

THE MAIN WAR OF THE CENTURY: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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Abstract. This article is devoted to the preliminary results and pilot analysis of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the next phase of which, in the form of a large-scale invasion, began on 24 February 2022. The author describes and explains key features of the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, emphasising the propaganda, diplomatic components and the humanitarian aspect of the most significant and bloody war of the beginning of the 21st century.

Keywords: Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Vladimir Putin, dehumanisation, propaganda, war

1. Introduction

Today's information space presents predominantly publicising assessments of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. Obviously, the most objective ones will be given by future historians who will have the possibility to see the situation from a particular retrospective viewpoint. But analysing events in the heat of the moment is also important, laying the foundations for understanding what is happening.

The aim of this article is to capture the state of affairs of Russian-Ukrainian relations under circumstances where both countries are in a state of undeclared war. The term “special military operation”, coined by Vladimir Putin², has lost its relevance six months after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The announcement of a “limited” mobilization in September 2022 opened a new phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war and revealed its large-scale nature to millions of Russian citizens.³

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² Баранец, В. Чем специальная операция в Донбассе отличается от войны. 24.02.2022. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27368/4550179/>.

³ Указ “Об объявлении частичной мобилизации в Российской Федерации”. 21.09.2022. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69391>.

This article is one of the first attempts to analyse the preliminary results of the war. Sources for this article were official documents (like decrees of the Russian President), periodicals, and Internet media publications.

Although the active phase of the military confrontation continues and prospects for its end remain dim, some conclusions can already be drawn today. Recalling that the Russian Federation is a presidential republic, the peculiar “role reversal” between the presidents of Russia and Ukraine is also worth noting. In Russian transcription—Vladimir—they are namesakes, but in Ukraine it is customary to use the Ukrainian one—Volodymyr. However, this is not the only difference. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who had no political experience before his election, after 24 February became a symbol of resistance in Ukraine and one of the most popular politicians in the world⁴. Vladimir Putin, who has been in power for more than 20 years as prime minister, president, ‘national leader’ and president again, is seriously deteriorating and becoming politically passive. The Kremlin master finds it increasingly difficult to respond to the challenges that life throws at him, and his speech at the Valdai Discussion Club is the best proof of this⁵. It can be argued that the relationship through distant dialogue between the leaders of Russia and Ukraine reflects the trends in Russian and Ukrainian society.

With the beginning of the large-scale invasion of Russian troops on 24 February 2022, the hybrid conflict with low-intensity combat operations between Russia and Ukraine entered a new phase—large-scale combat operations (battles, etc.) using all kinds of troops. It is necessary to note the high intensity of hostilities and the close relationship between the hostilities and events in the socio-political life of both parties to the war and the world at large.

2. Peculiarities of the Russian-Ukrainian war

On 24 February 2022, the most thorough and long-term war of the 21st century stepped into its next, more slaughterous phase. It was characterized not only by a particularly bitter confrontation but also exposed the shortcomings

⁴ Зеленский стал самым влиятельным человеком Европы по версии POLITICO. 23.03.2022. <https://ukraine.segodnya.ua/ukraine/zelenskiy-stal-samym-vliyatelny-m-chelovekom-evropy-po-versii-politico-1610263.html>.

⁵ Путин на Валдайском форуме. Прямой эфир. 27.10.2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duUL8bFTf64>.

of the global security system. Clearly, the end of hostilities will signal a radical change in the international security system.

Russia's large-scale aggression, which began in February 2022, has moved the confrontation, which began its armed phase at the end of February 2014 with the capture of Crimea by the "green men", into its next phase. The Russian Federation felt strong enough to attempt to subdue Ukraine⁶. Contrary to the predictions and assessments of numerous Western experts, Ukraine managed to withstand and repel the aggressor. As a result, instead of the Russian *Blitzkrieg* anticipated by a number of influential centres of influence, the region of Central and Eastern Europe was plunged into a bloody conflict, causing the region to be referred to as a "bloody land".

The status of "the former republics of the USSR" held by both parties to the Russian-Ukrainian war does not fully capture the full extent of the contradictions between Russia and Ukraine as the former played the role of metropolis in Muscovy/Russian Empire/Soviet Union, while Ukraine was not simply colonised by its neighbour but acted as a donor for its development over the centuries⁷. However, the nature and scale of the confrontation suggest that the end of the war will be a watershed moment for the post-Soviet space. Russia's dominance is coming to an end, a fact that is becoming increasingly apparent. Developments in the South Caucasus, where Azerbaijan and Armenia are increasingly seeking ways to reconcile⁸, and the appearance of Tajik President Emomali Rahmon at the Russia-Central Asia summit calling on the Kremlin to respect the Central Asian states⁹ are significant signals of the decline of Russia's authority.

The scale of the confrontation is exacerbated by the use of nuclear threat. It is not just a matter of Ukraine giving up the third largest nuclear arsenal in the

⁶ Matthews, O. 2022. **Inside Putin's bunker: how he kept the plan to invade Ukraine secret.** 03.11.2022. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-putin-kept-the-plan-to-invade-ukraine-a-secret-nlw087729>.

⁷ **Економічна історія України: Історико-економічне дослідження: в 2 т.** 2011. Т. 1. 696 с.; **Економічна історія України: Історико-економічне дослідження: в 2 т.** 2011. Т. 2. 608 с.

⁸ **Неверова, А.** 2022. **Азербайджан провели переговори в США.** 08.11.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/glavy-midov-armenii-i-azerbajdzana-proveli-peregovory-v-ssa/a-63687131>; **Армения и Азербайджан ведут переговоры о мире на фоне обвинений в расстреле военнопленных.** 3.10.2022. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-63123894>.

⁹ **Rahmon tells Putin: We want to be respected.** 14.10.2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0pIRt5-eUE>.

world in the early 1990s, which has been transferred to Russia¹⁰. The ineffective and declarative nature of the Budapest Memorandum¹¹ became commonplace. Russia seized the Chornobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants in the first weeks of the war¹². The Chornobyl NPP is perhaps the most famous nuclear facility in the world, long since decommissioned; Zaporizhzhia is the most powerful nuclear power plant in Europe. The Russian government did not limit itself to power games with the nuclear plant. However, it could not prevent an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) delegation from visiting the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Enerhodar¹³. Vladimir Putin's decree on transferring ownership of Zaporizhzhya NPP¹⁴ (the largest nuclear power plant in Europe) to Russia became an example of the most significant and bald-faced theft ever carried out in public.

However, it is worth noting that Russia did not limit itself to these actions. Accusations of Ukraine's preparation of a "dirty bomb" were made shortly after the large-scale aggression began¹⁵. They did not have the desired effect for the Kremlin, so a large-scale information and psychological operation was carried out in October 2022. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu¹⁶, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov¹⁷ and State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav

¹⁰ **Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.** 05.12.1994. <https://treaties.un.org/Pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=0800000280401fbb>.

¹¹ **Крамар, О.** 2022. Будапештский меморандум: что пообещали Украине в 1994 году и как Киев хочет использовать это в свою пользу. 27.02.2022. <https://hromadske.ua/ru/posts/budapeshtskij-memorandum-cto-poobeshali-ukraine-v-1994-godu-i-kak-kiev-hochet-ispolzovat-eto-v-svoyu-polzu>.

