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Volodymyr Zelenskyy's presidency and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war

Edited by
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Adam Reichardt and Tomasz Stępniewski

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's presidency and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war: Introduction

Russia's armed conflict with Ukraine, ongoing since 2014, has created conditions for Russia to revise the balance of power in Eastern Europe and even the international order established after the Cold War. One of the main geostrategic aims of the Russian Federation during Vladimir Putin's term has been to rebuild those influences on the periphery that it lost due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. When analysing Russia's actions with regard to the states of Eastern Europe, it should be noted that in spite of the fact that 30 years have passed since the collapse of the USSR, the Russian Federation is still striving to maintain a dominant position in Eastern Europe (more broadly the Commonwealth of Independent States) and is applying various means to do so, including military strength in the case of the Russo-Georgian war of August 2008 and the ongoing war against Ukraine in Donbas. Russia's main objective remains the desire to rein-

tegrate the post-Soviet space and strengthen the country's position as a leader in the region. Such a position entails great power and may ensure Russia's exclusive control over the post-Soviet space. Additionally, it may enable Russia to attain its role as a global power – one of the axes of power in the new multi-polar international order pursued by Russia. In this context, the Eastern European region constitutes a natural area of Russia's operation – a historical field of its vital interests and exclusive influence as well as an area subject to the policy of reintegration conducted by the country.

The character of Russia's armed conflict with Ukraine changed in February 2022. It was then that Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine. Contrary to the Kremlin's expectations, the first days of the Russian offensive did not result in Ukraine's swift capitulation. The Ukrainian army put up effective resistance against Russian forces, which experienced major losses in personnel and equipment. Russians have not succeeded in gaining full control over key cities in Eastern and Central Ukraine. A number of Ukrainian cities continued to be targeted by mass rocket and artillery attacks and bombings. The defenders resisted Russian forces but were unable to halt the Russian offensive. Attacks carried out on a large scale against civilian targets bear all the hallmarks of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The International Criminal Court in The Hague has already launched an investigation into this matter. The European Union and NATO provided assistance to Ukraine, while at the same time, sanctions and an escalating boycott of Russia are being increasingly felt by the Russian economy and by ordinary citizens of the Russian Federation.

At the helm of Ukraine's defence is its president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was elected in 2019 with a strong mandate for renewing politics in the country. Yet at that time, no one could have expected that Zelenskyy, a political novice with a background in show business, would be able to unite his people around their common goal. As Andrew Wilson points out in his interview for this series, Zelenskyy's "communication skills are now a massive asset... Zelenskyy is successful because he represents ordinary Ukrainians and what they're experiencing". Wilson describes further the lessons that Zelenskyy learnt prior to 24th February and what he expects as the war carries on.

Similarly, Anton Naychuk outlines three main characteristics of Zelenskyy's presidency since 24th February 2022. These include the consolidation of Ukrainian society, the effectiveness of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's activities as supreme commander, and the unity of the international community.

In that context, Vladyslav Faraponov describes Ukraine's relationship with the United States since Zelenskyy was elected. These relations started off with some uncomfortable situations; however, the full-scale Russian invasion has since strengthened these ties. Faraponov notes that "since late February, Washington has committed almost 17 billion USD in security assistance to Ukraine". This aid is a vital line of support necessary for Ukraine to not only defend itself but also to continue to function as a state.

In their contribution, Marta Drabczuk and Tomasz Stępniewski examine the critical issue of reconstruction and economic development. The fact that the war is still taking place throughout the country does not mean that discussions about reconstruction cannot be held. What's more,

as the authors point out, “it is assumed that the reconstruction should enable a technological leap forward (and lead to) a break from post-Soviet economic dependencies”. This basis should reinvigorate the Ukrainian economy and help it during the process of accession to the European Union. Yet there is one last element needed in this process, and that is the civil society. In her analysis, Victoria Vdovychenko describes the relationship between President Zelenskyy and Ukraine’s civil society and how it has evolved since 24th February, concluding that after the war the ties will need to be even stronger.

This special series of IEŚ Policy Papers is the result of a collaboration between the Institute of Central Europe in Lublin, *New Eastern Europe* magazine and international researchers from Ukraine and Poland. We would like to thank the authors for providing their input and analysis on Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s presidency during the Russia-Ukraine war, the changing security situation in Central and Eastern Europe and Ukraine’s domestic politics. We hope that these IEŚ Policy Papers will be well-received by the readers and will encourage experts who study this issue to continue their research.

Adam Reichardt, Tomasz Stępniewski
Kraków and Lublin, November 2022



The presidency of Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the impact of war

An interview with Andrew Wilson.

Interview by Adam Reichardt

ADAM REICHARDT: I want to start by taking a step back in time, before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and get some political context about the situation in the country leading up to this year, particularly looking at President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his role as the leader of Ukraine. Zelenskyy was elected in 2019 amidst a wave of what some could describe as a unique version of Ukrainian populism. He is a Russian speaker. He was a famous comedian. He did not come from a background of politics or the political elite. And then after being elected, his Servant of the People political party won a majority in parliament during snap elections that same year. Basically, a wave of Zelenskyy and his supporters came to power at that moment. In your assessment, how did Zelenskyy manage to take over the Ukrainian political scene?

ANDREW WILSON: Let's focus on that word, "takeover". I would interpret his victory as one in a series of many Ukrainian mini-revolutions. In Ukraine since 1991, all incumbent presidents have lost after one term. The only one

who did not was Leonid Kuchma in 1999, and he cheated. So if Zelenskyy, as it looks likely today, is re-elected, then that is a big change in and of itself. I also think that the word revolution or mini-revolution applies because it was not just about the presidency. Ukraine has had a series of regular revolts against the political class, and for good reason. Ukraine has traditionally had one of the worst political classes in Europe. So, yes, this was a part of this regular cycle, but clearly a much bigger victory than many of his predecessors. Zelenskyy won the presidency with 73% of the votes, and then won a majority in parliament in the snap Verkhovna Rada elections. But that is not the same thing as a takeover of the whole political system. I think Zelenskyy quickly found that real life obstacles and the solutions to them are not the same as in a TV drama. You have to navigate within the Ukrainian political system with all of its political technology and veto players, the judiciary in particular. We have seen this problem in all the Eastern Partnership states that are democratic to an extent – Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia: a trend towards what is called “judicial technology” alongside political technology. Meaning you do not have to rig elections or fund expensive political parties if you have your guys in the judiciary as veto players. And Zelenskyy hit the buffers there in 2020. His control of parliament quickly gave way to a kind of fractionalization of the Servant of the People party with various oligarchs manoeuvring for influence. The same can be said with mass media and oligarchs sponsoring rivals to Zelenskyy in their media. That was how Ukrainian politics had always worked – up to February 2022.

So, what we saw was Zelenskyy increasingly bypassing, or attempting to bypass, those veto players by using the National Security and Defence Council in particular, and by using emergency powers, charging people with treason rather than following due process. If we contrast that to Moldova at the moment, we have this new government, which is pro-European, trying to reform an entrenched post-communist and post-Soviet system after years of oligarchy and domination. But they are trying to do that by due process, not dispossessing any of the old guard or their media and taking things slowly, properly. The result there is a lot of public frustration. The bad guys aren't in jail. So, rightly or wrongly, Zelenskyy was taking a different approach, using the National Security and Defence Council and treason charges rather than following legal due process. There was a pushback against the Constitutional Court in a way which was questionably constitutional. In other words, it was the opposite of Moldova, possibly making more progress. And quicker. But not following due process in the same way. So in terms of "takeover", Zelenskyy wins the election, and he's always loomed large in the virtual world, using his personality in the media, but also facing all these veto players in Ukraine and its post-Soviet system.

You remind us of some of the early steps that Zelenskyy took and the criticism he faced of whether they were democratic or not... But if we stay in this period before 24th February, what kind of political achievements do you think Zelenskyy managed to get during his time as president before the invasion? And what about his popularity during this time? You mentioned the challenge all previous presidents had faced in

Ukraine, that a president gets elected, is relatively popular, and then throughout the first term the popularity decreases dramatically. Was Zelenskyy following this trend?

