

# Brussels Ukraine Review



**GEORGES DALLEMAGNE:  
“NOT GRANTING UKRAINE  
CANDIDATE STATUS WOULD BE  
TERRIBLE MISTAKE”**

**OKSANA BULDA:  
“DELUKOILISATION OF BELGIUM”**

**“MARIUPOL AT GUNPOINT”  
INTERVIEW**

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**P | Promote  
Ukraine**

Brussels Ukraine Review

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# EDITOR'S FOREWORD

*On 24th February, the worst forecast we made at the Brussels Ukraine Review late last year came true. Putin's "winter military exercises" have grown into a full-scale invasion. This immediately wiped out the entire system of international security that the world's nations had been building for decades to prevent a Third World War.*

In fact, World War III is already underway. Its transition to the hot stage is hindered only by Ukraine's resistance to Russian aggression – at the cost of tens (and maybe hundreds) of thousands of lives; at the cost of the unwavering spirit of the Ukrainian army, volunteers and civil society. After all, if Vladimir Putin's venture in Ukraine had succeeded, all dictatorial regimes would have received a signal that military aggression in the modern geopolitical paradigm would never be punished. And then most sluggish conflicts around the world would go into a hot phase.

Now that Ukraine's army is holding back Russian occupying forces along the front line and conducting successful counterattacks, the world is discussing a single question: how to counter the aggressor. And our editorial office has collected the main components of this global question in this issue of Brussels Ukraine Review:

- **What is the Ukrainian strategy?**

- Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO.

- Prospects for new interstate alliances in the modern world.

- European future through deputinization.

- Western doves of peace as useful idiots for the Putin regime: the wrong narrative "war is bad, so weapons are bad".

- LUKOIL in Belgium is a sponsor of terrorism and a cover for Russian special services.

- Why culture in Europe cannot be outside politics.

- How with of the war in Ukraine Putin provokes hunger riots in Africa and creates new centres of military tension in the world.

- Integration of Ukrainian refugees in the EU – the example of Belgium.

*And the most important: we believe in the victory of Ukraine and the world over the Putin regime. We believe that all war criminals will be punished.*

Marta Barandiy



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# EUROPE, UKRAINE, AND SURROGATES



**VITALY  
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UKRAINIAN  
JOURNALIST,  
POLITICAL  
COMMENTATOR,  
AUTHOR AND  
OPINION-MAKER**



**N**o sooner had the war unleashed by Vladimir Putin against Ukraine moved to the first protracted phase – I do not rule out new big battles ahead – than Western leaders began to carefully drift towards their promises of institutional support for Ukraine. An image of a “new political community” has loomed on the horizon, which could unite both countries that want to join the EU but are not yet welcome and the countries that have already left the EU. President of France Emmanuel Macron was the first to announce the idea. Then positive remarks were voiced by European Council President Charles Michel, followed by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

In my opinion, this idea is stillborn at its core. Who will agree to participate in the “political community”? Ukraine? It is an obvious national defeat for a country whose citizens are fighting for the right to determine their choice. President Volodymyr Zelensky already said this. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba wrote on Twitter just several minutes after a speech by the latest community supporter, Olaf Scholz, that the “strategic ambiguity” on Ukraine’s European perspective practiced by

some EU capitals only emboldened Putin. The United Kingdom? After leaving the EU, this country claims its own geopolitical role equal to that of the European Union. How can a country with such ambitions, all the more after its citizens decided to leave the European Union, stay in one “waiting room” with those who aspire to join the EU? The Western Balkans countries? But they strive to join the EU, not its supplement, and are already engaged in respective negotiations. By the way, some sort of surrogate structures were supposed to be created for these countries a few decades ago, but it all ended in the status of candidates for EU membership. Why reinvent the wheel?

This is so because the European politicians are already getting ready to answer the question: why is Ukraine not granted candidate status? Why have negotiations with it been carried out for so long? Isn’t the bloody war a reason to speed up the process? And the answer to these questions is already clear: we offered them a wonderful form of co-existence, but they refused. Because they lack adequacy.

But the heads of the leading countries of the European Union should show their adequacy themselves. Of course, Ukraine needs to make a lot of effort to meet EU standards. It is not an easy task. But the war that began on 24 February 2022



*By the way, some sort of surrogate structures were supposed to be created for these countries a few decades ago, but it all ended in the status of candidates for EU membership. Why reinvent the wheel?*

proved a simple thing: while Ukraine – not only Ukraine, but also Moldova, Georgia, and the Western Balkans – stays outside the EU and NATO, European security is under threat. Because European security is guaranteed by peace.

By peace, not war. And peace is a common commitment, a willingness to defend ourselves together against possible danger, to build a transparent labour and capital market. Yes, one needs to help others in this situation, but this is done for the common good and this help will definitely pay off. If this still needs to be proven, let's imagine that Ukraine had been in NATO by 2022. Would it have been attacked? Would the US, the UK, and the EU have been obliged to spend billions of dollars and accept millions of refugees? Would they have been forced to give up Russian energy? And these questions are only a concern for Europeans. Let's not forget about the millions of Ukrainians who lost their homes. About those killed at the front and in their own homes. About destroyed cities and villages. About the fact that this is not over yet and it is unknown when and how it will end. And if Ukraine was in NATO, none of these things would happen for sure. However, Western politicians preferred to abandon this simple idea, though like many of my compatriots, I admit. Instead, there was another popular opinion: Putin could be

“dragged” into a mutually beneficial energy partnership with the West (for example, to complete the construction of Nord Stream 2) and then he would not attack anyone because he would be interested in profits. I'm ashamed to ask: did the plan work out?

It is instructive to observe how representatives of the elites, who have shown astonishing political short-sightedness and persuaded a potential aggressor with their “constructiveness” and caution that he would get away with it, again try to invent something that has no real political meaning. Again, they cannot understand that it is not about the security of someone else, but about theirs, about their future. It is about Germany and France, not really just Ukraine.



*And if Ukraine was in NATO, none of these things would happen for sure. However, Western politicians preferred to abandon this simple idea, though like many of my compatriots, I admit.*



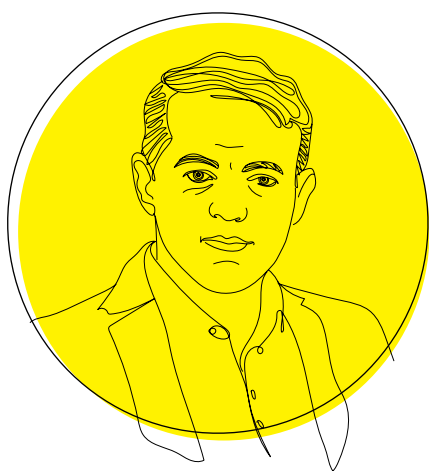
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# UKRAINIAN RESISTANCE STRATEGY



**ROMAN SUSHCHENKO –  
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KREMLIN, PUBLIC AND  
POLITICAL FIGURE**

**F**or more than three months, the world has been closely following the effective use of military skill, art, and heroism of the Ukrainian army. The clock is ticking every second, reminding us of the approaching devastating defeat of the Russians in Ukraine. Russia is exhausted and unable to wage a protracted war without new strike forces.

Kremlin strategists are forced to constantly re-evaluate their goals. Scenario “A” – the occupation of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy; the assassination of

the president, the arrest of the incumbent government, and the establishment of puppet authorities – failed miserably. Scenario “B” – blitzkrieg in the south, east, northeast, domination in the Ukrainian airspace – failed. Scenario “C” lies in desperate attempts to occupy Donbas and control the land corridor between Russia and Crimea. In fact, the Kremlin has constantly downplayed its goals and changed its strategy for achieving them in Ukraine. Russia has chosen barbaric aggression as a way to achieve political goals, but the fighting has changed them. The struggle of the Kremlin “hawks” and their false assumptions doomed the army to futile efforts, oppression, and despair.

The Ukrainian army has adhered to its own goals consistently

**PROMOTEHOUNGHTS  
BY SUSHCHENKO**



and systematically. The goals are simple: to protect sovereignty, people, home, land. This formula for achieving them remains unchanged and convincing. The chosen Ukrainian strategy of resistance is to destroy Russia's moral, intellectual, and physical ability to fight and win on Ukrainian soil. Over the past three months, Ukrainians have proven their effectiveness on the battlefield, in the rear, in the global information space. Ukraine's strategy of destruction involves attacking the weak points of the Russians, shackling their strike forces with smaller forces. This approach forms the basis for achieving effective results and ensures the unwillingness of the invader to counter it.

Ukrainian units attack the aggressor's weakest physical support systems on the battlefield – communications networks, logistics routes, rear areas, artillery, and senior commanders. The battle for Kyiv was the first. Ukrainians infiltrated the enemy's rear and ruthlessly destroyed its logistics, ruined the Russian expedition from within and drove it out of Ukraine. In the east of Kharkiv, the strategy of destruction was continued. Ukrainians struck the aggressor's critical infrastructure, including engineering units, UAVs, fuel depots, and command posts. Ukrainians suppressed and destroyed the aggressor's physical ability to fight.

These actions physically affected Russians morally and intellectually. The fighting spirit of the enemy subsided due to heavy losses, constant defeats on the battlefield, supply problems, and retreat under Ukrainian pressure from Kyiv and Kharkiv.

The successful use of social networks and the media to demonstrate the shortcomings of the Russians only intensified the moral destruction of the invader. The decline in morale depressed military discipline, led to desertions, increased refusals to fight and the number of war crimes.

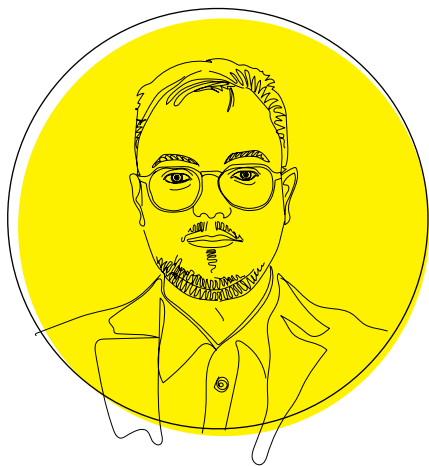
Ukrainians are slowly destroying the will of the Russians, imposing a model of intellectual influence on them. Numerous military defeats and the thirst for a tactical victory push the Russians to take greater risks in their operational or tactical decisions. Ukrainians are destroying Russians morally, intellectually, and physically from within. Conventional ground and air operations are combined with the special as well as information and psychological operations into a single whole of new quality. This has become an integrated, indivisible approach to warfare in Ukraine.

Ukraine has consciously chosen a civilised way of social life, shares cultural values that allow ideas to develop and integrate into successful businesses, democratic governance, legal system, free market, where investors need new technologies, where the intellectual property is protected, where control of corruption and crime is exercised, where a defendant has a chance to be acquitted. This culture presupposes critical statements, allows for independence, possibility to fail and try again. These are the civilised grains of truth which Ukrainians now pay for with their blood and freedom.



*Ukrainians are slowly destroying the will of the Russians, imposing a model of intellectual influence on them. Numerous military defeats and the thirst for a tactical victory push the Russians to take greater risks in their operational or tactical decisions. Ukrainians are destroying Russians morally, intellectually, and physically from within.*

# UKRAINE'S NATO INTEGRATION: REVISITING ENHANCED COOPERATION DURING THE FULL-SCALE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION



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Ukraine-NATO relations are pivotal for European and global security. The Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine reflect the dreams of its society in helping to defend peaceful and prosperous development, in Europe and beyond. At the same time, the military aggression, staged by Russia on Ukraine since 2014, 24 February this year transformed into a full-scale war with severe consequences on Ukraine's economy, climate and infrastructure.

Against this backdrop, the question of a potential NATO membership of Ukraine matters for the deterrence of Russian imperialism.

Retrospectively, the cooperation between Kyiv and the alliance started back in 1994 with the "Partnership for Peace" programme, which was aimed to establish a new framework for NATO cooperation with former Communist states of Eastern Europe (1, P. 45).

From the 1990s, Ukraine has conducted joint military exercises with NATO. In 2002, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine decided "to develop such a strategy, the ultimate goal of which will be Ukraine's accession to the security system in Europe, which is now based on NATO."

Further to this, one must recall that at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008, at which the Membership Action Plan would have been granted to Ukraine and Georgia, Russia

pressed the main actors (France and Germany) not to do so.

And although the public support for NATO accession among Ukrainians – plummeted (from 47.8. percent to 40.1 percent), following the 2014 ‘Revolution of Dignity’, the Ukrainian parliament (the ‘Verkhovna Rada’) went ahead and implemented the constitutional amendments regarding “implementation of the state’s strategic course towards Ukraine’s full membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization” in 2019.

However, Ukrainian support for the idea of joining NATO has grown to 62 percent (then the highest since 2014) in mid-February 2022 due to threat of Russian military escalation on the borders of Ukraine.

Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, NATO is facing one of its greatest challenges.

NATO’s response to the “new security environment” will be elaborated in a strategic concept, which is to be approved at the Madrid summit in late June 2022.

