UKRAINE'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM & ALLIED AND GLOBAL RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S WAR

Preliminary Draft Special Report
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Russia’s illegal and brutal military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 represents a tectonic shift in international affairs that will fundamentally affect the global security landscape. Ukraine stands at the frontline of the democratic world pushing back against a revisionist wave of authoritarian powers’ assault on the rules-based international order. While NATO is not a party to this war, Allies and their partners have a geopolitical stake and a moral duty to support the Ukrainian defence effort. The Alliance also has a duty to reassure its members and bolster its defence and deterrence posture.

This preliminary draft special report deconstructs the genesis and evolution of the war and outlines ways for NATO parliaments and governments to further assist Ukraine and to ensure the adequate adaptation of NATO. In particular, it urges Allies, inter alia, to increase and sustain the deliveries of the most critical weapon systems to Ukraine, to increase sanctions on Russia, to devise a Marshall Plan-type arrangement to rebuild Ukraine after the war, and to investigate all war crimes.
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I- INTRODUCTION

1. Russia’s heinous military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 is a world-changing moment in modern history, comparable to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 9/11 attacks. The return of a full-scale conventional war in Europe represents a tectonic shift in international affairs that will fundamentally affect the global security landscape. Ukraine stands at the frontline of the democratic world pushing back against a revisionist wave of authoritarian powers’ assault on the rules-based international order Allies have built and supported since the end of WWII.

2. Ukraine is paying an enormous human and material price for halting Russia’s advance. Therefore, while NATO is not a party to this war, Allies and their partners have a geopolitical stake and a moral duty to support the Ukrainian defense effort. The success of Ukraine is the success of the entire free world. The Alliance also has a duty to reassure its members and bolster its deterrence posture: NATO has already taken important steps in this regard, including at the extraordinary NATO summit on 24 March.

3. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly has been a long-standing advocate of Ukraine, supporting Ukrainian sovereignty, Euro-Atlantic integration and reform processes, and repeatedly urging Allied governments to increase diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and military support to Ukraine. Parliamentarians’ vital role in mobilizing this support during the ongoing war was highlighted by a series of addresses to national parliaments by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The NATO PA, its President and individual members continue to play their part.

4. This preliminary draft special report aims to deconstruct the genesis and the evolution of the war, outline ways for NATO parliaments and governments to further assist Ukraine and to ensure the adequate adaptation of NATO to what is arguably the gravest security and humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II.

II- THE GENESIS OF THE WAR

A. RUSSIA’S FIRST INVASION AND ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF UKRAINE BETWEEN 2014-2021

5. Ukrainians are quick to note Russia’s war on Ukraine has been ongoing for the last eight years, entering its most intense phase on 24 February 2022. In February 2014, Russia executed an operation principally combining the use of its special forces, elements of electronic and cyber warfare, and fomented local unrest to seize the Crimean Peninsula. Russian operatives and their allies on the ground in Crimea arranged a referendum in support of Russia’s illegal annexation of the peninsula by March 16, and an accession treaty was signed between Russia and representatives of the so-called Republic of Crimea two days later. Allies have condemned this action ever since, highlighting Russia’s direct violation of Ukrainian sovereignty in contravention of its 1994 Budapest memorandum obligations and the central tenets of the UN Charter. For the first time since World War II, a European country annexed part of its neighbour’s territory by force.

6. In parallel, in the spring of 2014, Russia fueled an insurgency in eastern Ukraine via financial and military support to armed formations in the Donbas and Luhansk regions. In 2015, the Minsk agreements – signed by Russia and Ukraine, as well as France and Germany – put into place a ceasefire provision between the Ukrainian armed forces and the Russian-backed armed formations. Not long after its implementation, consistent violations of the ceasefire, mainly by
Russian proxies, settled Ukraine’s east into an uncomfortable ebb and flow of low intensity conflict consistently shattering attempts to establish peace and the way forward to a negotiated settlement.

7. According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), the overwhelming majority of ceasefire violations, deployments of forbidden weapon systems and SMM movement restrictions were recorded in areas not controlled by Kyiv. Between 2014-2021, the ongoing conflict claimed more than 14,000 lives (Crisis Group, 2022). In November 2018, again in violation of international law and the Minsk agreements, Russian proxies in Donbas held so-called “presidential” and “parliamentary” elections in the regions not controlled by the Ukrainian government (U.S. Mission to the OSCE, 2018) and began the mass distribution of Russian passports (U.S. Mission to the OSCE, 2020). Talks within the Normandy2 and Trilateral Contact Group3 formats failed to produce tangible results.4

8. In 2018, Russia severely and illegally restricted the freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov by building the Kerch bridge connecting Crimea with Russia’s Krasnodar region, violating the international law of the sea, as well as the 2003 Russia-Ukraine treaty which provides for freedom of navigation in the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. Russia’s illegal control of the peninsula provided Russia with significant power projection capabilities in the Black Sea region and beyond. It also created preconditions for dangerous escalations, such as Russia’s threatening to attack the British Royal Navy’s HMS Defender sailing from Odessa to a port in Georgia in June 2021.

