The Ukraine List #506

compiled by Dominique Arel (darel@uottawa.ca)
Chair of Ukrainian Studies, U of Ottawa
www.chairukr.com
www.danyliwseminar.com
Twitter: @darelasn
4 December 2023

1- Danyliw 2023 Research Seminar on Ukraine: Call for Proposals (June 21 Deadline)
2- ASN 2023 Convention Awards (Ukraine at the Forefront)
3- Kule Doctoral Scholarships on Contemporary Ukraine, 2024-2025, U of Ottawa

New Books on the Ukraine War
4- Maria Popova, Oxana Shevel, Russia and Ukraine: Entangled Histories, Diverging States (Polity, 2024)
5- Anna Arutunyan, Hybrid Warriors (Hurst, 2022).
6- Samuel Ramani, Putin's War on Ukraine (Hurst, 2022).
7- Sergei Medvedev, A War Made in Russia (Polity, 2023).
8- Gwendolyn Sasse, Russia's War Against Ukraine (Polity, 2023).
9- Jacob Hauter, Russia's Overlooked Invasion: The Causes of the 2014 Outbreak of War in Ukraine's Donbas (Ibidem, 2023).
10- Adrien Nonjon, Le régiment Azov (Cerf, 2023).
11- Alina Nychyk, Ukraine Vis-à-Vis Russia and the EU (Ibidem, 2023).

12- NYT, Crossing the Dnipro: What a Ukrainian Operation Might Mean (2 December)
13- The Guardian, Historians Come Together (29 November)
14- The Guardian, Ukraine to Change Conscription Policies (27 November).
15- Lawrence Freedman, Why "Not Losing" Does Not Mean Winning (23 November).
16- Ontario To Make Holodomor Education Mandatory in High Schools (23 November).
17- The Independent, Arpan Rai, Putin Could Face New War Crime Case as Evidence Suggests Starvation of Ukraine Was Pre-Planned (16 November).
18- Time, Vera Bergengruen, Ukraine's 'Secret Weapon' Against Russia Is a Controversial U.S. Tech Company (14 November).

19- Le Monde, Thomas D'Istria, Ukraine Gives Swift Justice to Suspected Collaborators in Recently Liberated Areas (18 November)
20- Financial Times, EU Budget Dispute Threatens War lLfeline for Ukraine (3 Dec).

#1
Call for Proposals

Proposal Deadline: 6 December 2023
https://www.asnconvention.com/call-for-proposals-2023

28th Annual World Convention of the
Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN)

Columbia University
Sponsored by the Harriman Institute
16-18 May 2024

Key Points

- The ASN World Convention has the largest contingent of Ukraine-related papers, panels, book panels, and recent documentaries in the world. In May 2023, the Convention featured more than 35 panels or events focused on Ukraine, and in particular Russia's was of aggression in Ukraine. (For last year's program, see https://www.asnconvention.com/panels-by-date. For the 2023 films, five of which were on Ukraine: https://www.asnconvention.com/documentaries-2023.

- The 2024 Convention is welcoming five different types of proposals: Individual Paper Proposal, Panel Proposal, Book Panel Proposal, Roundtable Proposal, Film Proposal. Paper and panel proposals will be based on written papers.

- Two new sections — Populism and the Far Right, Gender — are added.

- Registration fees will be waived for discussants, unless they are making a presentation on a different panel.

- The Convention is in person only. No presentation will be on Zoom.

- Applicants will be notified of the status of their proposal in January 2024.

Over 150 Panels in 4 global sections:

Nationalism, Migration, Populism, Gender

And 7 regional sections:

Balkans, Caucasus, Central Europe, Eurasia (Central Asia and China)
Russia, Turkey and Greece, Ukraine

ASN Awards

Best Doctoral Papers, Best Book on Nationalism (Joseph Rothschild Prize)
Best Article in *Nationalities Papers* (Huttenbach Prize), Best Documentary Film
Nationalities Papers Photo Contest, Social Media Awards

To apply, go to https://www.asnconvention.com/call-for-proposals-2023

Deadline for proposals: 6 December 2023 (to be sent to both darel@uottawa.ca AND asnconvention24@gmail.com in a single Word attachment).

#2
The Next Danyliw Seminar: 26-28 September 2024

The 16th Annual Danyliw Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine was held with great success in late September 2023 at the Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa. Nearly 40 international scholars and doctoral students were in attendance. The program is available at https://www.danyliwseminar.com/program-2023.

The next Seminar will be held on 26-28 September 2024. The Call for Proposals will be issued in March 2024. For full information on the Seminar: https://www.danyliwseminar.com.

#3
Kule Doctoral Scholarships on Contemporary Ukraine

Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa
https://www.chairukr.com/kule-doctoral-scholarships

Application Deadline: 1 February 2024
(International & Canadian Students)

The Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa, the only research unit outside of Ukraine predominantly devoted to the study of contemporary Ukraine, is announcing a new competition of the Drs. Peter and Doris Kule Doctoral Scholarships on Contemporary Ukraine. The Scholarships will consist of an annual award of $30,000, with all tuition waived, for four years (with the possibility of adding a fifth year).

The Scholarships were made possible by a generous donation of $500,000 by the Kule family, matched by the University of Ottawa. Drs. Peter and Doris Kule, from Edmonton, have endowed several chairs and research centres in Canada, and their exceptional contributions to education, predominantly in Ukrainian Studies, has recently been celebrated in the book Champions of Philanthrophy: Peter and Doris Kule and their Endowments.

Students with a primary interest in contemporary Ukraine applying to, or enrolled in, a doctoral program at the University of Ottawa in political science, sociology and anthropology, or in fields related with the research interests of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies, can apply for a Scholarship. The competition is open to international and Canadian students.

The application for the Kule Scholarship must include a 1000 word research proposal, two letters of recommendation (sent separately by the referees), and a CV to be emailed to Dominique Arel, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, at darel@uottawa.ca.

Applications will be considered only after the applicant has completed an application to the relevant doctoral program at the University of Ottawa. Consideration of applications will begin on 1 February 2024 and will continue until the award is announced.

The University of Ottawa is a bilingual university and applicants must have a certain oral and reading command of French. Specific requirements vary across departments.

Students interested in applying for the Scholarships beginning in the academic year 2024-2025 are invited to contact Dominique Arel (darel@uottawa.ca), Chairholder, Chair of Ukrainian Studies.

#4

New Book on the Ukraine War:

Maria Popova and Oxana Shevel
Russia and Ukraine:
Entangled Histories, Diverging States.
Polity, 2024
https://bit.ly/417GDcq

In February 2022, Russian missiles rained on Ukrainian cities, and tanks rolled towards Kyiv to end Ukrainian independent statehood. President Zelensky declined a Western evacuation offer and Ukrainians rallied to defend their country. What are the roots of this war, which has upended the international legal order and brought back the spectre of nuclear escalation? How did these supposedly “brotherly peoples” become each other’s worst nightmare?

In Russia and Ukraine: Entangled Histories, Diverging States, Maria Popova and Oxana Shevel explain how since 1991 Russia and Ukraine diverged politically, ending up on a collision course. Russia slid back into authoritarianism and imperialism, while Ukraine consolidated a competitive political system and pro-European identity. As Ukraine built a democratic nation-state, Russia refused to accept it and came to see it as an "anti-Russia" project. After political and economic pressure proved ineffective, and even counterproductive, Putin went to war to force Ukraine back into the fold of the "Russian world." Ukraine resisted, determined to pursue European integration as a sovereign state. These irreconcilable goals, rather than geopolitical wrangling between Russia and the West over NATO expansion, are – the authors argue – essential to understanding Russia's war on Ukraine.

#5
New Book on the Ukraine War:

Anna Arutunyan, Anna
Hybrid Warriors
Hurst, 2022
https://bit.ly/415CJAY

The Russian government's deniable use of rogues, businessmen, enthusiasts, mercenaries and political technologists confounded policymakers as Moscow waged a covert invasion of Ukraine in 2014. Did Crimea and Donbas reveal the Kremlin's new 'hybrid war' playbook? Or was Moscow itself manipulated by the very forces it had unleashed? Given the disinformation and skewing of the narrative, it is no wonder that the international community has dramatically misunderstood the very nature of this war and was unprepared for the Kremlin's sudden and brutal escalation in 2022.
As Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine risks pitting the world's great powers against each other, Hybrid Warriors traces the trajectory of the conflict from the bottom up. Starting from the first pivotal years in the 2010s, the book draws on unique interviews, reporting from the conflict zones, and wider on-the-ground research, to reconstruct the granular relationships between civilians, non-state actors, and the Kremlin that co-opted them. In the process, it speaks not just to the history of this conflict, but also to our wider understanding of how Putin's Kremlin works and how it has prosecuted its war on Ukraine.

#6

New Book on the Ukraine War:

Samuel Ramani
Putin's War on Ukraine
Hurst,2023
https://bit.ly/3uQAWn3
Eight years after annexing Crimea, Russia embarked on a full-scale invasion of neighbouring Ukraine in February 2022. For Vladimir Putin, this was a legacy-defining mission—to restore Russia's sphere of influence and undo Ukraine's surprisingly resilient democratic experiment. Yet Putin's aspirations were swiftly eviscerated, as the conflict degenerated into a bloody war of attrition and the Russian economy faced crippling sanctions. How can we make sense of his decision to invade?