In its current strategic concept, dating back to 2010, Russia is mentioned as a partner in the fight against global terrorism. Back then, NATO’s military presence in Afghanistan was at its peak [3, P. 212]. Yet, the systematic violation of international law by the Kremlin, from its 2014 annexation of Crimea and military invasion of Eastern Ukraine, became a watershed for the alliance.

Think-tank Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” prepared the recommendations for NATO leaders [2]. According to them, the defence of democracy can not be implemented merely through communiques but also through concrete political and military action. From NATO, one would expect that Russia’s extension of its ‘sphere of influence’ through brute force against sovereign countries can never be accepted.

Further to this, the security situation in the Black Sea region (with NATO member-states Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey) is worsening due to Russian voluntarist actions towards the freedom of navigation. Additionally, Russia has deployed nuclear weapons in the occupied Crimea and is blocking Ukrainian ports with further implications for global food security. The absence of a particular NATO regional strategy can not be an option when this region is also a responsibility of the alliance.

Since June 2020, Ukraine has enjoyed status as one of NATO’s Enhanced Opportunities Partners [4]. Through that status, Ukraine is entitled to participate in numerous joint programs, ranging from military education and science to strategic communications to the rehabilitation of Ukrainian soldiers abroad.



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The process of concrete integration into the alliance consists of the implementation of a number of NATO standards as well as the civil control of security and defence matters. The Ukrainian Armed Forces have already showcased its capabilities on the battlefield. Therefore, the focus should not be not on the number of standards adhered to, but rather on the practical skills, with which our armed forces are defending Ukraine against the Russian occupiers.

On top of this, Russia’s brutality in Ukraine has also compelled other countries to rethink their relationships with the alliance.

The jointly submitted NATO applications of Sweden and Finland, two non-military aligned Nordic countries with strong welfare economies, must be considered the biggest shift.

Although militarily non-aligned until now, these states have taken significant steps towards NATO membership in the course of the past decades, including through substantial troop contributions of NATO-led forces in Afghanistan as from 2001.

By effectively and efficiently impeding the Kremlin’s imperial ambitions – and thereby defending Europe’s democracy and freedom – Ukraine should be an integral part of the NATO of tomorrow. Maybe not yet as a member of the alliance, but at least as a highly valued and increasingly integrated partner.

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**TO RESIST ON  
THE LEGAL FRONT**



# NOT GRANTING UKRAINE CANDIDATE STATUS WOULD BE TERRIBLE MISTAKE

**O**n 28 February 2022, four days after the start of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky officially applied for his country's accession to the European Union. Thus, the President of Ukraine began to accelerate the process that began 28 years ago, in 1994, with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine. The process gained pace in 2014 when an association agreement was signed between the entities.





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DIRECTOR OF DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS,  
FULLY DEDICATED TO THE VICTORY OF UKRAINE.**

The next day, MEPs enthusiastically responded to Zelensky's request, passing a resolution calling on "the Union's institutions to ensure that Ukraine is granted candidate status." This resolution was approved by as many as 637 members, 13 voted against, 26 abstained. A real plebiscite. The European people spoke out through their parliament, confirming the polls, which show that the vast majority of the population of 27 member states is in favour of Ukraine's accession, including Belgium.

Later, on 8 April, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen solemnly presented the President of Ukraine with a membership questionnaire, telling him in front of all the international press gathered there: "We are with you as you dream of Europe. Dear

Volodymyr, my message today is clear: Ukraine belongs in the European family. We have heard your request, loud and clear. And today, we are here to give you a first, positive answer."

However, a few days before the European Council meeting on 23 and 24 June, which is to decide whether to grant Ukraine the status of candidate for accession to the European Union, several member states seem to be hesitant or even back down, preferring to create a European political community. This is a new proposal of the President of France, envisaging that Ukraine should develop in the political community and not receive the status of a candidate for membership. Among those hesitant are also the founding members of the European Union: France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. To justify their



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*Among those hesitant are also the founding members of the European Union: France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. To justify their hesitation, they refer to the complexity of the current governance of the Union and the waiting room with certain countries already in it, not to mention the new demands put forward by Georgia and Moldova.*

for divisions and chatter. At best, it will be a time-consuming process. Its implementation could follow granting membership status to Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.

hesitation, they refer to the complexity of the current governance of the Union and the waiting room with certain countries already in it, not to mention the new demands put forward by Georgia and Moldova.

Of course, these arguments cannot be ignored, we need to reform the governance of the Union, and we must, for example, get rid of the rule of unanimity in decisions, whenever possible. But these difficulties cannot justify the refusal to grant Ukraine a candidate status. This refusal would be a 180-degree turn, the political consequences of which would be catastrophic.

First of all, the European political community with undefined outlines will not be created tomorrow. It should not be rejected immediately, but it is already facing strong opposition from 10 member states, who do not miss the opportunity to emphasise that now is not the time

First of all, this refusal, if it was addressed to Ukraine at a time when it suffers the most terrible humiliation for daring to embark on the path towards our Union almost three decades ago, would cause deep despair among its people. Such a Europe would be perceived as cowardly, unreliable and selfish. This would demoralise civilians and soldiers defending their country and could have detrimental consequences for the conflict. The Kremlin would be dancing for joy and would definitely take this decision as its victory, rejoicing that the Europeans did not want these “Nazis” in their family.

Should we be reminded that granting EU candidate status is essentially a symbolic, political, but necessary action that will show Ukraine, Russia, our people and the rest of the world that we reaffirm the right of Europeans, who respect the law, freedom and democracy, to join our union? Should it be added that in doing so, Europe pursues its dream of a single, peaceful, prosperous, united and democratic continent?

This candidate status does not in any way determine the outcome of a procedure that could take a very long time. Ukrainians know this and do not ask for any benefits.

In fact, nothing justifies these hesitations except the desire to provide assurances to Putin. But have we not learned that the President of the Russian Federation has no desire to have our guarantees? His project is

imperial. He laughs at our worship and concessions. His troops will not leave Ukraine if we deny this country what it deserves. If we don't want Ukraine to be in NATO anymore, let's at least agree to shelter it in Europe.

Not granting Ukraine a candidate status would be a terrible mistake. Let's not miss this historic moment.



*In fact, nothing justifies these hesitations except the desire to provide assurances to Putin. But have we not learned that the President of the Russian Federation has no desire to have our guarantees?*

# A CASE FOR UKRAINE'S EU CANDIDACY

**O**n 23 June, the member states of the European Union must make a historic decision and grant candidate status to Ukraine. In the following paragraphs, we discuss why this step is long overdue and what are the risks for the European Union if it fails to live up to the expectations of the moment.

## **STANDING UP FOR EUROPEAN VALUES: REVOLUTIONS OF 2004 AND 2014**

In a world that is changing faster than ever before, it is easy to forget that Ukraine's fight for European values dates back to at least 2004. Following a fixed presidential election under Kremlin influence and a lack of action from the President, Leonid Kuchma, Ukrainians revolted. Corruption and bad governance were also rampant. Through a peaceful popular resistance known as the "Orange Revolution," Ukrainians defended democracy and made a way for a pro-democratic and pro-EU President, Viktor Yushchenko. Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" became the most

significant democratic movement on the territory of the former Soviet Union. It firmly rooted Ukraine's future not as a Russian autocracy, but as a democratic and European country.

In 2014, Ukrainians rose up to defend European values again. They took to the streets after the pro-Kremlin President rejected the EU Association Agreement. In return, peaceful Ukrainian protesters were brutally attacked on the streets of Kyiv. This only increased people's determination to defend and protect their freedoms. Following the escape of the President and his proxies to Russia, "Revolution of Dignity," became a second democratic success story in less than 10 years and a failure of Putin to establish a Russian autocratic sphere of influence in Ukraine. Occupation of Crimea and start of the war in Donbas in 2015 were Putin's revenge.

## **DEFENDING UKRAINE AND EUROPEAN VALUES ON THE BATTLEFIELD**

On 24 February 2022, Russia waged a full-scale war against a peaceful, democratic and sovereign country. Putin has chosen war as a last resort to dominate Ukraine. However, once again he underestimated the will of Ukrainians to fight for freedom and democracy. In spite of unspeakable acts of atrocities (i.e.,



*Putin has chosen war as a last resort to dominate Ukraine. However, once again he underestimated the will of Ukrainians to fight for freedom and democracy.*



mass graves, extrajudicial killings, filtration camps, forced deportations, and rape of Ukrainian women, girls, and children), Ukrainians are heroically resisting against the country that is 28 times larger than their own. They are on the frontlines battling totalitarianism, autocracy, and a new wave of fascism, led by Putin, that wants to destroy an independent nation and its people and threatens the entire free world. Ukrainians are fighting and dying for European values and democratic freedoms every day so that their children and grandchildren can live in a free, democratic country, and call themselves European citizens.

### WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR THE EU?

It is the time that the EU recognises the sacrifices that Ukrainian people are enduring by including them into the family. The EU candidacy will help boost morale and give Ukrainians hope for a future, strengthening Ukraine's position in this war. Furthermore, the EU confronts the irrefutable multilateralist truth: Ukraine plays a crucial role in the name of collective security on the European continent. For this reason alone, it should do everything possible to strengthen Ukraine. Considering the cost of sanctions and other measures the EU is currently taking against Russia, granting Ukraine candidate status is both the simple and least expensive solution.

Liberty, equality, and the right to self-governance are all on the line as Russian violence rips across Ukraine and sweeps over Europe. Ukrainians fight the good fight so that Europe does not have to. If Ukraine triumphs, so does democracy. If Ukraine falls, the international status quo of democracy will be reconfigured to

one of uncertainty. The world, and most certainly the EU, cannot afford a defeat by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Thus, the moral argument for Ukrainian accession to the European Union is a clear one: Ukraine maintains the Western-dominated world order and tips the ideological scale further in favour of liberal democracy.

If Ukraine does not get candidate status, the European Union will suffer both from internal and external weakening and its reputation will be permanently damaged. Member states, like the Baltic countries and Poland, which fully support Ukraine, will be disappointed with the European Union. Most importantly, the following fact remains: EU citizens support granting Ukraine candidate status. According to the recent Flash Eurobarometer survey, a majority of EU citizens are in favour of Ukraine joining the EU. European citizens are eager to see Ukraine integrated into the European family. Not following through on public demand will further contribute to the democratic deficit already nesting inside the European Union, giving fodder to Euroscepticism, nourished by Russian propagandist voices. The only way democratic countries can stand against the aggression of autocratic regimes is by ensuring the unity of their forces.

Ukraine's EU candidacy has also found support in the highest cabinets of the EU institutions. The European Parliament passed a resolution on 1 March 2022 in support of candidate

status. Moreover, on 6 March, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen spoke in favour of Ukraine's EU membership, declaring that Ukrainian people "belong in the European family."

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Ukraine's dedication to the EU is unmatched. Time and time again, Ukrainians have demonstrated their full and unwavering support for democracy, freedom, and European values. Today, Ukrainians are paying for these democratic freedoms and liberties with their own lives. European Union leaders must choose Ukraine on 23 June. Ukraine's future is Europe and Europe's future is Ukraine.

*Promote Ukraine thanks its interns Hannah Meehan, Romane Gornet and Zachary Klein who worked on this op-ed.*



# A SHARED COST FOR A COMMON FUTURE: EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND DEPUTINIZATION



**ANDREA CASTAGNA IS A BRUSSELS-BASED POLICY SPECIALIST FOCUSING ON THE EU NEIGHBOURHOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD. IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN PROJECTS RELATED TO DIGITAL FOR DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, YOUTH POLICIES AND SPORT. HE IS ALSO AN ENTHUSIASTIC VOLUNTEER OF PROMOTE UKRAINE.**

**D**espite swift and robust economic sanctions, the EU is still collectively failing to take the necessary measures to contain Russian imperialism in the long run and create the conditions in which the Russian threat can be fully contained, in terms of both economic and political influence. Doing so needs a 'deputinization' of the relationship with Russia.

Renewed Russian imperialism is turning into a direct challenge to the common European project, which has historically been based on democratic values, multilateralism and the right of sovereign states to determine their own destiny. The war is demonstrating that the Russian understanding of the future of Europe is based on unilateral relations, autocracy, military confrontation and imperialism, which are exactly the opposite of what the EU was built on. This has in the short term called into question the type of relationship with Russia that several member states, in particular Germany, France and Italy, are able to develop.

Meanwhile, the prolongation of the occupation of a large part of Ukrainian territory exacerbates the problem of how to deal with Russia as a country over the medium and long term. First, this unprecedented occupation of a sovereign country poses threats to European energy and food security. The FAO estimates that more than 25 million tonnes of grain are currently stuck in Ukraine, and the blockade of Ukrainian ports is disrupting the European food supply chain impacting on the food security of millions of people beyond Europe's borders (particularly in Africa and the Middle East).