9. Further, since the illegal annexation of Crimea, Russian authorities have committed well-documented severe human rights violations on the peninsula, including the suppression of dissent, eradication of independent media, confiscation of property, enforced disappearances, torture, illegal imprisonment and persecution of Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians (U.S. Department of State, 2019).

B. RUSSIA’S MILITARY BUILD-UP AND ESCALATION IN 2021-2022

10. In hindsight, the immediate prelude to the current full-scale invasion of Ukraine was Russia’s massive build-up of combat-ready forces – more than 100,000 troops, according to the Ukrainian sources – on the borders of Ukraine and in the illegally occupied Crimea in March-April 2021. Russia subsequently announced the withdrawal of its troops, and the build-up was widely seen as Putin’s attempt to test the new US administration. The US and Russian presidents subsequently met in Geneva on 16 June 2021 to discuss issues of strategic stability. Nevertheless, Russia’s withdrawal was not complete and significant amounts of military equipment remained near the Ukrainian border – according to the Russian official justification, the remaining forces were preparing for the September 2021 Zapad exercise.5 Again, in the summer of 2021, Putin prepared the ideological ground for the assault on the Ukrainian statehood when he published a lengthy article “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” (Putin, 2021) where he belittled the Ukrainian national


2 Four signatories of the Minsk agreements – France, Germany, Ukraine, and Russia.

3 Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE as moderator.

4 There were no summit or ministerial-level meetings after 2019.

5https://www.crs.gov/Reports/IF11938?source=search&guid=658b1d1d89cb402d9bcfdcbbf3a1594&index=0
identity and presented a series of thinly disguised territorial claims, while asserting that Ukraine as a sovereign state can only exist in close partnership with Russia (Dickinson, 2021).

11. By November 2021, it was evident Russia was once again amassing troops and equipment— including main battle tanks, attack aircraft, electronic warfare assets, and multiple launch rocket systems—along the border with Ukraine. In January and early February 2022 Russia also moved troops to Belarus under the pretext of joint drills with Belarusian armed forces, and dispatched warships from its Baltic and Northern fleets to the Black Sea. Experts noted that the build-up differed from the previous one in important ways, including the stockpiling of blood for the wounded and partially mobilizing Russia’s national guard, presumably for maintaining order in the newly occupied territories (Amiel, 2021). Already in the beginning of November 2021, the United States began issuing warnings that Russia may be weighing a potential invasion of Ukraine (Nardelli and al, 2021), and by February 2022, Washington announced that the invasion was imminent and urged, on 11 February, all American citizens to leave Ukraine (Borger and Sabbagh, 2022). By February, the number of Russian troops had increased to roughly 190,000 (Reuters, 2022), and media published potential attack plans on Ukraine from the east (Russia), the north (Belarus) and the south (illegally-occupied Crimea) (Jones, 2022). Throughout, the Russian leadership vehemently denied any intention to invade Ukraine, and ridiculed such claims as “hysteria” and “absurdity” (Associated Press, 2022).

12. In late 2021, Western leaders reached out to Moscow to understand the motives of Russia’s unprovoked brinkmanship and escalation. In December, Moscow unveiled a wish list of its demands, including guarantees that Ukraine and Georgia would never join NATO, and that the Alliance roll back its military posture to pre-1997 levels (Pifer, 2021). These proposals were seen as non-starters by NATO: at the extraordinary meeting of the NATO-Russia Council on 12 January, Allies were united in their commitment to the Article 10 of the Washington Treaty which stipulates that any European nation that meets membership criteria may be invited to join NATO (NATO, 2022a). Furthermore, Allies firmly rejected any one-sided demands by Russia aiming to restrict NATO’s ability to defend and protect all Allies. As NATO Secretary General stressed, “We cannot end up in a situation where we have kind of second-class NATO members, where NATO as an Alliance is not allowed to protect them in the same way as we protect the other Allies” (NATO, 2022b). A similar message was delivered to the Russian Federation at the bilateral US-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue in Geneva (RadioFreeEurope, 2022a) and the OSCE Permanent Council meeting in the same week (RadioFreeEurope, 2022b). That said, the Alliance signaled its readiness to Russia to intensify dialogue on a range of issues, including arms control and transparency of military exercises (NATO, 2022a). Allies also issued multiple warnings that an invasion of Ukraine would result in devastating sanctions that would cripple the Russian economy (Neo and Clark, 2022).

13. The obvious unacceptability of Russian proposals raised concerns that Moscow was deliberately seeking their rejection to create a casus belli for its invasion in Ukraine. In parallel, Moscow engaged in coalition building, which involved more frequent political and military contacts with Minsk and issuing a milestone joint statement with Xi Jinping at the start of Winter Olympics, in which China publicly subscribed to Russia’s long’s standing criticism of NATO enlargement (Dou, 2022).