With Zelenskyy's pre-war presidency – if we can roughly divide it that way, obviously it wasn't labelled as "pre-war" at the time – in other words a year earlier, it was his slide in the polls that prompted some change. So this was January-February 2021. There were other things that mattered at that time, particularly the US presidential election and the arrival of Joe Biden as president in January. And the need to build bridges after Ukraine's entanglement in Donald Trump's first impeachment. But I think what really drove Zelenskyy to make some radical changes to his presidency was the fact that the Servant of the People party was no longer atop the opinion polls. His personal rating was sliding also. It was still slightly better than his party's, but heading downwards. That is really what prompted "Ukraine fights back" – Zelenskyy announcing, in typical soundbite fashion, that he would try and take action against these veto players, the oligarchs and Viktor Medvedchuk in particular. Indeed, it was Medvedchuk's media empire which by then had grown to the point where it was driving other changes in public opinion, including growing popularity for the pro-Russian Opposition Platform. We could debate the other factors, but I definitely think it was in large part the opinion polls that prompted that shift. And then the actions taken against Medvedchuk and others, including the anti-oligarch law, did actually help somewhat with the polls. The advance to war, again, meant that the rally around the flag effect didn't begin in February of this year. It began much earlier. Some of his critics say that opinion polls drive everything. I would not go that far.

But clearly the opinion polls were bad in early January 2021. And that did prompt this change of course which resulted in some improvement in his ratings.

One of the promises that Zelenskyy made before being elected was to end the war in Donbas, and I think we can say he had made some moves to try to negotiate with Russia on the conflict. From your perspective, do you think there was ever a chance for him during this time before 24th February to actually end the conflict peacefully?

Minimal to zero. Let's go to where we are now. With Zelenskyy passing a decree to stop himself negotiating with Vladimir Putin, very much personalized in that way, because Putin was the problem and there was minimal progress with him. Zelenskyy's early priorities were humanitarian: prisoner exchanges and improving the crossing conditions at the line of contact in Donbas. Pressing in that way was always going to put you at a disadvantage with Putin. The prisoner exchanges were very unequal, skewed towards Russia's advantage, and did not really lead to any broad concessions. The experiment with some negotiation format with some kind of Donbas representatives did not last long. I think the Russians, Putin in particular, thought Zelenskyy was not serious. They overemphasized his background as a comedian. They thought he was unskilled and naïve.

Ironically, or not. The first big summit was in Paris. Of course, Zelenskyy did have many naïvetés, from his lack of political experience. But he also had the same natural tendency as the host, Emmanuel Macron, who also thought that he would win diplomatic concessions from Russia by the sheer force of his personality...

This was during the Normandy format summit...

Yes, in Paris in 2019. So I think it took until 2020 for Zelenskyy to lose those illusions about Russia's willingness to negotiate. He has learnt that you have to negotiate from a position of strength.

One major initiative that I wanted to get your opinion on, and was launched by Zelenskyy in 2021 during the 30th anniversary of independence since leaving the Soviet Union, is the Crimea Platform. This project was aimed at keeping the issue of Crimea on the international agenda. I'm curious what your assessment is of the Crimea Platform project. Is this a key turning point in Zelenskyy's foreign policy, particularly when looking at the conflict with Russia?

I would say it has been a resounding success in all sorts of ways. First is the improved attendance, from the first meeting in August 2021 to the second in August 2022. Second is what academics call the Overton Window: what issues are central to, or defined as feasible in, politics. It is very important to put Crimea in that window. Thirdly, the Crimea Platform highlighted the issue of sovereignty over all of the Ukrainian territory. Crimea is not Russia and the absurdity of Putin making these legal claims that an attack on the four oblasts is an attack on Russian sovereign territory is as absurd as when that claim is made about Crimea. We have to take seriously the fact that we have not recognized Russian annexation. Crimea is Ukraine, full stop.

The platform also helped refocus attention on the Crimean Tatars, as did Ukraine's belated legal upgrading of their status and a recognition that they were an indigenous people in July 2021, which apparently annoyed Putin so much

that he complained about it on the phone to Angela Merkel, when she was still the German chancellor. That was also a success. So legally, politically, and diplomatically, I think, that the Crimea Platform was hugely successful.

This is a question that I have been asking myself for some time... Can we say that the Crimea Platform project, which I agree was successful in that it brought so much attention back to the issue of Crimea, because that has been kind of largely ignored since 2014... But do you think that the Crimea Platform itself annoyed Putin enough that this may have been one of the reasons to have pushed him towards the decision for the full-scale invasion in February?

Let's reject all of the words in that question...

I know how it sounds, but I do not know how else to ask the question. Was it one of the factors in the decision-making for the Kremlin? Of course, we do not know what all the factors are...

I don't like the word "pushed". Putin's war is a war of choice. But, apart from that important, not just semantic, point, why did Putin move when he did? I think there is a whole set of reasons. Although the invasion was such a colossal strategic mistake and miscalculation, and as Dr András Rácz of DGAP (the German Council on Foreign Relations) has said, it is difficult to predict a mistake. So reconstructing Putin's reasoning can make it overly rational. But there was a combination of him seeing windows of opportunity open for him and closing windows of opportunity elsewhere. He was stronger at home politically. Alexei Navalny was in prison. Putin had secured his consti-

tutional amendments in 2020 and victory in the 2021 Duma elections. Internationally, Biden was the new US president and was faced with the debacle of the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Merkel was leaving power in Germany, there was Brexit in Britain, and a French election was looming. There were the advantages of the Russian military build-up since 2008, which wouldn't last forever. We now know that to have been in large part illusory, but that's not what Putin's generals were telling him. And then, as previously mentioned, there was Putin's reaction to the launch of the Crimea Platform and the arrest of Medvedchuk.

But coming back to the wording of your question, we have to pick our words carefully because we can't attach blame to the Ukrainians for doing what they do, and Putin's logic is so warped that he can take offence at almost anything. Any assertion of sovereignty by a state that doesn't allegedly exist annoys Putin. Anything that threatens the cathedral of illogical thinking that he's constructed around himself annoys Putin. But then that's so easy to do.

Let's now look at the situation since 24th February. I am curious about your opinion of Zelenskyy, his response, particularly in the early days, but also, in general, how you assess him as a wartime president. How has he managed the situation and how do you think Ukrainians see him as their leader during this war?

Ukrainians see him as "their" president in a way that Putin could never be. There's this phrase that Zelenskyy used in his inauguration address in 2019: "Every one of us is the president now". Now that had a PR aspect, but Putin would never say those words. There is quite a difference between

the two. For Putin, the presidency necessarily has *grandeur* – “*L’État, c’est moi*”. In terms of personality, we all remember Putin’s long table, contrasted with Zelenskyy’s popular walkabouts. I can’t imagine Putin pressing the flesh in that way. Zelenskyy’s rating is sky high, but because Ukraine is now an 80-90% society. In other words, the old stereotype of Ukraine was that it was plural, or even divided. This no longer applies. 98% believe in a Ukrainian victory. And Zelenskyy’s rating is right up there too.

But three things about him personally. I think there were mixed characteristics, or even vices – particularly his emphasis on PR which was overdone in the first half of his presidency... There was too much emphasis on how politics and policy was mediatized and less on actual delivery. But his communication skills are now a massive asset. Secondly, I think he’s found some new skills, as well as his old skill set suddenly becoming more valuable. Being prepared to say he’s afraid, personally, as opposed to Putin’s machismo, I think that strikes a chord with many Ukrainians. The third thing is that Zelenskyy is successful because he represents ordinary Ukrainians and what they’re experiencing. Yes, he is president, but he is also living in a bunker, like so many other Ukrainians. When he is out and about, he makes great use of landscapes and familiar places, like the very first broadcast right outside the presidential administration, just to show that he’s there. But he also has this empathetic effect, walking down Khreshchatyk Street or by landmarks that people all know. And the missiles that Russia fired at Kyiv on 10th October were Russia’s response – bombing ordinary life. So the three things are the old skills suddenly having new value; finding a new skill set; but also representing

ordinary Ukrainians. And ordinary Russians too – the kind of Russian language appeal that he has made to Russians, using really good direct, demotic language, as opposed to Putin’s increasingly twisted propaganda.