This book argues that Putin's policy of global counter-revolution is driven not by systemic factors, such as preventing NATO expansion, but domestic ones: the desire to unite Russians around common principles and consolidate his personal brand of authoritarianism. This objective has inspired military interventions in Crimea, Donbas and Syria, and now all-out war against Kyiv.

Samuel Ramani explores why Putin opted for regime change in Ukraine, rather than a smaller-scale intervention in Donbas, and considers the impact on his own regime's legitimacy. How has Russia's long-term political and foreign policy trajectory shifted? And how will the international response reshape the world order?

#7

New Book on the Ukraine War:

Sergei Medvedev
A War Made in Russia.
Polity, 2023
https://bit.ly/3sVibyy

In this timely and incisive book, Sergei Medvedev argues that Russia's war in Ukraine was not merely a whim of Putin's obsession: rather, it was the result of two decades of authoritarian degradation and post-imperial ressentiment, a culmination of Putin's regime and of Russia's entire imperial history. Building on his prize-winning book The Return of the Russian Leviathan, Medvedev argues that it was not only Putin that started this war, but Russia itself, which, by and large, has imagined and embraced it with enthusiasm, seeking to relive its own military glory and colonial past.

#8
New Book on the Ukraine War:

Gwendolyn Sasse
Russia's War Against Ukraine
Polity, 2023
https://bit.ly/47TPm4s

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, giving rise to the deadliest conflict on European soil since the Second World War. How could this happen in twenty-first century Europe? Why did Putin decide to escalate Russia's war against Ukraine, a war which began with Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014?

In this concise and authoritative book, Gwendolyn Sasse analyses the background to this conflict and examines the factors that led to Putin's fateful decision. She retraces the history of Ukraine's struggle for independence from Russia and shows how democratic developments in Ukraine had become a risk for Russia's political system. She also shows that ambiguous Western policy towards Russia encouraged elites in the Kremlin to think that they had more room for action than they did. The result is a brilliant analysis of the factors that led to Russia's invasion, a concise account the course of the war itself and a timely reflection on what its consequences will be – for Ukraine, for Russia and for the West.

An indispensable text for anyone who wants to understand the most dangerous conflict of our time.

#9
New Book on the Ukraine War:

Jacob Hauter
Russia's Overlooked Invasion: The Causes of the 2014 Outbreak of War in Ukraine's Donbas
Ibidem, 2023
https://bit.ly/4a771Yc

The war in Ukraine did not start on 24 February 2022. It began eight years earlier in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region. In his new book, Jakob Hauter investigates the escalation of violence in the spring and summer of 2014. He demonstrates that, contrary to popular belief, the pre-2022 conflict was not a civil war. Ukraine has been fighting a Russian invasion since the armed conflict's very beginning.

Hauter arrives at this conclusion based on a thorough review of the digital open source information (DOSI) available on the Internet. He argues that social science research needs theoretical and methodological innovation to operate in the abundant but murky

information environment surrounding the Donbas War and other conflicts of the social media age. To address this challenge, he develops an escalation sequence model which divides the formative phase of the Donbas War into six critical junctures. He then combines the social science methodology of process tracing with DOSI analysis to investigate the causes of these critical junctures. For each juncture, Hauter assesses the available evidence of domestic causes and Russian interference, reaching the conclusion that, in most cases, there is convincing evidence that Russian involvement was the primary cause of armed escalation.

#10
New Book on the Ukraine War:

Adrien Nonjon
Le régiment Azov
Les Éditions du Cerf, 2023
https://bit.ly/3uJrz8V

24 février 2022. Poutine envahit l'Ukraine. Son prétexte ? « Dénazifier » le pays. Et dans la ligne de mire du Kremlin : le régiment Azov et ses racines idéologiques. Contre toutes les propagandes, voici l'indispensable étude critique du bataillon controversé et de son histoire.
Initialement désignée par la Russie comme une organisation terroriste néo-nazie devant être éradiquée, l'unité est devenue le symbole de la résistance farouche des Ukrainiens en défendant pendant plus de trois mois la ville de Marioupol et son usine Azovstal. En dépit d'une réputation de bravoure sur le champ de bataille, le régiment Azov demeure pourtant une entité complexe. Et la politique n'est pas loin.
Par-delà les polémiques, Adrien Nonjon explore l'itinéraire du régiment depuis sa fondation au lendemain de la révolution de Maïdan, en 2014, et jusqu'à nos jours. Son implication dans les tranchées du Donbass répond-elle à une logique idéologique ? Au désir partagé de défendre le sol ukrainien ? Et quel sera le rôle d'Azov dans la reconstruction à venir ?
Adrien Nonjon enquête et fait la lumière sur un dossier sensible au coeur de la guerre qui aura déchiré l'Europe.

#11
New Book on the Ukraine War:

Alina Nychyk
Ukraine Vis-à-Vis Russia and the EU
Ibidem, 2023
https://bit.ly/3GvkXxE

This book investigates the making of Ukraine's foreign policy towards the European Union and Russia between February 2014 and February 2015. To contextualize the events of the first year of the Russian-Ukrainian War, Nychyk lays out the history of the EU-Ukraine-Russia triangle since 1991 and draws lessons relevant for the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The book is based on her doctoral research and rests on a game-theory-inspired approach to foreign policy analysis. It relies on 38 elite interviews, official documents, and media reports.

Nychyk uncovers various mutual misperceptions in EU-Ukraine-Russia relations. Looking at Ukraine's 'side of the story', her analysis shows how Russian assertiveness and the EU's passivity, but also Ukrainian leaders' limited crisis management experience and erroneous policy decisions contributed to worse outcomes for Ukraine. The latter included poor analysis of foreign interlocutors, trust in their good intentions, and corruption. After 2015, a persistence—although with certain changes—of some of these pathologies left Ukraine in a weaker position in the face of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

#12

Santora, Marc. 2023. "Crossing the Dnipro: What a Ukrainian Military Operation Might Mean." *New York Times*, December 2. https://bit.ly/47HkrIy

Ukrainian troops have taken positions on the east bank of the Dnipro River, posing a threat to Russia's dominance of the region. Here is a look at the battlefield and the strategic implications.

Bands of Ukrainian soldiers fighting to take back territory on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River, an area long controlled by Russia, have been bombed by Russian warplanes, assaulted by Russian infantry and stalked by drones.

Still, battered and outgunned, the Ukrainian forces have managed to hold onto a handful of positions across the river for more than a month and are expanding their assaults on Russian forces there to target their vital supply lines.

The ultimate objectives of the Ukrainian campaign remain unclear: Is it aimed mainly at unbalancing Russian forces — using limited assaults to force the Kremlin to move troops

to the area, hoping to create weaknesses along other parts of the front? Or does Ukraine have more ambitious objectives, like trying to mount a major cross-river assault aimed at taking back a substantial amount of territory and dramatically reshaping a front line that has barely moved in a year?

Many Western military analysts have voiced skepticism that Ukraine can establish the kind of bridgehead that would allow its forces to move artillery and heavy armor across the river, which they would need to carry out large-scale offensive operations.

Still, the sustained attacks could prove difficult for Russia, especially if Ukraine can interfere with critical Russian supply lines. Whatever the Ukrainian intentions, the marshy wetlands along the Dnipro are simmering.

Here is a brief look at how the fighting has evolved, where things stand, and the risks and rewards should Ukraine attempt the most ambitious battlefield river crossing since World War II.

What's happening on the battlefield?

Much of the current state of fighting remains shrouded in secrecy and is deliberately obfuscated by both sides.

But military analysts using geolocated combat footage confirmed last month that Ukrainian forces are holding onto several footholds and are engaged in clashes in a string of villages stretching from Oleshky, opposite the city of Kherson, to Korsunka, a town about 30 miles up river.

The commander of a special Ukrainian unit fighting on the east bank said his soldiers had made their first forays across the river in August.

In late October, Ukrainian marines joined the fight, and in mid-November the marines announced that they were holding several bridgeheads. It was at that point that President Volodymyr Zelensky mentioned the operation for the first time.

As the Ukrainian assaults across the river intensified, so, too, did Russia's response.

In late October, Russian warplanes started blanketing the area with 500- and 1,000-pound bombs and used TOS-1A thermobaric artillery systems, which suck in oxygen from the surrounding air, to devastating effect, according to soldiers and combat footage.

Why is Ukraine opening up this front?

By attacking Russian forces on the east bank of the river, Ukraine is forcing Russia to move forces from other parts of the front, according to Russian military bloggers, the Ukrainian military, British military intelligence and military analysts.

But the fighting is taking a heavy toll on Ukrainian forces, with soldiers releasing combat footage of fierce fighting and harsh living conditions.

Ukraine appears willing to risk exposing some of its best fighters to such a precarious and difficult fight because the rewards of a successful operation could be transformative.

If Ukraine is successful in establishing enduring positions across the river, its forces would be within 30 miles of Crimea — putting a vital transit hub on the peninsula in range of Ukrainian artillery, reshaping the geography of the battlefield, and making it even harder for Moscow to bring food, fuel and ammunition to tens of thousands of soldiers over the winter.

