

Ihor Kondratiev

PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION: THE UKRAINIAN CONTEXT





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Translated from Ukrainian by Olena Prokopenko

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The book explores the possibilities of futurology and the prospects of using historical knowledge in scientific forecasting. It defines the concept of European civilization and examines the key factors that contributed to its formation and development. Ukraine's history is considered part of the broader European historical context. An attempt is made to forecast the prospects for Europe's future development. The final chapter of the study was written by Artificial Intelligence.

The publication is intended for students, postgraduate researchers, scholars, lecturers, and anyone seeking theoretical and applied knowledge of the history of European civilization and the potential of futurology.

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*The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam
yesterday – but never jam to-day.*
Lewis Carroll

YESTERDAY – TODAY – TOMORROW (a literary foreword)¹

Yesterday

Just yesterday, humans wrapped in animal hides warmed themselves by a fire in a cave; just yesterday, they gazed at the starry sky and named constellations; just yesterday, humans learned not to kill but to domesticate animals. Just yesterday, humans built their first homes.

Just yesterday, humans sowed seeds in the ground and harvested crops; just yesterday, the first clay pot was shaped; just yesterday, the first saddle was placed on a horse, iron ore was loaded into a furnace for the first time, the first thread passed through the eye of a needle, and the first rocket entered Earth's orbit.

Just yesterday, a journey around the globe took years, and not so long ago an unknown sailor from the top of a ship's foremast shouted with all his might, "Land!" Just yesterday, letters were sent with merchant caravans; just yesterday, people walked on pilgrimages across half the world. Just yesterday, news of wars and the fall of kingdoms reached people many years after the events themselves.

Just yesterday, a person's world was limited to their tribe, and later – their village and country. Just yesterday, someone born a peasant could not become a city dweller; a fisherman's son became a fisherman, and a king's son became a king.

Just yesterday, the head of a clan led his tribe to war against their neighbours; just yesterday, the first chief was elected at a tribal council. Just yesterday, wars were fought with stones, then with swords and arrows, and later with tanks and cannons. Just yesterday, rulers were hailed by the builders of pyramids, and principes sat in the senate. Only yesterday, the first nuclear explosion was heard. Just yesterday, truth belonged to the strong, and history was written by the victors. And yesterday, chieftains, kings, and governments sat down at the negotiating table for the first time and agreed to end a war.

Just yesterday, someone drew images of people and animals with charcoal on a cave wall, someone moulded a female figure from clay, and a sculptor took marble

¹ The basis for the "literary" foreword was an essay I wrote, which won first place in a competition organized by the UN Representation in Ukraine to mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. Kondratiev, I. (2020, October 26). *Zavtra* [Tomorrow]. United Nations in Ukraine. <https://surli.cc/ohdfge> [in Ukrainian].

in hand and turned it into a statue. Just yesterday, an artist painted the first portrait, and a poet wrote the first poem.

Just yesterday, humans began asking themselves, “Who am I?” and “Where am I?” – and invented gods. Just yesterday, people believed the Earth was flat and rested on three whales in a vast ocean. Just yesterday, a splint made of branches and rope was used for the first time on a broken arm. Just yesterday, the first school appeared, and the first woman sat at a school desk; just yesterday, the first university textbook was published, and a human travelled into space.

Today

Today, people build high-rise apartments and country cottages, dress and buy shoes in specialized stores, purchase food and drinks for themselves and their pets. But there are places on the planet where there is not only a lack of food but also of water, where people live in boxes and have neither jobs nor education.

The modern economy is capable of meeting any human need; all scientific knowledge and material resources are directed toward this, and global production networks span the entire planet. But the image of a product becomes more important than the product itself, presentation outweighs functionality, and promotion surpasses purpose. People buy not the product but the image, not the service but the status, not the item but the lifestyle. The human dream – “to be on trend” – demands constant consumption in the race for fashion.

Today, information spreads instantly, but more and more news is artificially created to influence and manipulate. With its help, hatred and love are stirred, compassion is provoked or fury ignited, turning a person kind or cruel. The virtual world is becoming harder to distinguish from the real one; reality is increasingly replaced by the screen of an electronic gadget. News turns into a show. The horror of events evokes not compassion but curiosity.

Increasingly, the collective yields to the individual, stereotypes are more often called traditions, ignorance is labelled knowledge, and religion is idealized. More and more often, rejection of the other is attempted to be framed as the norm.

From democracy, only the form is taken, not the essence. Democracy is replaced by elections, forgetting the central role of private property, justice, and the rule of law.

Increasingly, politicians are not the flagships of societal progress but weather vanes of public expectations. More and more, populism replaces progress, and public hopes are reduced to the ancient cry – “bread and circuses”.

Borders are becoming more transparent, but some countries are becoming even more closed. And still, here and there, it is not the state that exists for the person, but the person for the state.

In addition to “conventional” wars, we are increasingly accompanied by hybrid wars, information wars, and economic wars. But the law of the strong is no longer a

guarantee for building world empires or being right in international relations. More and more often, respected international organizations are only able to record and condemn conflicts, having no other means to resolve them.

Today, religion is becoming a formality, but at the same time more and more people choose the path of fanaticism.

Modern science advances our civilization, but becomes an inaccessible luxury for many. Medicine is making human life longer. Education is becoming international, yet remains inaccessible to many people on the planet.

Technical devices are becoming ever smaller and thinner, electronic databases store information from millions of books, and computers and robots already serve people. Art is becoming elitist, while culture turns kitschy and mass-produced.

Tomorrow

The person of the future should not have to worry about finding food or shelter. Hunger and water scarcity must be unacceptable; people should study, not struggle to survive. Equalizing living standards should be achieved through the development of entrepreneurship and tourism, education, and national economies. International aid, except in exceptional cases, should not be provided in money or food, but in the form of knowledge and technology.

The global economy will be built on the achievements of digital knowledge and based on the free exchange of information. Human needs should be met through renewable material resources, the concept of “waste” should gradually disappear and be fully replaced by “recyclable material”. Functionality and convenience, quality and reliability should play a greater role. These qualities should give things their value, while quality becomes the norm. Market expansion will help address the problem of increasing consumption, but consumption itself will become responsible.

Tomorrow, communications will become even faster, land and air transport will compete with one another, and near-Earth space will begin to be developed for integration into economic processes. Information will become responsible, and critical thinking will form the foundation of educational programs and information policy.

Societies will become more open, and improved living standards in many countries will reduce the need for migration. Education will become international and accessible, including through distance learning and open access to the Internet.

Respect for the individual will become the foundation of social relations. Social development will remain a process – an eternal search for harmony and balance between the personal and the public, the national and the international, rights and responsibilities.

The essence of democracy will remain respect for the citizen-owner. Social responsibility, which must be cultivated and promoted, will prevent certain countries from being thrown into the abyss of social and economic experiments. Populism must not replace social progress.

Tomorrow, there will be fewer wars, because aggressive foreign policy will be economically disadvantageous, and will automatically worsen life in such a country. A new international community, as a new representative body of the international community (or a radically reformed United Nations), will be able to stop all forms of war and conflict and serve as an effective international arbitrator.

As soon as tomorrow, religion will no longer be an instrument of national separation, but one of the tools of social development. The promotion of scientific knowledge will become an important factor in the development of human civilization. Knowledge itself will become the main capital of the future and its primary resource. Breakthrough discoveries in medicine – particularly in genetic engineering, digitalization, and robotics – will be key drivers of this process. Medicine will become accessible.

Education will become more valuable than oil and gold deposits; it will be international, prestigious, and significant. The development of art will make it possible for everyone to become acquainted with the finest works.

The step into tomorrow begins today, but it is a step that must be taken, because tomorrow never happens today.

People must once again look to the sky and give names to the constellations.

*Call a prediction a plan – and it will
have a better chance of coming true.*

IS IT POSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE FUTURE?

Futurology² has not yet become a science, but it is no longer associated with magic, seers, and oracles. This approach should not be surprising, as the forerunners of futurology were religions. They were the first to raise questions about the future of humanity and the world. Questions like “What will happen tomorrow?”, “What will it be like?”, “What should be done and how?” have troubled humans since they first became self-aware. Every religion owes its existence to the attempt to answer these questions by formulating responses to “What is life?” and “What is death?”, promising the continuation of human existence in some other form after death. Mythological thinking has always been part of human perception, which created a need for Delphic oracles, the prophecies of Nostradamus,³ the predictions of Vanga, who was popular in the post-Soviet space, and so on. Even today, many reputable media outlets publish horoscopes or tarot predictions. Let us not forget the activities of betting companies, as well as the forecasts of financial consultants and stock market analysts. Predictions of fluctuations in the securities and currency markets, which may be based on mathematical models, still to some extent cultivate a person’s belief in miracles.

Alongside the search for miracles – “eternal life”, “instant wealth”, the pursuit of new emotions and experiences, and so on – there is planning: a kind of vision of what “tomorrow” will be like based on what exists “today” and what was “yesterday”. Planning is embedded in the very biological program of living beings – both humans and animals build shelters, store food, care about reproduction, and raise their young. This is an essential part of evolution, because without such knowledge and skills, neither humans nor animals would survive.

But unlike the animal world, humans went further and began to plan all areas of their lives. From personal goals – planning education (choosing a major, school, college, or university), family planning (“I like that person – let’s buy this rug for the living room, our kids will love playing on it”), to life planning (“the vacation will be in July, and this Friday we’re meeting with friends”). So, call a prediction a “plan” – and it immediately becomes more real.

Can scientific forecasting exist? Forecasting refers to the process of predicting the future state of an object or phenomenon by analysing its past and present,

² Futurum – Latin for “future”; Greek Logos – “study”.

³ Michel de Nostredame (1503–1566) – a French astrologer and oracle, author of prophecies known for their vagueness and inaccuracy, allowing for extremely broad interpretation.

through systematic evaluation of information about the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the chosen subject's development.⁴ The result of forecasting is a forecast – knowledge about the future and the probable evolution of current trends of a specific phenomenon or object in its continued existence.

Science (in its broad sense) makes it possible to carry out forecasting in many areas, from weather forecasting and earthquake probabilities, to economic forecasts (business plans, transport logistics, technological forecasting) and political science (election processes, public sentiment), and so on.