Second, divisions about how to reduce reliance on Russian gas

and oil pose another key challenge for the future of Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, the EU energy policy was essentially based on getting cheap fossil fuels from Russia in order to support Member States' economic growth. Yet, despite the announced change in direction, the EU has imported nearly 40 billion EUR worth of fossil fuels since the war began. These divisions on how to cut Russian energy dependency are likely to continue in the upcoming years. For instance, the various member states such as Finland and Poland have already announced their intentions to put an end to the reliance on Russian energy. On the contrary, countries such as Italy and Germany are still largely dependent on Russian gas and are expected to oppose any future ban of Russian gas. This situation is also reflected in the Commission's confusing guidance on the payment in rubles. As of today, it remains unclear whether paying for Russian gas in rubles constitutes a breach of EU sanctions. In the meantime, several media have reported that major energy companies in Europe have started to operate bank accounts in rubles.

Despite these divisions over energy policy, one can argue the EU's immediate response to Russia's aggression has been resolute. Since 24 February 2022, EU member states expanded economic sanctions and added a significant number of people and



*Renewed Russian imperialism is turning into a direct challenge to the common European project, which has historically been based on democratic values, multilateralism and the right of sovereign states to determine their own destiny.*

entities to the EU sanctions list, including Russian media outlets and propaganda tools. Member states also agreed to cut key Russian banks from the SWIFT system and froze Moscow's Central Bank assets. Yet, the larger political and structural issues of the relationship with Russia remain unresolved. Many EU member states have taken no lasting steps to fully cut European economic and political ties with Russia. As a result, the EU has struggled to properly come up with a plan to de-Putinize its future.

There are, however, certain Member States that are well aware of the risks associated with going back to "business as usual" with Russia. That is why countries such as the Baltic States, Finland and Poland have introduced plans to drastically reduce their dependence on Russian energy. Moreover, their public opinion is among the most vocal in relation to the future of European defence and security. A recent survey shows that at least two third of citizens in the Baltic States are concerned about the Russian growing imperialism. Also, according to Eurobarometer, the percentage of people willing to finance military support for Ukraine is particularly high in Finland (90% of citizens), Estonia (87%), Poland (86%) and Lithuania (84%). Thus, these countries and their public opinion are fully aware of the need to "deputinize" the EU. Indeed, most of Eastern European leaders are conscious of the fact that further European integration won't be possible without radically changing the approach to the Kremlin and its imperialistic vision of Europe, which is simply not compatible with the interest



*The German Chancellery has probably struggled the most with understanding the long-term consequences of Russian aggression of Ukraine. Despite the (delayed) delivery of weapons to Kyiv and the recent change in support of an EU oil embargo, Germany's foreign policy is still in need of a total reboot.*

of the EU as a whole. In particular, maintaining a normal relationship with Russia is likely to exacerbate the East-West divide within the European Union and jeopardise the idea that new and old member states have common interests and aspirations. As of today, various older member states are convinced that Russia does not need to put an existential threat to the EU and economic cooperation with Russia could be possible under certain conditions. On the contrary, after the war in Ukraine, Central and Eastern European member states are increasingly putting their national focus on a common European security, which implies a full deputinization of EU foreign and energy policy. Moreover, for those countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Russian imperialism should no longer be tolerated in any forms, including the long-standing economic cooperation with Moscow.

However, there are countries that do not seem to fully share the view that "business as usual with Russia" can undermine the Union and its unity. For different reasons, Germany, France and Italy maintain a problematic approach vis-à-vis Russia and struggle to respond to its imperialistic ambitions to divide Europe. The consciousness of their leadership as well as public opinion in relation to the threat of Russian imperialism seems quite limited, perhaps because Germany, France and Italy's relationship with post-cold war Russia was essentially built on trade, political cooperation and energy. In reality, the war has made it all too clear that maintaining these areas of cooperation with Russia would be detrimental for the future of Europe because they would undermine the essential national



interests of EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe.

The German Chancellery has probably struggled the most with understanding the long-term consequences of the Russian aggression of Ukraine. Despite the (delayed) delivery of weapons to Kyiv and the recent change in support of an EU oil embargo, Germany's foreign policy is still in need of a total reboot. Germany's Ostpolitik did not prevent the Russian invasion of Ukraine and made the German economy extremely vulnerable and dependent on Russian gas. Chancellor Scholz is certainly aware that the era of energy interdependence with Russia might be coming to an end, but Berlin's desire for 'constructive' diplomatic and political relations with Moscow has not changed. Yet Germany is still one of the EU countries most hesitant to isolate Russia and its leadership, which remain influential within the German political landscape, particularly within Scholz's SPD.

Emanuel Macron has also stressed the need to maintain constructive links with Russia. On Europe Day 2022, the French President remarked that "We are not at war with Russia" and warned against "humiliating" Russia in the future. Moreover, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed that Macron asked Ukrainian authorities to make territorial concessions to help Putin save face. It should not come as a surprise that Macron's position is perceived as ambiguous and detrimental for the future of Europe in Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, the failure of the Minsk agreements and eight years of occupation of Crimea clearly show that territorial concessions do not put a limit to Putin's imperialism nor aggressive attitudes towards Ukraine or countries like Moldo-

va and Georgia (which also experience Russian aggressions).

In Italy, the war has shattered the model of a relationship that has roots in the historical, solid Russophilia of Italians, both at the political and cultural level. Across the Italian political spectrum, there is a huge block of pro-Russian MPs who are triggering tensions in the current governing coalition led by the former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi. Furthermore, pro-Putin disinformation is constantly being spread through most of the major media outlets, and Italian TV frequently hosts Russian government officials such as Sergey Lavrov or Russian propagandists such as Alexander Dugin or Vladimir Solovyov. It is, therefore, not a surprise that major political figures in Italy are demanding Ukraine find a compromise with Russia and that there is growing concern about the long-term cost of the sanctions for the Italian economy.

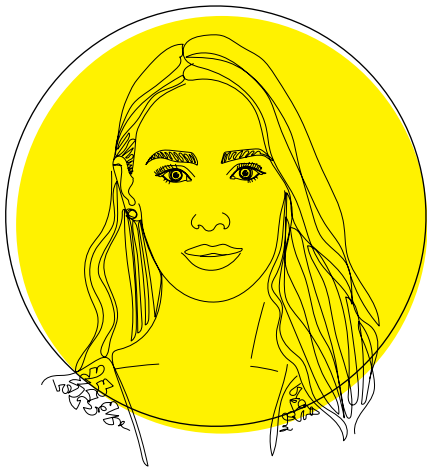
Though it must be admitted that – many EU countries need to take a hard look at their past mistakes in their Russia policy, it is in those three countries – which often proclaim themselves as leaders of Europe – there is a particular need for self-reflection about their position vis-à-vis the future of European integration. Supporting the fight against the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the full deputinization of the future of the EU comes with a cost, particularly for countries such as Germany, France and Italy. Yet, if European countries aspire to achieve a deputinized future without military confrontation and imperialism, this is a cost that we need to pay.



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# DEPUTINIZATION IN TIMES OF RUSSIAN FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE: EXPERIENCE OF THE BALTIC STATES



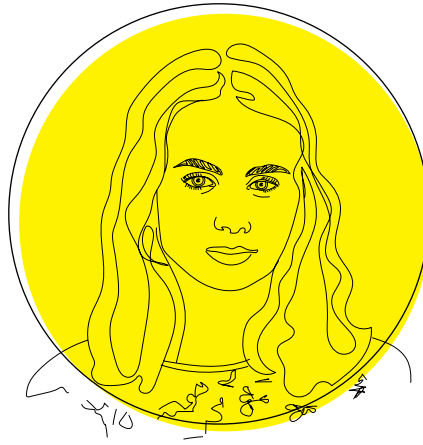
**NINA BASOK IS A YOUNG EXPERT ON EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE, THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE, THE WEIMAR AND LUBLIN TRIANGLES, UKRAINIAN-POLISH AND FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS, AND THE HISTORY OF MEMORY. SHE HAS STUDIED AT THE COLLEGE OF EUROPE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, RIGA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LAW, STOCKHOLM, GOTHENBURG, UMEA, LUND, AND DALARNA UNIVERSITIES.**

**T**he Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and his name have gained a special symbolic meaning over the past years. Putin's policies have become synonymous to those of the Russian Federation as an empire, as a leader of the Soviet Union, and now as an independent Russian state. Putinization, as Russia's current policy of doing business, is to exploit globalisation as a strategy to establish foreign dependence on Russia in as many sectors of international cooperation as possible. Examples include the establishment

of nepotistic ties between the Russian political elite and other countries by creating dependence on the supply of Russian energy and natural resources. Furthermore, putinization includes putting 'moral pressure' on other states, by creating myths about Russian statehood, language and culture as the greatest and most ancient, the spread of 'brotherhood and unity of nations' narratives, and propaganda advocating the Russian-speaking population protection and the empowerment of Russians abroad. Putinization arose and developed through Russia's long and brutal planting of imperial ideas as well as the constant tolerance of them due to a lack of awareness of Russia's true history, including Moscow's appropriation of other nations' achievements and denial of Russia's crimes against them, Russian political elites' mindset, and national sentiments. Putinization is



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**YELYZAVETA MARKOVA IS A YOUNG SPECIALIST IN EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL LAW AS WELL AS EUROPEAN POLITICS. SHE IS A GRADUATE OF THE COLLEGE OF EUROPE AND GHENT UNIVERSITY AND IS CURRENTLY PURSUING HER PHD IN EU LAW AND TECHNOLOGY AT RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN (THE NETHERLANDS).**

a new disease of our time, particularly for the EU Member States (MS), getting in the way of commercial, financial, cultural, and other cooperation when Russia's interests are opposed to those of the EU MS. This is the way Russia uses 'chantage' through already established ties in the network of putinization within Europe.

Deputinization would be the only feasible reaction to such destructive processes. Its goal should deprive Russia of any influence, whether it is exercised through the material component of inter-state relations or psychological manipulation by the Russian leadership. Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs – Dmytro Kuleba, gave a similar definition, describing the deputization as “getting rid of Russian influence in all spheres,” calling Russia a toxic partner, and urging the world to cut all ties with Russia as soon as possible. Unfortunately, despite Russian aggression in Georgia, Moldova, African countries, Syria, and Ukraine. As well as Russia's full-scale invasion and genocide against the Ukrainian

people, the idea of deputinization has not yet gained popularity among European countries, letting Russia's influence strengthen in the region.

However, Baltic states are the example of those EU MS that have long been preparing to cut ties with Russia. Despite their economic and energy dependence on Russia, Russian minorities' political and social activism in defence of ethnic Russians in the region and of the Russian language, and other examples of putinization's influence, the Baltic states have managed to prepare for deputinization and its active phase after February 2022.

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have long prepared the basis for cutting ties with Russia, taking both economic and political steps. The Baltic states are known for their consistent international statements about expanding sanctions and increasing border security with the Russian Federation, full independence of the

EU from the Russian grid, and the introduction of legislation to restore national languages and culture by reducing Russia's and Russian minorities' influence, which many experts find controversial. Furthermore, on the political-historical dimension, the Baltic states have taken steps to restore historical justice and condemn the actions of Soviet and Russian imperial authorities in the region, such as the Lithuania trials on the Soviet militaries storming the TV tower in January 1991, and establishing numerous museums dedicated to the Soviet regime's brutality. In addition, they are abandoning the Soviet legacy by renaming streets, cities, and, for example, the demolition of Soviet monuments, as happened recently in Latvia with the monument to the "Soviet liberators" in Pārdaugava. The Baltic states are also hoping for the opportunity to educate new Russian leaders to establish a fundamentally different Russia, free of imperial aspirations and predatory world views. As a result, they are assisting in creating a dialogue forum to discuss possible democratisation in the country and supporting the Russian independent media and opposition.

Since 24 February, deputinization in the Baltic States has gained new impetus and scale. In addition to statements and actions supporting Ukraine at the international level, these states are aware of the need to implement radical changes within their borders. For instance, by severing economic ties with Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia they have announced their intention to stop the supply and consumption of Russian energy resources by the end of 2022. Together with

Poland, they have called for the termination of road connections with the Russian Federation.

In addition, understanding the necessity of penalising those who support Russian aggression and thereby foster putinization, the Baltic governments were among the first to prohibit Russian media from being broadcast on their territory. Another method of deputinization used is banning Russian symbols that represent aggression and propagate war against Ukraine, which was backed up by harsh sanctions. Thus, in early May, Estonia expelled Alexei Yessakov, the local "Immortal Regiment" organiser. The Latvian Seimas has taken more drastic measures, amending the Law on Citizenship to allow the deprivation of Latvian passports of those holding dual citizenship with Latvia who provide any support for war crimes (including against Ukraine). Lithuania has put Russia and Belarus on the list of hostile states and territories, allowing it to exclude companies registered in these states from public procurement tenders or to terminate signed agreements and contracts. Furthermore, the Baltic states have recognised Russia's crimes in Ukraine at the state level as genocide. They were also among the initiators of a special tribunal to investigate Russia's crimes on Ukrainian soil. These states are the voice of truth and common sense during meetings of the EU, NATO, and other international formations, encouraging



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them to provide Ukraine with all necessary weapons, humanitarian aid, and support for Ukrainian refugee seekers in the EU.

Given the EU's disunity and difficulty to agree with some countries on the deputinization collectively, the Baltic states' experience should inspire individual member states to recognise its importance and initiate key changes to overcome Russian dependence within their own country. Such actions will significantly help Ukraine and the international community in their struggle for universal and European values and help promptly respond to the negative processes caused by dependence on another state.