Yevhen Dykyi, the former commander of the Ukrainian Aidar battalion, said Ukrainian troops were "closing in on" a critical highway connecting Crimea to Melitopol — an essential artery in the Russian supply chain.

"The next task is more difficult," he said last week on Ukrainian television. "In particular, to expand this foothold, break through the Russian defense and gain operational space."

How has Russia responded?

A chorus of prominent Russian military bloggers have criticized Russian commanders for not taking the threat from Ukraine seriously enough.

As reports of increased Ukrainian activity grew in October, the Kremlin replaced the commander in the area, Col. Gen. Oleg Makarevich, with Col. Gen. Mikhail Teplinsky, who had previously served as head of Russia's elite Airborne Forces.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said in a report last month that Russia's military "will likely struggle to redeploy combat-effective reinforcements" to the area while also engaged in defensive operations in the Zaporizhia region, to the northwest, and sustaining other offensive efforts in eastern Ukraine.

The Kremlin's main response has been to use its dominance in the air to carpet-bomb the areas where they believe the Ukrainians have footholds, hoping that the withering bombardments will dislodge them. Recently released Russian and Ukrainian drone footage reveals once peaceful riverside villages now razed to the ground, without a single building standing.

Several prominent Russian military bloggers have reported midlevel command problems, with Russian soldiers posting videos complaining about being ordered to go on suicidal missions while living in tough conditions.

What might happen next?

To expand their tenuous hold on the Dnipro's eastern bank, the Ukrainians need to find reliable ways to get supplies and reinforcements across the river — no easy task.

"A river crossing under fire is one of the most difficult operations in land warfare," said John D. Hosler, a professor of military history at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. "Imagine an hourglass, in which the sand flows from one large container through a narrow channel into another: River crossings are the horizontal expression of the same."

Soldiers and equipment are vulnerable at every stage of the operation: when they mass to prepare for the crossing, as they move across the "wet gap," and once again on the far side.

While the Dnipro River narrows as it passes the port city of Kherson, and Ukraine has combat-tested engineering units — as well as bridging equipment designed for the task — it would be hard to move large quantities of material across the river without being detected.

Widespread use of drones has made an already treacherous undertaking more deadly. Once across the river, the marshy flatlands on its eastern bank offer little natural cover.

Beyond the possible operational benefits for Ukraine that could come from expanding the area under its control along the river, a successful crossing effort would also likely raise morale sharply, particularly after a year of toil and bloodshed but little advancement on the ground.

But a failed campaign would mean that more of the country's best soldiers are lost.

No modern army has attempted anything even close to this scale under these conditions since World War II, and historians said it might be better to look back further for an analogy: George Washington leading his soldiers across the Delaware in December 1776.

"Washington's audaciousness ended up being worth the risk: It not only gained him a victory at Trenton, but also boosted the morale of his own beleaguered forces," Mr. Hosler said. That war would grind on until 1783, but the battlefield victory gave the struggling Continental Army something it desperately needed at that moment: hope.

#13

Higgins, Charlotte. 2023. “Historians Come Together to Wrest Ukraine’s Past Out of Russia’s Shadow.” *The Guardian*, November 29. https://bit.ly/3GttuB1

Ukrainian History Global Initiative brings together 90 academics to put the country’s historical contributions on the map

The opening salvo in Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February last year was not a rocket or a missile. Rather, it was an essay.

Vladimir Putin’s On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians, published in summer 2021, ranged over 1,000 years of history in its 7,500 words to assert that the two countries are “one people”.

Now, 90 international and Ukrainian historians are coming together under the umbrella of the new London-based Ukrainian History Global Initiative to wrest Ukraine’s past from the shadow of Russian and Soviet narratives.

The historians want Ukraine’s history to take its place among a wealth of global stories – from the part it played in the history of the ancient Greeks who founded trading emporia on the Black Sea, to its connections with Byzantium, and its links with the Vikings who ruled the medieval polity of Kyivan Rus.
Ukraine: The Forging of a Nation review – the perennial fight against domination by Moscow

Putting Ukraine into the picture will change understanding of major world events, said Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale, at a launch for the initiative at the British Museum in London. “The whole history of the second world war looks different if you understand that Germany’s main war aim was the conquest of Ukraine. And I would venture to say that the history of the 21st century looks different if you understand the reasons why Ukraine resisted the Russian invasion.”

With its terms of reference laid out in a manifesto by Snyder, and the three-year project funded by Ukrainian oligarch Victor Pinchuk, the initiative is planned to be a vast undertaking. Aside from supporting the 90 scholars invited to take part by Snyder and the academic board, Pinchuk will fund three major academic conferences, a host of publications, and archaeological digs. The initiative has been in the planning for three years – well before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Snyder and Pinchuk declined to comment on specific funding levels but Snyder said: “I can think of few endeavours, in contemporary humanities at least, which are on this scale, keeping just under 100 scholars active for around three years: if you just do the math, it’s a fair amount of money.”

Pinchuk, who trained as an engineer, made his fortune in manufacturing in Ukraine's turbulent 1990s and early 2000s. A sometimes controversial figure, he is the son-in-law of Ukraine's second president, Leonid Kuchma, who has been accused by critics of corruption, authoritarianism and assisting the rise of oligarchy in Ukraine.

Pinchuk insisted that the Ukrainian History Global Initiative would be "absolutely independent" and that he had "zero influence" on its academics. He is one of the trustees of the initiative, whose chair is Carl Bildt, the former prime minister of Sweden. Other trustees include the historian Anne Applebaum, the lawyer Philippe Sands, and Ukraine's most celebrated poet, Serhiy Zhadan.

Climate, geography and environmental questions will form a part of the project's focus, beginning with Ukraine's prehistory. The second world war will inevitably play a big role. And so will empire. "One of the most divisive issues in Ukrainian historical memory is decolonisation – to what extent Ukraine was a colony of Russia and wasn't. There is no consensus," said Yaroslav Hrytsak, professor of history at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. "There is hardly a topic in Ukrainian history on which you could find consensus – and that is good."

The importance of history in state-building and a nation's identity is aptly demonstrated by the fact that the father of Ukrainian historiography, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, was also the country's first head of state in 1917-18, between the collapse of the Russian empire and the briefly independent Ukraine's fall to the Bolsheviks. But, said Serhii Plokhii, professor of Ukrainian history at Harvard, Ukrainian historiography faltered after many of its practitioners either emigrated or were killed or sent to gulags under the Soviets. The new initiative marks, he said, the discipline further moving away from "the periphery, something on the margins of either Soviet or Russian historiography, to the centre".

Yuliya Yurchenko, a senior lecturer in political economy at the University of Greenwich, and one of the academics involved in the initiative, said that as a young researcher working on Ukraine's post-Soviet economy at a British university 20 years ago, "nobody was interested in Ukraine, and nobody could really instruct you ... I was made to feel when I was studying Ukraine that I was doing something very insignificant".

She was glad, she said, that the initiative was taking off "at this historic, painful, juncture in Ukraine history".

She added: "It gets thrown into Ukrainian faces that Ukrainians are censoring political discourse, that they are censoring narratives of what the Ukrainian nation is, and what history should be. And this is such a great slap in the face to those critics. We are willing to work collectively, internationally, together, to learn from history – and to do a proper job of it."

#14

Walker, Shaun. 2023. "Ukraine to Change Conscription Policies in Drive to Sustain Fighting Capacity." *The Guardian*, November 27. https://bit.ly/48kZ14f

Changes to include use of commercial recruitment firms to carry out more targeted conscription, say officials

The Ukrainian government is planning to change its conscription practices as it seeks to sustain fighting capacity after nearly two years of full-fledged war with Russia.

The changes, expected to be announced this week, will include the use of commercial recruitment companies to carry out more targeted conscription and to reassure conscripts they will be deployed in roles that match their skills and not simply sent to the front, according to one senior official.

"Some people are scared, scared to die, scared to shoot, but it doesn't mean they can't be involved in other activities ... Now we have a new minister with a new approach," Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's security council, told the Guardian.

In early September, the president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, sacked Oleksii Reznikov, who had been defence minister since the beginning of the war, and replaced him with Rustem Umerov, who spent the early part of the war working on doomed negotiations with Russia. On Friday, Zelenskiy said he expected Umerov's ministry to provide him with a package of new mobilisation policies this week.

"The plan will be worked out and all the answers will be there – next week I will see this plan," Zelenskiy told a news conference, without giving further details.

Danilov said the army would work with two of Ukraine's biggest recruitment companies in order to identify people with specific skills, and to dissuade skilled Ukrainians who wanted to help the army but did not want to go to the front from trying to evade the draft.

"The mobilisation will become more flexible, those specialities that are required will be announced, and people will be volunteering for a concrete position. For example, they need welders or mechanics and so on," said Danilov.

A source in the defence ministry confirmed that contracts had been signed with recruitment companies, but did not give any further details. It was not immediately clear how involved the recruitment companies would be in the process, nor at what level general recruitment for frontline work would continue alongside the more targeted process.

