



The Ukraine List

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First UKL in 16 months, as Ukraine is facing an existential threat. The amount of information generated in multiple languages is unprecedented, making it impossible for anyone to process in real time. UKL can only offer a sample of contributions, leaving the up-to-the-minute factual and visual reports to social media. In Chair-related news, the Danyliw Seminar, on Covid-induced hiatus for more than two years (there haven't been in-person events on my campus in two years, almost to the day) is set to make a comeback. Watch for an announcement fairly soon. The program of the 2022 ASN World Convention (4-7 May, still on Zoom due to Columbia regulations) will also be announced soon (after a delay caused by the Russian attack of Ukraine) and will include 24 Ukraine and 24 Russia panels, as well as war-themed special events –DA

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- 14- Foreign Affairs, Gideon Rose, Ukraine's Winnable War (13 June)
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- 17- The Guardian, Peter Pomerantsev, On Russia's Acts of Extreme Violence (11 June)
- 18- The Atlantic: Anne Applebaum, The True Purpose of the Counteroffensive (8 June)
- 19- Foreign Policy: Agathe Desmarais, Russia Not Massively Skirting Sanctions (25 May)
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#1

Danyliw 2023 Research Seminar on Ukraine: Call for Proposals

****Proposal Deadline: 21 June 2023****

17th Annual Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine
Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa, 28-30 September 2023
<http://www.danyliwseminar.com>

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

After a successful return post-pandemic in October 2022, the Danyliw Research Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine will be back on 28-30 September 2023. The Seminar is hosted by the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa with the support of the Danyliw Foundation in Toronto.

Since 2005, the Danyliw Seminar has provided an annual platform for the presentation of some of the most influential academic research on Ukraine — from scholars, including doctoral students, based in Ukraine, the rest of Europe, the United States, Canada, or anywhere in the world. As in 2022, the 2023 Seminar will be in-person only. *The Seminar, as always, is committed to including a significant number of scholars from Ukraine, including those still in Ukraine and those displaced abroad.*

The 17th Annual Danyliw Seminar invites proposals from scholars, including doctoral students, in political science, anthropology, sociology, history, law, economics and related disciplines in the social sciences and humanities— on a broad variety of topics falling under thematic clusters. We welcome both topics related to the current war and to Ukrainian studies in general. Among suggested topics:

- warfare (military tactics/strategy, territorial defense, combatants, military aid)
- international crimes (war of aggression, war crimes, crimes vs. humanity, genocide)
- media (social media, TV, state propaganda, international reporting)

- civilians (civil associations, volunteer groups, resistance/collaboration)
- geopolitics (postwar scenarios, security guarantees, NATO, EU, China)
- reconstruction (scope, sources of revenues, structural change, heritage)
- culture (religion, language, literature, arts, cinema)
- history/memory (imperial and earlier, interwar, World War II, Holodomor, Soviet, post-Soviet, memory and legacies)
- migration (IDPs, refugees, migrant workers, diasporas)
- society (protests, welfare, gender, corruption, education)

The Seminar will also feature new books and documentaries on Ukraine.

Presentations at the Seminar will be based on research papers (4,000-6,000 words). The Seminar favors intensive discussion, with relatively short presentations (10 minutes), followed with an extensive Q&A with the moderator and Seminar participants.

People interested in presenting at the 2023 Danyliw Seminar are invited to submit a 500 word paper proposal and a 150 word biographical statement, by email attachment *in a single Word document*, to Dominique Arel, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, at darel@uottawa.ca AND chairukr@gmail.com.

Please also include your full coordinates (institutional affiliation, preferred postal address, email, phone, and Twitter handle [if you have one]). Indicate also if you are on WhatsApp. If applicable, indicate your latest publication or, in the case of doctoral or post-doctoral applicants, the year when you entered a doctoral program, the title of your dissertation and year of (expected) completion.

Note that a biographical statement is not a CV, but a written paragraph. The same requirements apply to submissions regarding a new book (500 word abstract in this case) or new film (which must include a secured link).

In addition to scholars and doctoral students, policy analysts, practitioners from non-governmental and international organizations, journalists, and artists are also welcome to send a proposal.

The proposal deadline is 21 June 2023. The Chair will cover the visa, travel and accommodation expenses of applicants whose proposal is accepted by the Seminar. The proposals will be reviewed by an international program committee.

The Danyliw Seminar website (<http://danyliwseminar.com>) contains the programs, papers, videos of presentations and photographs of the last 2022 Seminar, as well as of the last six years (2014-2019) prior to the pandemic. To access the material, click on “Presentations” in the top menu. Presentations from pre-pandemic years are under “Archives.”

The Danyliw Seminar is made possible by the generous commitment of the Wolodymyr George Danyliw Foundation to the pursuit of excellence in the study of contemporary Ukraine and to support Ukrainian scholars in times of war.

Cordially,
Dominique Arel, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa (Canada)
Mayhill Fowler, Stetson University (US)
Anna Colin Lebedev, Université Paris Nanterre (France)
Daria Mattingly, University of Chichester (UK)
Oxana Shevel (Tufts University, US)
Ioulia Shukan, Université Paris Nanterre (France)
Danyliw 2023 Program Committee

#2

ASN 2023 World Convention Awards

For the first time since 2019, due to the pandemic, the ASN World Convention was back in person at Columbia University for an exhilarating and intense three-day event on May 18-20, 2023. The Convention brought together more than 600 international scholars and doctoral students and hosted the largest Ukrainian and Ukrainian studies presence in its history – with nearly 40 panels. The full program can be accessed at <https://www.asnconvention.com/panels-by-date>.

A peak moment of the Convention was the Awards Ceremony, held at mid-point on Friday May 19 over lunchtime.

The Doctoral Papers Awards were given to **Nicole Albrecht** (U of London, UK/Georgetown U, US) for the Balkans; **Tamar Qeburia** (Ilia State U, Georgia/U of Göttingen, Germany) for the Caucasus; **Merey Otan** (Nazarbayev U, Kazakhstan) for Central Asia; **Lediona Shahollari** (U of Michigan, US) for Turkey; **Tiphaine Le Corre** (U of Oxford, UK) for Migration; **Yehia Mekawi** (U of Michigan, US) for Nationalism; and **Silviya Nitsova** (UNC Chapel Hill), for Ukraine. Nitsova's paper was on "The Extremely Rich during the Politics of the Extraordinary: Oligarchic Networks of Influence and the Russia-Ukraine War."

The Harriman ASN Rothschild Book Award was given ex-aequo to **Rory Finnin** (Cambridge U, UK) for *Blood of Others: Stalin's Crimean Atrocity and the Poetics of Solidarity* (Toronto University Press), on the memory of the deportation of Crimean Tatars in works of literature, and **Adrienne Edgar** (UC Santa Barbara, US) for *Intermarriage and the Friendship of Peoples; Ethnic Mixing in Soviet Central Asia* (Cornell University Press) on the racialization of identities and its impact on mixed families.

The Huttenbach Prize for Best Article in Nationalities Papers (the ASN flagship academic journal) was given ex-aequo to **Jakub Wondreys** and **Cas Mudde** for “Victims of the Pandemic? European Far-Right Parties and COVID-19 Victims of the Pandemic? European Far-Right Parties and COVID-19,” and to **Anna Ohanyan** for “Regional Fracture and Its Intractability in World Politics: The Case of the Late Ottoman Empire.”

The Best Documentary Award was given to **The Kiev Trial** (Netherlands, 2022; directed by Sergei Loznitsa), on the “Kyiv Nuremberg” held in January 1946 on the banality of evil perpetrated by German invaders. Honorable mentions were given to **A House Made of Splinters** (Denmark, 2022; directed by Simon Lereng Wilmont), on orphan Ukrainian children in wartime Lysychansk, Donbas; **The Devil’s Confession: The Lost Eichmann Tapes** (US, Israel, 2022; directed by Yariv Mozer), on the most un-banal confession given by of the main Holocaust architects years before his trial in Jerusalem; and **Le procès, Prague 1952** (France, 2022), on the macabre and anti-Semitic Stalinist trial of former top Czech Communist officials.

The Nationalities Papers Photo Contest acknowledged the contributions of **Rimanté Jaugaitė** (U of Bologna, Italy), **Véronique Labonté** (U Laval, Canada), **Dragana Svraka** (APSA, US), **Hélène Thibault** (Nazarbayev U, Kazakhstan), and **Harris Mylonas** (GWU, US), whose work will adorn the covers of Nationalities Papers in 2024.

The Social Media Awards were given to **Steven Seegel** (U of Texas Austin) for Global Outreach and **Oya Dursun-Ozkanca** for ASN Convention Outreach.

The ASN Convention, the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa (in partnership with the Danyliw Foundation), the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta and the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute pooled their resources to support the participation of ten scholars from Ukraine in the midst of Russia’s devastating war of aggression. **Olena Muradyan** and **Darya Yashkina**, from Kharkiv Karazin U, who both travelled 23 hours to reach Warsaw in order to board a flight to New York, were acknowledged with flowers.

The dates of the next ASN World Convention are likely to be on **16-18 May, 2024** (tentative dates to be confirmed in early Fall 2023).

#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 Philanthropy: 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

Dominique Arel and Jesse Driscoll
Ukraine's Unnamed War:
Before the Russian Invasion of 2022
Cambridge University Press, 2023
<https://bit.ly/43Cr0uf>

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has its roots in the events of 2013–2014. Russia cynically termed the secessionist conflict in Crimea and Eastern Donbas a ‘civil war’ in order to claim non-involvement. This flies in the face of evidence, but the authors argue that the social science literature on civil wars can be used help understand why no political solution was found between 2015 and 2022. The book explains how Russia, after seizing Crimea, was reacting to events it could not control and sent troops only to areas of Ukraine where it knew it would face little resistance (Eastern Donbas). Kremlin decisionmakers misunderstood the attachment of the Russian-speaking population to the Ukrainian state and also failed to anticipate that their intervention would transform Ukraine into a more cohesively ‘Ukrainian’ polity. Drawing on Ukrainian documentary sources, this concise book explains these important developments to a non-specialist readership.

‘The ‘unnamed war’ in this brilliantly argued, comprehensively researched, and historically accurate book began as a civil war within Ukraine primarily fought between factions of what Russia has long imagined as their world. From this perspective, Arel’s and Driscoll’s analytic model reveals missed opportunities for a fragile peace that might have avoided Russia’s imperialist invasion, where we can now envision only an endless war of attrition.’

David D. Laitin - Professor of Political Science, Stanford University

‘Contrary to explanations that emphasize the foreign origins of the war in Ukraine, Arel and Driscoll understand it instead through a logic of escalating violence, rooting it in significant part in domestic Ukrainian political dynamics. In doing so, they bring to light new aspects of the war and Moscow’s miscalculations leading up to its full-scale invasion in February 2022.’

Mark R. Beissinger - Henry W. Putnam Professor, Department of Politics, Princeton University

‘It is impossible to fully comprehend the onset and course of the full-scale Ukraine-Russia war that began with the Russian invasion in February 2022 without understanding the politics and violence that preceded it. Using a strategic action model as a guide, Arel and Driscoll’s Ukraine’s Unnamed War provides the definitive account of the Ukraine-Russia

conflict from 2013–2021. Eschewing overgeneralization and writing with a style accessible to non-specialists, the authors show, in detail, how the decisions, agency, and identity of local Ukrainian actors prevented a political solution and developed the conditions that would spark a major conventional war in Europe.’

Roger Petersen - Arthur and Ruth Sloan Professor of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

‘In the heat of the devastating war in Ukraine, Arel and Driscoll have given us a cool and courageous account of the complex and fraught prehistory of Putin’s invasion. Their argument is the most compelling account of how a civil war in a divided country turned into a hot war between two neighbouring states.’

Ronald Grigor Suny - William H. Sewell, Jr. Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of History and Emeritus Professor of Political Science, The University of Michigan, and Emeritus Professor of Political Science and History, The University of Chicago

#5

Book Panel on Ukraine’s Unnamed War, ASN World Convention, 19 May 2023

Opening Remarks by Dominique Arel and Jesse Driscoll

This is a book that began as an article project in 2015. Within a year, it became a book project that stretched over six years, to Jesse’s dismay. This is the downside of a collaborative project: the authors don’t have the same rhythm. The upside is that there never would have been a book with the co-authorship. This is a book that was written and rewritten several times, down to every single paragraph, if not sentence or footnote. We needed each other.

The article became a book because we felt we had to produce the empirics, and then the deductively-induced model. The book will be criticized, but hopefully appreciated, for its interpretation, analysis, and modeling. We are quietly confident, and we say that with all candor, that no one else had documented the story that we are telling – from the months leading to Maidan in 2013 to the first serious warnings, in late 2021/early 2022, that a full-scale Russian invasion was looming. On the facts, in terms of what was knowable, we are pretty solid.

A word on what the book is not. It is not about the full-scale invasion of 2022-23. More to the point, it does not seek to explain why February 24, 2022, happened. Frankly, no one outside an incredibly small circle of Russian officials and a few prescient Ukrainian officials could imagine it. We certainly couldn’t. In all the pathways that we discussed in previous drafts, the worse, with low probability, was a metaphorical nuclear Iron Curtain erected in the contact lines of Eastern Donbas. A scenario whereby Russia would literally

bomb and in Donbas proper reduce to rubble majority Russian-speaking cities whose population it claims to defend, we just could not imagine. February 24 marks a rupture. When the book was sent to press, we thought we were telling a story in progress. When we re-sent it, the story had an end point.

What the book is about, the pre-2022 Unnamed War, can be briefly summarized in four points. The first is the most controversial. Ukraine effectively lost control of Crimea, in late February/early March 2014, and then of the heart of Donbas in April-May 2014. In Crimea, all it took was a commando of not even 70 Russian special forces to control parliament and shut down government. Within days, literally, between two-thirds and three-fourths of politicians, state officials, police and army defected to Russia. Unlike anywhere else in Ukraine, there had been no pro-Ukraine self-defense units in the street. The only militias were pro-Russia. We're certainly not saying that there was no pro-Ukraine sentiment in Crimea. What we are saying is that there was no resistance. This is how the Ukrainian Security Council saw within 24 hours. The police, the army, and local officials could not be trusted.

In Donbas, there was local resistance, pro-Ukraine self-defense, and pro-Ukraine demonstrations. There was a commando, similar in size and appearance to the one in Crimea, that seized Sloviansk. This commando, headed by Igor Girkin from Moscow, was actually formed in Crimea and the majority of its members were likely from Crimea. The Sloviansk takeover triggered the Unnamed War, with Ukraine for the first time sending troops. But it does not explain why dozens and dozens of towns across Eastern Donbas fell in a domino effect, as there was no other Girkin-type commando visbly in operation. Military intelligence were no doubt in action, even Putin admitted it later, but the mens with guns that seized government and police buildings were mostly locals.

In other words, what we document in the book is an insurgency, inspired by Russian military intervention in Crimea and awash in Russian propaganda about the so-called "fascist Maidan government", but an insurgency nonetheless. In the comparative political violence literature, a companion concept to insurgency is civil war. This is where we will be attacked and misinterpreted. Russia had made the term civil war radioactive by claiming absurdly through early 2022 that it was not involved. The reality is that the military units of the so-called DNR and LNR have been integrated into the Russian Army since the Fall of 2014. What we have to explain is March to August 2014. Since 1990, and no coincidentally in 2014, Russia had also rendered the term federalism radioactive in Ukrainian political discourse, as a way to erode the Ukrainian state from within, to vassalize it as we would now say. But Russia does not get to decide what comparativists use as concepts, whether federalism, insurgency, or civil war. We have to explain why and how men with guns and a Ukrainian passport (not entirely, but mostly) were fighting men and women with guns and a Ukrainian passport in 2014.

The second point emphasizes the strength of the Ukrainian state. Putin expected the Crimean scenario to unfold throughout Eastern Ukraine, from Kharkiv to Odessa: no resistance and a parliament calling for Russia's help. The opposite happened. With the

exception of Eastern Donbas, the street turned pro-Ukraine everywhere. Moreover, unlike in Crimea, local and regional officials did not defect. Even in Donetsk, Party of Regions officials remained loyal to Kyiv. This was the major test of the aggressive Russian World project and it failed miserably except in the one place that Russia least expected it: Eastern Donbas. Our story is one of Russian improvisation to events it for months could not control.

The third point is that prior to 2014 Ukrainian political dynamics had featured a bargaining game between the central elites, legitimized by the use of Ukrainian as a state language, and regional elites, legitimized by the preponderance of the Russian vernacular in their political constituencies. At multiple times, between 1991-1996, Crimean elites used the threat of separatism to obtain autonomy – which was recognized in the 1996 Constitution. A similar threat was used twice in Donbas, in 1993 and 2004, with the important change that by 2004 Donbas elites had acquired the electoral power to speak on behalf of all of Eastern Ukraine. The deal with Donbas elites was they would not be excluded from power. The Orange Revolution had put Yushchenko in power, but as a compromise he had less power than its predecessor. In less than 2 years, Yanukovych was back as prime minister. Mainstream Donbas elites continued to engage in bargaining in 2014, except that they were eventually overtaken by new elites with no prior political or social visibility.