14. Following the predictable failure of the talks with the West—and, coincidence or not, the end of the Olympics—Russia had entered the final stages of the preparation for the invasion of Ukraine. In the Orwellian meeting of the Russian security council on 21 February, senior Russian political and security figures duly “recommended” to Putin to recognize the “independence” of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansks People’s Republics. In a televised address, Putin offered yet another history lecture on the alleged artificiality of the Ukrainian statehood, calling its government “neo-Nazi”, and signed a document recognizing these ‘republics’, ordering Russian armed forces to officially enter
III- THE EVOLUTION OF THE INVASION: CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

15. Initial Objectives: At the time of writing, the war had just entered its third month. While the Kremlin has repeatedly stated the “special military operation” is proceeding according to plan, there is near consensus among Western observers that Russian armed forces have so far failed to reach their military objectives (Cranny-Evans and Kaushal, 2022). The lack of coherence of the military campaign suggests it was not underpinned by clearly formulated – or realistic – political goals. Initially, the invasion of Ukraine was presented as Russia’s response to the “Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics” signing and immediately invoking the “treaty of friendship and mutual assistance” with Russia. On 24 February, however, Putin announced the goal of the “special military operation” as the “demilitarization and denazification” of the entire Ukraine (Fisher, 2022a). He did not clarify exactly how these aims were to be achieved. Putin said that Russia had no plans to occupy the territory of Ukraine, but hinted that Russia sought regime change, when he referred to the Ukrainian leadership as “the anti-national junta”, and several days later, directly appealed to Ukrainian generals urging them to overthrow the “drug addicts and neo-Nazis” (France24, 2022) (i.e., the democratically elected Ukrainian government). However, Putin’s press secretary Dmitry Peskov subsequently clarified that Russia still considers Zelenskyy as the legitimate president of Ukraine, and Russia officially engaged in diplomatic talks with the Ukrainian delegation, appointed by the president. The fact Russian armed forces have attacked Ukrainian territory from the north, the east and the south, while using cruise and ballistic missiles to strike sites across the entire Ukrainian territory suggests Russia has been trying to achieve several political goals at once, possibly including regime change, territorial acquisition in the east, a land corridor to Crimea and Transnistria, unleashing a refugee flow to the West, and intimidating the people of western Ukraine. Russia attempted to achieve these goals with a relatively small military force for the size of the target: Ukraine is the largest European country in terms of land mass, with a population of 44 million.

16. Ostensibly, the Russian leadership was hoping Russian subversive activities in Ukraine over the years had eroded Ukrainian cohesion and weakened state institutions, and that a limited number of missile, air, and artillery strikes, coupled with the looming threat of approaching massive Russian military convoys, would paralyze Ukraine’s ability to resist and prompt some disillusioned Ukrainian generals – or Russian operatives infiltrated in Kyiv – to carry out regime change. This strategy reflects a long-standing tradition in Russian military thinking, which identifies long-range precision strike capabilities and non-kinetic means – such as information warfare, subversion and cyberattacks – as the crucial tenets of next generation warfare, to be used in coordination with conventional military actions (Cranny-Evans and Kaushal, 2022).

17. Early Campaign Outcomes: Russian military strategists grossly miscalculated. They overestimated the effect of missile and air strikes. Insufficient attention to developing maneuver warfare capabilities resulted in large Russian columns (one approaching Kyiv reportedly spanned more than 60 km at its peak) being paralyzed by mechanical breakdown and congestion, facing food and fuel supply problems as well as command and control issues due to disruptions of communication networks (BBC News, 2022). In essence, Russian forces were operating without a single operational commander, and with different headquarters for each army group advancing along three fronts and several lines of attack. Military analysts note that while Russia invested heavily in modern platforms over the years, they did not adequately invest in maintenance and repair cycles, which resulted in a large amount of equipment being abandoned (Chotiner, 2022). The quality of equipment was also affected by pervasive corruption, favoritism and the lack of transparency and
accountability in the Russian defense procurement sector (Jackson, 2022). Russian leaders did not take into account the drop of morale among Russian soldiers, many of whom were reportedly unaware of the imminent invasion until the last moment and were therefore unprepared for prolonged fighting (McLeary and Brown, 2022). Jeremy Fleming, the head of the British signals intelligence agency (GCHQ), has stated publicly there were numerous cases of Russian soldiers “refusing to carry out orders, sabotaging their own equipment and even accidentally shooting down their own aircraft” (GCHQ, 2022).

18. Conversely, Moscow grossly underestimated the robustness of the Ukrainian state and the extraordinary resolve of the Ukrainian people to defend their homeland. The number of volunteers for territorial defence is reportedly so high that many are put on the waiting list, due to the lack of weapons and structures to integrate them (Rukomeda, 2022). Within days since the beginning of the war, tens of thousands of Ukrainians residing abroad came back to Ukraine to join the fight (Reuters, 2022). Ukrainians have united around the exemplary leadership of President Zelensky, who refused to leave the capital and became the symbol of the free world’s resistance. Russian occupiers faced difficulties finding collaborators in captured Ukrainian towns, and people in occupied Kherson and Melitopol have been regularly protesting in large numbers with pro-Ukrainian slogans.

19. As the blitzkrieg failed, a horrific war of attrition followed. Russia captured some territories to the north of Kyiv, in the northeast and particularly in the south, where it seeks to complete a land corridor from Donbas to the illegally occupied Crimea. However, Russian forces’ progress has been stalled by the Ukrainian resistance and occasional counter-attacks. The Ukrainians exploited the defender’s advantages in urban terrain and attacked and ambushed Russia’s convoys over extended supply lines (Chotiner, 2022). The southern city of Kherson was the only oblast capital occupied since the beginning of the campaign. Despite repeated efforts, Russia failed to capture major cities in the east and the north, including Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv, and made very limited progress even in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that were under Kyiv’s control before the war. A major seaport Mariupol in Donetsk oblast was besieged and systematically annihilated for weeks, but, at the time of writing, Russia was still unable to take it under full control, which renders Russia’s land-bridge to Crimea incomplete.

