



Understanding the EU's Association Agreements
and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas
with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its impacts on Eastern Europe

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SUMMARY

From Ukraine the first essential observation is that the Russian Blitzkrieg, originally intended to secure control of Kyiv and overthrow the government within a week or two, has failed. The advance on Kyiv seems halted. Public opinion polls in Ukraine show a huge 92% majority believing that Ukraine will win the war, such has been their incredible resilience in stopping the huge Russian military machine.

The image in the EU of Ukraine, its people and President Zelensky has been totally transformed into one of heroism alongside terrible human suffering, while Putin becomes the embodiment of evil comparable with Hitler. The people of Ukraine are seen to be fighting with their lives our common struggle to defend the European values of democracy, fundamental freedoms and civilised international relations against the common enemy. They deserve from the EU a commensurate response to the formal request by Zelensky for Ukraine's accession. At its Versailles summit on 10-11 March the EU could only give a holding answer, inviting the Commission to formulate an Opinion on Ukraine's application, as also those of Moldova and Georgia.

The impact on Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan follows a pattern of public opinion and civil society overwhelmingly (except for Armenia) supporting Ukraine, while their governments take more cautious positions to avoid antagonising Russia, and their economies are hit inter alia through lower remittances. There are complex issues arising through refugee and migrant movements. Moldova receives more Ukrainian migrants per capita than even Poland. Armenia and Georgia on the other hand are receiving large numbers of Russian migrants. Belarus for its part, complicit in Russia's military operations, has become even more of a Russian satellite state.

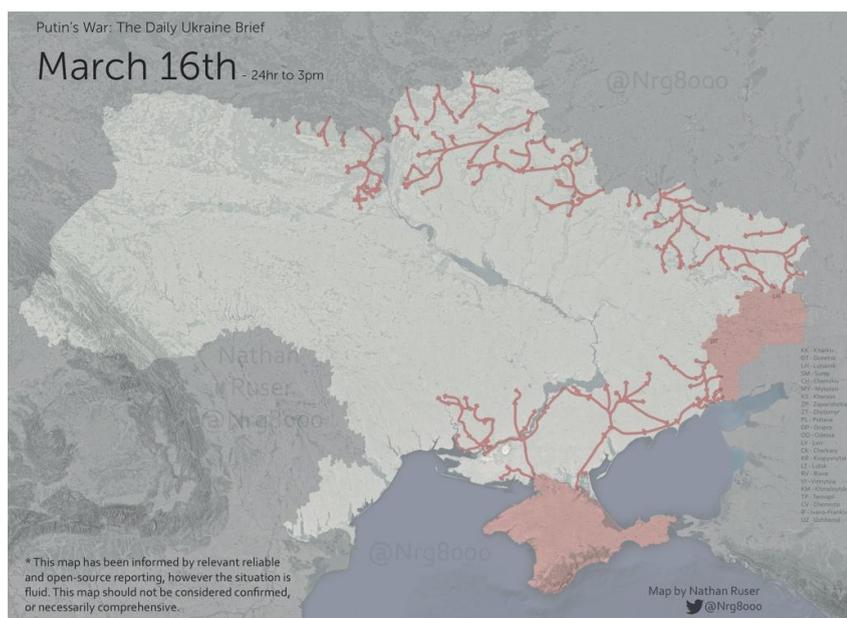
The EU and UK have, with the US, imposed unprecedented sanctions, now challenging the conventional wisdom that sanctions don't work, especially against Russia. The EU has further taken the unprecedented step to supply military weapons to Ukraine. The ongoing flow of refugee women and children into the EU is massive, reaching 2.5 million by 14 March; the support for the immigrants is also unprecedented both at EU level with the granting of rights to live, work, study and receive accommodation and health care, and through spontaneous initiatives of people in opening their homes to immigrant families.

While at the time of writing the war continues with Russian bombardment of Ukrainian cities, reports are emerging that ceasefire talks are progressing, but without clarity yet on the terms of a possible agreement

UKRAINE

Veronika Movchan, Artem Remizov¹

Military situation. After the first week of the Russian invasion into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, it became apparent that the Russian *blitzkrieg* in Ukraine had failed. According to different sources, the initial plan of the aggressor was to conduct a “special military operation” on the territory of Ukraine by capturing major cities and the capital during the first week of the war and removing/eliminating the current leadership of Ukraine. Although the Russian troops managed to reach Kyiv’s suburbs, where the intense fighting had never stopped, their advance on the North and North-East regions was stalled thanks to the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF). In particular, the Russian military failed to capture Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy despite putting them under heavy artillery fire and air strikes. Russia was more successful in the South-East where they occupied one (and a single so far) regional centre – Kherson. They also advanced to Mariupol while encircling the city in an attempt to build a so-called land bridge from the temporarily occupied territories of the Donbas to the annexed Crimea. However, as of March 16, critical southern cities, Mykolaiv and Odesa, remain under Ukrainian control.



Source: [Nathan Ruser](#)

The failure of the initial *blitzkrieg* can be explained by the Russian leadership’s poor military and political planning. In particular, Russia underestimated the power of the UAF. For example, Russian troops have failed to suppress Ukraine’s air defence and control the airspace above Ukraine despite a significant advantage in military capabilities. Moreover, Russian troops experience communication problems and cannot logistically sustain advances on multiple fronts, partly due to mobile defence employed by the UAF that targeted Russian overstretched and unprotected convoys. Moreover, Russia miscalculated Ukraine’s societal unity against the aggressor and the strength of the international support to Ukraine.

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As a result, after the first week of the war, Russia switched to a more aggressive campaign on different fronts employing more firepower that destroyed smaller cities and considerably damaged bigger ones. It allowed Russian troops to gain ground slowly at massive personnel and equipment costs. With each day of its aggressive campaign, Russia's use of artillery, including Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS), missiles, and indiscriminate bombardment (including cluster munitions), is increasing. While failing to achieve its crucial military (and political) objectives, the Kremlin opted for scorched earth warfare to get concessions from the Ukrainian leadership.

What is more, since the attack's inception, the Russian military has been concerned with nuclear terrorism. The Russian troops occupied the [Chernobyl](#) and [Zaporizhzhya](#) nuclear power plants facilities and impede their work, thus risking produce a man-made catastrophe of unknown dimension.

Humanitarian situation. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, [691 civilians died](#) because of the war between February 24 and March 14. However, the actual toll of civilian casualties is much higher. For instance, only in the single city of Mariupol, encircled by Russian forces, over [2,300 people died](#) due to the war. Moreover, the city itself has been under blockade for more than ten days, where citizens have to hide from constant shelling and airstrikes without having access to medicine, drinking water, food, electricity, and heat. Only since March 14, after numerous failed attempts, some evacuation corridors were opened allowing some citizens to finally leave the city. However, as in many other cases, those who flee via such corridors remain in danger since the Russian forces often violate ceasefire. As of March 14, [150,000 citizens](#) managed to evacuate from their homes through the pre-agreed routes.

These days nobody can feel safe in Ukraine since the Russian forces indiscriminately target civilian infrastructure, residential building, school and kindergartens, as well as [hospitals](#). Some of the strikes were executed against [food storages](#). There are also instances of [deliberate killing of civilians, taking them hostages](#), as well as abduction of representatives of local authorities, journalists and activist who do not recognise the occupation. Moreover, Russian occupying forces in Ukraine were [recorded stealing](#) from private houses and shops and thus the crime of pillage. To tackle the issue of war crimes committed in Ukraine, [41 nations have appealed](#) to the International Criminal Court (ICC) over Russia's invasion. Also, Ukraine has filed an application against Russia before the [International Court of Justice \(ICJ\) on the basis of a false claim of genocide](#) by the latter. On March 16, the ICJ delivered its order on provisional measures against Russia, requiring Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine.