Zelenskiy's announcement comes as Ukraine prepares to face another winter at war, with widespread fatigue at the front and amid society at large. The summer and autumn Ukrainian counteroffensive has failed to win back large amounts of territory, and there are increasing voices among Ukraine's western partners suggesting in private that sooner or later Kyiv may need to consider attempting a negotiated end to the war.

In the first months of the war, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians volunteered to fight, as part of a wave of patriotic determination that shocked Russia and repelled its initial advances. But as the war has dragged on, most people who are willing to fight have already signed up, and many of those already at the front are injured or exhausted.

Increasingly, the army has had to turn to mobilisation to fill the ranks. Viral videos have shown men snatched from the street to be conscripted, and there have been numerous corruption scandals of officials taking bribes to provide exemption. In August, Zelenskiy fired every regional recruitment chief.

Once conscripted, recruits get a few weeks of training and can then be sent to the front. Many Ukrainians say if called upon they would go to the army, but many men of conscription age who do not want to be sent to the front have spent weeks or months hiding at home, trying to avoid the roaming squads of mobilisation officers. Many join Telegram groups in which people share tips on where mobilisation officers are working on any given day.

In the summer, sources in Odesa explained a popular scheme in the city, whereby for a fee of $5,000 in cash, men who did not want to serve could receive a fake medical report suggesting serious spinal issues, with which they would be declared exempt from conscription and be allowed to leave the country.

Danilov admitted there was a recruitment issue but said Russian propaganda was exaggerating the scale of the problem. "Russia is trying to heat up this issue, saying that we don't have enough soldiers, that we have problems with mobilisation … There are always problems in life, let's not overestimate it," he said.

#15

Freedman, Lawrence. 2023. "Why "Not Losing" is not Tantamount to Winning." *Substack*, November 23. https://bit.ly/481bqdd

Can Putin wait for the West to give up on Ukraine?

In an article last weekend, Mark Galeotti, one of the best informed of all Russia-watchers, reported that Putin had just enjoyed one of his best periods of his war with Ukraine. His

views are not out of line with other commentators, for example Shaun Walker in the Guardian, all reflecting a more downbeat mood after the optimism earlier in the year that the Ukrainian counteroffensive would see the liberation of much more territory and add to the pressure on Putin to seek a way out of the war.

The starting point for the gloom is that Ukraine's offensive operations, though not yet abandoned, have yielded only limited territorial gains, and as the winter mud makes movement difficult there are unlikely to be any major advances until the ground hardens next spring. The Russians have shown themselves to be adept at defensive operations and have improved their use of drones and electronic warfare capabilities. In recent weeks most attention has been focused on a Russian offensive, targeted on Avdiivka, in Donetsk. This thus far has also achieved little, and at a high cost in Russian casualties, but the effort to hold it has required Ukraine to pull back forces from more promising operations elsewhere.

For the coming months Russia is in a better position in terms of shell production. The EU is falling short in its ambition to provide Ukraine with a million artillery shells and rockets by March, while Russia is now on a war footing in terms of production and has benefited from an influx of North Korean shells. Because of the surge of expenditure on the war effort its economy is growing fast. Over time Moscow has found more workarounds to limit the impact of Western sanctions. Through financial incentives it is able to keep up the flow of new recruits to feed the front lines.

Political tensions in Russia are kept well below the surface. Critics are cowed if not in exile or prison and Putin is looking forward to his rigged presidential election in March. By contrast, the frustrations of the past year have unsurprisingly led to tensions at the top in Ukraine, notably between President Zelensky and commander-in-chief General Valery Zaluzhny. Zaluzhny's candid interview with the Economist in which he described the war as stalemate irritated Zelensky who wants to stay upbeat. Yet while stalemate may not be a good description of the situation, the problems to which Zaluzhny alluded are real. Getting sufficient ammunition and recruits will be a challenge over the coming year. At the same time, the West has been distracted by events in the Middle East, which means that the effort required to support Ukraine has been lacking, especially when there is a need to get another bill to support Ukraine through a wholly dysfunctional Congress. There have been reports that US military supplies otherwise intended for Ukraine, including 155mm artillery rounds, have been diverted to Israel, though this issue tends to be overstated as their military needs are quite different.

There are, as Galeotti notes, some contrary trends that might lead Putin to worry about short-term military advantages evaporating during the course of next year. The economy is already showing signs of overheating leading to high inflation. He also notes recent polling which

‘for the first time found more Russians in favour of peace talks (48 per cent) than continuing the war (39 per cent) — and only 21 per cent thinking the economy will improve, while 43 per cent assume it will worsen.’

So whatever satisfaction Putin may feel at the moment, the issue is whether he can be confident that Russia’s relative position will strengthen even more over the coming year. Galeotti argues that Putin’s ‘real strategy is to attempt to outlast the West’s interest in Ukraine’. On that basis he claims that ‘not losing is tantamount to a win in his book’?

While I largely accept Galeotti’s analysis on this point I disagree. I don’t think ‘not losing’ is the same as winning, and I’m not convinced that Putin’s strategy involves little more than playing for time.

Winning and Losing

Put this the other way round. Is ‘not winning’ tantamount to ‘losing’? This is not just about playing with words. While a true loss, confirmed by a decisive military defeat, would be considered conclusive, a continuing failure to win can create a sense of futility and corrode the commitment necessary to sustain a military intervention. This is how many Western interventions have ended.

I asked the day after the full-scale invasion whether Putin had ‘launched an unwinnable war’. Because Russia failed to prevail with the advantages of surprise and apparently overwhelming strength, as Ukraine fought back and gained support, a clear-cut Russian victory became even less likely.

Losing, however, is still a different proposition. What would a Russia defeat look like? At the very least it would mean that having failed to achieve its objectives, Russia was obliged to withdraw its forces from Ukraine. This is the sort of defeat that Ukraine hopes to impose. It is also one that Russia has thus far been able to avoid because of the difficulty of dislodging it from all the territory currently occupied. An alternative form of defeat is rarely considered for Russia although it is often considered for Ukraine – that is the occupation of the capital and the installation of a compliant government. This reflects a fundamental asymmetry in the war: Russia’s objective is to subjugate Ukraine but it is inconceivable that Ukraine could do this to Russia. Ukraine is fighting to end the occupation; Russia is fighting to occupy.

It is always possible that failure in Ukraine could lead to upheavals in Russia. At one point this seemed to be happening with the Wagner mutiny. But the future of Putin’s regime depends on events within Moscow and Russia more widely. The Ukrainian army is not going to march to Moscow and impose surrender terms on the Kremlin. A Ukrainian victory has therefore always depended on Russia deciding that it was not worthwhile continuing with the war and seeking a peaceful way out. This is why all proposed peace deals require Kyiv conceding territory and Russia somehow promising to leave the rump

Ukraine alone in the future. Those designing these putative deals never envisage Russian territory being offered to Ukraine as a quid pro quo. They also fail to ask why and how a 'peace' that leaves both sides dissatisfied is likely to be stable and not just be an interlude before the next round of fighting.

If this analysis is correct then the conclusion is frustrating. It is very difficult for Ukraine to achieve a definitive victory. Ending the war depends on a Russian decision to extract itself from a futile and calamitous war. This requires Putin not only acknowledging an expensive failure, but also abandoning his war aims. He has given no indication of being prepared to do either.

'Not losing', in the sense normally understood, of avoiding an unambiguous military defeat, is therefore not really the issue. There was a point, in early September 2022, when that did seem to be on the cards, but in response Putin doubled down, moving to full mobilization and even more expansive war aims. It is now far less likely that Russia will lose. But crucially Putin does not see that as a tantamount to a win and he is not reconciled to the idea that he can't win.

This is why the widespread assumption that a cease-fire could easily be achieved with a bit of imaginative Western diplomacy and some pressure on Kyiv to make the best of a bad job is wrong. If that is what he wanted Putin could have offered a cease-fire any time over the past year if only to see the sort of pressure to which Zelensky was then subjected by those keen to extract a positive response. If the war stopped now with a cease-fire Putin could claim whatever territory Russia still holds as a major gain, but it would be far short of controlling all the territory hurriedly 'annexed' last autumn and which is now officially presented as part of Russia. He would still have to explain what the past year's fighting was about as Russia has barely added to its holdings and lost some ground. The prize of all this effort would be distressed and depopulated territories, challenging to occupy and defend, and continuing hostility from the rest of Ukraine as it edged towards membership of the EU and NATO. This is why Putin wanted a submissive government in Kyiv in the first place: unless he gets one it is hard to see he can view any outcome as satisfactory and durable. At the virtual 20 meeting on Wednesday Putin described the war as a 'tragedy', adding that:

'And of course, we should think about how to stop this tragedy. By the way, Russia has never refused peace talks with Ukraine.'