20. In the meantime, Russia considerably increased the – largely indiscriminate – shelling of Ukrainian towns and villages, especially in eastern, Russian-speaking Ukraine. The extensive use of cruise and ballistic missiles, including Kalibr and Iskander, as well as hypersonic Kinzhal missiles,
air strikes, and artillery shelling, and especially the horrific destruction of Mariupol, caused a global outcry and a humanitarian catastrophe, but failed to produce any tangible gains for the Russian military. On the contrary, Russia’s indiscriminate destruction deeply antagonized the mainly Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine, and prompted the democratic world to increase political and practical support to Ukraine and introduce further sanctions on Russia. Some observers argue that by shelling populated areas, Moscow was seeking to exacerbate the refugee crisis, thus putting pressure on European economies and societies, expecting the West to pressure Kyiv in return (Friedman, 2022). This has not produced the desired effect as European societies demonstrated remarkable hospitality towards Ukrainian refugees.

21. Russia has sustained heavy casualties – according to UK estimates, (Wheeler, 2022) approximately 15,000 were killed-in-action within the first two months of war (including several generals), seizing some Ukrainian territory but largely failing to achieve their stated goals and likely political objectives. Any effort to reinforce the Russian contingent significantly in Ukraine is impossible without at least partial mobilization, which Moscow is reluctant to do for political reasons – Vladimir Putin publicly stated that only professional soldiers will take part in the “special military operation” (AFP, 2022): In the beginning of April, there were reportedly several hundreds of Syrian, Chechen, or Wagner group mercenaries (Schmitt and al, 2022), although that number may have subsequently significantly increased (Borger, 2022). Therefore, after a month of fighting, Russia needed a strategic pause and regrouping.

22. By late March, Moscow started signaling an important alteration of its original strategy. The Russian Defense Minister announced, on 29 March, that the “main goals of the first stage of the special military operation in Ukraine have been accomplished” and the Russian armed forces will now “focus the main attention and main efforts on achieving the main goal – the liberation of Donbas” (TASS, 2022). Having failed to capture Kyiv and, by extension, secure a form of victory over all of Ukraine, the Russian leadership now ostensibly decided to concentrate on at least expanding a foothold in the Donbass region and southern Ukraine. In late March and early April, Russian armed forces withdrew from the Kyiv oblast as well as the northeastern oblasts of Sumy and Chernihiv. Ukrainian officials and NATO officials (NATO, 2022c) have publicly expressed their concern that Russia is planning a major offensive in south-eastern Ukraine to consolidate the land corridor to Crimea. Observers argue Russia may be learning from the initial mistakes of the campaign and attempting a frontal combined arms assault in Donbas, taking advantage of Russia’s greater aerial supremacy in that region and shorter supply lines (The Economist, 2022a). Furthermore, Russian units are being reorganized into more combined arms formations to conduct more effective tactical operations.

23. Moscow has also tried to improve force coordination by appointing a single theatre commander – General Alexander Dvornikov, known for his ruthless conduct of Russian operations in Syria. Speaking at the 7 April meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba predicted the upcoming battle of Donbas “with large operations [...] the involvement of thousands of tanks, armored vehicles, planes, artillery,” will be reminiscent of WWII (BBC News, 2022b).

24. Against the backdrop of Russian military aggression, since 28 February, designated Russian and Ukrainian delegations conducted several rounds of talks, including at the level of foreign ministers in Istanbul on 10 March. The talks have yet to yield tangible results, apart from some agreements on humanitarian corridors. Despite president Zelensky’s repeated appeals to his Russian counterpart to arrange a bilateral meeting and the mediation offer by Turkey’s president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Kremlin has so far declined the offer. A diplomatic solution appeared unlikely at the time of writing, and NATO and US officials are increasingly signaling the likelihood of a protracted conflict (NATO, 2022d; Schmitt and al, 2022).
IV- HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

25. The ongoing war is leaving a trail of horrific war crimes. The unprovoked invasion on a sovereign country directly violates the UN Charter, which stipulates that armed force can be used only in self-defense or when authorized by the UN Security Council. There is ample and mounting evidence of Russian indiscriminate shelling of population centers, hospitals, maternity wards, schools, and other civilian areas. Russia has also been accused of using prohibited munitions such as cluster bombs (Hagos and Detsch, 2022). International watchdogs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are collecting evidence on numerous cases of killing and raping civilians, torture, the looting of private property, and other acts of unspeakable cruelty in areas occupied by Russian forces (Human Rights Watch, 2022) (Amnesty International, 2022). Scenes of shocking brutality against civilians, including mass graves and traces of indiscriminate execution, in Bucha, Berdyanka and other places abandoned by retreating Russian forces have outraged global public opinion. US and Ukrainian officials stressed that the horrors of Bucha were but the “tip of the iceberg” of what was transpiring in the occupied territories. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the atrocities in Bucha were not a random act but deliberate tactics by Russia (The White House, 2022a), while President Biden called for Putin to be tried for war crimes (Mangan, 2022). While the situation in besieged Mariupol could not be accurately reported, the war crimes committed and the level of human suffering there could surpass anything seen in this war so far.