Given these mass atrocities, Ukraine also faces an enormous migration challenge. Between February 24 and March 11, 2022, at least 4.4 m people or 10.7% of the population, were forcefully displaced in Ukraine, including [1.9 million internally displaced persons \(IDPs\) and 2.5 million refugees](#). This number continues growing. Almost all refugees are going west. As of March 15, [nearly 3.0 million persons](#) or 7.3% of the population had already left Ukraine. Most refugees have remained in Poland (1.8 million). Other leading destinations are Romania (453,000), Moldova (337,000), Hungary (264,000), and Slovakia (213,000). The number of refugees who went to Russia is

143,000, mostly evacuated from the already occupied territories of Donbas. The total number of refugees is expected to reach four or even five million.

By comparison, at the peak of the previous conflict with Russia in 2014-2015, there were 1.8 million IDPs and about 1 million refugees, mostly fleeing to Russia.

Peace talks. The first round of negotiation between officials from Ukraine and Russia was held on February 27 on the border between Ukraine and Belarus. While Putin sought to justify the invasion to secure the [“denazification and demilitarisation” of Ukraine](#), the [Kremlin’s demands](#) so far are the following: Ukraine has to cease military action, change its constitution to enshrine neutrality, acknowledge Crimea as Russian territory, and recognise the separatist republics of Donetsk and Lugansk as independent states. Ukraine made clear that it is not going to accept any ultimatums and is ready to discuss the conditions of the cessation of the war, withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine, a consequent peace agreement, and provision of security guarantess for Ukraine in the future. Five rounds of ongoing negotiations have brought little if any result so far, with some mixed success at creating humanitarian corridors in Ukraine. Also, on March 10, the Ministers of Foreign Affaris of Ukraine and Russia hold talks in Istanbul that ended with no result.

International political support. On March 2, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly (141 nations voted in favour) adopted a resolution demanding that Russia immediately end its military operations in Ukraine. Five countries - Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Russia and Syria - voted against it, while 35 abstained.

The most significant political support of Ukraine comes from the Western democracies, including G7 states, and manifests itself in the introduction of tough sanctions against Russia and simultaneous provision of finanacial, humanitarian, and defence assistance to Ukraine. The EU has introduced four packages of wide-ranging and unprecedented sanctions aimed at Russia’s financial, economic technology and energy sectors, and at Russian officals and oligarchs. Thanks to measure taken by the EU, US and other allies, Russia become the target of 2,778 new sanctions, bringing the total to more than 5,530 in number, [making it the world’s most sanctioned nation](#).

In addition Russia is now [excluded from the Council of Europe](#). More precisely, on February 25 its Committee of Ministers suspended Russia's rights of representation in both the Committee and the Parliamentary Assembly, and on 16 March Russia formally announced its withdrawal.

There is new surge of support for Ukraine to become and EU member state, Ukraine having submitted its application for membership on February 28. While this will in the best of casaes be a complex and lengthy process there is a qualitative shift in this direction, certainly to begin with in [opinion polls notably in France and Germany](#). The European Parliament adopted a Resolution on March 1 calling on the EU institutions “to work towards granting the country EU candidate’ status”. The European Commission was invited by the [European Council summit meeting in Versailles on 11 March](#) to prepare an ‘Opinion’ on Ukraine’s application in accordace with the relevant provisions of the EU’s Treaty. This Opinion is a standard part of the accession procedure. The summit’s conclusions also

reads “Ukraine belongs to the European family”, while it was not able to agree on the proposal of Poland and many other member states designating Ukraine as a Candidate state.

Interestingly, China’s officials and media has been framing the ongoing conflict on Russia’s terms, promoting pro-Kremlin narratives, and spreading Russian disinformation about non-existent U.S.-backed Ukrainian bioweapons program.²

International defence assistance. The US has intensified delivery of lethal military assistance to Ukraine since Autumn 2021. The US provided \$1.2 billion of security assistance over the last year, with the most recent [\\$200 million approved just several days ago](#). Several other European states, particularly the UK and Baltic states, has followed the US example with positive responses to Ukraine’s call for defence support in early 2022.

However, it was reported that several EU/NATO states, particularly Germany and the Netherlands, were against delivery of lethal military assistance to Ukraine. The former even [blocked Ukraine’s purchase of anti-drone rifles and anti-sniper systems](#) via the Nato Support and Procurement Agency, as well as preventing [Estonia from transferring artillery weapons](#) to Ukraine. The situation dramatically changed after February 24. Both Germany and the Netherlands made U-turns in terms of its military assistance policy towards Ukraine and announced supply of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles to bolster Ukraine’s defense. What is more, for the first time in its history, the [EU agreed to provide 450 million euros, doubling it later with a further €500 million](#), of military assistance via the so-called “European Peace Facility” financing instrument. The Russian aggression also made such countries as Sweden, Finland, and Japan to step in and support the UAF with defence assistance. According to the [Ukrainian ministry of foreign affairs](#), as of March 3, 19 states have been providing defence assistance to Ukraine.

Indeed, the Ukrainian military has benefited substantially on the battlefield from modern anti-tank weapons (Javelin, NLAW) and MANPADS (Stinger, Piorun). At the same time, Western allies denied requests by the Ukrainian leadership to introduce a so-called “No Fly Zone” over Ukraine and provide the UAF with [fighter jets](#). Thus, according to [various experts](#), the Western partners should provide Ukraine with effective ground-based air defense systems (SAMs) so it could prevent the Russian airforces from dominating its airspace.

Financial & humanitarian aid. The country has received extensive international assistance. According to the Ukrainian central bank (NBU), total commitments related to financial, technical and humanitarian support has [reached \\$15 billion](#), with \$5 billion to be channelled to the state coffers. In particular, Ukraine already received [\\$1.4 billion of disbursements from the IMF](#) in the framework of Rapid Financing Instrument and €300 million out of €1.2 billion urgent macro-financial assistance (MFA) from the EU. In addition, the EBRD pledged to provide initial €2.0 billion resilience package measures to support companies. Furthermore, the World Bank announced the approval of \$783 million of

² Zack Cooper, Bret Schafer, Etienne Soula, [‘China’s State Media and Government Officials Are Backing Russia on Ukraine’](#), GMFUS, March 15, 2022.

support, including \$489 million for a supplementary budget package, and is preparing another \$3.0 billion of aid in the coming months.

The US has provided the most extensive financial assistance among the individual countries. On March 11, the US Senate approved a [\\$13.6 billion emergency military and humanitarian aid package for Ukraine and the European allies](#), which President [Biden signed on March 15](#). The EU member states, the UK, Canada, Japan and many other countries have provided financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

Between February 24 and March 14, the special account opened by the NBU for the support of Ukraine's army received \$386 million of donations, including \$100 million from abroad. In addition, the Ministry of Social Policy's account for humanitarian needs received \$8.5 million of contributions.