¹² **Военный конфликт и АЭС Украины: угроза взрыва и утечки радиации.** 5.03.2022. <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2022/03/1419282>.

¹³ **МАГАТЭ: на Запорожской АЭС нарушены все семь обязательных компонентов ядерной безопасности.** 06.09.2022. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-62811953>.

¹⁴ **Путин поручил принять в федеральную собственность объекты Запорожской АЭС.** 5.10.2022. <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/15964877>.

¹⁵ **Мельникова, А.** 2022. МАГАТЭ не нашло в Украине следов разработки "грязной бомбы". 3.11.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/inspekcia-magate-ne-nasla-v-ukraine-priznakov-razrabotki-graznoj-bomby/a-63641262>.

¹⁶ **Keskin, O.** Шойгу обсудил тему о "грязных бомбах" Украины с коллегами из Индии и КНР. 26.10.2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/мир/шойгу-обсудил-тему-о-грязных-бомбах-украины-с-коллегами-из-индии-и-кнр/2721223>.

¹⁷ **Лавров назвал опровержения Запада о "грязной бомбе" голословными.** 24.10.2022. <https://ria.ru/20221024/bomba-1826359359.html>.

Volodin¹⁸, one after another in different venues, accused the Ukrainian leadership of preparing to use a nuclear bomb. The purpose of these actions was to damage Ukraine's credibility worldwide and to portray Ukraine as a terrorist state. However, the results of the IAEA inspection have refuted the insinuations of Russian VIP propaganda¹⁹, only confirming its criminal nature.

There is another factor that experts sometimes overlook. The Russian-Ukrainian war is a confrontation between states with major Orthodox denominations. The Russian Orthodox Church occupies an exclusively pro-government position²⁰, but the situation in Ukraine is somewhat different. The recently created Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate are in opposition. It is, let me remind you, the most significant part (in terms of people and money, of course) of the Russian Orthodox Church²¹. The nature of the confrontation and the actions of the opposing sides suggest that the situation in global Orthodoxy will change significantly once the fighting is over.

3. Russian aggression in Ukraine and international relations

Elaborating on this thought, I would like to point out that the established format of the multipolar world, which Russia's actions have challenged, will also radically change after the end of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Its scale and ferocity suggest a significant transformation of the format of global international relations in the near future. Ukraine has solved the issue of its geopolitical survival on the battlefield, proving its viability as a state. At the same time, the low effectiveness of the OSCE and the International Committee of the Red Cross has unfortunately become evident to all.

The situation at the United Nations is paradoxical. The vote in the UN General Assembly on the issue of pseudo-referendums, which Russian

¹⁸ Володин счел США и ЕС пособниками ядерного терроризма из-за помощи Киеву. 24.10.2022. <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/24/10/2022/63561eee9a794730c7b9c5e9>.

¹⁹ Инспекторы МАГАТЭ не обнаружили на ядерных предприятиях в Украине никаких признаков незаявленной активности. 3.11.2022. <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2022/11/1434282>.

²⁰ Смерть в Украине смыкает все грехи? 27.09.2022. <https://ru.euronews.com/2022/09/27/web-patriarch-kirill-on-ukraine>.

²¹ Лученко, К. 2022. Независимость или раскол. Какими станут отношения Украинской и Русской православной церкви. 30.05.2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/87212>.

authorities led in the occupied territories of Ukraine²², demonstrated the attitude of the world community to Russia's actions. The latter managed to put together a "coalition of outcasts" in support of itself—only the Russian Federation, Nicaragua, Syria, Belarus and the DPRK²³ opposed said resolution (in March 2022 Eritrea voted for a UNGA²⁴ resolution condemning the invasion of Ukraine, but Nicaragua did not)²⁵. Iran is also a fully-fledged participant in this coalition, supplying Russia with kamikaze drones which it uses to attack the critical infrastructure in Ukraine²⁶. On the other hand, meetings of the UN Security Council, in which Russia abuses its veto power²⁷, are rapidly losing procedural meaning and are thus intensifying the debate on the need to reform the United Nations.

The global community has responded to Russia's actions with at least two asymmetric, and therefore effective, steps. On the one hand, on the initiative of the USA and its NATO partners, the "Ramstein format"²⁸ was created on 26 April 2022, which allows us to discuss the prospects of strengthening the Ukrainian Armed Forces and agree on the need for new supplies. The presence of all NATO members in the process of ratifying documents on Finland and Sweden joining the Alliance promotes discussion about the continuing leadership of NATO in its role of ensuring international security. Also noteworthy is the reanimation of the Lend-Lease procedure by the United States which was marked by the realisation of the US leadership's own ability to use informational techniques to influence Russia. The United States is informed almost weekly that a new batch of military aid has been made available to Ukraine.

²² **Генеральная Ассамблея ООН потребовала от Москвы отменить решения по статусу отдельных районов Донецкой, Запорожской, Луганской и Херсонской областей Украины.** 12.10.2022. <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2022/10/1433377>.

²³ Democratic People's Republic of Korea (editor's comment).

²⁴ The United Nations General Assembly (editor's comment).

²⁵ **Гостев, А.** 2022. Друзья, с какими и врагов не нужно. Кто в мире остался с Путиным. 06.05.2022. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/druzya-s-kakimi-i-vragov-ne-nuzhno-kto-v-mire-ostalsya-s-putinyam/31836348.html>.

²⁶ **Иранские дроны в небе Украины.** 22.10.2022. <https://ru.euronews.com/2022/10/22/iranian-drones-in-ukrainian-skies>.

²⁷ **Совет Безопасности ООН: Россия наложила вето на резолюцию, осуждающую аннексию территорий Украины.** 30.09.2022. <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2022/09/1432952>.

²⁸ **DeYoung K.; Timsit, A.** 2022. 'Putin never imagined' global rally of Ukraine support, defense secretary says. 26.04.2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/26/aus-tin-putin-ukraine-support-military-russia/>.

Before discussing the military component of the confrontation, I would like to elaborate on the propaganda component of the Russian-Ukrainian war. After the First World War, information support for combat operations became a necessary element of warfare. Here, it is necessary to dwell on the key messages of Russian and Ukrainian propaganda:

The basic messages of Russian propaganda are as follows:

- The priority of Russian propaganda can be said to be the dehumanisation of the enemy. This trend has been developing since at least 2014 with the story of the “crucified boy in Sloviansk”²⁹, the Ukrainian Defence Forces being referred to in propaganda messages as “nationalists” and “Zelenskyi militants”³⁰, and being attributed to a variety of military actions and war crimes. In violation of the Geneva Convention, Russian propagandists are forcing Ukrainian POWs to publicly “repent” in their own interests³¹.
- The term “special military operation”³² adopted by the Kremlin and the Russian media on 24 February 2022 proved ineffective. The ideological construct “special military operation” was supposed to appease Russian public opinion, but it failed in its objective as reality proved unpredictable for the Russian leadership.
- The concepts of “denazification” and “demilitarization” were not understood by Russian citizens when applied to the realities of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation. They were not reflected in informal communication in Russian society, despite the fact that it was consistently pumped full of tales of the “glorious history of the Russian army and navy” and of the much-talked-about Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazis during the

²⁹ Калашник, П. 2021. Автор фейка о “распятом мальчике” сожалеет о своих словах и жалуется на плохое отношение в России. 12.04.2021. <https://hromadske.ua/ru/posts/avtor-fejka-o-raspyatom-malchike-sozhaleet-o-svoih-slovah-i-zhaluetsya-na-plohoe-otnoshenie-v-rossii>.

