

A b s t r a c t s

Trial by Fire Ukraine in Times of War

Ulrich Schmid
Italy as a Model
Paths to Ukrainian Nation-Building

For centuries, Ukrainian history was marked by regional differences and antagonisms. The pioneers of the Ukrainian national movement saw Galicia as the core of a future Ukrainian state. They had in mind the role played by Piedmont in Italian unification. Today's Ukrainian state emerged along different paths, yet the Italian example remained the model for nation-building. Russia's aggression since 2014 has enabled Ukraine to overcome old East-West divisions. Identification with the Ukrainian state is now high in all of the territories that Russia has not occupied. Competing models for the country's future development are no longer tied to regions.

Andrii Portnov
Conflict and Dialogue
Ukrainians, Russians, and the Ukrainian Question

Russia is waging war against Ukraine in order to destroy its sovereignty and freedom. Most Russian politicians and intellectuals rejected the ideas of the Ukrainian national movement even before it was thinking of an independent state. This desire for statehood began to spread during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, as well as during the world wars. Often, emigration was the only place where Russians and Ukrainians were able to discuss relations between their two nations. The war will impede any attempt at such a dialogue for the foreseeable future.

Volodymyr Jermolenko
“We don't want a bad state, but what we want even less is to have no state at all.”

The Ukrainian philosopher Volodymyr Yermolenko talks about the relationship between state, society, and the individual, and about how war changes language and literature. And he explains how trust and an unwavering will for freedom are carrying Ukraine through difficult times.

Nico Lange

“War Shapes Politics”

On the Logistics and Logic of the War in Ukraine

After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the failed blitzkrieg has devolved into a war of attrition. The arms race and the resources that the warring parties and their allies can mobilize are decisive for the war’s outcome. On the front, a static war dominated by drones is taking place. In the air war, Ukraine is developing increasingly sophisticated capabilities to hit Russia’s army in its rear area. However, Russia’s air superiority near the front remains a major problem for Ukraine, as does Kyiv’s lack of reserve forces. It is in the political interest of European states to support Ukraine financially, militarily, and politically.

Andreas Heinemann-Grüder

How Wars (Don’t) End

Russia, Ukraine, and the Problem of Security

Russia’s war against Ukraine will not end quickly. The Kremlin continues to pursue its goal of bringing already annexed Ukrainian territories under its complete control. As its troops are advancing slowly on the ground, Moscow is likely to increase its use of force. Even if a ceasefire is achieved in the near future, this will change nothing in the rivalry between Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine therefore wants reliable assurances that it will receive military assistance in the event of a renewed attack. However, for almost all of the NATO and EU countries, avoiding a direct confrontation with Russia has highest priority.

Nikolay Mitrokhin

Russia’s War Against Ukraine

Weekly Reports January 2026 to March 2026

At the start of the fifth year of the war, a stalemate persists. Russian troops are advancing on some sectors of the front, but have not gained a decisive advantage. Nor have they succeeded in breaking the Ukrainian society destroying its energy system. The arms race continues, with both sides betting on air strikes to inflict maximum damage in the hinterland of its adversary. The main obstacle to a ceasefire agreement is Moscow’s demand that Ukraine completely withdraw from the Russian-annexed Donbas region.

András Rácz

Accelerated Arms Race

Russia and Ukraine in Drone Warfare

The war between Russia and Ukraine has led to a rapid acceleration of the arms race. Development in the field of drones is particularly rapid. Both sides are capturing and imitating each other’s unmanned systems. Every technological

advantage is therefore lost within a few months at the latest. NATO countries are not under a comparable pressure to innovate. If they do not want to fall even further behind Russia in drone technology, they must learn quickly from Ukraine.

Oleksandra Tarkhanova
Collaboration or Survival?
Ukrainian Criminal Law and Everyday Life Under Occupation

Following Russia's large-scale invasion, Ukraine has passed new laws on collaboration with the enemy. The term is defined very broadly, and laws overlap in some respects, yet they envision very different levels of punishment. The number of criminal proceedings and convictions is rising, and sentences are becoming increasingly harsh. Often, no distinction is made as to whether a person in a position of responsibility acted for political motives or was merely providing for the basic needs of the population. The consequence is that people are being deterred who are actually supposed to be integrated. The laws and their application are inadvertently playing into the hands of Russian propaganda.