People's mood. After two weeks of the war, Ukraine's public mood remained united and positive. According to the opinion poll conducted by Rating Group on March 8-9,³ 92% of respondents believe in Ukraine's ultimate victory. Furthermore, the number of people ready to defend their country with weapons increased from 59% in December 2021 to about [80% in early March 2022](#). Also, almost 80% of respondents reported that they participate in Ukraine's defence financially, as volunteers, as members of territories defence units, taking part in information/IT defence, or working on critical infrastructure objects etc.

More than half of the population believe that the fundamental goal of Russia is to [genocide the Ukrainian people](#), and this opinion dominates in all regions of Ukraine. Another goal is the occupation of Ukraine and its accession to Russia. On the other hand, only 15-17% think that Russia wants to change Ukraine's political course or prevent the deployment of NATO bases.

As for potential concessions, [most Ukrainians are not ready to give up Donbas and Crimea](#). On the contrary, they believe that Ukraine should use all opportunities to return the occupied territories of Donbas (86%) and Crimea (80%). 72% of the population support Ukraine's membership in NATO.

Economic consequences. There are no official statistics on the economic effects of the war. However, there are some preliminary and indirect estimates. According to the IMF assessments, Ukraine's [GDP drop can range from 10% to 25-35%](#) depending on the scale of physical capital destruction and the duration of the conflict.

The current situation appears to be even worse. According to the deputy head of the NBU, Ukraine's [daily GDP is currently only half](#) of what the country produced before. [The Ministry of Economy gives a similar assessment](#). The [survey of 245 firms](#) conducted by Advanter Group on March 11-13 showed that only 2% of companies had continued their usual operations, another 19% operated partly, while 25% almost stopped and 54%

³ The survey covered 1200 respondents from all regions of Ukraine;
https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/ocenka_situacii_v_ukraine_8-9_marta_2022.html

stopped working. The European Business Association earlier reported that [56% of its member companies closed or paused operations](#).

Foreign trade has also almost stopped due to manufacturing closure and the disruption in logistic routes. Before, Ukraine relied on sea transport, but its ports are now blocked. The only remaining transport routes are to the EU and Moldova by road and rail. However, road crossings are overburdened by the outflow of people and inflow of various types of aid, while rail transportation is slowed by the need to change wheels adapting to the track difference. Therefore, the urgent need is the development of additional border crossing capacity.

Ukraine introduced currency control and trade restrictions to preserve monetary stability and food security. In particular, the [NBU limited cash withdrawals](#) to UAH 100 thousand (about \$3.3 thousand) while keeping no restrictions on the country's cashless transactions. The NBU also imposed a ban on import operations except for critical imports. The [list of critical imports](#), initially including only several positions (fuel, medicine and several other products), has been gradually expanding as the new needs emerge. In addition, the Cabinet of Minister [banned exports](#) of beef, rye, oats, buckwheat, millet, sugar and salt; and mandatory licensing of wheat, corn, chicken meat, chicken eggs, and sunflower oil exports. Later on, the ban on exports of fertilisers was imposed.

The relaunch of the economy has been another urgent task of the Government. On March 15, the Parliament adopted a simplified taxation regime for the war period to foster business revival.

Political consequences. Realizing the existential threat posed to the whole nation and its statehood by Russia and its leader Putin, the Ukrainian people and all political forces have put aside their disagreements and united against a common enemy. It became impossible even for the pro-Russian forces to openly deny the act of unprovoked aggression committed by the Northern neighbour and its co-aggressor Belarus. The Ukrainians have rallied around a flag and forgot, at least for now, about their different attitudes towards the president Zelensky who has proven to be a resilient and decisive leader in these extremely difficult circumstances.

It also becomes clear for many inside Ukraine that the country cannot afford to freeze this conflict and lose the chance to break the Putin regime, thus allowing it to regain its strength while keeping on trying to undermine Ukraine's European reform path. Since the post-Cold War order has collapsed, it also makes many worried about the West's future intentions and its commitment to liberal values and democracy that could be exchanged for several stable years without hot conflict in the neighbourhood.

RUSSIA

Andrey Makarychev ⁴

The goals of the so-called “military operation”, as announced by the Kremlin, are very vague – “de-Nazification” and “de-militarization” of Ukraine. The former implies a de-facto regime change, while the latter seeks to justify military occupation of Ukrainian territory. On both accounts Russia faces insurmountable hurdles. Militarily, the Russian invaders seem now to be realizing that urban warfare in the largest Ukrainian cities will exhaust Russian resources and might turn into a disaster. On a political front, Moscow’s previous attempts to install pro-Russian forces in some other post-Soviet countries were far from successful. The anecdotal story that the Kremlin planned to bring back to power the former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich⁵, who visited Minsk on 7 March, would attest to the scarcity of Russia-loyal political figures in Ukraine and to Moscow’s lack of understanding of Ukrainian political realities.

In addition, it appears that Putin faces problems with the functionality of the chain of military command. With the war in full swing, the Kremlin has publicly admitted that Putin’s direct order not to involve conscripts into the invasion against Ukraine was not fulfilled. The recognition of non-compliance with the instructions given by the commander-in-chief may attest to either poor discipline within the armed forces, or to the practical impossibility to attain the military goals with the resources of professional army alone.

When it comes to the situation within Russia, since Putin is notoriously known as a foreign policy president, it would be counter-intuitive to expect him to care much about internal repercussions of the war. Domestic conditions for a risky foreign policy adventure were quite favorable for the Kremlin: the anti-regime opposition network run by Alexei Navalny was destroyed, the most vociferous opponents of the Kremlin in civil society were either dismantled (the “Memorial” society) or forced to change their narrative (“Doctors’ Alliance”). Dissenters are leaving the country, although the border crossing procedures have been toughened.

Perhaps, the Kremlin might have thought of the Ukraine war as a second edition of the so-called “Crimean consensus” – which saw consolidation of support for Putin after the annexation of this Ukrainian peninsula in 2014. However, this time the full-fledged war has spurred fragmentation and confusion in society. A sizeable percentage of the Russian population (according to some estimates, up to one half) still prefers to live in an imaginary yet quite comfortable bubble where Russia is always good and great, and the West is malign and feeble. Others prefer to move out abroad: according to some estimates, about 200,000 Russians have left the country since the war started. Russian educational, academic and intellectual communities are split between war supporters and critics who stay on pacifist positions, not necessarily extending them to targeting Putin and his government.

⁴ Tartu University

⁵ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2022/03/7/7329131/>

Internationally, the three weeks of the war have proven again that Russia is a solitary power with very few allies. Moreover, the potential outcomes of its aggression are exactly opposite to what it tried to achieve: the West maintains its unity regarding sanctions and gradual isolation of the Kremlin, NATO strengthens its military presence in the Baltic states, and Finland and Sweden are much more seriously debating the prospect of NATO membership. An illustrative detail: the annual march titled "Immortal Regiment" dedicated to the Soviet soldiers fallen during the Great Patriotic War, this year was cancelled in Estonia. Russia not only loses political ground in neighboring countries, but also loses the information war with Ukraine that is quite effective in spreading the information about Russian atrocities and casualties across the globe, including in Russia.

It is against this background that Russian–Ukrainian negotiations on a ceasefire are taking place. Russia's insistence on an Austria- or Switzerland-like status of Ukraine as a neutral country might finally be interpreted as Russia's acceptance of Ukraine's European future. However, it looks like Russia wants Ukraine to pay a dear price for making this future possible – the recognition of the loss of both Crimea and Donbas. It is for this border redrawing that Russia has already paid its own price - thousands of lives of its citizens perished in the Ukrainian battlefield.