³⁰ Боевики Зеленского нанесли удар по Энергодару – ВГА Запорожья. 28.07.2022. <https://crimea.ria.ru/20220728/boeviki-zelenskogo-nanesli-udar-po-energodaru--vga-zaporozhya-1123983234.html>.

³¹ Пленный боевик “Азова” рассказал о лжи Зеленского про оборону Мариуполя. 17.10.2022. <https://iz.ru/1411216/2022-10-17/plennyi-boevik-azova-rasskazal-o-lzhi-zelenskogo-pro-oboronu-mariupolia>.

³² СВО идет по плану – сатанисты из “цивилизованного мира” будут разбиты: мнение. 24.10.2022. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2022/10/24/svo-idet-po-planu-satanisty-iz-civilizovannogo-mira-budut-razbity-mnenie>.

Second World War, labelling the Ukrainian Armed Forces “Nazis”³³. As an aside, there came no answer to the obvious question about the connection between the “denationalization” of Ukraine and the nationality of the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish. In this matter, Russia can only count on the growth of domestic anti-Semitism.

- Another aspect of the dehumanisation of the enemy is the desire to show Ukrainian servicemen as adherents of Nazi ideology. The Azov regiment, banned in Russia, is perceived by Russian propaganda as part of a Nazi military structure. It is no coincidence that a show trial was being prepared for captive Azovstal defenders in Russian-occupied Mariupol³⁴. Although Azovstal’s defense leaders escaped Russian captivity during an exchange in September 2022, it cannot be entirely claimed that the idea of such a trial has lost its relevance.
- Foreign servicemen of the Ukrainian Armed Forces whom Russian forces have taken prisoner have received particular attention. We are referring primarily to the marines who were sentenced to death by the “court” of the self-proclaimed DNR³⁵ but returned home as a result of the exchange. In violation of the Geneva Convention, Russian propagandists publicly showed footage of prisoner interrogations in which they gave testimony required by the Russian authorities.
- It should be noted that the topic of the possible use of weapons of mass destruction by Ukraine was not limited to the aforementioned “dirty bomb” reports: General Igor Kirillov, Chief of Chemical, Bacteriological and Radiation Defense Troops of the Russian Army, publicly and regularly voiced insinuations about the possible use of toxic substances by The Armed Forces of Ukraine³⁶. I would like to point out that the Russian general’s public assumptions have not been objectively confirmed.

³³ Украинские нацисты ударили по жителям Херсона, которые ждали своей очереди для эвакуации на другой берег Днепра. 5.11.2022. https://www.1tv.ru/news/2022-11-05/440964-ukrainskie_natsisty_udarili_po_zhitelyam_hersona_kotorye_zhdali_svoey_ocheredi_dlya_evakuatsii_na_drugoy_bereg_dnepra.

³⁴ Родионов, М. “Следователи дадут отмашку”. Как идет подготовка к трибуналу над “Азовом”. 10.08.2022. <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2022/08/10/15249038.shtml>.

³⁵ Верховный суд так называемой “ДНР” приговорил к смертной казни трех иностранцев, воевавших в составе украинской армии. 09.06.2022. <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/dnr-sud-nad-tremya-inostrantsami/31890855.html>.

³⁶ Брифинг начальника войск РХБ защиты ВС РФ генерал-лейтенанта Игоря Кириллова по угрозам радиационной безопасности. 24.10.2022. https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12442898@egNews.

- The supply and use of Western weaponry by the AFU can also be called a sore point for Russian propaganda. Since the start of deliveries of 155-calibre howitzers to Ukraine, which are in service in NATO countries and have the necessary ammunition, Russian propagandists have been trying to prove that American and European guns are incapable of influencing the situation on the frontline³⁷. Even the Kremlin's main ally Alexander Lukashenko has been involved in promoting this thesis³⁸. The situation has been aggravated by deliveries of HIMARS to Ukraine, which have demonstrated their high effectiveness. The Russian media reported the destruction of the “transport and loader unit for HIMARS” in the summer of 2022, ignoring that a transport and loader unit for this type of weapon does not exist. Russian Defense Ministry spokesman General Igor Konashenkov reports on “HIMARS missile interceptions” almost daily. However, there is not a single objectively confirmed instance of the destruction of an MLRS³⁹ launcher of this type.⁴⁰

The Kremlin has succeeded in diluting responsibility for its own actions in several ways. Firstly, the Russian media actively uses the phrase “allied forces”⁴¹ to refer to the Russian army and the illegal armed groups created in 2014 in the terrorist quasi-states of the DNR and LNR, and in 2022 in other occupied regions of Ukraine. I should note that the units created by Ukrainian citizens are often not formed voluntarily. Another fact is equally telling: the situation in the occupied regions is commented on by local collaborators rather than Russian officials. Interestingly, among Russia's fellow travelers are not only ex-parliamentarians Yevgeny Balitsky⁴² and Vladimir Saldo⁴³,

³⁷ Спецоперацию на Украине не поможет остановить ни одно западное оружие – эксперт. 06.09.2022. <https://easaily.com/ru/news/2022/09/06/specoperaciyu-na-ukraine-nepomozhet-ostanovit-ni-odno-zapadnoe-oruzhie-ekspert>.

³⁸ Лукашенко считает, что французские САУ Caesar уничтожат сразу после доставки на Украину. 21.07.2021. <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/15279785>.

³⁹ Multiple launch rocket system.

⁴⁰ В Пентагоне говорят, что РФ не смогла уничтожить ни одной установки HIMARS из переданных Украине. 05.11.2022. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/news/2022/11/5/7150093/>.

⁴¹ Союзные силы России и ДНР начали наступление под Бахмутом. 29.09.2022. <https://iz.ru/1403343/2022-09-29/soiuznye-sily-rossii-i-dnr-nachali-nastuplenie-pod-bakhmutom>.

⁴² Балицкий Евгений Витальевич. https://rus.lb.ua/file/person/815_balitskiy_evgeniy_vitalevich.html.

⁴³ Биография Владимира Сальдо. 05.10.2022. <https://tass.ru/info/15958209>.

but also the anti-vaccinationist Kirill Stremousov⁴⁴, known for his statements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter died (or was probably killed) on 9 November after Sergei Shoigu ordered Russian troops to leave Kherson⁴⁵. This state of affairs did not change even after the pseudo-referendums on the annexation of the occupied territories of Ukraine to Russia had taken place.

At the same time, the actions of Russian troops in the occupied territories of Ukraine were often reported on the basis of the work of Soviet propagandists during the “limited contingent of Soviet troops” in Afghanistan in the late 70s and early 80s of the twentieth century⁴⁶. If reports from Russian propagandists are to be believed, the Russian military does nothing but distribute humanitarian aid, take children to school, plant flowers and water trees.

Ramzan Kadyrov can safely be called a favourite of Russian propaganda in Ukraine. The head of the Chechen Republic not only skilfully imitated direct participation in combat operations but also sent three of his underage sons to Ukraine, posing with weapons in their hands⁴⁷. It is worth noting the alliance between Kadyrov and Vagner’s PMC handler, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who entered the public sphere by recruiting Russian prisoners to participate in combat operations in Ukraine⁴⁸. This Kadyrov-Prigozhin alliance has been intensely critical of Russian generals⁴⁹. This tandem is becoming increasingly visible in the Russian political landscape.