This is not the first time that Putin has spoken in these terms, but when pushed further it transpires that his interest in diplomacy is only to help him achieve some of his core objectives, such as Ukrainian neutrality or the transfer of even more territory than currently occupied to the Russian Federation. We can take such calls more seriously when they open with a promise to withdraw from Ukrainian territory,

Galeotti argues Putin's 'real strategy is to attempt to outlast the West's interest in Ukraine'. From the start Russia put a lot of effort into persuading Ukraine's backers that this was a losing cause for which they were paying an unnecessarily high price. This was why they

created an energy crisis in 2022 which did have a deleterious effect on Western economies though not one sufficient to undermine support for Ukraine's war effort. While Ukraine might have wished for key capabilities to have been provided quicker the level of political, economic, and material support runs high. At the moment the challenge is to get new packages through EU processes, against some Slovakian resistance, and through the US Congress, with some (but not all) Republicans reluctant to authorise any more support for Kyiv. If these efforts fail then that will create serious short-term problems for Ukraine, though both packages will probably be approved. That was certainly the message taken by US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to Kyiv on a recent visit, anxious to refute suggestions that Washington was losing interest and distracted by Gaza.

'I'm here today to deliver an important message – the United States will continue to stand with Ukraine in their fight for freedom against Russia's aggression, both now and into the future.'

There are political and capacity challenges involved in keeping up support for Ukraine but they ought to be manageable, especially when compared with the consequences of handing Russia a victory.

The event most likely to bring US backing for Ukraine to a juddering halt would be a victory by Donald Trump in a year's time. Given the impact of his last period in the White House, and what he has said since, this would send shock waves through the whole American alliance system. What he would actually do would depend on his own priorities (probably pardoning himself), appointments to key positions and the readiness of the 'deep state' to work with them, and the composition of Congress. Trump has claimed that he could end the war in '24 hours' but he says that about most of the intractable problems of government. But whatever the uncertainties it is hard to see how a Trump presidency would be good for Ukraine or NATO, and Putin might assume this to be such a positive possibility that it is one worth waiting for.

It is however no more than a possibility and still a year away. Nikki Haley, now the most promising alternative Republican nominee, would support Ukraine. Putin therefore has coping strategies for the long term – including a war economy and a hope that Ukraine will struggle to keep its own war effort going and will lose vital support – but I am not sure that he sees these as guaranteeing victory.

It may also be the case that Putin is thinking more about his own presidential election on 17 March than the American election in November. In the West this election is barely taken seriously as the result is hardly in doubt, but Putin does worry about questions of turnout and expressions of popular enthusiasm. An early military victory would give him something to boast about. An alternative view, which may fit in better with the fighting conditions, is the one expressed by Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council Secretary, Oleksii Danilov, who told a Canadian audience that:

‘After Putin’s enthronement, the regime will be anchored, (which) basically means giving it a free hand. That is why Ukraine and the global community have 3-4 months to prepare relevantly.’

Danilov believes that with the election behind him, Putin would be able to mobilise even more troops. Either way the idea that Putin is waiting for the West to give up is misleading. He is still hoping for an early military breakthrough.

Perhaps because of the setbacks faced by Russia after the full-scale invasion, the idea of Russia ‘winning’ by fully defeating Ukrainian forces has also been discounted. I tend to agree that this is unlikely, especially if Ukraine continues to benefit from Western support. But Putin, encouraged by a compliant military leadership, may take a different view. He seeks an outcome that looks more like a win. This is his preference and he would like a win of sorts to come sooner rather than later. If he lacks confidence that things will turn even more to Russia’s advantage by the end of next year then he might at least hope to exploit what many assume to be current advantages in manpower and ordnance that should be in play for the coming months. Should Putin fail to get a quick win, then the question becomes one of whether at some point ‘not winning’ really does start to look too much like ‘losing’.

Russian Offensives

The best evidence of Putin’s determination to see some serious military progress is the massive offensives launched by Russia in early October, almost as soon as he was convinced that the Ukrainian offensive had run its course. These have largely been in the Donbas region, with the battle for the strategically-placed town of Avdiivka the most prominent. They could well be geared to Putin’s minimum objective, which is to gain control over all of Donetsk and Luhansk, whose supposedly precarious security position provided the original pretext for the full-scale invasion. It is even possible that achieving this objective would lead him to offer a cease-fire, on the grounds that this could be presented as a victory. Equally if this objective is not achieved it is hard to imagine him accepting one.

It is too early to say that these new offensives have failed, as there have been some gains and forces are being gathered for an even more determined push. So far there has not been much to give the Russian generals great encouragement. Whatever the adaptability they have shown in defensive operations there is little to suggest that they have come up with more innovative offensive tactics. They still view infantry as an expendable resource and rely on constant pressure and bombardment to wear down Ukrainian resistance. Their forces suffer as a result of the familiar challenges of minefields, drones, and the artillery fire that follows detection. Whatever limited progress has been made has come at an enormous cost. Zaluzhny claimed on 10 November that Russia had suffered some 10,000 casualties since 10 October, and had lost over 100 tanks, 250 other armored vehicles, about 50 artillery systems and seven Su-25 aircraft.

Even allowing for some exaggeration these are staggering losses, which if experienced by Ukraine would have led to gloomy questions about their ability to stay in the fight, and the wastefulness of their tactics. Somehow it is now assumed that in an unaccountable system, with soldiers taken from minorities and the poor, these casualties barely register in Russian society and cause no political backlash. Yet even if the Russians are prepared to take such losses in their stride, the readiness to risk them is not the action of a government content just to hold ground until the enemy and its supporters tire of war. These are the actions of an impatient government looking for early results.

If my analysis is correct then 'not losing' on the basis of the current lines of contact is not tantamount to a win because it leaves the Russian grip on Ukraine tenuous and circumscribed. For Putin 'not winning' is better than losing but it is not enough. He may be prepared for the war to go on for years to get to a win but there is no reasons to suppose that he relishes years of gruelling positional battles without a major breakthrough any more than Zelensky.

And Russia, unlike Ukraine, has a choice. It has the option of withdrawing from the fight. While Putin might hope that time is on his side and that the West will lose interest there is an alternative possibility that support for Ukraine will continue and even strengthen, as ordnance production steps up, and that the Russian people and elite will become progressively more anxious as the war drags on. If so, he may see the coming months as a chance to make real gains in the war. Ukraine is tired and depleted, with insufficient ammunition and stressed air defences. This explains the effort and urgency apparent in Russia's current operations.

In my next post I will look at the implications of this analysis for Ukraine's strategy, and in particular the special challenges to be faced in the period until spring and then the value of a strategy that ensures that Russia keeps 'not winning' as opposed to one that promises, unrealistically, an early win for Ukraine.

#16

"Ontario To Make Holodomor Education Mandatory for High School Students."
Government of Ontario, November 23, 2023. https://bit.ly/3Gzz0lv

Students will learn about the significance of the Ukrainian Famine-Genocide of 1932-33

TORONTO —The Ontario government is introducing new mandatory learning in the Grade 10 Canadian History course about the Holodomor famine and its impact on the Ukrainian community in Canada. This new learning will elevate Canadian values focused

on embracing democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law. The new curriculum will ensure all students learn about the adverse consequences of extreme political ideologies like those from Stalin's totalitarian communist regime, designed to ensure students learn from history.

Beginning in September 2025, the new learning will outline how the Holodomor, also known as the Great Ukrainian Famine, was a result of totalitarian policies of the Communist Soviet Union leading to a man-made famine in Ukraine that killed millions of Ukrainians between 1932 to 1933.

Students will also learn about how extreme ideologies enabled mass-scale political repressions through widespread intimidation, arrests and imprisonment, along with the impact of this genocide on the Ukrainian community in Canada.

"The rise of extremism, including Communism and Marxism, are direct threats to our democracy, social cohesion and values as Canadians," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "I am determined to strengthen education on our shared values, including by mandating learning about the horrors of state-sponsored persecution of Ukrainians in the Holodomor in Grade 10 Canadian History. This learning will help ensure students are never bystanders in the face of such horrors, understand the danger of totalitarianism and help safeguard fundamental Canadian values of freedom and democracy over communist extremism."

To reinforce this learning, Ontario is investing $400,000 in the Canada-Ukraine Foundation to support the Holodomor National Awareness Tour and the Holodomor Mobile Classroom (HMC), a 40-foot mobile recreational vehicle (RV) with interactive hands-on lessons designed to engage students and assist in teaching about the Holodomor. The Holodomor Mobile Classroom travels to schools across the province and will engage up to 4,000 students in Grades 6 to 12 through experiential learning directly linked to the Ontario curriculum.

Following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Ontario Government took action to stand with the people of Ukraine, including by ensuring every child seeking protection in Canada from war could immediately enter publicly funded schools at no cost, along with the extension of trauma and mental health resources in their language. These actions are part of Ontario's ongoing commitment to strengthening education to combat the sharp rise of hate afflicting Canadian societies and schools. It includes new supports and resources for Ontario students and educators and complements new expanded mandatory learning about the Holocaust in the Grade 10 Canadian History course to be introduced in September 2025.

Quick Facts

The Holodomor National Awareness Tour also travels to British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

In April 2022, in response to Ukrainian families arriving under the new emergency travel authorization, Ontario launched a number of supports for Ukrainians to help them find jobs and settle in the province.

According to Statistics Canada, in the 2021 census, approximately 1.26 million people or nearly 3.5 per cent of the Canadian population reported at least one of their ethnic origins as Ukrainian. This includes more than 342,000 Ontarians.

In the Grade 10 Civics and Citizenship course, students explore issues of civic importance and mechanisms of government, as well as the historical foundations of the rights and freedoms Canadians enjoy.