BELARUS

Andre Yahorau⁶

Participation in the war. On February 24, Russia began its military aggression against Ukraine using the territory of Belarus as a springboard to attack Ukraine from the north. Prior to the intervention, Russia concentrated troops in Belarus under the cover of the joint military exercise "Union Resolve". On February 20, instead of ending the exercise, it was prolonged by Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko, under the pretext of increased military activity at the external borders of the Union State of Belarus and Russia and the aggravation of the situation in eastern Ukraine. Belarusian troops have not directly entered Ukraine and do not take part in military strikes, while at the same time Belarus provides its territory to Russian troops for ballistic missile attacks, air raids, passage of Russian military personnel and heavy weapons, provides its technical, transport and medical infrastructure for Russian aggression. In terms of international law, this makes Belarus a direct participant in the Russian aggression.

At the same time most of the population of Belarus does not support the military aggression. Mass anti-war protests were brutally suppressed by the Belarusian authorities. Radical groups in the democratic movement have carried out several successful attacks on railroad infrastructure, including cyber-attacks on the internal computer network, destruction of signaling equipment, and blocking of railroad tracks. Democratic Belarus leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya called Belarusians to join the nation-wide anti-war movement. Belarusian diaspora organizations and volunteer networks switched to helping refugees from Ukraine. A military unit ("Kastus Kalinovsky Battalion") was formed of Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine as part of its territorial defense, and currently there are about 100 men fighting in the unit, but its numbers are growing.

Political and economic responses. Political positioning. Belarus voted against the March 2 UN General Assembly resolution, hence supporting Russian aggression. Alexander Lukashenko tries to deny Belarus' participation in the war, emphasizing the fact that Belarusian troops are not involved in the attack on Ukraine. He admits the facts of missile attacks from the territory of Belarus and stated that Belarusian troops can be sent in Ukraine "if needed". Justifying the Russian aggression, Lukashenka accuses Ukraine and West of provoking the attack, including the odious claim that "Ukraine was preparing to attack the joint Russian and Belarusian troops on the territory of Belarus". At the same time, Lukashenko tries to maneuver constantly calling for peaceful negotiations since the beginning of the war and supports Ukraine-Russian negotiations on the territory of Belarus.

The democratic forces of Belarus condemned the military aggression against Ukraine and the participation of Belarus in it.

Economic and other sanctions. On February 24, the EU extended sanctions against Belarus for a year in response to continued repression, human rights abuses and the instrumentalization of migrants. On March 2 and March 9, the EU significantly expanded

⁶ Centre for European Transformation, Minsk.

sanctions against Belarus in connection with its involvement in military aggression against Ukraine. In addition to personal sanctions the agreed measures include: cutting off three Belarusian banks from SWIFT; prohibiting transactions with the Central Bank of Belarus related to the management of reserves or assets; significantly limiting the financial flows from Belarus to the EU, by prohibiting the acceptance of deposits exceeding €100.000 from Belarusian nationals or residents; enhancement of the existing restrictions to the tobacco sector, petroleum/mineral products, and potash; procurement restrictions on wood, cement, iron and steel, rubber originating in Belarus; tighter restrictions on dual-use and other high-tech exports to Belarus and other measures.

Current EU sanctions, which concern wood, metals, petroleum products and other raw materials, affect about 20% of all exports of Belarus.

Indirect political responses. Russian aggression from the territory of Belarus puts into question the sovereignty of Belarus over its territory. Moreover, Belarus' co-participation in the war makes its situation typologically similar to that of the satellite regimes of Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria during the Nazi aggression in 1941-44, where the independence of these countries was formal.

Media coverage. Belarusian state media try to pay less attention to the war, making the topic not mainstream news. The propaganda narratives concentrate on the topics of justification of Russia's actions, Russia's compulsion to go to war due to the West and Ukraine, the West's dragging of Belarus in the conflict, the non-participation of Belarus and the Belarusian military in the aggression, Belarus' aspiration for peace; the designation of war as a "special operation" and "conflict" .

In the independent mass media, the topic of the war is the main one. Besides news from Ukraine, much attention is paid to the Belarus' role in the war, the consequences of the war for Belarus, debunking of Russian and Belarusian propaganda, and reporting of anti-war actions of Belarusian society.

Reactions in public opinion. Chatham House's early February opinion polls, i.e. right before the Russian intervention, showed that 79% of citizens didn't support Belarusian army conscripts participation in the war between Russia and Ukraine, 57% of Belarusians called Belarusian participation in the conflict "a disaster" and 56% think the country should take a neutral position in the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Despite the trend of socio-political demobilization, continuing mass repression, and the prevailing depressed moods among supporters of the democratic opposition, the war brought an impetus for the return of mass street protests and the intensification of civil resistance. On February 27 and 28, massive street protests were held across the country, followed by the detention and arrest of more than 1,000 people by the authorities.

Domestic economic consequences. The Belarusian economy experienced a recovery trend after the COVID-19 epidemic, demonstrating growth of 2.3% by the end of 2021. According to preliminary estimates of Belarusian economists, the cumulative negative effects of Belarus' participation in the military aggression, including the effects of sanctions, the withdrawal of many companies from the Belarusian market, the transport

blockade, the loss of the third most important Ukrainian market and the impact of collapse of the Russian economy will result in the loss of about 40% of exports, a 20% reduction in GDP, a drop in average wages from \$560 to \$330, a 30% inflation and a doubled unemployment rate, the risk of non-payments and shortages of some goods.

Domestic social consequences. The number of refugees arriving in Belarus from Ukraine is insignificant, and a significant increase in their flow is unlikely. The potential economic and financial crisis carries much greater risks of social consequences. Another social effect is the trend of growing negative attitudes towards ordinary citizens of Belarus abroad, who are perceived as accomplices to the aggression unleashed by the Putin and Lukashenko regimes. There are numerous facts of discrimination against Belarusians in EU and EaP countries, including restrictions on opening bank accounts and issuing entry visas, canceling of cooperation with Belarusian scientists, limiting admission of students to study at European universities, boycotting businesses, damaging property, and even physical aggression.

Overall political consequences. For Belarus, the main political consequence is the actual elimination of the country's independence and its transformation into a satellite state of the Russian Federation. The likely development of the military and political conflict will lead to the establishment of a new iron curtain, where Belarus finds itself on one side of the curtain together with internationally isolated Russia.

