimated to be less than 50. This creates the challenge that the market is very unfamiliar, and the local way of doing things needs to be learned. In this regard, the advisory services mentioned earlier play a significant role. I believe that if the markets are brought closer to the companies and made more accessible, the step towards initial transactions will be significantly easier.

I believe that Finnish companies will be seen in significant roles in the reconstruction of Ukraine. Finland has strong expertise, for example, in water treatment, energy production, and the aforementioned timber construction. Some of the cooperation will involve technology deliveries, normal bilateral trade, and potentially Finnish companies establishing themselves in the Ukrainian market. In the future, Ukraine will be an interesting market due to its size and potential future membership in the EU. EU membership or a strong probability of it will increase foreign investments in the country.

Ukraine as a society still suffers from corruption. It is possible and necessary to operate in the country without participating in corruption, but it remains part of social activities nonetheless. There have been some initial steps towards improving the situation, but corruption scandals are still frequent news in local media. If successful, reconstruction could be one way to create a corruption-free society. With the right tools, control of materials and financial flows could be done digitally and efficiently. Finnish companies could have a lot to offer in terms of this expertise.

The reconstruction of Ukraine will be an enormous task that will take years to accomplish. However, it will not begin on a larger scale until a ceasefire or peace is achieved in the country. I hope that day is near. Until then, we must provide all possible support to Ukraine in its fight against the tyrannical Russian regime.

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ALEKSANDER PANASIUK & HALYNA ZUBRYTSKA

Future of tourism in Ukraine after the end of the war

Expert article • 3587

Despite the ongoing war in the eastern regions of Ukraine, Russian pressure on Ukrainian cities and the occupation of Crimea, the plans of the Ukrainian government in consultation with foreign partners to rebuild the country's economy after the end of the war are continuing. Based on the current situation, it is not possible to determine the date and area scope of starting the reconstruction plan. Considering Ukraine's efforts to return to the borders from 2014, economic reconstruction plans, including the tourist economy, should cover the entire territory of Ukraine. Tourism is one of the sectors of the Ukrainian economy that was most affected by the war. More than one third of tourist facilities are occupied, robbed, or completely destroyed. Despite the war, domestic tourism in Ukraine has not completely lost its position, tourist traffic takes place in the relatively safe western regions of Ukraine. Internationally, Ukraine cannot be considered a safe tourist destination. After the victory, Ukraine has every chance to attract tourists from all over the world, declaring itself a safe and attractive tourist destination and, moreover, a country of heroes that won an unjust war with international support.

Before Russia began its aggression against Ukraine, the country attracted tourists with its historical, cultural and natural attractions, and the main centers of international tourism in Ukraine were: Kiev, Lviv, Odessa, the Crimean Peninsula, and the Ukrainian part of the Carpathians. Crimea was the most popular resort, accounting for over 30% of the country's total reactionary tourism potential. The basis for the decisions of foreign tourists, mainly from Europe, were the affordable price level, hospitality and safety. The dominant themes were cultural, recreational, family, ethnic, nature, sports and health tourism in numerous health resorts.

To synthetically assess the state of Ukraine's tourism economy, it is necessary to refer to the level of market development before the invasion in 2022 and at the same time before the pandemic period, i.e. to the realities of 2019. In the second decade of the 21st century, the share of the tourism economy in Ukraine was estimated at 7% of GDP and 1.2 million jobs. Revenues from tourism amounted to USD 3.6 billion per year. During this period, the number of tourist arrivals from abroad (stays with at least one night) was constantly decreasing from approximately 1.2 million in 2011, through approximately 0.5 million in 2013, 0.15 million in the year of the annexation of Crimea, and in the following years it recorded further declines. The largest tourist traffic was generated by citizens of neighboring countries, including Moldova, Belarus, Russia and Poland. A significant share in incoming tourism also concerned: Turkey, Israel, Germany, the USA and Great Britain. The main reasons for the decline in the attractiveness of Ukraine for foreign tourists were: (1) The annexation of Crimea by Russia and military operations in eastern Ukraine. (2) Information war against Ukraine, which has generated false narratives about Ukraine in the world community, including: high level of corruption, lack of an independent justice system, illegal takeover of power and management of the country by neo-Nazis, (3) Insufficient development of tourist infrastructure, lack of high quality hotel services, low transport accessibility, (4) Continuous reorganization and change of subordination of Ukrainian authorities implementing tourism policy and insufficient activities in the field of tourism marketing.

The end of hostilities in the near or long term will constitute the basis for rebuilding the economy, of which tourism is an important element. The key issue for incoming foreign tourism will be safety. The basis for guaranteeing security and development will be building a democratic society and deepening integration with the European Union, including the possibility of using pre-accession funds, as well as joining NATO. Tourism can become an important element of revitalizing the country's economy and opening it to the world. Attention should be paid to the possibility of shaping the development of tourism in the post-war period in a different way in places not affected by extensive military operations, such as Kiev, Lviv, Odessa and the Ukrainian Carpathians, which will probably be able to regain their position on the tourist market at a faster pace, provided they are convinced of the appropriate level of safety and condition of the tourist offer. In the longer term, the reconstruction of the tourist economy will concern especially Crimea and Donbas. It will be necessary to develop the state's socio-economic infrastructure and implement a marketing policy affecting the tourist image of the entire state and tourist centers. Ukraine, as a large construction site, has a chance to become a business tourism destination. In the long term, Ukraine, as a candidate and then after meeting the conditions for accession as an EU member, will be able to become a fully European tourist destination.

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Ukrainian contribution to meet western democracies' energy security challenges

Expert article • 3588

The socioeconomic development of any country depends upon the availability of energy. Simultaneously, external energy dependence is a country's vulnerability that could be utilized by an aggressive supplier of energy resources and technologies. Ukraine was aware of the threat of using energy as a weapon by Russia to subordinate Ukraine[1] and had been taking steps to eliminate its dependence long before the war started.

Ukraine stopped buying natural gas from Russia in 2015, diversified the supply of nuclear fuel for its nuclear power plants, ensured the integration of the Ukrainian gas transportation system into European networks (ENTSO-G), and, finally, a few hours before the invasion, disconnected the electric power system from the Russian one as part of the implementation plan of scheduled synchronization to European networks (ENTSO-E). Ukraine has made progress in bringing its energy legislation closer to EU legislation as well.

The full-scale Russian military invasion on February 24, 2022, confirmed the correctness of Ukraine's chosen strategic course for full Euro-Atlantic integration. At the same time, the resilience demonstrated by Ukraine during the war period[2] highlights the country's potential as a contributor to European security. The Ukrainian energy industry is one of the examples of possible mutually beneficial cooperation that strengthens security in the region.

Since June 2022, the Ukrainian power system has been operating in synchronous mode with ENTSO-E which increases the stability, and security of electricity supply to consumers in different countries. Ukraine, prior to the Russian massive bombardment of an energy infrastructure, had supplied electricity to EU countries to moderate price volatility in their markets. At the time of the power shortages, as a result of the destruction of energy facilities, Ukraine had a technical possibility to import electricity from EU countries. Ukraine has huge potential for producing green energy and readily will resume the export of power to the EU the moment the war ends.