To that end, we consider the experience of the Baltic States, which has sent a diplomatic message (closing embassies and consulates in their countries, recognising Russia's actions as genocide against Ukrainians aimed at destroying everything related to Ukraine's identity), a security signal (joint and repeated statements on strengthening NATO's presence in these countries), energy (support for a ban on Russian gas and oil purchases and reduction of energy reliance on Russia), cultural integration and education (projects and policies for Russian national minorities' full integration), as well as banning the use of aggressor country's symbols associated with its illegal activities in other states (St. George's ribbon; symbols Z, V, and cultural aspects of their public promotion: songs,

poems, literature, cinema, theatre, and others, where Russia's actions are labelled as "liberation") is something other countries have to strive for. Their values are in danger when it comes to closer cooperation with Russia. Deputinization is the way of proving their intentions and to protect themselves from something that Ukraine experiences today. This article is a call for action that some countries took up from the Baltic states already and that should continue the wave of changing politics all over the EU, remembering that partnership with Russia should not be built on the principles and whims of putinization and, consequently, Ukrainian blood.

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**OKSANA BULDA, LEAD  
MANIFESTATIONS  
AT NGO PROMOTE  
UKRAINE, LEGAL  
ADVISOR IN  
INTERNATIONAL  
BUSINESS LAW.**

**Who is Lukoil Belgium?**

Lukoil Belgium NV is a limited liability company registered in Flanders with its head office in Vilvoorde and statutory capital of 6,197,338.00 EUR.

Lukoil has been present on the Belgian retail market since 2007 after acquiring a network of petrol stations and developing its sales network in Western Europe. In recent years, the network has been growing and today has 184 petrol stations in Belgium.





# DELUKOILISATION OF BELGIUM

## How is it linked to Russia?

Lukoil is Russia's second-largest oil company with a market value of €49.5 bn. Lukoil Belgium NV is a subsidiary of its Russian holding company PJSC Lukoil in Moscow.

According to the latest available financial reports, Lukoil Belgium NV has two shareholders. One of which owns 99,99% of the shares is Litasco SA, a Swiss-based trading subsidiary of Lukoil. Litasco SA was founded in 2000 in Switzerland and it is the exclusive international marketing and trading company of Lukoil. It acts as an intermediary company and also is a major shareholder of other Lukoil subsidiaries in Europe.

The company claims that it is “an independent international company,” which in the oil industry is a term used to distinguish multinational commercial firms, like Shell or Total, from state oil companies like Saudi ARAMCO or Venezuela's PDVSA that are owned by the state and hold oil reserves in the country that owns them. Lukoil undertakes 91% of its oil production in Russia. Nor indeed in Russia, is there such a thing as an independent large energy business. Even when shareholders are private individuals, their property rights are not secure, and can be removed or reassigned at the whim of the

Kremlin – as Mikhail Khodorkovsky found out to his cost.

Bulat Subaev - the current General Manager at Lukoil Belgium NV, held until recently the same position in Lukoil Bulgaria, where during his tenure, the Bulgarian authorities launched several investigations into Lukoil. These covered the abuse of dominant market position, tax violations, and even financial fraud. For many years, Lukoil Bulgaria had been declaring financial losses despite its dominant position on the market, and as a result, no income taxes were paid to the Bulgarian state. Where did the money go? According to

Radio Free Europe, “The profits always go back to Russia.” Given this information, it should come as no surprise that Putin has awarded Bulat Subaev “For Merits to the Fatherland.”

Because sanctions have not been extended to them, people like Subaev, with close ties to the Kremlin, keep doing business in Europe and could have access to decision-makers in national governments and in the European Union. While Belgium has expelled many Russian diplomats for allegedly spying and posing





risks to security, non-diplomats and “Russian lobbyists or businessmen” are still allowed to operate.

### **Is Lukoil linked to Russian Intelligence?**

The presence of high-level Russian management with strong links to the Kremlin poses serious threats to Belgian as well as European security. The growing role of EU and NATO institutions have made Belgian cities such as Brussels and Antwerp major hotspots for international espionage. Lukoil has a long history of connections with Russian intelligence and it has been caught in various espionage and corruption scandals in Cyprus, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania. Considering the fact that Belgian media outlets have reported that a third of Russian diplomats are actually intelligence officers, there is a strong case for Belgian authorities to investigate whether Lukoil is involved in similar activities here.

### **How does Lukoil Belgium NV finance Russia's war against Ukraine?**

Lukoil petrol stations in Belgium are managed as franchises

by local entrepreneurs. Under this formula, the entrepreneur is responsible for Lukoil's fuel sales and sales in a shop. The entrepreneur will receive a commission for this that is calculated on the sale of fuels and the shop that is managed by the entrepreneur.

Some petrol station entrepreneurs claim that they “have nothing to do with Putin and his regime.” However, every franchise agreement requires a payment to be made to Lukoil for the right to use the company's brand, products, and intellectual property, and we are not even talking about the oil origin and payment for it.

Swiss intermediary “Litasco SA is the key player in the transactions. It buys crude oil from Russia's Lukoil and then sells it to European refineries. Acting as the intermediary, Litasco SA seeks to buy low and sell high. The difference goes to Litasco SA, which is registered in Switzerland, where [corporate] profit/income tax is very low and there are legal options that allow this profit not to be taxed and go directly to Russia.”

According to the latest open financial report of Lukoil Belgium NV, the company turnover for 2020 was around €730 million with €36 million as a profit from

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which 15% taxes were paid to the Belgian state. There are around 60 full-time employees employed by Lukoil Belgium NV.

Russian media propagandists proudly report that “Lukoil set a record this year - one trillion three hundred billion rubles in taxes paid.” Unfortunately, there is no data on how much of this money has been spent on weapons and soldiers, who commit war crimes in Ukraine, kill innocent civilians, rape women and children, but since Lukoil is one of the biggest taxpayers in Russia, it is likely that this sum is substantial, and it is very unlikely there would be no financial input from Lukoil into the war.

#### **What about sanctions?**

Lukoil is under US sectoral sanctions that impose restrictions on agreements regarding individual projects.

Lukoil Belgium NV has not been directly sanctioned yet but the Russian billionaire and, until recently, the CEO of its holding company in Russia, Vagit Alekperov, is already on the UK sanctions' list. As there have been personal sanctions imposed on him,

he has resigned in order to not affect the company's operations.

The sixth package of sanctions introduced by the EU against Russia covers crude oil, as well as petroleum products, delivered from Russia into the Member States, with a temporary exception for crude oil delivered by pipeline. This might mean that tankers with Russian origin oil might not be allowed to dock and unload at Belgian ports. Therefore, Lukoil petrol stations' franchisees will have to diversify if possible under the franchise agreements to other sources; otherwise, they won't be able to operate in Belgium selling Russian origin petrol.

Belgium is the world's 7th largest importer of fossil fuels from Russia. For the past two months, the newly merged port of Antwerp-Zeebrugge has also been the second largest import port worldwide for Russian fossil fuels. For Antwerp, this mainly concerns oil (products), with a total value of €600 million.

#### **Belgium boycotts Lukoil**

In April this year, we Promote Ukraine volunteers, launched a Lukoil boycott in Belgium with the main goal to share information and raise awareness about

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*The boycott of Lukoil is not just a Belgian phenomenon. Many countries support this movement. In New Jersey, United States, the city voted to suspend the licenses of Lukoil petrol stations, Shell is selling their business in Russia, Italy is looking into nationalising their Lukoil refinery, and this is only the beginning.*

Lukoil as a Russian company sponsoring Russia's war against Ukraine.

Given the unprecedented support and solidarity of Belgians with Ukraine, the majority of consumers support the boycott and refuse to fill up their tanks at Lukoil. Upon seeing the protesters, many Belgians choose not to drive into the forecourt of Lukoil's petrol stations. Even a petrol station entrepreneur has supported the activists by bringing water and brainstorming ideas on changing their franchise to another brand or even switching to a greener fuel like hydrogen.

As a result of the Lukoil boycott, more people are now informed and can make a better choice but we know that many people continue to come to Lukoil because of their corporate cards. Therefore, we have brought this issue to the companies' attention. For example, at one petrol station, during the boycott, 15 out of 20 cars turned back, three purchased fuel because of their corporate cards and two stopped because they had run out of petrol and had no choice.

The boycott of Lukoil is not just a Belgian phenomenon. Many countries support this movement. In New Jersey, United States, the city voted to suspend the licenses of Lukoil petrol stations, Shell is selling their business in Russia, Italy is looking into nationalising their Lukoil refinery, and this is only the beginning.

Although many Belgians support boycotting Lukoil, some feel concerned about the consequences. For example, people are worried that if Lukoil Belgium shuts down, its Belgian employees will lose their jobs. While this might be true, it needs to be set against to Ukrainians losing their lives because Lukoil feeds the Russian war machine. Nor do petrol station franchisees have to shut down. A franchisee should switch its franchiser to stop paying royalties to the Russian parent company. Secondly, the upstream business must stop purchasing gas and oil from Russia by switching suppliers. If it does not, perhaps Belgium could nationalise refining and distribution facilities,



like Italy is considering. Last but not least, Lukoil Belgium must replace those top management employees potentially involved in espionage or unfair business activities such as the abuse of power, tax legislation violations and financial fraud.

#### **Will delukoilisation work?**

Some doubt the effectiveness of the “delukoilisation” of Belgium. Lukoil consumers say that the company pays taxes in Belgium, a significant share of which is directed towards the support of Ukraine. However, relying on this is counterproductive. While it is true that Belgium provides vast financial and humanitarian aid, both to those in Ukraine and Ukrainians who entered Belgium as temporarily displaced people, supporting the business that finances the war against Ukraine diminishes the effectiveness of such measures. By supporting a Russian company that sponsors Putin’s regime, Belgium only increases the need for aid to Ukraine.

It is crucial to understand that gas and oil export is the key revenue source for Russia. It accounted for 36% of the country’s total budget in 2021, roughly \$9.9 billion in revenue per month. Meanwhile, estimated direct losses from the war have cost Russia about \$3 billion per month, three times less than the country’s energy revenues. This is a clear illustration of just how effective halting purchases of Russian energy could be for stopping Russia’s war against Ukraine. “Delukoilisation” is an important part of defunding this war.

*If it does not, perhaps Belgium could nationalise refining and distribution facilities, like Italy is considering. Last but not least, Lukoil Belgium must replace those top management employees potentially involved in espionage or unfair business activities such as the abuse of power, tax legislation violations and financial fraud.*



# MARIUPOL AT GUNPOINT

## MARIUPOL AT GUNPOINT

*The attack on Mariupol came as no surprise for this girl. A few days before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Iryna (her name has been changed) left for Kyiv with a heavy heart. She lost touch with her family and the sounds of continuous explosions near her house in Kyiv forced her to flee the capital as well. Iryna took four days to make her way to Belgium. Two months later, the mobile signal with the village near Mariupol, where her relatives live, was restored. The mobile operator is not Ukrainian, but of “Donetsk People’s Republics,” called Feniks. Iryna talks to her relatives only via the Internet. Now she is 26... She has left her profession, friends, and dreams behind.*

## INTERVIEW





**MARTA BARANDIY,  
FOUNDER OF  
PROMOTE UKRAINE,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF  
BRUSSELS UKRAİNA  
REVIEW**

**How did you find out about his death?**

His brother started searching for him on the Internet, – I saw those publications. Then, he published information that the guy passed away ...

**How do your loved ones cope with this situation now?**

[It is] Very difficult. They are very upset. The hospital where they used to work was completely bombed. My uncle lost his job. The situation with hospitals in Mariupol is overall critical. There are one or two left but they are also damaged partially. There is no equipment, many doctors [have] left the city.

**Do they get any help?**

Yes, one of my relatives gets assistance as a disabled person.

**From “Donetsk People’s Republic”?**

Yes, now from them.

**Iryna, are you from Mariupol?**

Yes, the village is 20km from Mariupol. That’s where my house is, that’s where my relatives live.

**Do your relatives still live in this house?**

Yes, they live now in occupied territory.

**Did you leave Mariupol during the occupation or before?**

I left before the occupation. I stayed at my family’s place until 18 February.

**Did you know that there would be an occupation, did you feel anything?**

Yes, everyone knew that something bad would happen, they foresaw it. Everyone wrote about it. Basically, everyone thought that everything would happen in the Donetsk region, not across Ukraine. I went to Kyiv, I rented an apartment there.

**Did you work in Kyiv? What about your work now?**

Yes, I worked in an agricultural enterprise that had lands in the Kherson region. Now they

are also under Russian occupation. Therefore, there is no work. Although the company legally exists, the sowing campaign was to begin in March and April. We were preparing for that, but sowing did not start.

**You had your life in Kyiv, your friends. Is there anyone who suffered from the war?**

My friend, with whom I studied at the university; he was a little older than me. When he was cooking meals on the street, he got a shrapnel wound and died.