In fundamental science, let us at least recall the discovery of Pluto. Back in 1906, the orbit of this dwarf planet was mathematically calculated by American diplomat, orientalist and mathematician Percival Lowell, although this micro-planet was discovered only in 1930.⁵ The existence of an elementary particle – the Higgs boson, was described by British theoretical physicist Peter Higgs in 1964, but its presence was proven experimentally only in 2012.⁶

But most often, society becomes the object of forecasting. For example, just a few days before the beginning of the “Arab Spring” – the mass protests and conflicts in Arab countries that began in 2010 and continue to this day – its onset was predicted by researchers at the Institute for Complex Systems at the University of Cambridge. The scientists, led by Dr. Yaneer Bar-Yam, paid attention to demographic and socio-economic development factors in the region – the presence of a significant number of unemployed youth and food shortages.⁷

Futurology is actively used by economists, although not many specialists actually call themselves futurists. Among the most famous futurists of Ukraine, we should mention Valeriy Pekar,⁸ Vice President of the Ukrainian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, as well as Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Andriy Dlyhach.⁹

Can history predict the future? After all, what is to happen in the future – happens on the basis of the past and present. Let us recall that forecasting is based on available data (in a broad context – historical data), without which it becomes simply im-

⁴ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Prohnozuvannia* [Forecasting]. *Wikipedia*. <https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Прогнозування> [in Ukrainian].

⁵ Voronin, M. (2020, February 18). *90 rokiv tomu vidkryly Pluton* [90 years ago Pluto was discovered]. BBC News Ukraina. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-51547406> [in Ukrainian].

⁶ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Bozon Higgsa* [Higgs boson]. *Wikipedia*. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Бозон_Хіггса [in Ukrainian].

⁷ Carleton, A. (2022, March 24). *Scientist who predicted Arab Spring: Skyrocketing wheat prices are creating a global 'regime of risk'*. VICE. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/scientist-who-predicted-arab-spring-skyrocketing-wheat-prices-are-creating-a-global-regime-of-risk/>

⁸ Pekar, V. (n.d.). *Valerii Pekar, Ukrainian futurologist, entrepreneur, and public figure* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbJyx4H13iU> [in Ukrainian].

⁹ Dlyhach, A. (2023, November 27). *Budushchee Ukrainy. Ne zhdyte, poka padet Putin i sogorit Moskva – Andrii Dlyhach, futurolog* [The future of Ukraine. Don't wait until Putin falls and Moscow burns – Andrii Dlyhach, futurologist] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5REBHJqncA&t=10s> [in Ukrainian].

possible. Forecasting also involves studying cause-and-effect relationships, which in fact are the basis of the historical process.¹⁰

Among professional historians one can hear an interesting statement: “We are historians, we know how it will be.” Sometimes it really works, sometimes – not. But it is historical science that widely uses the method of extrapolation¹¹ in the study of social processes. Historical processes are continuous; they begin in the past and go into the future. Therefore, futurology claims to become a kind of “history of the future”. In 2020, the journal *Aeon* published an article by Amanda Rees “If history was more like science, would it predict the future?” The article analyses the search of Western humanities regarding the problem of history’s ability to predict the future. Researchers continue to ask themselves questions that seemed to have been solved long ago, for example: “Are there laws of history?”, and even – “Is history itself a science?” Interestingly, these questions are being raised against the background of some successes in historical forecasting, the emergence of new synthetic research methods and new disciplines (such as “cliodynamics”¹² or “synergetics”¹³). But even new approaches involve using historical experience to predict the future.¹⁴

Any scientific prediction is made based on facts within science and with its help. In most cases, these predictions are grounded in understanding patterns of current processes. However, in the social sciences, the future is always variable, since it deals with the subjective behaviour of individuals or groups. Despite possible similarities, absolute repeatability of processes simply does not exist.

Therefore, modern futurology is a field of knowledge or a complex discipline¹⁵ based on the intersection of social and natural sciences; it is an attempt to model a general concept of the future by combining the social, economic, and technological processes of the present. As we can see, there is nothing supernatural about forecasting, even though it is knowledge about what does not yet exist – and sometimes about what is still unknown.

Scientific forecasting relies on appropriate scientific methods, which are selected according to the defined object and subject of study, the stated goal, and the outlined

¹⁰ Filosofskyi entsyklopedychnyi slovnyk. (2002). *Prohnozuvannia* [Forecasting] (p. 524). Kyiv: Abrys. [in Ukrainian].

¹¹ Extrapolation is the extension of conclusions drawn from one part of a system to another part of the same system.

¹² Cliodynamics studies historical and social processes using mathematical models, based on the assumption that historical processes follow regularly recurring patterns.

¹³ The direction is actively being developed in the Russian Federation. See: Kapitsa, S. P., Kurdyumov, S. P., & Malinetsky, G. G. (2003). *Sinerghetika i prognozy budushchego* [Synergetics and forecasts of the future] (3rd ed.). Moscow: Editorial URSS. [in Russian].

¹⁴ Riz, A. (2020, June 21). *Chy mozhe istoriia peredbachyty maibutnie, yakshcho stane bilsh skhozhoiu na nauku?* [Can history predict the future if it becomes more like a science?] Historians. <https://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/2760-amanda-riz-chi-mozhe-istoriya-peredbachiti-majbutne-yakshcho-stane-bilsh-skhozhoiu-na-nauku> [in Ukrainian].

¹⁵ Sukhorolskyi, P. M., & Sukhorolska, I. Yu. (2018). *Osnovni etapy rozvytku futurolohii ta yii zavdannia v umovakh suchasnoho svitu* [The main stages of the development of futurology and its tasks in the conditions of the modern world]. *Grani*, 21(3), 116–123. [in Ukrainian].

tasks. Let us try to highlight the methods that are more relevant for forecasting social processes (such as the development of society, political systems, and partially the economy, which on a global scale becomes part of the psychology of mass behaviour, etc.). It should be noted that the range of general scientific methodologies used is quite broad and must correspond to the research objectives.

Firstly, the choice of methods depends on the representativeness (and sometimes the variability) of the research material. Forecasting begins with the collection and analysis of initial information – sources, process parameters, and the factors influencing its development. A very important role is played here by comprehensive or cluster monitoring, which allows to evaluate all possible aspects of the forecast. Basic information also includes scientific principles and patterns of process implementation in the studied field.

Secondly, the choice of methodology depends on the set goal of the forecast and the formulated research objectives. According to the defined goal, forecasts can be exploratory (studying possible future states of a phenomenon without influencing those states), or normative (goal-oriented) – the aim of which is to achieve a desired “tomorrow” based on the existing “today” through deliberate influence on these states. Normative forecasts (or future modelling) allow to timely identify undesirable alternatives and eliminate them.

When studying society, a researcher primarily deals with social (historical) data – events, facts, social stereotypes, customs, religious beliefs, economic factors, educational processes, and individual and social behavioural narratives.

The most commonly used methods in the study of historical data are the cause-and-effect and logical methods, which are among the key scientific tools for studying the process of understanding and forecasting the development of social systems and future scenarios.

These also include extrapolation methods, which rely on empirically recorded laws – objective and stable recurring phenomena. For this reason, empirical knowledge cannot be used to make predictive conclusions without such regularities. Extrapolation plays a very important role in expert work.

The modelling method (or model-based method). Modelling allows analogies to be drawn between the model and the original process. These similarities are established through a hypothesis that carries a certain degree of probability. Sometimes a model experiment is conducted based on the analysis of the development of a particular social system.

One of the modelling methods can be considered the method of historical analogy. Although history never repeats itself entirely, it is quite possible to find certain similarities. It is no coincidence that Cicero’s famous quote about history is often recalled: “*Historia est magistra vitae*” (“History is the teacher of life”), though the claim that history has ever truly taught anyone anything remains debatable.

An important role in this process is played by expert assessment, or forecasting the prospects of historical development based on the judgments (knowledge) of experts.

The main forms of expert assessment are as follows:

- 1) Individual forecasting based on the expert's intuition, knowledge, and experience;
- 2) Group consensus, when several experts use intuitive knowledge and experience to develop a common position on a specific issue concerning the future;
- 3) Brainstorming – a team effort aimed at generating the maximum number of ideas in a short period of time to find prompt (including non-standard) solutions to tasks;
- 4) The Delphi method – a sequential survey of experts, during which each is informed of the opinions of the others. As a result of several rounds, a prevailing opinion is determined.

Expert assessment works very well when studying qualitative characteristics – social (historical) data. When the data are expressed through statistics or monitoring results, mathematical modelling becomes useful. Modern forecasting is impossible without the use of mathematical models, including informational (computer) modelling. This method is actively used in business planning, meteorology, sociology, social psychology, and more. Entirely new horizons for the use of these models are emerging with the advent of AI.

Mathematical models can be roughly divided into process modelling methods and methods based on extrapolating long-term observational data into the future. The most popular quantitative method is time series forecasting, where future values are predicted based on past observations (this may also include analysis of cause-and-effect relationships). A mathematical model is created for forecasting, allowing future numerical indicators to be calculated. Ideally, a research model should include a correlation between quantitative and qualitative parameters, which increases the probability of an accurate forecast.

In our view, the essential components of scientific forecasting as a research process should include the following stages:

1) Defining the research problem – “What exactly will happen and when?” or “What will happen, when, and under what conditions?” Based on the defined problem, the research or project goal is formulated.

2) A research program is developed. The object and subject of forecasting are defined; the past and current state of the problem is evaluated. The research hypothesis should include assumptions about the development and duration of the process. In normative (planned) research, the social scope and its methods are specified.

3) A data base is compiled (quantitative and qualitative indicators) – this includes forecast information, which is then processed and analysed. The development of the process and its components are considered in interaction; information about the past and present state of the process is gathered to form the chain “past – present – future”.

4) A research model (forecasting scenario) is constructed, representing a systematization of acquired knowledge to define the future development of the process, or the process is modelled.

5) The resulting model is critically reviewed to identify its weaknesses and increase the assessment of its reliability. If the forecast is normative (planned), it should include recommendations with optimal implementation options, which form the basis for real planning. Such forecasts are often formalized as forecast projects or design forecasts.

Cautionary forecasting is very common, where experts warn about the possible negative consequences of certain processes. This usually includes ecological and social modelling, and within the latter – economic modelling as well.