New opportunities for cooperation are opening up in the gas sector as well. The further increase of cross-border network capacity and the utilization of underground natural gas storage facilities available in Ukraine by gas suppliers to EU consumers makes it possible not only to implement EU plans to create a strategic gas reserve, but also to organize a Central and Eastern European gas hub. An opportunity opens up for the establishment of a platform to trade gas of different origin: the gas of Ukrainian origin (significant volumes of conventional natural gas, unconventional gas of dense rocks, the gas from the Black Sea shelf deposits, etc.), the gas resources of third countries (which can potentially be supplied through territory of Ukraine from post-war Russia and countries of Central Asia), and green energy resources (biogas, hydrogen).

The potential for the development of hydrogen energy is quite high in Ukraine. The preparation of the Strategy for the Development of Hydrogen Energy in Ukraine and the development of a new industry is underway. Ukrainian companies have already joined the "H2EU+Store" initiative and will now produce "green hydrogen", which can be stored in Ukrainian gas storage facilities and exported to EU countries. Ukraine is actively preparing a regulatory and legislative framework to ensure compatibility with EU requirements for biomethane production and its export to the EU. Potentially, Ukraine can produce up to 10 bcm of biomethane per year.

Ukraine is becoming important for regional nuclear energy security. Ukraine is the first country in the world, to have succeeded in substituting Russian nuclear fuel for nuclear power plants of soviet technologies. Today, seven power units of Ukraine's nuclear power plants are fully operating on fuel produced by Westinghouse Electric Sweden AB. From 2024, all 15 power units of Ukrainian nuclear power plants will be supplied with this fuel. Ukraine can help the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to diversify nuclear fuel supply as well. Today, there are 17 Soviet-type nuclear power plants operating in Europe, which until now had no alternative to Russian fuel. Ukraine, in cooperation with Westinghouse, is already proceeding with fuel assemblies for such reactors (VVER-1000 and VVER-440).

In fact, Ukraine can contribute to the implementation of the efforts of the Western democracies to reduce dependence on Russian nuclear technologies (the G7 countries agreement[3]) globally. Ukraine possesses a significant resource potential (uranium deposits), a significant market volume (reduction of market entry costs), a technological base, and qualified personnel (developed nuclear industrial complex and system of personnel training). Ukraine has already concluded a number of agreements with international partners, allowing the establishment of a new chain of nuclear fuel supply from uranium production to its conversion, enrichment, and production of nuclear fuel assemblies. Ukraine can also participate in accelerating the development and practical application of small modular nuclear reactor technologies.

The lessons learned from the Ukrainian experience of ensuring the stability of the energy supply in the conditions of war could benefit developed democratic countries a lot. Ukraine stated the priority of a transition to fundamentally different approaches to energy systems development. The development of a decentralized energy system by increasing the number of power generation facilities while simultaneously reducing spatial disparities in their localization will contribute to increasing the overall reliability of the energy systems and reducing their vulnerability to kinetic and cybernetic attacks. The development of energy supply systems according to the above priorities creates a new huge market for investors because it will require the deep reconstruction of the significantly destroyed energy systems throughout the territory of Ukraine.

1 *Sukhodolia O (2020). Energy Weapon in a Geopolitical Strategy ofRussia.Kyiv:NISS.https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2020-12/energy-weapon-english-dopovid_0.pdf*

2 *Sukhodolia O (2023). Chapter "Ukrainian Energy Sector under Military Attack: Lessons for Resilience" in the book "War and Energy Security: Lessons for The Future". Tallinn: ICDS. https://icds.ee/en/war-and-energy-security-lessons-for-the-future/*

3 *New nuclear fuel agreement alongside G7 seeks to isolate Putin's Russia. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-nuclear-fuel-agreement-alongside-g7-seeks-to-isolate-putins-russia*

The challenges facing Ukraine as well as defined priorities justify Ukrainian positioning within a future energy security framework of European nations as:

- an electricity supplier, - thanks to the expansion of generating capacities on a new technological base, the developed energy network of Ukraine will contribute to the operational safety and stability of the networks of neighboring EU countries;
- a gas hub, - due to the development of the trading platform and infrastructure based on underground gas storages and an extensive gas transportation system to provide additional options to gas supply to EU countries (from Ukraine and third countries);
- a manufacturer of equipment for renewable energy, - thanks to the rapidly growing demand and a significant market for the development of renewable energy technologies in Ukraine (bioenergy, solar and wind energy, hydrogen, etc.);
- a supplier of green energy, - in particular, thanks to the export of green electricity, hydrogen, and biofuels;
- an element of the nuclear fuel and services supply chain, - thanks to the existence of a resource and technological base, the separate elements of the nuclear fuel production cycle, the significant internal market, and the available scientific and technological expertise of Ukraine;
- an example of energy systems transformation, - due to learning Ukrainian experience in the development of decentralized energy systems for communities and protection of the energy systems from physical and cyber threats.

These prospective areas of cooperation development, as well as Ukraine's experience in responding to threats caused by Russia's armed aggression, will significantly increase the security and resiliency of democratic countries.

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ANDRIAN PROKIP

Battling Russia and populism: Ukraine's energy sector after 2014

Expert article • 3589

In December 2023, the European Council agreed to open membership talks with Ukraine. This decision was based on Ukraine's progress toward reforms in different areas, including the energy sector, which is detailed in a separate report published in November. In the report the European Commission rated Ukraine's progress in implementing energy reforms as at "a good level of preparation." For the specific period since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukraine was ranked as having made "some progress."

In late 2023, the Continental European regional group of the European Network of Transmission System Operators (ENTSO-E) recognized that the Ukrainian transmission system operator, Ukrenergo, had achieved compliance with the key technical requirements necessary to enable a permanent interconnection between the power systems of Continental Europe and Ukraine. The Energy Community Secretariat, which acts as the guardian of the Energy Community Treaty, marked Ukraine's impressive track record on electricity and gas market reforms in 2023.

All the progress the Ukrainian energy sector has made in the recent decade was huge, even considering a lot of work should still be done, and unsolved problems remain. This path was not easy and was full of obstacles like populism driven by paternalism, which blocked reforms, energy policy mistakes, and oligarchs trying to collect rent from the energy sector. But besides the internal barriers, there was an external one – Russia, trying to block Ukraine's European integration. Since the moment of a full-scale invasion, it has resulted in direct damage to Ukrainian energy infrastructure with Russian air strikes and artillery shelling.

In 2011, Ukraine became a member of the European Energy Community. This meant the country had to implement energy regulations consistent with those in force in the EU. But the real progress was very weak. Conversely, these reforms would have meant some painful changes, first of all about establishing market energy prices for households. Victor Yanukovych's administration, which was in power then, was more oriented on pretending reforms rather than being committed to fundamental changes, trying to build a good personal image. But the reforms would also threaten the power of oligarchs, and Yanukovych's closest circle, including his son, which tried to take control over the economy, including the energy sector.

Yanukovych's decision to make a U-turn from European integration towards deeper connections with Russia pushed massive protests, also known as the Euromaidan (and later Revolution of Dignity), when people demanded the government follow the European track. In late 2013, Yanukovych fled away, and a new government that was established in Kyiv committed to continuing the efforts of European integration, and Russia unleashed the war against Ukraine in 2014.