The final point is that the main narratives defining the Unnamed War (and the large-scale invasion) originate in Maidan. Ukraine calls it Dignity, Russia calls it Fascist (or Nazi, since February 2022). A mass movement against state brutality on the one hand, a coup d'état on the other. Both narratives revolve around the idea of resistance. Maidan was about civic resistance, but also the determination of frontline protesters to use strategic urban violence against the police to achieve political aims. That for Russia was fascist and does echo back to the World War II insurgency in Western Ukraine: the dare that Ukrainians will use violence to resist Russian state power.

The Dignity narrative significantly transformed Ukraine between 2015-2021 and the Eastern Ukrainian elites lost bargaining power. Our last chapter is about how Ukraine became more Ukrainian – in memory politics, in policy over language and religion, and in identification with the state. The one crucial element that we could not know is how much more potent the Ukrainian army had become. The whole Minsk premise had been based on the notion that Ukraine could not fight the Russian army, that NATO was not about to fight for Ukraine, and that therefore autonomy for Donbas was the path to resolution, with the diplomatic pretense that Russia was not directly involved and that Crimea was off the table. That premise is gone.

#6

New Book on the Ukraine War

Serhii Plokhy
The Russo-Ukrainian War
Norton, 2023
<https://bit.ly/3qBPYuS>

Despite repeated warnings from the White House, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 shocked the world. Why did Putin start the war—and why has it unfolded in previously unimaginable ways? Ukrainians have resisted a superior military; the West has united, while Russia grows increasingly isolated.

Serhii Plokhy, a leading historian of Ukraine and the Cold War, offers a definitive account of this conflict, its origins, course, and the already apparent and possible future consequences. Though the current war began eight years before the all-out assault—on February 27, 2014, when Russian armed forces seized the building of the Crimean parliament—the roots of this conflict can be traced back even earlier, to post-Soviet tensions and imperial collapse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Providing a broad historical context and an examination of Ukraine and Russia's ideas and cultures, as well as domestic and international politics, Plokhy reveals that while this new Cold War was not inevitable, it was predictable.

Ukraine, Plokhy argues, has remained central to Russia's idea of itself even as Ukrainians have followed a radically different path. In a new international environment defined by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the disintegration of the post-Cold War international order, and a resurgence of populist nationalism, Ukraine is now more than ever the most volatile fault line between authoritarianism and democratic Europe.

#7

The Russo-Ukrainian War by Serhii Plokhy review

Tsar Putin's bloody dream: an empire to rule them all
by David Patrikarakos
The Times (UK), 13 May 2023

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is fuelled by centuries-old imperial fantasy and twisted history, says David Patrikarakos

This year, I spent some time in the ruined city centre of Bakhmut, just a few hundred metres from the Russian army, listening to artillery go off all around me while I darted between burnt-out vehicles and shell craters trying to find a place to tweet. It struck me then that this was the last 12 months of the war in miniature: the return of 20th-century industrial conflict to 21st-century Europe — brutality and atavism in equal measure. How we got here is the question that Serhii Plokhy, a professor of Ukrainian history at Harvard University, tries to answer in his important and magisterial book *The Russo-Ukrainian War*. He finds the answer, perhaps unsurprisingly, in a *longue durée* approach to things. As he tells us, wryly rephrasing Churchill: “Historians are the worst interpreters of current events except everyone else.”

The book opens with Plokhy in Vienna at the start of Russia’s all-out invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. He could scarcely believe it. In the preceding weeks he watched Russian troops massing on the border and concluded it was a ploy. “I believed that the troop movement was part of Russian blackmail,” he writes. “My colleague argued that it could be for real.”

It was an egregious error, but one made by so many who had spent years reporting on, writing about and analysing Russia — including me — and we made it because, quite simply, Putin’s invasion made no sense, militarily or politically. It still doesn’t. But, *mea culpa*, I now understand that, equally simply, we underestimated the ability of madness and hubris to move history.

Or perhaps more correctly, we didn’t fully internalise the lessons of that history, and the madness and hubris that it created in the Kremlin. And this is what Plokhy does so magnificently. He sees “the roots of the current war . . . in the history of imperial collapse in the 19th and 20th centuries, which also produced the key ideas that have fuelled the current conflict”.

But if the conflict is several centuries old, its origins stretch back over a millennium. Most Russians believe that their nation originated in “Kyivan Rus”, the polity that emerged in the 10th century that encompasses Kyiv and a good part of what is now Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. It is here that Russians find the origins of their “religion, written language, literature, arts, law code and — extremely important in the premodern era — their ruling dynasty”.

At a primordial level, then, Ukraine is fundamental not only to Russian imperialism, but to Russia’s sense of itself. It didn’t matter that travellers from Moscow and St Petersburg found that the locals in Kyiv and the surrounding areas spoke a different language, sang different songs and had a distinct culture. The myth of Russia’s Kyivan origins, Plokhy tells us, had by the 15th century “already embedded itself in the consciousness of the Russian elites”.

This myth would drive the violence of tsar after tsar against Ukrainians, who fought back as best they could, often with some successes before the inevitable defeat to a much larger enemy. Even when imperial myth was abandoned (at least superficially) in favour of communism Ukraine remained existential, to help to maintain Slavic dominance of a new empire: a Soviet Union filled with Moldovans, Kazakhs and Georgians.

Plokyh argues convincingly that slow disintegration of the Soviet Union finally became irreversible on December 1, 1991, when the citizens of Ukraine (the Union's second-largest state after Russia) went to the polls. From a turnout of more than 84 per cent, 92 per cent voted for independence.

Mikhail Gorbachev had argued for an all-Union referendum on the USSR's fate, but with Ukraine now out, he simply accepted that result as a verdict on the wider question. If there were to be any more imperial dreams, Ukraine would need to be retaken. As the former US diplomat Zbigniew Brzezinski once remarked: "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire." For a time, Russia was either too chaotic or too distracted to think about empire. Then came Vladimir Putin.

The televised security council briefing Putin gave in February 2022, just before he launched his all-out invasion, made two things clear: first, that we are watching a modern-day tsar surrounded by a herd of lickspittles too terrified to openly contradict him (although their body language is garrulous); second, that we are watching a man who does not even accept the principle of Ukraine as a separate entity to Russia.

When Plokyh moves from history to an analysis of the present war — which began when Russian troops invaded Crimea on February 20, 2014 — he makes clear the full meaning of the book's title. "The Russo-Ukrainian War" of course refers to the present day, but also to something else. A simple and near-perennial historical dialectic: on the one hand, a Russia pathologically driven by imperial mission; on the other, a Ukraine determined to carve out independence. This is why talk of Nato expansion and so on as a cause of the war is all hokum, and why the service Plokyh performs in forensically laying out the reality is so valuable.

All nationalisms are built on the fetishisation of history. Putin's, though, is of a particularly egregious kind. It is the fetishisation of a warped history, fuelled by myth and born from a personal monomania that swelled throughout the Covid lockdown, large parts of which he spent self-isolating and reading propagandist works on Ukraine that masqueraded as fact. History has become the nightmare from which Putin cannot awake.

On the front lines and in the ruined cities you see the cost of this madness everywhere. You see it in the eyes of people in the formerly occupied territories who have had family members deported to Russia. You hear it in the voices of those who saw children disappeared, and those who were forced to dig the graves that their fellow citizens were dumped into.

Bakhmut once had a population of more than 70,000. When I was there, I saw no life beyond the handfuls of civilians who refuse to leave because they have nowhere else to go and the Ukrainian special forces I was travelling with. Surrounding us all were thousands of Russians trying to kill anything left living, in the service of a tsar's delusion.

Moving around the city, it was sometimes hard to see properly amid the shattered glass and tendrils of smoke that billowed from entire blocks of ruined buildings. But my understanding was clear enough. The fight here is, in the end, a simple one. Empire versus nation; the lies of the past versus the realities of the present; madness versus a simple desire to live free and in peace.

Plokyh is a historian and he brilliantly outlines the dangers of perverse history; as a correspondent, I try my best to illustrate its most immediate effects. On the page, you laugh at historical absurdity; on the ground, you count its cost in bodies.

[Patrikarakos covered the war in Donbas in 2014 –UKL]

#8

New Book on the Ukraine War

Olga Onuch and Henry Hale
The Zelensky Effect
Oxford University Press, 2023
<https://bit.ly/3PjdDuF>

With Russian shells raining on Kyiv and tanks closing in, American forces prepared to evacuate Ukraine's leader. Just three years earlier, his apparent main qualification had been playing a president on TV. But Volodymyr Zelensky reportedly retorted, 'I need ammunition, not a ride.' Ukrainian forces won the battle for Kyiv, ensuring their country's independence even as a longer war began for the southeast.

You cannot understand the historic events of 2022 without understanding Zelensky. But the Zelensky effect is less about the man himself than about the civic nation he embodies: what makes Zelensky most extraordinary in war is his very ordinariness as a Ukrainian.

The Zelensky Effect explains this paradox, exploring Ukraine's national history to show how its now-iconic president reflects the hopes and frustrations of the country's first 'independence generation'. Interweaving social and political background with compelling episodes from Zelensky's life and career, this is the story of Ukraine told through the journey of one man who has come to symbolize his country.

Zelensky's Heroic Wartime Leadership Has Deep Historical Roots

Review by Serhii Plokhyy

Washington Post, 9 March 2023

<https://bit.ly/43DTGCR>

In 'The Zelensky Effect,' Olga Onuch and Henry Hale investigate the historical and cultural origins of Ukraine's solidarity in the face of Russian invasion

In a recent interview with Volodymyr Zelensky on “My Next Guest Needs No Introduction,” David Letterman asked the Ukrainian president about the source of his country’s fighting spirit. Letterman also suggested that he already knew the answer: that it came from Zelensky himself. The president demurred, instead praising the courage of Ukrainians in military uniform defending their country.

The basis of Zelensky’s personal courage and the solidarity of Ukrainians resisting unprovoked Russian aggression are among the key themes of Olga Onuch and Henry E. Hale’s deeply researched and well-argued book, “The Zelensky Effect.” They locate the roots of Zelensky’s ability to captivate and mobilize the imagination of his fellow citizens in the rise of Ukrainian civic identity. “This is not simply Zelensky’s doing,” the authors write, adding that the Ukrainian president is “a product of a Ukrainian culture steeped in the same sense of civic national belonging and duty that he advocates, advances and now symbolizes.”

The Zelensky effect, as the authors define it, is the manifestation of Ukrainian civic identity since the start of the all-out war, though its origins are far older. Looking for the sources of Ukraine’s inclusive national identity, which crosses linguistic, ethnic and religious lines, Onuch and Hale follow the life story of Zelensky and his generation from the final decades of the U.S.S.R. to the current war. The results of that history were succinctly expressed in the words “I’m Ukrainian” printed on the hoodie that Zelensky wore on “My Next Guest.” But it’s even clearer in the language he used in that interview, responding to questions in Ukrainian but slipping in a few Russian words when telling a Jewish joke from Odessa. As Onuch and Hale explain, the rise of independent Ukraine in the early 1990s helped to overcome the obstacles that had long divided Ukrainians and Russians from each other and from their Jewish and Crimean Tatar fellow citizens.

Zelensky, who today represents the entire Ukrainian nation, was long regarded by supporters and opponents alike as a representative of Ukraine’s Russian-speaking east, a region whose inhabitants had stood apart from the struggle for democracy and sovereignty embodied by the revolutions of 2004 and 2014. But Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its attack on Donbas in 2014 changed Zelensky and Ukraine itself. A comedian who made a name for himself in Russia before becoming known in Ukraine, Zelensky

left political news to others. But in 2014 he turned political, reacting to the annexation of Crimea with pointed barbs and sarcasm. Zelensky and his cohort, politically inactive up to that point, adopted the big-tent Ukrainian civic identity that Onuch and Hale regard as a result of decades of civic activism.

The vision of a multiethnic and multicultural Ukrainian nation was initially formulated in the middle of World War I by Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who was the first scholar to make a persuasive historical case that Russia and Ukraine were separate entities. Hrushevsky envisioned the rise of a free Ukraine as the result of common efforts of Ukrainians, Jews, Russians and Poles. Jews, as fellow victims of Russian imperial rule, were at the top of Hrushevsky's hierarchy of friends of Ukrainian freedom. He also welcomed Russians and Poles who wanted to support the cause, promising Ukrainian support and cultural autonomy in return.

In 1917, Hrushevsky's vision of a multiethnic and multicultural Ukraine served as the political foundation of the first modern Ukrainian state, known as the Ukrainian People's Republic. It did not survive the Bolshevik invasions of 1918 and 1919, which brought civil strife and violence, often directed against minorities. To pacify Ukraine, however, Vladimir Lenin eventually made concessions to the Ukrainian cause that Vladimir Putin now finds unforgivable. The Ukrainians were recognized as a distinct people, and their language and culture received state support in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, one of the founding polities of the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin reneged on many of those concessions, pushing a Russification agenda that produced a new category of citizens, Russian-speaking Ukrainians, consisting largely of Ukrainian peasants who moved to the cities, where they lost their language but not their identity.

In December 1991, when Ukrainians went to the polls to vote on the future of their republic, the results were astounding: More than 92 percent chose independence, with huge majorities registered not only in all regions of Ukraine but also among all ethnic groups. Jews demonstrated slightly greater support for independence than did ethnic Russians.

A week after the Ukrainian referendum, the Soviet Union was dissolved by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Independence created a new country that faced the difficult task of reconciling its borders with the politically, culturally and linguistically diverse population that it inherited from the U.S.S.R. At the time, some observers wrote of two Ukraines: the largely Ukrainian-speaking and Europe-oriented west and the Russian-speaking and Russia-oriented east. Those were the divisions that Russia tried to exploit in 2014, annexing Crimea and starting a hybrid war in Donbas that succeeded in some Russian-speaking areas but failed in others.

That was the juncture at which Zelensky and his generation of Russian-speaking citizens from Ukraine's east and south joined the battle to preserve the Ukrainian nation and state. When Putin ordered his armies into Ukraine in February 2022, the new Ukraine embodied by Zelensky fought back. Zelensky was both product and architect of Ukraine's new sense

of identity. That identity has grown stronger over the course of the war, helping to ensure Ukraine's survival as an independent nation-state after Putin's Russia confronted it with an existential challenge. In their conclusion, Onuch and Hale write that "Ukrainian civic identity was what had produced not only Zelensky, but 44 million Zelenskys."

#10

New Book on the Ukraine War

Jade McGlynn

Russia's War

John Wiley, 2023

<https://bit.ly/3XaLmIE>

In the early hours of 24 February 2022, Russian forces attacked Ukraine. The brutality of the Russian assault has horrified the world. But Russians themselves appear to be watching an entirely different war – one in which they are the courageous underdogs and kind-hearted heroes successfully battling a malign Ukrainian foe.

Russia analyst Jade McGlynn takes us on a journey into this parallel military and political universe to reveal the sometimes monstrous, sometimes misconstrued attitudes behind Russian majority backing for the invasion. Drawing on media analysis and interviews with ordinary citizens, officials and foreign-policy elites in Russia and Ukraine, McGlynn explores the grievances, lies and half-truths that pervade the Russian worldview. She also exposes the complicity of many Russians, who have invested too deeply in the Kremlin's alternative narratives to regard the war as Putin's foolhardy mission. In their eyes, this is Russia's war – against Ukraine, against the West, against evil – and there can be no turning back.

Jade McGlynn is a specialist in Russian media, memory and foreign policy in the Department of War Studies, King's College London. She is the author of *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia* and frequently writes and comments for the media, including CNN, BBC, *The Times*, *The Spectator*, *The Telegraph*, *MSNBC*, *The Diplomat*, and *Foreign Policy*.

#11

What We've Misunderstood About Russian Motivations for the War in Ukraine

by Michael S. Neiberg
Washington Post, 12 June 2023

Two new books by Jade McGlynn make the disturbing case for why Russia's invasion had a convincing historical logic to it.

At least some of the West's disbelief over Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 came from the absurdity of Vladimir Putin's stated justifications. The threat of NATO expansion toward Russian borders? Surely, he knew that the alliance — chronically underfunded; brain dead, according to French President Emmanuel Macron; and postured for deterrence — posed no peril to Russia. The presence of Nazis in Ukraine? True, a handful of Ukrainians recall their joint anti-Soviet operations alongside the Wehrmacht with a discomfiting pride. Still, a nation that had freely elected a Jewish president seemed an odd candidate to revive Nazism as a political force.