How do you think Zelenskyy will be as a president after the war? I know this is very difficult to answer because we do not know how the war will end...

Well, a lot of people compare him to Winston Churchill in the Second World War in the United Kingdom. Churchill was always immensely popular, but that didn’t convert into a victory in the 1945 election. The Conservative Party even had to remind people not to vote Labour, that Churchill was technically a member of the Conservative Party. He hadn’t always been. He wasn’t a natural conservative, he had gone back and forth between parties. I think the analogy here is that the Labour Party in 1945 had this very successful slogan of “winning the peace”. We have won the war, but the purpose of war was to make Britain a better and fairer society. Not going back to the problems that we had pre-war, which, in Britain meant unemployment and poverty. In the 1930s, we didn’t have a national health system and there was a very limited national education system. All of that was delivered post-war. So I think the mood in Ukraine is very much the same. That is not to take away from Zelenskyy’s personal popularity, and I am sure he will be re-elected, because at the moment, he is very successfully also representing that desire to win the peace, to build back better. Similarly, the challenge will also be to address the pre-war problems – a different set of problems obviously to the UK in the 1930s and 40s – but to deal with some of these issues that he was

struggling to deal with in Ukraine before February 2022. Issues like corruption, oligarchy, and the rule of law will be even more important post-war because of the huge sums that will need to be spent on reconstruction...

...which will be coming from Western countries and there will be some sort of accountability as well and expectations?

Yes, but there are three possible sources of money. One is Western aid. The other is international financial institutions. The other is Russia and currently confiscated Russian assets. Now the legal and moral questions about doing that remain to be sorted out, but funding will not just be coming from the West as it were. But yes, Ukraine's own resources are pretty limited. So the money is going to come from outside. But to the extent that it becomes possible to use some Russian assets – those numbers are in the hundreds of billions, as are the reconstruction costs.

We have been talking about Zelenskyy in his domestic position, but I also want to hear your assessment of his international role and in particular his engagement with Western officials and audiences about getting aid to Ukraine during the war. How effective has he been in this regard? And have there been any mistakes that you think he's made or can improve upon in his international diplomacy?

He has been extremely successful in terms of communication and packaging his personality, and communicating and tailoring his message to national audiences. With one or two problems with research notwithstanding, it has worked extremely well. And in the social media age, personalizing it and using images of war crimes, taking people

to Bucha and bringing home what the war is about, I think has also been hugely successful. Were there any missteps? Not many. By some accounts, he gets into a shopping list (for weapons) a bit too quickly sometimes when communicating with Western leaders, but that's entirely understandable. It might be a minor thing to correct. The shopping list is so important. It's not just about symbolism and speeches. But the constant pressure to get people to deliver and to deliver on their promises is hugely important as well.

Do you think he will face some fatigue in Western countries? I am thinking in particular about the United States with their congressional elections coming up, and we do see some messages from conservatives in the US that they are getting tired of sending aid to Ukraine. And I wonder if other countries are starting to see some cracks in terms of showing less support, especially when the winter comes and there's this crisis with heating and gas...

Well, fatigue means many things. It means attention span. And I think Ukraine has been very successful in keeping attention focused and keeping the story rolling, keeping the focus where the focus should be on war crimes and what Ukraine's actually fighting for. In today's world, media cycles can be measured in days. This war is already eight months old, so I don't think we see too much fatigue in that sense. Then there's a question of the cost that Putin is imposing on us and how we balance that with continued support for Ukraine. I think in the key countries providing military assistance, support is pretty solid. This refers to the neighbours, the Baltic states, Poland in particular, and non-EU NATO countries like the UK, Canada, and the US. Public

opinion is still pretty solid there. There are more problems in other parts of Europe, Southern Europe for example, but they are not the ones providing large amounts of weapons.

But the US is key. I think the issue there is politicization more than fatigue. Yes, it is about the sheer amount of money, which is enormous. And this will be an issue in the upcoming elections. I do not think the kind of Republican griping that you mentioned, about the accumulated cost of all this, is universal within the Republican Party. So, even if the Republicans win the House, the Senate looks closer – the administration still controls most of the foreign policy levers, if not all, because so much of it is about spending. But having support from most Democrats plus some Republicans will hopefully ensure that the current policy survives. But that said, a Republican victory, even if it's only in the House, will unleash mayhem. In this sense, US domestic politics might get in the way of attention and assistance to Ukraine. If the Republicans stop and reverse the congressional hearings into January 6th, for example, and turn them into the opposite hearings against the Democrats... that kind of indirect threat, the linkages from domestic politics to foreign politics, I think is a big potential danger after the midterms.

Thank you, Andrew, for your input and perspective.



Anton Naychuk

How Volodymyr Zelenskyy changed approaches to politics during the war and what kind of politician he became

The war against Ukraine became a real test for Volodymyr Zelenskyy, his professional abilities, and his personal and psychological skills. These are the features that distinguish an average politician from a true leader, capable of consolidating society around him, going to the end, making difficult decisions, being able to act under pressure and take risks into account. The results of the military campaign, the achievements of Ukraine on the international arena, and the level of public support form the conclusions about the successful passing of an unprecedented challenge, when a full-fledged military invasion took place on Ukrainian territory, the largest such conflict in Europe since the Second World War.

Currently, it can be stated that Ukraine not only withstood and resisted the blitzkrieg but also confidently retakes its own territories, carries out the modernization of the army,

and continues to move in the direction towards goals that were previously considered unattainable, namely the complete restoration of territorial integrity within the 1991 borders (including the return of Crimea).

Of course, the war is still in an active phase and we are far from final conclusions regarding the timing of Ukraine's achievement of a final and complete victory, since much depends on many factors, including the long-term support of Western partners. Yet, based on the facts on the ground, the contours of victory have been formed, largely thanks to the ability of the Ukrainian people to self-organize, the strength of the armed forces, and the unprecedented unity of most of the international community.

Determining the level of influence of the Ukrainian political leadership in general – and the president in particular – regarding certain processes will allow us to form a detailed understanding of the role of Volodymyr Zelenskyy in recent events, his political approaches, and the effectiveness of their application.

1. Consolidation of Ukrainian society

Before the start of the war, the Ukrainian electorate was largely fragmented. Political institutions were not always able to find successful solutions to overcome existing problems related to economic reforms, combating corruption, or solving issues with the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as well as Crimea. The ratings of the president and his political force Servant of the People gradually decreased after coming into power in 2019. In some places, questions were raised regarding the effectiveness of the chosen political course. However, with

the onset of the full-scale invasion in February 2022, the situation changed dramatically.

The priority issues have since become the protection and survival of Ukrainian statehood and overcoming the economic issues related to the extreme conditions of a country at war. Comfortable conditions for the implementation of peacetime reforms have been replaced by stressful military circumstances, when it is necessary to coordinate the activities of the state authorities in a non-stop mode of real-time and direct management. President Zelenskyy resorted to these approaches and his choice justifies itself.

The phrase “I need ammunition, not a ride” was included in the lexicon of catchphrases, symbolizing the steadfastness of the president’s intentions to stay in Kyiv despite recommendations from his Western colleagues to move to a safer place with the onset of the invasion. After that, Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s willingness to stay in the capital despite numerous threats contributed to raising military morale, increased public support, and shaped his image as the people’s leader.

It is worth noting that the use of an effective media campaign became one of the elements of the consolidation of the Ukrainian people around President Zelenskyy. The daily addresses of the president justified themselves as a tool of “direct communication” with the people and a successful mechanism for conveying information about the results of one’s own activities or the situation on the front line.

In the conditions of the war, the office of the president resorted to other successful technologies to share information support about events: information came in doses from designated speakers and a single information space was cre-

ated which depicts the dynamics of the hostilities, the state of affairs in the economy, etc. Such an approach made it possible to protect the Ukrainian leadership from information attacks which the Russians tried to systematically carry out to destabilize the situation inside the country.