**//**

*This is needed if you want to go somewhere. For example, if you want to go from a village to a neighbouring village or a town. This requires filtration. If you are not filtrated, you won’t be let out anywhere. You won’t be able even to do shopping.*

**Do you know if there are any protest sentiments against the occupiers in Mariupol?**

Basically, everyone wants to go back to Ukraine. They say they lived well. Of course, utility payments increased, but it was good to live in Ukraine. And now it's bad.

**And how do they perceive the occupation: that this is no longer Ukraine but rather "DPR" or Russia? How do people feel about it?**

The "DPR" is considered an illegal formation. You can't even go to the police there, because the "DPR" is lawlessness. Acquaintances say that if you get sick, you have nowhere to go to a hospital, no medical care will be provided. And of course, morale is very poor because of all this.

**There are media reports on filtration camps. Has your family undergone filtration?**

They say it was very tough. I did not ask for details. Very unpleasant questions were put, the phone was taken away and all social media accounts were completely looked through. They asked: 'What is your attitude towards the Ukrainian army? Azov Battalion?' My relatives had to lie because people with weapons were present at the interrogation.

**Did they have weapons?**

Of course, they had. And when relatives applied for filtration, they were well after 3,000th in the line. That is, the occupiers are in



*People cook on fires or barbecues near their homes. And they wash near the Metro store, where the "Ministry of Emergency Situations" brings water. They go there with bottles. I don't know how they do it in such heat, because everything is broken. No sewage, you can't wash. It's just awful. And there are so many people left, as it turned out.*

no hurry "to filtrate." There were active hostilities back then, and my relatives wanted to leave the city and go abroad or to another city in Ukraine. And they asked, 'Could it be faster? We want to leave.' And a 'DPR' militant answered, 'Those in need will undergo filtration first. You sleep in your bed. Why should you go through it first?' They began to argue, saying they need to leave for health reasons. And he told another militant: 'Bring a gun, they talk a lot here.' It was as if he was joking, but still.

**You say that relatives submitted documents for filtration, what does it mean? Was it their initiative or everyone is required to do so?**

This is needed if you want to go somewhere. For example, if you want to go from a village to a neighbouring village or a town. This requires filtration. If you are not filtrated, you won't be let out anywhere. You won't be able even to do shopping.

**But you go through it once and that's it?**

Yes, only once. Moreover, there are passes. For example, you need to buy food, go to a pharmacy or go to Mariupol or Berdyansk. You need to get a pass every time. It is given for 10 days. You can't just move through the occupied territory.

**Do they come home or are they ordered to go somewhere?**

No, it seems to be happening in the premises of the former police station. There are tables,

computers. They check whether the person served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. And if a person served, he or she is taken to Donetsk. The people who were taken away have not returned yet.

### **Are there any filtration camps?**

Those who left Mariupol must undergo filtration in neighbouring villages. It can take several days.

### **Do you know what happens to those who 'fail' filtration or are related to the Ukrainian army?**

They are taken to the previously occupied territory, to Donetsk. So far, none of my acquaintances who were taken away have returned. 'DPR' militants came in groups holding machine guns, inspected the entire apartment or house, looked in all the closets, and asked if anyone was hiding there. A neighbour used to serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. He was taken away during such a search and transferred to Donetsk. He is under custody there, something is being done there. I do not know.

### **Is he alive?**

Yes, he is alive. His wife calls him, sends him some parcels, food. He was told that he would be released in a month, but almost three months have passed and he is still not at home.

### **Is it like a prison?**

Yes, it is. They also may "sit in a pit." I do not know what it means. Probably a basement.

### **Are the occupiers "DPR" militants, Kadyrovites, or Russians?**

There are "DPR" militants around Mariupol. In Mariupol, there are Kadyrovites as well.

### **And what are "DPR" militants' plans for Mariupol? Are there any ideas about a "referendum"? What do they plan to do next?**

People there are in complete isolation. The information comes from social networks, Russian and "DPR" TV channels are broadcast there. If you have a satellite dish, you can catch Ukrainian channels. The alternative is to subscribe to some channels on social networks. Therefore, apart from gossip, it is difficult to say anything for sure. There is information that children in Mariupol have already gone to school and write "city of Mariupol, Rostov region" on their notebooks.

### **Are your classmates all right? Did they leave Mariupol or stay?**

Most of them left.

### **Abroad or for Russia?**

Someone went to Crimea and Donetsk. Nobody went precisely to Russia. Mainly, they left for Germany and Poland.

### **There is a lot of information about mass graves in Mariupol. Have your relatives seen them?**

I do not know. They go to Mariupol, but do not look at such things specifically.

But there are places where corpses stink a lot, especially where the rubble has not yet been removed.

### **It is hot these days in Mariupol, isn't it?**

The last two or three days the temperature is already very high, about 30 degrees Celsius. And even cholera cases have already been detected. And that's why they say that now Mariupol will be closed... no one will be allowed in and out, so as not to spread it.

### **But is there clean water, gas, power? Is it already restored?**

If there are no damages, power and water supplies are available. There is no gas supply at all. In Mariupol, the situation is a 100,000 times worse than around the city. Volunteers bring water and food to people from villages. They take things to wash at home and then bring them back. It's all because there is no power, no water, no Internet, no mobile communication. Kyivstar and MTS [Ukrainian mobile operators] may appear at some height in good weather. People cook on fires or barbecues near their homes. And they

wash near the Metro store, where the “Ministry of Emergency Situations” brings water. They go there with bottles. I don’t know how they do it in such heat, because everything is broken. No sewage, you can’t wash. It’s just awful. And there are so many people left, as it turned out.

### **Are there many people left in Mariupol?**

Yes, a lot of people are still there. This is especially evident near places of distribution of water and humanitarian aid. And children... There are children in the building where my friend lives. They walk, ride bicycles and scooters. Children adapt better.

### **Tell us, how did you come here from Kyiv, how did it happen?**

On 24 February, I woke up to explosions in Kyiv, in Boryspil town. As far as I understand, this is the first location that was bombed in Ukraine. I immediately called my relatives in Mariupol, Hostomel, Kharkiv. I woke everyone up and said it had started. No one believed me, everyone told me to sleep and that it was just rain. Or military exercises. I said, “No, I hear a lot of explosions.” I started looking for something on the Internet and found no information.

### **At 4 a.m.?**

Somewhere around 5 a.m. There was no information yet. And it was

quiet in Mariupol. I called my friend, she said those were exercises. And her boyfriend serves in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and he said that those were not exercises. I got scared, I lived in an apartment with a cat. I cooperated with this friend and decided to sit together in Kyiv and wait for it to end. For some reason, everyone thought it would end quickly. No one could believe it was a war. I already collected a go-bag with documents and money. When I went outside, I bent over because the explosions were very loud. I ran to the metro station to travel three stops. We stocked up on groceries, drinking water, filled a bathtub and bottles with tap water. We decided to stay in Kyiv. We did not hear explosions in Hostomel and Bucha, because it is on the other side. But in 3-4 days next to us, there was a tank somehow. It was burned. It was very scary. There were air raid sirens. We ran to the basement of my house. I talked to my parents on the phone. And then the connection was lost. That scared me the most. I thought maybe they are gone and our house, too. I decided to leave the city. It was dangerous to do it by car because people were shot by Russians and this way is not safe for a girl. It took 3-4 days to get to Western Ukraine by car. So I decided to take the evacuation train. Many discouraged me, saying there are a lot of people, everything is packed, people travel while standing. But I took the most

necessary things, my cat, and I and my friend went to the railway station. Just the day before, a missile hit it. It was very scary. But, perhaps, not scarier than in Mariupol.

### **Do you remember exactly when you decided to go? How was it?**

I lost connection with my family, and I thought that the connection may disappear in the capital as well. The Internet, power will be switched off and we will have to sit in a basement, waiting for the unknown. And I decided to come here.

### **How did you get here?**

The first try failed, I had to miss several trains. We tried to get anywhere. We took a crowded train to Ivano-Frankivsk. People sat on the floor, even in the toilet. That was in early March. There were mostly women with children on the train. There were very few men. Probably disabled or those who had the right to leave. There was no air to breathe on the train, the trip was very long. I got off in Lviv, spent the night at my friends’ place. The most unpleasant thing was when it was impossible to take a train abroad in Lviv and I decided to go to the border by the Red Cross bus and then cross the border on foot. There were extremely many people on the bus, we



were suffocating. Everyone was throwing up on each other. It was very unpleasant.

The bus took us to the border, to Shehyni. And then we went on foot to the border. It was fast. I crossed two borders in two or three hours. We were very well received in Poland. They offered drinks, food, and suggested taking us where we needed to go. The Poles treated us warmly.

**How do you feel now?**

I have already adapted, people get used to everything. It's better now.

**And what do you expect from the whole situation?**

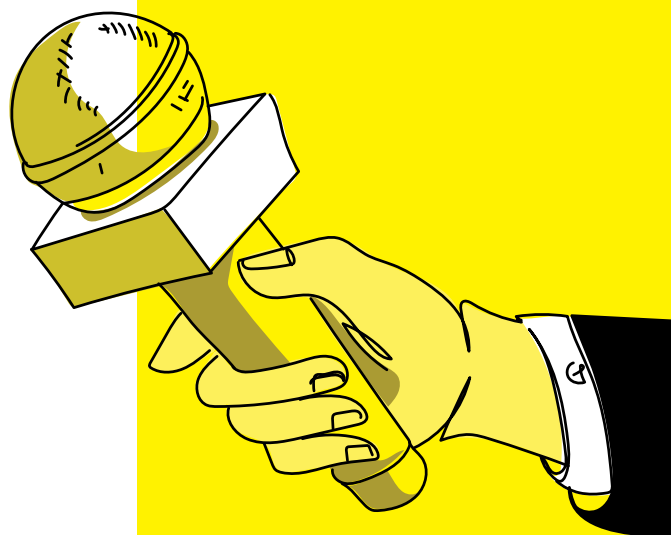
Of course, I expect the war to end soon and I will be able to return home. I've never wanted to live abroad at all, only in Ukraine. Built my life, career in Ukraine. Now, it's dangerous for a girl in Kyiv. I went there to pick up some things. I felt very uncomfortable there. Although I have always loved Kyiv. This is a lovely, kind city. But there are constant air raid sirens, road-blocks, people with weapons. You do not feel safe.

**And while you are here, will you study, look for a job?**

Yes, I enrolled in school. I will learn the language and eventually look for a job.

//

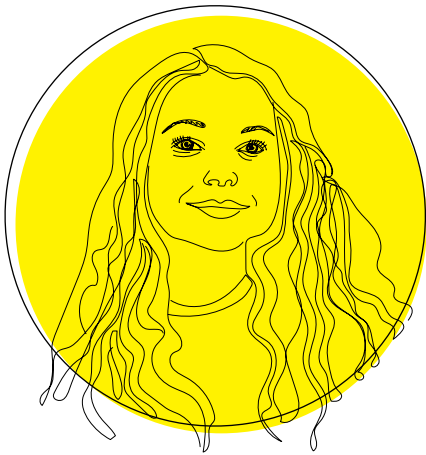
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# WESTERN PEACE MOVEMENTS AS USEFUL IDIOTS FOR PUTIN'S REGIME

One might wonder what peace craving European parties and NGOs might have in common with the bloody dictatorial, tyrannic, militant and aggressive regime of nowadays Russia. At first look - really nothing. These parties and organisations are pro-human rights while there is not much of that anymore in Russia: according to Amnesty international reports - freedom of speech is truly absent. These organizations are also in favour of LGBTQ+ rights while Putin is openly a major homophobe: what happens in Ichkeria with non-straight people is pure horror and deserves an article of its own.





**LESYA MAGAS,  
COMMUNICATIONS  
AND MANIFESTATIONS  
VOLUNTEER AT  
PROMOTE UKRAINE**

Furthermore, parties and NGOs in question advocate workers' rights, redistribution of wealth, and fair trade, in Russia though only a privileged few live in somewhat satisfying living conditions. Nearly half of the total wealth was held by only 1% of the population in 2020.

And yet, there is something that Putin's regime and European "peace doves" share - the wish for Ukraine to be disarmed against Russia's genocidal war.

A simplified narrative that "war is bad ergo weapons are bad" does not work when you are protecting your people on your territories from monsters that rape 6-month-old children. But unfortunately, these nuances can not be seen by some leftist organisations if they are sitting on such a moral high horse. That is, I believe, the endless naïveté of the people who have not

seen a war for almost a century, of people whose existence has never been threatened in their lifetime, and especially of people who never had to undergo Russian occupation directly.

It is absolutely not surprising to me that the countries that support Ukraine most besides the UK and US, are mainly the countries that have experienced Russian occupation: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic. These countries remember what Russian rule entails. The call upon Ukraine to cease fire and give up the occupied territories by the western peace-craving organisations is nothing less than calling upon Ukraine to let a part of its population be deported, killed, raped, and marauded. It's a call to give up on those Ukrainians who have proved once again that they want nothing to do with Russia, like our brave Khersoners who keep protesting against Russian occupation to this day.