Modern evaluation methods allow for fairly accurate determination of the probability of a forecast's realization. However, as already mentioned, historical processes do not guarantee absolute repeatability, which leads to the classification of forecasts as probable, possible, or unlikely. Under certain conditions, even the least likely forecast may become possible or even probable.

The verification of a research model also depends on the time frame it is made for. Although the division of forecasts by time frames is quite relative and depends on the tasks set:

- operational (from a few days to a few months);
- short-term (mostly up to 1 year);
- medium-term (from 1 to 5 years);
- long-term (5–10 years);
- strategic (10–30 years or more).

Naturally, the quality of forecasts depends on the selected time frame: the shorter it is – the more accurate the forecast tends to be, the longer it is – the more likely future generations will interpret it no more precisely than the quatrains of Nostradamus.

In 2021, the course “Perspectives of European Civilization” was added to the list of university courses I teach. Its first students were history majors. Therefore, this book can be regarded as an attempt to forecast the future through the study of the past and present, based on teaching experience as well as certain reflections and generalizations. A vision of the future of Europe is especially important for students, as they are the future of Europe and the architects of European identity in Ukraine.

Acknowledging the complexity of the tasks set out in this study, let us recall a timely quote from the sixteenth president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln: “Books serve to show a man that those original thoughts of his aren't very new after all.”

And yet we shall try.

*Professionals are predictable,
but the world is full of amateurs.*
Murphy's Laws

THE REALITIES OF FORECASTING

Do Chinese communists' dreams come true?

The Chinese economic miracle enabled the country to become one of the world's economic leaders. But for a long time, China's best technical products were copies of those from other countries. Chinese engineers were excellent imitators but mediocre inventors. To understand the reasons behind this phenomenon, the Chinese authorities commissioned interviews with experts from high-tech Western companies (Apple, Google, Microsoft, etc.). Among the factors most frequently mentioned in shaping the personalities of modern inventors was a passion for science fiction during their school and university years.¹⁶ Science fiction became an excellent promoter of science – and possibly even one of its driving forces.

In the 1960s–1980s, China's ruling elite viewed science fiction with suspicion. From science fiction to social fiction is just one step; who knows what writers might depict in their stories – what kind of future – and whether the Communist Party would even exist in it. In 1983, science fiction was effectively banned in China,¹⁷ and sci-fi writers were accused of morally corrupting the people. There was even debate over whether this genre qualified as literature at all, and whether science fiction was inherently capitalist.¹⁸ The situation began to change in 1997, when an international sci-fi conference was held in Beijing.¹⁹

Ten years later, the first All-China Science Fiction Convention was held. At that convention, British sci-fi author Neil Gaiman heard a government official say: “In

¹⁶ Klein, E. (2015, August 24). *How Google convinced China's Communist Party to love science fiction*. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/2015/8/24/9196945/china-science-fiction>; Goodreads. (n.d.). *Neil Gaiman: Quotes*. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/820553-fiction-is-dangerous-because-it-lets-you-into-other-people-s>

¹⁷ It was banned back in 1966, along with all fiction literature, when the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” began in China. In 1983, a programmatic article by Chinese communists titled ‘Vigilance Against “Spiritual Pollution” in Science Fiction’ was published, which effectively banned all science fiction literature.

¹⁸ Siaosia, U. (2020). Pro osoblyvosti rozvytku suchasnoi kytaiskoi naukovoï fantastyky [On the features of the development of modern Chinese science fiction]. *Kytaieznavchi doslidzhennia*, 1, 99–108. <https://doi.org/10.15407/chinesest2020.01.099> [in Ukrainian].

¹⁹ *Kitai segodnia*. (2015, March 9). *Nauchnaia fantastika: nereal'noe v real'nom* [Science fiction: The unreal in the real]. http://www.kitaichina.com/se/txt/2015-03/09/content_675462.htm [in Russian].

China, we're really good at making things people bring to us, but we don't invent – we lack innovation.” This story was shared in a discussion between Neil Gaiman and Kazuo Ishiguro, the 2017 Nobel Prize laureate in Literature, who has written many works of speculative fiction.²⁰

Interestingly, back in 1999, Chinese sci-fi writer Han Song suggested that the mission of Chinese science fiction – to educate the scientists of the future – had failed due to writers' fear of censorship.²¹ It is government censorship – along with self-censorship – that hinders this process.²² But who knows – perhaps science fiction itself will become one of the triggers for the rise of freedom and democracy in China, leading to the fall of communist rule, and some writer may one day be called the “Chinese George Orwell”.

People have always dreamed, and to some extent, it is precisely dreams that have driven the development of humanity. One of the expressions of these dreams has been the works of science fiction writers. Interestingly, it is little known that Europe was actually the birthplace of science fiction literature. The first science fiction novel in history is considered to be *True History*, written in the 2nd century AD by Lucian of Samosata, a Greek writer of Assyrian origin. Although it was likely perceived by contemporaries as satire, the book mentioned robots, space travel, interplanetary wars, and life on other planets with artificial atmospheres.²³

There is no doubt that science fiction accompanied the development of science and the rapid industrialization of the Old and New Worlds in modern times. The figures of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells became symbols of 19th-century visionary hopes and heralds of the dynamic 20th century. In 1865, French sci-fi classic author Jules Verne described weightlessness, an air regeneration device, and even the future launch site for space missions, Florida, in *From the Earth to the Moon*. The submarine described in his novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) featured an electric engine and a double hull. He also envisioned a communication system that in some ways resembles the Internet.²⁴

British science fiction writer H.G. Wells, in his 1898 novel *The War of the Worlds*, portrayed laser-like weapons. The ending of the novel essentially predicted the mod-

²⁰ Klein, E. (2015, August 24). *How Google convinced China's Communist Party to love science fiction*. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/2015/8/24/9196945/china-science-fiction>; Goodreads. (n.d.). *Neil Gaiman: Quotes*. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/820553-fiction-is-dangerous-because-it-lets-you-into-other-people-s>

²¹ Karaev, N. (2015). *Fantast v Kitae bol'she chem fantast: Istoriia nauchnoi fantastiki Kitaia* [A science fiction writer in China is more than just a writer: The history of Chinese science fiction]. *Mir fantastiki*, 139(3), 6–19 (p. 17) [in Russian].

²² Human Rights Watch. (2021, June 30). *“They don't understand the fear we have”: How China's long reach of repression undermines academic freedom at Australia's universities*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/06/30/they-dont-understand-fear-we-have/how-chinas-long-reach-repression-undermines>

²³ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Science fiction*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction

²⁴ Evans, B. (1988). Science fiction vs. scientific fiction in France: From Jules Verne to J.-H. Rosny Aîné. *Science Fiction Studies*, 15(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4000/resf.1406>; Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Jules Verne*. Wikipedia. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jules_Verne

ern concept of biological warfare. Six years before World War I, in his novel *The War in the Air*, he described the mass use of military aviation. Interestingly, Wells considered science fiction works to be a kind of blueprint for the possibilities of the future, which allows us to call him one of the founders of modern futurology.²⁵

The Czech writer and science fiction author Karel Čapek is often credited with giving the world the term “robot” (in 1920),²⁶ although the first actual robots appeared only in the mid-20th century. It is well known that American sci-fi author Robert Heinlein predicted, among other things, the microwave oven, the waterbed, and the automatic hand dryer.²⁷

In the works of science fiction authors from the first half to the mid-20th century, characters frequently used devices similar to mobile phones and laptops, paid for services using bank cards, and travelled on hovertrains. They opened car doors using fingerprints; the dashboards featured navigation systems; they read e-books and listened to music via compact players and miniature headphones. Long before their real-world invention, the Internet, electronic language translators, news feeds, and even hackers and computer viruses existed in sci-fi literature.

After World War II, science fiction became incredibly popular in the United States. Let's focus on the predictions of American science fiction writer and biochemistry professor Isaac Asimov, who can be considered one of the greatest futurologists of the 20th century. In 1964, at the request of *The New York Times*, the author provided his forecast for the next half-century (ending in 2114).²⁸ Among his predictions were the following:

- Urban living spaces will be moved underground, reducing heating costs in winter and cooling in summer. City surfaces will become green zones;
- Household chores will be minimized through automation (toasters, automatic coffee machines, etc.), although cooking will remain a hobby for many;
- Robots will not replace humans, though there will be many of them, and they will be controlled by humans;
- Movies will become three-dimensional (3D format);
- Devices will be cordless and powered by batteries and accumulators;
- Half of the planet's energy will be generated by nuclear power plants, with large solar power stations built in deserts. A technology will emerge to collect solar energy in space and transmit it to Earth;

²⁵ Uells, H. G. (2021). *Budushchee nashego mira: protsvetanie ili gibel* [The future of our world: Prosperity or doom]. Moscow: Kislod [in Russian]; Sadigzade, Z. (2023). On the use of science-fiction genre by H.G. Wells. *Slovak International Scientific Journal*, 1(78), 119–122.

²⁶ Čapek, K. R. (2020). *R.U.R. (“Rossumovi universal'ni roboty”): kolektyvna drama z elementamy komedii na try dii* [R.U.R. [“Rossum’s Universal Robots”]: A collective drama with elements of comedy in three acts]. Kyiv: Komora. [in Ukrainian].

²⁷ Patterson, A. (2015, July 7). *19 predictions for the future from Robert A. Heinlein*. Writers Write. <https://www.writerswrite.co.za/robert-a-heinleins-19-predictions-for-the-future/>

²⁸ Collins, K. (2014, Jan 3). *In 1964 Isaac Asimov accurately predicted how technology would look in 2114*. Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/asimov-2014-technology-predictions/>

- Future transportation will not touch the ground; it will hover up to 1 meter above the surface. Water transport will work similarly;
- Goods will be delivered through systems resembling pneumatic tubes;
- Phones will become portable, capable of displaying documents and photos, and used for reading books. Audio-visual communication will be satellite-based;
- By 2014, unmanned spacecraft will reach Mars, and plans for a Martian colony will be under development;
- Earth's population will reach 6.5 billion, with 350 million living in the USA. A demographic boom will force active colonization of deserts and arctic zones. Average life expectancy in developed countries will reach 85 years. Birth rates will be regulated;
- Microorganisms will drive agricultural progress. Yeast and algae will be converted into food. These innovations will face resistance from many people;
- Computer science will become the core of school education;
- Humanity will suffer from boredom, making psychiatry the most important medical specialty;
- The social elite will be small in number and will engage in creative work.

