

THE ^[NINTH] YEAR OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

INE ANALYSIS

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The protest against the war, photo: Sandra Krawczyszyn

A YEAR OF WAR

THE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ASPECTS

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PATRONAGE



"We see, therefore, that War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by the other means."

-
Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*



Shelter, photo: Kaoru Ng



IN SHORT

20.02
2014

The Russo-Ukrainian war is a realization of the politics of the Russian Federation by military means, aiming to regain spheres of influence lost as a result of the collapse of the USSR. The moment properly considered the launching of the Russo-Ukrainian war is the **20th of February, 2014**, when Russians started the operation to annex the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The most important conclusions that emerged from this analysis are as follows:

24.02
2022

- Long-term trends are showing almost complete **eradication of pro-Russian attitudes** in Ukrainian society;
- After 9 years, the Russian Federation **has not achieved** the political objective of the war;
- Through the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia provided a strong impetus for both more dynamic Western allied cooperation and **NATO enlargement** in terms of Sweden and Finland;
- Despite large-scale destruction and a decrease of GDP in 2022 of more than 30%, Ukrainians are continually **restoring the function of the infrastructure** necessary to rebuild the economy;
- The 2022 phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war resulted in **the largest intra-European refugee flow** since the Second World War;
- The military aggression on Ukraine has led to an **acceleration of cultural change**, deepening and strengthening the adherence of Ukrainian culture to Western civilization;
- Ukrainians, on the basis of the heroic defense of their country **strengthening national bonds**, are heading towards complete displacement of Russian Armed Forces from annexed Ukrainian territories.

24.02
2023



THE AREAS OF CONFLICT



Source: Own Elaboration

LEGEND

-  Russian Federation
-  Ukraine
-  Ukrainian territories under Russian occupation
-  Post-soviet countries destabilized by Russia
-  Regions destabilized by Russia

Crimea

Moldova

Transnistria

Luhansk

Donetsk

Abkhazia

Georgia

Armenia

South Ossetia

Azerbaijan

Nagorno-Karabakh



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HISTORICAL

Aspect

** In the context of the analysis of the next stage of the Russian-Ukrainian war, taking place between the 24th of February, 2022, and the 23rd of February, 2023 (hereinafter: "the analyzed period"), it is valuable to point out the historical background of the outbreak of war in 2014.*

As a result of the decomposition of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Russian Federation as the political heir to the USSR[1], plunged into a crisis that peaked in the middle of the last decade of the 20th century[2]. The beginning of the subsequent stabilization coincided with Vladimir Putin taking the post of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation in 1999, and later President of the Russian Federation in 2000. As early as 2005, during an address to the Federal Assembly,

Vladimir Putin referred to the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the previous century[3].

This expression has become a geostrategic compass for the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, which the European Union and NATO were already aware of by 2008.

Increased efforts to strengthen cooperation within the framework of the EU's Eastern Partnership with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and support for the initiative expressed at the European Council summit, was met with an armed response from Russia. The Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 clearly demonstrated Russian power being directed to counter any rival geopolitical projects carried out in the post-Soviet states[4].



For Russia, the political advantage of this war was not only maintaining its domination in South Ossetia brought the Kremlin's influence closer to the most important supply infrastructure of liquid fuels in the region and expanded the scope of de facto control over the Black Sea coast into Abkhazia. The Russian invasion also precluded the possibility of peaceful integration into the structures of the European Union by Georgia and other South Caucasian states. The Russian Federation has reaffirmed its influence on the stability of the countries of the South Caucasus, especially through guarantees for Armenia's international security.

Azerbaijan, surrounded by Russian influence, has been deprived of any alternative to take advantage of its geopolitical position to enhance cooperation with the West. An example of destabilizing influence in the former Soviet Union was Moldovan Transnistria's request to join the Russian Federation in 2014.

Belarus under the leadership of Alexander Lukashenko remains under strong Russian influence with particular emphasis on the existence of the Union State of Belarus and Russia and unsuccessful attempts to incorporate Belarus into Russia, rejected by the Belarusian parliament in 2002.

Ukraine is a particularly important state in the Russian policy of regaining influence in the former Soviet Union. In striving to gain control over Europe's most fertile land (an area exceeding 600,000 km²), numerous deposits of valuable raw materials, and the long coastline on the Black Sea, Russia is challenged by tens of millions of Ukrainians striving for integration with the West.

The collapse of the bipolar balance of power made it possible for Ukraine to regain independence and sovereignty in 1991, which was recognized by Poland just a few hours after the proclamation[5].

In the 1990s, while Ukraine was struggling to emerge from a severe economic crisis, significant political and social changes took place, which resulted in its accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1994. Ukraine agreed to transfer its nuclear arsenal, left on its territory since the Soviet era, to be transferred to the Russian Federation, in exchange for guarantees of its territorial integrity by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation.

The Budapest Memorandum[6] also enabled the establishment of cooperation with NATO under the 1997 Partnership Agreement.



However, the process of Ukraine's integration with the European Union progressed much more slowly than in the case of the Baltic states and was delayed by political destabilization.