26. Between 24 February – 6 April, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 3,838 civilian casualties in the country: 1,611 killed and 2,227 injured, including 131 killed children (UNHCHR, 2022a). Ukrainian sources report much higher numbers. Hundreds of thousands in besieged towns were deprived of electricity, water, heating, food, and healthcare, while the humanitarian corridors to inner Ukraine were frequently shelled by Russian forces, according to Kyiv (Rott, 2022). As an alternative, Russia cynically proposed humanitarian corridors to Russia or Belarus, which Kyiv and its Western partners find hypocritical and completely unacceptable (DW, 2022).

27. The process of investigating these war crimes has already started at the international level. The UN’s International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague has opened an investigation of Russia’s actions under the UN Convention against Genocide. While the ICJ has yet to rule on the case, on March 16, its judges ruled that Russia must halt military operations in Ukraine (Posthumus and Zvobgo, 2022). Another important institution – the International Criminal Court (ICC), which investigates crimes committed by individuals rather than states – is also looking into the war crimes accusations against the Russian President and other Russian officials. The case against Russian officials is supported by 39 countries, and ICC prosecutors are already collecting evidence in Ukraine (Riegert, 2022). On March 1, the Council of Europe’s European Court of Human Rights also told Russia to stop attacking civilians and ensure their safe evacuation (Kinetz, 2022a). Ukraine’s foreign minister Kuleba has also proposed setting up a Nuremberg-type special tribunal for the Russian political and military leaders. By early April, 10 countries (Kinetz, 2022b) have reportedly opened investigations of Russia’s war crimes or crimes against humanity in Ukraine (Kinetz, 2022b). Russia does not officially recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of ICC nor ICJ, and its membership in the Council of Europe was terminated on 16 March, but the investigations can nevertheless have a significant moral and political impact.

28. The war drove millions of Ukrainians from their homes: as of 2 May, some 7.7 million were internally displaced, while more than 5.6 million left Ukraine (mostly women, children and elderly men, as able-bodied men ages 18 to 60 were instructed to stay in the country). At the same time, some 1.4 million Ukrainians came back or entered Ukraine (UNHCR, 2022a). Poland alone hosted more than 3 million people (according to UNHCR), significant numbers also fled to other neighboring countries, including Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova. The Ukrainian
refugees were met with remarkable hospitality – European states as well as thousands of individual volunteers set up reception centers and offered shelter, food, transport, medical care, financial support and even employment. The EU swiftly invoked – for the first time – the Temporary Protection Directive, which entitles anyone who legally resided in Ukraine before 24 February to have a clear legal status for up to three years, which includes the possibility to work, study, and access social welfare in an EU country of their choice (Martini, 2022). Most Ukrainian refugees were hosted by European families or houses provided by governments (Lovett and al, 2022). The EU has also invoked its Technical Support Instrument to help Member States welcoming and integrating people fleeing the war in Ukraine (European Commission, 2022). The UNHCR is coordinating the provision of services, such as legal aid, psychological support, child protection and gender-based violence case management (UNHCR, 2022b).

29. It is also noteworthy that tens of thousands of Russians, including opposition figures, journalists, IT specialists, even some oligarchs, chose to flee, mainly to the neighboring countries – Georgia, Central Asian republics, the Baltic States and Turkey (Rumer, 2022).

V- ALLIED AND GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

30. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has stated repeatedly that NATO’s and individual Allies’ long-standing support for Ukraine has greatly contributed to the ability of the Ukrainian armed forces to repel the Russian offensive. Indeed, Allied security assistance to Ukraine has been stepped up markedly after 2014. The US alone has committed more than USD 4 billion from 2014 through March 2022, “to help Ukraine preserve its territorial integrity, secure its borders, and improve interoperability with NATO” (Congressional Research Service, 2022). Before the war, several other Allies, including the UK, Poland and Lithuania, also supplied weapons to Ukraine, while Turkey provided Bayraktar TB2 drones that proved indispensable on the battlefield (Seibt, 2022). Canada contributed with a 200-strong military training mission, while several others provided significant non-lethal support.