To Western eyes, therefore, the invasion appeared to make no sense. But in two new books, Russia analyst Jade McGlynn presents a powerful and disturbing case that the invasion had a convincing historical logic to it, for Vladimir Putin and for Russians more generally. In “Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia,” she argues that the invasion was “perhaps the only possible outcome of Russia's preoccupation with policing the past.” In “Russia's War,” she shows how deeply and fully the Russian people have accepted the historical narrative justifying this war. Taken together, the two books suggest that we have been looking in the wrong places to understand Russian motivations.

The Russian historical narrative, according to McGlynn, posits that when the state is strong and the people united, Russia achieves greatness, such as defeating Nazi Germany and launching Sputnik. When the state is weak and the people disunited, as under Boris Yeltsin, the West exploits and weakens Russia and its people. Russian media outlets thus treat Western support for Ukraine not as a response to the invasion of Crimea in 2014 but as a long part of a Western “war” to keep Russia weak and therefore exploitable. Why else, Russians ask, would a debauched West support Ukrainian Nazis if not to use Ukraine as a proxy for perpetuating the West's centuries-long quest to keep Russia weak and divided?

McGlynn argues that it is a mistake to dismiss this policing of the past as mere propaganda or brainwashing. She argues that the regime uses history to “develop cognitive filters and heuristics” that create comfortable spaces for framing the present. Key themes include the insistence that Ukraine has always been an extension of Russia, never a nation in its own right, and that the Russian state has played a key role in protecting the Russian people from the persistent existential dangers that lurk outside the country's borders.

The Russian state has used a heavy hand to enforce its view of the past, firing or imprisoning many of those who disagree with it. But as McGlynn shows in “Russia’s War,” the most effective methods are much more subtle. What she describes as “agitainment” in television news and a tightly controlled internet blur the line between fact and fiction. Popular literature and entertaining feature films, many of them funded by the state or developed by influential figures including the media star Vladimir Solovyov and the former culture minister Vladimir Medinsky, promote “correct” historical themes such as Russian heroism and sacrifice. Multiple generations have internalized these narratives through school curriculums laden with tales of Western perfidy and historically grounded messianic narratives from the Russian Orthodox Church. This framing resonates with ordinary Russians, in part because it offers a heroic past to a people whose present and future are so precarious. It also offers a neat and tidy explanation (namely, the consistent enmity of the West) for Russia’s numerous shortcomings.

As McGlynn points out in “Memory Makers,” when history is rooted in an aberrant view of the past, the present is turned on its head. The Russian “heroes” fighting in Ukraine today are marching in the footsteps of the heroes of past generations and restoring Russia to the greatness that is — because of its glorious history — its true birthright. Russia becomes David, fighting the Goliath of Ukrainian Nazism masterminded by an all-powerful and incurably Russophobic West. History “proves” that the West is in terminal decline, while Russia is on a path to return to its natural position of global leadership. Russian soldiers are not agents of aggression and mass murder; rather, they are heroically defending Russians everywhere from a genocidal Ukrainian regime intent on killing them with bioweapons provided by the CIA. Taken to its illogical extreme, Russia is liberating Ukrainians from the degenerate Westerners tricking them into turning against their Russian brothers.

The war in Ukraine that McGlynn ruefully describes is therefore “Russia’s war,” not just Putin’s war. The Russian people, like those she came to know during her many years of studying Russia and living there, either support the war or at least identify with the historical justifications underpinning it. In the end, however, public support does not really matter. Unlike the West, where democratically elected leaders seek the support of the people they lead into war, Putin needs only their apathy or political neutrality. Their agreement with a common narrative of events is a more-than-adequate substitute for their active support.

In a tightly controlled dictatorship like Putin’s Russia, there is no possibility for an independent civil society to present alternative viewpoints, engage citizens in free discussion or search for sources to assess the government’s messaging. The result is not history as debate but history as a performative act of patriotism and a weaponized justification for an unprovoked war against a neighbor. As if to prove McGlynn’s point, historically based justifications for Russian policy and alleged plots by the West form

terrifyingly explicit parts of Russia's most recent National Security Strategy. Her insightful and creative analysis suggests that we are in for a long conflict not just over the fate of Ukraine but also over how differing memories of the past will continue to shape the future.

Michael S. Neiberg is the chair of war studies and a professor of history at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa. He is the author, most recently, of "When France Fell: The Vichy Crisis and the Fate of the Anglo-American Alliance."

#12

New Book on the Ukraine War

Greta Lynn Uehling

Everyday War:

The Conflict over Donbas Ukraine

Cornell, 2023

<https://bit.ly/3CrZh3g>

Everyday War provides an accessible lens through which to understand what noncombatant civilians go through in a country at war. What goes through the mind of a mother who must send her child to school across a minefield or the men who belong to groups of volunteer body collectors? In Ukraine, such questions have been part of the daily calculus of life. Greta Uehling engages with the lives of ordinary people living in and around the armed conflict over Donbas that began in 2014 and shows how conventional understandings of war are incomplete.

In Ukraine, landscapes filled with death and destruction prompted attentiveness to human vulnerabilities and the cultivation of everyday, interpersonal peace. Uehling explores a constellation of social practices where ethics of care were in operation. People were also drawn into the conflict in an everyday form of war that included provisioning fighters with military equipment they purchased themselves, smuggling insulin, and cutting ties to former friends. Each chapter considers a different site where care can produce interpersonal peace or its antipode, everyday war.

Bridging the fields of political geography, international relations, peace and conflict studies, and anthropology, Everyday War considers where peace can be cultivated at an everyday level.

Greta Lynn Uehling is a lecturer at the University of Michigan. She is the author of Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return (2004). Follow her on Twitter @uehlingumiched1.

#13

New Book on the Ukraine War

Anna Colin Lebedev

Jamais frères?

Ukraine et Russie: Une tragédie postsoviétique

Seuil, 2022

<https://bit.ly/46i394P>

« Nous ne serons jamais frères ; ni de même patrie, ni de même mère. » Tels sont les mots adressés par la poétesse ukrainienne Anastasia Dmitruk au peuple russe en 2014, miroir inversé des discours récents de Vladimir Poutine qui ne cesse de souligner au contraire l'identité commune entre les deux pays.

S'appuyant sur son expérience de terrain en Russie et en Ukraine, Anna Colin Lebedev retrace les trajectoires de ces deux sociétés pendant les années postsoviétiques. Si l'époque soviétique a créé une proximité forte entre les deux sociétés, leur passé n'est pas complètement commun, et les différences n'ont cessé de s'approfondir au cours des trente dernières années. À partir de 2014, l'annexion de la Crimée et la guerre dans le Donbass ont conduit à une rupture entre Russes et Ukrainiens qui ont cessé d'avoir la même vision d'un destin partagé. Et c'est un gouffre qui semble depuis février 2022 se creuser entre les deux peuples, alors que l'agression armée de l'Ukraine par la Russie les a fait basculer dans l'horreur d'un conflit meurtrier.

Aucun livre ne suffira à combler ce gouffre et à panser l'immense blessure de la guerre. Ce texte se veut cependant un pas dans une direction essentielle : ne pas renoncer à connaître et comprendre l'autre.

Maîtresse de conférences en science politique, Anna Colin Lebedev travaille sur les sociétés postsoviétiques. Elle a publié Le Cœur politique des mères. Analyse du mouvement des mères de soldats en Russie (Éditions de l'EHESS, 2013).

#14

Rose, Gideon. 2023. "Ukraine's Winnable War: Why the West Should Help Kyiv Retake All Its Territory."

Foreign Affairs, June 13. <https://bit.ly/3NwpaFu>

In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in an attempt to conquer the country and erase the independence it had gained after the collapse of the Soviet Union three decades

earlier. Given the vast disparities in size and strength between the belligerents, almost nobody gave the defenders much of a chance. Pessimists thought Kyiv would succumb in days or weeks. Optimists thought it might take months. Few believed Ukraine could ever beat back its attacker.

“A satisfying victory is likely out of reach,” wrote the Russia experts Thomas Graham and Rajan Menon in *Foreign Affairs* a month after the invasion began. “Ukraine and its Western backers are in no position to defeat Russia on any reasonable timescale.” Around the same time, the political scientist Samuel Charap agreed: “Ukraine’s brave resistance—even combined with ever-greater Western pressure on Moscow—is highly unlikely to overcome Russia’s military advantages, let alone topple Putin. Without some kind of deal with the Kremlin, the best outcome is probably a long, arduous war that Russia is likely to win anyway.” Three months into the war, the historians Liana Fix and Michael Kimmage argued that “a full-scale Ukrainian military defeat of Russia, including the retaking of Crimea, verges on fantasy.” Four months after that, the political scientist Emma Ashford upgraded a Ukrainian victory to a “dangerous fantasy.”

Just as Russia has surprised everyone by its poor military performance, however, Ukraine has surprised everyone, as well, punching far above its weight throughout the conflict. Russia’s attempt to take the capital was thwarted, and then its attempts to consolidate gains in the east and the south were disrupted. Russian troops were forced to withdraw from the Kharkiv region and Kherson. A brutal Russian air campaign against civilian infrastructure stiffened Ukraine’s will instead of breaking it. Recent Russian offensives in Bakhmut and elsewhere gained little ground at vast cost. And now, with Russian forces softened, Ukraine is launching a counteroffensive to take back more territory.

A common view of the war sees it as a military deadlock destined to end with a negotiated settlement far short of each side’s original goals. “Later this year, a stalemate is likely to emerge along a new line of contact,” argued the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, and the political scientist Charles Kupchan in April, and at that point the United States should nudge Ukraine into recognizing that “pursuing a full military victory” would be unwise. “An end to the war that leaves Ukraine in full control over all its internationally recognized territory . . . remains a highly unlikely outcome,” asserted the political scientists Samuel Charap and Miranda Priebe in January, and so Washington “could condition future military aid on a Ukrainian commitment to negotiations” involving territorial compromise.

It is indeed likely that there will be a lull in the fighting after Ukraine’s coming offensive, as Kyiv consolidates its gains. But that will be only a pause in a still fluid conflict, not the emergence of a deadlock. There has not been and need not be a stalemate, thanks to Western military support and Ukraine’s remarkable ability to transform it into battlefield success. The world has not witnessed such a fruitful strategic collaboration since Israel used Western assistance to achieve devastating victories over larger, Soviet-supported Arab forces in 1967 and 1973. Because of the effectiveness of this partnership, there is no need to pressure Ukraine into a compromise peace. Instead, the United States and Europe

should enable it to continue pushing Russian forces back to Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. A true status-quo-ante ending to the war, reversing the gains Russia has made since its initial 2014 incursion, is not only possible but also the best option to shoot for. It would liberate Ukraine. It would establish a solid foundation for regional security. It would prove the liberal international order has a future as well as a past. And it would provide a winning model for post-hegemonic U.S. global leadership.

UKRAINE CAN WIN

The chief goal of Western governments over the past year and a half has been to help Ukraine stave off defeat. The United States, Europe, and other friendly countries have given large amounts of economic aid and increasingly powerful weapons to Kyiv, which has used them to keep itself in the fight. To avoid provoking Moscow, however, the West has kept a lid on the amount and nature of its help. It has avoided the possibility of direct clashes between NATO and Russian forces and eschewed direct attacks on Russia and its regime. And it has carefully chosen the weapons it sends, incrementally doling out some but not all the materiel Ukraine has requested.

Much of this is simple prudence, reflecting standard aspects of war in the nuclear age. It makes sense to keep Western intervention indirect and to limit the theater of combat, and those restrictions on the fighting should be maintained or even enforced more strictly, so as to prevent any more attacks on Moscow. But Ukraine's demonstrated ability to put military aid to good use makes it sensible to relax the restrictions on that front, given how much reward can come from minimal added risk. As U.S. President Richard Nixon pointed out to his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, when supplying military aid to Israel during the Yom Kippur war in 1973, "Look, Henry, we're going to get just as much blame for sending three [planes], if we send 30, or a hundred, or whatever we've got, so send them everything that flies. The main thing is—make it work."

Rather than limiting conventional military aid to Ukraine, accordingly, the United States and Europe should increase the flow: more armor, artillery, and ammunition; improved air defenses; squadrons of fourth-generation jet fighters—the conventional works, for as long as it takes. Such a course is not only the right thing to do. It is also the best way to end the war, either by teeing up the possibility of a durable negotiated settlement or by allowing Kyiv's forces to gain positions that they could defend indefinitely with continued assistance.

Many consider this policy option futile, dangerous, or distracting. Russia cannot be beaten, they say, because it will always have more resources to throw into the fight and an insatiable will to avoid defeat. Attempts to force Russia backward and retake Crimea could lead to nuclear escalation. And a focus on Ukraine and Russia comes at the expense of other, more important problems, such as Taiwan and China. All these concerns, however, are overblown.

A TEST OF WILLS

“Where are you in the war?” I asked a senior Ukrainian military official during a recent trip to Ukraine sponsored by the Renew Democracy Initiative. “Toward the end of the first half,” he replied. And in the second half, they’re coming out hot.

At first, Western aid was sharply curtailed. “We asked, ‘Can we have Stingers?’” Ukrainian Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov recounted. “We were told, ‘No, dig trenches and kill as many Russians as you can before it’s over.’ People thought our victory was impossible.” But as Ukrainian forces held out and continued to fight, the United States, European countries, and other friends of Ukraine eventually supplied a vast array of ever more sophisticated weapons. The Stingers came, and the HIMARS, and the Patriots, which I watched shoot down Russia’s supposedly unstoppable hypersonic Kinzhal missiles. Now, Reznikov said, Ukraine has “Bradleys, Strykers, Abrams, Leopards, and more.” And, eventually, the armor will be supported by F-16s.

The fresh, well-equipped, highly motivated Ukrainian brigades taking part in the offensive, meanwhile, are facing tired Russian forces with low spirits, little personal investment, and mediocre leadership. Like the Arab countries that fought Israel half a century ago, Russia has more manpower and materiel than its opponent but isn’t putting them to good use. “Russia has a huge set of tools but no understanding of how to employ them effectively,” the senior Ukrainian military official said. “There is nothing surprising about their war. They are using the classic Soviet approach; nothing has changed.” And Russia has no strategic plan; ever since the initial invasion failed, it has been improvising, with its commanders increasingly at odds. Moscow’s resources are becoming constrained through attrition and sanctions, and at this point its forces are no longer capable of significant offensive progress. The Ukrainians will be attacking elaborate fortifications, and the Russians are likely to be better at defense than offense. But this offensive should nevertheless make major gains and continue Ukraine’s track record of changing outsiders’ views about what outcomes are ultimately possible. (Earlier in the conflict, I was among those who thought it made sense for Ukraine to shoot for the 2022 status quo ante rather than the 2014 one.)

Officials in Kyiv do not believe this campaign alone can end the war. “Our goal is the full expulsion of Russia from Ukrainian territory,” said Foreign Minister [Dmytro Kuleba](#). “If the offensive achieves that, it will be the last. If not, there will be more. If our weapons supplies get cut off, Ukraine will just shift to lower intensity war. We won’t give up; we won’t accept territorial losses.” Vitali Klitschko, the mayor of Kyiv and a former world heavyweight champion boxer, echoed the point. “The goal is the 1991 borders, including Crimea. Maybe this year, maybe not. We can hope, but just have to keep going. It’s only a matter of time before Russia breaks.” Like the Russians, the Ukrainians see the war as not just a test of arms but a test of wills and are convinced they have the advantage in both.

THE NUCLEAR BOGEYMAN

Many outside observers worry about what Russian President Vladimir Putin might do before such a break occurs, such as resort to the use of nuclear weapons. “Some Western analysts suggest that the United States and NATO should call the Kremlin’s bluff—they should more forthrightly back the Ukrainians and drive Russian forces out of Ukraine,” wrote the political scientist Nina Tannenwald in February, characterizing this as “a cavalier approach to the risk of nuclear escalation.” A proper approach to the risk, she claims, would recognize that the “shadow of nuclear weapons” constrains Ukraine’s options and means that “a good outcome for Kyiv will be more complicated to attain, and invariably less satisfying.” Charap and Priebe concurred: “Russian nuclear use in this war is plausible,” they wrote, and trying to prevent it should be “a paramount priority for the United States.” Putin is determined to fight to the bitter end no matter what the cost, asserted the scholars Rose McDermott, Reid Pauly, and Paul Slovi, and “is a man whom humanity will wish it had kept away from its most dangerous weapons.”

That is certainly true already. But humanity has survived those weapons being in far worse and less stable hands, from the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin to the Chinese tyrant Mao Zedong to the brutal Kim dynasty in North Korea, and there is no reason to believe the pattern of post-1945 nuclear nonuse will change. The Ukrainians themselves, who would bear the brunt of any nuclear attack, know all about the supposed Russian redlines but are significantly less concerned than their American and European counterparts about crossing them.