New mandatory learning about the Holocaust is also being taught in the Grade 6 Social Studies curriculum and new and expanded learning will be taught in the Grade 10 History course starting in September 2025.

Quotes

"The 90th anniversary of the Holodomor genocide is an opportunity to learn and reflect on a dark time in history where millions of innocent Ukrainians starved to death. By introducing mandatory learning about the Holodomor and its impact on the Ukrainian community, students will be able to better understand the dangerous impact of hate, discrimination and prejudice and how to recognize and respond to it. It will also help them learn about democracy, human rights, respect and the shared responsibility we all play in building a stronger, safer and more inclusive province for all."

- Hon. Michael D. Ford
MPP for York South—Weston and Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism

"We need to raise awareness about the consequences of hate, genocide and bullying, and we are doing this through the lens of the Holodomor on the Holodomor Mobile Classroom, a state-of-the-art experiential learning environment with our thought-provoking lessons designed to inform and assist teachers, engage and educate students about the Holodomor and demonstrate that lessons of the past are relevant in the world today."

- Roma Dzerowicz
Holodomor National Awareness Tour

"The Ukrainian Canadian community is thankful that the truth about the Holodomor and the millions of innocent Ukrainians who starved to death in 1932-33 under the Stalinist Russian regime, will now be taught widely in Ontario schools. It is more important than ever as Russia today continues to use food as a weapon by bombing Ukrainian grain silos and laying land mines in farmers fields."

- Peter Schturyn
President, UCC Toronto

"Today's announcement to include the study of the 1932-33 Holodomor in Ukraine in Grade 10 Canadian History is momentous news for the Ukrainian-Canadian community that works tirelessly to document and spread the truth about the atrocities of the Soviet regime under Joseph Stalin that claimed millions of lives in Ukraine in 1932-33. Canada-Ukraine Foundation is immensely grateful to the Government of Ontario for the $400,000 in support to continue the Holodomor National Awareness Tour and its main component - the Holodomor Mobile Classroom to enhance and reinforce the newly mandated curriculum."

- Victor Hetmanczuk
Chair of the Board, Canada-Ukraine Foundation

#17

Rai, Arpan. 2023. "Putin Could Face New War Crime Case as Evidence Suggests Starvation of Ukraine Was Pre-Planned." *The Independent*, November 16. https://bit.ly/3Rhm21W

Purchases by Russian defence contractor suggest Moscow was planning to steal vast quantities of Ukrainian grain months before troops ever crossed the border.

Russia was actively preparing to steal grain supplies and starve the Ukrainian population of food for months before Vladimir Putin ordered last year's invasion, according to new evidence compiled by human rights experts.

When Russian tanks did roll across the border on 24 February 2022 they deliberately targeted grain-rich areas and food production infrastructure first, the new report by international human rights law firm Global Rights Compliance found.

GRC found that Russia's defence contractor began purchasing trucks to transport grain, as well as three new 170-metre bulk carrier cargo ships, as early as December 2021, evidence of advance planning for the pillage of Ukrainian food resources "on an unprecedented scale".

Russia began commandeering Ukrainian farms within less than a week of its invasion, and at its peak was exporting 12,000 tonnes of grain per day from across occupied territories.

The evidence of a “highly coordinated level of pre-planning” will be provided by to the International Criminal Court and GRC hopes it will lead to a first international prosecution against Mr Putin for the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare.

It is “highly likely” Russia will be found guilty, Catriona Murdoch, a partner at Global Rights Compliance, and if so Mr Putin could face another ICC arrest warrant to go with the one issued in March this year for the unlawful deportation of children from occupied Ukrainian territories.

“Russia not only deployed a multi-pronged approach by besieging civilian populations, destroying critical infrastructure, but it also pre-planned the seizure and pillage of agricultural commodities in an insidious plan. Moscow has sparked a global food crisis and attacked Ukraine’s agriculture sector as a warfare tactic,” Ms Murdoch told The Independent.

The grain pillaged from Ukraine so far has an estimated market value of $1bn per year. Multiple private Ukrainian grain companies were forcibly incorporated into Russia’s state operator, the GRC said.

Beyond its impact on Ukrainian citizens, Russia’s invasion has affected millions around the world by increasing global food insecurity – Ukraine was the world’s largest wheat producer prior to the conflict.

A farmer in Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine said his grain farm was taken over by Russian forces five days after the full-scale invasion began.

“Multiple convoys of vehicles were seen carrying grain in the direction of the Crimean Peninsula in the following weeks, and GPS trackers on farmers’ stolen trucks show them driving through Crimea and into Russia,” the GRC said.

Satellite images shared with The Independent by the GRC showed grain trucks at a facility in Melitopol in Zaporizhzhia bearing licence plate numbers registered in occupied Crimea. Other images show train carriages labelled “grain” leaving Beridansk train station in Zaporizhzhia.

And another image from March this year shows a newly constructed storage building in Melitopol with grain visible throughout the compound.

GRC said that despite the apparent planning that went into Russia’s theft of Ukrainian grain, job adverts seen in Russia suggest the government was unable to recruit truck drivers quickly enough to transport the vast quantities of stolen food.

The investigation into grain theft ran up to August this year. GRC said that while Russia has not captured any more grain-rich territory since then, it still controls all of the Crimean peninsula – one of the main regions from which grain is transported by sea to Russia and abroad.

Yousuf Syed Khan, senior lawyer at GRC, called Russia's weaponisation of Ukraine's grain industry "unprecedented in modern history".

Russia is now appealing to the UN and other global powers to ease war-related sanctions so it can resume grain exports from occupied territory to developing countries hit hardest by the food crisis. The offer of grain to friendly third countries was also part of Mr Putin's failed charm offensive to get back onto the UN Human Rights Council.

"Russia is doing this to represent itself as the legitimate authority of Ukrainian territory, in turn also weakening Ukraine's national economy," Mr Khan said.

#18

Bergengruen, Vera. 2023. "Ukraine's 'Secret Weapon' Against Russia Is a Controversial U.S. Tech Company." *Time*, November 14. https://bit.ly/3QMbZ3N

Leonid Tymchenko spent the first month of Russia's invasion sitting in his dark government office after curfew. Unable to go home, Ukraine's Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs scrolled through Telegram, looking at thousands of videos and images of advancing Russian soldiers. When Tymchenko was offered a chance to test a new facial-recognition tool, he uploaded some of the photos to try it out.

He could not believe the results. Every time Tymchenko added a photo of a Russian soldier, the software, made by the American facial-recognition company Clearview AI, seemed to come back with an exact hit, linking to pages that revealed the soldier's name, hometown, and social-media profile. Even when he uploaded grainy photos of dead soldiers, some with their eyes closed or their faces partially burned, the software was often able to identify the person. "Every day we identified hundreds of Russians who came to Ukraine with weapons," Tymchenko tells TIME in a video interview from his office in Kyiv.

In the ongoing war against Russia, Clearview has become the Ukrainian government's "secret weapon," Tymchenko says. More than 1,500 officials across 18 Ukrainian government agencies are using the facial-recognition tool, which has helped them identify more than 230,000 Russian soldiers and officials who have participated in the military invasion. Ukraine's use of Clearview has rapidly expanded beyond identifying Russian troops on their soil. The nation has come to rely on the private U.S. tech company, which

has just 35 employees, to assist with a vast range of wartime tasks, many of which have not been previously reported, according to interviews with officials from half a dozen government agencies, law-enforcement officers, Ukrainian analysts, and Clearview executives.

Ukrainian officials have used Clearview to detect infiltrators at checkpoints, process citizens who lost their IDs, identify and prosecute members of pro-Russia militias and Ukrainian collaborators, and even to locate more than 190 abducted Ukrainian children who were transported across the border to live with Russian families. Ukraine has run at least 350,000 searches of Clearview's database in the 20 months since the outbreak of the war, according to the company. "The volume is insane," Clearview AI's CEO, Hoan Ton-That, tells TIME. "Using facial recognition in war zones is something that's going to save lives."

The partnership between the Ukrainian government and the American tech company has been a boon to both sides. Ukraine's tech-savvy government was desperate to use any tools it could find to defend itself against a larger invading army. And Clearview was eager to provide its tools for free—which it is still doing now—to showcase an effective use for its facial-recognition technology, which has been maligned for harvesting its data by scraping billions of public photographs from the Internet, allegedly violating privacy rights, and selling access to law enforcement.

Ukraine's extensive use of Clearview raises complicated questions about when and how controversial or invasive technology should be used in wartime, and how far digital privacy-rights should extend in the midst of an armed conflict. To proponents, the value of the technology is worth the cost: if you can use a digital tool to identify alleged war criminals or find abducted children, why wouldn't you? But human-rights groups and privacy advocates warn that Ukraine may find it difficult to rein in its use of Clearview when the war is over. Those critics accuse the company of attempting to harness the conflict to burnish its image. And Ukraine indicates it's making plans to embed Clearview tools in the country's long-term security infrastructure, which experts say could lead to mass surveillance or other abuses. Ukrainian civil-society groups say this might also jeopardize the nation's bid to join the European Union, several of whose member states have deemed Clearview illegal, issued steep fines, and attempted to ban it from collecting the faces of its citizens.