With the beginning of the war in the country, the role of the opposition, which previously focused on Volodymyr Zelenskyy's ratings, was virtually eliminated. The president managed to enter the electoral field of his key political opponent of Petro Poroshenko, unite around him the patriotic wing of civil society, and exclude other political figures who tried to create competition in the information field before the Russian invasion.

At the same time, the "pro-Russian opposition" factor finally exhausted itself due to the obvious circumstances. In connection with Russia's war crimes in Ukraine, even traditional supporters or loyalists of the Putin regime either left the country or changed their views, speaking in defence of national interests.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy became the only candidate for the west, centre, east, north, and south of Ukraine. This was the result of his balanced reaction and consistent actions against the background of an unprecedented event – Russia's military aggression – additionally uniting Ukrainians around him in the fight against the key consolidating factor – the enemy in the form of the Russian army and state power. According to one sociological survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 81% of Ukrainian citizens trust Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Statistical indicators are an identifier of the successful actions of the president, who managed

to increase his own ratings and gain public support during the crisis period.

2. The effectiveness of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's activities as supreme commander

The circumstances forced Zelenskyy to prove himself as a wartime president in which he can claim the ability to perform exceptional functions. An interesting interpretation of Zelenskyy's approaches to the organization of the armed forces was published in *Time* magazine in an article about General Valery Zaluzhnyy: "When Zelenskyy took office in 2019, the war in eastern Ukraine had been going on for the fifth year, and Zaluzhnyy was the acting commander in the war zone. It fell to him to inform the new president on military operations and the command structures. The general knew that Zelenskyy had never served in the army, and had no plans to train him in the tactical details of warfare. "He doesn't need to understand military affairs any more than he needs to know about medicine or building bridges", said Zaluzhnyy. To his surprise, it seemed that Zelenskyy agreed. He allowed his generals to lead the process "without direct interference into military business".

Based on these assessments, we can conclude that Volodymyr Zelenskyy is ready to delegate functions to professional military personnel in the field of state defence, without abusing his own presidential powers. A particular contrast is seen against the background of the methods of the Russian president, who, according to the *New York Times*, independently directs the actions of his own army.

During the 2019 election campaign, Volodymyr Zelenskyy's critics actively used the thesis of his inability to per-

form the functions of supreme commander-in-chief, but the president's actions prove the opposite.

During the hostilities, Zelenskyy repeatedly demonstrated the ability to ensure effective coordination of political management with the military command, not afraid to delegate decision-making powers regarding the conduct of hostilities to the commanders on the ground.

Another important trend observed in the president's approach is that even his entourage is responsible for critical miscalculations. In the first half of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's tenure, he was often criticized for his subjective approach to personnel policy. First of all, the appointment of a close friend and partner, Igor Bakanov, to the post of head of the Security Services of Ukraine (SBU) without adequate experience was negatively assessed. Numerous questions arose not only during the work of Bakanov in peacetime but also with the beginning of the full-scale invasion by Russian troops. The loss of Kherson and scandals regarding the possible work of some people related to the state authorities in the interests of the enemy are still not fully understood. These factors influenced Zelenskyy's decision to remove Bakanov from his post and to initiate a restructuring of the special services in difficult conditions. Being close to the president or belonging to his old team no longer worked in this situation.

Currently, we can observe the effective work and interaction of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies, which may indicate the appropriateness of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's modern, somewhat democratic approach. At the same time, the permanent meetings of the commander-in-chief led by the president testify to his simultaneous deep control and understanding of the processes unfolding.

A necessary balance has been found, full trust and consolidation on the part of the military is preserved, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy has significant merit in this.

3. Unity of the international community

It is difficult to overestimate the help of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union in regard to the success of Ukraine. The arrival of weapons, macro-financial support, a well-established system and the logistics of armed forces training are all elements contributing to the stability and defence capability of the country, sources of modernization, and technical equipment of the army. Effective diplomacy, primarily from Zelenskyy, also plays an important role in ensuring the unity of Ukraine's international partners.

Since the beginning of the war, the presidential office has been working non-stop in the international arena. Zelenskyy conducts negotiations, meets delegations, and speaks remotely at events every single day. Without exaggeration, he has entered the list of the most influential politicians, which allows him to communicate on the same level with heads of states of the leading countries of the world. All the fears that arose at the beginning of Zelenskyy's term of office regarding his ability to conduct high-level negotiations have long since lost their relevance. The Ukrainian president has changed the state of affairs and included in the basic principle of Ukrainian diplomacy subjectivity and specificity, which were so lacking amongst his predecessors. The Ukrainian approach is based on the message "negotiations are not for the sake of negotiations, but for the sake of the result".

If at the beginning of the war, the international community had doubts about Ukraine's ability to resist, in a short period of time everyone revised their position. The feats of the Ukrainian people and the armed forces provided the president with the necessary tools to persuade Western partners and conduct diplomacy from a position of strength. As a result, we see the active inclusion in the process of the United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, and other countries that have changed their own approaches, coming to the understanding that the way to end the war, and its direct threat to other European capitals, lies through military aid to Ukraine.

Practical actions have led to concrete results. The main requirement and indicator of efficiency for the work of diplomats is determined by the president – the amount of military and financial aid from the host country. The main principle of Ukrainian diplomacy in general and the office of the president in particular was not an abstract discussion, but substantive tough negotiations.

In some places, such an approach had a dubious effect. This was the case during misunderstandings with Germany or, perhaps, a too symbolic gesture with the signing of an application to join NATO – but it was based on the principles of focusing on the result, lacking fear of voicing one's position and a readiness to take concrete steps.

With all this considered, we make the following conclusions regarding the achievements and changes in the policy and perception of Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the war against Ukraine:

1. Consolidating himself with the status of a political leader with an unprecedented level of support, capable of

consolidating society and “stitching” it around one common idea – the struggle for independence, territorial integrity, and freedom of Ukraine. If there was an opinion beforehand among the president’s critics that he did not live up to the expectations of all groups of voters and was losing trust, the war completely turned the situation around.

2. The demonstration of willingness to delegate authority and effective personnel policy in the security sphere. General Valery Zaluzhnyy has the authority to make decisions about the defence of his own country and full support from the office of the president, despite numerous speculations on this topic. No one tries to “appropriate” joint victories, but they are ready to bear responsibility for common miscalculations.

3. The ability to admit one’s own mistakes together with the ability to promptly correct wrong decisions and bear responsibility.

4. Bringing subjectivity and concreteness to Ukrainian politics, oriented to the result, changing the principles of conducting diplomacy, and the intention to act from a position of strength in the negotiation process.

5. The ability to work under critical pressure when it is necessary to make decisions in an operational mode and ensure effective coordination of all authorities.



Vladyslav Faraponov

US-Ukraine partnership only strengthened amid the biggest war in Europe since WWII

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, was caught in the middle of impeachment proceedings for the former president of the United States, Donald Trump. Ukraine's image in America and worldwide suffered significantly during that time. The victory of Joe Biden in the 2020 US presidential election gave Ukraine hope that old misunderstandings would not affect future relations, on which Ukraine relied very much.

At that time, no one would have considered that Russia would amass its troops on the border with Ukraine twice: first, in the spring of 2021; and again in the winter of 2022, when the invasion actually started. Thus, it was impossible to determine how significant US military, financial, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine would be amid the full-blown war Russia launched in February 2022.

Rough start

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, noted that Ukraine was lucky to have Joe Biden as the American president in the White House when Moscow launched its war of choice. And more than seven months into the war, the statement was proved time and again, as a deep understanding of Ukrainian needs and the direct involvement of the US administration in assisting Kyiv plays a crucial role on the battlefield.

At the same time, the United States is also a champion of foreign humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the American people have provided various forms of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since the very first days of the full-scale invasion. This aid has arrived in the spheres of health care, drinking water, sanitation, hygiene supplies, and protection for vulnerable children. The US also provides emergency medical supplies to meet the needs of hundreds of thousands of people, as well as emergency food assistance to meet the immediate needs of Ukrainians.