Ukrainian energy became among the first victims of the war. After Russia annexed Crimea, using its proxies, it unleashed the war in the Donbas region, which was responsible for a considerable share of coal produced in the country. By that moment, coal was the only energy resource that the country was self-sufficient with, and it became import-dependent then. In 2014, Ukraine experienced rolling blackouts due to the lack of coal, and later, more expensive imported coal naturally affected the electricity prices. There is no need to mention that control of the energy assets worth billions of dollars in the occupied territories was lost.

Besides, together with the invasion, Russia blackmailed Ukraine with gas supplies. In 2010, Yanukovych's administration negotiated a discount for natural gas in exchange for prolonging the Russian fleet location in Crimea till 2042. Even when discounted, the price was high, and later, in 2012, Yanukovych's administration tried to diversify gas supplies – without much success, as Russia, being skilled in the gas business and blackmailing, blocked any efforts. After annexing Crimea, Russia canceled the discount, demanding to pay an extra high price.

Ukraine addressed the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce regarding the gas dispute and won the case in 2018. But in 2014, with the gas and coal shortage risk, the situation was critical before the winter. In some way, this pushed reforms and other steps to change the energy sector in the long term and prepare the country for winter in the short term.

During 2014-2017, a list of crucially important laws was adopted, called to comply with Ukraine's energy legislation with European rules, strengthen the country's energy security, and make the energy sector more financially sustainable. Meanwhile, Russia did not give up on threatening Ukraine's energy sector. A couple of times, Russia-associated hackers attacked Ukrainian energy. In some cases, these attacks even resulted in blackouts, as it was in late 2016.

However, the path of energy reforms has not been smooth during all the years. In some periods, when energy security risks were not critical, different governments were tempted by paternalistic expectations and populistic steps. Mostly, that was about avoiding or postponing introducing unsubsidized prices for households. In fact, in the case of households, except for a short period, the country did not see liberalized markets for households with unsubsidized energy prices.

The lack of market approaches, predictability, and transparency of the energy policy restricted opportunities and interest for new energy investments. Most of Ukraine's energy assets were deprecated and obsolete, which defined low efficiency and high energy losses.

The start of Russia's wide-scale invasion coincided with a test operation of the Ukrainian power system disconnected from the Russian one. An isolated mode operation had to last less than a week. It was a preparation for a future disconnection from the Russian power system and synchronization with the European network ENTSO-E. The war speeded up the process, and Ukraine did not connect back to the Russian system and instead could trade electricity with the European countries. Ukraine exported electricity when European countries tried to save gas, as Russia launched blackmailing and undersupplied gas. But as Russia started widescale air attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities in September 2022, imports from the EU helped Ukrainians to survive.

Since the invasion, Ukraine continued energy reforms. A lot must be done yet. But the key enemies are still the same – lack of political will and populistic temptations on the one side and Russia trying to take control over Ukraine on the other. Despite all odds, Ukraine has changed its energy regulations and the sector since the Revolution of Dignity. Ukraine has been withstanding Russia and its aggressive policy for more than ten years. These ten years prove that Ukraine deserves future support as the Ukraine defense itself and its right for the European future.

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VICTOR LIAKH & ILONA KHMELEVA

Pro-Western reforms despite all obstacles: Main achievements of Ukrainian civil society during the war decade

Expert article • 3590

During the last decade, the civil society of Ukraine faced a difficult task. Despite Russian aggression, which began in 2014 with the occupation of Crimea and Donbas, Ukraine had to implement many reforms. These pro-Western changes in legislation and policies were a request of the Ukrainian people, formed during the Revolution of Dignity. And two years ago, the challenge became even greater. After all, no country in the world has the experience of implementing the institutional reforms necessary for European integration during a full-scale war. Civil society simultaneously became an indispensable assistant of the state and the military, providing a significant portion of humanitarian support, and continued to be a driving force behind legislative reforms and a source of high-quality expertise for the government. Activists and volunteers simultaneously established shelters for internally displaced persons, continued to prepare sophisticated legal analysis, provided effective international advocacy, and promoted systematic changes in public governance. Does this combination of tasks seem almost impossible? But during these 10 years, Ukrainians proved that almost nothing is impossible for them. This is the secret of Ukrainian resistance and sustainability.

At least three areas can be distinguished among the main achievements of civil society.

Democratic procedures and transparency

The first noteworthy accomplishment lies in the approval of democratic procedures and the promotion of transparent state decision-making. Civil activists served as vigilant watchdogs, overseeing government activities and contributing to successful digitization. Ukraine, having achieved significant strides in digital transformations (including corruption-free e-services, open data, and e-participation tools) emerged as an "exporter of reforms", sharing its experiences globally. The commitment to democratic values became a cornerstone of Ukrainian resistance and sustainability. For example, within the framework of the EGAP Program, implemented by East Europe Foundation, the development of the portal and mobile application "Diia" was supported. Civil society experts in cooperation with the Ministry of Digital Transformation specialists have developed more than 60 state services. All these electronic services were simplified, digitized and appeared in the convenient form in which they are now used by more than 20 million Ukrainians.

Humanitarian aid and veterans' reintegration

A second area of achievement involves the provision of humanitarian aid to war victims, the reintegration of veterans, and addressing the consequences of Russian aggression. Civil society efforts extended to the establishment of shelters and bomb shelters, along with educational initiatives on mine safety skills. For example, the Zrozumilo! Online Educational Platform set records for views of a landmine safety course, facilitating and promoting self-education among Ukrainians. The commitment to the well-being of those affected by the conflict demonstrated the compassionate side of Ukrainian civil society. One of the important examples is an initiative aimed at restoring and equipping bomb shelters in schools and ensuring children's access to education despite the war. Thanks to the efforts of many organizations, such as savED or East Europe Foundation, more than 200 schools have been properly equipped.

International advocacy and image improvement

The third major accomplishment is the impactful role played by civil society in international advocacy and enhancing Ukraine's global image. Non-governmental organizations spearheaded international consolidation around Ukraine, leading to crucial decisions on aid and support. Non-governmental diplomacy emerged as a unique and potent weapon, ensuring the preservation of Ukraine's statehood amidst global challenges. For example, East Europe Foundation in cooperation with the Zentrum Liberale Moderne implements the Project "Ukraine in Europe", aimed to make a long-term contribution to deepening the German-Ukrainian parliamentary dialogue and strengthening the capacity of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to carry out reforms for European integration.

Role of civil society in shaping reform policy

The European Union's decision to open negotiations with Ukraine further underscores the increasing importance of civil society in shaping reform policies. The 2023 Enlargement Package recognizes the powerful reform dynamic created by granting EU candidate status to Ukraine, with strong popular support despite the ongoing war. The positive report reflects the significant contribution of civil society to Ukraine's progress, providing a robust foundation for democratic developments and effective post-war reconstruction.

European Commission's view on civil society

The European Commission acknowledges the vibrant role of Ukraine's civil society, emphasizing its engagement in reform processes and response to Russia's aggression. Civil society is recognized as a crucial component of the democratic system, maintaining social bonds and contributing to overall societal resilience. Recommendations provided include adopting a legal framework for public consultations, expanding governmental funding for civil society organizations, and preventing pressure and threats against civic activists.