⁴⁴ Довженко, О.; Білоусенко, О. 2021. Проросійський трикстер, конспіролог і ватажок антиваксів. Хто такий Кирило Стремоусов. 31.08.2021. <https://ms.detector.media/trendi/post/28056/2021-08-31-prorosiysskyy-trykster-konspirolog-i-vatazhok-antyvaksiv-khto-takyy-kyrylo-stremousov/>.

⁴⁵ **Замглавы оккупационной администрации Херсонской области Кирилл Стремоусов погиб в ДТП – RT и ТАСС.** 09.11.2022. <https://theins.info/news/256839>.

⁴⁶ Рамм, А. 2022. Область мира: как сегодня живет Херсон. В регионе налаживаются мирная жизнь и работа предприятий, а экономика постепенно переходит на рубли. 23.09.2022. <https://iz.ru/1338333/aleksei-ramm/oblast-mira-kak-segodnia-zhivet-kherson>.

⁴⁷ Безменова, Е. 2022. “Одних на убой, а своих детей – в рекламу”. Зачем сыновья Кадырова ездили в Украину. 25.10.2022. URL: <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/odnih-na-uboy-a-svoih-detey-v-reklamu-zachem-synovjya-kadyrova-ezdili-v-ukrainu/32094770.html>.

⁴⁸ **Пригожин – о вербовке заключённых на войну: “Либо эки, либо ваши дети”.** 15.09.2022. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/prigozhin---o-verbovke-zaklyuchyonnyh-na-voynu-libo-zeki-libo-vashi-deti-/32035673.html>.

⁴⁹ Азаров, Д. 2022. Кадыров и Пригожин регулярно (и подозрительно синхронно) критикуют российскую армию. Чего они добиваются? Мы попытались это выяснить. 4.10.2022. <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/10/04/kadyrov-i-prigozhin-regulyarno-i-podozritelno-sinhronno-kritikuyut-rossiyskuyu-armiyu-chego-oni-dobivayutsya>.

It is also interesting how Russian propaganda seeks to internationalise the conflict in Ukraine. In spring there was speculation about the possible entry of the Armed Forces of Ukraine into unrecognised Transnistria, which turned out to be fake⁵⁰, while in autumn the Russian media accused the Moldovan President Maia Sandu of preparing for war⁵¹. The protests in Moldova organised by the “ŞOR” party are no less actively covered in Russia⁵².

Another state that has borders with both Ukraine and Russia is Belarus. Since the autumn 2020 presidential election, the results of which are not recognised by much of Europe, its self-proclaimed president Alexander Lukashenko has been in the orbit of the Kremlin's influence. In February 2022 he predicted the imminent defeat of Ukraine⁵³, accused NATO of aggressive actions⁵⁴, and promoted the favourite Russian thesis of “brotherly peoples”⁵⁵. It should be borne in mind that, since 24 February, the territory of Belarus has become a bridgehead for Russian aggression against Ukraine, a logistics base for Russian troops, and a hospital for wounded servicemen of the invading forces. In the autumn of 2022 Putin and Lukashenko agreed to form a regional grouping of Russian and Belarusian troops.⁵⁶

Coverage of the actions of Russian troops in Ukraine has two components. On the one hand, official videos of the Ministry of Defence are posted on various information platforms. Let me remind you that in Russia the media

⁵⁰ **Фейк: Украина планирует захватить крупнейший склад с боеприпасами в Приднестровье.** 26.04.2022. <https://www.stopfake.org/ru/fejk-ukraina-planiruet-zahvatit-krupnejshij-sklad-s-boepripasami-v-pridnestrove/>.

⁵¹ **Пока Санду готовит военную мобилизацию в Молдове, Лукашенко намерен “мобилизовать всех”.** 4.10.2022. <https://www.sovsekretno.ru/news/poka-sandu-gotovit-voennuyu-mobilizatsiyu-v-moldove-lukashenko-nameren-mobilizovat-vsekh/>.

⁵² **Сторонники партии “Шор” проводят пикет у суда Кишинева.** 05.11.2022. <https://ria.ru/20221105/moldaviya-1829341946.html>.

⁵³ **Интервью Александра Лукашенко Владимиру Соловьеву – полная версия.** 07.02.2022. <https://sputnik.by/20220207/intervyu-aleksandra-lukashenko-vladimiru-solovevu--polnaya-versiya--1060122998.html>.

⁵⁴ **Лукашенко: НАТО и Украина готовят нападение на Белоруссию, но мало им не покажется.** 10.10.2022. <https://eadaaily.com/ru/news/2022/10/10/lukashenko-nato-i-ukraina-gotovyat-napadenie-na-belorussiyu-no-malo-im-ne-pokazhetsya>.

⁵⁵ **Лукашенко: почему мы позволили столкнуть лбами три братских народа?** 01.09.2022. <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-pochemu-my-pozvolili-stolknut-lbami-tri-bratskih-naroda-521522-2022/>.

⁵⁶ **Лукашенко и Путин договорились о развертывании совместной региональной группировки войск.** 10.10.2022. <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-i-putin-dogovorilis-o-razvertyvanii-sovmestnoj-regionalnoj-gruppirovki-vojsk-528286-2022/>.

is legally prohibited from using unofficial sources of information about the “special military operation in Ukraine”⁵⁷. However, this does not in any way hinder the activities of a group of war correspondents whose practice was proven as far back as Donbas and Syria during the previous years of Russian aggression⁵⁸. It should be noted that such “double-barrelled” information works mainly in situations where there is no alternative because, since the large-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has taken a number of measures to close its information space from foreign influence⁵⁹.

It is strange to observe that Russian propaganda has failed to find a creative approach to their “limited” mobilisation, which has resulted in the distribution of a significant number of summonses to military conscripts. Since a number of the mobilised were captured in Ukraine or killed within a month of the mobilisation being announced⁶⁰, the question arises: what is happening in the Russian army and what is the state of the reserves if soldiers and sergeants are deployed to the war zone without minimal training? Russian propaganda has failed to answer this question.

At the same time, a remarkable trend should be noted: even the Kremlin’s system of unifying information about aggressive actions from the Russian army failed to prevent information circulating about the shooting of fellow servicemen by Tajiks due to their lack of respect for Islam⁶¹, the demands of mobilized men from Chuvashia to pay them the promised material aid⁶², and other manifestations of crises in the Russian army. Putin’s formal statements

⁵⁷ Госдума приняла закон об уголовной ответственности за фейки о российской армии. 04.03.2022. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-60615902>.

⁵⁸ “Военкоры” – новый тип российских пропагандистов. Во время войны они набрали огромную популярность, а теперь яростно критикуют власть и Минобороны РФ. 13.09.2022. <https://meduza.io/episodes/2022/09/13/voenkory-novyy-tip-rossiyskih-propagandistov-vo-vremya-voyny-oni-nabrali-ogromnuyu-populyarnost-a-teper-yarostno-kritikuyut-vlast-i-minoborony-rf>.

⁵⁹ Чурманова, К. 2022. За что в России запретили Meta и можно ли пользоваться Facebook и Instagram. 28.03.2022. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-60903909>.