31. Also, before the war, NATO as an organization had been contributing through numerous mechanisms and programs, most notably the 2016 Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP), which includes ten Trust Funds. In the framework of CAP, NATO provided strategic-level advice as well as 40 tailored support measures. In June 2020 Ukraine was granted Enhanced Opportunity Partner status, which provided Ukraine with preferential access to NATO’s exercises and exchange of information. Under its new status, Ukraine hosted, in September 2020, the Exercise Joint Endeavour involving the American, British, and Canadian troops (Mills, 2022). Through its Defence Education Enhancement Programme, NATO helped to enhance Ukraine’s military education and training systems, focusing on eight defense education institutions and five training centers (NATO, 2022d). Training and exercising with NATO personnel between 2014-2022 has been involving at least 10,000 Ukrainian troops annually and helped to instill a more modern approach to warfare and the organization of the armed forces. This approach entails, inter alia, the bolstering of the non-commissioned officer component and the emphasis on flexibility and autonomy of those lower in the chain of command to achieve combat goals set by higher commanders (Michaels, 2022). NATO’s advisors were also instrumental in bolstering the democratic oversight of Ukraine’s defence and security sector. Despite the ongoing conflict in its eastern regions, Ukraine had also been a valuable security provider, contributing to numerous NATO-led operations, including in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and the Mediterranean, as well as to the NATO Response Force.
32. Through its own dedication and Allied support, between 2014-2022, Ukraine succeeded in increasing its combat-ready troops from about 6,000 to nearly 150,000, while modernizing its tanks, armored vehicles, and artillery systems. NATO instructors, including at the Military Law and Order Service (MLOS) training center near Lviv, helped Ukrainian officers and soldiers “to unlearn old [Soviet] reflexes that are predictable for Moscow”, as one expert put it (Seibt, 2022). The 8-year experience of countering Russian proxies in Donbas also helped to harden the Ukrainian military and identify talent among officers. It is also noteworthy that Ukraine has made significant strides in recent years to bolster its cyber defenses – with significant assistance from its Western partners (Cerulus, 2022). To the surprise of some observers, in the beginning of Russia’s invasion, Ukraine proved remarkably successful in fending off the accompanying Russian cyber attacks and recovering quickly when those attacks were successful (Conger and Sanger, 2022).

33. On the eve of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Allies, and particularly the United States, redoubled their support to Ukraine. The Biden administration, despite the risk of potential reputational costs, chose to openly disclose its intelligence information about the imminence of the Russian invasion – which proved to be instrumental in taking away the element of surprise from the aggressor, complicating Moscow’s plans for “false flag” operations and mobilizing the Euro-Atlantic community (Barnes and Sanger, 2022). In December 2021, the US announced the supply of an additional USD 200 million to support Ukraine’s defence capabilities, and, in January 2022, confirmed additional deliveries of Javelin missiles, and other equipment, including five Mi-17 helicopters (Mills, 2022). Allies have also repeatedly warned Russia that an invasion of Ukraine would result in devastating sanctions.

34. The invasion on 24 February galvanized NATO Allies into rapidly expanding support to Ukraine. While the full scale of the Allied support cannot be gauged because some of it is classified, Allies have been providing crucial defensive military equipment ranging from heavy weapons to rifles and body armor. Since the start of the 2022 war, the Biden Administration has committed a total of more than USD 3.7 billion in security assistance to “provide Ukraine the equipment it needs to defend itself.” (U.S. Department of State, 2022). The US security assistance to Ukraine includes Stinger anti-aircraft systems, anti-armor weapons, Howitzers as well as Switchblade and Phoenix Ghost “kamikaze” drones (The White House, 2022b) (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). On 28 April, Biden asked US Congress to authorize USD 33 billion in supplemental funding, in part to support Ukraine defense effort over the next several months (Sullivan and al, 2022). On the same day the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed legislation authorizing a lend-lease type arrangement for Ukraine (Edmondson, 2022).

35. At the time of writing, observers were noting a shift in the US approach to supporting Ukraine: from merely helping Ukraine fend off Russian offensive, to, as Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III put it, weakening Russia “to the point where it can’t do things like invade Ukraine” (Sanger, 2022). On 26 April, the US also hosted a conference at the Ramstein air base in Germany where dozens of countries offered major pledges to sustain aid to Ukraine’s defense effort (DW, 2022b). The UK continued to supply, inter alia, thousands next generation light anti-tank weapons (NLAWs) as well as Javelins, Starstreak high-speed anti-air missiles (UK Government, 2022a) and anti-ship missile systems that could be used to repel the Russian navy advances on Black Sea ports (McKernan and Helm, 2022). The majority of Allies announced their readiness to provide lethal support – some reversing their decades-long policies in this regard, including Germany and Norway. The EU has also made an historic decision to fund, for the first time, lethal equipment supplies from its budget: a total of USD 1 billion was allocated for military assistance to Ukraine, including USD 900 million for lethal equipment (Archick, 2022).

36. There were also other ways to support Ukraine’s military effort. Turkey as the guardian of the Montreux Convention took steps to deny warships Black Sea access: while the Convention contains an exception for – in this case Russian – ships returning to their Black Sea bases, Turkey’s foreign
minister has clarified that ships returning to base “should not be involved in the war” (Zanotti and Clayton, 2022). At least one Ally – the US – is believed to be sharing intelligence information with Ukraine: President Biden publicly announced that the US was “sharing and will continue to share significant, timely intelligence with Ukraine to help defend them against Russian aggression” (The White House, 2022c). NATO as an organization pledged to increase cybersecurity assistance and provide equipment to help Ukraine protect against chemical and biological threats (NATO, 2022e).

37. As Russian military superiority over Ukraine is particularly salient in the air domain, Ukrainian leadership has been repeatedly and vehemently appealing to the international community, and NATO in particular, to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. This notion is widely considered as both unfeasible and overly escalatory within the Alliance, as it would involve NATO assets directly targeting Russian aircraft and missile systems, including on the Russian territory. Allies have made it clear that NATO has a paramount duty to protect its members and that the Alliance is not a party to the war. The Alliance is, therefore determined to maintain substantial support to Ukraine, while refraining from sending in troops or imposing a non-fly zone.