The Orange Revolution

in response to the rigged presidential elections of 2004, was a manifestation of the pro-European aspirations of Ukrainians. It resulted in the stabilization of the political system but only at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, leaving time for the reconstruction of Russian political influence in Ukraine. As early as November 2013 President Viktor Yanukovich failed to fulfill his publicly-proclaimed promise to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement[7], which sparked the largest protests in the history of modern Ukraine.

Despite attempts to violently suppress the Euromaidan, as a result of a nationwide social movement President Yanukovich fell from power and fled to Russia in February 2014. The fall of the pro-Russian head of state, leader of Ukraine's Party of Regions, was a clear signal to the Russian Federation that Ukrainian authorities and society are pro-European and skeptical about close relations with Russia.

Kremlin authorities' realization that there is no possibility of achieving political influence in Ukraine after Viktor Yanukovich's loss of power should be considered the immediate cause of the Russian-Ukrainian War. The Kremlin continued implementing its policy of regaining influence lost by the collapse of the USSR with military measures.



The launch of the Russian Federation's operation to take over the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on February 20th, 2014, constituted the actual start of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The nearly bloodless seizure of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula along with the destabilization of the Donetsk Oblast and Luhansk Oblast resulted in a Russian-sponsored proclamation of independence of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and a multidimensional crisis. The presidency of Petro Poroshenko, who had been one of the leaders of Euromaidan, was a time of fighting in the Donets Basin against separatists supported by the Russian Federation.

It is worth noting that both sides of the conflict failed to comply with the provisions of the Minsk Protocol signed on the 5th of September, 2014,[8] as well as the second protocol signed in Minsk on the 12th of February, 2015[9].

During the current presidency of Volodymyr Zelensky, on the 22nd February, 2022 the Kremlin recognized the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic as independent, opening the way to their annexation by the Russian Federation. One day later began the next stage of the war, involving a full-scale invasion by the Russian Armed Forces of Ukraine, aimed at restoring Russia's political influence over the country.

■ 1991

■ 2000

■ 2008

■ 2014

■ 2022





POLITICAL

Aspect

1 The political goal of the Russo-Ukrainian war is *to gain influence on Ukrainian territory for the authorities of the Russian Federation.*

For the Kremlin, the ability to effectively impact decision-making in Ukraine is a condition for maintaining and expanding its influence, which was displaced by contemporary, pro-European Ukrainian politics. Deepening integration with the West in accordance with the will of Ukrainian society as well as the development of cooperation and the establishment of a military alliance with NATO are among the most significant barriers preventing the successful implementation of the Russian policy of regaining influence in Ukraine.

2 The strategic goal of the stage of the war that began in February 2022 was to *overthrow the Ukrainian authorities,* including President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Prime Minister Denis Shmyhal.

The installation of a puppet government in Kyiv, completely obedient to the Kremlin, would have been the most effective measure of securing Russian interests in Ukraine. The images of President Zelenskiy, Prime Minister Shmyhal, and Mayor of Kyiv Vitaly Klitschko have become symbols of Ukraine's political unbrokenness, gaining international recognition.

The mature and conscious attitude of Ukrainians manifested in a nearly unanimous stance against Russian aggression, representing the failure of the aggressor to achieve any of its strategic goals.



Another strategic goal of Russia is *to prevent the deepening of Ukrainian political cooperation with Western countries*, with particular emphasis on the European Union members and institutions, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Despite the destabilization resulting from the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, Donetsk Oblast, and Luhansk Oblast by Russia, Ukraine has not abandoned its efforts to integrate with the EU.

It is worth noting that on the 17th of June, 2022 the European Commission officially issued a recommendation to grant Ukraine the status of a candidate country for membership in the European Union[10]. The exile of President Viktor Yanukovich represents the failure to enforce pro-Russian politics in Ukraine. The Russian belief that there is a possibility of winning the favor of Ukrainian society through an escalation of the war was put to rest by the intransigent anti-Russian stance of this society.

Significantly, pro-Russian narratives have almost completely disappeared from Ukrainian politics, which emphasizes Russia's powerlessness to foster pro-Kremlin stances in Ukrainian society.

The Russian Federation's strategic goals also include *preventing Ukraine from establishing cooperation or military alliances*, particularly with NATO. It was the full-scale Russian invasion of February 2022 that gave an impetus to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to intensify its efforts to indirectly achieve the goal of its establishment. Moscow learnt in the first months of its full-scale invasion that there is political solidarity between both the collective defense alliance and the individual states contributing to it.

Importantly, Germany, France, Hungary, and Turkey have repeatedly taken stances and actions that violate the line of NATO's response to the Russian-Ukrainian war, particularly in terms of providing military support to Ukraine or expanding the alliance. However, in the context of the unequivocal stance of the Finnish and Swedish authorities regarding accession to NATO [10], the Russian Federation is aware of the negative political consequences of unjustified military aggression.

Despite starting a full-scale war in Ukraine, and thus effectively preventing its accession to NATO, the Kremlin has failed to paralyze Ukrainian-NATO cooperation. At the same time, it is having to face the ensuing dynamization of the activities and development of the structures of the most powerful military alliance in the world.