⁶⁰ Болезни, драки, суициды. Мобилизованные в России погибают, не добравшись до фронта. 12.10.2022. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-63227622>.

⁶¹ Расстрел под Белгородом: что известно о подозреваемых таджикстанцах. 12.10.2022. <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/32089008.html>.

⁶² В Ульяновской области мобилизованные устроили массовую акцию протеста из-за отсутствия обещанных выплат. 2.11.2022. <https://meduza.io/news/2022/11/02/v-ulyanovskoy-oblasti-mobilizovannye-ustroili-massovuyu-aktsiyu-protesta-iz-za-otsutstviya-obeschannyh-vyplat>.

about his heightened attention to the mobilized men were a response to it⁶³. It should be noted that as far back as 8 March 2022, the president of the Russian Federation assured everyone that “reservists will not be drafted”⁶⁴.

After 10 October 2022, the official Russian media (RIA Novosti, TASS) began to cover in detail the results of massive missile strikes on peaceful targets in Ukraine aimed at destroying critical infrastructure and facts about declaring air raids on Ukrainian megacities and regional centres⁶⁵. This is far from indicative of the effectiveness of Russian propaganda but of its criminal nature, which should be legally assessed after the end of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

4. Ukrainian propaganda in the context of the Russian invasion

After the large-scale Russian invasion, many popular Ukrainian TV channels (both private TV holding companies and the parliamentary TV channel Rada and Public Broadcasting Suspilne TV) united to run the “Unified News” TV marathon. Its creation was a forced step, and its functioning is only sometimes effective. It is not surprising that the professional community criticised the “United News” marathon’s production⁶⁶. That being said, Minister of Culture and Information Policy Alexander Tkachenko is convinced that the current format of news presentation must remain until the war ends⁶⁷.

Three television channels close to former president Petro Poroshenko (Pryamiy, Pyatiy, and Espresso) were disconnected from digital television broadcasting while retaining the ability to broadcast via satellite, YouTube, and other digital platforms. Attempts to find those responsible for this

⁶³ Путин планирует лично обсудить с россиянами ситуацию с поддержкой мобилизованных. 07.11.2022. <https://www.interfax.ru/business/871369>.

⁶⁴ Поздравление российским женщинам с 8 Марта. 08.03.2022. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67937>.

⁶⁵ На Украине объявили воздушную тревогу в четырех областях, сообщили СМИ. 06.11.2022. <https://ria.ru/20221106/svo-1829419647.html>.

⁶⁶ Кравець Р. Телевізор і влада. Як працює телемарафон зсередини та хто його курує. 21.06.2022. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2022/06/21/7353715/>.

⁶⁷ Марафон “Єдині новини” має продовжувати своє існування і не загрожує свободі слова – Ткаченко. 06.10.2022. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-tkachenko-marafon-svoboda-slova/32066666.html>.

contraversion within the Ukrainian government system were unsuccessful⁶⁸. At the same time, it should be noted that all three TV channels have maintained their position of support for the state of Ukraine and have not resorted to indiscriminate criticism of their attackers.

The format of daily video appeals to the people of Ukraine chosen by Volodymyr Zelenskyy's team has been a success. Among other things, they provide an antidote to claims from Russian propaganda about the fleeing President of Ukraine which constantly appear in the information space⁶⁹. Zelenskyy's TV appeals to the parliaments of primarily EU and NATO states, and other TV initiatives of the Ukrainian head of state have also proven to be quite successful.

The decisions of the Ukrainian authorities to apply for membership of the European Union and NATO, mentioned above, are also among them. They make it possible to designate reference points for the country's future development, to create an image of a "bright future" that is technologically necessary for millions of citizens experiencing the most extensive trials of their lives, regardless of age and level of wealth. "Return to civilization" is how we can characterise Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic vectors, designed for the prospect of implementation. The perspective of implementing these foreign policy initiatives will be discussed below.

An essential component of the information confrontation is video footage shot by the Ukrainian military and other security agencies' employees in direct combat conditions. Their volume and information saturation are qualitatively higher than those that Russian propaganda offers to its consumers. It is interesting to note that Ukrainian journalists covering the course of combat operations prefer not to call themselves "war correspondents".

We report on the number of dead defenders of Ukraine and the active horizontal interaction between Ukrainian citizens and representatives of

⁶⁸ "Шо ого?" Як на парламентському комітеті шукали винних у відключенні 5 каналу, Прямого і "Еспресо" (СТЕНОГРАМА). 13.05.2022. <https://detector.media/infospace/article/199186/2022-05-13-sho-ogo-yak-na-parlamentskomu-komiteti-shukaly-vynnykh-u-vidklyuchenni-5-kanalu-pryamogo-i-espreso-stenograma/>.

⁶⁹ ФЕЙК: Владимир Зеленский сбежал из Украины после вторжения России. 11.03.2022. <https://voxukraine.org/ru/fejk-vladymyr-zelenskyj-sbezhal-yz-ukrayny-posle-vtorzheniya-rossyy/>.

sympathising states.⁷⁰ Various mass actions⁷¹ are not the only elements of solidarity; there is also fundraising in Lithuania and Poland to purchase Bayraktar UAVs for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine⁷².

One aspect of Russian propaganda against which there is still no effective counteraction can be called anonymous telegram channels controlled by Russian special services⁷³. Their integration into Ukraine's information space began in 2018–2019, creating an impressive base of subscribers. Today, these instruments of influence are focused on forming an alternative reality, creating preconditions for the growth of capitulating sentiments and strengthening Russian influence in Ukraine. It is doubtful that they have any impact on the decision-making process. Still, they are able to influence the mood in Ukrainian society, which is important if we take into account the democratic nature of Ukrainian society.

It should be emphasised that the decisions in 2015–2017 to restrict the broadcasting of Russian TV channels and the spread of Russian social networks in Ukraine⁷⁴, coupled with the closure of pro-Russian TV channels in February 2021⁷⁵, have significantly increased Ukraine's information security. At the same time, mechanisms of state censorship have not been officially

⁷⁰ **В Украине почти семь тысяч человек считаются пропавшими без вести, – Маляр (видео).** 02.11.2022. <https://focus.ua/voennye-novosti/535492-v-ukraine-pochti-sem-tysyach-chelovek-schitayutsya-propavshimi-bez-vesti-malyar-video>.

⁷¹ **От Тбилиси до Лиона: в Европе прошли массовые митинги в поддержку Украины.** 05.03.2022. <https://dumskaya.net/news/ot-tbilisi-do-liona-v-evrope-proshli-massovyemi-160756/>.

⁷² **Крамар, О.** 2022. Міноборони України нагородило литовського журналіста, який організував збір коштів на “Байрактар” для ЗСУ. 9.08.2022. <https://hromadske.ua/posts/minoboroni-ukrayini-nagorodilo-litovskogo-zhurnalista-yakij-organizuvav-zbir-koshtiv-na-bajraktar-dlya-zsu; Ще один Байрактар для ЗСУ: Україна знову отримає безпілотник безкоштовно. 20.07.2022. https://fakty.ua/404894-ecshe-odin-bajraktar-dlya-vsu-ukrainasnova-poluchit-bespiilotnik-besplatno>.

⁷³ **СБУ обнародвала список Telegram-каналов, которые координируют спецслужбы РФ.** 21.03.2021. <https://www.unn.com.ua/ru/news/1969004-sbu-oprilyudnila-spisok-telegram-kanaliv-yaki-koordinuyut-spetssluzhbi-rf>.