"I don't want Ukrainian authorities to have the reputation of the guys who use very intrusive and abusive services, which could [later] be used to persecute activists or civil society," says Tetiana Avdieieva, a human-rights lawyer in Kyiv and legal counsel for Digital Security Lab Ukraine. "That's very dangerous."

For Hoan Ton-That, the 35-year-old Australian CEO of Clearview AI, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine was an opportunity to demonstrate the value of his company's facial-recognition software. "It's a technology that shines and only really is appreciated in times of crisis," he explains in a recent video interview from New York. "I think people really understand it when it's their life on the line or someone close to them."

Founded in 2017 with the backing of a group of investors including Peter Thiel, Clearview initially operated in relative secrecy. For several years, it built up the world's largest database of human faces by scraping the Internet and running them through a facial-recognition algorithm that it says can identify people with 99.85% accuracy. (Clearview's library of images of people's faces has grown to 40 billion—an average of five images for every person on Earth, and a 400% increase since the start of the war, Ton-That tells TIME.) By 2018, Clearview was quietly selling access to its database to a host of eager government clients, which grew to more than 600 law enforcement agencies, including U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the FBI.

But in 2020, Clearview became something of a tech pariah after the company's existence, the size of its database, and its use by law enforcement were revealed by a New York Times investigation. Critics slammed Clearview as "creepy," "terrifying," and "dystopian" in the press. Since then, it has been hit with a wave of lawsuits, fines, and cease-and-desist orders from companies whose data it scraped. Ton-That, an Australian programmer and former model who tried his luck with several failed iPhone games before landing on facial recognition, was lambasted for his alleged ties to far-right figures. Clearview was accused of violating data-privacy laws in the EU, deemed illegal in Austria, France, Greece, Italy, and the U.K, and largely prohibited from selling access to its database to U.S. private companies.

"We were attacked by a lot of different privacy groups," acknowledges Ton-That, who sought to highlight Clearview's potential use for the public good—finding child abusers, rescuing human-trafficking victims, even identifying the rioters who attacked the U.S. Capitol in 2021. When Russia invaded Ukraine, Ton-That mined his network for contacts in the Ukrainian government. At the time, Clearview's database already contained more than two billion images it had previously scraped from Russian social-media sites like VKontakte. "The thing that makes it so much better than DNA and fingerprints is that you have those for your own citizens," Ton-That says, "but you don't have a database of your enemies."

In a letter addressed to Ukrainian officials just days after the invasion began, Ton-That offered free training and access to Clearview. The technology "may be of help during this time of terrible conflict," he wrote, "to prevent harm, save innocent people and protect lives." Ton-That first demonstrated the tool to a handful of Ukrainian defense officials over Zoom in early March 2022. Two weeks later, he was leading a training session for 85 members of Ukraine's National Police, aided by a translator. Halfway through the session, one of them shared his screen to show how he had already identified two dead Russian soldiers, Ton-That recalls.

More Ukrainian agencies began to request access: the state Border Guard Service, the Crimean Prosecutor's Office, the State Bureau of Investigations. When Ton-That visited Ukraine in April, officials rolled out the red carpet, showering him with gifts: bottles of Crimean wine and Ukrainian vodka, rare commemorative war stamps, decorative military medals, and letters of gratitude that he later had framed. "It was like a parallel universe," he says. "It's inconceivable to them that someone wouldn't like this technology."

The Ukrainians found a variety of uses for Clearview. To counteract Russian propaganda denying that their troops were suffering heavy casualties, Ukraine's Ministry of Internal Affairs set up a website called Poter.net, the Russian term for "No Losses," and posted a searchable database with the names of dead Russian soldiers that Clearview helped identify, linking to open-source information from Russian social media so their families could find them. (As of Nov. 13, there were more than 71,000 Russians identified on the site.) The facial-recognition technology was so effective, Tymchenko says, that Russian troops began wearing masks and face coverings, even in sweltering summer months. "They wore them despite the heat because they now knew that we could identify them," Tymchenko says, "and they knew their life wouldn't be the same, that they would never be able to visit normal countries after this activity."

Clearview accelerated Ukraine's process of collecting evidence to prosecute alleged war criminals, which previously relied on sifting through witness testimony and other data to identify them, Ukrainian officials say. Igor Ponochovnyi, the head of the Prosecutor's Office for Crimea, says his office has used advanced open-source investigations to prosecute war crimes in occupied territories since 2014. But Clearview was something new. For years, it had been impossible for Ukrainian prosecutors to verify the identities of the low-ranking members who made up the bulk of the Crimean Self-Defense forces, an armed militia that has helped Russia occupy the peninsula. Using Clearview, the prosecutor's office quickly identified more than 70, allowing authorities to arrest them when they entered Ukrainian territory. "We realized we needed to use Clearview on a regular basis for our activities," Ponochovnyi tells TIME.

The prosecutor's office also found another use for the tool: identifying Ukrainian children who were forcibly taken from orphanages and temporary shelters, many to be reportedly adopted by Russian families or sent to "re-education" camps. Using images Clearview took from Russian social-media, like family photos, Ponochovnyi says his office was able to identify 198 of the missing children and confirm that they were in Russia or Russian-occupied territories, as well as identify their adoptive parents.

"The implementation of Clearview became an important step in the development of our law-enforcement agency," says Andrii Kulalayev, the head of the IT Department at Ukraine's State Bureau of Investigation, citing examples where Clearview helped identify Ukrainian business owners who continued working with Russian companies

after the invasion. Kulalayev also notes a number of cases unrelated to the war, like the identification of drug dealers. “We continue to actively use Clearview and explore new possibilities for its application,” he says. “This tool has become an integral part of our work.”

There are no signs that the Ukrainian government is eager to wind down its use of Clearview when the war is over. That’s part of what alarms human-rights groups and privacy advocates inside and outside the country, who warn that Ukraine has outdated privacy laws which could fail to curtail the potential surveillance of citizens without proper justification. “The deep collaboration on the state level, extending into the peacetime systems, really concerns me,” says Avdieieva, the human rights lawyer in Kyiv who serves as the legal counsel for Digital Security Lab Ukraine. There is no way to guarantee that it won’t fall into the hands of bad actors, Avdieieva adds, or even Russians who might capture access to digital tools along with physical infrastructure as the war continues.

There are also unanswered questions about how the tool is being used and how long the data collected is being stored, which Ukrainian officials have been reluctant to answer, advocates say. “We’re basically trying to justify the breach of personal data all around the globe by saying that at least in an armed conflict it might be useful,” says Avdedieva.

How Ukraine uses facial recognition and other digital tools “once the fog of war dissipates,” says Juan Espindola, a researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), will have an impact on how other countries decide to treat citizens’ privacy during a time of crisis. “It’s a slippery slope,” Espindola says. Government officials “will always find a way to justify an ever-expanding use of these tools when they’re at war. But then it becomes a never-ending war. Even if the invasion is over, there will always be the threat.”

Indeed, Ukrainian officials have signaled they intend to expand their relationship with the company. “Clearview AI is ready to help build the digital infrastructure of Ukraine, which will be based on the latest technologies,” Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine’s influential Minister of Digital Transformation, announced in a Telegram post on April 13 next to a photo of himself and Ton-That in Kyiv. Fedorov named customs and banking as two areas the company’s tech could be integrated further.

For his part, Ton-That is considering opening a Clearview AI office in Kyiv to strengthen the partnership and continue developing the company’s products. He believes the technology’s use in Ukraine will convince critics that a facial-recognition company often derided as “creepy” is a force for good. “Future conflicts will use facial recognition a lot,” says Ton-That. “War’s a terrible thing, right? If these wars didn’t exist, then people wouldn’t need something like Clearview.”

#19

D'Istria, Thomas. 2023. "Ukraine Gives Swift Justice to Suspected Collaborators in Recently Liberated Areas." *Le Monde*, November 18. https://bit.ly/3ST6KSj

Ukraine is waging a relentless battle against those it considers traitors to the nation. Simply visit the Telegram channel run by the country's security services, the SBU, to get an idea of the intensity of this battle. Every day, investigators share blurred photos of people accused of treason and collaboration, accompanied by snippets of information on the charges – guiding enemy missile strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure, passing on military intelligence to Russian forces, or praising the Russian military on the internet.

For the Ukrainian government, this is a question of national security, but also a vigorous response to the strong demand for justice from Ukrainian society, which is furious with this "enemy from within."

Since the start of the invasion in February 2022, the security services have carried out thousands of investigations and arrests of Ukrainians suspected of treason. "As long as the war lasts, there will be people in our society who will help the enemy, for money or ideology," said SBU chief Vasyl Malyuk, responding in writing to Le Monde's questions. "That's why we won't stop and will do everything to ensure that all traitors and collaborators are punished fairly."

Much of this battle is taking place in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russian forces, but also in those since liberated by the Kyiv army. On this last point, human rights defenders have made no secret of their concern at the speed with which the government has sentenced many civilians accused of having consorted with the enemy during the occupation.