Aleksander Palikot, Jerzy Sobotta
On "Falcons" and "Missiles"
Military-Patriotic Education in Wartime

Since Russia's large-scale invasion in February 2022, military exercises have become the norm for millions of Ukrainian citizens. This also applies to children and adolescents. They can now choose between various "military-patriotic" summer camps and similar activities. These camps provide instruction in military sports and first aid, as well as national self-awareness and civic engagement. Cadet schools are also enjoying increasing popularity in Ukraine. The militarization of the youth seems unstoppable. However, unlike in the Russian-occupied territories, where children are forced into paramilitary activities, such programs in Ukraine are voluntary. For their participants, they often serve a therapeutic function; for society at war, they are of strategic importance.

Garry Polusckin
Reorientation, Reform, Resilience
The Development of the Ukrainian Economy since 2014

Ukraine's gross domestic product doubled between 2015 and 2021. Russia's large-scale attack led to a sharp decline in 2022, but since then, the economy has been recovering despite the damage caused by the war. Private consumption is an important driver, and foreign investment continues to flow into the country. A major problem is the shortage of skilled workers. Of central importance is the rapprochement with the EU, which is slowly opening its single

market to Ukrainian goods. The effects of the war have been massive in all sectors, from agriculture to energy, and industry to services. This is also seen in the large trade deficit and the considerable need for external financing.

Roland Götz
International Support for Ukraine
Results of the Ukraine Support Tracker

The Ukraine Support Tracker, published by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, records military, financial, and humanitarian obligations that government agencies from 41 donor countries and EU institutions have pledged and in part already allocated to Ukraine since January 2022. The list of countries is led by the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Canada. However, the largest share of support relative to gross domestic product has come from seven “Nordic” countries. The United States ceased its allocations in 2025, thus its lead over allocations from European donor countries is slipping; it no longer ranks first in military aid. However, US military aid approved up to 2024 will probably continue to be disbursed until 2027.

Stephan von Cramon-Taubadel, Salome Gelashvili
Uprooted
Ukrainian Agriculture in Times of War

Agriculture plays a central role for Ukraine. The country is one of the world’s leading producers of grain and oilseeds. Russia’s large-scale offensive in 2022 led to a decline in production of almost a quarter. Despite the loss of arable land and the destruction of agricultural machinery and warehouses, Ukrainian farmers have since managed to maintain stable production. Repeated new air raids on port facilities and warehouses are impeding exports. Most of Ukraine’s exports go to the EU, which is why shaping trade relations and the country’s planned accession to the EU are of great importance.

Ella Libanova
Demographics in War
Flight, Fertility, and Mortality

Ukraine lost seven million people in the first years of its independence. Birth rates have been below the replacement rate since the early 1960s. Since 2014, Russia’s war against the country has exacerbated the demographic crisis. Birth rates have continued to decline, while mortality, particularly among men, has risen. In 2022, millions of young women fled abroad with their children, and the longer the war lasts, the less likely their return becomes. In addition, there’s the population loss caused by the occupation. Overall, the population has decreased by ten million people since 2014. Reversing this trend is only possible through immigration.

Maryna Rabinovych
Multiple Pressures
Ukrainian Universities and Science at War

Ukrainian universities are underfunded and internationally uncompetitive. Russia's large-scale offensive has exacerbated these problems. Student numbers have plummeted. Hundreds of thousands of young people live abroad. The war has also led to restrictions on academic freedom and freedom of expression. International exchange has been reduced. There is a tendency toward (self-) censorship in debates on sensitive topics. At the same time, politicians and institutes of higher learning are striving to internationalize and improve research and teaching by means of legislation, reforms, and participation in EU programs.

Florian Hassel
Attacking the Backbone with Missiles
The Ukrainian Railway

The railroad is of central importance to Ukraine. That is why Russia has been attacking its neighbour's railway infrastructure since invading the country. For a long time, electric transformer stations were the main target. Advances in drone technology mean that today railway bridges and track systems can also be damaged. Meanwhile, Russia is even deliberately targeting locomotives. Until now, repair crews have been able to maintain traffic on the extensive rail network. In the meantime, however, attacks on the energy infrastructure are also having serious consequences for rail transport.