⁷⁴ **Ромашенко, С.** 2020. Украина продлила на три года блокировку российских соцсетей. 15.05.2020. <https://www.dw.com/ru/украина-продлила-на-три-года-блокировку-российских-соцсетей/a-53445829>.

⁷⁵ **Комарова, О.** 2021. Вимкнули “каналы Медведчука”: перші пояснення та реакції в соцмережах. 03.02.2021. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/kanaly-medvedchuk-sankciy-zelen-skiy-tv-112-zik-newsone-zaborona/31082909.html>.

launched. Paradoxically, this situation is helped by the Ukrainian population's low media literacy level, many of whose citizens are satisfied with the quality of information from the "Unified News" telethon.

5. Quantity vs Quality: Military Aspects of the Confrontation between Russia and Ukraine

Considering the military component of the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, it is necessary to note the following facts:

- Russia gambled on an attempt to quickly seize Kyiv⁷⁶, to change the Ukrainian government, and thus bring chaos to the defensive actions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In this way, the Russian authorities not only managed to mark allied relations with Belarus in the most obvious way, but also to save time and resources. The failure of this plan made the Russian-Ukrainian war more protracted.
- The successes of the invasion forces include the rapid capture of Kherson, which became the only regional centre captured by Russia after 24 February 2022. In this context, it is necessary to consider the restoration of the water supply to Russian-occupied Crimea and the Kremlin's desire to maintain control over this territory.
- In March–April 2022, Ukrainian forces regained control of the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions⁷⁷. This not only liberated previously occupied territories but also eliminated the threat of capturing Kyiv and Chernihiv—defence of the latter was also strategically important.
- In September 2022, the AFU, having indicated its desire to advance in the Kherson region, carried out a swift offensive in the Kharkiv region, almost completely liberating it and creating the conditions to put pressure on the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. The threat of capturing Kharkiv was eliminated and the intensity of shelling in the megalopolis was significantly reduced.

⁷⁶ Harris, S.; DeYoung, K.; Khurshudyan, I.; Parker, A.; Sly, L. 2022. Road to war: U.S. struggled to convince allies, and Zelensky, of risk of invasion. 16.08.2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/?fbclid=IwAR0fW6RyBvjoBoiy4aOtpg3dpmeFkEK3egnYli6kA7r9TlkJIxjv9xQggGE>.

⁷⁷ Оккупанты ушли от Киева и Чернигова для захвата Донбасса – РФ готовится к затяжной войне. 03.04.2022. <https://www.segodnya.ua/strana/podrobnosti/okkupanty-ushli-ot-kieva-i-chernigova-dlya-zahvata-donbassa-rf-gotovitsya-k-zatyazhnoy-voyne-1612684.html>.

- It is worth noting that Russia failed to establish air supremacy despite its numerical advantage in planes and helicopters and the refusal of Western countries to supply Ukraine with fourth-generation aircraft. The Ukrainian air force demonstrated high training and dedication.
- Russia was forced to change its tactics: it switched from using high-precision Kalibr missiles and a single use of hypersonic Kynzhal missiles to massive use of Kh-55 and Kh-555 missiles in the summer of 2022. In autumn it gambled on attacks on Ukrainian critical infrastructure with kamikaze drones⁷⁸. This suggests that the Russian Federation's initial plans for a blitzkrieg in Ukraine have failed.
- A separate episode in the Russian-Ukrainian war was the destruction of the Moskva missile cruiser by the Ukrainian Armed Forces⁷⁹. Two Ukrainian-made *Neptun* missiles delivered a fatal blow to the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, having a powerful military and psychological effect. The obvious superiority at sea played a cruel joke on the Russian military. In late October 2022 Ukraine used drone boats to attack Black Sea Fleet ships in Sevastopol Bay, triggering a panicked reaction from Russian authorities⁸⁰.
- Since 24 February, the Armed Forces of Ukraine have demonstrated high combat skills and readiness for independent action, managing not to lose control in the face of a massive invasion by Russia. The creation of the Territorial Defense Forces of the Ukrainian Armed Forces made it possible to promptly resolve the issue of increasing the numerical component of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.
- The Russian army proved unable to use the factor of a relative surprise attack to its full extent; its technical equipment and tactical training did not allow it to act successfully against Ukrainian forces. The actions of the Ukrainian forces offset the successes of the first days of the invasion.

⁷⁸ Кнпп, К. 2022. Дроны в Украине – свидетельство похожих взглядов РФ и Ирана. 21.10.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/kommentarij-drony-v-ukraine-svidetelstvo-pohozih-vzgladov-rf-i-irana/a-63520590>.

⁷⁹ Гибель российского крейсера “Москва” в Черном море: пять важных вопросов. 15.04.2022. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-61121371>.

⁸⁰ Иванова, А. 2022. Черноморский флот в Севастополе атаковали беспилотники. 29.10.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/chernomorskij-flot-v-sevastopole-atakovali-bespilotniki/a-63592758>.

- It can be said that the course of military operations in Ukraine has refuted numerous assumptions from Western military experts who predicted the collapse of the AFU and the collapse of Ukrainian statehood in the event of a Russian attack. Their calculations were based on the assumption that confrontation between Russian and Ukrainian armies would be a war of similar armies of different sizes. It turned out, however, that the Ukrainian Armed Forces which had been gaining combat experience since 2014 were much more effective than the Russian Army.

The dramatic changes in international relations provoked by Russian aggression against Ukraine were reflected in various diplomatic moves. An analysis of their dynamics during the 250 days after Russia's large-scale invasion allows us to draw disappointing conclusions for the Kremlin.

6. International aspects of Russia's war against Ukraine

The start of full-scale aggression was accompanied by three rounds of talks between representatives of Russia and Ukraine on the territory of Belarus (February 28, March 3 and 7)⁸¹. Among the concrete results of this process was the preservation of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Belarus despite Russian troops invading Ukraine from its territory.

The result of these talks was the draft Istanbul communiqué, presented by the Ukrainian side on March 29 during the talks in Turkey. It implied a number of compromise positions on the part of Ukraine. Still, the course of military actions in the vicinity of Kyiv promptly changed the Ukrainian authorities' position. The war crimes of the Russian occupants in Bucha, Irpen, and Borodyanka that became known made further negotiations with Russian representatives senseless and politically dangerous for Zelensky's team. Since August 2022, the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, including Crimea which Russia occupied in 2014, has been the main goal of the confrontation between Ukraine and Russia at the official level⁸².

⁸¹ **Переговоры между Россией и Украиной: есть ли прогресс и насколько близко соглашение?** 21.03.2022. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-60822040>.

⁸² **Наш шлях – це шлях незалежності, територіальної цілісності, інтеграції з цивілізованим світом, шлях РФ – поразка й ганьба – звернення Президента України.** 30.09.2022. <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/nash-shlyah-ce-shlyah-nezalezhnosti-teritori-alnoyi-cilisnost-78197>.

It is worth noting that the self-proclaimed president of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, was practically the only ally of Russia not to hide relations with the aggressor. The other subjects of international relations—arms suppliers like Iran⁸³ or China and India⁸⁴ who buy Russian raw materials at a geopolitical discount—prefer not to flaunt their allied contacts with the Kremlin. This suggests that the process of Russia's demythologisation continues unabated and that it is losing its status as a predictable partner and authoritative participant in international relations.