The role of civil society in shaping Ukraine's reform policy is becoming even more crucial given the EU decision to open negotiations with Ukraine. In 2023 Enlargement Package, the European Commission stipulated that the decision to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine created a powerful reform dynamic, despite the ongoing war, with strong support from the people of Ukraine. All in all, the 2023 Enlargement Package is very positive. It includes a profound reforms agenda, which will ensure democratic developments and effective post-war reconstruction. In general, the Report is rather complimentary for Ukraine. And this is a great merit of civil society.

The Report includes many provisions on civil society. The European Commission declares that "*Ukraine's vibrant civil society remains engaged in reform processes and in the response to the impact of Russia's aggression. Volunteer movements and informal civil society groups often act as the backbone of humanitarian action across the country, including in the liberated and in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. In many respects they are key to the country's resilience*". Moreover, it is stipulated that "*an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is recognized and treated as such by state institutions. Civil society remains a key element of Ukrainian democracy, maintaining social bonds and fabrics, and contributing to the resilience of society at large*". Given such estimations, some recommendations are provided: 1) adopting a legal framework for public consultations; 2) expanding governmental public funding programmes for civil society organisations; 3) avoiding any pressure and threats against civic activists.

Future outlook

All in all, this decision will motivate Ukrainians to move forward with all the reforms. While criticizing some problematic spheres (including the judiciary, SSU, etc.), the documents fully support the efforts of Ukrainian civil society. Given East Europe Foundation's previous experience (such as institutional development of the parliament, support of democratic procedures, international advocacy for European integration, ensuring digitalization, etc.), it will act as a reliable partner for the implementation of the recommendations provided by the EU. Another important goal is ensuring cooperation among the Ukrainian experts and civil society organisations, developing their capacity and sustainability. One of such success stories is the Crimea Platform Support Program, launched by East Europe Foundation. Among other things, this initiative enabled the Crimea Platform Expert Network to bring together hundreds of representatives of Ukrainian and foreign non-governmental organizations and think tanks, human rights activists involved in researching the full range of issues caused by the Russian occupation of Crimea. This approach can serve as a model for involving civil society in the development of transitional justice strategies.

Despite the challenges of the war decade, civil society remains a fundamental pillar of Ukrainian democracy and statehood. The next decade is poised to bring new challenges, including the pursuit of reforms essential for European integration, post-war reconstruction, and mitigating the negative consequences of Russian aggression. The unwavering commitment of civil society ensures its continued success in steering Ukraine toward a future characterized by success, peace, and European integration.

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HLIB FISHCHENKO

Maidan as a phenomenon of formation of Ukrainian civil society

Expert article • 3591

Starting from 2013 until the end of the Maidan, I was a participant in that revolution, and the most vivid memory I have of it is the feeling of unity. People are the government, the state. The nation has clearly expressed its position on the course towards Europe, and you, being there, felt the power of unity and mutual respect.

The Maidan symbolizes the modern form of organization of Ukrainian society, which made it possible to resist during the Russian occupation and unite to repel the enemy. After all, it was Maidan that clearly articulated the values of the modern Ukrainian community — the values of freedom, democracy, and European orientation.

Unlike Russians, Ukrainians have the values of European civilisation. The Maidan was a reaction to despotism, a way of defending personal and civic freedoms. This model is rooted in Ukrainian history, particularly in the times of Cossacks and the Ukrainian People's Republic. We can say that beating of students was the main turning point of the Revolution of Dignity.

The Revolution of Dignity commenced on the 9th anniversary of the Orange Revolution, coinciding with protests against the Azarov government's decision to halt Ukraine's European integration on the evening of November 21, 2013. Nine years prior, on November 22, 2004, people had rallied against the falsification of presidential election results. In both 2004 and 2013, citizens protested against Viktor Yanukovych's actions. On November 27, activists conveyed their message to Yanukovych on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, writing a 100-metre-long letter urging him to choose European integration and offering advice to the government.

The peaceful protest took a violent turn on November 30 when police brutally dispersed the remaining activists on Maidan, mainly students — unarmed protesters. In response, the very next day, on December 1, hundreds of thousands of people from across Ukraine converged in Kyiv, fuelled by anger over police brutality, corruption, and the abuse of power. We saw posters, messages, and rhetoric: "Stop beating children" from protesters.

The Maidan model promotes strong and creative individuals who are able to organise systemic resistance in times of crisis, in addition to formal leaders. In fact, Maidan was and still is a format for generating new, young leaders. Politicians were standing together with ordinary people, talking and discussing pressing issues in the country. There were fewer than 1,000 people, but the revolution gained momentum daily.

According to the theory, three circumstances make it possible for the revolution to defeat the regime:

1. The presence of an alternative centre of influence — the counter-elite, forming new values and rules, different from those professed by the regime.
2. The ability of opposition leaders to organise (construct) mass public offensive actions.
3. The formation of an institutional result during the revolution — a new type of social relations, and new institutions of future power.

And that third had become the central aspect of Ukraine's transformation and its "Euro-Atlantisation." It was the new, or rather reborn, civil society that demanded order and punishment of those responsible not only for the shootings but also for corruption.

Maidan laid down a model of a democratic society that does not tolerate autocracy and corruption. The fight against corruption is no longer the responsibility of law enforcement agencies alone. Civil society has become a guarantee of preventing total corruption. This function is crucial in the context of public control over the defence budget and procurement for the Ukrainian army.

Most importantly, it has become a challenge to the oligarchy and clannishness. Maidan was a signal for the formation of an effective government in Ukraine. After all, in a democratic system, it is impossible to constantly resolve issues by mobilising a significant part of society. It had also become a form of social solidarity, which proved to be especially important during the hostilities when a large part of the civilian population became highly vulnerable to various risks and challenges associated with the war.

The Maidan gave impetus to the development of a large number of civic institutions and initiatives in various spheres of public life; it also led to a surge of initiatives in Ukraine's regions. As a social phenomenon, Maidan attracted considerable attention from the international community, which was crucial to large-scale support for Ukraine during the war with Russia. However, it demonstrates the strength of a democratically-minded society. And this is what makes Maidan so close to passionate people in different countries who want to make effective changes.

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VALERIIA LOIKO

Education in Ukraine during the war

Expert article • 3592

The classic scheme of obtaining secondary and higher education in Ukraine was destroyed in 2014 after the beginning of Russia's annexation of Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Some educational institutions stopped working, some were moved to other regions controlled by Ukraine.

Even more, the education system in Ukraine was destroyed in February 2022. The first two weeks after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, people were in a state of shock, so no one even thought about education. The majority of people were forced to relocate to secure cities, which included emigrating abroad. Many educational institutions were destroyed. However, the education process began online in many educational institutions and general secondary educational institutions in the second half of March 2022. The educational process in educational institutions was quickly restored and improved by the distance learning format that had already been implemented during the pandemic. There were a lot of people displaced in Ukraine, both inside and outside the country. At the same time, educational institutions that were still functioning were evacuated. According to Ukraine's Ministry of Science and Education for 2022, there were 3,593 educational institutions damaged by bombing and shelling, and 365 were destroyed completely. 34 educational institutions have been moved or are in the process of moving. Mostly these are institutions from the Lugansk and Donetsk regions.