Nevertheless, it is important to admit that relations between Kyiv and Washington were not so warm and friendly prior to the full-scale invasion. Since early December 2021, top officials of the Biden administration, citing intelligence data, have warned their Ukrainian counterparts publicly and in private that the threat was imminent, and that Russia would proceed with a full-scale military intervention. Furthermore, given the events that occurred later, it turned out that the proposed strategy resulted in postponing the implementation of Russia's plans. Hence, this move helped Kyiv gain a significant amount of time to prepare its defence

capabilities and ultimately save lives, considering the hard winter that can be experienced in Ukraine. Also, it helped Ukraine organize and train its territorial defence forces, as the law regulating this wing of Ukraine's army entered into force only on 1st January 2022, less than two months before the invasion started.

And yet, Ukraine's leadership under Volodymyr Zelenskyy showed frustration and anger at the West in general and the US in particular for announcing Vladimir Putin's intentions without providing prior military aid to Ukraine, especially air defence systems. To some extent, the rhetoric of leaving Ukraine alone to face Russia's invasion was seen as a betrayal. This was unfolding at a time when Western diplomats were demonstratively urging their citizens to leave Ukraine amid notable security concerns that Russia was preparing a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Embassies were evacuated, one by one.

The issue of intelligence sharing is definitely one that helps parties have more secure relations and ensure normal relations are put in place after the aforementioned issues. Some media commentators even celebrated the move by the US to declassify intelligence on the invasion as "amazing deterrence". In late 2021 and early 2022, Washington was certain that Kyiv would not ignore the information and would use it to strengthen its military capabilities. Yet Ukraine still needed weapons and this public sharing of intelligence also had a reverse effect. Namely, international businesses and foreign embassies shut down, leaving Ukraine to go it alone, one-on-one, with Russia. Luckily, Ukraine withstood the Russian invasion of the whole country, particularly to-

wards the capital Kyiv, and managed to shift the frontline almost to its borders with Russia.

Turning point

Ukraine's ability to defend its primary infrastructure and key regional cities at the beginning of the full-scale war and in mid-autumn, and to conduct a massive counteroffensive in the east and in the south, has helped Kyiv talk with Washington on equal terms. In terms of bilateral relations, the weeks and months following 24 February were largely about overcoming a barrier of disbelief to form a comprehensive strategy that would help Ukraine win a long-lasting war with Russia. This was a significant turning point in US-Ukraine relations during the full-scale war when it came to policy and strategy.

However, there was another critical factor. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, despite being half Biden's age, was not afraid to demand additional military assistance to Kyiv. There is a famous quote from Ukraine's president that he is alleged to have made when responding to an American offer of evacuation: "The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride". This quote symbolizes Zelenskyy's passion for staying with his people and an ability to speak plainly and directly.

Through this strategy of directness, Zelenskyy won not just the hearts and minds of the American people and members of both chambers of the US Congress, but also won his personal right to be called a leader in the face of a real crisis. This image allowed Ukraine to open almost every door in terms of negotiations to speed up support for Ukraine and anti-Russian sanctions and other issues related to war.

In terms of policy, Ukraine's example certainly illustrates that the United States is ready to help those who are willing to win and help them achieve their aims. In the case of Ukraine, the final objective is to win the war with Russia. It is also necessary to mention that this key objective could be divided into three major goals. First, Ukraine would like to restore its territorial integrity and impose sovereignty over its lands as of 1991, not 23rd February 2022. Second, Kyiv needs more weapons to defend itself. Third, Ukraine needs to establish a special tribunal to prosecute Russia and then receive war reparations. Given all three goals are equally important, Ukraine's efforts are distributed evenly. Ensuring the European Union and other partners provide substantial amounts of aid to Ukraine is a joint challenge for Washington and Kyiv, as US resources are not endless and America would like other allies to contribute as well. At the same time, from Ukraine's perspective, Kyiv just does not have enough time to persuade others to get involved. That is why Zelenskyy and his administration keep turning to the United States.

The cost of war

It was very noticeable from the beginning of the full-scale war that there are two different branches of opinions in the Biden administration. The first is led by Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, who is known to support negotiating directly with Russia. The second is led by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who has always been clear when it comes to supporting Ukraine in resisting Russia's aggression. Nevertheless, the official line of the administration towards Kyiv, reiterated both by President Joe Biden and

US Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink, is that the United States will stand with Ukraine as long as it takes.

Ukraine understands that since 24th February 2022, Kyiv has received an enormous amount of aid for one country in less than a year. The same applies to the United States. For example, the United States used to allocate around 3 billion USD in military aid to Israel and Afghanistan, one of the largest sums. Since late February, Washington has committed almost 17 billion USD in security assistance to Ukraine. If we consider the period since 2014, the total US allocation reaches 20 billion USD.

Kyiv gives credit to the administration and Congress for their dedication and commitment to Ukraine. However, the most significant factor in this regard is that the US government was able to modify its aid to match Ukraine's needs on the battlefield. From March, the Biden administration shifted its strategy and would announce particular types of assistance only when it landed in Ukraine, not when it was planned. This was a crucial logistics decision which made it harder for the Russians to adapt to certain weapons and ammunition, especially considering the fact that the US-provided military capabilities are much more modern than those that Russia possesses. In addition, in the spring of 2022, Washington engaged with its NATO allies in order to compensate for the ammunition and weapons that some NATO members provided to Ukraine.

However, Ukraine's real needs in this war amount to more than Kyiv's partners could provide. According to the National Bank of Ukraine, every day of the war, losses add up to 50 billion hryvnias (around 1.2 million USD) as of mid-sum-

mer 2022. Every day in early spring cost around 4.5 billion hryvnias, hence the price of the war has increased 10-fold.

There are two dimensions in which the United States helps Ukraine. These include the Presidential Drawdown Authority, which ensures delivery of equipment to Ukraine by drawing from stocks of the US Department of Defense, and the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which allows the Department of Defense to procure materiel directly from industry to support Ukraine. Both methods have been very effective and they equally demonstrate the real desire of the US Administration not just to support Ukraine but to do its best to aid in the victory.

In terms of US policy and political and military strategy, there is also a major shift that still has not been fully completed. The real issue is that Ukraine needs more training, including abroad, and coordinating efforts with partners. In the meantime, some specific defence capabilities, such as the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) and M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, known as HIMARS, have become a symbol of successful bilateral cooperation. Furthermore, the fact that the US Department of Defense plans to set up a new command to arm Ukraine once again proves that the United States considers the Russia-Ukraine war as a test of its ability to aid in the defence of its partner and ally. Moreover, this indirect conflict with Russia definitely demonstrates that Kyiv and Washington working together are much more powerful than Russia alone. Ukraine's counteroffensive in the east, in the Kharkiv region, and in the south, only proves that statement.

The impact of US politics on Ukraine

There is the challenge, of course, of the donor-recipient dilemma. Here the United States is the largest donor of assistance to Ukraine and considers aid packages in accordance with its own domestic interests and ability to provide the needed type of assistance in a timely manner. On the other hand, Ukraine, as the recipient party, continues to lack more than the donor can provide.

In this context, it is essential to mention that the more than 30 years of partnership between the United States and Ukraine play a key role here. This partnership operates within an American bipartisan consensus which understands that it is in the interest of the United States to support Ukraine. Considering the threat that Russia poses to the US-led world order with its revisionist view of history, this relationship with Ukraine is very important. It remains to be seen whether it will hold up in terms of the upcoming US midterm elections and if such a consensus remains in both chambers of the US Congress.

Senators, congressmen, and congresswomen of both major parties registered bills and resolutions that aimed to put more pressure on Moscow and countries that supported the Putin regime. For example, as a response to Russia's attempt to annex four regions of Ukraine, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham introduced a bill which would terminate American economic and military assistance to any country that recognized these Ukrainian territories as a part of Russia. A couple of months prior, alongside Democrat Richard Blumenthal, Graham proposed to designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. This move, however, has not been supported by the US State Department – the body which is

responsible for such designations. At the same time, Congressional efforts are also very important, as the US Congress can vote on another aid package for Ukraine and impose its own sanctions on Russia.