Mariia Tsaturian
Defeating the Monster
Corruption in the Ukrainian Energy Sector

Electricity and heat are essential for the survival of a society. Therefore, Russia is attacking Ukraine's energy system. Moscow's missiles and drones are destroying the facilities, but the consequences of the bombardment are particularly severe, because corruption in Ukraine undermines the ability to prevent the attacks and quickly repair the damage.

Heiko Pleines
Under Pressure, but Undefeated
Ukrainian Oligarchs in Times of War

Since the mid-1990s, influential big businessmen have been undermining democracy and the rule of law in Ukraine. Even the upheavals of 2004 and 2014 did little to change this. For several years now, however, the so-called oligarchs have been under political and legal pressure. A law on "de-oligarchisation," passed in 2021, has been suspended, however. The Venice Commission had

certified that the law itself posed a threat to democracy and the rule of law. Russia's large-scale attack on Ukraine has caused the oligarchs to suffer heavy economic losses. However, it is too early to declare an end to the political influence of the oligarchs in Ukraine.

Roland Götz

Asymmetric Interdependence

Ukraine's Energy Relations with Russia after the Collapse of the Soviet Union

After the demise of the Soviet Union, natural gas trade between Ukraine and Russia was marked by conflict, particularly in the 2000s. Since Ukraine was dependent on natural gas from Russia and at the same time served as an important transit country, both sides had the potential to block supplies. Unlike in the oil trade, this led to several crises, which prompted both sides to disentangle their ties in this field. Russia shifted its gas exports to the Nord Stream and TurkStream pipelines, while Ukraine stopped importing natural gas from Russia. As both sides had lost their leverage, further gas crises were averted. Contrary to what is often claimed, the end of natural gas transit through Ukraine is not related to Russia's large-scale attack in 2022.

Bastian Veigel

Backbone of the Resistance

Municipalities in Ukraine

Since 2014, Ukraine has been transforming its state structures. It carried out a territorial reform, creating 1,469 collective municipalities (hromada), granting them new powers, and providing them with additional funding. The goal of the reforms was to increase state efficiency by strengthening local self-government. The war is now a test case for the municipalities. Decentralization has strengthened their resilience. Despite all the hardships, the municipalities are managing to maintain essential services for the people.

Oksana Huss, Oleksandra Keudel

Test of Resilience

Ukrainian Municipalities in War

Public administration in Ukraine continues to function despite the war. The municipalities, known as hromada, had been given more powers before the war began. Today, local authorities have to solve problems such as providing supplies and integrating internally displaced persons. To this end, they involve volunteers and those affected and draw on the resources of local businesses and the expertise of civil society. Together, they develop humanitarian projects and build social infrastructure. Acute crisis management gives rise to social resilience.

Oksana Chorna, Heiko Pleines
Alleviating Misery
Social Policy in Times of War

After gaining independence, the Ukrainian state failed to fulfil the functions of a modern welfare state. The situation began to improve only in the 2000s. The first Russian invasion in 2014 already exacerbated the situation. The large-scale offensive in 2022 had catastrophic social consequences. Wounded and traumatized soldiers and civilians need care, and millions of internally displaced persons require support. At the same time, ever-increasing shares of the budget are being allocated to defence. One-third of the population lives in poverty.

Kostiantyn Fedorenko
The Legacy of the Maidan
Ukrainian Engagement in Europe

Many Ukrainian migrants and refugees in Germany actively support their homeland, even if they do not see their personal future in Ukraine. They organise demonstrations, collect donations, and take humanitarian aid and civil defence supplies to Ukraine. For many, this commitment stems from their experiences on the Euromaidan. In 2014, they learned to stand up for their own values and convictions and to act collectively. Networks formed at that time have become the nucleus of transnational aid. Organisations such as the *Blau-Gelbes Kreuz* in Cologne or *Ukraine-Hilfe Berlin* demonstrate just how effective these networks are.

Susann Worschech
New Beginning, Upheaval, or Fleeting Fad?
Ukraine Expertise in Germany 1991–2025

Knowledge arises under specific social conditions. This also applies to knowledge about Ukraine. For a long time, there was hardly any expertise on Ukraine in Germany. Russia dominated politics, public discourse, and universities. A lack of expertise on Ukraine was not considered a shortcoming. And the logic of academic over-specialization and career advancement prevented the systematic development of Ukrainian studies. This is slowly changing. The Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea, and Russia's war against Ukraine have promoted the development of Ukrainian studies in Germany. But whether they can establish themselves remains to be seen.