During the analyzed one-year phase of the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, the aforementioned strategic goals have not been achieved. The Ukrainian authorities have not only strengthened public support and their negotiating position in the context of obtaining international support but also overcame a broad spectrum of challenges and constraints while enjoying very high public trust. The enhancement of Ukraine's integration process into the European Union has been sealed by it being granted the status of candidate country,

and in a statement from the 24th Ukraine-EU Summit, the EU reaffirmed its solidarity in the face of Russian aggression, along with laying out a broad catalog of areas of support[12].

NATO's potential expansion to cover the whole of the Scandinavian peninsula together with Ukraine and Georgia working on their future accession is a clear shift in international politics. The replacement of the policy of neutrality by Sweden and Finland with the advanced process of accession to NATO constitutes a particularly unfavorable scenario for Russia's imperialism. In the political aspect of the Russo-Ukrainian war, one of the most significant changes is the strengthening of the Ukrainian national identity well beyond the level manifested during the Orange Revolution or Euromaidan.

The consolidation of the cohesion of the Ukrainian nation through the community-wide effort to defend the country constitutes Ukraine's greatest political victory and at the same time the most humiliating political defeat for Russia in the current war, significantly weakening the chances of the Russian Federation's victory.

The analyzed period of twelve months of the full-scale war is a national victory of Ukraine, as well as a symbolic defeat of Russia. However, the failure to achieve the political goal of the war and strategic goals of the Russian Federation does not mean Ukraine's victory or the defeat of the aggressor, just as it does not mean the loss of Ukraine nor the Kremlin's victory. At the same time, the conditions of the armed conflict are deepening the political destabilization of Ukraine in the occupied territories and those covered by military operations. However, the resurgent structures and institutions on the ruins of destroyed cities and in the aftermath of battle point to the political strength of Ukrainians, exhibiting high morale and underlining the attitudes of heroic armed resistance against a potentially many-times stronger aggressor.





MILITARY

Aspect

AHS Krab firing

In the military aspect, it is necessary to analyze the military operations carried out in the analyzed period both in the context of the postulated political goal and strategic goals, as well as in relation to the general regularities of the conflict. The ninth year of the war has proved the crucial importance of high morale, excellent knowledge of the terrain, and support of allied states as the pillars of Ukraine's defense.

With regard to the effectiveness of the Ukrainian defense and counter-offensive against the theoretically many times stronger Russian Federation, it is worth taking into account not only the three factors mentioned above but also the other strengths and weaknesses of the warring states, as well as the opportunities and threats resulting from twelve months of full-scale war in Ukraine.

The weaknesses of the Russian military include a *highly hierarchical chain of command, its poor logistics and supply capacity, as well as the generally low quality of individual soldiers' equipment.*



From the moment the non-commissioned officers send a message about the current situation on the battlefield, through subsequent levels of command to the highest command structures, and back to the sender of the message, *issuing an order in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation is extremely time-consuming.*

The Armed Forces of Ukraine rely on the decision-making freedom given to non-commissioned officers and officers operating on the battlefield, which allows them to engage in combat or completely neutralize even entire Russian battalion tactical groups[13] in the face of the lack of effective communication between the aggressor's soldiers and its command. In particular, in the first weeks of a full-scale invasion, Russian troops operating far from the Russian Federation or Belarus borders were often cut off, encircled, and defeated by smaller Ukrainian forces due to shortages in Russian supplies.



Shortages of fuel, ammunition, provisions, and other means and resources necessary to fight on the territory of a state with a hostile society towards the aggressor highlighted the mediocre development of the logistics of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Throughout 2022 the need became apparent for Russia to fight in close proximity to the Russian border or areas annexed by Russia in order for it to provide adequate logistical support.

Deficiencies in the individual equipment of soldiers, especially in battlefield medicine, were the cause of much higher losses among the wounded Russians than in the case of wounded Ukrainians. Parallel to the high morale associated with the release of social energy by a full-scale war and the increase in national awareness of Ukrainian society, the Ukrainian Armed Forces used knowledge of the terrain to paralyze the progress of the aggressor's troops in the first days of the fighting.

The opening of the dam in Demidovo caused a large-scale flood, preventing a dynamic attack by Russian armored and artillery forces on Kyiv [14]. The Ukrainians used their *knowledge of the characteristics of the enemy*, among other things, to prepare the defense and fight for the airport in Hostomel[15] which lasted several weeks, and was instrumental in protecting Kyiv.

Soldier in Barwinkowe, photo: Kaoru Ng



Importantly, Ukrainian forces successfully neutralized enemy troops operating in the vicinity of Kyiv in order to eliminate the Ukrainian authorities[16]. By taking advantage of the weakness of the Russians and supplementing the elements of the Ukrainian advantage with the incoming support of allied countries, with particular emphasis on Poland, by the end of March the Ukrainians forced the Russian Federation to withdraw the forces operating in the direction of Kyiv, defeating the several-day strategy to take Kyiv that the political purpose of the "special operation" depended upon.