So, it is as clear as day that persecution of Ukrainians would not stop if Russia was able to keep the territories that they occupied. Simply because their goal is not Kherson or Donbas, their goal is to "resolve the Ukrainian issue" and I quote Putin's speech on the

21st of February here. He says very openly on all the platforms he has that Ukraine is a fake state and Ukrainians should not exist as a nation. The terrorist state of Russia truly is an heir to the Soviet Union, and Ukrainians have lived through it already for more than 70 years: 7 to 10 million Ukrainians were killed by the man-made hunger, as declares a joint statement to the United Nations signed by 25 countries. In 2003, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, among which the elite of our society, were deported to Siberia (all during so-called peaceful times! There was no war between the Soviet Union and Ukraine when these horrors were happening). Naturally, Ukraine will do everything not to go through Russian occupation again. And all those high-browed Macrons of this world I want to ask, which part of France would you give up to Russia to "preserve Putin's face" and "achieve peace"?

Yet another reason why Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia do their best to stand with Ukraine is the following: appeasement with the blood thirsty, hateful and imperialistic regime does

not work. And they know it better than the soft, peace-loving West, who will be the next target of Russia's aggression should Russia win the war in Ukraine. The entire identity and morals of Russians (yes, regular people) lie in the idea that "Russia is a great empire that needs expansion and everyone around it is an enemy." The appeasement techniques proposed by some western politicians are just a joke to Putin. The militaristic establishment of Russia understands only power and the lack of powerful resistance is just a green light for Putin to go further. But hey, you don't have to trust my word. Here is a list of expansionist and destabilising wars Russia has carried out during 30 years of its existence outside of the Soviet Union:

**1992-1993 – Russia occupied Transnistria**

**1992-1993 – Russia provoked the Abkhazian war**

**1994-1996 – first Russian-Chechen war**

**1999-2009 – second Russian-Chechen war**

**2008 – Russian-Georgian war**

**2015-2022 – Russia's invasion of Syria**

**2014 – Annexation of Crimea and occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk regions**

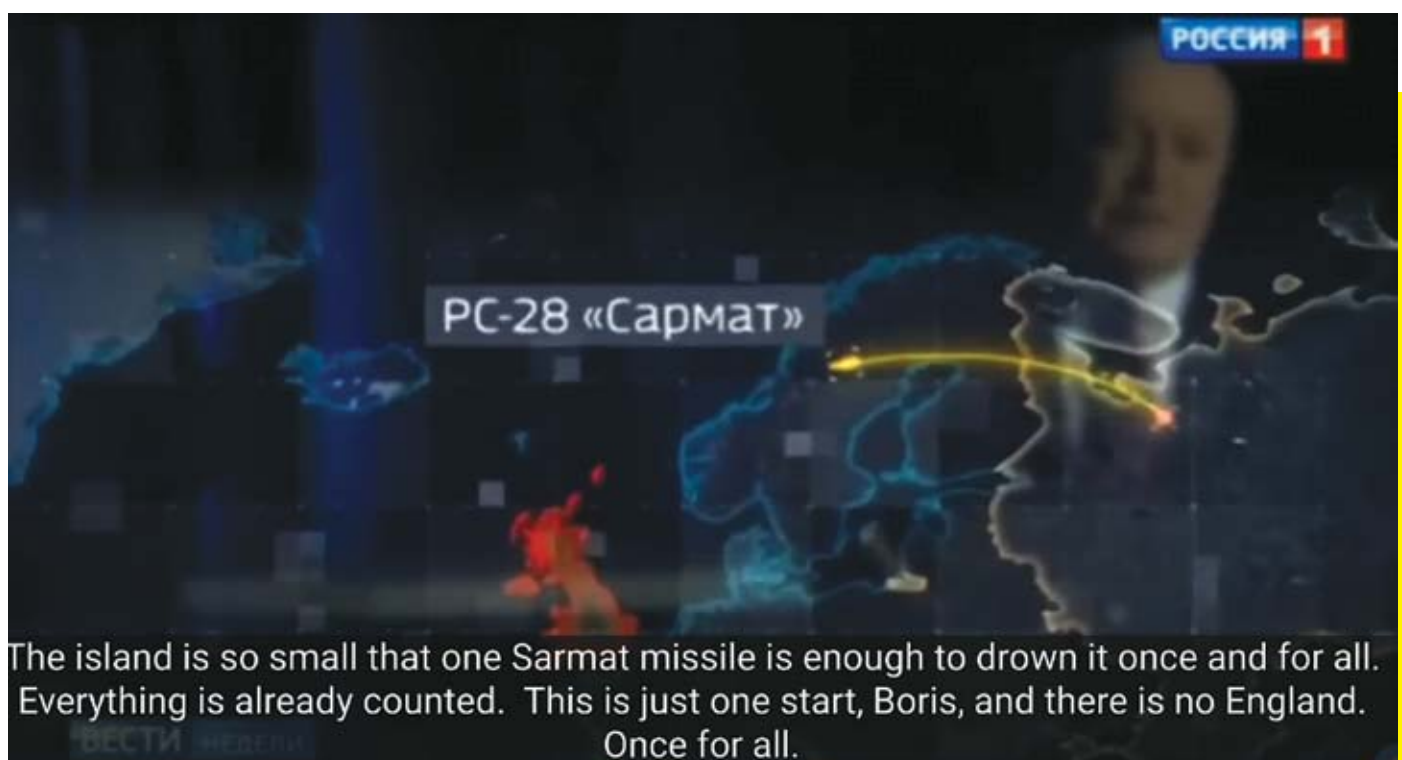
**2022 – Full-scale war on Ukraine**

This pattern is clear and consequent: Russia is not interested one bit in peace. Peace and stability in the areas around Russia only underline clearly to its sheep population that they live in a poor country that is not interested in social or economic development. I really wish that

leftist scholars like Idesbald Goddeeris and Tom Sauer, "peace-craving" parties all over Europe, and trade unions would understand that there is in principle no territory that would be sufficient for Russia to stop invading other countries because their true goal is not this or that piece of land. It's already the largest country in the world, the goal is destabilisation of the democratic world and ability to keep own population in check through the supposed military victories (as there are no other ones to be proud of in any of the fields).

And, once again, you don't have to take just my word for it:

Ramzan Kadyrov recently said on his Instagram: With Ukraine, it's all clear already, now the new open question is Poland.





On Russian state TV, it is often shown how a Russian nuclear missile destroys the UK.

Countless threats were openly voiced to the Baltic states and Finland and Sweden.

And lastly, way too many western politicians and organisations still do not view Ukraine as an agent, a subject, not an object in this war. All those narratives that it's a conflict between Russia and the US or Russia and NATO only support Russian propaganda. There are only 4 kilometers between the border of Russia and the USA in the north, close to Alaska. If it was about Russia vs the US then maybe they would have gone with their armies that way.

It's also crucial to stress that there are no other sides responsible for this war besides Russia. It began with unprovoked invasive aggression in Ukraine. Expansion of NATO to the east as a casus belli is a weak non-argument because NATO did not forcefully make

Ukraine a member against its will. Ukraine, in a democratic way, selected its development course toward the EU and NATO, and Russia does not have a say in it. Everything else is victim-blaming. So, I'd like to ask these western intellectuals who blame NATO for the war in Ukraine, whether they also blame a rape victim because she went on a date with a different guy? Or maybe Ukraine was wearing a very short skirt?

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*And lastly, way too many western politicians and organisations still do not view Ukraine as an agent, a subject, not an object in this war.*



# RUSSIAN WAR CRIMES IN UKRAINE

## HORRIBLE REALITY

International mass media sources are full of information about and photos of atrocities committed by Russia after its invasion on 24 February 2022.

**T**he world has seen an unbelievable picture of war. Thus, in the course of a war there should be respected rules of war and provisions of the international humanitarian law, including the ones of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols thereto, the Hague Conventions. In Ukraine, almost all types of grave war crimes were committed in breach of the international law and principles of humanity.

Thus, according to the OSCE's Report, the gravest crimes which, even at the current stage of investigation, are attributed to Russia are targeted killing of civilians, including journalists and human rights activists, cruel treatment of civilians, including rape of women and girls, enforced disappearance or abductions of civilians.

The scale of crimes is so staggering that this led to

the pavilion "Russia House" being replaced by the "Russian War Crimes House" at the World Economic Forum 2022 in Davos where Russia was not invited this year.

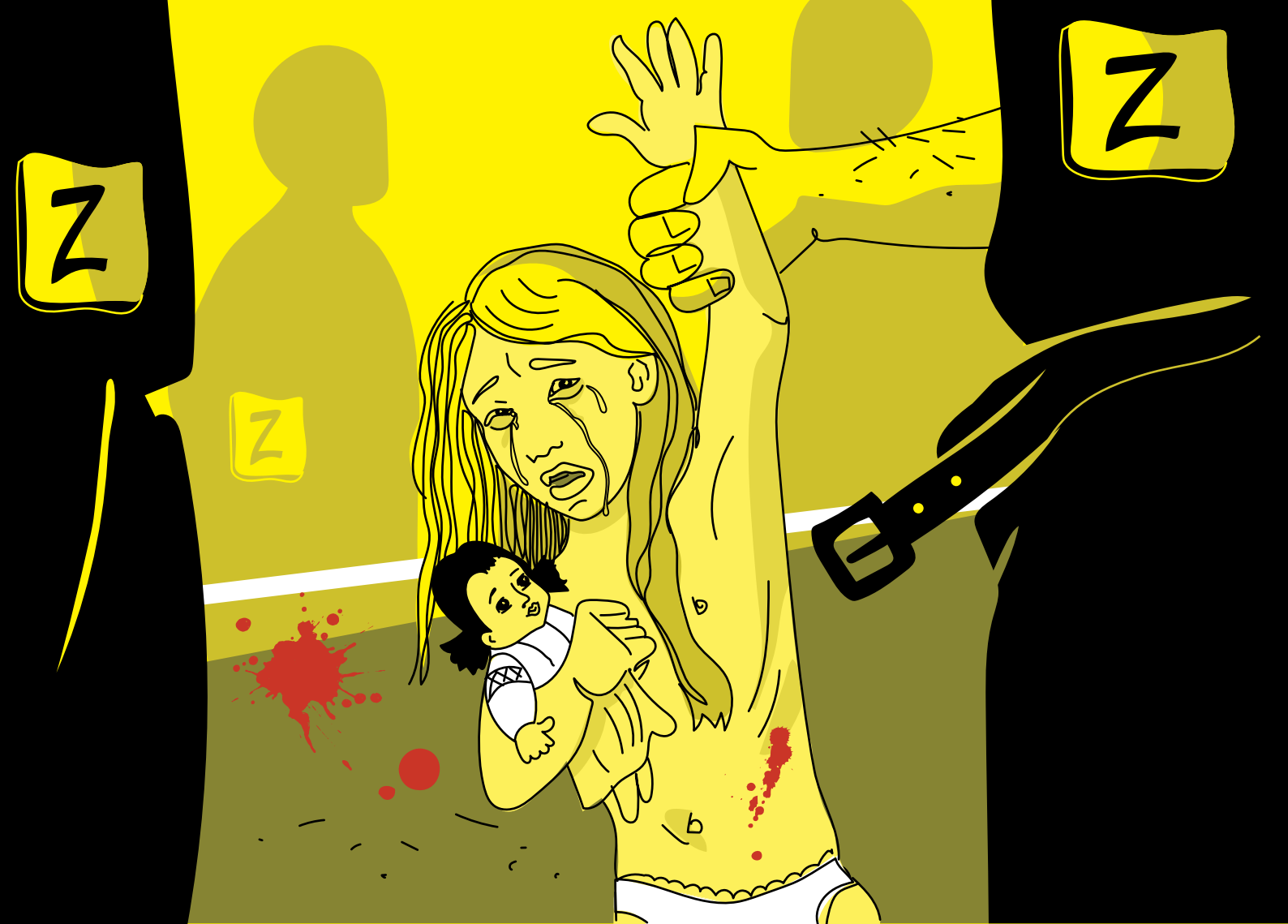
Thus, during the Russian invasion in March 2022, mass killings and tortures of civilian population were committed in Bucha, Irpin, Vorzel and other settlements of the Kyiv region. Only in Bucha more than 420 civilians were killed, women and children among them. Famous international mass media, such as Bellingcat, Deutsche Welle, The Economist, BBC and The New York Times published proof of atrocities committed by Russia.

Taking into consideration the scale of crimes, on 14 April 2022, the Ukrainian Parliament approved that major violations of humanitarian law and customs of war committed by the Russian military forces are deemed actions aimed at the annihilation of the Ukrainian people.

Besides that, the Ukrainian Parliament requested the United Nations, the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, as well as



**DIANA DEGUEL, MBA,  
A UKRAINIAN LAWYER  
WITH OVER 20 YEARS  
OF EXPERIENCE,  
ASTERS LAW FIRM**



governments and parliaments of foreign states, to recognise that Russia is committing the crime of genocide against the Ukrainian people and crimes against humanity and war crimes in the territory of Ukraine.

The committed crimes must remain in history as personalised crimes. Thus, the crimes were committed according to orders. At the same time, they were not committed personally by the Russian army commanders or by the country's leaders – they were committed by ordinary Russians, soldiers. Information regarding crimes is being collected and will be published in the “Book of Executioners,” the release of which was announced by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky.