MOLDOVA

Denis Cenușă⁷

Participation in the war. Moldova does not participate in any way in Russia's war against Ukraine, maintaining its constitutional neutrality and avoiding further complicating relations with Moscow. However, the country is one of the hardest hit bordering Ukraine and facing a refugee crisis and severe economic fallout due to business disruptions. Members of the government expressed some optimism about the ability of Moldovan companies to adapt and diversify in countries that supply grains, flour products, butter, poultry, dairy products, etc.⁸ At the same time, they admitted that certain categories of imported products can become more expensive.⁹

Political and economic responses. Political positioning. Moldova expressed a clear condemnation of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, emphasizing that it violates international law and destabilizes regional security. Moldovan diplomacy began talks with external partners about the tragic events in Ukraine, calling for a peaceful settlement in full respect of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The government demanded that parliament vote for a two-month state of emergency on February 24 to handle refugee flows from Ukraine. All 88 deputies present at the legislative session supported the initiative, including members of the pro-Russian opposition, the Socialists Party, who suggested not politicizing the decision.¹⁰ Although the main scope of the special regime lies in the management of the flow of refugees, other security aspects were addressed, such as the following: special use of airspace; expulsion of people considered a potential threat; special regulation of gas, electricity and water supply; limitation of the right of public association; critical infrastructure protection; counter disinformation; administration of foreign aid, participation of citizens in the provision of public services, etc.¹¹

Economic and other sanctions. Moldova did not join the sanctions policy, recalling that it has stayed away from such actions towards Russia since 2014 for economic reasons, given its underlying vulnerabilities. In addition the government uses the energy argument, given that Moldova is still facing the consequences of the energy crisis that has lasted since 2021. The Ukrainian side criticized the non-alignment of Moldova and Georgia with the sanctions against Russia and questioned the usefulness of the "Associated Trio" platform.

Indirect political responses. Both the ruling party and the pro-Russian opposition focused on promotion of the neutrality status in the public discourse, signaling that

⁷ Expert-Grup, Chisinau

⁸ <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/alimente-economie-razboi-rusia-ucraina/31745789.html>

⁹

<https://unimedia.info/ro/news/e076365851e35b72/video-popescu-acest-razboi-afecteaza-dur-economia-nu-suntem-in-stare-de-penurie-dar-unele-importuri-vor-deveni-mai-scumpe.html>

¹⁰

<https://tv8.md/2022/24/02/video-live-parlamentul-a-instituit-stare-de-urgenta-in-pentru-60-de-zile-in-contextul-razboiului-din-ucraina/193446>

¹¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=130079&lang=ro

Moldova does not want to be dragged into the war. Total disinterest to attack Ukraine was expressed by the separatist regime in the Transnistrian region.

Media coverage. One of the government's goals has been to ensure public order and stability. To do this, the intelligence (Intelligence and Security Service) is in charge for monitoring, detecting and blocking web pages that incite hatred linked to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. As of March 16, access to eight (rather marginal) web pages was temporarily restricted. Popular media outlets were not found to be involved in disseminating false information, including those associated with pro-Russian political forces in Moldova. To systematize communication on the management of the refugee crisis, the government launched a Telegram channel (with nearly 80,000 subscribers) that provided up-to-date information on recent decisions taken by the Commission for Exceptional Situations and other state institutions (border police, etc.).

Reactions in public opinion. The authorities mobilized society asking for support to offer shelter to Ukrainian refugees. The civil society organizations of the Nation Platform of Civil Society published on February 24¹² the first statement condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine, establishing the Initiative Group to carry out the National Information and Communication Campaign against the war (# StopWar). The Group established three areas of action aimed at promoting solidarity with Ukraine, advocating for peace in relation to society, and countering disinformation¹³, which has continued throughout the state of emergency. Nevertheless, pro-Russia messages (including Ukrainophobia) are promoted through the social media (Tik Tok etc.). There are fears in the public that the war could also reach Moldova, which is reflected in recent polls: 76% believe that the war in Ukraine poses a great risk to Moldova's national security.¹⁴

Domestic economic consequences. The refugee crisis has not had serious economic consequences so far, although some of the pre-existing inflationary trends have been accentuated. Some of the effects of the growing economic pressure were mitigated with the help of external financial aid (EU, Lithuania, etc., for more than €15 million), humanitarian aid in the form hygiene products, food, etc., approaching €800,000.¹⁵ To this end, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism helped mobilize humanitarian aid from EU states. The Moldovan population have provided economic donations worth 25 million MDL (almost €1.2 million). To help local public administrations, on the 20th day of the war, the government allocated 21 million MDL (approximately €1 million) to facilitate the management of the refugee crisis.

Domestic social consequences. On the day the state of emergency was established, the first 4,000 refugees from Ukraine cross the border into Moldova. This number multiplied almost 85 times reaching 337,000 in the following 20 days (as of March 15). The growing flow of refugees forced the authorities to speak openly of a refugee crisis as a problem that can collapse state institutions. Therefore, the government stepped

¹² <https://www.eap-csf.md/declaratia-privind-condamnarea-agresiunii-neprovoicate-a-rusiei-impotriva-ucrainei/>

¹³ <https://www.eap-csf.md/stopwar/>

¹⁴ <https://cotidianul.md/2022/03/09/sondaj-opinia-moldovenilor-fata-de-razboiul-din-ucraina-si-pe-cine-sustin/>

¹⁵

<https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/moldova-poluchila-gumanitarnuyu-pomosch-ot-avstrii-italii-danii-i-finlyandii-na-e789-tys/>

up humanitarian diplomacy seeking financial aid from the EU and bilateral agreements with EU states, Turkey, Israel, etc. to relocate Ukrainian refugees. More than 100,000 people remained of the total who crossed Moldova, representing up to 5% of the country's population of 2.6 million people. Following the reopening of the airspace in early March, cross-border transport ("green corridors") have been organized to help refugees who want to leave Moldova. They are redirected to Romania and other EU states using national and European buses, trains and airlines.

The authorities took measures to facilitate access to the labor market (by issuing national identification numbers) and free education (kindergartens, schools and universities) for Ukrainian refugees, the majority of whom are women and children. Up to 80 shelters were made available to the refugees and more than 4,000 volunteers were recruited to help. There were many cases when Moldovan citizens took in Ukrainian refugees, paid their rent or helped find free housing. The government launched a special platform (<https://dopomoga.gov.md/index.php>) to assist refugees with employment, finding housing, registration to study (including in the Ukrainian language), language courses, travel abroad, access to food etc.

Overall political consequences. As a result of the situation in Ukraine and its decision to apply for EU membership, Moldova followed quickly to make the same demand. However, as in the case of Ukraine, the EU refrained from offering a clear timetable for its response or to recognize candidate perspectives.

GEORGIA

Tamara Kovziridze¹⁶

Participation in the war militarily. Georgia formally does not participate in the war of Russia against Ukraine. However, Georgian soldiers fight in the Ukrainian army and there are Georgian volunteers supporting the Ukrainian army.

Political and economic responses. Political positioning. Georgia's official position vis-à-vis Ukraine has been very measured and careful, causing heavy criticism by the opposition, non-governmental organisations as well as Georgian public, who gathered numerous times on the streets to support Ukraine. At the same time they protest against the policy and the position of the government and in particular the tepid statements by the prime minister and high-level members of the ruling Georgian Dream party. Georgia supported the UN resolution on Ukraine.

Notably, the government of Georgia did not let a Ukrainian plane land in Georgia, which was supposed to take Georgian volunteer fighters to Ukraine. This caused the strong discontent of the Ukrainian government and President Zelensky summoned Ukraine's Ambassador to Georgia back to Kiev on the 1 March. The Ambassador returned to Georgia only on the 14 March. Ukrainian high-level officials, including the President Zourabashvili, the Chairman of the Parliament and MPs have been vocal expressing appreciation of strong political support among the Georgian public, while at the same time expressing criticism of the official stance of Tbilisi.

In recent weeks, positions expressed by the Government and the President have been divergent, the President being clearly more supportive of Ukraine in her speeches, and even openly criticizing the Government for its modest and measured political statements in her address to the Parliament.