Reclaimed Kherson, photo: Kaoru Ng

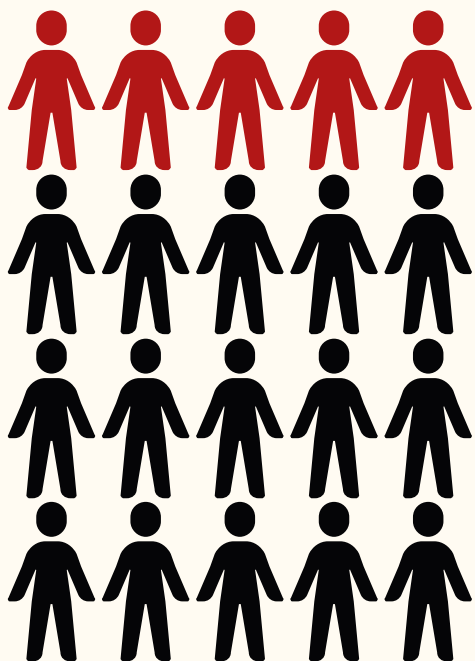
Faced with the effective defense of Kyiv, the Russians began using the scorched earth tactic[17], which mainly affected Eastern Ukraine. The gradual pushing of the Russians led to Ukraine pushing the Russians behind the Dnieper line, however, the battle for Donbass slowed the dynamic of Ukrainian progress in liberating its occupied territories. The Ukrainian Armed Forces' qualitative advantage was balanced by Russia's incomparably greater quantitative potential, and the transition to fighting on the territories occupied by the aggressor for over 8 years reduced Ukraine's advantage of having knowledge of the terrain.

In September, Kharkiv Oblast[18] was completely liberated, and Russia focused its fight in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts. The liberation of Kherson, which was important in the context of preparing military operations to drive the occupiers out of Crimea[19], pushed back the Russians, who were forced to fall back to new positions ranging from a dozen to a hundred kilometers from the Dnieper. Last autumn, the Russian Federation began gathering forces in Belarus, most likely both in order to force Alexander Lukashenko to engage Belarusian forces directly in the war and to prepare another offensive[20].

Against the backdrop of joint Belarusian-Russian exercises, fighting in the vicinity of Bakhmut intensified, to which the Kremlin was sending large quantities of troops despite suffering heavy losses, which underlines Russia's much greater reconstruction capabilities compared to Ukraine. It is worth emphasizing that due to both the chaotic reality of the war and the information warfare conducted by both sides of the conflict, it is impossible to estimate the losses among the combatants of either side precisely. The estimated losses of both sides of the conflict differ from one data source to another.



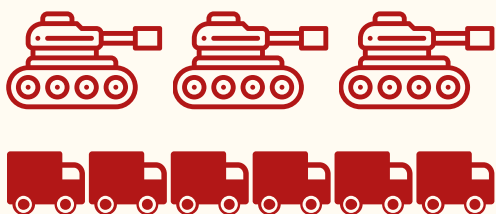
The British Ministry of Defense reported losses of 175,000 to 200,000 soldiers and mercenaries on the Russian side, of which 40,000 to 60,000 thousand were killed[21]. Norwegian estimates indicate over 100,000 soldiers killed or wounded fighting to defend Ukraine[22]. Importantly, the ratio of the number of wounded to dead among the Ukrainian Armed Forces is probably much better than in the case of Russians due to much more widespread and professional medical assistance on their side, also provided by Polish volunteers.



The proportion of people killed and injured on the Russian side according to British data.

The issue of the effectiveness of the weapons used by each side is also important. Beyond any doubt, the Russo-Ukrainian war strongly suggested the dominance of artillery as a means of destruction, resulting in the greatest casualties among the enemy. It is worth emphasizing that the Polish self-propelled gun-howitzer "Krab" has become a particularly valued artillery piece of equipment on the Ukrainian side[23].

The use of drones, both as a means of striking infantry and combat vehicles or even ships, has turned out to be equally important. Night vision and thermovision devices allow the Ukrainians to gain an advantage in night operations over the Russians, who are very poorly saturated with modern optics. Moreover, the combat effectiveness of Polish assault rifles GROT dispelled numerous stereotypes about modern, modular firearms of Polish production[24].



Losses in the equipment of the Russian troops according to Ukrainian data (in thousands).

According to Ukrainian sources, the Russian invasion resulted in the destruction or damage of over three thousand Russian tanks, six thousand armored combat vehicles and almost three hundred aircraft[25]. Ukraine does not publish information about losses of Ukrainian materiel, which means that the estimation of these losses is potentially subject to significant errors.





The exhaustive struggle of the Russian Federation is intended to achieve the strategic goals of the war by military means, including neutralizing or defeating or at least significantly weakening the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Another military objective is large-scale destruction, with particular emphasis on Eastern Ukraine. This action is aimed not only at weakening the general potential of Ukraine as a nation but above all at significantly hindering the operation of any Ukrainian armed forces in the territories not far from the borders of the Russian Federation.