“Professionally, I’m obliged to worry about nukes,” said the senior Ukrainian military official. “But I don’t see a high probability of it.” Kuleba, for his part, believes that “nuclear deterrence worked in the past, and it will continue to do so.” Reznikov was even more blunt: “I’m sure the nuclear threat is a bluff. Their weapons are out of date, and Moscow can’t be sure they’ll work. The Chinese and Indians have told them not to use nukes. And there is no place to use them. Battlefield use would hurt them as well as us, and general use would provoke retaliation and end any chance of negotiations.”

Washington sees the absence of Russian nuclear use so far as a triumph of its risk management. Kyiv sees it as confirmation that the threat was minor to begin with. The Ukrainians have inflicted hundreds of thousands of Russian casualties in the war and have suffered almost as many themselves. They don’t think Moscow is holding back effective military options or limiting its brutality; they see an enemy that is desperately throwing into the fight whatever it thinks might work. In Kyiv’s view, the conflict has stayed conventional because nuclear weapons are not particularly useful instruments of war, especially for close-in fighting over neighboring territory and friendly populations that Moscow is ostensibly trying to rescue. Nothing about that will change because of Kyiv’s conventional military successes. And even the execution of Moscow’s nuclear threats would not necessarily reverse the trend of the fighting and lead to a Russian victory.

The Ukrainians, in short, see a gap between the objective realities of the Russian situation and the Kremlin's recognition of it. The next several months of fighting should reduce that gap, and then things will get interesting.

HOW TO PLAY THE ENDGAME

“This won't be the last battle of the war,” the senior military official said. “Russia will need to suffer more to concede defeat. And the war won't end even when we attain all the 1991 territory. Because we'll still have an enemy neighbor. The end of this war is not just pushing out Russia and reclaiming our territory, but convincing Russia not to think about trying it again a few years down the road. We have no intention of leaving this war to our children.”

What might have seemed mere bravado a year and a half ago now sounds like a plausible strategic plan. When this offensive is over, Ukraine will probably have broken through Russian lines, regained significant chunks of territory, and put itself in a position to credibly threaten the remaining Russian-held areas over the long term, including Crimea. From there, Kyiv's friends should prepare it to launch future offensives that could regain Ukraine all its internationally recognized territory. Depending on the timing of Russia's decision to cut its losses, this could lead to any of three scenarios, which might be called “Egypt 1973,” “Korea 1951,” and “Korea 1953.”

In the Yom Kippur War, the United States helped Israel gain the upper hand against Egypt and Syria and then used that threat for diplomatic leverage. As Kissinger put it to Nixon, “The strategy now diplomatically is to go for a cease-fire and maneuver to link it loosely to a permanent settlement. For pressure, we will begin a massive supply effort and stop it only with a cease-fire.” When the Israelis reached the Suez Canal and encircled Egyptian forces there, Washington brokered a deal that stopped the fighting, allowed the Egyptian forces to escape, and segued to broader peace negotiations, ultimately producing a settlement that has remained the bedrock of regional security ever since.

Like the Egyptians in 1973, a sensible government in Moscow today might respond to the prospect of imminent military catastrophe by accepting reality and agreeing to serious negotiations, trading an end to the fighting and recognition of Ukraine's gains and future security concerns for, say, a new Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty that allowed Moscow to continue basing its Black Sea Fleet in Crimea. It seems unlikely that the current Russian regime would make such a deal, but it is not impossible.

Even a credible threat to retake all Ukrainian territory, however, might not be enough to induce a true change of heart in Moscow, in which case it will be necessary to execute the threat, with Washington and its partners continuing to support Ukraine until its forces reach the 1991 borders. This would trigger the two hypothetical scenarios that echo the Korean War, both of which start with the restoration of the territorial status quo ante.

When North Korean forces attacked across the 38th parallel in June 1950, the United States backed South Korea and led a United Nations operation “to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.” The fortunes of war shifted back and forth in the months afterward, but by the early summer of 1951, the frontlines had begun to stabilize around the belligerents’ original positions, and the Truman administration decided that would be a logical place to end things. As Secretary of State Dean Acheson framed the U.S. position in June, “Our aim is to stop the attack, end the aggression . . . , restore peace, providing against the renewal of the aggression. Those are the military purposes for which, as I understand it, the U.N. troops are fighting.” On June 23, the Soviet ambassador to the UN, Jacob Malik, suggested in a radio address that both sides agree to an armistice at the 38th parallel, and direct cease-fire negotiations between the belligerents began two weeks later. After two more years of fighting, an armistice was finally signed that froze the war along almost the exact same line of contact.

In Ukraine, this Korea 1951 scenario would involve Kyiv retaking all its territory and then continuing to hold it against renewed enemy attacks, fighting an open-ended war to secure its gains but being prepared to stop whenever the Russians are. Eventually, that could evolve into the Korea 1953 scenario, in which all sides agree that enough is enough and move to codify the outcome in a negotiated settlement that secures the territorial status quo ante. At that point, Ukraine’s friends could help it survive and thrive over the long term, offering a path to eventual membership in both the [EU](#) and NATO and locking Ukraine securely into Europe once and for all.

The root cause of the war is Russia’s refusal to accept the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its willingness to take its former empire back by force. That problem will be fully solved only when Moscow accepts that its empire is gone for good and readjusts to life as a normal country rather than an international predator. Until that day comes, a Korean-style armistice would not be a bad model for Ukraine, as Charap recently [noted](#): “In the nearly 70 years since, there has not been another outbreak of war on the peninsula. Meanwhile, South Korea emerged from the devastation of the 1950s to become an economic powerhouse and eventually a thriving democracy. A postwar Ukraine that is similarly prosperous and democratic with a strong Western commitment to its security would represent a genuine strategic victory.”

What Charap misses, however, is that this does not suggest rewarding aggression by leaving Moscow with significant territorial gains in Ukraine, because North Korea was not allowed to keep chunks of South Korea. The Korea analogy does not strengthen the case for starting negotiations now—on the contrary, it bolsters the argument for pushing Russian forces back across the prewar dividing line, fighting them off from there until they accept a draw, and then securing the line so they don’t cross it again.

Put simply, the fighting must continue until Moscow accepts that it cannot achieve territorial gains by military force. Until that psychological turning point is reached, Ukraine and its backers will have little choice but to keep frustrating Russia militarily. When Russia is ready to accept such an outcome, sanctions and other restrictions could

be lifted. Before then, it will exhaust itself further in vain, stagnating on the international sidelines, hemmed in by a strong defensive line running from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea—a new iron curtain pulled down not to keep captured countries in but to keep their would-be capturer out.

It took defeat in two world wars before Germany got the message that aggression didn't pay. It might take defeat not just in Ukraine but also in a second Cold War for Russia to learn the same lesson. Until then, the wall must be guarded. Just like the last time. A satisfactory outcome could take years to achieve, and the costs for Ukraine and its Western partners will be high. But the costs of not doing so would be even higher and come not just in Ukraine but throughout Europe and around the world.

THE WAR AFTER THE WAR

For the larger conflict to end, Russia will have to continue evolving. So will Ukraine. Domestic democratization is the war's second front, and the struggle there will continue long after the guns in the east and the south are silent. The providers of foreign aid are right to care about corruption and accountability. The Ukrainians do, too. In November 2013, the Ukrainian journalist Mustafa Nayyem wrote a Facebook post calling on people to join him in the streets to protest Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's abandonment of an emerging partnership with Europe. This sparked what came to be known as the Maidan revolution, a mass popular uprising that toppled Yanukovich's regime. A decade later, Nayyem, now a member of parliament, is the head of the State Agency for Restoration and Infrastructure Development and one of the key figures managing Ukraine's reconstruction. "This war is the ultimate Russian response to Euromaidan," he says. "It is the continuing and culmination of Ukraine's fight for independence and freedom. We are escaping from our past, and the corruption is part of that. Reform is crucial, not just reconstruction. If our domestic promises aren't fulfilled, after victory you'll have another Maidan."

Klitschko agrees. "Rebuilding buildings is not enough. It's important to build the rule of law and democratic institutions. We need judicial reform, military reform, procurement reform. People expect a new and better country after the war."

FINISH THE JOB

As for the notion that this war represents a distraction from other, more urgent and important Western national security concerns, nothing could be further from the truth. Thanks to the conflict, NATO is sapping its enemy's strength and learning invaluable lessons about the nature of modern combat—from the amount of materiel required to the importance of mixing commercial and military technology to the need for constant innovation and agile weapons development.

Battlefield success is the ultimate advertisement for any weapons system, and Ukraine's performance means the demand for cutting-edge Western artillery, armor, and air defenses will only grow. The war has revealed dramatic shortcomings in the Western defense industrial base, but luckily in time to fix them before the situation becomes truly critical for its own security. Those who complain that there are not enough munitions to defend Ukraine, Taiwan, and the United States simultaneously are right. But the solution to the problem is not cutting off Ukraine; it is producing more stuff. Doing so will require the reform of sclerotic institutions and inefficient procurement practices, this time in Washington rather than Kyiv. The Department of Defense will have to mentally reclassify the conflict in Ukraine and learn its lessons; it is not a nuisance but a warning. Meanwhile, supporters of the war in both the administration and Congress will have to secure enough long-term funding to restore domestic production lines for crucial materiel ranging from guns to tanks, shells to drones, missiles to planes. This war is the most urgent and important issue on the national security agenda, and Western governments need to treat it as such.

The Taiwanese, like the Ukrainians, understand that their security is best served by forcing Russia to return to the status quo ante, no matter what the costs. "I think pushing back on aggression is the key message that will help to deter any consideration or miscalculation that an invasion can be conducted unpunished, without costs, in a rapid way," Bi-khim Hsiao, Taiwan's de facto ambassador to the United States, told reporters recently. "We must ensure that anyone contemplating the possibility of an invasion understands that, and that is why Ukraine's success in defending against aggression is so important also for Taiwan." China hawks in Washington should agree, rather than portraying the Ukrainian conflict as the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong enemy.

However improbably, what began as a challenge to the American-sponsored global system is causing a revival of it, something a Ukrainian victory would drive home with a vengeance. In Ukraine, the United States is not unilaterally imposing its will on other countries but leading a broad coalition to restore international order. It is not committing war crimes but preventing them. It is not acting as the world's policeman or as a global bully but as the arsenal of democracy. And it has been doing all this effectively and efficiently, without firing a gun or losing a single soldier. The effort to date has been a model of how to blend hard and soft power in a single strategy. Now it's time to finish the job.

#15

Charap, Samuel. 2023. "An Unwinnable War: Washington Needs an Endgame in Ukraine."

Foreign Affairs, June 5. <https://bit.ly/42BZnA0>

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was a moment of clarity for the United States and its allies. An urgent mission was before them: to assist Ukraine as it countered Russian aggression and to punish Moscow for its transgressions. While the Western response was clear from the start, the objective—the endgame of this war—has been nebulous.

This ambiguity has been more a feature than a bug of U.S. policy. As National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan put it in June 2022, "We have in fact refrained from laying out what we see as an endgame. . . . We have been focused on what we can do today, tomorrow, next week to strengthen the Ukrainians' hand to the maximum extent possible, first on the battlefield and then ultimately at the negotiating table." This approach made sense in the initial months of the conflict. The trajectory of the war was far from clear at that point. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was still talking about his readiness to meet his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, and the West had yet to supply Kyiv with sophisticated ground-based rocket systems, let alone tanks and long-range missiles as it does today. Plus, it will always be difficult for the United States to speak about its view on the objective of a war that its forces are not fighting. The Ukrainians are the ones dying for their country, so they ultimately get to decide when to stop—regardless of what Washington might want.

But it is now time that the United States develop a vision for how the war ends. Fifteen months of fighting has made clear that neither side has the capacity—even with external help—to achieve a decisive military victory over the other. Regardless of how much territory Ukrainian forces can liberate, Russia will maintain the capability to pose a permanent threat to Ukraine. The Ukrainian military will also have the capacity to hold at risk any areas of the country occupied by Russian forces—and to impose costs on military and civilian targets within Russia itself.

WHAT WINNING DOESN'T LOOK LIKE

As of the end of May, the Ukrainian military was on the verge of conducting a significant counteroffensive. After Kyiv's successes in two earlier operations in the fall of 2022, and given the generally unpredictable nature of this conflict, it is certainly possible that the counteroffensive will produce meaningful gains.

Western policymakers' attention is primarily devoted to delivering the military hardware, intelligence, and training necessary to make that happen. With so much seemingly in flux on the battlefield, some might argue that now is not the time for the West to start

discussions on the endgame. After all, the task of giving the Ukrainians a chance at a successful offensive campaign is already straining the resources of Western governments. But even if it goes well, a counteroffensive will not produce a militarily decisive outcome. Indeed, even major movement of the frontline will not necessarily end the conflict.

More broadly, interstate wars generally do not end when one side's forces are pushed beyond a certain point on the map. In other words, territorial conquest—or reconquest—is not in itself a form of war termination. The same will likely be true in Ukraine: even if Kyiv were successful beyond all expectations and forced Russian troops to retreat across the international border, Moscow would not necessarily stop fighting. But few in the West expect that outcome at any point, let alone in the near term. Instead, the optimistic expectation for the coming months is that the Ukrainians will make some gains in the south, perhaps retaking parts of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, or push back the Russian assault in the east.

Those potential gains would be important, and they are certainly desirable. Fewer Ukrainians would be subjected to the unspeakable horrors of Russian occupation. Kyiv might retake control of major economic assets, such as the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the largest in Europe. And Russia would have suffered another blow to its military capabilities and global prestige, further raising the costs of what has been a strategic catastrophe for Moscow.

The hope in Western capitals is that Kyiv's gains on the battlefield will then force Putin to the negotiating table. And it is possible that another tactical setback would diminish Moscow's optimism about continued fighting. But just as losing territorial control does not equate to losing a war, neither does it necessarily induce political concessions. Putin could announce another round of mobilization, intensify his bombing campaign on Ukraine's cities, or merely hold the line, convinced that time will work for him and against Ukraine. He might well continue fighting even if he thinks he will lose. Other states have chosen to keep fighting despite recognizing the inevitability of defeat: think, for example, of Germany in World War I. In short, gains on the battlefield will not in themselves necessarily bring about an end to the war.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE?

After over a year of fighting, the likely direction of this war is coming into focus. The location of the frontline is an important piece of that puzzle, but it is far from the most important one. Instead, the key aspects of this conflict are twofold: the persistent threat that both sides will pose to each other, and the unsettled dispute over the areas of Ukraine that Russia has claimed to annex. These are likely to remain fixed for many years to come.

Ukraine has built an impressive fighting force with tens of billions of dollars' worth of aid, extensive training, and intelligence support from the West. The Ukrainian armed forces will be able to hold at risk any areas under Russian occupation. Further, Kyiv will maintain the capability to strike Russia itself, as it has demonstrated consistently over the past year.

Of course, the Russian military will also have the capacity to threaten Ukrainian security. Although its armed forces have suffered significant casualties and equipment losses that will take years to recover from, they are still formidable. And as they demonstrate daily, even in their current sorry state, they can cause significant death and destruction for Ukrainian military forces and civilians alike. The campaign to destroy Ukraine's power grid might have fizzled, but Moscow will maintain the ability to hit Ukraine's cities at any time using airpower, land-based assets, and sea-launched weapons.

In other words, no matter where the frontline is, Russia and Ukraine will have the capabilities to pose a permanent threat to each other. But the evidence of the past year suggests that neither has or will have the capacity to achieve a decisive victory—assuming, of course, that Russia does not resort to weapons of mass destruction (and even that might not secure victory). In early 2022, when its forces were in far better shape, Russia could not take control of Kyiv or oust the democratically elected Ukrainian government. At this stage, the Russian military even appears unable to take all the areas of Ukraine that Moscow claims as its own. Last November, the Ukrainians forced the Russians to retreat to the east bank of the Dnieper River in the Kherson region. Today, the Russian military is in no state to push back across the river to seize the rest of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. Its attempt in January to push north on the plains of the Donetsk region near Vuhledar—a far less taxing offensive than a river crossing—ended in a bloodbath for the Russians.

The Ukrainian military, meanwhile, has defied expectations and may well continue to do so. But there are significant impediments to achieving further progress on the ground. Russian forces are heavily dug in on the most likely axis of advance in the south. Open-source satellite images show they have created multilayered physical defenses—new trenches, antivehicle barriers, obstacles and revetments for equipment and materiel—across the frontline that will prove challenging to breach. The mobilization Putin announced last fall has ameliorated the manpower problems that had earlier allowed Ukraine to advance in the Kharkiv region, where Russia's thinly defended lines were vulnerable to a surprise attack. And the Ukrainian military is largely untested in offensive campaigns that require integrating various capabilities. It has also suffered significant losses during the war, most recently in the battle for Bakhmut, a small city in the Donetsk region. Kyiv is also facing shortages of critical munitions, including for artillery and air defenses, and the hodgepodge of Western equipment it received has strained maintenance and training resources.