Economic and other sanctions. Georgia has not joined the western sanctions on Russia and official Tbilisi is not planning to do so. The government position has been that the sanctions will not have any real impact on Russia, given the small size of Georgia's economy, but would damage Georgia more substantially, risking creation, among others, of a shortage of some supplies. In reality, this position has been motivated by political reasons and the desire not to offend Russia at any cost. Such a stance of the Government has been heavily criticized by the opposition parties, many NGOs and analytics.

Indirect political responses. Georgia formally applied to EU membership on March 3. Earlier, the Government had declared that it was planning to apply for EU membership in 2024. However, this declaration has been in strong contrast to its behavior as well as the recent trends in the country; these concern democratic processes and rule of law, including politically motivated arrests and prosecutions of opposition leaders as well as critical media representatives, which in turn has led to criticism by the EU.

¹⁶ Reformatics, Tbilisi.

The sudden decision to follow Ukraine in its application for EU membership was in part a reaction to strong public protests against the government policy towards Ukraine, with three demands expressed at public demonstrations: (1) resignation of the prime minister, whose statements towards the war in Ukraine were unacceptable for the protesters, (2) application for EU membership, and (3) closure of the Georgian sky for Russian planes. (1) and (3) remain unfulfilled.

Media coverage. Ukraine war is intensively covered in the Georgian media, in particular the critical media. This includes live interviews with Ukrainian politicians, central and local government representatives, MPs as well as opinion-makers. Tbilisi was among a handful of cities, in which President Zelensky directly addressed a large public demonstration.

Reactions in public opinion. The Georgian public has been strongly supportive of Ukraine and much more vocal in condemning the Russian war in Ukraine in contrast to the government and the ruling party, whose statements on Ukraine have been overall supportive, but still measured, trying not to be openly offensive to Russia.

According to the results of a poll, published by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre on the 15 March 2022, 61% of the population thinks that the government should be more supportive of Ukraine, and 66% believes that Georgia should join all or at least some sanctions introduced on Russia.

Domestic economic consequences. The economic crisis in Russia caused by Western sanctions will have an impact on Georgia, given that in recent years, after the gradual lifting of the unilateral Russian trade embargo in 2013, the Georgian economy became again more dependent on Russia, most notably in trade terms. As of 2021 14% of Georgia's export went to Russia and 10% of import originated in Russia.

Georgia may indeed face some challenges in terms of supply of consumer products including wheat, given that as of 2021 Ukraine and Russia are among Georgia's main suppliers. In addition, Russia is the top source of remittances in Georgia, which will also have an impact, given the imminent economic crisis in Russia and its anticipated default.

Domestic social consequences. There is no significant amount of Ukrainian refugees coming to Georgia. In contrast, there is a substantial number of Russians immigrating to Georgia. Some of them are trying to escape the Putin regime, while others seek to avoid the consequences of the western sanctions. According to the available data, around 25 000 Russians have immigrated to Georgia in the past couple of weeks and several hundreds of Russian-owned companies have been registered in Georgia. This caused discussions among the population as well the opposition political elites with regard to what Georgia's policy should be towards Russia in this case. Opponents of the government criticize the latter for not being careful with regard to Russian immigration, naming it as a security concern, especially because it may become a potential source of provocation and thus a pretext for Putin for a possible future intervention in Georgia, given that protecting Russians outside of Russia is part of the Kremlin's official doctrine.

Opposition and critics of the government have called for the introduction of a visa regime, stricter control of the border and even border closure.

Overall political consequences. Overall the political consequences will be different depending on what happens in Russia and whether and how quickly Ukraine wins the war. A couple of key elements have nonetheless already emerged. The Georgian public is very united in support of Ukraine, criticizing the policy of the current government. The divide between the two is likely to deepen if and when Ukraine wins the war, and Russia is severely damaged economically and becomes isolated politically.

ARMENIA

Benyamin Poghosyan¹⁷

Political positioning. The launch of the large-scale war in Ukraine was a shock for the Armenian society and expert community. After the US and NATO rejected core Russian demands articulated in two draft agreements publicized by Russia in mid-December 2021, there was a perception in Armenia that Russia would answer with action. Some argued that Russia would recognize the independence of self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics without any military action, while others anticipated limited military intervention to take the entire territories of Lugansk and Donetsk oblasts. However, few anticipated large-scale hostilities aiming at Kharkiv, Kyiv, Kherson, and other cities of Ukraine.

The war put Armenia in a difficult position. Since its independence in 1991, Armenia has been firmly anchored in the Russian sphere of influence, being a member of CSTO and later the Eurasian Economic Union. The defeat in the 2020 Karabakh war has significantly increased Armenian dependence on Russia. Meanwhile, Armenia managed to develop modest cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic community. Armenia has Individual Partnership Action Plans with NATO, participates in the EU Eastern Partnership initiative, signed the CEPA with EU in 2017, and launched a strategic dialogue with the US in 2019. While being a strategic ally of Russia, Armenia is interested in continuing its cooperation with the West, but the rupture of Russia-West relations makes the Armenian task much more complicated. Armenia pursues a cautious policy. It voted against suspending Russia's membership in the Council of Europe and abstained in the UN General Assembly vote on Ukraine.

Armenia historically has friendly relations with both Russia and Ukraine. Up to 2 million Armenians currently live in Russia, while different estimates put the number of Armenians in Ukraine somewhere between 300 000 and 500,000, making the Armenian community in Ukraine the fourth largest in Armenian diaspora after Russia, the US, and France. Some

¹⁷ Centerr for Political and Economic Strategic Studies, Yerevan.

70,000 Armenians lived in self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics in February 2022.

Media coverage. The war dominates the content of both regular (TV, newspapers) and social media. The majority of Armenians have more access to the Russian language content, as people above 40 years old lack adequate skills of English. In local media, there are different opinions. Pro-Western politicians and experts are criticizing Russia and articulating their support to Ukraine. Pro-Russian circles argue that the core reason for the war is the prospect of NATO enlargement and the decision made in Bucharest NATO summit that Ukraine and Georgia will someday join NATO, which was a clear red line for Russia. Some experts connect the war to the complicated transformation of the unipolar world and Russian efforts to secure its place in the emerging world order as an equal pole with the US and China.

Reactions in public opinion. There were small rallies in support of Ukraine organized by pro-Western opposition parties and by civil society representatives with the participation of European diplomats. Armenian communists organized an even smaller rally in support of Russian actions. However, in general, Armenian public opinion is more or less neutral. Armenian society is still under the psychological pressure of the 2020 Karabakh war defeat, while in recent days, military actions of Azerbaijan along with Armenia–Azerbaijan state border and line of contact in Karabakh have shifted popular attention into that direction. Armenia has some concerns that if, as a result of the West's sanctions on Russia, domestic turmoil or upheaval will occur there, Azerbaijan will use the moment to militarily take over the remaining part of Karabakh, which is protected only by the Russian peacekeepers.

Economic and social consequences. The war in Ukraine and the economic sanctions imposed by the West will have severe implications for the Armenian economy. Russia is the main export destination of Armenia (\$860 million in 2021), and the significant decrease of living standards in Russia and the steep devaluation of the Russian ruble will negatively impact the Armenian export. In 2021 Armenia received \$865 million of remittances from Russia, and the devaluation of the Russian ruble will significantly cut this amount.