In the military aspect, effective defense and pushing the Russians beyond the Dnieper line do not mean victory or defeat for Ukraine or Russia. Given the determination of the Ukrainians and the significant Russian potential, the Russo-Ukrainian war will not end peacefully in the foreseeable future.

Irpin, photo: Kaoru Ng





ECONOMIC-ECOLOGICAL

Aspect

One of the results of the last year's large-scale military operations in Ukraine is large-scale destruction, mainly by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. According to estimates, Ukraine's GDP will have decreased by more than 30% in 2022[25].



Estimates indicated up to 5 million unemployed Ukrainians[26], and Eastern Ukraine remains a particularly economically devastated area. However, the Russian rocket fire directed at numerous civilian targets caused damage to infrastructure and property damage also in Western Ukraine.

At the same time, military operations prevented the functioning of many enterprises and caused a reduction in the availability of labor, due to the involvement of hundreds of thousands of men in the defense of the country, the need to remove damage, or migration from areas that were dangerous or did not allow free development.



The above-mentioned factors led to the collapse of production efficiency in all sectors of the Ukrainian economy, but also to numerous perturbations in the global space. Armed fighting in agricultural areas, field fires and destruction of buildings, the death and pestilence of farm animals, and the plundering of Ukrainian farmers' property by Russian soldiers led to significant shortages in agricultural products. It is worth emphasizing that the use of many fertile soils and pastures is limited by the heavy mining of Ukraine[27], with particular emphasis on the eastern, south-eastern, and southern parts of the country.

In order to illustrate the economic effects of the Russo-Ukrainian war on a global scale, it is worth analyzing the disturbances in food availability in the most densely populated regions of the world, directly caused by the war.

Both warring states play an important role in the context of food security on a global scale, accounting together for more than 50% of the world's sunflower production, about 20% of the world's barley production, about 15% of the world's wheat production, about 5% of rapeseed and maize production, and about 2% of soybean production[28].

The fifteen countries with the largest imports of cereals have a combined population of almost 3.1 billion people, and purchase approximately 52% of exported cereal globally[29].



A particular economic challenge for wartime Ukraine is the lack of availability of raw materials necessary to sustain the production of many industrial sectors. Importantly, the regions richest in raw materials include, above all, Eastern Ukraine and the areas located on the western bank of the Dnieper River, i.e. territories particularly devastated by the war.

The large-scale destruction did not spare the largest industrial facilities, which, like the Azovstal plants in Mariupol, became the object of long-term defense by the Ukrainians and fierce attacks by the Russians. In this context, it is particularly important and mutually beneficial to create conditions for the development of industrial production for the needs of struggling Ukraine in neighboring countries, especially Poland. However, with the exception of plants producing or repairing armaments and equipment transferred to Ukrainians, Poland does not take full advantage of the opportunity to strengthen economic relations with Ukraine.

An example of effective cooperation was the increase in the volume of grain transshipment through Polish Baltic ports in response to the Russian naval blockade of Ukraine in the Black Sea[30]. The decision to adapt the width of Ukrainian tracks to European standards was also important, which offers prospects for the development of Polish-Ukrainian rail transport, connecting the defending state with ports on the Baltic Sea and transport from Western Europe[31].

In the context of the development of services, a particular challenge is the devastation of cities, the impoverishment of society, and the need to redirect parts of production capacity to goods enabling Ukraine to maintain its defense capabilities. However, in the case of companies providing specialized services, Poland turned out to be a desirable country for temporary and even permanent relocation of Ukrainian businesses. In particular, Ukrainian IT companies continue to operate smoothly in Poland. The increasing number of refugees from Ukraine employed in Poland, dominated by women of working age, is also significant[32].



Most of the analysis of the economic situation in Ukraine caused by Russia's invasion ignore the ecological aspect. Ukraine will face serious environmental contamination for decades. The widespread use of lead bullets will contaminate vast amounts of land and many living organisms with heavy metals. Artillery strikes and the use of armored and mechanized forces cause particular damage to the diverse natural ecosystem of Ukraine.

From the disturbance of river ecosystems to fires caused by military operations to the emission of harmful gases, dust, and pollution of nature with long-term and very disruptive noise, populations of thousands of species of animals and plants may be endangered. Significantly, the Russians have also exploited Ukrainian forests, deforesting whole square kilometers of them[33].

It is worth emphasizing that the Russo-Ukrainian war is economically devastating primarily for Ukraine. The Russian Federation makes significant profits from the sale of energy resources, which is one of its main sources of financing the armed forces. However, oil and gas sales to Asian countries generate significantly lower profits than exports to European countries did before February 24, 2022.

Despite the sanctions imposed on Russia, in the short term, Russia maintains a level of production sufficient to maintain its military potential and continue military operations. If the international community intends to effectively influence the Russian Federation through economic means, it must take consistent actions aimed at cutting Russian access to resources and markets. The reconstruction of the damage in Ukraine, currently valued at over USD five hundred billion[34], will take several decades. At the same time, Ukrainian society and Ukraine as a state will be burdened with irreparable social losses, which will have a negative impact on the Ukrainian economy in the long term.