38. As an alternative, Kyiv is appealing to the West to increase the deliveries of lethal weapons, particularly anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems as well as fighter aircraft, in order to enable Ukraine to protect their skies themselves. While Ukraine has received crucial assistance with deliveries of Stingers and other anti-aircraft systems, the provision of fighters and advanced anti-missile systems has faced political and practical roadblocks. The Ukrainian military has not been properly trained to operate modern Western systems, while Central Eastern European Allies have limited numbers of Soviet/Russian MiG fighters or S-300 air defence systems, and their transfers to Ukraine would need to be compensated by additional deployments of analogous assets in Central and Eastern Europe. Russia has also warned that it would consider convoys of advanced weapon systems to Ukraine to be a legitimate target. As a result of these political and practical factors, the delivery of MiGs to Ukraine has been stalled. Slovakia has, however, publicly confirmed it donated an S-300 system to Ukraine (Muller, 2022). While some Allies have been reluctant to supply “offensive” weapons to Ukraine, i.e. weapons such as fighter aircraft or tanks that could hypothetically be used for Ukraine’s advance into Russian-controlled territory, at the last meeting of NATO Foreign minister on 6-7 April, NATO Secretary General dismissed the division of weapons into ‘offensive’ and ‘defensive’ as irrelevant, arguing that Ukraine was fighting a defensive war and used all weapons supplied for defensive purposes (NATO, 2022f).

39. According to the World Bank, Ukraine’s economy could contract by 45%, as the result of the war (Toh, 2022). Ukraine claims that about 30% of its businesses have ceased all activities, while 45% were working at reduced capacity (Wheatley and Hall, 2022). The country is in dire need of massive economic assistance. In March, the US Congress approved USD 13.6 billion in emergency spending to support Ukraine and neighboring countries, including to provide food, health care and supporting refugees (Pallaro and Palarpiano, 2022). In addition to humanitarian support, the EU has provided macro-economic assistance by transferring EUR 600 million to the Ukrainian budget in March as well as providing additional grant support of EUR 120 million to help state and resilience building (European Commission, 2022b). The UK financial support during the war amounts to around GBP 400 million, including the USD 100m transfer directly to the Ukrainian government budget (UK Government, 2022b). The IMF disbursed emergency assistance of USD 1.4 billion to Ukraine to help meet urgent financing needs, while the World Bank has prepared USD 3 billion package of support for Ukraine in the coming months, of which USD 350 million has already been disbursed (International Monetary Fund, 2022). These are only some examples of financial support that numerous countries and international institutions are offering to Ukraine. It is also noteworthy that some private individuals and companies provided crucial support to Ukraine – including Elon Musk’s space company, SpaceX, which provided Starlink internet terminals to Ukraine, which has proved “very effective,” according to Ukrainian sources (Lerman and Zakrzewski, 2022).
40. In addition to military and financial assistance, Ukraine has received unprecedented political support from across the world. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion, millions of people worldwide took to the streets to protest the aggression and to express solidarity with Ukraine. Numerous cities decorated their landmarks in Ukrainian national colors, while many celebrities and influencers spoke in support of Ukraine. In the UN, Russia was completely outnumbered with 141 General Assembly members voting for the resolution condemning the aggression and 5 voting against (Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, Russia, and Syria). In the UN Security Council, a similar resolution was not adopted only due to Russia’s veto, as China chose to abstain. Following the atrocities in Bucha, Russia’s membership in the UN Human Rights Council was suspended with 93 votes in favour and 24 against.

41. Sanctions on Russia is a vital instrument of supporting Ukraine and deterring further Russian aggression. The EU, individual Allies, and a range of nations and international organizations across the world have introduced measures making Russia the most sanctioned country in the world. These sanctions include freezing an estimated 50% of the Russian central bank’s international reserves, cutting seven Russian banks off from SWIFT financial messaging system, freeing the assets of Russian officials, legislators, and other elites, limiting Russia’s access to crucial technologies, and closing airspace to all Russian-owned aircraft. Some of the most painful sanctions were imposed not by governments, but by private businesses that began a mass exodus from the toxic Russian market. While there is a lag before the effect of sanctions is fully felt, and despite Russian central bank’s efforts to prop up the rouble artificially, the World Bank expects the Russian economy to contract by 11.2% in 2022 (The World Bank, 2022). Russia’s global reputation has also been hit by its mass expulsion from international sports and cultural organisations and events such as the World Cup, Formula 1 and the Eurovision song contest.