Students from universities who remained in the occupied territories were accepted by a number of universities. Almost all higher education institutions from the occupied territories opened branches in other cities of Ukraine. The learning process gradually began to improve. Children were able to more easily perceive all the hardships associated with the war, so the training was restored more fully. It was more difficult for students to psychologically tune in to study, so teachers often worked in the classroom as psychologists, and then they taught their subject. The establishment of the educational process in all educational institutions was greatly aided by the mutual support of each other. As of the end of 2022, more than half of secondary schools have switched to a mixed and full-time education format. A feature of full-time education was the presence of a shelter in the school. In July 2022, only 13% of higher education institutions had protective shelters that were minimally usable. By the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year, half of the educational institutions had protective shelters that were more suitable for use. All teachers have undergone training on ensuring the safety of students during the educational process. In 2022, there was a decrease in the number of students, in particular, in the city of Kyiv by 6.36% and an increase in local budget expenditures for ensuring the educational process in secondary schools. Significant amounts of expenditures from the local budget of the city of Kyiv were directed to the restoration of damaged school buildings and the purchase of computer equipment for conducting classes in the online format.

Universities remained in the online education format for longer. They switched to full-time education only in September 2023. During the war, many educational institutions suffered significant destruction, also some of them were completely destroyed. However, people restored damaged educational institutions, equipped shelters, and did everything to continue the educational process.

Taking into account the state of war, educational institutions made changes to educational programs and training courses.

In the training courses of social disciplines, topics on European integration of Ukraine, the study of European experience in different directions were added. In 2022, the academic mobility of applicants for education of Ukrainian educational institutions, in particular, to European countries, has increased significantly. Many European educational institutions accepted Ukrainian students to study.

Under the conditions of martial law, funding for educational institutions at the expense of budget funds decreased, which negatively affected the level of wages of teachers. Lower wages lead to a decrease in the prestige of teaching, which is mainly intellectual. Under martial law, many institutions of higher education were forced to optimize the level of wages by reducing various surcharges. Lower wages encourage teachers to leave their professional activities and transition to more paid areas of the economy or switch to work in foreign educational institutions. This trend reduces the intellectual potential of the country.

Another negative feature of Ukrainian education during the war is the outflow of foreign students, most of whom left the country and switched to an online learning format.

The positive aspects of Ukrainian education during the war include the fact that educational institutions, both secondary and higher, adapted to such difficult working conditions. Most educational institutions, up to 80% equipped with shelters for classes in full-time format. In educational institutions there are processes of accreditation of educational programs, and new educational programs are being developed that correspond to the direction of European integration of Ukraine.

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MAKSYM KRAVCHUK

The peace formula: A holistic pathway towards a just and lasting peace

Expert article • 3593

As we mark two years since the illegal and unprovoked full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and ten years of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it becomes increasingly apparent that the global system is growing more volatile and uncertain. Over more than two decades, Russia has aggressively pursued its global role and influence, undermining liberal democratic values and norms. This has included reviving Soviet-style colonial outreach, reshaping the international system into spheres of influence, and in recent years, escalating tensions between the Global East/South and Global West. It's now evident that Russia's genuine goals include the complete destruction of Ukrainian national identity, fragmentation of the international order, and the suppression of rule of law, basic freedoms, and human rights, both domestically and internationally. Should Russia achieve these aims, the world risks descending into an extreme form of anarchy, devoid of rules, order, and effective institutions.

Despite its obligations as a permanent member of the UNSC, Russia has consistently disregarded international norms, including the UN Charter. Over two years, it has utilized all available resources, including deliberate attacks on civilians and Ukraine's critical infrastructure using missiles and drones, and weaponized global energy and food supplies to incite social disturbances in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Russia has also conducted massive cyber, information, and hybrid operations, including facilitating illegal migration, to destabilize democratic states. Moreover, Russia has abused its power within the UNSC, paralyzing a body tasked with maintaining international peace and security. This highlights a critical flaw in the post-Cold War international system, as witnessed by the attempted annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent lack of international community's bold response to Russia's aggressive actions.

At present, the international community confronts three crucial challenges in reinstating a rules-based order:

- Isolating Russia politically and economically to curtail its capacity for aggression.
- Ensuring accountability for Russia's war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and crime of aggression.
- Providing comprehensive support to Ukraine for full restoration of its territorial integrity, sovereignty, and integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions once the war is over.

A just and lasting peace in Europe hinges upon fulfilling these tasks and demands a holistic vision for shaping the future. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy outlined a comprehensive 10-point Peace Formula at the G20 Summit on November 15, 2022, encompassing vital aspects of the path to peace such as preventing nuclear disaster, restoring food security, ending energy coercion, releasing abductees and POWs, upholding international law, withdrawing Russian troops, restoring justice, tackling Russia's ecocide against Ukraine, preventing further escalation, and confirming the end of the war. On February 23, 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted the Resolution "Principles of the UN Charter underlying a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine" with 141 votes. This Resolution explicitly echoed the vision outlined by the President of Ukraine in the Peace Formula as a pathway to restore peace.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine represents an imperialistic endeavor aimed at dismantling the rules-based international order. Therefore, the Peace Formula isn't solely focused on securing peace for Ukraine, it also confronts the vulnerabilities inherent in the global system. It stipulates reinforcing the rule of law, reforming international institutions, transitioning to sustainable practices, addressing energy challenges, ensuring food security, and safeguarding environmental integrity. Effective coordination among world leaders is pivotal in achieving a consensus for executing this ambitious agenda. Therefore, broad participation of nations in the Global Peace Summit is crucially required to reach an agreement on the fundamental provisions that will form the basis of a relevant document, to be presented to representatives from Russia.

Ukraine relies on proactive engagement of partners from all continents to spearhead the development and implementation of collective actions for each point of the Peace Formula. This includes intensive dialogue within 10 working groups, regular meetings of the national security and political advisors, high-level thematic conferences and Summit of the heads of states and governments. Ukraine anticipates the guidance and leadership of its Nordic partners across all engagement formats. Finland's exceptional expertise, especially in nuclear safety and combatting ecocide, will be invaluable and much needed.

Collaborative efforts are essential in the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty, strengthening the international order based on established principles, and jointly shouldering the responsibility for our shared future to prevent catastrophic disorder within the global system.

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ROMAN MARTYNOVSKYY

Ukraine of the future

Expert article • 3594

Despite the enduring, unjustified, and horrific aggression of the Moscow state against sovereign Ukraine over the past 10 years and the numerous challenges faced by the Ukrainian nation in pursuing its path of Western development, today the shape of the Ukraine of the future is becoming increasingly clear. A painful transformation is taking place. Ukraine is no longer seen as an "eternal" victim – an image formed in the early years of its independence – instead, it is replaced by the perception of Ukraine as a courageous country – an outpost of Western civilization.