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SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC

Aspect

A year of war has profoundly influenced Ukraine socio-demographically. The most important demographic change has been the biggest migration within Central-Eastern Europe since the end of the Second World War. According to UNHCR data, the Ukrainian border has been crossed 25 million times for migration, including

**15 mln times in terms of emigration
and
10 mln times in terms of immigration**

with a particular focus on men arriving to fight in the defense of Ukraine or people providing different forms of support[36].

Among five countries hosting refugees, Poland was the dominant destination for asylum seekers, ahead of the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Meanwhile, more than 7 million Ukrainians were subject to internal displacement as refugees [37], which reflects the scale of destruction and its threat to survival, particularly in Eastern Ukraine and the biggest Ukrainian cities.

Internal migration increased at the end of the 2022, not only because of harsh living conditions during winter in Ukraine, but also due to rocket attacks aiming to use coerce Ukrainians into migration[38].





Ukrainian authorities have been acting to manage internal migration, preventing the Kremlin instrumentalizing the tragedy faced by Ukrainians.

Particularly important to the demographic situation are attitudes towards migration and refugees in host countries. Research shows that no more than 12 percent of the more than 3 million refugees present in Poland are planning to permanently live in the country. However, the share of refugees intending to permanently settle may change, depending on factors such as the duration of the war and the level and coverage of destruction caused intentionally by Russia.

Women of preretirement age had a significant share in the total number of refugees in Poland and a large number arrived with children, and only a small number of refugees are of post-working age. Concurrently, the outbreak of war caused Ukrainian emigration from Poland, especially of men of working age, which has been particularly noticeable in the outflow of workers from the construction industry and from the transport sector.

Humanitarian aid from UNICEF,
photo: Kaoru Ng

Due to bottom-up aid provided on a mass scale by Poles to Ukrainians, many stereotypes and stigmas were broken. Ukrainians, benefiting from the wide variety of forms of aid offered by Poles to refugees, became convinced about the positive attitude of the Polish society towards Ukrainian society. Importantly, since the 24th of January, 2022, Polish society started a bottom-up initiative independent from government projects to provide humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees.

It is important to underline that, in comparison with the countries of Western Europe and the biggest EU countries, who were hit by the migration crisis in 2015 [40], Poland has a significantly smaller economy and population. In 2022 Poland was able to make an effort to help more than 3 million Ukrainians, creating for them living conditions ensuring survival and an opportunity for further development.



It is worth mentioning the ease of assimilation of the Ukrainian minority into Polish society. Ukrainians belong to nations characterized by the biggest share of Polish language speakers in the world who are not Polish citizens. Polish culture and Ukrainian culture, despite important differences, have similarities or even common features. A particular base of popularization of Polish culture is Ukrainians, who during long-term economic-based migrations, decided to permanently live in Poland and started relationships and families with Poles[41]. The mutual process of integration had been ongoing on a smaller scale for decades before the mass inflow of refugees in 2022.



This phenomena likely contributed to a more frequent emphasizing of the past common statehood of Poland and Ukraine, in particular including the First Commonwealth.

An important element of the sociodemographic situation is unsolved issues between Poles and Ukrainians. Among the most significant sources of conflict is the Wolyn genocide. Importantly, the previous efforts of the Polish and Ukrainian governments to reach a settlement concerning historically-rooted sources of conflict failed.

Despite many favorable gestures from Ukrainian authorities, manifested especially by the permission for a search of tombs and graves of murdered Poles and the exhumation of their bodies [42], the issue of the Wolyn genocide is a subject of information war conducted by the Russian Federation. The particular challenge is developing an agreement with Ukraine in terms of symbolism, narration, and attitudes, connected with Banderism. It is important to mention that the Russo-Ukrainian war creates a solid base for the development of a pantheon of modern Ukrainian heroes, consisting of people of merit in the effective defense of the country against the Russian aggressor.

Protest against the war, photo: Sandra Krawczyszyn

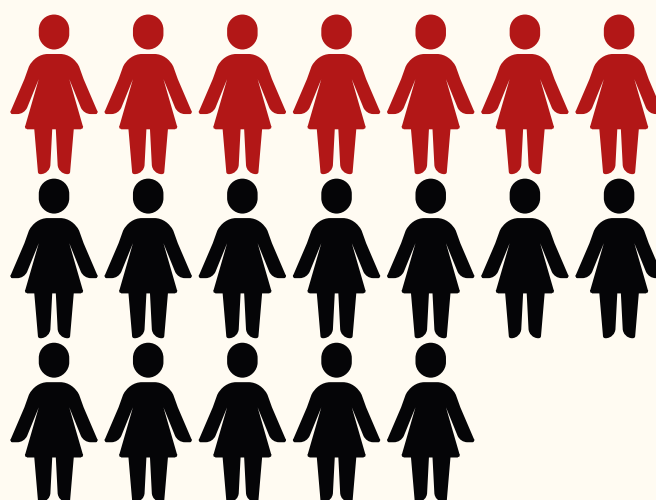


Without adequate and effective discreet diplomacy and the unambiguous attitude of the Polish government, the best relations in the history of both nations could fall victim not only to Russian manipulations but also to domestic political extremes, given energy by the dynamic development of the current multidimensional crisis.