It is worth remembering that the most scary part here is the ruined and broken lives of families

of the deceased and victims. Raped women and children, cynically killed civilians in the basement of the Mariupol theatre, torture and slaughters. These are horror stories of deaths and ruined lives as a result of Russian hostilities.

The minimum measure of justice is that perpetrators must be punished according to the liability rules provided for by law.

#### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Liability for war crimes may be put both on countries and definite people. Sanctions, reparations, compensations to Ukraine and its citizens for crimes and harm, criminal responsibility of guilty persons are some measures of responsibility.

Collecting and documenting proofs of damage and arranging for their further compensation is one of the areas of work

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for Ukraine to remedy the infringed rights. Besides, the issue of responsibility of definite people remains important.

Thus, in May 2022 Ukraine imposed the first sentence on a Russian trooper Vadim Shishimarin, who shot to death an unarmed 62-year-old man a few meters from that man's house. Prosecutors demonstrated evidence, in particular a gun-machine, which was used to make shots, opinions of forensic examination and results of the investigative experiment. The court sentenced Shishimarin to life imprisonment.

What is more important with such types of crimes, is that not only the person who committed a crime must be responsible, but also his commander, leaders, who ordered to do so or who did not take all feasible measures within their power to prevent or repress the violation. Such an approach to responsibility is enshrined in Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions.

It means that not only the soldiers who committed the crimes should be responsible, but also their commanders and leaders of



*Besides, the International Criminal Court in the Hague opened a large-scale investigation into crimes connected with Russian aggression against Ukraine. The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, visited Ukraine twice after the commencement of the war and communicated with witnesses personally, witnessing consequences of the aggression in Bucha. In the course of crime investigation by ICC, there are 39 countries involved, which ensures full and impartial investigation.*

Russia, including president Vladimir Putin.

It is difficult to believe that numerous acts of violence and killings are being committed without an order from and awareness of the country leaders. In such a case, the task of proving becomes much more complicated since investigation can not find direct, real evidence as was with the Shishimarin case, and it is necessary to prove a link between orders of commanders and their consequences. On the other hand, taking into consideration the scale of crimes in Ukraine, its systematic manner and availability of proof in the public domain, it is difficult to imagine that it is only perpetrators who must be brought to justice.

#### **HOW WAR CRIMES ARE INVESTIGATED IN UKRAINE**

Despite broad dissemination of information with regard to crimes in Ukraine, Russia does not take any actions to investigate crimes and bring perpetrators to justice.

According to the General Prosecutor Office of Ukraine, by 24 May 2022, there have been registered 19,821 war crimes. 234 children died and 433 were wounded.

Apart from investigation authorities and the Prosecutor Office, proofs of Russian aggression are being collected, upon statements by victims and witnesses, on the common platform of the General Prosecutor Office of Ukraine.

Prosecutions have been instigated both by prosecution authorities of Ukraine

and by international institutions abroad.

It is highly important that the investigations are being carried out with unprecedented involvement of international experts.

All this bespeaks openness of Ukraine, its readiness to carry out transparent and unbiased investigation, and its belief that truth and justice will prevail.

Thus, according to President of France Emmanuel Macron, French gendarmes and experts are helping Ukrainian and international justice to collect evidence and identify those responsible.

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Moreover, the European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom established the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group (ACA) to coordinate efforts to bring to justice those responsible for war crimes during Russia's war against Ukraine.

According to the press-release of the European External Action Service, the ACA seeks to streamline coordination and communication efforts to ensure best practices, avoid duplication of

efforts, and encourage the expeditious deployment of financial resources and skilled personnel to respond to the needs of the Prosecutor office of Ukraine as the legally constituted authority in Ukraine responsible for dealing with the prosecution of war crimes in its own territory.

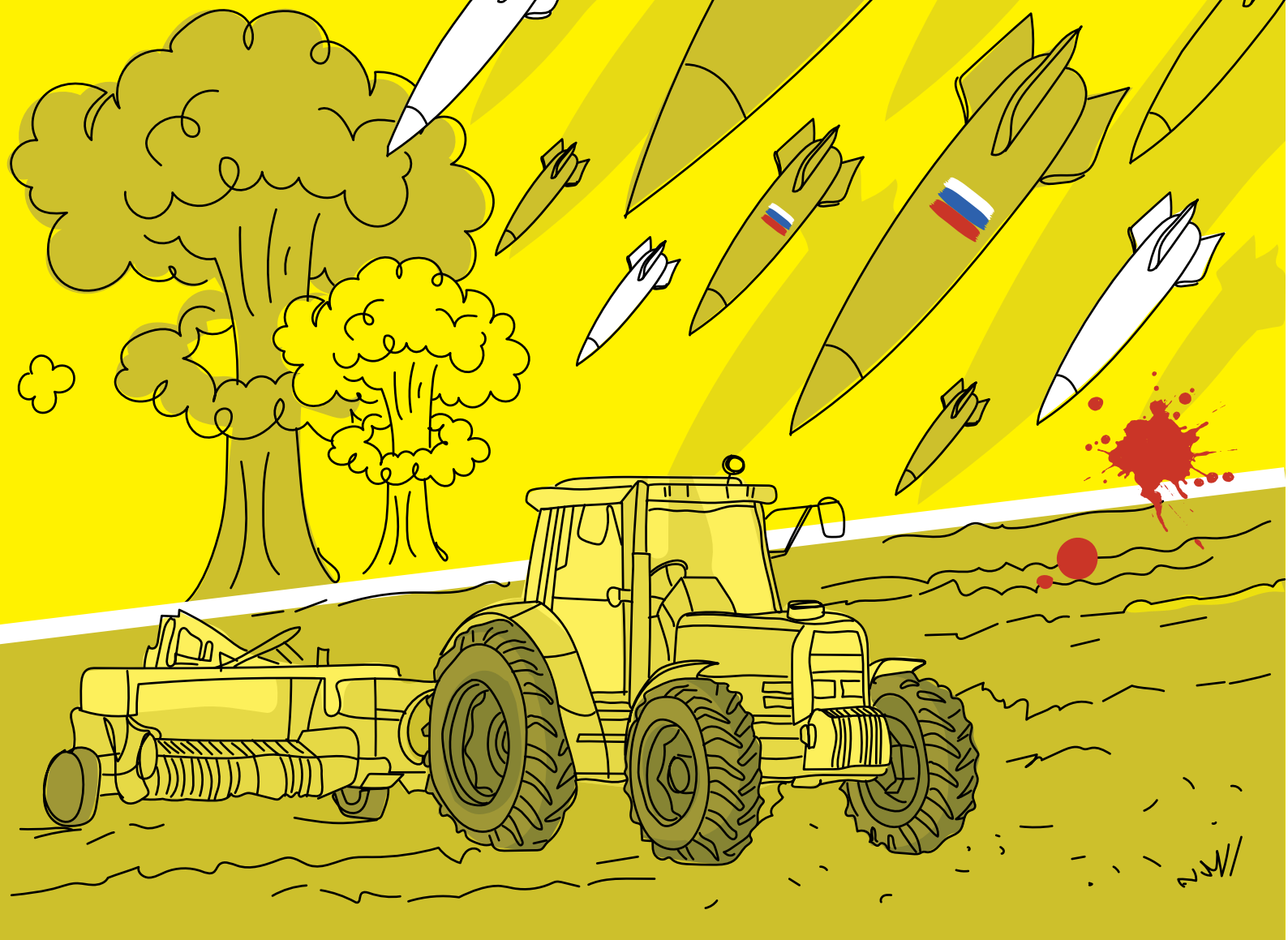
### NEVER AGAIN?

It is apparent that the most important thing as of today is to stop the aggressor's actions, prevent any recurrence thereof and insure security not only for Ukraine but also for the whole Europe. Otherwise, ignoring and impunity will give rise to new crimes.

In this regard, support of Ukraine by EU countries is of paramount importance. Ukraine should become a candidate country of the EU at the nearest time, as the Ukrainian people at the cost of their own lives daily demonstrate loyalty to democratic principles of Europe, ensure the peaceful life of the neighbouring countries, and defend freedom and democracy of Europe.



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# FOOD AS A WEAPON OF WAR: NEW COMPONENT OF PUTIN'S 'HYBRID WARFARE'



**MARYNA YAROSHEVYCH,  
HEAD OF ADVOCACY AT  
PROMOTE UKRAINE;  
DIRECTOR OF "UKRAINE  
AND THE EU" PROGRAMME  
AT FOREIGN POLICY  
COUNCIL "UKRAINIAN  
PRISM"**



For more than three consecutive months, the world has been compassionately sympathising with Ukraine for losing its people - both military and civilians - as a result of Russia's sinister and unprovoked, full-scale attack on its territory. To mitigate the consequences for people in precarious situations, countries have widely opened their doors welcoming more than five million refugees (Ukrainians under temporary protection status) while stakeholders at all levels have been channelling humanitarian assistance to the remaining thirty-five million internally displaced and those who did not evacuate, but remained in destroyed and besieged villages, towns and cities instead.

As for the military component, though, not only have western allies consistently excluded fighting on the side of Ukraine under the pretext of avoiding a third world war, but until very recently favoured an appeasement policy over supplies of tangible military equipment support



*With Russia's sabotage of grains and fertilizers exports, energy, and thus production prices at record levels on top of distorted supply chains, coping with all the difficulties not only for underdeveloped countries, but even the most affluent ones might be next to impossible.*

to Ukraine. The Ukrainian army, despite its indescribable bravery and commitment, being underprepared on a technical level cannot halt Russia's troops penetration into its territory completely. Once the invaders are pushed back, the risk of rising death toll is not gone. The estimates show that around 80,000 sq. km of arable land in Ukraine is currently mined and cannot be cultivated, not only this season, but for years to come before deminers clear the territory.

**Alas, in 2022 Russia has managed to widen the scope of its undeclared and unadmitted 'hybrid war' on the entire world by disrupting Ukraine's ploughing and sowing, destroying food processing and transportation infrastructure, stealing and looting farm and harvest equipment, halting the exports of agricultural produce by blocking Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea, while shifting the blame for the looming global food crisis on Western sanctions and Ukraine's policies on top.**

The latter, however, depicts a totally distorted picture, since restrictive measures on Russia intentionally exempt the agricultural sector on the one hand and it is Russia itself that has limited its food exports on the other. Fearing shortages, around two dozen states by now have followed suit according to Rob Vos from the International Food Policy Research Institute (based

in Washington DC). Supply cuts on global markets further instigate inflation.

The situation is further deteriorating and becoming more critical day by day. If no snap solution is found, by fall the world will be sympathising yet again. This time, though, with millions of people from at least 26 countries, predominantly in the Middle East and Africa that might starve to death. Circumstances are particularly tough for countries like Somalia, Senegal and Egypt, which depend on one or both Russia and Ukraine for between 50% and 100% of their wheat supply. If the war goes on, many indebted countries could be forced to borrow even more to subsidise staple foods. Populations of these countries, in turn, pushed beyond the poverty line are most likely to take part in riots and social unrest. Due to food inaccessibility or extreme scarcity others will flee. Increased migration flows will yet again put pressure on the developed world that has yet to recover economically from the recent COVID-19 pandemic. With Russia's sabotage of grains and fertilizers exports, energy, and thus production prices at record

levels on top of distorted supply chains, coping with all the difficulties not only for underdeveloped countries, but even the most affluent ones, might be next to impossible.

This vicious circle if not broken will result in a downspiraling of the global economy into a protracted downturn. In the words of David Beasley, UN World Food Programme Executive Director, it would be "a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe." This time around, however, the victims won't be counted in the thousands. Rather they will be calculated in tens and hundreds of millions of those who died as a result of the Russian aggression and lack of world's prompt reaction and adequate response.

**The question is: will the western world have the guts to admit this time around that it has become 'a partner in crime' by doing too little and too late to stop Putin when the worst could be avoided still?**

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# INTEGRATION OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN BELGIUM: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY AHEAD



**FATIH YILMAZ,  
DIRECTOR OF  
PROJECTS AND  
PARTNERSHIPS AT  
BEYOND THE HORIZON  
ISSG**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

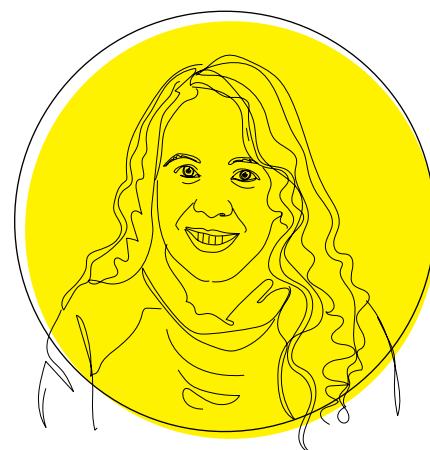
Russia's invasion of Ukraine has resulted in a large-scale refugee flow from Ukraine, making it the largest since World War II.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of Ukrainian refugees crossing into other European countries has exceeded 6.5 million since the invasion started, 90 percent of whom are women and children. Although there is hope that the war in Ukraine might end soon, history tells us that, in most cases, a majority of refugees will not be able to return to their home country in the near future.