For decades, before the declaration of independence and even afterward, the vast majority of foreigners associated Ukraine with the Russian Federation. In turn, the latter sought in every way to maintain and promote the image of Ukraine as its own replica. In the pursuit of implementing imperial ideas and appropriating the achievements of the states that once constituted the Soviet Union, Russian Federation hoped to become a "mighty" Russia as it once was but ultimately transformed into a medieval feudal Muscovy. The responsibility for this, as well as for the war in Ukraine, cannot be placed solely on the leadership of the modern Russian Federation. The notion of an "innocent people" has no chance of being accepted in light of the hundreds of thousands of killed Russian invaders, who entered Ukrainian territory and the horrific, intrinsically inhumane comments from this very people left on social media posts about the deaths caused by Russian bombings and missile attacks on Ukrainian children, the destruction of schools, cultural heritage sites, and maternity hospitals.

Now, Muscovy resembles a creature that has attacked its victim, hoping to get forcibly what is usually achievable only through the voluntary agreement of both parties. However, when it seemed that those goals were close, it became clear that the victim of its unhealthy "passion" was ready to defend itself to the last breath. It turned out that in Ukraine a nation had formed that was no longer willing to see itself as an "eternal victim," a nation with values and a mentality extremely different from the population living in Muscovy.

The loss of Crimea was a severe blow to the young Ukrainian state, but it did not become the tragedy that Moscow had envisioned to internally destroy the Ukrainian nation. It did not happen because the part of the Ukrainian population in the Crimean Peninsula that fiercely supported the idea of "returning Crimea to the native harbor" actually had nothing in common with the Ukrainian nation. This was partly due to the fact that, in addition to Ukrainian passports which granted them the right to reside in Ukraine, they also held Russian passports, indicating their loyalty to the Russian state. On the other hand, a part of the Crimean population, mainly of retirement age, was not prepared to undergo the challenging path of restoring the full independence of Ukraine from a government that had shifted its attributes from Soviet to neo-Russian.

Crimea and Sevastopol became an unexpectedly easy prey for Moscow due to the weakness of the Ukrainian government at that time, the indecisiveness of Western partners, and the betrayal by a significant part of the Crimean population of their country of citizenship, Ukraine. The "legendary" Sevastopol, glorified in Soviet songs, demonstrated to the world not heroism but mass betrayal of its population to their own state. Traitors always seek opportunities to serve their new master. That is why today, Crimea and Sevastopol are at the forefront of Putin's "special military operation," and that is why their cemeteries are growing at a rate that can only be compared to the burial grounds of Buryatia and Yakutia.

The inadequate behavior of the Ukrainian government and the deficient reaction of the European and international community to Russian aggression, which began with the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula in February 2014, contributed to its further development – the seizure of parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and a full-scale invasion in February 2022 onto the Ukrainian territory, from Mykolaiv to Kyiv. Despite the fact that the world has repeatedly witnessed the aggressor's unwillingness to stop on its own and the fact that it can only be stopped by a resolute response, it continues to step on the same rakes, hoping that Putin will quit after conquering a part of Ukraine.

Nevertheless, more than thirty years of independence, especially ten years of war, have changed Ukraine for the better, in contrast to Russia, which has remained loyal to the "values" of the fallen empire that fell in 1917 but continued to live in the minds and hearts of Russians and their leaders. The atrocities committed by Russian invaders in Bucha and towns and villages adjacent to Kyiv, in Izyum in Kharkiv region, in Mariupol – the pearl of Ukrainian Azov, the torture chambers of Kherson, and the mass murder of Ukrainian prisoners of war in Olenivka in Donetsk region not only widened the gap between the Russian under-empire and Ukraine but also provided a significant impetus for the transformation of its genetic code for decades to come.

The entire world must acknowledge the truth that is obvious to Ukraine and its true friends, which is breaking through the ruins of the Mariupol Drama Theatre and the mangled residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, and other peaceful Ukrainian cities. The hope for the rapid advancement of European values to the east of Ukraine has collapsed, as present-day Russia mentally continues to live in a feudal world.

Today, amidst the wailing of air raid warnings and missile threats, prosperous, Ukrainians dream of a united and independent Ukraine respected throughout the civilized world and has survived an unequal battle with its eastern neighbor. Muscovy must not be allowed to win this war, as such a victory would question the continued existence of the entire civilized world. On the other hand, a victory for Ukraine would create conditions for Moscow to admit to the horrors it has committed and contribute to its return to the path of genuine respect for the rules of peaceful coexistence among nations.

Ukrainians have already achieved the main result in the ongoing war - they have proved, first and foremost, to themselves, and to the world at large that the Ukraine of the future will never be a replica of the Russian Federation. Equal partnership with civilized countries based on respect for universal values and human rights, ensuring food security for Europe and other parts of the world, and defending Eastern Europe's border against Russian barbarism will define the role of Ukraine and its destiny for decades to come.

With these features, Ukraine of the future will be perceived globally as a positive, although tragic, example that empires are powerless against the desire of a population shaped into a nation to break free from imperial chains and exercise its right to determine its own future without coercion from any third state.

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PETER DICKINSON

European security hinges on Ukrainian victory

Expert article • 3595

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has transformed the geopolitical landscape and looks set to shape the international security climate for decades to come. However, as the second anniversary of the invasion approached in early 2024, there were growing indications than many in the West had yet to fully appreciate the historical significance of the war raging on Europe's eastern frontier. Political battles fought in Washington DC and Brussels over the future of Western military aid for Ukraine highlighted this alarming shortsightedness, while also hinting at a broader reluctance among Western policymakers to acknowledge the scale of the threat posed by Putin's Russia to the existing world order.

The lack of vision on display in many Western capitals is partly a matter of convenient denial in the face of painful realities. After all, no Western leader would be eager to abandon decades of peace dividends in order to prioritize military spending. But there is more to the problem than fear of destabilizing domestic politics or angering voters. The invasion of Ukraine has also exposed a fundamental failure to grasp the true nature of modern Russia or the revisionist imperial agenda driving Vladimir Putin's invasion.

Nothing illustrates this lack of understanding better than the readiness of many in the West to embrace Putin's own attempts to justify the invasion. For more than two years, the Russian dictator has blamed the war on NATO expansion, which he claims poses an intolerable threat to Russian security. Many Western commentators and politicians have readily echoed this argument, despite the fact that it has been comprehensibly debunked by Russia's own actions.

In the wake of Russia's Ukraine invasion, Finland and Sweden both decided to abandon decades of neutrality and seek immediate NATO membership. In theory, this should have represented a much greater threat to Russian national security than Ukraine's far slimmer hopes of NATO membership. Indeed, on the eve of Russia's invasion, the most optimistic forecasts indicated that Ukraine's dream of joining NATO was still decades away.

Revealingly, Putin made no attempt to derail, disrupt, or even symbolically oppose the fast-track accession of the two Nordic nations, even though Finnish membership more than doubled Russia's border with NATO and Swedish membership promised to transform the Baltic Sea into a NATO lake. Instead, he downplayed the entire issue and pretended it had nothing to do with the massive war he had just unleashed on strikingly grounds. Nor was Putin's obvious indifference merely for show; in the months before Finland joined the alliance, Russia actually withdraw approximately 80% of its military from the Finnish border. Clearly, Putin knows perfectly well that NATO poses no security threat to Russia.

This does not mean that Russia's objections to NATO's post-1991 enlargement are entirely insincere. On the contrary, the growing presence of the alliance in the former Eastern Bloc has long been a source of bitterness and resentment throughout the Russian establishment. However, it is critical to clarify that this indignation has nothing to do with legitimate security concerns. NATO is not a threat to Russian security; NATO is a threat to Russian foreign policy because it prevents Russia from bullying its neighbors.