Nearly twenty years later, in 1983, Isaac Asimov gave an interview to the Canadian newspaper *Toronto Star*.²⁹ This time, the end date for his prediction was set as the year 2019. The date was not chosen at random, as exactly 35 years earlier, in 1949, George Orwell had written his famous work *1984*. It's interesting to compare how the writer's predictions had changed – they became more specialized and technical.

Unlike his 1964 forecast, Asimov structured his 1983 prediction into two major categories: computerization and the use of near-Earth space.

Among the prospects of computerization, the futurist emphasized its expansion into daily life – “a mobile computerized object” would enter the home, and the development of society would make life impossible without this technology.

Computers will transform working conditions and eliminate “routine clerical and assembly-line jobs”. Profound changes will affect education, as the population must become “computer-literate”. Children will be able to learn everything they need at home using computers.

The writer foresaw active use of near-Earth space: “We will go into space to stay.” “By 2019, the first space settlement should be on the drawing boards, and possibly under actual construction”, he wrote. After landing on the Moon, humanity will begin to colonize it – extracting minerals, building factories that “take advantage of the unique properties of space”, observatories, and solar power stations that will transmit electricity to Earth.

In the same year, 1964, when Asimov was making his predictions, science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke predicted not only the Internet but also the 3D printer. In

²⁹ Big Think. (2018, December 27). *In 1983, Isaac Asimov predicted the world of 2019. Here's what he got right (and wrong)*. <https://bigthink.com/hard-science/isaac-asimov-future-predictions-from-1983/>

1977, British sci-fi writer James Ballard described something very similar to modern social networks. American author Philip K. Dick predicted that oil would be replaced by hydrogen as an energy source. Imagining the world of 2063, Robert Heinlein believed that cancer, tooth decay, and the common cold would be permanently eradicated.³⁰ In 1981, Stanisław Lem described a situation in which a military computer with artificial intelligence escapes human control, gains consciousness, and stops performing its functions.³¹

Interestingly, contemporary Western science fiction is currently experiencing a significant crisis, with fantasy and mysticism now favoured by Western audiences. In contrast, Chinese science fiction continues to be dominated by scientific themes. This is clearly seen in the screen adaptations of the sci-fi trilogy *The Three-Body Problem* by Chinese author Liu Cixin, first published in 2006. In the 2023 Netflix adaptation of the novel,³² the scientific content was minimized, whereas the Chinese version of the series remains much closer to the original text with all of its science fiction elements.

In concluding our review of the achievements of science fiction, we should note that some predictions have come true, some exist as emerging trends, and some, especially those related to space, have not materialized. Let us also recall Asimov's statement that imagining the future of society is pointless if the USA and the USSR start a nuclear war, although, according to the futurist, this would not happen. And although the USSR no longer exists, the possibility of nuclear conflict has re-emerged. As we can see, most predictions concern the scientific and technological sphere, while the social sphere has attracted less attention from science fiction writers. While recognizing the contributions of Herbert Wells, Aldous Huxley,³³ Isaac Asimov,³⁴ Ray Bradbury,³⁵ and other authors, the most famous prediction of the future belongs to British writer George Orwell, whose novel *1984* has been included by UNESCO in the Memory of the World Register.

In 1949, Orwell managed to describe a future in which a totalitarian despotism controlled people through total surveillance and total propaganda. Much of what he

³⁰ Open Culture. (2019, April 11). *9 science-fiction authors predict the future: How Jules Verne, Isaac Asimov, William Gibson, Philip K. Dick & more imagined the world ahead*. <https://www.openculture.com/2019/04/9-science-fiction-authors-predict-the-future.html>

³¹ Lem, S. (2017). *Holem XIV* [Golem XIV]. Ternopil: Navchalna knyha – Bohdan. ISBN 978-966-10-4924-5 [in Ukrainian].

³² Masenko, V. (2024, March 21). *Novyi serial ot sozdatelei "Ihry prestolov". Na Netflix vykhodit masshtabnaia epopeia "Problema trekh tel"* [New series from the creators of *Game of Thrones*: Netflix releases the epic *The Three-Body Problem*]. Forbes.ua. <https://forbes.ua/ru/lifestyle/nova-saga-vidtvortsiv-gri-prestoliv-na-netflix-vikhodit-serial-problema-trokh-til-shcho-varto-znati-pered-premeroyu-21032024-19996> [in Russian].

³³ The novel *Brave New World* describes an attempt to build a perfect technocratic civilization.

³⁴ Isaac Asimov is the author of the concept of predicting the future through psychohistory – a future science combining the capabilities of history, sociology, and statistics. The term was introduced in the 1940s when the first stories from the Foundation series were published.

³⁵ The novel *Fahrenheit 451* describes a society in which books are banned.

described has become reality or has found very close equivalents. First and foremost is the concept of total surveillance. In the novel, this is implemented through ubiquitous telescreens that constantly broadcast information and simultaneously observe the viewer. Reality has gone even further: facial recognition technologies are now widely used around the world, and the tracking of consumer interests (shopping-related and beyond) has become a constant companion of the Internet and social media.

Great attention in the novel is devoted to total propaganda. An essential component of such a society is total militarization and the waging of “just” wars against enemies. “War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength.” The poster with the words “Big Brother is watching you” became one of the symbols of 20th-century totalitarianism in all its forms.³⁶

Of course, not all the predictions of science fiction writers came true (sometimes that may be for the better), but as we can see, some of their ideas became a literal “guide” for further implementation.

Edison, Tesla, and Sakharov

Besides the predictions of science fiction writers, let us also pay attention to the forecasts of scientists. Sometimes these predictions are no less impressive than those of the fiction writers. In 2021, I came across an interesting text that I initially took for a clever hoax. In 1900, civil engineer John Elfreth Watkins Jr. published an article titled “What May Happen in the Next Hundred Years”³⁷ in *The Ladies' Home Journal*. He cited as his sources the contemporary scientists he interviewed “the most educated and most conservative minds in America”.³⁸ Here are some of those predictions.³⁹

Demographics and Human Physiology. The population of the U.S. will range from 350 to 500 million people (as of 2024, it is nearly 336 million – I.K.). The average person’s height will increase by a few centimetres. Thanks to medicine, good nutrition, and physical exercise, life expectancy will increase and exceed 50 years.⁴⁰

Everyday Life. Most people will live outside cities, and getting from the suburbs to the city will take only a few minutes. Hot and cold air will be piped into

³⁶ Seaton, J. (2018, May 7). *Why Orwell's 1984 could be about now*. BBC Culture. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20180507-why-orwells-1984-could-be-about-now>

³⁷ Open Culture. (2020, November 12). *Futurist from 1901 describes the world of 2001: Opera by telephone, free college & pneumatic tubes aplenty*. <https://www.openculture.com/2020/11/futurist-from-1901-describes-the-world-of-2001.html>

³⁸ Incidentally, this is one of the interesting cases of applying the expert evaluation method.

³⁹ Judging by the publication’s text, the author involved scientists and engineers from various fields as experts, but sometimes they predicted the same trends, so for convenience, the predictions were grouped.

⁴⁰ In the early 20th century, the average life expectancy in the USA was 48 years, while in then-Russia it was around 30 years.

homes, produced at factories and delivered to residences; there will be no chimneys in houses.

Food will be prepared in special electric laboratories using electromechanical devices, then delivered to homes by pneumatic tubes or by automobile. Dishes will be washed at those same facilities. Food will no longer be sold on the streets; it will be stored only in refrigerators. High-speed refrigerator airplanes will be able to deliver tropical fruits to the U.S. within a few days.

Energy. Coal will no longer be used for heating and cooking, as its reserves will soon be depleted and it will become very expensive. The main source of energy will come from hydro turbines placed in every river, and tidal energy from the oceans will also be used.

Transport and Communication. There will be no more trams on city streets; subways and moving staircases will be everywhere. Transportation will become silent; express trains, including electric ones, will appear and travel at speeds of up to 150 miles per hour. Cars will have artificial air cooling, and vehicles themselves will become inexpensive. Specialized vehicles will appear – for police, medical use, cleaning, and more.

It will be possible to travel from the U.S. to Great Britain in just two days, thanks to high-speed electric hovercraft. These ships will be made of non-combustible materials and will be equipped with air coolers. During storms, the ships will submerge underwater. Air transport will emerge, but it will not be able to compete with automobiles.

Revolutionary changes will take place in the field of communication. Telephones will be everywhere, and wireless devices will appear. Telephone operators will disappear as communication becomes automatic. Calling China will be as easy as calling from New York to Brooklyn.⁴¹ A person will be able to see everything happening in the world, just aim a camera at the location and the image will be transmitted to screens thousands of kilometres away. Photographs will be able to be telegraphed any distance, and images will transmit in full colour.

In the U.S., people will watch theatre performances in Europe or coronations in the East. Images will not only be seen but also heard. Purchases will be made by mail, as pneumatic mail systems will be everywhere.

Education and Culture. The letters “C”, “X”, and “Q” will disappear from the English alphabet – they will be eliminated, and spelling will fully match pronunciation. English will become the most popular language in the world. People will begin doing gymnastics from early childhood, and physical education will become mandatory⁴² in schools. Gymnasiums will appear in educational institutions. Schools will also teach etiquette and household management. Higher education will become

⁴¹ Until 1898, Brooklyn was a separate city; at the time of writing the article, it was still considered a suburb of New York.

⁴² It's hard to believe now, but physical education classes were not widely included in school curricula until the 1920s–30s.

free “for every man and woman”, but the number of universities will decrease significantly. Only a few national universities will remain. Many sciences will be combined into joint subjects to save time. Underprivileged students will be provided with food, housing, free clothing, and books. Doctors will look after them and provide free medical care. Students will have the right to free travel, including to other countries.

Automatic instruments will allow people to listen to music in every home (“grand opera will call into private houses”); musicians will be able to play these instruments remotely. New instruments will also appear, capable of evoking stronger emotions.

Medicine. Medicines will no longer need to be swallowed; instead, they will be applied to the affected organ using electricity, and treatment will be painless. For medical purposes, the human body will be made artificially transparent using invisible rays, and doctors will be able to photograph any human organ.⁴³

Agriculture. Agricultural producers will use various machines for transporting goods and other tasks. Automobiles will completely replace horses. Vegetables will be grown using electricity that will heat the plants, allowing farmers to turn winter into summer and night into day. Plants will be protected from disease through vaccination. New acclimatized plant varieties will appear. Strawberries will be the size of apples, and fruits and vegetables will become large.