These limitations on both sides strongly suggest that neither one will achieve its stated territorial objectives by military means in the coming months or even years. For Ukraine,

the objective is extremely clear: Kyiv wants control over all its internationally recognized territory, which includes Crimea and the parts of the Donbas that Russia has occupied since 2014. Russia's position is not quite as categorical since Moscow has maintained ambiguity about the location of the borders of two of the five Ukrainian regions it claims to have annexed: Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Regardless of this ambiguity, the bottom line is that neither Ukraine nor Russia will likely establish control over what they consider their own territory. (This is not to suggest that both parties' claims should be accorded equal legitimacy. But the manifest illegitimacy of the Russian position does not appear to deter Moscow from holding it.) Put differently, the war will end without a resolution to the territorial dispute. Either Russia or Ukraine, or, more likely, both, will have to settle for a de facto line of control that neither recognizes as an international border.

A FOREVER WAR BEGINS

These largely immutable factors could well produce a drawn-out hot war between Russia and Ukraine. Indeed, history suggests that is the most likely outcome. A study from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, using data from 1946 to 2021 compiled by Uppsala University, found that 26 percent of interstate wars end in less than a month and another 25 percent within a year. But the study also found that “when interstate wars last longer than a year, they extend to over a decade on average.” Even those that last fewer than ten years can be exceptionally destructive. The Iran-Iraq war, for example, lasted for nearly eight years, from 1980 to 1988, and resulted in almost half a million combat fatalities and roughly as many wounded. After all its sacrifices, Ukraine deserves to avoid such a fate.

A long war between Russia and Ukraine will also be highly problematic for the United States and its allies, as a recent RAND study I co-authored with the political scientist Miranda Priebe shows. A protracted conflict would keep the risk of possible escalation—either to Russian nuclear use or to a Russian-NATO war—at its current elevated level. Ukraine would be on near-total economic and military life support from the West, which will eventually cause budgetary challenges for Western countries and readiness problems for their militaries. The global economic fallout of the war, including the volatility in grain and energy prices, would persist. The United States would be unable to focus its resources on other priorities, and Russian dependence on China would deepen. Although a long war would also further weaken Russia, that benefit does not outweigh these costs.

While Western governments should continue to do all they can to help Ukraine prepare for the counteroffensive, they also need to adopt a strategy for war termination—a vision for an endgame that is plausible under these far-from-ideal circumstances. Because a decisive military victory is highly unlikely, certain endgames are no longer plausible. Given the persistence of fundamental differences between Moscow and Kyiv on core

issues such as borders, as well as intense grievances after so many casualties and civilian deaths, a peace treaty or comprehensive political settlement that normalizes relations between Russia and Ukraine seems impossible, too. The two countries will be enemies long after the hot war ends.

For Western governments and Kyiv, ending the war without any negotiations might seem preferable to talking to the representatives of a government that committed an unprovoked act of aggression and horrific war crimes. But interstate wars that have reached this level of intensity do not tend to simply peter out without negotiations. If the war persists, it will also be extremely difficult to transform it back into a low-intensity localized conflict like the one that took place in the Donbas from 2014 to 2022. During that period, the war had a relatively minimal impact on life outside the conflict zone in Ukraine. The sheer length of the current frontline (over 600 miles), the strikes on cities and other targets far beyond the line, and the mobilization underway in both countries (partial in Russia, total in Ukraine) will have systemic—perhaps even near-existential—effects on the two belligerents. For example, it is difficult to imagine how the Ukrainian economy can recover if its airspace remains closed, its ports remain largely blockaded, its cities under fire, its men of working age fighting at the front, and millions of refugees unwilling to return to the country. We are past the point when the impact of this war can be confined to a particular geography.

Since talks will be needed but a settlement is out of the question, the most plausible ending is an armistice agreement. An armistice—essentially a durable cease-fire agreement that does not bridge political divides—would end the hot war between Russia and Ukraine but not their broader conflict. The archetypal case is the 1953 Korean armistice, which dealt exclusively with the mechanics of maintaining a cease-fire and left all political issues off the table. Although North and South Korea are still technically at war, and both claim the entirety of the peninsula as their sovereign territory, the armistice has largely held. Such an unsatisfactory outcome is the most likely way this war will end.

In contrast with the [Korean](#) case, the United States and its allies are not doing the fighting in Ukraine. Decisions in Kyiv and Moscow will ultimately be far more determinative than those made in Berlin, Brussels, or Washington. Even if they wanted to do so, Western governments could not dictate terms to Ukraine—or to Russia. Yet even while acknowledging that Kyiv will ultimately make its own decisions, the United States and its allies, in close consultation with Ukraine, can begin to discuss and put forward their vision for the endgame. To some extent, they have already been doing so for months: U.S. President Joe Biden's May 2022 op-ed in *The New York Times* made clear that his administration sees this war ending at the negotiating table. His senior officials have regularly repeated this view ever since, although the language of helping Ukraine for “as long as it takes” often garners more attention. But Washington has steadfastly avoided providing any further details. Moreover, there do not appear to be any ongoing efforts

either within the U.S. government or among Washington, its allies, and Kyiv to think through the practicalities and substance of eventual negotiations. Compared with the efforts to provide resources for the counteroffensive, practically nothing is being done to shape what comes next. The Biden administration should begin to fill that gap.

THE COSTS OF WAITING

Taking steps to get diplomacy off the ground need not affect efforts to assist Ukraine militarily or to impose costs on Russia. Historically, fighting and talking at the same time has been a common practice in wars. During the Korean War, some of the most intense fighting took place during the two years of armistice talks, when 45 percent of U.S. casualties were incurred. Beginning to plan for the inevitable diplomacy can and should occur in parallel with the other existing elements of U.S. policy—as well as with the ongoing war.

In the short term, that means both continuing to help Kyiv with the counteroffensive and beginning parallel discussions with allies and Ukraine about the endgame. In principle, opening a negotiation track with Russia should complement, not contradict, the push on the battlefield. If Ukraine's gains make the Kremlin more willing to compromise, the only way to know that would be through a functioning diplomatic channel. Setting up such a channel should not cause either Ukraine or its Western partners to let up the pressure on Russia. An effective strategy will require both coercion and diplomacy. One cannot come at the expense of the other.

And waiting to set the stage for negotiations has its costs. The longer the allies and Ukraine go without developing a diplomatic strategy, the harder it will be to do so. As the months go by, the political price of taking the first step will go up. Already, any move that the United States and its allies make to open the diplomatic track—even with Ukraine's support—would have to be delicately managed lest it be portrayed as a policy reversal or an abandonment of Western support for Kyiv.

Starting preparations now makes sense also because conflict diplomacy will not yield results overnight. Indeed, it will take weeks or perhaps months to get the allies and Ukraine on the same page about a negotiating strategy—and even longer to come to an agreement with Russia when the talks begin. In the case of the Korean armistice, 575 meetings were required over two years to finalize the nearly 40 pages of the agreement. In other words, even if a negotiation platform were set up tomorrow, months would elapse before the guns fell silent (if the talks were to succeed, which is far from a given).

Devising measures to make the cease-fire stick will be a thorny but critical task, and Washington should ensure that it is ready to assist Kyiv in that effort. Serious work should begin now on how to avoid what Ukrainian officials, including Zelensky, describe

derisively as “Minsk 3,” a reference to the two failed cease-fire deals that were brokered with Russia in the Belarusian capital in 2014 and 2015, after its earlier invasions. These agreements failed to durably end the violence and included no effective mechanisms for ensuring the parties’ compliance.

Using data from conflicts between 1946 and 1997, the political scientist Virginia Page Fortna has shown that strong agreements that arrange for demilitarized zones, third-party guarantees, peacekeeping, or joint commissions for dispute resolution and contain specific (versus vague) language produced more lasting cease-fires. These mechanisms reinforce the principles of reciprocity and deterrence that allow sworn enemies to achieve peace without resolving their fundamental differences. Because these mechanisms will be challenging to adapt to the Ukraine war, governments need to work on developing them now.

Although an armistice to end this war would be a bilateral agreement, the United States and its allies can and should assist Ukraine in its negotiating strategy. In addition, they should consider what measures they can take in parallel to provide incentives for the parties to get to the table and minimize the chances that any cease-fire collapses. As Fortna’s research suggests, security commitments to Ukraine—some assurance that Kyiv will not face Russia alone if Moscow attacks again—should be part of this equation. Too often, the discussion of security commitments is reduced to the question of NATO membership for Ukraine. As a member, Ukraine would benefit from Article 5 of NATO’s founding treaty, which requires members to consider an armed attack against one of them as an attack against them all. But NATO membership is more than just Article 5. From Moscow’s perspective, membership in the alliance would transform Ukraine into a staging ground for the United States to deploy its own forces and capabilities. So even if there were consensus among allies to offer Kyiv membership (and there is not), granting Ukraine a security guarantee through NATO membership might well make peace so unattractive to Russia that Putin would decide to keep fighting.

Squaring this circle will be challenging and politically fraught. One potential model is the U.S.-Israel 1975 memorandum of understanding, which was one of the key preconditions for Israel to agree to peace with Egypt. The document states that in light of the “long-standing U.S. commitment to the survival and security of Israel, the United States Government will view with particular gravity threats to Israel’s security or sovereignty by a world power.” It goes on to say that in the event of such a threat, the U.S. government will consult with Israel “with respect to what support, diplomatic or otherwise, or assistance it can lend to Israel in accordance with its constitutional practices.” The document also explicitly promises “remedial action by the United States” if Egypt violates the cease-fire. This is not an explicit commitment to treat an attack on Israel as an attack on the United States, but it comes close.

A similar assurance to Ukraine would give Kyiv an enhanced sense of security, encourage private-sector investment in Ukraine’s economy, and enhance deterrence of future Russian aggression. Whereas today Moscow knows for sure that the United States will not

intervene militarily if it attacks Ukraine, this kind of statement would make the Kremlin think more than twice—but it would not raise the prospect of new U.S. bases on Russia's borders. Of course, Washington would need confidence in the durability of the cease-fire so that the probability of the commitment being tested would remain low. Avoiding war with Russia should remain a priority.

When the time comes, Ukraine will need other incentives such as reconstruction aid, measures of accountability for Russia, and sustained military assistance in peacetime to help Kyiv create a credible deterrent. In addition, the United States and its allies should supplement the coercive pressure being applied to Russia with efforts to make peace a more attractive option, such as conditional sanctions relief—with snapback clauses for noncompliance—that could prompt compromise. The West should also be open to a dialogue on broader European security issues so as to minimize the chance of a similar crisis with Russia breaking out in the future.

START TALKING

The first step toward making this vision a reality over the coming months is to stand up an effort in the U.S. government to develop the diplomatic track. An entire new U.S. military command element, the Security Assistance Group–Ukraine, has been devoted to the aid and training mission, which is led by a three-star general with a staff of 300. Yet there is not a single official in the U.S. government whose full-time job is conflict diplomacy. Biden should appoint one, perhaps a special presidential envoy who can engage beyond ministries of foreign affairs, which have been sidelined in this crisis in nearly all relevant capitals. Next, the United States should begin informal discussions with Ukraine and among allies in the G-7 and NATO about the endgame.

In parallel, the United States should consider establishing a regular channel of communication regarding the war that includes Ukraine, U.S. allies, and Russia. This channel would not initially be aimed at achieving a cease-fire. Instead, it would allow participants to interact continually, instead of in one-off encounters, akin to the contact group model used during the Balkan wars, when an informal grouping of representatives from key states and international institutions met regularly. Such discussions should begin out of the public eye, as did initial U.S. contacts with Iran on the nuclear deal, signed in 2015.

These efforts might well fail to lead to an agreement. The odds of success are slim—and even if negotiations did produce a deal, no one would leave fully satisfied. The Korean armistice was certainly not seen as a triumph of U.S. foreign policy at the time it was signed: after all, the American public had grown accustomed to absolute victories, not bloody wars without clear resolution. But in the nearly 70 years since, there has not been

another outbreak of war on the peninsula. Meanwhile, South Korea emerged from the devastation of the 1950s to become an economic powerhouse and eventually a thriving democracy. A postwar Ukraine that is similarly prosperous and democratic with a strong Western commitment to its security would represent a genuine strategic victory.

An endgame premised on an armistice would leave Ukraine—at least temporarily—without all its territory. But the country would have the opportunity to recover economically, and the death and destruction would end. It would remain locked in a conflict with Russia over the areas occupied by Moscow, but that conflict would play out in the political, cultural, and economic domains, where, with Western support, Ukraine would have advantages. The successful reunification of Germany, in 1990, another country divided by terms of peace, demonstrates that focusing on nonmilitary elements of the contestation can produce results. Meanwhile, a Russian-Ukrainian armistice would also not end the West's confrontation with Russia, but the risks of a direct military clash would decrease dramatically, and the global consequences of the war would be mitigated.

Many commentators will continue to insist that this war must be decided only on the battlefield. But that view discounts how the war's structural realities are unlikely to change even if the frontline shifts, an outcome that itself is far from guaranteed. The United States and its allies should be capable of helping Ukraine simultaneously on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. Now is the time to start.

#16

Dancy, Geoff, Kathryn Sikkink, Mykola Soldatenko, and Patrick Vinck. 2023.

“Russia’s Willing Collaborators.”

Foreign Affairs, June 8. <https://bit.ly/3PxpchZ>

As Ukrainian forces aim at a major counteroffensive against Russia, the issue of collaborators, especially in Russian-occupied areas, has drawn renewed attention. If Kyiv successfully regains significant territory, as it did in the fall of 2022, it will have to decide what to do with people in those areas who worked with or otherwise assisted Russian occupation authorities and forces in their repression of local populations and propaganda. Since the start of its illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Russia has been actively relying on collaborators to establish its control over the occupied territories, get information about military targets, help crush dissent and spread propaganda in occupied areas, and sabotage Ukrainian democracy from within, for example by infiltrating Ukrainian state institutions to assist Moscow's aggressive agenda.

For the Ukrainian government, there will be strong pressure to mete out harsh punishment against anyone suspected of helping the Russian side, regardless of the extent of the collaboration. After more than 15 months of brutal fighting in which Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure have often been targets of Russian attacks, Ukrainian

public opinion favors strong retribution against anyone who aided the enemy. Yet in areas under Russian occupation, there have been various forms of cooperation by some locals, not all of whom have actively sought to help Russia or harm Ukraine. Alongside purposeful collaborators are an assortment of Russia sympathizers or passive bystanders who, although not directly engaging in the war, bolster the [Russian invasion](#) through their ideological alignment or their indifference. As Ukraine liberates more of its territory, the government will face the crucial task of discerning among these different levels of involvement with the Russian side and determining how to deal with specific individuals in a way that best serves Ukraine and its democratic foundations.

One of the ways to tackle the collaboration problem is lustration, a transitional justice mechanism aimed at identifying individuals who pose a significant danger to democracy and often barring them from public positions. The instrument is familiar to many governments whose populations have emerged from the clutches of unsavory regimes, including central and eastern European states who struggled with their post-communist legacy. Indeed, [Ukraine](#) itself already went through a version of lustration in 2014, following the Maidan revolution. It sought to ban from public office a number of specified categories of individuals, including those who had served during the notoriously corrupt and pro-Russian administration of Viktor Yanukovich. Almost invariably, the challenge is balancing the desire to draw a bright line around the actions dangerous for the democratic order with the need to maintain due process and avoid unnecessarily and unfairly antagonizing a larger part of the population. At worst, a poorly executed lustration process can undermine democracy and lead to new instability—or even sow the seeds of future conflict.

For Ukraine, the stakes are high. In the heat of war, and its immediate aftermath, Kyiv must be able to coolly differentiate among dangerous collaborators, who pose or have posed a real threat to the country, a larger group of possible [Russia](#) sympathizers, and people who had no other choice but to coexist or even cooperate with the aggressor in some way, including under outright coercion. In doing so, Ukraine must look to the pitfalls of past lustration efforts and try to avoid them.

RESTRAINING ORDERS

As it has been practiced in countries such as Germany, Bosnia, and Iraq, lustration typically aims to identify people who have violated human rights or engaged in other compromising activities under a previous hostile regime or recent enemy occupation. Based on their past conduct and associations, such individuals may pose a significant threat to democracy. The goal is often to temporarily prevent these people from holding public positions, thereby safeguarding the democratic process. Designing and implementing such a policy, however, is not as simple as it may appear. History makes clear that the process requires restraint, including establishing safeguards to minimize potential risks and unintended consequences. This will be especially important in Ukraine, given the direction of popular sentiment and the brutality of the war.

Ukrainian attitudes toward suspected war criminals and collaborators are understandably intense. Many Ukrainians harbor a deep desire to exact severe retribution against such individuals. According to a poll conducted late last year, for example, 39 percent of polled Ukrainians said that lynching Russian war criminals is justified. A solid majority, 57 percent, said that no amnesty should be given to journalists who collaborated with Russia, and an even higher proportion of respondents—78 percent—said the same of local government and law enforcement officials who collaborated with Russia.