- One interesting diplomatic element of the Russo-Ukrainian war was the grain agreement signed in Istanbul on 22 July 2022⁸⁵. It is worth noting that its signing became possible after the destruction by Ukrainian armed forces of the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, the missile cruiser the Moskva, and the de-occupation of the Island Zmiinyi (Snake Island) in the Black Sea⁸⁶. Russia was forced to sign the grain agreement to save its international reputation. It is indicative that Russia's attempts to unilaterally block implementation of the agreement in November 2022 caused Turkey's dissent, forcing the Kremlin to change its position.
- Russia's aggression forced the U.S. and the EU to apply economic sanctions against it, which together turned out to be the largest sanctions package in history⁸⁷. Its main components are not the cutting off of some Russian banks from SWIFT⁸⁸ or the EU's refusal to buy Russian crude oil, which

⁸³ **Цветаев, Л.** 2022. “За несколько месяцев до СВО”. Иран подтвердил поставки дронов в Россию. 05.11.2022. <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2022/11/05/15736129.shtml>.

⁸⁴ **Nihon Keizai: КНР и Индия увеличивают закупки нефти из России.** 10.06.2022. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/economics/news/2022/06/10/926046-knr-i-indiya-velichivayut-zakupki-nefti-iz-rossii>.

⁸⁵ **Опубликован текст зернового соглашения, подписанного сегодня в Стамбуле.** 22.07.2022. <https://ukragroconsult.com/ru/news/opublikovan-tekst-zernovogo-soglasheniya-podpisannogo-segodnya-v-stambule/>.

⁸⁶ **Левченко, А.** 2022. Шантаж голодом и месть изуверов: как деоккупация Змеиногорского нарушила планы Кремля. 13.07.2022. <https://realist.online/politika/shantazh-holodom-i-mest-izuverov-kak-deokkupatsiya-zmeinogo-narushila-plany-kremlja>.

⁸⁷ **Боррель, Ж.** 2022. Санкции против России работают. 17.07.2022. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/sankcii-protiv-rossii-rabotajut_ru?s=177.

⁸⁸ **Кулик, А.** 2022. Всем SWIFT: кто из российских банков еще в системе и какие есть альтернативы. 15.08.2022. https://new-retail.ru/business/ekonomika/vsem_swift_kto_iz_rossijskikh_bankov_eshche_v_sisteme_i_kakie_est_alternativy1744/.

will come into effect in December 2022⁸⁹. Much more important is the loss of Russia's status as a predictable and effective partner, capable of being an adequate participant in the international economy.

- In the same context, we should consider the sabotage of the NordStream gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea. It is well known that the second phase of this ambitious project was not implemented⁹⁰, while Gazprom stopped the first one after a series of political speculations⁹¹. The explosions on the branches of NordStream⁹² which took place on 26 September 2022 have of course given rise to conspiracy theories but investigations into their nature are still ongoing. It should be noted that this did not prevent EU countries from filling their storage capacities by November 2022 in volumes that would practically rule out any problems with the passage of the heating season. Even Russia had to admit this⁹³. This situation suggests that the EU-Russia energy relationship (an important element of international politics in recent years) will change once and for all.
- One interesting and revealing fact: despite the fierce nature of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine, the latter continues to act as a transit country for Russian energy resources. The reason for this is simple: stopping the transit would cause the pro-Russian lobby within the European Union to strengthen its position, which could lead to a decrease in support for Ukraine from the European Union.

The scale of the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine makes the role of peacemaker, able to stop the bloodshed with his own efforts, attractive. It is clear that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has repeatedly stated his desire to bring Russia and Ukraine to the negotiating table, has

⁸⁹ Вакуленко, С. 2022. К чему приведет эмбарго ЕС на российскую нефть. 8.06.2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/87269>.

⁹⁰ Гурков, А. 2022. ФРГ остановила СП2. Что будет с трубой, газом и ценами? 23.02.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/frg-ostanovila-severnyj-potok-2-cto-budet-s-truboj-gazom-i-cenami/a-60891439>.

⁹¹ “Газпром” полностью остановил “Северный поток” на неопределенный срок. 02.09.2022. <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/02/09/2022/63122f949a7947dde66915e7>.

⁹² Вакуленко, С. 2022. Аварии на “Северных потоках”. Что о них понятно, а что – нет. 30.09.2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88050>.

⁹³ Евросоюз заполнил газовые хранилища на 90 процентов. 4.10.2022. <https://lenta.ru/news/2022/10/04/kachaut/>.

the upper hand in this matter⁹⁴. Pope Francis⁹⁵, French President Emmanuel Macron⁹⁶, and Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer⁹⁷ have been less active in their mediation efforts. The nature of the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine seems to leave little room for such a role.

Against the background of the continuing demythologization of Russia and the decline of its authority in the international arena, it is interesting to note Ukraine's progress in achieving its main foreign policy goals. On February 28, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, together with Prime Minister Denys Shmygal and Parliament Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk, applied for Ukrainian membership in the European Union⁹⁸. We should emphasize the political will of the European Union which managed to consider the application promptly and grant Ukraine the status of candidate for EU membership⁹⁹.

- It is worth noting a number of fundamental points. Ukraine obtained candidate status in the EU together with Moldova (Moldova and Georgia applied for EU membership at the beginning of March 2022¹⁰⁰, but Georgia's application was not supported in Brussels). Such a decision from the European Union requires Ukraine to build good neighbourly relations with Moldova and to act in tandem with European integration. In addition, it should be recognised that the EU has its own ramifications in granting Ukraine the status of candidate for EU membership. Thus, the issue of extracting Ukraine from the "Russian world" is being resolved,

⁹⁴ **Куса, И.** 2022. Союзник, посредник или разрыв. Какие перспективы у отношений Украины и Турции. 26.09.2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/87998>.

⁹⁵ **Папа Римский Франциск обратился к главам РФ и Украины с призывом положить конец конфликту.** 02.10. 2022. <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/15932657>.

⁹⁶ **Неверова, А.** 2022. Макрон призвал Украину и РФ вернуться к переговорам. 13.10.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/makron-prizval-ukrainu-i-rossiu-vernutsa-k-peregovoram/a-63421209>.

⁹⁷ **Марков, З.** 2022. Канцлер Австрии Нехаммер призвал Россию и Украину вернуться за стол переговоров. 10.10.2022. <https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/news/2022/10/10/18763591.shtml>.

⁹⁸ **Неверова, А.** 2022. Евросоюз начал рассматривать заявку на вступление Украины. 07.03.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/evrosojuz-pristupil-k-rassmotreniju-zajavki-na-vstuplenie-ukrainy/a-61045245>.

⁹⁹ **Савицкий, А.** 2022. Киев в восторге: Украина – кандидат на вступление в ЕС. 24.06.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/kiiev-v-vostorge-ukraina-kandidat-na-vstuplenie-ves/a-62254714>.

¹⁰⁰ **Грузия и Молдова подали заявки на вступление в ЕС в ускоренном порядке.** 03.03.2022. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/gruziya-i-moldova-podali-zayavki-na-vstuplenie-ves-v-uskorennom-poryadke/31734721.html>.

and prerequisites are being created for Brussels to step up efforts to rebuild Ukraine after the end of the Russian-Ukrainian war. President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has already stated that the EU is ready to be the agent of Ukraine's recovery¹⁰¹. This process is highly likely to become an economic impetus for the development of the European Union.