While the NATO narrative has helped the Kremlin conceal its true intentions from international observers, Putin has been far franker when addressing domestic audiences. Throughout the invasion, Putin has spoken openly of his imperial ambitions in Ukraine. He has compared his invasion to the eighteenth century imperial conquests of Russian Czar Peter the Great, and frequently refers to Ukraine as "historically Russian land" while insisting Ukrainians are actually Russians ("one people").

The actions of the Russian army in Ukraine mirror this imperialistic language. In areas of Ukraine under Kremlin control, thousands of potential Ukrainian community leaders and opponents of Russian rule have been killed or imprisoned, while millions have been deported or forced to flee. All traces of Ukrainian national identity are being methodically eradicated, while Ukrainians living under Russian occupation are under enormous pressure to accept Russian nationality and submit their children to Russian indoctrination.

Ukrainians are acutely aware that they are fighting for national survival. They are under no illusions that if Putin achieves his goal of subjugating their country, all traces of Ukrainian statehood and nationality will be ruthlessly erased. This alone should be enough to convince Western leaders they cannot afford to stand by and allow a genocide to take place in the heart of Europe. However, there are also compelling pragmatic arguments for more forceful intervention.

The key question is how far Putin's ambitions extend. If he is not stopped in Ukraine, will he go further? The Kremlin strongman has been obsessed with Ukraine for much of his 23-year reign, but this obsession actually reflects his broader fixation with reversing the verdict of the Cold War. Putin frequently mourns the collapse of the Soviet Union and the injustices of the 1990s. For years, he has spoken of his desire to end what he sees as the era of Western dominance. In its place, he dreams of ushering in a new multipolar world order. This has become a key theme in many of his public addresses since the start of the Ukraine invasion.

It is difficult to define exactly what this means in practice. What can be said with a high degree of certainty is that Putin seeks to divide the West and destroy key Western institutions such as NATO and the EU. He believes this can be achieved without having to embark on an all-out war. All Russia need do is continue exploiting the chronic lack of political resolve displayed by Western leaders in Ukraine. If Putin is not stopped in Ukraine, that is exactly what he will do.

In terms of territorial ambitions, Putin's stated commitment to "returning historically Russian lands" means all former possessions of the Russian Empire are potentially at risk. This includes Finland, the Baltic states, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Alaska, and the whole of central Asia. An emboldened Putin would almost certainly seek to press home his advantage against a demoralized and discredited West by launching fresh invasions or hybrid takeovers using thinly veiled proxy forces.

This nightmare scenario cannot be avoided by appeasing Putin or offering Russia some kind of compromise deal that allows Moscow to retain some of its territorial gains in Ukraine. Such an approach would only pause the war and enable Putin to rearm before resuming hostilities.

Instead, the only way to end the threat of resurgent Russian imperialism is by providing Ukraine with the weapons to win the war and then fully integrating a victorious Ukraine into the Western community of nations.

As long as Ukraine remains in the geopolitical gray zone, it will be the primary target of Russian aggression. However, if the West demonstrates the resolve to fully arm and integrate Ukraine, a defeated Russia will be plunged into an existential crisis of its own, and will eventually have no choice but to abandon its imperial agenda. Putin and other Russian leaders regularly frame the invasion of Ukraine as part of a bigger war against the West. They will continue waging this war until they are decisively defeated. The West must choose whether it prefers to support Ukraine today or fight Russia tomorrow.

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ESKENDER BARIIEV

New trends of Russian crimes in Crimea

Expert article • 3596

In 2014, Russia occupied Crimea, the homeland of the Crimean Tatar people and part of the territory of Ukraine, violating the UN Charter and the UN DRIP.

The Crimean Tatar people opposed the occupation. To suppress the non-violent resistance, the occupiers started persecution, violating the fundamental human rights and collective rights of the indigenous people. The occupation administration uses all instruments of pressure: detentions, arrests, searches, torture, forced abductions, murders, illegal aliena-tion of private property. All these crimes have become systemic.

In the occupied Crimea, there is a tendency of mass detentions on suspicion of involve-ment in the activities of organizations "Hizb ut-Tahrir" and "Jehovah's Witnesses" banned in Russia, failure to report about the crime, public calls to carry out extremist activities, espionage in favor of Ukraine, illegal acquisition, storage, transportation of explosives, ammunition, and since 2022 began to create new instruments for prosecution. Thus the Supreme Court of Russia declared the battalion named after Noman Chelebidzhikhan a terrorist organization, introduced articles into the administrative and criminal codes about discrediting Russian army and propaganda of Nazi symbols. In 2022-2023 35 people were arrested on suspicion of participation in the battalion.

During the occupation 306 people became politically persecuted, 206 of them are Crimean Tatars. As of January 1, 2024, there are 185 political prisoners in prisons, 125 of them are Crimean Tatars. Nariman Dzhelyal, deputy chairman of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, is in jail. In February 2023, political prisoners Dzhemil Gafarov and Kostiantyn Shyring died in prison.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, mass war crimes by Russian servicemen in the newly occupied territories of Kherson and Za-porizhzhya regions have been recorded. Along with "prisoners of war" and "political pris-oners", a category of "civilian hostages" has emerged, who are deprived of liberty without court decisions. The occupants created more than 20 facilities for torture and intimidation in Genichesk, Nova Kakhovka and Melitopol where thousands of people are interrogated and tortured. In Simferopol detention facilities, new boxes and buildings have been opened where forcibly abducted Ukrainian citizens from the newly occupied territories are held. Information about these citizens is not available even at the request of lawyers.

Since 2022, activists have been subjected to fines and administrative arrests. Lawyers are deprived of their status, detentions and administrative arrests are carried out, which pre-vents from carrying out advocacy activities.

The practice of illegal deportation to the territory of Russia in inhumane conditions continues. In the newly occupied territories, medical examinations of children and forced medical examinations are carried out, children are taken to the occupied Crimea and Russia for treatment. Orphans and children whose parents are deprived of their rights are also taken to the occupied Crimea. School teachers are forced to work according to the Russian curriculum, parents are threatened to be deprived of parental rights if they refuse to take their children to school. Schools in Crimea have introduced lessons about SMO in Ukraine into the curriculum.

In addition to illegal conscription campaigns, partial mobilization has been carried out since 2022. Raids to detain citizens evading mobilization were conducted in places of compact residence of Crimean Tatars, which led to a new mass wave of departure of Crimean Tatars from Crimea.

Occupation courts prohibit testimony in Crimean Tatar language, cases of expulsion from the courtroom have been recorded.

Recommendations

- Improve the mechanism of control over the implementation of the sanctions policy with systematic updating of the sanctions list. Introduce a mechanism for the application of personal sanctions against persons responsible for human rights violations similar to the Magnitsky Act
- Initiate the patronage of Crimean political prisoners and their families by public figures and the participation of parliamentary deputies and diplomats in the courts on the territory of Russia
- Engage international lawyers to defend political prisoners
- Include a section on collective rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, in hu-man rights monitoring reports on Crimea/ Ukraine
- Develop an Action Plan to improve the situation of indigenous peoples in the CoE and OSCE region.
- Develop a UN Humanitarian Response Plan on Crimea.
- Encourage the OSCE, the Red Cross, and the UN to organize assistance in third countries for Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians who evade mobilization into the Russian army
- Recognize Deportation 1944 as genocide of the Crimean Tatar people and condemn Russia's pol-icy of persecution and discrimination against Crimean Tatars in the occupied Crimea.