Until now, suspected collaborators have been primarily dealt with by Ukraine's law enforcement agencies and courts. Right after the full-scale invasion, in March 2022, Ukraine amended its criminal laws to deter and punish a broad spectrum of collaborative conduct. Those found guilty could receive a prison sentence of three to 15 years depending on the type and severity of the collaborative activities—or even life imprisonment if the actions led to serious harm or death. People convicted of collaboration crimes could also be fined, have their property confiscated, and be subject to a ten- or 15-year ban from certain public offices, including in state and local government.

Yet the Ukrainian criminal justice system may not be able to appropriately handle the issue of collaboration on its own. Ukrainian law enforcement bodies are already overloaded with war crimes and other war-related investigations. Among other problems, they may not have the resources and evidence required to criminally prosecute all different forms of behavior posing a threat to democracy. According to the estimates made by Ukrainian officials, under current Ukrainian law, more than 200,000 people in the Crimea alone may have committed collaboration crimes. The figure gives some indication of the scale of the problem Kyiv faces in areas that have been under Russian control, especially in those that Russia has illegally occupied since 2014. The justice system cannot appropriately handle such high numbers of criminal prosecutions. A formal administrative lustration process, overseen by an independent lustration agency, could effectively complement criminal trials of dangerous collaborators. And it could add flexibility, confronting less severe forms of collaboration by relaxing strict evidentiary standards that would be required in criminal proceedings.

WITCH HUNTS AND REVENGE RISKS

The most challenging aspect of designing an effective lustration policy is establishing a clear-cut definition of compromising or threatening conduct. On the one hand, a policy that is aimed at an overly broad group of potential collaborators or whose targeting criteria are too vague can morph into a large-scale witch hunt. Such a purge, which may be aimed at an entire social group or political parties, may create more problems than it solves. Nonetheless, governments may be tempted to pursue a maximalist approach when they want to deter potential collaboration and when popular opinion strongly

supports punishment. On the other hand, governments that fail to deal effectively with collaborators may invite vigilante justice or erode public trust in state institutions. For Ukrainians, there is also the risk that pro-Russia individuals left in important public positions will endanger Ukraine's democratic stability in the years to come.

The particular stresses that occupied populations have faced in Ukraine bring added complexity. Under harsh Russian control, some people have been forced to make difficult moral choices. Overbroad lustration policies may end up targeting people whose communities were occupied and who needed to engage in certain activities—such as keeping public enterprises running or teaching the Russian curriculum in schools under credible threats of harm—to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. Many people in such situations may have been coerced to do certain things, while others continued to meet the population's critical needs, such as providing medical services and utilities, while the Russians were in control. And in many such cases, there is a fine line between those who voluntarily supported unlawful policies and propaganda of the aggressor and those who had no real choice but to adhere to occupation authorities in some way. To add more complexity, those who voluntarily supported the unlawful policies may dishonestly claim that they were coerced.

An infamous more recent example of overly broad lustration was the de-Baathification policy pursued by U.S. authorities in Iraq after 2003. The policy sought to remove everyone in the top four ranks of the deposed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's Baath Party and everyone in the top three layers in each government ministry from public sector positions. In the end, 85,000 employees were driven out of and prevented from working in public service. Thousands of teachers who had been required to join the Baath Party to keep their jobs under Saddam were also removed from their positions. Skilled administrators and other professionals were forced underground with ruinous consequences for the Iraqi economy. In some cases, those who lost employment reportedly went on to join al Qaeda in Iraq and, subsequently, the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), helping the terrorist group conquer significant parts of Syria and Iraq.

Although there are many significant differences between the cases of Ukraine and Iraq, de-Baathification provides important lessons. One of the main deficiencies of the Iraqi policy was its focus on the collective responsibility of Baath Party members rather than on the individual conduct of influential functionaries, who could have been evaluated on a case-by-case basis or at least on more narrow criteria requiring individuals to be tangibly linked with compromising practices. In lacking this kind of precision, the blanket policy targeted some people who did not pose any threat to the new government and failed to target other dangerous individuals who happened not to be officially associated with the Baath Party. Moreover, procedures to appeal decisions were vague, inconsistent, and nontransparent.

The disastrous outcome of de-Baathification also underscores the large risk of lustration being improperly influenced by politics. In Iraq, the process reportedly became weaponized, for example, by members of the de-Baathification commissions who blackmailed political rivals for alleged Baathist sympathies. These lessons serve as a stark reminder of the need for a balanced and impartial lustration policy.

DEMOCRATIC DEFENSES

Ukraine has already experienced some of the pitfalls of an expansive approach to lustration in its recent history. Following the Maidan revolution in 2014, Ukraine banned from public service a number of categories of state officials, including those who had served for at least one year cumulatively during the pro-Russian Yanukovich administration. It also targeted those who maintained their positions during the Maidan demonstrations, as well as former managing members of the Soviet Communist Party and its affiliates, and agents of Soviet intelligence agencies. In a 2019 decision, the European Court of Human Rights found significant deficiencies in those policies. For example, the Ukrainian policy targeted state officials who failed to resign within one year after Yanukovich became president, even if they could not be shown to have significant connections to undemocratic activities. The court also found a violation of the right to a fair trial as Ukrainian courts failed to resolve the lustrated officials' complaints within a reasonable time frame.

Indeed, Ukraine should pay close attention to European Court of Human Rights case law when it designs any future lustration policies, to avoid more such legal challenges. Ukraine has ratified the European Convention of Human Rights, and the case law is binding for Ukraine and its national courts as a matter of both international and Ukrainian domestic law. Notably, the court confirms that lustration, when properly designed, can comply with human rights standards as a recognized tool of a “democracy capable of defending itself.” According to the court, a state can demand loyalty to democratic principles from its civil servants and even interfere with individual rights in order to protect democracy subject to certain requirements developed by the court's case law. Furthermore, the court deems states to have wide discretion in choosing measures to protect the democratic order from the legacy of authoritarian regimes, and this discretion is even more relevant in the context of the pending full-fledged international war.

The court specifies, however, that lustration as a form of democracy protection is not a blank check, and states need to follow a series of requirements. First, lustration must be conducted according to a law that is sufficiently clear and precise as to the criteria being used and the consequences to which a lustrated individual is subject. Second, lustration must be designed to pursue a clearly defined aim such as the protection of rights and freedoms, national security, or safeguarding democracy. And importantly, a policy “may not be used for punishment, retribution or revenge.” Third, lustration measures must be proportionate to the specified and legitimate aims. In this respect, policies

must convincingly link lustrated individuals to compromising forms of cooperation or collaboration and give a reasonable justification for any targeting criteria used. Last but not least, states must guarantee due process, including proper and timely judicial review of any measures.

For Ukraine, the case law provides an important reference point for any future lustration policy aimed at suspected Russian collaborators to ensure its legitimacy. Albeit the mentioned court jurisprudence considered peacetime lustration measures in the aftermath of the authoritarian regimes, it is still highly relevant considering that Ukrainian lustration policies will be aimed at safeguarding the democratic order beyond the end of the war.

LESS BAGHDAD, MORE PRAGUE

Even if lustration is recognized by European human rights standards as an appropriate means to protect democratic institutions, a larger question for Ukraine is whether such a policy could actually help it defend and strengthen its own democracy. In this regard, it is useful to consider how states have used lustration policies in recent decades, as well as the effect of those policies. Although Iraq provides a cautionary tale, the record shows that many states that have used lustration have generally succeeded in defending their democratic institutions. Our project, Transitional Justice Evaluation Tools, has analyzed 40 lustration policies between 1985 and 2020. The countries included in the analysis span eastern Europe, the Balkans, and post-Soviet Central Asia. Although some of these cases differ in important respects from present-day Ukraine in the context of international war, this research offers important insights into the effects of lustration on democratic resilience overall.

The study first examined the relationship between lustration policies and improvements in liberal democracy in the countries in question. To this end, it drew on quantitative measures developed by the Varieties of Democracy Project, which defines liberal democracy as the combination of free and fair elections, constitutionally protected civil liberties, an independent judiciary, and checks on the executive. As it turns out, lustration policies are associated with, on average, a seven percentage point improvement in liberal democracy. While this may seem like a small effect, there is seldom drastic change in regimes' democracy scores over time. That lustration is, on balance, associated with gradual movements toward the consolidation of liberal institutions is a statement about the ability of this mechanism to neutralize threats to democracy.

But the data also show that it matters how fair the policy is and how extensively it is applied. To measure fairness, the study registered whether lustration policies targeted individuals rather than whole political parties and whether they had at least minimal due process provisions that allowed for appeal or constitutional review. The study also counted how many distinct public institutions—including the executive branch, the

judiciary, the legislature, the public sector, and the security sector (police and military)—were targeted for screening. Most lustration policies target three to four of these sectors at a time. The study found, though, that the more institutions targeted for lustration, the greater the improvements to liberal democracy over time.

For instance, Czechoslovakia's 1991 Screening Act was extensive, in that it targeted a wide variety of institutions. All individuals seeking high-level elected or appointed positions in the state administration, security sector, judiciary, public media, academies of science, and state corporations had to submit a confidential certificate to an independent committee of the Ministry of the Interior concerning their collaboration with the secret police or Communist Party. By one count, somewhere around 345,000 were screened, and over 11,000 individuals were positively vetted. One difference between the Iraqi and the Czech approach—outside of the disparity in the number of banned individuals—was that the latter also provided outs for those who were vetted. Proven collaborators' vetting certificates were kept secret (though they were published over a decade later), those who were screened had a right to request their files and challenge the decision, and sometimes vetted individuals could be transferred to different public posts that posed less risk to the government. In short, those banned from office could still avoid a civic death.

One final question for comparative analysis is whether it is productive to ban individuals from public office simply based on their past party affiliation. This kind of issue regularly emerges when there is a public debate about lustration policy. In fact, in the 40 cases studied, there was no discernible relationship between screening for public office based on party affiliation alone and the future health of liberal democracy. The general implication of these findings is that banning people from office on the basis of fair and legal consideration of their past individual conduct can, under the right circumstances, have a positive effect on democracy. But the effect will be less positive if people are excluded simply for being involved in a particular party, unless there are additional criteria that can establish with some certainty that these individuals pose a continued risk to the country's democratic institutions.

USE A SCALPEL NOT A MACHETE

As Ukraine confronts the problem of Russian collaborators—and those who are suspected or accused of collaborationist activity—it faces difficult choices. If it is successful in liberating areas that have long been under Russian occupation, such as some parts of the Donbas and, potentially, the Crimea, it will have to deal with tens or even hundreds of thousands of people who could qualify for lustration under the loosest criteria. But the historical record makes clear that blunt, sweeping policies that lack appropriate targeting criteria or that border on purges are unlikely to succeed and could well backfire, undermining the same democratic institutions they are intended to strengthen.

Fortunately, the experience of other countries and the European Court of Human Rights case law provide important guidelines on how to make lustration both effective and

legal. The process can be used to ban or dismiss individuals from a wide variety of public institutions as long as there are clearly defined criteria for doing so, as well as clear due process, including proper and timely judicial review of any measures. In this regard, it will be crucial for Ukraine to develop criteria that specifically target individuals who pose a continuing threat to the democratic order and avoid targeting people who simply stayed in occupied territories or performed basic acts of cooperation with the enemy to save themselves and their families. Put simply, democracy-enhancing lustration should be done with a scalpel, not a machete. Also, the consequences and publicity of the lustration process should be proportional to the level of cooperation.

Second, and relatedly, the lustration process should be insulated as much as possible from potential political and corruption interests to avoid its weaponization. One of the ways to do this is to create an independent lustration body. Determining who serves on this body is critical. Its members should be respected, trustworthy, and nonpartisan people. Also, the timely and proper judicial review of the lustration measures must be guaranteed.

Finally, the law should clearly define the timespan and criteria that are in play. For example, laws should specify exactly how far back lustration boards will look for evidence of compromising conduct. Without a defined time frame and clear criteria, lustration can more easily become arbitrary and susceptible to abuses. The timespan and criteria help scale the implementation process and allocation of resources. It is also a question of legal certainty and due process. A potential general starting point is Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014. Still, calibrated exceptions are useful, such as targeting people affiliated with Russian intelligence agencies before 2014 and granting exceptions to people (depending on the severity of their prior conduct) who credibly changed their position following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion and helped Ukraine defend its independence.

Lustration policy should clearly define which forms of collaboration and what level of involvement in or connection to undemocratic practices qualify, to prevent the process from being used against individuals who do not pose a significant threat to the democratic order. The targeting criteria should cover individuals whose past conduct and associations create reasonable risks that they may continue or resume advancing Russian aggressive interests in their respective positions. Such threats to democracy may also include attempts to manipulate opinions, spread misinformation, and overall distort the democratic process. The ongoing presence of collaborators in state institutions can be a source of social tensions and contribute to divisions and potential violence. It could also undermine public trust in justice and accountability and, more broadly, democratic institutions.

That Ukraine is grappling with the thorny issues relating to formerly occupied areas is a significant triumph: at the start of the Russian full-scale invasion, few observers might have predicted that Kyiv would not only resist the onslaught but also be able to liberate

significant territory from Russian control. But this means that it will be all the more crucial for Ukraine to rebuild democracy in these areas—and address concerns about collaboration by the people who live in them. Indeed, the cohesion of Ukrainian society, as well as the country’s future security, may depend on it.

#17

Pomerantsev, Peter. 2023. “What lies behind Russia’s acts of extreme violence? Freudian analysis offers an answer.”

The Guardian, June 11. <https://bit.ly/46612Ri>

Beneath the veneer of Russian military “tactics”, you see the stupid leer of destruction for the sake of it. The Kremlin can’t create, so all that is left is to destroy. Not in some pseudo-glorious self-immolation, the people behind atrocities are petty cowards, but more like a loser smearing their faeces over life. In Russia’s wars the very senselessness seems to be the sense.

After the casual mass executions at Bucha; after the bombing of maternity wards in Mariupol; after the laying to waste of whole cities in Donbas; after the children’s torture chambers, the missiles aimed at freezing civilians to death in the dead of winter, we now have the apocalyptic sight of the waters of the vast Dnipro, a river that when you are on it can feel as wide as a sea, bursting through the destroyed dam at Kakhovka. The reservoir held as much water as the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Its destruction has already submerged settlements where more than 40,000 people live. It has already wiped out animal sanctuaries and nature reserves. It will decimate agriculture in the bread basket of Ukraine that feeds so much of the world, most notably in the Middle East and Africa. To Russian genocide add ecocide.

The dam has been controlled by Russia for more than a year. The Ukrainian government has been warning that Russia had plans to blast it since October.

Seismologists in Norway have confirmed that massive blasts, the type associated with explosives rather than an accidental breach, came from the reservoir the night of its destruction. Some – including the American pro-Putin media personality Tucker Carlson – argue Russia couldn’t be behind the devastation, given the damage has spread to Russian-controlled territories, potentially restricting water supply to Crimea. But if “Russia wouldn’t damage its own people” is your argument then it’s one that doesn’t hold, pardon the tactless pun, much water. One of the least accurate quotes about Russia is Winston Churchill’s line about it being “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.” This makes it sound as if Russia is driven by some theory of rational choice – when century after century the opposite appears to be the case.

ew have captured the Russian cycle of self-destruction and the destruction of others as well as the Ukrainian literary critic Tetyana Ogarkova. In her rewording of Fyodor Dostoevsky's Russian classic novel *Crime and Punishment*, a novel about a murderer who kills simply because he can, Ogarkova calls Russia a culture where you have “**crime without punishment**, and punishment without crime”. The powerful murder with impunity; the victims are punished for no reason. When not bringing humanitarian aid to the front lines, Ogarkova presents a **podcast** together with her husband, the philosopher Volodymyr Yermolenko. It's remarkable for showing two people thinking calmly while under daily bombardment. It reminds me of German-Jewish philosophers such as Walter Benjamin, who kept writing lucidly even as they fled the Nazis. As they try to make sense of the evil bearing down on their country, Ogarkova and Yermolenko note the difference between Hitler and Stalin: while Nazis had some rules about who they punished (non-Aryans; communists) in Stalin's terror anyone could be a victim at any moment. Random violence runs through Russian history. Reacting to how Vladimir Putin's Russia is constantly changing its reasons for invading Ukraine – from “denazification” to “reclaiming historic lands” to “Nato expansion” – Ogarkova and Yermolenko decide that the very brutal nature of the invasion is its essence: the war crimes are the point.