More than 7,000 investigations

In the eyes of these NGOs, this immediate wartime justice makes no distinction between acts to survive and outright collaboration with the enemy. "We're in the era of populist promises where everyone must be imprisoned," complained Alena Lunova, director of advocacy at the human rights center Zmina.

At the heart of the criticism are two articles of the criminal code adopted in March 2022: Article 111-1, which deals with "collaborative activities," and Article 111-2, which punishes Ukrainians for providing "assistance to the aggressor state." These two articles were created as a matter of urgency, in the first weeks of the war, and were intended to send a "strong signal" to residents living in territory that was occupied or about to be occupied.

The SBU has identified "tens of thousands of people who helped the enemy in various ways," said Malyuk. "All of them will have to answer for their actions, including before an

international court." Since February 2022, over 7,000 investigations have been launched under Article 111-1 of the criminal code, concerning "almost 2,900 people involved," and "330 collaborators" have already been convicted, Malyuk added. One of the latest sentences to date, 15 years in prison, handed down in absentia, concerns Vladimir Saldo, an ex-MP who became acting governor of the occupied Kherson oblast.

When a territory is liberated, the Ukrainian government similarly conducts investigations into collaborators. However, as Malyuk acknowledged, the majority of those who "terrorized the Ukrainian population" fled with the Russian army when it withdrew from the areas it occupied in the Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions, followed by Kharkiv and Kherson.

According to Lunova, those who remain after the departure of the Kremlin forces "don't think they can be accused of anything." People who have published or "liked" pro-Russian publications on social media, and also teachers, company employees or minor officials are still liable to be prosecuted. And while doctors are protected by international humanitarian law, administrators and managers in medical institutions are not. Nothing distinguishes them from Ukrainians who have deliberately sided with Russia.

'Continuing to live in occupied territory'

Article 111-1 is divided into several parts, intended to represent all possible situations. But their definitions remain vague. In an opinion piece published on October 23 on the Zmina website and devoted to the shortcomings of this legislation, lawyer Anastasya Serbina deplored the fact that the MPs did not "take into account the norms of international humanitarian law." According to her, "the text of the article itself does not comply with the principle of legal certainty," which includes several elements, "including the clarity and precision of the law (...), so that a person can determine their behavior and understand whether they are going to commit a crime."

Lunova also criticized this lack of precision. She took the example of paragraph 4 of Article 111-1, which condemns the "transfer of material resources" to the enemy, punishable by a fine or three to five years' imprisonment. "What is a resource?" she asked, referring to the story of a man who gave 20 kilos of meat to Russian forces while they occupied his village in the Sumy region. Accused of collaborating with the enemy, he was sentenced in November 2022 to four years' imprisonment and barred from holding a government post for 12 years.

Read more Article réservé à nos abonnés 'A perfect storm is brewing for Ukraine and its allies. Negative developments everywhere are converging'

"Of course the locals cooperated with the Russians," protested Aleksei Arunian, a journalist at Graty, a publication specializing in justice affairs. "Why? Because the civilian population must continue to live in the occupied territory, one way or another."

In September, the journalist published a long investigation into the case of a woman, the head of a "microdistrict" in the town of Lyman in the Donetsk region, which was liberated in October 2022. Unpaid by the occupying forces, she had been tasked with distributing Russian humanitarian aid to her district's civilians. A court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in August, with deprivation of the right to hold public office for 15 years. Her lawyer has appealed. "The courts don't understand the difficult situations people find themselves in," Arunian lamented.

Not a threat to society

The Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, has been working on revisions to the law for months. But human rights organizations doubt that the MPs will manage to amend it before the end of the year. Lunova even doubts their willingness to do so, citing a "competition in patriotism" between politicians.

Read more Article réservé à nos abonnés The race to repatriate Bogdan Ermokhin, an orphan from Mariupol deported to Russia

At a time when the judicial system is overburdened by tens of thousands of war crimes investigations, Volodymyr Yavorskyy, of the Center for Civil Liberties, also questioned the value of looking into these collaborations that pose no threat to society. The lawyer and human rights defender believes that investigators are subject to "very significant demands from society on the prosecutor's office to come up with numbers." According to him, around 30% of investigations into small-scale collaboration cases can be explained by this pressure.

However, the more time passes in the territories occupied by Russia, the more the Kremlin imposes its mark, its administration, and its culture. "If we want to reintegrate these territories, we have to determine how to punish collaboration and at the same time build a society," Lunova stressed. If Crimea, annexed by Russia a little less than ten years ago, is reconquered and Article 111-1 applied there, she noted, "up to 200,000 civil servants and teachers could be punished for collaboration."

#20

Foy, Henry, Hall, Ben and Dunai, Marton. 2023. "EU budget dispute threatens €50bn war lifeline for Ukraine." *Financial Times*, December 3. https://bit.ly/3N9bmjJ

Bloc's leaders embroiled in financial row that risks leaving Kyiv empty-handed at crucial moment in conflict

EU leaders risk leaving Ukraine empty-handed at a perilous moment in its war against Russia as divisions over finances threaten a €50bn lifeline for Kyiv and Hungary vows to thwart its EU membership talks.

Disputes within the EU over money and Ukraine's future are endangering crucial pledges to Kyiv made months ago — just when the flow of US financial and military support for Ukraine has abruptly stalled in a politically divided Congress.

EU member states are far from reaching a deal over topping up the bloc's joint budget — including €50bn for Ukraine — ahead of a summit in Brussels on December 14-15, said officials involved in the discussions.
EU efforts to reach a compromise are being hampered by the victory of a far-right party in last month's Dutch election and a recent German court ruling curbing the government's borrowing. A budget agreement would be "very, very difficult", a senior official said.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration's proposed $60bn package is struggling to pass through Congress.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Friday again vowed to veto the start of Ukraine's EU membership talks, telling public radio it was "contrary to the interests of several member states" and accession might only be possible "many years from now".

"We are in a good enough shape to dare say so, no matter the pressure we come under," he said.

A failure to approve long-term funding, a separate €20bn facility for weapons purchases and the start of accession negotiations would be a hammer blow to Kyiv after the failure of its summer counteroffensive and growing concern about faltering western support. Olha Stefanishyna, Ukraine's deputy prime minister, last week described the EU summit as an "existential moment" for her country.

"It is crucial that the continued support for Ukraine remains and that we Europeans play our role," Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo told the Financial Times.

Ukraine has warned that the uncertainty over US and European support packages is putting the country's "macro-financial stability" at risk. The €50bn proposed by the EU is designed to keep Kyiv solvent to 2027.

"It is a moment of truth," said an EU official. "If you say you stand by Ukraine, you have to step up to the plate."

Germany and other states have vowed to give Brussels no additional funds beyond that required for Kyiv, while others are demanding extra cash for domestically sensitive issues such as migration.

Orbán also opposes the funding package. EU officials note that he has relented on Ukraine decisions before and are trying to assess whether he has a price for his support, including the release of some of the €22bn in EU funds blocked by Brussels over rule of law concerns.

EU officials last week indicated that the European Commission was close to unblocking up to €10bn for Budapest, as reforms enacted earlier this year had strengthened judicial independence.

However, Hungarian officials insist there is no link between Ukraine and the funds issue, and EU officials and diplomats say that this time the Hungarian leader seems more implacable.

“There’s a lot of fog that needs to be lifted in the next weeks. And today there’s so much fog that I don’t see very far away what’s coming,” said De Croo.

Illustration of a wall calendar with tear off pages with the bit left on the top page dated February 2022, and the current page showing little figures of soldiers in different combat positions on each day of the month

Brussels’ Ukraine funding has become a political football in a wider debate over the EU’s budget priorities, due to the decision by the commission to combine the Kyiv support in a proposal with other funding requests to top up its 2021-27 budget.

The €50bn for Ukraine — made up of €17bn in grants and €33bn in loans — has been bundled up with requests for €15bn in new money for migration, €10bn for investments in “strategic technologies” and almost €19bn to pay off interest on the EU’s joint borrowing.

At the last EU leaders’ summit in October, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz dismissed the commission’s calculations as “a comic”, according to multiple people briefed on the private debate.

Officials said EU negotiations over the budget were always going to be difficult but a compromise was still possible. A revised package is expected to be proposed before the summit.

“I think the doom and gloom around this issue is vastly over-exaggerated,” said one EU official involved in the discussions. “We are not going to allow Ukraine to experience a sovereign default.”

But resistance from finance ministries wary of additional spending has been stiffened by the decision of Germany’s constitutional court striking down the use of pandemic emergency borrowing facilities for future green investment, and by the victory of far-right, anti-EU politician Geert Wilders in the Dutch election.

UKL 506, 4 December 2023

Fair Use Notice: MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL THAT IS REDISTRIBUTED FOR PERSONAL, SCHOLARLY USE ONLY. UKL is a single emission e-mail to a limited number of scholars and professionals in the area of Ukrainian studies for scholarly and educational purposes. UKL is distributed on a completely volunteer basis. The UKL editor believes that the use of copyrighted materials therein constitutes “fair use” of any such material and is governed by appropriate Canadian and International law.

Dominique Arel, Chair of Ukrainian Studies
University of Ottawa
School of Political Studies, FSS Building
120 University St.
Ottawa ON   K1N 6N5