42. Sanctioning Russian energy sector remains an acute issue, owing to Europe’s high dependency on Russian hydrocarbons. Revenues from the sale of fossil fuel contribute to over 40% of the Russian federal budget (Liboreiro, 2022). Some significant breakthroughs did take place in this regard after the invasion – Germany officially suspended the Nordstream-2 project, and the EU banned Russian coal imports, began deliberating on plans to greatly reduce purchases of Russian oil, and to phase out all Russian fossil fuels “well before 2030” (Taylor, 2022). The US has banned all imports of Russian oil and gas, while the Baltic States stopped importing Russian gas. The UK and Poland plan to stop the imports of Russian hydrocarbons by the end of 2022. Several private Western oil companies also stopped purchasing Russian oil. Nevertheless, some major European countries remain reluctant to impose oil and gas embargo, fearing dire economic consequences. According to the EU High Representative Josep Borrell, since the beginning of the war, the EU has paid EUR 35 billion for Russian hydrocarbons, while offering Ukraine EUR 1 billion in military assistance (Euronews, 2022).

VI- LOOKING AHEAD: SUPPORTING AND REBUILDING UKRAINE AND FOSTERING NATO ADAPTION

43. Russia’s illegal, unprovoked invasion and the barbaric conduct of the war have been countered by the dramatic consolidation of the Ukrainian nation, which won global admiration. The world is witnessing the birth of new Ukrainian national narrative, which will be the basis of its future statehood, its identity, and its newly found self-confidence. Through its bravery and sacrifices, Ukraine earned a prominent place in the family of democratic nations. The Euro-Atlantic community has an obligation to support Ukraine not only as a moral duty, but also to send a strong signal that military conquest cannot be practiced in contemporary world without serious consequences for the aggressor. Should
Russia be allowed to prevail in this war, the entire international political and security architecture would be compromised.

44. Your Rapporteur is convinced of the necessity for the Allies to consider the following steps to further support Ukraine:

- Increase and sustain the deliveries of the most critical weapon systems to Ukraine, particularly anti-aircraft, artillery, ammunition, anti-missile, and anti-ship systems.
- Radically accelerate the phasing out of Russian oil, gas, coal, and uranium imports and introduce solidarity mechanisms for the most affected NATO and EU members; introduce other sanctions including the full exclusion from the SWIFT.
- Increase and sustain financial, economic, and material support to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees; help devise a Marshall Plan-type arrangement to rebuild Ukraine after the war, potentially using frozen Russian assets. Some estimates already put the likely cost of reconstruction at over half a trillion dollars, in light of extensive destruction of housing, roads, airports, ports, rail, and civil society institutions all across the country (The Economist, 2022b).
- Encourage Allies that are EU members to use all leverages to accelerate Ukraine’s EU accession process.
- Support the investigation of war crimes committed in Ukraine and support international efforts to hold the perpetrators accountable.
- While Ukraine is winning the information war globally, increase the coordination of efforts to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation, including by setting up and supporting more Russian-language online sources that provide objective information to Russian-speakers within and outside Russia.
- Reiterate their enduring commitment to Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and the non-recognition policy of illegal annexations.
- Reiterate the commitment to NATO’s Open Door policy and to the principle that no third country has a power of veto on NATO membership, while recognizing the sovereign right of Ukraine to choose its alliances or other security arrangements.
- Continue supporting the diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict, and being clear-eyed about the current Russian regime’s track record of deceit and reneging on its international commitments.
- Continue holding the current Belarusian regime accountable for its part in the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

45. NATO itself will need to adapt significantly in the wake of this war. While the political and military aspects of this adaptation are examined in detail in other reports of this Assembly, Your Rapporteur would like to highlight the need to capitalize on the unprecedented solidarity that the Alliance is currently displaying. NATO has re-discovered the unity of purpose and demonstrating commitment to fair burden sharing. Germany’s historic decision to boost its defense spending significantly is emblematic in this regard. The Allies have also decided to increase the existing forward presence, which now covers the entire eastern flank. They should consider replacing the concept of forward presence with that of forward defense.

46. NATO is determined not to be directly involved in this war. However, the Allies also signaled that Russia’s use of weapons of mass destruction would change this calculus. The Allies must have in place clear – classified – plans of how they would react should Russia decide to use chemical or tactical nuclear weapons. Allies should make it clear that the consequences of such reckless decision would be devastating for Russia.
Finally, the Allies must consider wider implications of this war, which is not a regional, but a global phenomenon, and should be view through the lens of global power competition. Strategies of other global actors, such as China and India, will also be shaped to a significant degree by the outcome of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This war will affect the hitherto prevalent notion that the strategic landscape of the 21st century will center around the US-China competition. This landscape is likely to be much more complex. On the rhetorical level, Beijing has been siding with Russia and subscribing to its narrative of shifting responsibility for war on the US and NATO. At the same time, in practice, China has not provided significant support to Russia’s isolated economy nor to its military and reiterated its commitment to the principle of territorial sovereignty. It signaled readiness to serve as mediator between Kyiv and Moscow and offered humanitarian aid to Ukraine. While China is challenging the current global order, and it has no interest in Russia’s defeat and the triumph of Ukraine and its Western allies, Beijing also has a stake in global stability. In this regard, NATO’s noticeable intensification of contacts with like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific is highly relevant and strategically important.

The ramifications of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine will shape regional and global politics for years to come. In these historic times, NATO must stay the course of solidarity and remain the beacon of democratic values. NATO and Ukraine are on the right side of history. They may need to be prepared for a long struggle in Ukraine. Yet, your Rapporteur is convinced that, with the Euro-Atlantic community’s military, economic and technological clout behind it, Ukraine cannot but prevail.
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