Another final, important issue relates to negotiations in the face of Putin's threat of using a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine. The United States has been clear that this threat has not gone unnoticed and has developed various scenarios to ensure a proper response.

All in all, paradoxically or not, the Russian war against Ukraine has only strengthened the US-Ukraine partnership. Thanks largely to President Zelenskyy's direct approach, this relationship is stronger and more flexible than ever before. Ukraine has no other ally in the world that can provide such extensive, diverse aid in the hour of need.



Marta Drabczuk, Tomasz Stępniewski

Ukraine's economic reconstruction plans after the war with Russia

After the war ends, Ukraine will have to reinvent itself as a state and rise from the ruins. According to independent estimates, up to half of the country has been destroyed. Much depends on Ukraine itself, but the scale and speed of the aid that the country receives from Western states and institutions will also be crucial.

Russia's war against Ukraine is destroying not only Ukraine's physical assets but also its society and resources. Russian forces are destroying military and civilian infrastructure. They are bombarding, shelling, and occupying towns, damaging mines, and burning down petrol storage facilities, chemical plants, and industrial premises, as well as fields of crops. The Ukrainian economy, weakened by the two-year coronavirus pandemic, is struggling with a deep recession. The Ukrainian government is accumulating resources for defensive purposes and aid for households and businesses which have suffered from the war.

The ongoing conflict does not allow for a precise assessment of the increasing losses, but their scale is enormous considering the disruption of infrastructure objects, the displaced population, a fall in demand, obstacles to imports and exports, a fuel crisis, and a slowdown in investments and economic reforms. On the one hand, since the Russian invasion started, the Ukrainian government has been gathering information about the damage as well as working on minimizing losses during the war. It has also started planning activities for the rebuilding of the country and the Ukrainian economy once the conflict ends. On the other hand, Russia continues to conduct massive bombardments in order to cause the greatest possible damage to Ukraine in both material and human terms, which also hinders effective planning to reconstruct a country which is being destroyed by Russia systematically and deliberately.

Clearing and rebuilding

Attempts to determine the needs of the post-war reconstruction plan and to prepare a basis for it took place during a special round table discussion held in Kyiv on 24th March 2022, just one month after the war began. Those taking part included representatives of the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development, the Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories, the State Architectural and Construction Inspection of Ukraine, the Confederation of Builders of Ukraine, and domestic and international industry associations. Tasks identified as among the most urgent included organizing financing for reconstruction, constructing temporary residences for returning people, and rebuilding infrastructure as well as recreating jobs,

severing trade relations with the aggressor, compensating citizens for losses, and providing loan guarantees for private business.

The first plan for the reconstruction of Ukraine, called U-24, was unveiled by Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal on 7th April 2022. It consisted of the three stages. The first stage is already under way – this is clearing up after the Russian devastation and reinstating what is left. Pursuant to a government resolution passed on 19th April on approving the procedure for dismantling premises damaged or destroyed as a result of extraordinary events, military or terrorist action, work began on clearing away ruined premises and rubble.

The second stage also began and is connected with returning the local population and businesses to their homes and workplaces. This involves restoring communications and renewing electricity and water supplies to around a million households which have been cut off from the rest of the country. Several temporary bridges have been opened and roads restored in order to deliver construction materials, among other things; for example, the bridges over the Teterev River near Kyiv and over the Irpin River (destroyed once again by a mine on 28th June), and the bridge on the Kyiv-Zhytomyr route in Stoyanka. Roads have been cleared and surviving buildings are being renovated. Military engineers have demined the area and removed the aggressor's destroyed military equipment and burnt-out and shot-up civilian vehicles.

On 1st June 2022, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the Deputy Head of the President's Office, announced that on 45% of the evacuated territories, railway connections had been restored

and were constantly being targeted by Russian missiles. Medical facilities had been opened in 326 settlements and pharmacies in over 400. Altogether, 85% of the abandoned settlements had come back to the life. These two stages are financed from a sum of 1.6 million hryvnias from budget reserves – these are small in comparison with the amount of the destruction – 400 million hryvnias for the Kyiv oblast and 200 million hryvnias for Kyiv, plus 250 million each for the Sumy, Chernihiv, and Kharkiv oblasts, and 100 million hryvnias for the Zhytomyr oblast. The third, longest and costliest stage will involve rebuilding entire villages and towns with the participation of foreign partners and donors. However, this will only be possible after the war ends and the political situation stabilizes.

At the gates of the EU

In early April 2022, a group of Ukrainian, European, and American economists from the Centre for Economic Policy Research prepared a document titled “A Blueprint for the Reconstruction of Ukraine”¹, which denotes three phases of the reconstruction: immediate restoration of basic civilian infrastructure (along the lines of natural disaster procedures); rebuilding of critical and service infrastructure (including public services); and constructing foundations for future development and modernization of the country. The main challenge, besides the operational problems arising from ongoing military actions, fighting, and bombardments, remains the question of the funds for the reconstruction.

¹ *Напис про відбудову України*, Centre for Economic Policy Research, https://cepr.org/sites/default/files/news/BlueprintReconstructionUkraine_ukr.pdf

On 21st April 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appointed a National Council for Recovery of Ukraine from the War, which was headed by Prime Minister Shmyhal and Head of the President's Office Andriy Yermak. The Council is tasked with preparing strategic initiatives and developing proposals for high-priority reforms and a post-war action plan for rebuilding the country, modernizing its economy, fighting unemployment, as well as restoring and retaining objects of cultural heritage². A week later, Minister of Economy Yulia Svyrydenko presented the assumptions considered when developing a post-war road map for the country's development.

On 8th June 2022, during the Ukraine Virtual Investor Conference, Zelenskyy appealed to foreign investors for short- and long-term support for Ukraine. In the short-term, investors can join the UNITED24 platform, where funds are gathered for immediate aid from international financial and humanitarian organizations, transnational corporations, and donations from private individuals. Long-term support is going to consist of buying Ukrainian war bonds and direct investment. According to the Minister of Finance, in the first quarter of 2022, Ukraine took out foreign loans (from the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, and the European Investment Bank) totalling 162.9 billion hryvnias (approx. 423.2 billion USD) which provides 120% of the amount planned for that period before the Russian invasion. Issuing treasury bonds enabled 66.2 billion hryvnias to be raised (the largest bond

² Положення про Національну раду з відновлення України від наслідків війни, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/2662022-42225>

holders remain Ukrainian banks with 51.17%); war bonds worth 79.7 billion hryvnias were sold in 45 tranches.

On 13th June, the Council appointed by the president presented the first draft of the National Council for Recovery of Ukraine from the War. This assumes full access to the European Union and the G7 states' markets, which is to enable Ukrainian manufacturers to enter global supply chains. In order to support Ukrainian exporters, on 19th May 2022, the European Parliament supported a proposal by the European Commission concerning the suspension of customs duties on Ukrainian exports to the EU from 4th June 2022. The United States also introduced a one-year duty-free system for Ukrainian steel. Canada lifted its customs duty, while trade with the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan is also expected to be liberalized. On 24th June, during a summit of EU member state leaders in Brussels, there came the announcement of the European Council's decision to grant Ukraine the status of candidate to join the European Union, which involves the start of the long route of economic modernization in line with EU standards.

Wide rails

The objective of the plan is to build the economy on the principles of deregulation and liberalization. Since the ports which constitute the main transport route for metallurgical and agricultural goods are blocked, the Ukrainian government is working in collaboration with partners from the European Union on the creation of logistics routes westward, and on increasing their capacity (including by changing the rail gauge). There are also plans to replace the export of raw materials with processing in those industries which pro-

vide the greatest export revenues, particularly agriculture and metallurgy. Obsolete and unprofitable sites (including mines in the Donbas and architecture left over from the Soviet Union) will not be restored. The priority in the reconstruction of residential buildings and industrial premises is to be the use of the latest technologies (particularly energy efficient ones), modern spatial planning projects (work has already begun on these), and town planning programmes. It is assumed that the reconstruction should enable a technological leap forward, a break from post-Soviet economic dependencies, and the creation of potential for economic growth after the end of the war. Because of this, a balance should be sought during the reconstruction between the “old” and the “new” (“smart”, “green”).