The scope of the common cultural past allows us to reach conclusions relating to the possible closer integration of Poles and Ukrainians. Importantly, Ukrainians speak positively about social integration with Poles. The important role of Poland as a country introducing Ukraine to the structures of the European Union and allowing indirect cooperation with NATO cannot be doubted and constitutes an endeavor to disown Russian influence from the post-soviet area.



The Russo-Ukrainian War particularly destructively impacted Ukrainians in the sociodemographic aspect, with at least seven thousand civilian victims and more than twelve thousand wounded.



The number of civilian casualties and people injured as a result of the war in Ukraine (in thousands).

However, the aim of the region's countries and the international community is to relieve the tragedy of Ukrainians.

Bucha, photo: Kaoru Ng





CIVILIZATIONAL-CULTURAL Aspect

The Russo-Ukrainian war serves as an accelerator for cultural change in Ukrainian society. The current dynamic of cultural and civilizational change exceeds the more long-term process of gradual liberalization and democratization of Ukraine and the development of civic society. The dissemination of attitudes and values that indicate increasingly tightening relations between Ukrainian culture and Western culture are denying any possibility of expansion of Russian culture, and work against the model of *Homo Sovieticus*.

Cultural changes in Ukrainian society occur at the civilizational level. A valuable insight into the issue of social and civilizational changes connected with the Russo-Ukrainian war is provided by Samuel Huntington.

In his work titled “*The Clash of Civilizations*”, Huntington indicated Ukraine as a “*cleft country*” whose territory is under the influence of two different civilizations[44]. Within the typology of civilizations, the boundary between Western civilization and Orthodox civilization runs longitudinally through Ukraine.

Therefore, the process of westernization observed within Ukrainian society, understood as the process of gaining particular cultural characteristics of Western civilization, moves the boundary between Western civilization and Orthodox civilization further to the East, towards the core – the Russian Federation.



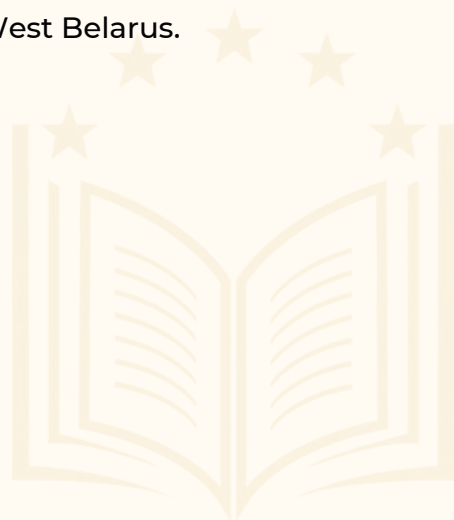
The American researcher recognized the boundaries of civilizations as conflict-prone areas in a similar way as the creator of the original concept of civilization, Feliks Koneczny. Polish scientists defined the pillars of Latin civilization as based on the philosophy of ancient Greeks in terms of cognition of the truth, Roman civil law, and on Christian ethics and morality. However, he indicated Russians and Cossacks as belonging to the Turan civilization, formed on the Asian steppe by nomads and basing their existence on nomadism and conquests.

In contrast to Latin civilization, Turan civilization was distinguished by amorality and a political system shaped by military aims, while instrumental exploitation of religion was a factor triggering conflicts[45]. It is worth underlining that Feliks Koneczny defined seven civilizations existing in the first half of the 20th century, including Latin civilization on the territories of the Second Republic whose Eastern boundaries were situated in what is now West Ukraine and West Belarus.

Profound cultural changes caused by the 2022 stage of the Russo-Ukrainian war resulted in the movement of the boundary of Latin civilization to the Russo-Ukrainian border.

There is no doubt that Ukrainian culture is transitioning to the Latin culture and becoming increasingly differentiated from the Turan culture of Russians.

This phenomenon undermines the attempt to develop a Russian narration, which aims to obliterate cultural differentiation between Ukraine and Russia and narrow the identity of numerous nations of Central-Eastern Europe to a single Slavic root.



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Among the most important factors influencing culture are religion and language. The Russo-Ukrainian war led to the clearer separation of Ukrainian culture from Russian influence in both factors. In terms of the dominant Orthodox faith in Ukraine, in 2018 the uniting council was conveyed, whereby the Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchy, Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church, and a part of the Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchy, was united into the Ukrainian Orthodox Church[46].

Breaking religious bonds with Moscow happened not only in the form of acts contrary to the will of the Patriarchy of Moscow and the whole of Rus but also on the acquisition of autocephaly on the 6th of January, 2019 [47]. In February 2022 more than 400 orthodox parishes previously subjugated to the Moscow Patriarchy joined the Ukrainian Orthodox Church[48].

In May 2022, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchy has taken the decision to administratively separate from the Russian Orthodox Church on the basis of the Chart of Autonomy and Self-Government from 1990. The council justified the decision with the divergent standpoint between Kirill, the Patriarch of Moscow, on the Russo-Ukrainian war, and the attitude of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchy, which condemned the Russian invasion[49].