Ukraine has responded to Russia's pseudo-referendums in occupied Ukrainian territories on joining the Russian Federation with an announcement from Volodymyr Zelenskyy on 30 September 2022 of an "accelerated application" to join NATO¹⁰². This information impulse allowed Ukraine to reduce the negative effect of Russia's actions. Still, it did not allow it to seriously expect to join the North Atlantic Alliance before a real end of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine. The reason is obvious: there are enough states within NATO not ready to extend the principle of collective security of the Alliance to Ukraine, which continues to wage war against Russia in possession of a nuclear arsenal.

The diplomatic component of the Russian-Ukrainian war has become an essential component of the confrontation between the two countries. The dynamics of events allow us to assert that Russia is consistently losing credibility in the international arena while remaining a member of the nuclear club and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. At the same time, Ukraine is leaving the "grey zone" between the "Russian world" and Western civilisation at a brisk pace, opting for the latter.

7. The humanitarian component of the Russian-Ukrainian war

It is impossible to talk about the war between Russia and Ukraine without mentioning losses on both sides. Obviously, there is an element of military propaganda in mentioning the number of dead and wounded servicemen on the opposing sides; one only has to look at the statement by Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu¹⁰³. However, there is another point to consider: thousands of Ukrainian civilians have been killed and wounded in hostilities. This

¹⁰¹ Шевчук, С. 2022. Платформу для восстановления Украины должны создать до конца года – глава Еврокомиссии. 25.10.2022. <https://forbes.ua/ru/news/platformu-dlya-vidbudovi-ukraini-mayut-stvoriti-do-kintsya-roku-golova-evrokomisii-25102022-9270>.

¹⁰² Ukraine Applies for Accelerated NATO Membership. 30.09.2022. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/news/2022/09/30/7147833/>.

¹⁰³ Шойгу рассказал о потерях армий РФ и Украины за время спецоперации. 21.09.2022. https://www.ng.ru/armies/2022-09-21/2_8545_army.html.

fact is indisputable proof of the criminality of this Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Another critical point is the refugee factor. Millions of Ukrainian citizens have been forced to leave their homes, and the prospect of their return today looks far from clear¹⁰⁴. We are dealing with the biggest migration crisis of the 21st century, the consequences of which will still affect both the development of Ukraine and the functioning of the Ukrainian diaspora in various European countries.

This process also has a downside: after Vladimir Putin announced partial mobilisation in Russia, approximately 700,000 people left the country¹⁰⁵. Ukrainian political philosopher Volodymyr Yermolenko noted that this is the first time in history that citizens of an aggressor state, rather than of a country that has been a victim of aggression, have left the country. Demographic differences are also evident. While it was mostly women, the elderly and children who left Ukraine, men of conscription age left Russia in an emergency. Their coexistence in European refugee camps is hardly an example of reconciliation between the two nations in the foreseeable future.

Ukraine has demonstrated self-organisation skills by effectively developing a volunteer movement, turning confrontation with Russia into an element of a national idea. Large-scale donations by citizens for the needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the complicity of almost all Ukrainian oligarchs in this process, and the existence of a number of foundations engaged in the procurement of necessities for Ukraine's defenders are a reality in 2022. At the same time, Russia favours the use of cripples from the behavioural model of its opponents, betting on administrative resources. However, this "partial" mobilisation has exposed the problems in the Russian army: xenophobia and disrespect for national minorities caused a bloody incident in the Belgorod region¹⁰⁶. Riots by mobilised servicemen demanding payment of promised wages have also become a familiar element of Russian reality¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁴ **Число беженцев из Украины со статусом временной защиты в Европе достигло почти 4,2 млн, в лидерах Польша, Германия и Чехия – ООН.** 02.10.2022. <https://ru.interfax.com.ua/news/general/862590.html>.

¹⁰⁵ **Россию после 21 сентября покинули около 700 000 граждан.** 04.10.2022. <https://www.forbes.ru/society/478827-rossiu-posle-21-sentabra-pokinuli-okolo-700-000-grazdan>.

¹⁰⁶ **2 attackers opened fire on volunteer troops preparing to deploy to Ukraine.** 15.10.2022. <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/15/1129321544/russia-soldiers-shooting-training-belgorod>.

¹⁰⁷ **В Ульяновской области мобилизованные устроили массовую акцию протеста из-за отсутствия обещанных выплат.** 20.11.2022. <https://meduza.io/news/2022/11/02/v-ulyanovskoy-oblasti-mobilizovannye-ustroili-massovuyu-aktsiyu-protesta-iz-za-otsutstviya-obeschannyh-vyplat>.

In the autumn of 2022, the Russian military struck at Ukraine's energy infrastructure, damaging it significantly¹⁰⁸. This was a violation of the laws and rules of war aimed at destabilising the situation in Ukraine. However, the blackouts have not provoked mass protests in Ukraine.

A litmus test for the width of the divide between Russia and Ukraine was the reaction of Ukrainian society to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Memorial (Russia), imprisoned founder of the human rights organisation "Viasna" Ales Belyatski (Belarus) and the "Centre for Civil Liberties" (Ukraine)¹⁰⁹. This suggests that the notion of "good neighbourliness" will not return to Russian-Ukrainian relations in the foreseeable future and that the phrase "friendship of peoples" lies buried under the ruins of Ukrainian towns and villages and in the graves of the innocent victims of Russian aggression.

8. Conclusions

Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, has not allowed the Kremlin to achieve its goals; we have seen the degradation of Russian foreign policy and the escalation of problems in the economy and public life of the Russian Federation.

- Contrary to numerous predictions, Ukraine has proved to be an internally resilient state, capable of resisting an aggressor;
- international support of Ukraine for countering Russia's actions has been formalized;
- the war between Russia and Ukraine is far from being over.

At the same time, it can be argued that it has not only acquired the character of a bitter confrontation but has defined the prospect of an end: only the victor will be able to preserve the structure of the state and its possibilities for development. The loser will have to come to terms with a deep political crisis and disintegration within the country. The position of NATO countries,

¹⁰⁸ Ржеутская, Л. 2022. Энергетический фронт: как украинцы экономят электроэнергию. 22.10.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/energeticeskij-front-kak-ukraincy-ekonomat-elektroenergiu/a-63518853>.

¹⁰⁹ Лукавое нобелевское "братство". Как первую нобелевку Украины омрачило одно-временное присуждение премии мира лауреатам из РФ и Беларуси. 07.10.2022. <https://nv.ua/ukraine/events/pochemu-nobelevskaya-premiya-mira-2022-vozmutila-ukraincevy-obyasnenie-komiteta-i-reakciya-obshchestva-50275191.html>.

publicly voiced by the Secretary General of the Alliance Jens Stoltenberg¹¹⁰, suggests that Ukraine will win this war. Although the criteria for victory are still in the process of being determined, this is inevitably becoming apparent to a growing number of people around the world.

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¹¹⁰ **Келли, С.** 2022. Столтенберг: НАТО делает все, чтобы Украина выиграла войну. 24.10.2022. <https://www.dw.com/ru/jens-stoltenberg-nato-delaet-vse-ctoby-ukraina-vyigrala-voynu/a-63536492>.

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