Even after the war, being a neighbour of Russia will not be safe, thus Ukraine will need an extensive domestic military-industrial complex. This applies to both the purchase and manufacture of arms, including through the transfer of military technology which will become the motor for development of civilian sectors of the economy. Ukraine should increase its energy independence and its own gas production and invest in the development of nuclear power. The National Plan for Recovery of Ukraine from the War draft assumes the involvement of Ukrainian companies in the reconstruction to be at least 60%, which will also be one of the elements for reviving the Ukrainian economy.

On 18th May 2022, the European Commission approved its Plan for Recovery of Ukraine prepared on the basis of an analysis of needs and losses incurred in the Ukrainian government's recovery plan. It will take over a decade to implement. A *sine qua non* condition is to be linking the

money received with the control of its spending and the implementation of reforms, in particular in the rule of law and combating corruption. The funds will be collected using the “RebuildUkraine” instrument, from member states and foreign partners, and are to be allocated to the investments and reforms aimed at integrating Ukraine with the European Union’s internal market.

The Commission also proposed the possibility of boosting the fund with money through additional payments from the member states into the EU budget, or the relocation of money within the budget. This solution was not supported by the largest contributors to the budget, especially Germany, France, Belgium, and Holland. Neither is there any chance of using frozen assets or gold and currency reserves held in bank accounts in European Union states or their allies, due to the long legal procedure of seizing these and limiting the owners’ right to administer the assets. The beneficiary and the administrator of the funds will be Ukraine, and the process itself will proceed in the accordance with the needs of Ukraine, and not of the aid donors. The reconstruction is conditional on modernization of the economy (in accordance with the new regional development strategy being worked on) and on implementation of the most modern solutions – energy efficient, safe, and inclusive.

* * *

According to World Bank estimates, as much as 45% of the Ukrainian economy will require reconstruction after being destroyed. The war is still not over and some scenarios predict that the armed conflict could continue for many more

months, which would lead to even greater losses for Ukraine. The conflict affects not only the eastern part of the Ukrainian state, as cities all over the country are being targeted along with their infrastructure. Without the active assistance of Western countries, Ukraine will be unable to cope with the enormous scale of the problems and the lack of financing for economic reconstruction.

While it has been granted candidate status for EU membership, we already know that this will be a long road. On the one hand, the war goes on, and on the other, the scale of the challenges faced by the land on the Dnipro River is also immense. The hope connected with EU membership will undoubtedly be an additional motivation for Ukrainian society and its political decision-makers. In addition, rebuilding Ukraine's economy will involve not only aid from the European Union but also the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other financial institutions, as well as countries such as the US, UK, Japan, etc.

It should be stressed that after the war, Ukraine will have to reinvent itself as a country. Much depends on Ukraine itself, but also on the scale and the speed of the aid which it receives from Western states and institutions.



Victoria Vdovychenko

Shaping up social resistance: Zelenskyy's approach to rearranging Ukraine

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has become one of the symbols of Ukrainian resistance in the West. His famous tweet “I need ammunition, not a ride” as well as the live streams from the centre of Kyiv when the missile strikes were taking place in the first days of the full-scale invasion inspired many Ukrainians, and also became iconic for other leaders worldwide. He and his wife Olena were in the lens of *Vogue* photographer Annie Leibovitz, and *TIME* magazine nominated Zelenskyy as one of the 100 most influential people of 2022. His face is depicted in murals and on postage stamps. How do the Ukrainian population view their president? What does the coordination between the governmental authorities and civil society of Ukraine look like?

Criticism by civil society and trust within society

Prior to the full-scale invasion, almost three years ago when Zelenskyy was elected, Ukrainian civil society was by no

means unanimous on the choice. While Zelenskyy won the presidential election by a significant margin with more than 70% of the vote, the heated debate between his supporters and opponents continued up until the start of the full-scale invasion. Zelenskyy was able to achieve such an election result largely due to the “wider agenda” of his election programme. In fact, he did not devote many aspects of his programme to the situation in Donbas or Crimea, unlike his rival Petro Poroshenko. Therefore, it gave him the chance to “capture” a significant part of the Russian-speaking Ukrainian electorate. Yet, this is exactly what turned a part of the active pro-Ukrainian segment of society against him – people were worried that the war with Russia and the reforms necessary for rapprochement with the European Union had taken a back seat for the newly-elected authorities.

Civil society’s criticism continued into Zelenskyy’s presidency. Particular areas of concern revolved around issues related to the rule of law and the judicial branch of power, where a lack of transparency and integrity frequently led Ukrainians to protest. Moreover, challenges arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as when Zelenskyy announced the closing of Ukraine’s borders despite masses of Ukrainians trying to return home from abroad during the lockdowns in March 2020.

From 2014, Ukrainian society became more and more prepared for a tectonic shift in relations with Russia. Over the last eight years, before the full-scale invasion, there was a gradual decline in positive attitudes towards Russia, but even despite several months of escalation near the borders of Ukraine, 34% of Ukrainians at the beginning of February 2022 still had a positive attitude towards Russians. The

polls consistently demonstrated that the army, volunteers, ordinary people in the communities, as well as the church enjoyed the greatest trust within Ukrainian society. At the same time, trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine achieved its peak: 72% of Ukrainians expressed their willingness to trust the army.

Meanwhile, 27% trusted the president and 50% did not. Accordingly, the trust-distrust balance was -23%. Compared to December 2020, the indicators deteriorated. The share of those who trusted the president decreased by five points and the trust-distrust balance had decreased by 10. The remaining governmental institutions had negative trust-distrust balances. In fact, among respondents, distrust was recorded in the central government institutions (president, parliament, government) and law enforcement agencies (national police, patrol police, security ser). Another survey by the "Rating" agency in September 2021 found that 50% of respondents expressed confidence in Zelenskyy, higher than in February 2021 (38%) or even September 2020 (44%).

Taking into account this trust in the army and the high distrust of the governmental authorities, which increased from 2014 in particular, Ukrainians managed to elaborate their own system of self-organization and self-coordination. Moreover, starting from the autumn of 2021, the number of territorial defence training and guerrilla movements increased significantly, signalling that Ukrainians were heavily involved in preparations to be more resilient. The lack of a proactive approach from the Ukrainian authorities did not stop Ukrainians from continuing their own preparations, peaking at the beginning of 2022. However, a lack of sincere communication with society in those decisive months – even

days – prior to the full-scale invasion was still evident. One Ukrainian media outlet, *Ukrainska Pravda*, attempted to reconstruct the first days of the full-scale invasion and it found that there was some hesitation on the part of the Ukrainian leadership in preparing Ukrainian society for the invasion.

New methods of communication

It is obvious that since 24th February 2022, President Zelenskyy has completely changed his communication with Ukrainians. Starting from the first moments, Zelenskyy left no doubts: he was staying in Kyiv. These changes were also seen in his physical appearance – updating his classic suit for military fatigues. He clearly showed the whole world that he is at home, he is not afraid, and is not going to hide anywhere. Most importantly, he did not wait out the attack on the capital hiding in a bunker, but on the contrary, he recorded video messages to his citizens and together with the Armed Forces of Ukraine represented the “first front” of Ukraine, fighting both politically and militarily. As a result, 98% of Ukrainians believe in Ukraine’s victory in the war with Russia and 91% approve of the activities of their president.

Since the very beginning of the hostilities and the introduction of martial law, communication between the Ukrainian authorities and society has intensified. The daily video addresses of the president to the Ukrainian people have become a kind of ritual – for Zelenskyy himself, but also for millions of Ukrainians who tune in to hear his voice. Undoubtedly, the public surveys and communication launched this year via the *Diia* e-governance application and platform are another positive practice which will contribute to the es-

establishment of an operational dialogue between the people and the authorities. The Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine has conducted online testing among Ukrainian entrepreneurs, which should help the authorities build a strategy for economic recovery. This includes assistance for the development of Ukrainian business and exports, private participation in the development of analytics, the creation of tools for economic recovery, and necessary solutions for local communities and the financial and credit sector.