Military Technology. Cannons of enormous calibre will appear, capable of firing over 40 kilometres, with a single shell able to destroy an entire city. Large fortresses will move on wheels, and massive motorized plough will be able to dig trenches for soldiers in just a few minutes. Silent bullets for rifles will appear. Submarines will be able to stay hidden underwater for several days, and the air fleet will hide beneath artificial clouds. From balloons, it will be possible to photograph the enemy from 150–160 km away; these images will be clear and can be immediately transmitted to military commanders.

Nature. Flies and mosquitoes will disappear, and rats and mice will be completely eradicated. Horses will almost disappear, and horns will vanish from cattle. Wild animals will remain only in zoos.

As we can see, there are numerous inaccuracies in these predictions (especially in the military field), but also some remarkable insights. Many things were predicted correctly on a conceptual level, such as the existence of air conditioning and centralized heating.

In 1911, Thomas Edison made his own set of futuristic predictions for the next 100 years in articles published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine and the *Miami Metropolis* newspaper.⁴⁴ The scientist predicted the disappearance of steam power and the

⁴³ X-rays are believed to have been discovered in 1895; at the time the article was written, they were not yet widely used.

⁴⁴ Open Culture. (2015, December 21). *In 1911, Thomas Edison predicts what the world will look like in 2011: Smart phones, no poverty, libraries that fit in one book*. <https://www.openculture.com/2015/12/thomas-edison-predicts-what-the-world-will-look-like-in-2011.html>

transition of rail transport to electric traction. He believed that by 2011, future travellers would fly through the air in colossal machines at 200 miles per hour, enabling them to “have breakfast in London, conduct business in Paris, and dine in Cheap-side”. Future homes would be furnished not with wooden furniture but with steel furniture, which would be very lightweight: “moving a cabinet will be as easy as lifting a chair in today’s living room”. Edison predicted that reinforced steel concrete would replace brick: “A concrete building will last practically forever”. Technology will eradicate poverty: “Now that people have begun using their brains, poverty is decreasing”. Agriculture will be fully automated, as science, technology, and big business will outpace its traditional methods. Automation will cover all human production processes. Books of the 21st century will be printed on sheets of nickel; they will be very light and voluminous: “A book two inches thick will contain forty thousand pages, equivalent to one hundred volumes.”

Some predictions may even be considered curiosities, such as the claim that the transmutation of metals would be invented, leading to cheaper gold: “Its ingots will be as common and cheap as iron bars or blocks of steel.”

According to Edison, the arms buildup would help avoid a major war because it “will bring about either a general revolution or general peace before more than one great war can occur”.

In 1926 and 1935, Nikola Tesla also shared his visions of the future.⁴⁵ His first interview was given to *Collier’s* magazine, in which he more or less accurately predicted smartphones, wireless telephony, and computers. According to the inventor, once wireless communication covers the entire Earth, the planet will become a giant brain. Communication will become possible regardless of a distance of thousands of miles, and the devices we will use for it will be incredibly simple compared to current telephones. A person will carry a phone in their vest pocket.

In 1935, in a lengthy essay in *Liberty* magazine,⁴⁶ Tesla focused more on social relations. He named Buddhism and Christianity as the major religions of the 21st century (he clearly underestimated the role of Islam – I.K.). Being a supporter of the

⁴⁵ Open Culture. (2015, December 21). *Nikola Tesla’s predictions for the 21st century: The rise of smart phones & wireless, the demise of coffee, the rule of eugenics (1926/35)*. https://www.openculture.com/2015/12/thomas-edison-predicts-what-the-world-will-look-like-in-2011.html#google_vignette

⁴⁶ Judging by the fact that American billionaire Elon Musk is the head of Tesla Inc., the figure of the great American inventor holds a significant place in his worldview. Ignoring Godwin’s Law, let’s recall another interview and Elon Musk’s reaction to it. In February 2024, American journalist Tucker Carlson interviewed Russian President V. Putin. Initially, Musk was impressed by it, but a few days later he mocked Putin’s answer to the question, “Why did the Russian president launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine?” Will Musk ever give an interview to Carlson? Another intriguing piece of news from late 2024 – Elon Musk publicly expressed support for Germany’s far-right. (Ruiter, D. E. (2024, December 28). *Elon Musk backs far-right AfD party in an op-ed for German newspaper «Die Welt»*. Euronews. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/12/28/elon-musk-backs-far-right-afd-party-in-an-op-ed-for-german-newspaper-die-welt>). Musk’s appearance at Trump’s inauguration, accompanied by a gesture resembling a Nazi salute, added new food for thought. Sulyma, R. (2025, January 21). *Maska raskritikovali za zhest v rechi posle inauguratsii Trampa* [Musk criticized for gesture in speech after Trump’s inauguration]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/ru/maska-raskritikovali-za-zest-v-recipe-posle-inauguracii-trampa/a-71360881> [in Russian].

early 20th-century trend of eugenics, he believed that by 2100 it would become universally accepted: “no one who is not a desirable parent should be allowed to produce offspring”. (incidentally, many in 1930s world politics were drawn to Nazism, one of the roots of which lay in the popularity of eugenics – I.K.). According to the inventor, hygiene and physical culture would play a huge role in the future, becoming “branches of education and public administration”. However, the claim that the Minister of Hygiene or Physical Culture would be much more important in the President’s cabinet in 2025 than the Secretary of War clearly does not reflect the realities of the modern world.

Among other things, Tesla predicted the decline of coffee, tea, and tobacco fashion, to be replaced by a trend for alcoholic beverages, which he called “the true elixir of life”. The food problem will be solved: “There will be enough wheat and wheat products to feed the entire world, including the many millions of people in China and India.” Reforestation and the management of natural resources will put an end to devastating droughts, forest fires, and floods.

Water power will become the main source of electricity, and its transmission over long distances will provide every household with cheap electricity (this and some other predictions make one wonder whether Tesla was one of the experts interviewed in 1900 by John Elfreth Watkins – I.K.).

Tesla predicted the end of wars: “by making every nation, weak or strong, capable of defending itself”. Afterward, military funds will be redirected to finance education and research. Among the scientific achievements of the future, he foresaw automation that would replace physical labour, the creation of a “thinking machine”, and aircraft that would not require fuel.

Tesla also spoke on the issue of gender. He fully agreed that women could equal and surpass men in every sphere, but warned that this would lead to a “usurpation of leadership” by them and a future matriarchy (incidentally, Tesla became one of the symbols of the “men’s rights” movement – I.K.).

Let us also recall the specifics of Soviet scientific forecasting, as the main geopolitical competitor of the United States in the second half of the 20th century. In the USSR, scientific forecasting was replaced by socialist planning; “bourgeois” futurology was rejected, and only “scientific” (“Marxist-Leninist”) prognostics were considered correct. If we disregard the purely ideological component and focus on scientific forecasting, the period of Khrushchev’s “thaw” is of particular interest, marked by high social optimism. In the book *Report from the 21st Century*, first published in 1957 and reissued in 1963,⁴⁷ scientists attempted to envision achievements in their fields half a century ahead and to make predictions for the year 2007. Among other things, the following was predicted:

- the invention and spread of thermonuclear power plants;
- the emergence of fully automated factories;

⁴⁷ Vasiliev, M. V., & Gushchev, Z. Kh. (1963). *Reportazh iz XXI veka* [Report from the 21st century]. Moscow: Sovetskaiia Rossiia. [in Russian].

- home automatons that would handle housework – cleaning, cooking, reading books aloud, and more;
- oil and associated gases would become mere chemical raw materials, and new sources of energy would emerge;
- machines would begin colonizing the Moon, Mars, and Venus; they would be the first to reach the asteroid belt and study the Sun;
- the emergence of radiation metallurgy capable of altering atomic nuclei structures and artificially transforming elements (was someone an Edison fan? – I.K.);
- oil wells would become much deeper – up to 20 km; new drilling methods would appear – using high frequencies, ultrasound, and directed explosions. Drilling stations would become fully automated;
- the share of thermal power plants would decrease, while hydroelectric and nuclear power generation would increase;
- new wheat hybrids would appear, permanently solving the food problem;⁴⁸
- information would be stored in archives – film libraries of library centres; electronic machines would manage “millions of magnetic tapes”, and requests would be handled by a bibliotechnician – the librarian of the future;
- the advent of electronic translators would simplify international conferences, and the translation machine would be no larger than a writing desk.

In 1974, Soviet dissident and academician Andrei Sakharov wrote an article for *Saturday Review* in which he described his vision of the future.⁴⁹ According to the scientist, the key factor that would determine the nature of the future was demography. He estimated that by 2014 the planet would be home to more than 7 billion people, which could lead to the depletion of natural resources: oil, fertile soil, and clean water; serious disruption of ecological balance; and a shortage of human living space.

An integral part of his prediction was the possibility of civilization and humanity being destroyed in a thermonuclear war. As a supporter of the then-popular theory of convergence (the eventual merging of socialist and capitalist systems), he argued that it was crucial to prevent the world from splitting into antagonistic groups of states. This would require demilitarization, the strengthening of international trust, and the protection of human rights, law, and freedom.

Sakharov's main predictions:

- Nature will fully serve the practical needs of humanity, and all industry will be concentrated in giant automatic and semi-automatic factories. A global shift to closed-loop production systems will occur, with a complete absence of hazardous and polluting emissions.

⁴⁸ Let's recall the two dimensions of this prediction. The first is global – hunger was a serious issue for many countries in Africa and Asia. The second is purely Soviet – from 1963 until its very collapse, the USSR purchased grain on foreign markets – in the USA, Canada, Australia.

⁴⁹ Sakharov, A. (1974). *Tomorrow: The view from Red Square. A famed Russian sees a world of flying cities, freight-carrying dirigibles, and arctic farming, adding a recipe for progress in human rights*. <https://www.sakharov.space/lib/the-world-in-50-years>.

- Almost all people will live in “supercities”, with central areas consisting of high-rise residential buildings featuring artificially controlled climate and lighting, automated kitchens, landscaped walls, and more. A significant part of the cities will be made up of suburbs with houses or cottages stretching for tens of kilometres. The human of the future will have the opportunity to live in a more natural environment.