Russia's ban on food export, including grain, may create significant problems for Armenia's food security. Armenia imports a large volume of grain from Russia and partly from Ukraine, and if both sources are out of reach, implications may be significant. Recently, people have started to buy food staples, such as sugar, sunflower oils, macarons, and flour in large quantities, bringing back the memories of the early days of the COVID–19 outbreak.

Meanwhile, since February 24, up to 50,000 people have arrived in Armenia from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. They are mostly highly educated specialists in the IT sector who want to work in Armenia, given the boost in the Armenian IT sector in the last decade. Armenia faces an influx of both individual professionals and entire small and mid-level companies. Given that the main obstacle for the quicker growth of the Armenian

IT sector has been the lack of high-level specialists, this influx may significantly boost Armenian IT. The associations of IT companies in Armenia are actively supporting the business relocation process. As a result of this influx, the renting prices in Yerevan were doubled within the last two weeks.

AZERBAIJAN

Shahla Ismayil¹⁸

Participation in the war. Contrary to EU countries, official Baku has not taken any political side in the ongoing war, trying to keep neutral position between Russia and Ukraine. Yet, the population predominantly supports Ukraine and perceives the Russian invasion to Ukraine as the open violation of the international law, often making the parallel with the Nagorno-Karabagh war in the view of positions on territorial integrity. People are open in demonstrating the support towards Ukraine through flashmobs, social media posts, and demarches in the form of petitions, statements, letters; meanwhile, the demonstrative political silence of the Azerbaijani authorities on the issue is often taken negatively by the larger public.

In parallel, during the last 20 days the government of Azerbaijan sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine and provided energy support to social vehicles. Hikmat Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan and Head of Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration, commented on the war, and expressed the position of Azerbaijan as: *"Resolution of this issue must be ensured through political and diplomatic ways and on the dialogue basis. Azerbaijan is always guided by norms and principles of international law in international relations. I would like, especially, to mention sovereignty and territorial integrity issues of the states".*¹⁹

The embassy of Azerbaijan in Ukraine was one of the last diplomatic missions to leave the capital Kiev and move to Lviv.²⁰ As a result of the strikes by the Russian Air Force on the city of Kharkiv, the building of the consulate of Azerbaijan in Kharkov was severely damaged.²¹

Ukraine is one of the countries with the largest Azerbaijani diaspora where many Azerbaijanis have received citizenship. As a result of the Russian attack on civilian settings, several Azerbaijani families were killed and wounded.²² ²³ Azerbaijanis living in Ukraine

¹⁸ Womens Association for Rational Development (WARD), Baku.

¹⁹Assistant to Azerbaijani president comments on what is happening in Ukraine, Retrieved from:

<https://apa.az/en/foreign-policy/assistant-to-azerbaijani-president-comments-on-what-is-happening-in-ukraine-369307>

²⁰ No: 089/22, Information of the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the relocation of diplomats of the Embassy of our country in Ukraine from Kyiv to Lviv, Retrieved from:

<https://www.mfa.gov.az/az/news/no08922>

²¹ No: 087/22, Information of the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the demolition of the building of the Honorary Consulate in Kharkov, Retrieved from:

<https://www.mfa.gov.az/az/news/no08722>

²² Several Azerbaijanis killed in Ukraine, Retrieved from: <https://www.azernews.az/nation/189934.html>

²³ 5 Azerbaijani citizens killed in Ukraine since start of hostilities, Retrieved from:

<https://report.az/en/foreign-politics/5-azerbaijani-citizens-killed-in-ukraine-since-start-of-hostilities/>

fight in the army and in volunteer self-defense groups. Many Azerbaijani businessmen operating in Ukraine are engaged in charity, such as free meal distribution.

Policy responses. Political positioning. The government of Azerbaijan seeks to maintain a neutral position between Russia and Ukraine. A Joint Declaration and bilateral documents were signed between Ukraine and Azerbaijan in January 2022. But then a Declaration on “Allied Interaction between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation”²⁴ was signed by the Russian and Azerbaijani Presidents on 22 February, just 2 days before the war start, which caused a large public debate in the country. In addition, Azerbaijan was one of the few countries that refrained from voting on the UN General Assembly Resolution against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on March 2²⁵, which was a further sign of complicated political challenge for Azerbaijan in keeping a balance between Russia and Ukraine, as well as regarding its long-term international relations at large.

Economic and other sanctions. The Azerbaijan government has not conducted any economic sanctions against the Russia. Since Russia is one of the main trading partners of Azerbaijan, it is predicted that these sanctions can also negatively impact the Azerbaijani economy and may have political implications too. Additionally, over 2 million Azerbaijanis live in Russia, working primarily in the business and trading sectors, and their repatriation would undoubtedly affect the social-economic situation inside Azerbaijan.

Indirect political responses. On the second day of military operations in Ukraine, after a conversation between the two countries' governments, Azerbaijan sent humanitarian assistance to the country. On February 25, two planes of the Azerbaijani Silk Way airline, full of food and medical aid worth more than €5 million (\$5.6 million), headed for Ukraine. Afterwards, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) announced that all social service vehicles in Ukraine (ambulances, fire engines, etc.) will be provided with free fuel at SOCAR's 59 gas and petrol filling stations throughout Ukraine. On 12 March, the Silkway cargo plane carried to Kyiv another 380 tons of humanitarian aid, containing food, medications and medical supplies.

Media coverage. Regardless of the government’s formally neutral position, almost all of the media outlets under the control of the government support Ukraine in the war. War-related news and activities appear in the content of both regular (TV, newspapers) and social media on a daily basis. The independent and oppositional mass media outlets and representatives demonstrate open and extensive support to Ukraine.

Reactions in public opinion and voluntary activity. The overwhelming majority of Azerbaijani society and social media users condemn the invasion of the Russian government, and support Ukraine in this war. To express the support for the Ukraine and Ukrainian people, hundreds of people gathered before the Ukrainian embassy in Baku on 27 February. After the demonstration people collected and sorted donations of essential

²⁴ Declaration on “Allied Interaction between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation”:

<https://president.az/en/articles/view/55496>

²⁵ Which countries abstained from the UN vote on Ukraine? Result of General Assembly’s resolution on Russia explained, Retrieved from:

<https://inews.co.uk/news/un-vote-ukraine-russia-countries-abstained-general-assembly-result-resolution-explained-1495346>

items in the collection center to be sent to Ukraine.²⁶ Ukrainian flag colors dominate in the streets and private vehicles.

Social consequences. The war caused a massive flow of Ukrainian refugees to neighboring EU member states. There is no official information about the flow of Ukrainian refugees to Azerbaijan yet, suggestin that their numbers are not great.

However, a substantial repatriation of Azerbaijanis, living in Ukraine and Russia, is expected and hence social complications are inevitable. Over 3.5 million Azerbaijanis live in Ukraine and Russia combined, and the ongoing war negatively affects Azerbaijani compatriots on both sides. Those in Ukraine suffer from ongoing war and insecurity, and those in Russia from sanctions. So far Azerbaijan managed to evacuate around 5,000 Azerbaijani compatriots from Ukraine via Moldova, Romania, and Poland.

On the other hand, as Russia is one of the main sources of foreign remittances to Azerbaijan, the devaluation of the Russian ruble and the weakening of the Russian economy will reduce the income of Azerbaijanis working in Russia, which will also reduce the social well-being of their families in Azerbaijan, who predominantly reside in rural areas.