Above all, Zelenskyy demonstrated a new level of state communication never before seen in Ukraine. It was thanks to his determination and confidence, the persistent defence of the country, and support for citizens in this time of crisis that the president's rating reached an unprecedented 91%. But, surprisingly, Zelenskyy's high rating could be seen among citizens in other countries as well. In particular, in the US it is 72%. American comedian Bill Maher even joked that finally in the US there is a president whom everyone loves and who has an extremely high rating, and this is the president of Ukraine. Moreover, due to the strong position of Zelenskyy, the military achievements, and national resilience, the West also had to shift its mindset from "generally neutral" to "complete admiration". At the same time, the grain and energy crises lead to a certain fatigue of Ukraine in some European societies such as Hungary, Austria, or even Slovakia.

Society's response

It's worth mentioning that Ukrainians do not have such "blind admiration" for Zelenskyy as was seen in the EU or the US. One of the causes is the ability of Ukrainians to self-or-

ganize, which is perfectly manifested in crisis conditions and has helped even now. The other side of the coin is what the Ukrainians jokingly call “the search for treason”. This is a tendency to constantly expect the worst, which creates a certain vigilance. If we talk purely about the topic of war, then for Ukrainians, it is not Zelenskyy who is in first place, but Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Not so much a public figure, he became a real hero after launching a successful counter-offensive in the east and south of Ukraine.

Moreover, from the first days of the full-scale invasion, volunteers became the second front of the fight against the Russian troops, supporting the humanitarian needs of the civilian population and becoming soldiers in territorial defence units and in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. As in 2014, society’s response to the challenge of external aggression turned out to be swift and effective. Even before the start of the full-scale invasion, as tensions around Ukraine increased in 2021, Ukrainians, on their own initiative, actively participated in preparations to repel aggression. The contribution of patriotic activists to the formation of an effective system of territorial defence turned out to be enormous, if not decisive. Of particular note is the fact that the purchase of expensive equipment for territorial defence units was often carried out at the expense of the fighters themselves or thanks to volunteer networks.

Another lesson from 2014 was that helping each other using the Ukrainian language turned out to be significant in the fate of some villages and towns. Also, evacuations, temporary lodgings, as well as humanitarian support for internally displaced persons (IDPs), were in effect from the

first days of the invasion. Most of the IDPs were able to adapt to the situation due to the already well-developed grassroots self-organization movements among Ukrainians, together with almost unprecedented assistance from the democratic world.

Finally, a surge of Ukrainian patriotism and resistance in the temporarily occupied territories became a phenomenon that still needs a comprehensive understanding and scientific study. Civic activism was manifested in numerous peaceful protests against the Russian occupation in places such as Kherson, Enerhodar, Berdyansk, and Melitopol. In some places, this included the creation of a local guerrilla movement.

Public organizations and charitable foundations became volunteer headquarters and hubs for collecting resources necessary for the conditions of the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people against the Russian occupiers. This is evidence of the existence of a strong and united civil society in the country, which was finally formed and united in the face of a terrible threat. What is more, civil society activists openly declare that the inclusion and partnership of civil society is needed not only from the Ukrainian authorities, but from the EU as well. And that is why it is very important to use consultation tools and formats in which these consultations are carried out continuously.

Reforms equally important

For the most part, the EU perceives the civil society of Ukraine as its partner, an auditor of Ukrainian governmental actions. The EU has already provided around 60 million EUR in new funds for civil society activities in war-affected

communities, together with 335 million EUR for humanitarian aid. Even during the war, thanks in part to pressure from civil society, the Ukrainian authorities are attempting to continue the reform process, outlining reform agenda priorities and presenting them both in Lugano (July) and Berlin (October). In particular, the international community was eager to see concrete reform steps in the sectors of the judiciary, economy, energy, and public administration.

The process of relaunching the judiciary reform began even before the full-scale invasion, since judicial reform is one of the main EU priorities for Ukraine's integration process. This included certain activities such as resuming the functions of the High Council of Justice and the High Qualification Commission of Judges of Ukraine, as well as making it easier for people to gain access to justice and participate in the administration of justice. On top of this, the authorities have expressed that digitalization of the judiciary will be a priority area for overcoming the aftermath of the war.

Gaining the status of an EU membership candidate in June 2022 also obliges Ukraine to continue its reform process, including of the judiciary. The European Council's specific requirements in this regard are straightforward – Ukraine must implement reform of the Constitutional Court in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission. At the heart of this reform should be a transparent competition for the Constitutional Court, which will include the vetting of candidates for integrity. Ukraine also needs to complete a cleansing of the High Council of Justice with the participation of the Ethics Council and make a transparent selection to the High Qualifications Commission. The European Commission notes that if Ukraine's

judicial reform is successful, it will not only build an independent and accountable justice system, but also reduce the influence of stakeholders who have previously used the justice system to undermine the rule of law in Ukraine.

Another pivotal challenge for Ukraine remains the fight against corruption, as was noted by the EU and international partners during discussions in Lugano. At the same time, it is worth mentioning some of the achievements in this area, including the Anti-Corruption Strategy 2021-2025 and the establishment of anti-corruption institutions such as the National Agency on Corruption Prevention, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, as well as the High Anti-Corruption Court.

In this way, Ukraine continues to emphasize that it is willing to further decrease corruption in areas that Ukrainians consider to be the most corrupt: customs and taxation, courts and law enforcement agencies, state regulation of the economy, construction and land policies, the defence sector, health care, and social protection. Ultimately, Ukrainian resilience is being challenged by all of the above risks and threats, made worse by both Ukrainian and international structural shortcomings.

Conclusions

Objectively, the Russian Federation is trying to take advantage of the situation in order to restore its influence in Ukraine by brutally invading part of Ukrainian territory, continuing the hybrid war, and systematically using political, economic, informational, psychological, cyber, and military means. Additionally, Ukraine is affected by a wide number

of challenges arising from the effects of climate change and increasing man-made pressures on the environment, pandemics, growing inequality, rapid technological changes, terrorism, international crime, and more.

However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been met with fierce resistance from Ukraine's military, its government, as well as ordinary people, proving that it has its own resilient approach, a subject to be further analysed and assessed. On the one hand, Ukraine continues to be a laboratory for innovative ideas and practices within the domain of resilience, which gives substance to an all-societal approach towards security and defence. On the other hand, many new practices are available to be leveraged and new analytical capabilities offer opportunities to rethink old solutions that may have run their course.

It is certainly clear for Ukrainians that not all problems can be solved by a competent information policy alone or through the strategic communication of the president. Effective and fair economic revival will be impossible without a systematic transformation of the entire social environment – from political power to labour relations. Ukrainians understand that the improvement of their well-being will not come immediately and not to everyone at the same time. However, the most important thing now is the feeling of a change in the very atmosphere of life, and confidence that Ukraine can overcome the old defects of its national statehood which have been eating away at it from the inside for years and decades. This, in turn, will motivate the people of Ukraine to even greater achievements.



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The character of Russia's armed conflict with Ukraine changed in February 2022. It was then that Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine. Contrary to the Kremlin's expectations, the first days of the Russian offensive did not result in Ukraine's swift capitulation. The Ukrainian army put up effective resistance against Russian forces, which experienced major losses in personnel and equipment. Russians have not succeeded in gaining full control over key cities in Eastern and Central Ukraine. A number of Ukrainian cities continued to be targeted by mass rocket and artillery attacks and bombings. The defenders resisted Russian forces but were unable to halt the Russian offensive. Attacks carried out on a large scale against civilian targets bear all the hallmarks of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The International Criminal Court in The Hague has already launched an investigation into this matter. The European Union and NATO provided assistance to Ukraine, while at the same time, sanctions and an escalating boycott of Russia are being increasingly felt by the Russian economy and by ordinary citizens of the Russian Federation.

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