- Flying cities will orbit the planet – artificial Earth satellites with important industrial functions. They will host vacuum metallurgy plants, greenhouses, and more. These satellites will serve as laboratories for space research and as intermediate stations for long-distance flights.

- The “green revolution”⁵⁰ will continue, with genetics and selective breeding playing the leading role. Humanity will create artificial soil, and greenhouses will be built in northern regions. New forms of agriculture will emerge, including marine, bacterial, microalgal, and fungal farming. An industry of animal protein substitutes will be developed, leading to a sharp decline in livestock farming, which will become unnecessary.

- A single global telephone and videophone system will be created. A universal information system will provide everyone with access at any moment to the contents of any magazine or book ever published, as well as any fact. The system will include individual miniature computer terminals, central hubs for managing information flow, and communication channels composed of thousands of artificial means – satellites, cables, and laser lines. Sakharov noted: “Even the partial implementation of the UIS⁵¹ will profoundly affect every person – their leisure, their intellectual and artistic development. Unlike television, the main source of information for many of our contemporaries, the UIS will offer each person maximum freedom of choice and will demand individual initiative.”

- Nuclear energy production will become widespread, and energy generated through thermonuclear fusion will also appear. The problem of radioactive waste disposal in nuclear energy will be resolved.

- Cars will be replaced by battery-powered transport on mechanical “legs” that will not damage the grass cover and won’t require paved roads. Major freight and passenger transport will be carried out by helium airships with nuclear engines and high-speed nuclear trains running on monorails and underground. Cities will have moving sidewalks (Sakharov here references Herbert Wells).

- Science will widely employ theoretical computer modelling of many complex processes. For example, advances in physics and chemistry will lead to the creation of synthetic materials that significantly surpass natural ones.

- Science will continue to develop, and entirely new concepts of space and time structure may emerge. Unexpected discoveries could arise from research in physi-

⁵⁰ The “Green Revolution” refers to the introduction of modern agricultural technologies in the 1960s–70s, which led to increased global food production.

⁵¹ Unified information system.

ology and biophysics, the regulation of life functions, medicine, social cybernetics, and more.

- The search for extraterrestrial civilizations will continue; powerful telescopes installed in space laboratories or on the Moon will allow us to see planets orbiting nearby stars (Alpha Centauri and others). Within 50 years, economic exploitation of the Moon's surface and of asteroids will begin. Nuclear explosions on asteroids may be used to direct them "closer" to Earth (now one can argue who the real author of the film *Don't Look Up*⁵² was – I.K.).

The late 20th and early 21st centuries were no less fruitful in terms of conceptual scientific predictions about the future of humanity, although the era of scientific romanticism in futurology is gradually coming to an end. Scientific and technological advances are being implemented so actively that sometimes science fiction can't keep up with reality.

One of the most well-known futurist scientists of our time is the American writer, scientist, and inventor Ray Kurzweil.⁵³ Since the 1990s, he has been forecasting the emergence of new technologies, at times achieving remarkable accuracy. He is the author of several books on technological singularity, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, and futurism. Kurzweil can be considered the leading ideologist of the singularity theory (or technological singularity). His ultimate vision of singularity is the transformation of humanity into one powerful supercomputer with immense superintelligence, where humans will live forever and the capabilities of the mind will be limitless. According to Kurzweil, the singularity will not stop on Earth but will expand to encompass the entire universe. In 2005, the researcher's book *The Singularity Is Near* was published, playing a major role in popularizing this idea.⁵⁴

Let us note that the idea of transhumanism (human immortality through scientific advancement), actively promoted by the scientist, could quite easily turn his teachings into a religion, at least, all the prerequisites for this seem to be present. One way or another, groups such as the "Singularity Church of the MachineGod", "The Church of the Singularity", and "The Church of the Technological Singularity" have already emerged. And although these organizations are currently either eccentric or merely niche "interest clubs", historical experience suggests that their true rise will likely occur after the physical death of the ideologue. Thus, it is possible that singularity has promising religious prospects.

It should be added that not all researchers agree with an entirely positive view of technological singularity. The English-language Wikipedia offers the following definition of the term: "Technological singularity, or simply the singularity, is a hy-

⁵² *Don't Look Up* – an American political satire comedy film written and directed by Adam McKay, released in 2021. Starring Jennifer Lawrence, Leonardo DiCaprio, Meryl Streep, and others.

⁵³ Incidentally, in his youth he was an avid reader of science fiction. Raymond Kurzweil. (n.d.). *Bionity*. Bionity. https://www.bionity.com/en/encyclopedia/Raymond_Kurzweil.html

⁵⁴ Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. New York: Penguin Books. ISBN 9780715635612

pothetical future point in time when technological growth becomes uncontrollable and irreversible, resulting in unforeseeable consequences for human civilization”.⁵⁵ Among the worst-case predictions regarding the negative impact of the singularity is the possibility of human extinction.⁵⁶

For comparison, the authors of the Ukrainian-language Wikipedia define technological singularity as “a predicted exponential increase in the pace of scientific and technological progress, likely to occur in the 2020s – 2030s as a result of disruptive innovation, accelerating change, human enhancement, and the creation of strong artificial intelligence (AGI)”. Another definition is given below: “Technological singularity is a moment in human history when scientific and technological progress becomes so rapid and complex that it surpasses human understanding. A significant leap in the capabilities of the human brain and body is also expected, driven by advances in bioengineering, medicine, engineering, and manufacturing.”⁵⁷ As we can see, the editors of the Ukrainian Wikipedia are more optimistic – or perhaps less critical.

Raymond Kurzweil indeed succeeded in predicting many events and technological innovations. For instance, he predicted that a computer would defeat a human by 1998, and this event occurred in 1997. He forecasted the rapid development of the Internet, which began in the 1990s. For 2009, he predicted the growing ubiquity of wireless Internet access and wireless computer peripherals, as well as the active use of electronic learning materials in schools and universities. However, his claim that by 2009 people would have a dozen portable computers embedded in their clothing and accessories turned out to be incorrect, as did the prediction that most texts by that time would be created not via keyboards and manual typing but through continuous speech recognition.⁵⁸ Without delving into a thorough analysis of Kurzweil’s body of futurist work, let us note some of his predictions for the 21st century, specifically, those expected to occur after 2025 (the time of this book’s writing). It is also worth noting that the futurist himself has repeatedly revised his forecasts – adjusting dates, clarifying certain points, or even abandoning them altogether.

In his works and public appearances, the scientist stated the following:⁵⁹

2020–2050:

- During phone conversations, participants will see a holographic image of the person they are speaking with.

⁵⁵ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Technological singularity*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technological_singularity

⁵⁶ Cellan-Jones, R. (2014, December 1). *Stephen Hawking warns artificial intelligence could end mankind*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-30290540>

⁵⁷ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Tekhnolohichna synhuliarnist* [Technological singularity]. Wikipedia. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Технологічна_сингулярність [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁸ Raymond Kurzweil. (n.d.). *Bionity*. Bionity. https://www.bionity.com/en/encyclopedia/Raymond_Kurzweil.html

⁵⁹ Kurzweil, R. (n.d.). *The Singularity is Nearer*. Thesingularityisnearer. <https://www.thesingularityisnearer.com/>; Kurzweil, R. (1999). *The age of spiritual machines: When computers exceed human intelligence*. Viking; Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The singularity is near: When humans transcend biology*. Viking; Raymond Kurzweil. (n.d.). *Bionity*. Bionity. https://www.bionity.com/en/encyclopedia/Raymond_Kurzweil.html

2020–2070:

- A computer will pass the Turing test (considered passable only by humans), becoming the first true artificial intelligence.
- By the late 2020s, mass production based on nanotechnology will become widespread.
- Virtual reality will become so high-quality that it will be indistinguishable from reality.
- Medical nanobots will be able to cure most diseases; nanotechnology will allow humans to significantly overcome the limitations of biology.

2026:

- “Flying cars based on nanotechnology” will appear.

2027:

- The global energy crisis will be resolved; humanity will be aided by cheap and highly efficient solar panels synthesized by nanomachines.
- By 2027, nanomachines will be assembling all types of objects: food, clothing, building materials, and more.

2029:

- Computer implants designed for direct connection to the brain will become available; they will enhance natural senses and improve higher brain functions such as memory, learning speed, and overall intelligence. Direct brain implants will allow users to enter fully immersive virtual reality.
- Most communication will occur between humans and machines rather than between humans.
- The industrial, agricultural, and transportation sectors of the economy will be almost fully automated, employing only a small number of people.
- A movement for “robot rights” will emerge. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will claim to possess consciousness and will demand recognition of this fact.

2030s:

- Nanomachines can be directly inserted into the brain; they will interact with brain cells to fully control input and output signals. As a result, fully immersive virtual reality can be created without any external equipment.
- Nanomachines in the human brain will allow people to greatly expand their cognitive, memory, and sensory capabilities, interact directly with computers, and “telepathically” communicate with similarly enhanced individuals via wireless networks. People will live on the Internet, project bodies whenever they want or need (in virtual or real reality), and live indefinitely as long as computers maintain their “mind file”.

2040s:

- “Human Body 3.0” (as defined by Kurzweil) will emerge. It will have no fixed physical form and will be able to change shape and appearance at will. The emergence of such a body will be made possible through advances in genetic engineering, nanorobots that can be inserted into the body, and synthetic biology.
- People will spend most of their time in fully immersive virtual reality.

- Non-biological intelligence will be billions of times greater than biological intelligence.

2045:

- Artificial intelligence surpasses humans as the most intelligent form of life on Earth, and the **Singularity** occurs. From this point on, technological progress becomes explosive, controlled by machines, and therefore impossible to predict. The transformation of Earth into one giant computer begins.

“Awakening” of the Universe after 2045:

- Artificial intelligence converts more and more of Earth’s matter into a designed computational substrate until the entire planet becomes one giant computer. For people who choose to remain in their natural state, a few nature reserves will be allocated on the planet’s surface.

- AI will begin converting all matter and energy in the Universe into similarly massive computers. This “awakens” the Universe, as all inanimate matter is transformed into structured matter capable of supporting life (as understood by the Singularity – I.K.).