Russia claims to be a powerful “pole” in the world to balance the west – but has failed to create a successful political model others would want to join. So it has nothing left to offer except to drag everyone down to its own depths. “How dare you live like this,” went a resentful piece of graffiti by Russian soldiers in Bucha. “What's the point of the world when there is no place for Russia in it,” complains Putin. After the dam at Kakhovka was destroyed, a General Dobruzhinsky crowed on a popular Russian talkshow: “We should blow up the Kyiv water reservoir too.” “Why?” asked the host. “Just to show them.” But, as Ogarkova and Yermolenko explore, Russians also send their soldiers to die senselessly in the meat grinder of the Donbas, their bodies left uncollected on the battlefield, their relatives not informed of their death so as to avoid paying them. On TV, presenters praise how “no one knows how to die like us”. Meanwhile, villagers on the Russian-occupied side of the river are being abandoned by the authorities. Being “liberated” by Russia means joining its empire of humiliation.

Where does this drive to annihilation come from? In 1912 the Russian-Jewish psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein – who was murdered by the Nazis, while her three brothers were killed in Stalin's terror -first put forward the idea that people were drawn to death as much as to life. She drew on themes from Russian literature and folklore for her theory of a death drive, but the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, first found her ideas too morbid. After the First World War, he came to agree with her. The desire for death was the desire to let go of responsibility, the burden of individuality, choice, freedom – and sink back into inorganic matter. To just give up. In a culture such as Russia's, where avoiding facing up to the dark past with all its complex webs of guilt and responsibility is commonplace, such oblivion can be especially seductive.

But Russia is also sending out a similar message to Ukrainians and their allies with these acts of ultra-violent biblical destruction: give in to our immensity, surrender your struggle. And for all Russia's military defeats and actual socio-economic fragility, this propaganda of the deed can still work.

The reaction in the west to the explosion of the dam has been weirdly muted. Ukrainians are mounting remarkable rescue operations, while Russia continues to shell semi-submerged cities, but they are doing it more or less alone. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has been mystified by the "zero support" from international organisations such as the UN and Red Cross.

Perhaps the relative lack of support comes partly because people feel helpless in the face of something so immense, these Cecil B DeMille-like scenes of giant rivers exploding. It's the same helplessness some feel when faced with the climate crisis. It's apposite that the strongest response to Russia's ecocide came not from governments but the climate activist Greta Thunberg, who clearly laid the blame of what happened on Russia and demanded it be held accountable. But there's been barely a peep out of western governments or the UN.

Pushing the strange lure of death, oblivion and just giving up is the Russian gambit. How much life do we have left in us?

#18

Applebaum, Anne. 2023. "The True Purpose of Ukraine's Counteroffensive."

The Atlantic, June 8. <https://bit.ly/45VT6lG>

Kyiv needs to show Russians that the war is not worth fighting.

Groups calling themselves the Free Russia Legion and the Russian Volunteer Corps have launched raids inside Russia. Drones have flown over Moscow, damaging what may be the homes of Russian intelligence officers and buzzing the Kremlin itself. Unusually intense fighting has been reported this week in several parts of eastern Ukraine, with completely different versions of events provided by Russians and Ukrainians. Conflicts have also been reported between the Russian mercenaries of the Wagner Group and the soldiers of the regular Russian army.

What does it all mean? That the Ukrainian counteroffensive has begun.

In a week that also marks the 79th anniversary of D-Day, we should note the many ways in which this military action does not, and probably will not, resemble the Normandy landing. Perhaps at some point there will be a lot of Ukrainian troops massed in one place, taking huge casualties—or perhaps not. Perhaps there will be a galvanized, coordinated

Russian military response—or perhaps the response will look more like it did on Tuesday, when a dam that was under direct Russian control collapsed, leading to the inundation of southern Ukraine. Nor was that the only disaster: A series of smaller man-made floods has also washed over Russian-occupied territories in the past few days.

This counteroffensive will also look different from the D-Day movies because Ukraine's goals are not merely military. Yes, Ukrainian troops are probing Russian defenses up and down the 1,000-kilometer front line. Yes, the Ukrainians are conducting “shaping operations,” hitting ammunition dumps and other targets behind Russian lines. Yes, Ukraine wants to take back territory lost since February 2022, as well as territory lost in 2014. Yes, we know the Ukrainians can do it, because they've done it before. They fought the Russians out of northern Ukraine at the very beginning of the war. They recaptured Russian-held parts of the Kharkiv district in September, and the city of Kherson a couple of months later.

But in addition to taking back land, they are also conducting a sort of psychological shaping operation: They have to convince the Russian elite that the war was a mistake and that Russia can't win it, not in the short term and not in the long term, either. Toward this end, they are also seeking to convince ordinary Russians that they aren't as safe as they thought, that the war is nearer to their own homes than they believed, and that President Vladimir Putin isn't as wise as they imagined. And the Ukrainians have to do all of this without a full-scale invasion of Russia, without occupying Moscow, and without a spectacular Russian surrender in Red Square.

The anti-Putin Russians fighting in Russia are part of that battle. This group, which seems to contain some authentic Russian extremists and some authentic opponents of Putin (but may also contain Ukrainians pretending to be Russian extremists or opponents of Putin), does have a military purpose. These incursions can help neutralize the immediate border zone, and draw Russian troops away from more important battles. The group's leaders appear to have killed a senior Russian officer and are said to have taken prisoners.

But they, too, are part of a different game. As one of the group's members (nickname “Caesar”) told *The New York Times*, they aim to provide “a demonstration to the people of Russia that it is possible to create resistance and fight against the Putin regime inside Russia.” By their very existence, they prove that apathy is not mandatory, that the Russian nation is not unified, and that no one is secure just because they live inside the borders of Russia.

The drones in Moscow could have the same effect. I don't know who launched them—Ukrainian special forces, Russian saboteurs, or Ukrainian special forces pretending to be Russian saboteurs. But the effect is the same: They show Muscovites that no one is untouchable, not even the residents of the Kremlin. Maybe they won't persuade people to “create resistance and fight against the Putin regime,” but they might help persuade people to start thinking about what comes next.

And indeed, some people are clearly thinking about what comes next. Although no evidence indicates that Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the Wagner mercenaries, is actively trying to eliminate Putin, he does seem to be part of a competition to replace him, should the Russian president accidentally fall out a window. During an interview Monday, he mocked the luxurious life of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu's daughter, implied that Shoigu himself is lazy, and described the chief of the general staff throwing "paranoid tantrums, yelling and squealing at anyone surrounding him." We are, he said, "two months away from the firing squads"—by which he meant the firing squads that will eliminate these degenerate leaders. One Russian officer who said he had been captured and interrogated by the Wagner Group issued a statement claiming that Prigozhin's men were threatening and humiliating Russian soldiers. Prigozhin, in turn, says the regular Russian army opened fire on his mercenaries and left land mines to obstruct their movement.

In this context, the destruction not just of the big dam on the Dnipro River but of other dams and waterways all across occupied Ukraine has a clear purpose. Floods create chaos, forcing the Ukrainian state to care for evacuees. They put large, unexpected bodies of water between the Ukrainians and Russian forces, making it impossible to move equipment. These actions also send a psychological message: We will do anything—anything—to stop you. We don't care how it looks. We don't care who it damages. Confirmed reports say that the Russian occupation regime is not rescuing people stranded on the roof of their house by the flood, and that the Russian army is shelling people engaged in rescue operations. Russian soldiers have also drowned, Ukrainian spokespeople believe. An army that was willing to waste tens of thousands of men in the pointless nine-month battle of Bakhmut is unlikely to care.

Remember that all of this—the weird psyops, the exploded dam, the Russian infighting—has unfolded even before anyone has reliably spotted the Western-trained, Western-equipped Ukrainian brigades that are meant to lead this counteroffensive. On Tuesday, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced with great fanfare that it had destroyed some of this equipment, including a German Leopard 2 tank. Hours later, Russian bloggers examined the video clips they produced. Alas, the objects destroyed seem to be not Leopard tanks but John Deere tractors. Future reports from the Russian ministry should be treated with caution.

Future reports from any source should be treated with caution. What we can see is not the "fog of war," in the old-fashioned sense; instead it is a kind of swirling tornado, a maelstrom of claims and counterclaims, memes and countermemes, real battles taking place away from television screens and fake ones happening on camera. The Normandy landings were followed by a long, bloody Allied slog through France, which no one back home watched in real time. The certainty that D-Day was a true turning point emerged only in retrospect. This Ukrainian counteroffensive is, so far, disappointing fans of panoramic drama, set-piece battles, and heroic tales. Those might, or might not, come later. In the meantime, remember that the true purpose of the counteroffensive is not your entertainment.

#19

Desmarais, Agathe. 2023. "No, Russia Is Not Massively Skirting Sanctions."

Foreign Policy, May 25. <https://bit.ly/465GPLk>

Reading media reports, one could get the impression that Moscow is easily skirting Western sanctions. Articles abound describing how murky firms in Kazakhstan, Turkey, or the United Arab Emirates are funneling shipments of technology and other sanctioned goods to Russia. Trade statistics also show unusual spikes of shipments from several European Union countries to Armenia in 2022, suggesting that this country may have turned into a hub for sanctioned trade. Moscow agrees: The Kremlin has long denied that sanctions are even having an impact on the Russian economy.

Yet a sober look at the data paints a more nuanced picture. Russia is certainly managing to evade some sanctions, but on a scale that is probably more limited than media reports and Kremlin statements claim. Here are eight key takeaways from what we really know about Moscow's sanctions-dodging.

1. Not all Russian trade is sanctions evasion. Only the United States, the European Union, and some of their allies are imposing sanctions on Russia. This means that only Western companies need to respect sanctions, both in their direct dealings with Russia and their business with third countries. (If a European firm records a jump in sanctioned high-tech exports to Kazakhstan, it is required to investigate whether something fishy is going on). Conversely, countries not participating in sanctions are mostly free to do business with Russia as they please.

Even in Western economies, many firms can still trade with Russia. EU sanctions, for example, cover just 49 percent of the bloc's exports to Russia, based on 2021 trade data. Western governments have not imposed sanctions on food, medical supplies, and other civilian goods in order to avoid harming ordinary Russians. As a result, sanctions did not prevent Europe's exports of food and medicine to Russia from increasing in 2022. Also up are Russia's wheat exports, which boomed to record levels last year, although part of the increase may be due to illegal shipments coming from occupied Ukraine.

2. Evasion is as old as sanctions. In 1806, French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte imposed an embargo against British trade: Ships coming from Britain could not unload cargo in French ports or those of French-controlled Europe. The British quickly adapted to what became known as the Continental Blockade, providing one of the first modern examples of sanctions evasion. London reoriented trade routes towards the United States and established smuggling routes to continental Europe.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, and all sanctions regimes are being circumvented in some way. North Korea is illegally importing oil, thanks to ship-to-ship transfers between untracked oil tankers in the East China Sea. Iran periodically manages to send

oil cargoes to Greece. As long as sanctions exist, various actors—from murky entities to respected European banks—will cash in by helping sanctioned countries or firms skirt these measures. This does not mean that sanctions do not work. Quite the opposite: If sanctions had no impact, demand for complex, risky, and time-consuming schemes to dodge them would be far lower.

3. Evading sanctions is hard for a big country like Russia. Western sanctions against Russia are comprehensive, targeting both Moscow's access to finance and its ability to trade. Since 2014, sanctions have made it nearly impossible for the Kremlin to raise money abroad for energy projects. After the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Western countries started to target Russian imports of high-tech goods (such as semiconductors) in a bid to constrain Russia's ability to build military gear, as well as exports of hydrocarbons to curb the Kremlin's revenues.

The Russian economy is so large that schemes to evade sanctions or shift trade elsewhere cannot fully make up for lost business. This is not surprising: Russia is the world's ninth-largest economy, with imports of more than \$300 billion in 2021. For small countries, such as North Korea, Cuba, or Belarus, successful sanctions-dodging can be small enough to happen under the radar—for instance, through so-called suitcase trade in smuggled goods. Conversely, doing illicit business with Russia on a scale large enough to meet the needs of its nearly \$2 trillion-a-year economy would be hard to conceal.

4. China is not a major enabler. China is not big on evading sanctions. Last year, Beijing imported more oil and gas from Russia than it did in 2021. However, this was not sanctions evasion, since firms around the world are free to buy Russian oil as long as it is priced below \$60 per barrel if Western shipping companies or insurance firms are involved. When it comes to exporting goods to Russia, Chinese firms appear to be cautious: Chinese customs data shows that there is no sign of a boom in China's shipments to Russia.

Two reasons underpin Beijing's lack of willingness to evade sanctions. First, China is struggling just as much as Russia to get hold of advanced microchips; in 2022, Western countries curbed the ability of both Russia and China to import sophisticated semiconductors and the equipment to make them. Second, Chinese businesses worry that the United States could soon impose secondary sanctions on Russia. In such a scenario, Chinese firms would need to exit the Russian market in a rush—or risk being sanctioned themselves.

5. Russia is not swamped with smuggled high-tech goods. Russia's high-tech imports from several nonsanctioning economies, such as Armenia, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and the United Arab Emirates, have surged over the past year, giving credence to the idea that Moscow is easily dodging sanctions. Media reports on this issue conveniently forget to mention that there is a catch: Such eye-popping growth rates invariably come from a very low base.

Take Turkey, whose semiconductor exports to Russia quadrupled in 2022. That sounds like a lot—until you note that the total reached only \$489 million at most—and probably less, since this amount includes other advanced electronic products. Although this figure does not capture smuggling, even several times the amount would remain far below Russia’s needs. In 2021, Russia’s imports of high-tech components, including semiconductors, topped \$13 billion, and Russia’s microchip needs have no doubt increased further since the start of the war; semiconductors are a critical component for missiles and other military gear. If Russia were really swamped with smuggled semiconductors, it would not have to resort to harvesting chips from fridges or dishwashers, as has been widely reported.

6. Oil exports remain an area of concern. Western countries are seeking to curb Moscow’s revenues through restrictions on Russian oil exports. These measures take two forms: embargoes on imports of Russian crude (in the EU, for instance) and the G-7 oil price cap, which prevents Russia from exporting oil priced above \$60 per barrel whenever Western companies are involved. The cap has had mixed results: It appears to be well-respected in Russian Baltic Sea ports, which mostly serve India now, but less so in Russia’s Far East, from where oil is shipped to a variety of emerging economies.

The data is stark: In the first quarter of 2023, 96 percent of the oil shipped from the huge Russian Pacific Ocean port of Kozmino was sold above the price cap, for an average price of \$73 per barrel. More than half of these shipments involved Western shipping or insurance firms, pointing to widespread illegal evasion of the G-7 price cap. Looking ahead, implementing the oil price cap could also become increasingly difficult as Moscow builds a sanctions-proof supply chain to export its oil, complete with Russian-owned ships and insurance services.

7. Tackling sanctions evasion is hard. Tackling sanctions evasion is like whack-a-mole; as soon as one loophole is closed, various actors get busy creating other lucrative schemes to circumvent sanctions. This does not mean that nothing can be done to address this issue. Convincing third countries not to turn a blind eye to sanctions evasion is a first step. It may yield results: In September 2022, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Vietnam abruptly stopped using Mir, Russia’s payments system for fear of breaching U.S. sanctions.

Secondary sanctions are another option. Only the United States uses such penalties, which force companies around the world to make a choice between trading with the sanctioned country or the United States. Most firms choose to stay in the U.S. market. So far, U.S. secondary sanctions target only the Russian defense sector, but they could be expanded to other areas. Washington will tread carefully: Russia is such a big commodity exporter that imposing secondary sanctions on Moscow would fuel a spike in commodity prices.

8. Sanctions evasion does not mean sanctions do not work. In the first quarter of 2023, Moscow’s receipts from oil exports fell by \$15.6 billion compared the same quarter in 2022, a drop of 29 percent. Around three-quarters of this drop was due to sanctions;

the rest was mainly the effect of declining oil prices. As a result, over these same three months, the Russian Finance Ministry reported a \$30 billion government budget deficit, a whopping 82 percent of the full-year deficit target. This is making it harder for the Kremlin to finance the war. Sanctions evasion is happening, but the bigger picture is a different one. Sanctions are working, and evasion is not much more than a drop in the ocean.

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#20

Hinshaw, Drew, Thomas Grove, Gordon Lubold and Sharon Weinberger. 2023.

“Russian Cruise Missile That Struck Poland Exposes NATO’s Air Defenses.”

Wall Street Journal, May 30. <https://bit.ly/43J2lnN>

WARSAW -- A cruise missile launched during a Russian barrage of Ukraine crossed into Poland last December then slammed into a patch of forest about 10 miles from a NATO training center, exposing challenges to defending the alliance’s airspace, according to Western officials.

The details of the missile remained unknown to the public until April, when a horseback rider found the debris in the forest outside the city of Bydgoszcz and local authorities were alerted. Bydgoszcz is home to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s Joint Force Training Center, which conducts tactical training for alliance members.

While the Polish government has so far declined to identify the debris pending an investigation, security analysts and Western officials say the evidence points to a variant of the KH-55, a cruise missile that Russia had been using to fool Ukrainian air-defense systems.

In November, the U.K. Ministry of Defense reported that Russia was taking older cruise missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons, stripping them of their warheads and then launching them into Ukraine as decoys.