The integration of these people in the host countries is, therefore, very important both for the refugees and the host societies. The generally positive and warm attitude of the host countries towards Ukrainian refugees could facilitate their integration, both from an education, health, housing, labour, and linguistic point of view. The large numbers of refugees arriving in Belgium indeed poses a challenge to the country's local authorities and the society as a whole.



*Often in shock, with one or two small bags, most Ukrainian refugees arrive in the host countries highly distressed.*



**LYUBA KARPACHOVA,  
REFUGEE DEPARTMENT  
LEAD AT PROMOTE  
UKRAINE**

## 2. CHALLENGES OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Often in shock, with one or two small bags, most Ukrainian refugees arrive in the host countries highly distressed. Even if they have someone to meet them at the train station or airport, the language barrier poses a major challenge. New country, new culture, unknown language, and no friends or family to support them.

With the support of the civil society and the Ukrainian community associations, the UNHCR on 15 May 2022 organised its first community consultation on refugee-related integration issues in the Brussels capital region. During the meeting the participants touched upon some of the most common challenges facing Ukrainian refugees across all parts of Belgium.

### SOCIAL ORIENTATION

One of the key challenges identified in terms of social integration was the lack of knowledge of local languages. Unable to speak French, Dutch, or even basic English, refugees from Ukraine often miss out on critical information even if it is readily available. They are not aware of the services and support to which they are entitled. Even less so, they are unaware of the responsibilities of each governmental agency, and do not understand how the Belgian system operates.

In addition, the registration process to receive identification documents, obtain social allowances, or open a bank account can take up to three months depending on the municipality, often leaving Ukrainians without the necessary means to being fully functional in Belgian society. Belgian authorities and the population are doing their best to support and change the processes, but that is a time-consuming process, too.





## HOUSING

While many people living in Belgium kindly opened their houses to the refugees from Ukraine following the events of 24 February, the prolonged hosting of families on a voluntary basis is not a feasible long-term solution, both for monetary (increased cost of utilities) and psychosocial (host fatigue and cultural differences) reasons.

Many Ukrainian refugees in Belgium are unable to rent a place on their own, since their temporary stay permits ('card A') expire on 4 March 2023, and landlords in Belgium usually want contracts with one to three years commitments. Further to this, the legal notice period of such contracts is three months. Most refugees can't agree to this condition, wishing to go back as soon as possible.

Collective housing offered by the government is scarce, and there is generally not enough information available as to when and how it will be offered.

## HEALTH

The Belgian social security system and the mandatory health insurance, initially offered to Ukrainians for free, is certainly helpful when medical assistance is required. However, the complexity of the social security system and intricacies of local healthcare are making it extremely difficult for the refugees to grasp what to do in case of an emergency, and how to get reimbursed for any medical expenses incurred.

## EDUCATION

From the outset, Belgian schools and universities have ensured Ukrainian refugees swift access to their courses. As for the challenges, a lack of a clear understanding of the enrolment process has been identified, as

has the difficulty for children with no or little understanding of local languages to immediately immerse into the local educational process. In fact, few schools offer integration classes allowing Ukrainian children to gradually adjust to their curricula, as well as to learn local languages. On top of that, many parents are hoping to go back to Ukraine as soon as possible and therefore do not see the need to integrate their children into local schools. Instead, they prefer them to attend online courses offered by schools in Ukraine.

## WORK

Lacking the knowledge of local languages, Ukrainian refugees already have a very limited pool of jobs to apply for. In addition, the time-consuming procedure of proving the equivalence of Ukrainian diplomas makes it almost impossible for a large number of Ukrainians to start working in Belgium immediately. In order to overcome this obstacle, some Ukrainian refugees are applying for positions for which they are overqualified and for which the remuneration is significantly lower than in Ukraine.

3. Belgium's response to the integration of Ukrainian refugees

In response to the situation, the European Union (EU) has, for the very first time, activated its Temporary Protection Directive. By doing so, Member States are now obliged to provide immediate, temporary protection to refugees from Ukraine, grant them immediate access to education, and housing and healthcare services, as well as to the labour markets of the EU. Belgian administrations now face an enormous challenge in making such access a reality.

Relying on its experienced institutions and its vibrant civil society, Belgium reacted quickly to

the current situation. However, a humanitarian crisis of this scale does not come without challenges. Officials estimate that Belgium might receive up to 200,000 Ukrainian refugees. Between 24 February and 24 May 2022, 42,979 Ukrainians, of which 80 percent were women and children, were granted so-called temporary protection status. From the outset, Belgian authorities established a separate in-processing pipeline for Ukrainian refugees. And when needed, they scaled up the capacity.

The most demanding task is to find immediate shelter for these people, a responsibility shared between all layers of state and citizens. To this end;

- The Flemish government, together with its local authorities, aimed to enable 18.000 so-called 'reception places' by the end of



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March. Additionally, the government is considering building 15 'emergency villages' to enable the potential reception of yet another 120.000 Ukrainian refugees. Such villages have already opened in Antwerp and Mechelen.

- The parliament has temporarily eased quality standards in the rental regime, allocated vacant social spaces suitable for collective housing (such as monasteries and hospitals), and tasked the Social Housing Society with preparing mobile housing units.

- The Flemish Government has provided €1.000 per reception location for cities and municipalities, and another €400 per reception location from private individuals (more than 6.000 residents volunteered as host family candidates).

- A screening procedure developed for families who want to receive Ukrainian refugees has also been established.

**In tandem with the main effort (housing), several other measures are being taken simultaneously;**

- The authorities have provided preventive health measures for the refugees such as screening for/vaccination against tuberculosis, COVID-19, measles, mumps, rubella (MBR) and diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.

- Give a Day, the largest volunteer job bank in Belgium, has launched an online platform for people who want to help Ukrainians.

- A 45 percent tax deduction has been introduced for donations in excess of €40 for selected aid organisations (Consortium 12 12, in partnership with Flemish Red Cross, among others) assisting Ukrainian refugees.

- An allowance granted upon registration is being discussed at the federal level.

**Measures on social orientation;**

- The Civic Integration Agency ('Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering') has compiled necessary information and organised online info sessions in Ukrainian about living in Flanders,

- The Flemish Ministry of Education is considering opening schools in emergency villages, alongside current schools, in order to teach the refugees Dutch and keep children continuing their educational curricula without interruption.

**Measures on labour market integration;**

- The Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) is responsible for integrating Ukrainian refugees into the labour market. Its main focus is on additional language training and mentoring. As of 2 June 2022, 3.306 positions were available on the VDAB portal.

- Although currently available jobs are generally temporary, they are still an option for Ukrainian refugees. Yet, Hilde Crevits, the minister for Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy and Agriculture, said Ukrainian refugees will not solve the talent shortage in the Flemish labour market.

**4. THE WAY AHEAD**

The uncertainty of the situation poses a challenge both to refugees and local authorities. Given the urgency, Belgian authorities ought to be more adaptive and flexible, enabling new, fast-track solutions to challenges in terms of integration of Ukrainian refugees. Civil society organisations could also play a bigger role in materialising such solutions. On the other hand, the private sector could also do more by coordinating different efforts in order to achieve synergies aimed at better supporting the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Belgium.

*Lacking the knowledge of local languages, Ukrainian refugees already have a very limited pool of jobs to apply for.*

# CULTURE IS (WITH) OUT POLITICS

## CULTURE IS (WITH) OUT POLITICS



**DANYLO POLILUEV-SCHMIDT, CULTURAL COLUMNIST FOR THE PROJECT "UKRAINE IN DEUTSCHLAND," DECISION BOARD MEMBER OF THE NGO IWEK E.V., ACTIVIST, PODCAST CREATOR AND BLOGGER BERLIN, GERMANY**

**T**he wealth of culture is acknowledged and recognized by many over a long period of time. It is thanks to culture we become conscious, capable and aware; it is culture that gives us the opportunity to develop and self-realize ourselves. Moreover, culture gives us space to find new meanings, build critical thinking and preserve national memory. At the same time, it is a space for the formation of national identity.

Subjectivity is one of the central themes of culture, cultural diplomacy and inclusiveness. Consciously or unconsciously, culture is an integral part of our daily lives: when we go to

work and listen to our favorite music on a streaming platform, when we watch movies at the Berlinale, when we go to a museum, buy clothes or when we eat in an oriental restaurant with sticks, when we read a book in whatever language, we admire the achievements of athletes at the Olympics ... The description of contacts with culture and its derivatives can go on and on. I assume that for many the integrity of culture at different levels of life is undeniable. Therefore we can conclude that culture can change time and space and change the content of meaning.

In my opinion, Russia has intensified the use of the cultural component as an instrument of aggression and oppression immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And during the last eight years and a little

more than three months of war, Russian society and leadership continued to use new ways to attack everything nation-building in Ukraine and abroad: linguistic identification (Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar, Karaite), historical justice and the desire to move towards European values and standards. Therefore, it is no longer a surprise that cultural expansion and appropriation become useful tools of hybrid warfare. The constructive approach and deliberate rewriting of historical facts. They are used to blur the border between Ukrainian and Russian, while the importance of the Ukrainian language as part of the European space is denied. The Kremlin's monotonous voice catches the eye of



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the West to Ukraine being only a province of Russia - just "a part of Russia" that rebelled and broke away from the cradle of "Soviet good" during a terrible injustice. Therefore, all artists, performers, singers, cultural figures and figures automatically become Russian. Great cultural figures turn into exclusively Russian actors; Ukrainian singers, who were only visitors to the north-eastern direction, become full-fledged Russian stars. There is a shift in the concepts and basis for the new, aggressive demands of Russia on Ukrainian as a cultural entity. That is why, in my opinion, the issue of cultural affiliation, origin and language is becoming very relevant, not secondary. If we think longer, we can see that this number of Ukrainian losses in the field of Russia's cultural war. For years, the number of losses was not visible. Because it was impossible to see them in the shadow of the overwhelmed empire, but these facts were not allowed to be seen, such as the Holodomor, the Red Terror, the Executed Renaissance, frescoes taken from St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral, attempts to appropriate the "Scythian Gold" of Crimea and more.

And the last aspect of Russia's fierce struggle against Ukraine is the thesis of everything Ukrainian as something anti-Russian and vile. This thesis was proved in action by the Russian army and its allies during the occupation of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk, but also in many other towns and villages. The first thing the occupiers did was not to maintain a new currency or new laws, but to blur the boundaries of the cultural environment. The Ukrainian coat of arms and flag began to be removed from all buildings, new monuments of Lenin began to grow like mushrooms after rain, and the books in the Ukrainian language began to be immediately removed from local libraries or burned in the squares of bombed cities and burned houses. The renaming of cities to the Russian-sounding name was not delayed either. What Ukrainian culture is worse for the Kremlin than bullets or guns.

For many years Ukraine's contribution to the development of European culture and values has simply been attributed to Russia, as if it were the only Russian culture in Eastern Europe. Now this pattern can and should be corrected.







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The cultural component in the Ukrainian political space has often been underestimated and tried to be avoided, marginalisation and underestimation of Ukrainian potential take away the chances of popularising Ukraine both inside the country and abroad. In the media sphere, there are topics voiced that culture is not relevant at the moment or that it is not that profitable. During a full-scale invasion, these trends are redirected to the “do not incite the hostility” message. I completely disagree with the above theses, as do most of our civil society, which has grown and changed over the last two Ukrainian revolutions (the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity). I personally remember that until 2012 it was almost impossible to buy any books in the Ukrainian language - a kind of deficit product on bookstore shelves in Ukraine. Therefore, each new book was like a breath of fresh air and breath of freedom. In comparison with Poland and its development of publishing, films, magazines, music in Ukraine, there was a regression and legitimisation of Russia's narratives and ignoring the needs of its own population and the demands for Ukrainian culture and its products. Such trends have not gone unnoticed abroad. In a dream-like Europe, it was perceived as a general trend. Even now we can hear from educated citizens of the European Union that they consider Ukrainian and Russian language cultures to be basically the same. But the main thing is that Russian itself prevailed on the market because it became dominant in this context. I fully understand that wartime complicates activities in the cultural field, but this cannot be a reason for new meanings to cease to be created by our artists. We must do our best to support

them, because without art there is no core of national identification. During the air war against the United Kingdom, the Parliament called on the then-Prime Minister Winston Churchill to cut spending on culture and co-finance art projects for the defense budget. To which the Prime Minister replied: “Then what are we fighting for?” Would this quote be an impetus for the Ukrainian political elite to treat culture differently in times of crisis? Would there be a clearer policy of supporting literature and television in the state language, promoting cinema and promoting Ukraine as a brand abroad?

However, now we, as Ukrainians, can only better understand and destroy Russian myths about Ukraine, explore the past and continue to build our cultural universe because only thereby we will be able to win the war for a bright Ukrainian future in the European Union. I firmly believe that this is a great opportunity for all of us to get to know Ukraine in a new way as a subject of political, historical, scientific, cultural and linguistic identity.





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