2049:

- Food is “assembled” by nanomachines and is indistinguishable from “natural” food, but it is much healthier, as its production is controlled at the molecular level.

- The difference between virtual and “real” reality disappears.

2072:

- Picoengineering becomes possible (technology at the scale of trillionths of a meter).

2099:

- Natural human thinking has no advantage over computer-based thinking.

- Machines have been granted equal legal status with humans.

- Humans and machines merge in both physical and mental realms. Cybernetic brain implants allow people to merge their minds with artificial intelligence. There are no longer clear distinctions between humans and machines; most conscious beings no longer have a permanent physical form.

- Organic humans are a small minority of intelligent life forms on Earth. Some Homo sapiens who remain human still embrace the use of computerized implants. A small group of people who chose to remain “natural” and unmodified effectively exist at a lower level of consciousness than all others, but are protected from extinction.

- AI focuses its energy on new discoveries.

- Thanks to medical immortality and advanced computers, the concept of “life expectancy” disappears.

Thousands of Years from Now:

- “Intelligent beings contemplate the fate of the Universe.” The Universe will transform into a giant supercomputer, and human-AI hybrids will possess unmatched intelligence and physical control over it.

As we can see, Raymond Kurzweil formulated truly global forecasts, while most scientists tend to make predictions on much shorter timeframes. Let us recall the forecast by a professor of economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who in 2012 attempted to predict the main trends in humanity's development for the next 100 years.⁶⁰ Interestingly, the anticipation of his son's birth inspired him to make these predictions.

Here are some of them:

- Global pollution will worsen, CO² emissions will increase, and climate change will occur. The only way to slow this is a mass shift to clean energy.
- The ruling regimes in Muslim countries will collapse, as people realize how governments control their lives through religion. The struggle of women and minorities for their rights will play a key role in this.
- Humanity will wage fewer wars, largely thanks to international organizations and public enlightenment.
- Manufacturing will revive in the USA, as wages in China and the Philippines rise, making production there less cost-effective.
- People will be healthier and live longer, aided by new technologies, medicines, and vaccines.
- Robots will replace manufacturers and farmers; agriculture will become automated.
- The middle class will shrink. Economic growth will become increasingly uneven, and the gap between the rich and the poor will be larger than ever before.
- The global economy will thrive. The main drivers of global economic growth will remain the regions with the highest consumption – namely, the USA and Europe – which must first resolve their economic issues.
- We will have automated machines. Many technological innovations await us, ranging from self-driving cars to more effective medicines.

Sometimes fortunately, and sometimes unfortunately, not all predictions come true, as we can see from the forecasts of writers, scientists, and futurists we've already mentioned. The analysis of failed forecasts – often considered management errors – has been the focus of hundreds of books on self-improvement, business strategy, relationship psychology, and social interaction.

Here are some authoritative scientific or expert predictions that now mostly provoke a smile:⁶¹

⁶⁰ Lutz, A. (2012, April 25). *MIT professor: 10 predictions about the world my grandchildren will inherit*. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/daron-acemoglus-predictions-2012-4#youve-seen-what-earth-will-look-like-in-100-years-11>

⁶¹ Business Insider. (2012, May). *Hindsight is 20/20, but it can be humorous to look back on what great intellectuals and reputable publications once predicted for the future*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/false-predictions-2012-5>; Perry, M. J. (2022, April 21). *18 spectacularly wrong predictions were made around the time of the first Earth Day in 1970, expect more this year*. American Enterprise Institute. <https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/18-spectacularly-wrong-predictions-were-made-around-the-time-of-the-first-earth-day-in-1970-expect-more-this-year/>; Bukszpan, D. (2014, August 27). *14 spectacularly wrong predictions*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2011/05/19/14-spectacularly-wrong-predictions.html>

- “Rail travel at high speed is not possible because passengers, unable to breathe, would die of asphyxia.” (Professor of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy Dionysius Lardner, 1823).
- “Everyone acquainted with the subject will recognize it as a conspicuous failure.” (President of Stevens Institute of Technology Henry Morton on Edison’s light bulb, 1880).
- “The horse is here to stay, but the automobile is only a novelty – a fad.” (President of the Michigan Savings Bank advising Henry Ford’s lawyer not to invest in the Ford Motor Company, 1903).
- “A rocket will never be able to leave the Earth’s atmosphere.” (The New York Times, 1936).
- “Television won’t last, because people will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night.” (20th Century Fox producer Darryl Zanuck, 1946).
- “The world potential market for copying machines is no more than 5,000.” (IBM executives to future Xerox founders, saying the copier did not have a large enough market to justify production, 1959).
- “Civilization will disappear in 15 or 30 years unless immediate action is taken to address the problems facing humanity.” (Harvard biologist George Wald, 1970).
- “There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.” (Ken Olsen, president, chairman, and founder of Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), at a 1977 meeting of the World Future Society in Boston).
- The Internet “will soon become a spectacular supernova and in 1996 catastrophically collapse.” (founder of Digital Equipment Corporation Robert Metcalfe, 1995).

Paradise on Earth or Torments of Hell

A description of futurological approaches would be incomplete without at least a brief analysis of social forecasting (although this aspect alone could be the topic of a separate study). The desire for a “perfect future” has troubled humanity since the very beginnings of its social and political organization. Antiquity gave us Plato’s idea of the ideal state⁶² (428/427 – 424/423 BCE), Aristotle’s *Politics* (384–322 BCE), and Cicero’s treatise *On the Republic* (106–43 BCE). With the rise and spread of Christianity, the search for the future was reduced to scholastic attempts to justify the possibility (or impossibility) of building paradise on Earth. One of the notable works of this period was *The City of the Sun* by Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639).

The Enlightenment era gave new life to ideas of future societies. Let us highlight the legacy of British philosopher and educator John Locke (1632–1704), with his theory of the “social contract” and the rights of humans to life, equality, and freedom. It is no coincidence that Locke is called one of the most prominent advocates

⁶² The work *The Republic* is considered central to his writings.

of liberalism. This concept was further developed by French philosopher and jurist Charles-Louis de Montesquieu (1689–1755). Let us also mention Voltaire (1694–1778), whose fight for freedom of religion and the separation of church and state made him an iconic figure.

The foundations laid during this time contributed to the rapid development of the social sciences in the 19th and even more so in the 20th century. Scientific forecasting has become an integral part of scientific development. In the social sciences, future prediction has become an inseparable part of sociology and political science.

In turn, the political visions of this period were truly staggering. The 19th century affirmed the philosophy of imperialism and colonialism – the future became the future of empires. It was within the imperial paradigm that the idea of European unification emerged. Some dreamed of empires, others of equality and democracy. Liberal ideas struggled to find their way, but the events of the 20th century clearly demonstrated that imperialism and liberalism are incompatible. The idea of a “United States of Europe” as a free federation of nations arose from the notion of monarchical unification of European countries,⁶³ and later evolved into the concept of the European Union.

The formation of a united Europe even led to the emergence of the “European Dream”⁶⁴ as a forward-looking vision of the future, although its author was the American economist and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin.⁶⁵ From the researcher’s perspective, Europe is characterized by sustainable development and respect for human rights, and the EU’s economic potential enables it to compete with the U.S. and become a full-fledged global superpower. It should be noted that today this slogan is not as well-known or popular as its American counterpart.

Interestingly, in a broader context, humanity has not departed from the paradigm of “searching for paradise” – building an ideal society or state, accompanied by fearmongering about “hellish torments” – the collapse of civilization. Many global social forecasts of today resemble the Christian Bible’s prophecies of the end of the world and the Last Judgment. Headlines from modern media are filled with numerous apocalyptic predictions: “Around a billion people may become climate refugees by 2050”; “The UN reported that the number of natural disasters has increased five-fold over the past 50 years”; “Scientists have stated that Earth is on the brink of five climate disasters: what awaits humanity?”; “There are 14 extinction scenarios for humanity: experts name evolutionary traps”; “The Earth has entered the stage of human extinction”; “The most popular scientific articles of the year predict the apocalypse”; “Scientists describe the worst – yet realistic – scenario for Earth’s future”; “Humanity has crossed the threshold of renewable resource consumption”; “The

⁶³ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Federal Europe*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Europe

⁶⁴ An unmistakable allusion to the “American Dream” – the idea that every American has the opportunity to achieve success.

⁶⁵ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Yevropeiska mriia* [European dream]. Wikipedia. https://uk.wikipedia.org/Європейська_мрія [in Ukrainian].

UN Secretary-General warns against using artificial intelligence to make decisions about launching nuclear weapons” – and more. At times, it resembles a series of action movies, each portraying a different version of the never-ending theme of the world’s end. Of course, some of these are exaggerated by politicians or the media, while others remain real issues that must not be ignored.

Let us not forget that in the average society, there is a prevailing expectation for simple answers to simple questions. Predictions are still regarded as “prophecies” – with caution – and serious scientists tend to avoid them so as not to be ridiculed by their peers. One might assume that in the “historical” memory of scholars, there remains a recollection of the “cleansing” fires of the Inquisition, which did not encourage such practices. Perhaps that’s why madmen were proclaimed prophets, as people tried to catch “signs from above” in their mumblings.

Octopus Paul and American Intelligence

As previously noted, the scarcity of scientific forecasts does not prevent the flood of “prophecies” from astrologers, tarot readers, numerologists, fortune-tellers, psychics, and other charlatans, who are lavishly promoted by the media. Even animals “manage” to predict the future – especially when it comes to sporting events. For example, during the Euro 2012 football championship, a pig named Emma turned out to be the perfect predictor – she guessed all the winners of the German team’s matches and predicted their loss to the Italian team.⁶⁶ Two years earlier, the European press reported on Paul the Octopus, who correctly predicted almost all the results of Germany’s matches at Euro 2008 and the 2010 World Cup. The octopus became so popular that he was made an honorary citizen of a Spanish town (he had predicted Spain as the winner), and a documentary was made about him.⁶⁷ Usually, these “animal-oracles” were offered food from containers labelled with the names of football teams. For instance, Paul the Octopus would indicate the winning team by choosing one of two boxes containing mussels and flags of the competing countries.