The Russian embassy in Washington, D.C., didn’t respond to a request for comment on the incident.

How a Russian missile penetrated Polish airspace and flew more than halfway across the country without being intercepted has triggered an investigation in Poland and prompted

questions inside NATO over how to respond to potential air threats. The missile crashed into Poland about one month after a separate incident, in which a Ukrainian surface-to-air defense missile malfunctioned and landed near the southern Polish town of Przewodó, killing two agricultural workers.

“The conflict is going to last a while, and this won’t be the last time a missile goes off course,” said Tom Karako, a senior fellow with the International Security Program and the director of the Missile Defense Project at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies. “You only get so many warnings before you actually have to deal with a problem.”

On Dec. 16, Ukraine alerted Poland that the long-range air forces of Russia were operating in the area, a Polish official told The Wall Street Journal. After Polish radar detected an object flying in the country’s airspace, two U.S. Air Force F-15 jet fighters based in Poland and two Polish-operated MiG-29s flying in the area failed to identify the missile visually or with their onboard radars, a Polish official said.

Weather that day included heavy cloud coverage, along with freezing rain and fog, limiting visibility.

The White House and the Pentagon didn’t respond to requests for comment about the involvement of U.S. aircraft in the incident or the Russian missile.

After the missile vanished from radar screens, the Polish military determined it wasn’t connected to a nuclear, biological or chemical attack, but never conducted an extensive search for the object, the Polish official said.

NATO doesn’t have a protocol for searching for debris after something is detected, the official added.

On April 27, the Defense Ministry announced that the remains of a missile had been found in the forest near Bydgoszcz, setting off a domestic political controversy over why information about a potential incursion hadn’t been released earlier. Poland’s government hasn’t confirmed the missile was launched from Russia, but officials there say that it likely veered off course unintentionally.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said earlier this month the U.S. had been in touch with Poland about the missile, and was trying to find out more.

Following the November missile incident that killed two agricultural workers, Germany offered to send Patriot air-defense systems to Poland. Those Patriots didn’t start arriving in Poland until January, after the Russian cruise missile crashed, and they are scheduled to return to Germany this year because of the limited supply of air-defense systems.

Cruise missiles can malfunction if operators input coordinates incorrectly, if their onboard systems misread the terrain, or if an opposing military emits fake GPS signals to confuse its navigation instruments, a tactic Ukraine has used.

But even a missile that enters NATO territory by mistake risks triggering a potential escalation.

While the ability of a foreign missile to strike Poland has raised questions about the country's ability to defend its airspace, the Polish official said there was no operational failure. Assuming anything identified on radar is a threat could lead to catastrophe, the Polish official said, pointing to past shootdowns of passenger aircraft, such as the Ukraine International Airlines flight shot down over Iran in 2020.

"You cannot take the decision to shoot it down just based on the radar records," the official said.

Polish President Andrzej Duda, who received an internal report on the missile earlier this month, has declined to discuss the incident. "Everything that is being discussed by the media right now is just speculation," Duda told the Journal in an interview.

A NATO official declined to comment on the missile incident, but confirmed that Duda spoke with General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg earlier this month, after the debris was found.

"NATO constantly keeps our air and missile defense posture under review to ensure deterrence and defense for all Allies," the official said.

Aside from missiles, errant drones have veered into the territory of Ukraine's NATO neighbors. Last April, one bomb-laden unmanned Soviet-era drone flew all the way across Hungary and into Croatia before it crashed about 150 feet from a college dormitory. Ukraine and Russia both blamed each other for the near miss.

--*Karolina Jeznach contributed to this article.*

#21

Ponomarenko, Illia. 2023. "Russia's Kinzhal Missile Is Not Hypersonic. Nor Is It Invincible."

Kyiv Independent, May 25. <https://bit.ly/3OEZmrH>

When the Kremlin says something, it should always be taken with a grain of salt. When it says something about its military prowess, one should take the claim with an entire salt mine.

For years, Russia's Kinzhal missile was portrayed by the Kremlin's propaganda machine as an invincible, cutting-edge hypersonic weapon, symbolizing Russia's supremacy in advanced military tech.

The realities of the battlefield, however, have shown the true capabilities of the missile, also known as Kh-47M2.

The Ukrainian military successfully intercepted the first Kinzhal with the advanced Western-provided Patriot air defense system in May. As Ukrainian authorities showed the debris of the destroyed Kinzhal, Russia's propaganda myth about its invincibility crumbled.

The Kinzhal was never a truly hypersonic weapon – a supposedly advanced military technology that the United States and China spent years developing, but that has yielded minimal results.

Behind years of Russia's propagandistic bravado, the Kinzhal was, in essence, closer to a ballistic missile Iskander that was adapted for being launched from supersonic aircraft, something Western arms experts repeatedly stated.

The “invincible” Kinzhal's failure to the U.S.-made Patriot in Ukraine is just the latest episode of the Kremlin's humiliation, as the whole world was watching.

How does it work?

Russian dictator Vladimir Putin introduced the Kh-47M2 Kinzhal (“Dagger”) during an address to Russia's parliament in early 2018.

Putin presented it as a full-fledged hypersonic missile system that is capable of reaching a Mach 10 (roughly 10 times the speed of sound or up to some 12,000 kilometers per hour).

Putin went as far as to call the Kinzhal “the ideal weapon” that “all of the world's leading militaries want to have.”

Also, according to Putin, the Kinzhal can maneuver along its flight path toward its target, rendering it impossible to intercept by any of the world's operational air and missile defense systems.

The Soviet-made Mikoyan MiG-31, one of the fastest jets ever produced, in the MiG-31K (the K being for Kinzhal) modification is the Kinzhal's primary carrier.

According to the Russians, the Tu-22M3M and Tu-160 strategic bombers can also carry Kinzhals, potentially along with the Sukhoi Su-57, a handful of which Russia has in limited service.

Each MiG-31K can carry just one Kinzhal missile at a time.

It works in roughly the following way: A MiG-31K takes an altitude of some 15 kilometers and reaches the supersonic speed of some Mach 2.8. The aircraft then launches the missile from the stratosphere for reduced air resistance, which serves as a booster.

According to the Russians, the missile gains an altitude of 20 kilometers and follows a quasi-ballistic flight path at the speed of Mach 10, which allegedly makes it too fast and too maneuverable to detect, predict its path, and impossible to intercept.

The “invincible” hypersonic Kinzhal, according to the Russians, with the use of the MiG-31K, has an operational range of some 2,000 kilometers and can carry a nuclear warhead.

The Kremlin invested a lot into propaganda that portrayed Russia as the sole leader in hypersonic technology and, moreover, as the first military power to ever use hypersonic weapons in combat.

What the Kremlin propagandists were not too eager to reveal about the Kinzhal was that it was not a brand new design – but a modification of the Iskander missile.

As a surface-to-surface short-range, tactical ballistic missile system, the Iskander’s design dates back to the 1980s and is also widely used against Ukraine.

Amid the hypersonic race in the 2010s, Russia adapted the Iskander missile to be launched not from the ground but an aircraft – and called this a hypersonic missile system Kh-47M2 Kinzhal.

But to be called a hypersonic missile armament, it’s not enough to just travel at the speed of over Mach 5.

Pretty much any ballistic missile reaches hypersonic speed. That includes Iskanders, any intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), or even Nazi Germany’s V-2 missiles used in 1944 and 1945.

To be considered a truly hypersonic weapon, a missile must also be highly maneuverable at a hypersonic speed.

Despite Putin’s unsupported claims, the Kinzhal has never demonstrated anything more than minor flight course corrections, which is typical for many conventional ballistic systems.

In a 2020 report, NATO classified the Kinzhal as an “air-launched ballistic missile” that is “not generally characterized as a hypersonic weapon.”

However, as NATO noted, it is often included in discussions of hypersonic weapons “due to its similarities which feature a maneuverable re-entry vehicle.”

“...Russia’s designation of the Kinzhal as a ‘hypersonic’ missile is somewhat misleading,” as the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a U.S.-based think tank, says in its Missile Threat database.

“Nearly all ballistic missiles reach hypersonic speeds (i.e., above Mach 5) at some point during their flight.”

So just like any other aeroballistic missile, the Kinzhal was an impossible target for Ukraine’s air defenses before the acquisition of the Patriots.

Russia’s Defense Ministry also insists the Kinzhal strike has an accuracy rate of just one meter. Reaching a speed of Mach 10 may also be another one of Putin’s unsupported claims, according to U.S.-based media outlet Popular Mechanics.

The original Iskander is believed to reach between Mach 6 and 7. And since the Kinzhal has essentially the same engine, it’s likely that it can develop roughly the same speed, Popular Mechanics believes – although the supersonic jet and the high altitude can add “a little” to the missile speed.

In other words, the Kremlin did what it’s always good at – faking its leading role in the hypersonic race via propagandistic narratives and exaggerated figures.

Tried in battle

The first confirmed combat use of Kinzhal occurred on March 18, 2022, when the missile hit a munitions depot in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast in western Ukraine.

According to Ukraine’s military, another Kinzhal strike on May 9, 2022, wiped out a shopping mall and a food depot in Odesa, injuring three civilians. During yet another massive missile strike targeting the Ukrainian energy infrastructure on March 9, 2023, Russia reportedly fired six Kinzhal missiles.

Ukraine’s Air Force repeatedly stated that it had no means to intercept Kinzhals. For a year and a half since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale war, every single takeoff of Russian MiG-31K in Belarus has triggered a nationwide air raid alert in all of Ukraine’s regions.

Things changed when in late April, Ukraine finally acquired two MIM-104 Patriot batteries provided by the U.S. and Germany. The Ukrainian military specifically requested Patriots in a bid to fill the gap in the country’s defense against Russia’s ballistic missiles.

On May 4, a Ukrainian-operated MIM-104 Patriot PAC-3 CRI specialized in ballistic targets performed a confirmed successful interception of Russia's "unstoppable" weapon.

According to Ukraine's Air Force, as many as six Kinzhal missiles were also successfully intercepted during a May 16 air battle over Kyiv.

According to Ukraine's Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov, following two clashes with the Patriot systems, Russia may have around 73 Kinzhal missiles left in stockpile.

Hypersonic arms race

Meanwhile, the global race for mastering true hypersonic weapons continues. Russia claims to operate six Avangard hypersonic glide vehicles – essentially warheads mounted in nuclear-carrying ICMBs UR-100 TTH – that can allegedly travel at Mach 28.

The Chinese have their experimental WU-14/ZF-DF glide vehicle, while the U.S. Navy in March sought some \$900 million for a Conventional Prompt Strike hypersonic program.

Despite a lot of hype, self-maneuvering advanced hypersonic weapons are still in development, and creating a real hypersonic missile will be much harder than just falsely proclaiming older missiles are hypersonic.

Due to multiple failed tests, in March 2023, the U.S. Air Force terminated Lockheed Martin's AGM-183 ARRW project to develop a hypersonic air-to-surface missile, also a glide vehicle design.

And when it comes to hypersonic cruise missiles – something that Russia's Kinzhal aspires to be – the situation is even more complicated. Such things would almost certainly require a highly-effective scramjet (supersonic combustion ramjet), the kind of airbreathing jet engine that allows for combustion to run at extremely high speeds. So far, such an engine remains a technology that no nation has mastered.

Though the U.S. reportedly had a successful early test of such an engine with a cruise missile in March 2022, so far, this component, and with it, the hypersonic technology, remains very expensive and experimental.

#22

Abibok, Yulia. 2023. "How I Ended Up Despising My Mother Tongue in Ukraine."

Global Voices, June 7. <https://bit.ly/3J7yYDd>

As a child, I heard stories from old ladies who witnessed the Nazi occupation of the Soviet Union. They told me that for decades after that, they could not bear listening to the German language, but I never believed them. In a couple of decades, however, I myself could not bear listening to Russian, my mother tongue.

It now sounds more foreign than any language I've ever encountered, even though I still speak it myself sometimes. There are no objective obstacles to me using Russian — I simply don't want to use it anymore. I also no longer think in Russian.

Today, my Russian is reserved solely for my sixty-something-year-old parents, who are already stressed enough because of the war and barely understand these political and psychological nuances around the Russian language in Ukraine today. They have spoken this language for their entire lives. For the rest, among people who speak Russian and know that someone from Ukraine also speaks Russian, the proper thing to do is to first ask whether it is acceptable to switch to Russian. I especially appreciate my Russian colleagues who either ask or just continue addressing me in English as if we don't share any other common language. And some of them are learning Ukrainian now.

In search of a community

My story is far from unique. In Ukraine, the overwhelming number of Russian speakers — most of us are bilingual — switched to Ukrainian following the full-scale Russian invasion of 2022. Language became the primary marker of an ally.

We switch not only in public; now, we communicate in Ukrainian via messengers, in private telephone conversations, and at home with family and guests. This creates a sense of security in the highly insecure environment of our cities, which are being constantly shelled by people who see our state as a historical misunderstanding and its language and culture as distorted provincial versions of the Russian language and culture. Using the Ukrainian language now signals mutual understanding. Many of us tried to leverage our Russian to negotiate with war supporters in Russia in the first months of 2022, but as our attempts to influence their position failed, using Russian now only evokes trauma. We are not doing this anymore, and the Russian language has lost any meaning in Ukraine outside of online trolling.

This newly found sense of unity among millions of Ukrainian speakers created a flow of memes and jokes like the following one from early 2022, about Russian troops entering the Chernobyl exclusion zone. An old lady from a few remaining locals saw soldiers digging trenches in the area of a forest contaminated with dangerous chemicals. "Boys,

what are you doing?! This is the Red Forest!” She shouted at them in Ukrainian, believing them to be Ukrainian soldiers. “What? What are you saying?” one soldier asked in Russian with a recognizable non-Ukrainian pronunciation. Realising she was talking to the invaders, the woman replied in Russian, “I’m saying: Dig, boys, dig!”

That is, even those in Ukraine who do not speak Ukrainian speak Russian with a Ukrainian accent. It is especially recognizable by the Ukrainian soft “g” which we spell in English as “h.” In Donetsk, the eastern Ukrainian city where I was born and grew up, we also used some Ukrainian words instead of Russian, like buryak for beetroot instead of the Russian svekla, maybe, because it is the key ingredient of borshch, the traditional Ukrainian soup. In that area, we put almost no or just no beetroot into borshch, however. In a word, everything has been complicated there.

My city was overwhelmingly Russian-speaking. Throughout my childhood, I only knew one person who spoke Ukrainian: the mother of my classmate who came from another region. She sounded alien to me. In the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, we still watched Russian TV. It had much richer content, and it broadcast engaging TV shows and new movies while the Ukrainian film industry lay in ruins. In the 2000s, that same content gradually became an instrument of Russia’s new nationalist and chauvinist state propaganda.

Until recently, almost everything Ukrainian, especially on TV, continued to look marginal and second-sort. A new media product had potential only when launched in Russian so it could reach a wider audience of Russian speakers in the entire former Communist bloc. This remained the trend even after 2014 when Russia attacked Ukraine in the south and east.

Homeless language

There is a long and complicated history of how we ended up like this. The people in the territory of today’s Ukraine were never outside of European political and cultural processes. The foundation of the Ukrainian literary tradition emerged in the late 18th to early 19th centuries, the same period when the Russian language literature in Russia was first written and published. The greatest Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko, was a contemporary of Alexandr Pushkin, Adam Mickiewicz, Johann Goethe, and George Byron, with the major and very characteristic difference being that those were noblemen and Shevchenko was a nobleman’s slave.

From 1240 until 1991, the (proto) Ukrainian culture belonged to no state. Until 1945, it existed in an area divided by several empires and republics. Miraculously, for all these centuries, those different parts maintained a dialogue with one another. The wave of repressions against the Ukrainian language in the Russian empire led to the relocation of printing activities to the territory under the Habsburgs; the attempts of forced assimilation under Poland in the 1920–1930s caused local Ukrainian intellectuals from the

West to join the post-revolutionary cultural drive in the early Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. It didn't end well, however, with the majority of those called later the Executed Renaissance either committing suicide or being, indeed, executed under Stalin's repressive regime in the early 1930s.

In 2014 and later, many people from my area who know Ukrainian very well, including me, still continued speaking Russian out of protest, being constantly attacked and stigmatized in our own state only for belonging to that "separatist" and "pro-Russian" region speaking "the wrong" language. In 2022, all these sentiments became irrelevant. By invading the entire country, Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, put all of us in the same position and left us no choice. So he managed to accomplish what all the previous generations of Ukrainian patriots failed: to Ukrainize Ukraine, in several days or weeks. Ukrainian, once a provincial "language of a village," became the main language of those young, well-educated, creative, socially and politically active, and relatively well-off, with those who spoke Russian generally being older, less educated, poorer, and now marginal.

In 2022, almost everyone in Ukraine made sure that Ukrainian is rich, flexible, and sexy. The long-repressed language finally found its home in the land of its origin.

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