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KARI LIUHTO

EU-Ukraine integration via the trade bridge

Expert article • 3597

Ukraine's journey towards European Union membership has taken three decades so far and has involved a number of dramatic events. The twists and turns of the journey are not so much due to the fact that the Ukrainians do not know what they want, but to the fact that the Russian leadership, living in nostalgia for the Soviet empire, is not ready to accept that that empire has been destroyed for good and that the Western parts of the former Soviet bloc do not want to integrate towards Moscow, but towards Brussels, i.e., they want to integrate into the European Union and NATO.

Historic milestones of Ukraine's EU integration include the poisoning of presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko and the Orange Revolution that took place in Ukraine two decades ago. Another historic milestone occurred just over 10 years ago, when President Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union, resulting in the Revolution of Dignity and Russia's annexation of Crimea and the eastern regions of Ukraine, meaning that the war had already begun in the spring of 2014. The saddest turn of events in relation to Ukraine's European integration began exactly two years ago, when Russia began a full-scale war against Ukraine. Half a million soldiers have already died or been wounded in this senseless war, and there is no end in sight.

Despite the war, the process of Ukraine's European integration has not stopped, as evidenced by the fact that the European Council agreed to begin negotiations on Ukraine's membership in November 2023. Although Ukraine's goal remains clear, the end result is not, because not all the leaders of the EU member states are ready for Ukraine's EU membership, since they are corrupted by Russia's inexpensive energy and the Kremlin's campaign aid.

The main objective of this article is to discuss how Ukraine's integration towards the European Union has been realised through foreign trade. We may observe that the value of Ukraine's foreign trade has doubled over the past 20 years (Figure 1). Ukraine's trade with the EU has grown even more rapidly. EU-Ukraine trade began to grow particularly rapidly in 2016, when the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement began to be applied in EU-Ukraine trade (Figure 2). In addition, in June 2022 the EU granted Ukraine full trade liberalisation, suspending import duties, quotas and trade defence measures for Ukraine on a temporary basis. In June 2023, these temporary measures, known as the Autonomous Trade Measures (ATM) Regulation, were reintroduced for another year.

Figure 1. Ukraine's foreign trade ($ billion)

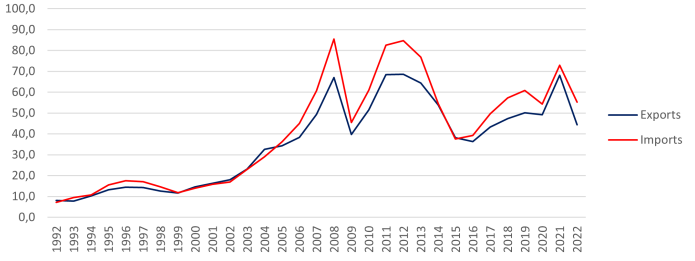
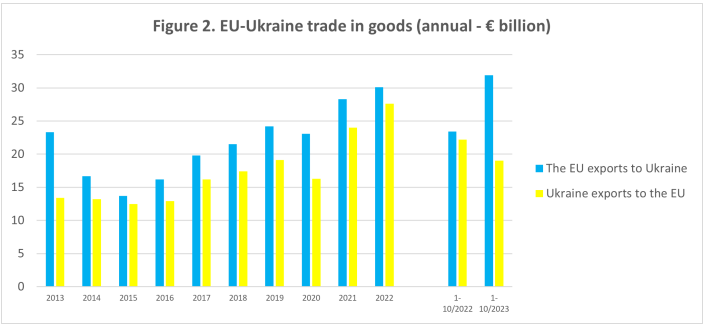


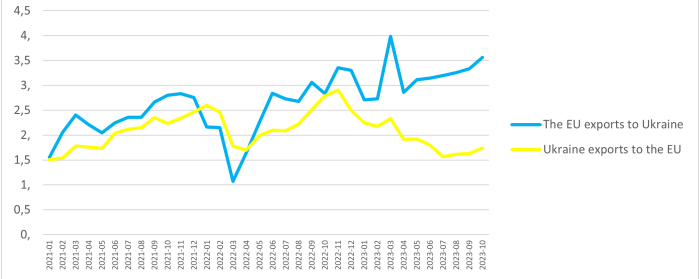
Figure 2. EU-Ukraine trade in goods (annual - € billion)



Sources: WTO; European Commission; Eurostat.

In 2022, the EU already covered more than half of Ukraine's foreign trade. Ten years earlier, the EU share was just a quarter. Machinery and transport equipment were the main export product from the EU to Ukraine in 2022. This product group covered nearly 30% of EU exports to Ukraine. In turn, agricultural products accounted for half of Ukraine's exports to the European Union, and Ukraine became the third largest supplier of agricultural goods to the EU. While EU exports continued to grow in 2023 (over 30%), Ukrainian exports to the European Union decreased (-15%). Russia's systematic attacks on the Ukrainian export infrastructure, the halt of the Black Sea Grain Initiative in the summer of 2023 and the blockade of East European farmers against inexpensive grain imports from Ukraine were the main reasons for the decline (Figure 3). Foreign trade is of utmost importance for the Ukrainian economy. The foreign trade-GDP ratio in Ukraine was 0.66 in 2022. This indicator for Ukraine was slightly higher than for Finland (0.65), which is considered an open economy.

Figure 3. EU-Ukraine trade in goods (monthly - € billion)



Sources: WTO; European Commission; Eurostat.

Trade can build bridges between the EU and Ukraine, but ultimately the Ukrainians' determination to join the EU shall dictate the success of Ukraine's European journey. The following message from Ukrainian President Volodomyr Zelenskyi on social media in September 2022 is a vocal signal that Ukraine wants to leave behind the system built by the Bolsheviks a century ago, which the Russian FSB is still trying to defend. Zelenskyi's message is an indisputable statement that Ukraine does not want to be part of the Kremlin-created dictatorial and morally corrupt regime, the Russkiy Mir.

Expert article • 3597

"Do you still think that we are "one people" [Ukraine and Russia]?
Do you still think that you can scare us, break us, make us make concessions?
Did you really not understand anything?
Don't you understand who we are? What we are for? What we are talking about?

Read my lips:
Without gas or without you? Without you.
Without light or without you? Without you.
Without water or without you? Without you.
Without food or without you? Without you.
Cold, hunger, darkness and thirst are not as terrible and deadly for us as your "friendship and brotherhood".
But history will put everything in its place.
And we will be with gas, light, water and food ... and without you!"

Ukraine's membership of the European Union would not only serve as a measure of Ukraine's ability to transition from a totalitarian Soviet system into a democratic European country, but also measures how the EU's existing member states and their citizens have internalised what the core values of Europeanness are. These core values are not defined in terms of money, economic wellbeing, inexpensive energy, and trade growth, but as a commitment to democracy and human values. How we put these values into practice defines who we are and determines how we will be remembered by future generations.

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