It is worth pointing out that the instrumental approach towards the religion of the Russian Federation along with the sovereignty of civic authorities over religious authorities is being used to embed secret service officer in religious structures and raise secret collaborators among orthodox priests.



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In the linguistic aspect, the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war resulted in the revaluation of the meaning of the Russian language in Ukrainian society, which was a commonly-used language in particular in Eastern Ukraine. Despite the fact that from 2014 there was a gradual decrease in the pro-Russian attitude on the part of Ukrainian society, the invasion has boosted the phenomena of rejection of the Russian language by Ukrainians. In particular, the phenomenon was present among the waves of refugees coming to Poland, who did not know any other foreign language.



Importantly, in Ukraine, the issue of changing the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin alphabet was raised multiple times and highlighted the aspiration of Ukrainians to tighten cultural bonds with Western civilization. However, till today Ukrainian authorities have not made a decision on this issue as the authorities of Kazakhstan have, with the latter ending the process of switching from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet in 2025 [50].

The Russian Federation's unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine led to an intensification of cultural and civilizational changes in Ukrainian society, which are inconsistent with the political aims of the war. Cultural changes, based on the westernization of Ukrainian society, are especially negatively influencing the upholding of Russian influence on Ukraine. Importantly, contrary to the pro-Russian attitude of a part of Ukrainian society after the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war in February 2014, the new stage of the war beginning in February 2022 resulted in the devastation of large areas of Ukraine and war crimes being committed, leading to the near complete disappearance of positive attitudes towards the Russian Federation.

The common hostility of Ukrainian society to the presence of Russian forces, disproved the aggressor's wishful thinking in terms of support for the invasion from Ukrainians.

Children in front of the shelter in Bakhmut, photo: Kaoru Ng



SUMMARY



Despite over nine years of war, only after the last twelve months of conflict provoked the development of a new founding myth of Ukraine.

Both the increase of the coherence of the Ukrainian nation and the raising of social awareness and political memory is proceeding alongside the process of development of civic society. Ukrainian society is the subject of a strong process of democratization and liberalization, is more and more accepting of Western civilization and hostile towards Russian culture and Russian influence.

The last year was also crucial from the perspective of giving a new impetus to cooperation within NATO, and also in Sweden and Finland's move from their previous policy of neutrality to NATO accession. There is no doubt that the attitudes of the Ukrainian authorities and society, as well as the international community led to the realization of phenomena that were absolutely contrary to the political aim of the Kremlin in the Russo-Ukrainian war.



*Protest against the war,
photo: Sandra Krawczyszyn*

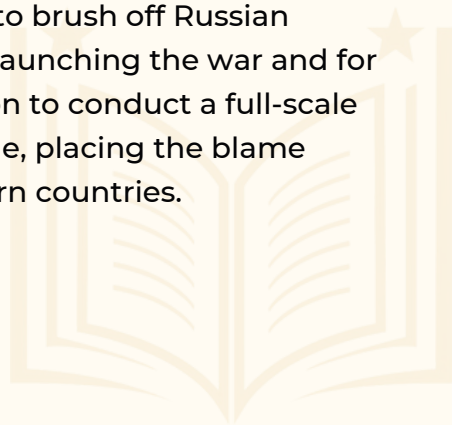


Symbolically, the visit of the President of the United States Joe Biden to Kyiv during the ninth anniversary of the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war, underlined the meaning of the fight for Ukraine as a country supported by the international community. Pointing out the readiness to support Ukraine with billions of dollars, President Biden commented on the lack of military success of the Russian Federation and underlined the economic problems of Russia.

The following day, during a speech in Warsaw, Joe Biden emphasized the continuation of Ukrainian statehood and the meaning of the Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in particular the determination of the alliance to defend of all territories of NATO members. Words of appreciation of the President of the USA were directed to Poland as a country particularly generous to Ukraine, accepting refugees and providing them care, and expressing solidarity with fighting Ukrainians.



President Biden ensured the continuation of sanctions on the Russian Federation. The simultaneous speech of President Vladimir Putin attempted to brush off Russian responsibility for launching the war and for taking the decision to conduct a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, placing the blame instead on Western countries.



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Naming Poland a centuries-old hostile country, Putin compared supporting Ukraine to the nineteenth-century activities of Austria-Hungary, which Putin alleged to be a policy of detaching Ukraine from Russia. Putin also emphasized Russia's readiness to conduct nuclear weapon tests if Western countries conduct their own.

Notably, Ukraine endeavors to play an increasingly active role as a partner in Central-Eastern Europe, which creates a unique opportunity to strengthen its position as well as that of Poland within EU structures and NATO. When the war ends, which most likely will not happen in the near future, Poland shall guide the process of further integration of Ukraine and the West. This decades-long process will prevent the establishment of any Russian spheres of influence on Ukrainian territory and finally put a nail in the coffin of Russian power politics. This will strengthen Poland's position on the world's political map based on the unprecedented role it has played in this war.



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Underground of the Kiev metro, photo: Kaoru Ng



A YEAR OF WAR

THE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ASPECTS

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