Economic consequences. In the longer term, experts predict that the sanctions against Russia will not seriously affect the amount of currency entering Azerbaijan, as Russia's share of the currency entering the country is below 5 percent.²⁷ Yet, in terms of remittances, both Russia and Ukraine are the main sources of foreign income, respectively \$409 million and \$21 million. While Russia makes up 53% of the total remittances' transfers to Azerbaijan, Ukraine is also among the top six countries.²⁸

After the first week of the war, Azerbaijan Airlines (AZAL) suspended flights to Russia for an undetermined period of time. According to AZAL's statement, the decision is aimed at protecting the citizens, airlines, and legal entities against the negative impacts of the ongoing developments.

Overall political consequences. It is commonly believed that the outcome of the ongoing war will have serious political implications not only for Ukraine and Russia, but for the whole region. The anti-Putin global mood is to cause a power shift in the region, especially in the case of formal military defeat of Russia. Taking into account that the Russian peacekeeping troops in the Nagorno-Karabagh area monitor compliance of ceasefire agreement by Armenia and Azerbaijan since November 2020, the negative attitude towards their presence on the territory of Azerbaijan has the high potential to grow even harsher. And finally, although the main concern of the world now is to minimize the risk of nuclear warfare, in a long-term perspective the invasion of Russia to Ukraine is mobilizing the global democratic community to invest into democratization and good governance across the globe, and to stop the overrule of authoritarian regimes in the world.

²⁶ Azerbaijanis take to the streets against Russian invasion
<https://oc-media.org/azerbaijanis-take-to-the-streets-against-russian-invasion/>

²⁷ Rusiyaya qarşı sanksiyalar Azərbaycanca təsir edəcəkmi--Şərh:
<https://sputnik.az/20220301/rusiyaya-qarsi-sanksiyalar-azerbaycana-tesir-edecekmi---serh-439723298.html>

²⁸ Central Bank of Azerbaijan.

EU & UK

Michael Emerson²⁹

Participation in the war. The EU has effectively engaged in hybrid war against Russia. In an unprecedented step, on 28 February the EU decided to supply 500 million euro of military equipment to Ukraine, and there are now proposals to double this amount. This follows military supplies from the US and UK, and also from Germany for whom the move marks a major policy switch. However the call by Zelensky for NATO to enforce a no fly zone the Ukrainian airspace is declined on the grounds that it would risk a direct NATO-Russian military confrontation and a conceivable nuclear war with a deranged Putin. Around 20,000 volunteers are reported to have entered Ukraine to join a 'foreign legion', with many from Western Europe.

Policy responses. Political positioning. All EU member states and all the rest of Europe, except Russia and Belarus, supported the UN General Assembly Resolution on 2 March deploring Russia's invasion and calling for the immediate withdrawal of their military forces. The European Council summit meeting on 10-11 March in Versailles was categorical in condemning "Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression...". It further assessed that "Russia's war of aggression constitutes a tectonic shift in European history", with long-run political implications for bolstering defence capabilities, reducing energy dependencies, and building a more robust economic base.

Economic and other sanctions. Together with the US the EU promised devastating sanctions. The EU adopted several packages, including a ban on transactions with the Russian Central Bank, limiting access to EU capital markets and SWIFT, export bans of sensitive technologies, a ban on Russian aircraft to use EU airports or overflight of EU airspace, and asset freezes on 680 individuals (including Putin and his entourage) and 53 entities. The EU plans to reduce gas imports from Russia by 2/3rds by the end of 2022. Belarus is also sanctioned. The UK is confronted with how to deal with the grand properties of the sanctioned Russian oligarchs in 'Londongrad', one idea being to use these assets to accommodate Ukrainian refugees.

In addition there is a proliferation of spontaneous private sector sanctions against the Russia economy, going way beyond the legal requirements of sanctions policies. In addition to many US-based global brands (Visa, Macdonalds, etc.), many EU/UK multinational corporations are shutting down operations with Russia. Some but not all oil companies are writing off their Russian investments, for example BP. Many companies stop supplying the Russian market, or stop investments, or close down their operations in Russia. For example the Spanish Zara company closes down its 502 retail clothing and household outlets, and the Swedish IKEA its 17 major outlets there, etc. Volkswagen halts its Russian production. There are thus economic costs for the EU, but the broad consensus is that these have to be borne.

²⁹ Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Brussels.

Overall the depth and range of US and EU sanctions may well overturn the former conventional wisdom that sanctions do not work, especially for Russia.

Indirect political responses. The major indirect impact on the EU has been the urgent application of all three associated states - Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – for accession to the EU. President von der Leyen declared on 28 February, the same day as President Zelensky's accession bid, that "*They (the people of Ukraine) are one of us and we want them in*", which implies dissolving the EU's policy of denying 'membership perspectives'. While immediate accession is out of the question, the triple bids (by Moldova and Georgia, following Ukraine) the Commission has been invited by the EU summit in Versailles on 10-11 March to prepare 'Opinions' on these applications, which sounds banal but such is a conventional stage of the accession process. Opinion polls in both France and Germany have swung immediately from minority to majority support for Ukrainian membership. There are calls from civil society³⁰ and member states from Central and South-Eastern Europe to extend Candidate status to Ukraine immediately. This proposal was debated intensely at the Versailles summit without winning unanimous support.

Media coverage and public opinion. The war dominates the content of both regular (TV, newspapers) and social media, with live reporting supportive of Ukraine every day. There is also fair reporting on how Putin and his main spokesperson are presenting their manufactured arguments. There are street demonstrations and blue-and-yellow symbols of support for Ukraine everywhere.

Social consequences. There is the continuing massive flow of women and child refugees across the borders with the four neighbouring EU member state. By 14 March a total of over 2.5 million refugees had crossed into the EU over the borders of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, with Poland taking 1.7 million. How far this ongoing tidal wave of migration will continue is a speculative matter, depending on the course of the war, but it is widely considered that the numbers may rise to around 4 million. The unity of support for the refugees among member states has been impressive.

The EU suspended normal asylum procedures, simply admitting all Ukrainians presenting themselves at the borders. In addition on 4 March the EU activated a legal protection mechanism for Ukrainian refugees, and granting them the right to live, work, study and receive accommodation and medical care across all EU member states for up to three years. Free public transport across the EU is also granted to help the spreading out of refugees among member states. At EU border crossing points there is a huge mobilisation of non-governmental organisations and individuals helping the refugees in basic ways. Inland, including member states not bordering Ukraine, there is a mushrooming of coordination mechanisms for volunteer households offering accommodation.

Economic consequences. The economic recovery in the EU from the Covid pandemic was proceeding vigorously in 2021, until the new Omicron variant hit output at the end of the year. Forecasts by the European Central Bank for 2022 are now being

³⁰ <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-news/open-letter-responding-to-putins-invasion-of-ukraine/>

revised downwards for GDP growth under the impact of the war, with various independent analysts warning stagnation or even a new recession. The rise in energy prices drives the acceleration of consumer price inflation, expected to reach 5% in 2022.

Overall political consequences. For the EU the war is generally seen as increasing the need for 'strategic autonomy', heading towards a major rethink of security, enlargement and neighbourhood policies. The image of Ukraine, its people and President Zelensky has been totally transformed into one of heroism alongside terrible human suffering, while Putin becomes the embodiment of evil comparable with Hitler. Ukrainians are perceived as fighting with their lives our common struggle to defend the European values of democracy, fundamental freedoms and civilized international relations against the common enemy.