Given that modern sports competitions contain strong elements of show business, animal “prophecies” attract active interest from the media and betting companies, fuelling public excitement around the games and capitalizing on people’s fascination with the irrational. Among the animals spotted “prophesying” were pigs, cats, cows, camels, parrots, geese, goats, and even hamsters. Of course, “luck” hasn’t been cancelled – sometimes it follows clear mathematical patterns, and sometimes it’s just a coincidence that perhaps wasn’t supposed to happen, but did. Moreover, not all animals manage to eat from the “correct” box and guess the winners, even when the odds are 1 to 1 (or 50/50), with only two possible outcomes – right or wrong.

⁶⁶ Spiegel Online. (2012, June 29). *Pig oracle has perfect record*. <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/germany-euro-2012-semifinal-loss-predicted-by-emma-the-pig-a-841735.html>.

⁶⁷ BBC News. (2010, October 26). *Paul the World Cup octopus dies in his tank in Germany*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11626050>

After some surprisingly accurate sports predictions made by animals, the story beloved by stock market brokers and financial market “players” doesn’t sound like such a joke. The anecdote features an investor, a brokerage firm’s analytics department, and the investor’s pet hamster. Splitting his capital into two equal parts and deciding whether to buy or sell securities, the investor listened both to analysts and to his pet, who was offered two boxes of food labelled “buy” and “sell”. According to legend, the hamster brought the investor a slightly – but still higher – profit than the professional analysts.

In another version of this story, during a World Cup, a German bank used a financial market analytics program and predicted Brazil’s victory based on a million computer simulations. Another financial company, based on ten thousand virtual simulations, predicted Germany’s victory. In reality, neither team even reached the semifinals. Remembering that every joke contains a bit of a joke – and everything else is true – we must admit that predicting events tied to human subjectivity is truly difficult, and social forecasters sometimes need the luck of either Emma the pig or Paul the octopus.

Even intelligence agencies can boast of flawed predictions. As an example, let us recall the forecast by the U.S. National Intelligence Council, which predicted that by 2030, Asia would surpass North America and Europe combined in terms of GDP growth, defense spending, and technological investment, and that China might become the world’s largest economy, overtaking the U.S.⁶⁸

If we say that only those who do nothing make no mistakes, then some forecasts turned out not merely mistaken but downright worthless. For example, during Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, U.S. intelligence predicted that Ukraine would hold out for no more than seven days.⁶⁹ Germany’s Federal Intelligence Service believed there would be no invasion at all and that all Russian actions near Ukraine’s borders were merely military exercises.⁷⁰ In 2022, the head of French intelligence, General Éric Vignat, lost his post after his agency failed to foresee the Russian invasion and considered such a scenario unlikely.⁷¹ Ultimate-

⁶⁸ National Intelligence Council. (2012). *Global'nye tendentsii 2030: Al'ternativnye miry* [Global tendencies 2030. Alternative spaces] (Publication No. 2012-001, p. 8). ISBN 978-1-92667-21-5. [in Russian].

⁶⁹ Furman, M. (2024, October 31). *USA radily Zelens'komu zapysaty videozapovit: rozsekrecheno detali pochatku viiny* [The U.S. advised Zelenskyy to record a video will: details of the war’s beginning declassified]. Glavred. <https://glavred.net/ukraine/ssha-sovetovali-zelenskomu-zapisat-videozaveshchanie-rassekrecheny-detali-nachala-voyny-10610321.html> [in Russian].

⁷⁰ Zhuravel, M. (2023, August 24). *Nimets'ka rozvidka prorakhuvalasya z pochatkom viiny v Ukraini – vitsekantsler FRN* [German intelligence miscalculated the beginning of the war in Ukraine – Vice Chancellor of Germany]. Television News Service (TSN). <https://tsn.ua/ato/nimecka-rozvidka-prorahuvalasya-z-pochatkom-viyni-v-ukrayini-vice-kancler-frn-2397139.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁷¹ Focus.ua. (2022, March 31). *Ne zmih sprohnozuvaty viynu v Ukraini: holova frantsuz'koi rozvidky zalyshyv posadu* [Failed to predict the war in Ukraine: Head of French intelligence resigned]. Focus.ua. <https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/511032-ne-smog-sproghnozivat-voynu-v-ukraine-glava-francyskoy-razvedki-pokinul-dolzhnost> [in Russian].

ly, Russian military analysts predicted that Kyiv would be captured in three to four days.⁷²

Let us recall that modern intelligence agencies are expected to have powerful tools for computer modelling and data processing, and public perception holds that the best analysts should work there, since national security depends on their “predictions”. It turned out that some individuals do indeed have exceptional forecasting abilities. In 2014, the BBC, citing University of Pennsylvania professor Philip Tetlock and a publication in *Psychological Science*, told its readers about people who intuitively possess an extraordinary ability to predict the future. It turned out that there are people (just 2 %)⁷³ who have a talent for forecasting. According to the authors, professional political experts often make mistakes, and their forecasts are generally inaccurate. “If chimpanzees randomly threw darts at a board with different possible outcomes written on it, they would achieve almost the same results as the experts with their forecasts”, one political analyst commented to *The New York Times*.

Tetlock’s research caught the attention of intelligence agencies, and the U.S. Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA) funded the Good Judgment Project, aimed at discovering new approaches to political forecasting.

Research showed that “superforecasters” can make accurate predictions four times better than the average person. As expected, superforecasters scored better on intelligence tests, but they were also marked by open-mindedness, a tendency to view problems from all sides, and a capacity for self-reflection. Among the talented individuals were representatives of various professions, for example, one of the top “forecasters” in the experiment was a pharmacist. Interestingly, more accurate predictions were achieved by using historical analogies and by remembering to consider both the most optimistic and most pessimistic scenarios, which helped verify predictions. Teamwork also proved effective, but only if participants were trained in how to critique others’ ideas constructively and accept alternative points of view.

The only thing known for certain is that there is no predetermined future, predictions sometimes come true 100 %, and sometimes they do not come true at all. However, the development of futurology is one of the promising scientific fields, at the very least – for identifying developmental threats and preventing the worst-case scenarios, and at best – for creating optimal conditions for progress.

⁷² BigKyiv. (2022, August 17). *Zakhopyty Kyiv za 3–4 dni. U USA rozkryly plany Putina shchodo viiny v Ukraini* [Capture Kyiv in 3–4 days: U.S. revealed Putin’s war plans against Ukraine]. BigKyiv. <https://bigkyiv.com.ua/zakhopyty-kyiv-za-3-4-dni-u-ssha-rozkryly-plan-putina-shhodo-viiny-v-ukrayini/> [in Ukrainian].

⁷³ Robson, D. (2014, June 12). *The best way to predict the future*. BBC Future. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20140612-the-best-way-to-see-the-future>

WHAT WE OWE TO GREECE, OR THE IDEA OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

I always begin teaching my university course on the prospects of European civilization with the question: “Which European countries are the ‘richest’ and which are the ‘poorest,’ and is this somehow related to religion?”⁷⁴ During the discussion, it becomes clear that the richest countries in Europe are those where a significant or noticeable part of the population adheres (or adhered) to Protestantism (the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Germany, France). Next come the “Catholic” countries – Italy, Spain, and Portugal. And the last places (in terms of purchasing power parity, GDP per capita, and other economic markers) are usually occupied by countries where the majority of the population adheres to Orthodoxy. Interestingly, in European history, even the migration of Protestants from one country to another significantly affected the level of economic development. For example, a major reason for the economic rise of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland was the influx of French Huguenots (Calvinists), who were forced to flee Catholic France in the early 17th century.⁷⁵ Many of these Protestants also reached the New World, which played an important role in the formation of the United States.

Undoubtedly, the development of the “Orthodox” countries of Europe was also influenced by their former membership in the so-called “socialist bloc”. Yet we also see Greece within this “club”. Let us recall that the 2009–2010 financial crisis in Greece nearly buried the euro and almost triggered a new wave of global financial crisis. Ultimately, the same trend is observed in post-socialist Europe – the standard of living in “Protestant” Czechia or “Catholic” Poland is likely to be higher than in the “Orthodox” countries of the region.

The reason for this economic “inequality” is simple and lies primarily in the number of religious holidays.⁷⁶ It turns out that even in modern Germany, a Protestant works a few hours more per week than a Catholic, and thus achieves better

⁷⁴ This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

⁷⁵ After the Edict of Nantes was adopted in France in 1598, French Protestants were granted the right to remain Protestants in a Catholic country. However, during the 17th century, French monarchs gradually repealed the edict’s provisions. In 1629, Louis XIII captured the fortress of La Rochelle and banned political parties and gatherings. Pressure on the Huguenots intensified under the reign of Louis XIV, and in 1685, the edict’s provisions were completely revoked. Only in 1787 were persecutions of Protestants officially ended. This misguided policy led to the mass emigration of tens of thousands of Protestants to neighbouring Holland, which contributed to its economic rise.

⁷⁶ The intrinsic value of labour in some Protestant denominations of Christianity is also significant, and in this regard, one can agree with Max Weber (See: Weber, M. (2018). *Protestants'ka etyka i dukh kapitalizmu* [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism] (O. Pohorylyi, Trans.). Kyiv: Nash Format. [in Ukrainian]), However, the lack of religious holidays favours the profitability of Protestant labour purely in arithmetic terms.

results.⁷⁷ We must also mention the works of Max Weber, who saw deeper foundations in this phenomenon – the asceticism of Protestant entrepreneurs, many of whom rejected ostentatious luxury and the enjoyment of power. In this system of values, wealth is viewed as a sign before God of a duty well fulfilled.⁷⁸ Evidently, it was Protestantism that gave rise to the idea of the legitimacy of wealth for those who earned it through honest labour.⁷⁹ Perhaps this is the true definition of Weber’s “spirit of capitalism”.

Living in Ukraine, where the majority of citizens consider themselves Orthodox (with a corresponding number of Orthodox holidays, some of which are also officially recognized by the state), I have repeatedly encountered situations when, due to a religious holiday, I could not receive a service or purchase a product because a store or institution was simply closed or shut down early. However, in recent years such cases have become less frequent, which may indicate a positive trend.

I emphasize that this is simply a statement of fact; the author of this book is an atheist and in no way seeks to “glorify” Protestants or to “diminish” the role of Orthodox or Catholics in the formation of European civilization. In relation to Europe, the idea of building a common home proves effective, where every idea, every culture, every religion laid the foundation brick by brick, built the walls, and raised the roof. Perhaps in places the thickness of the mortar and the texture of the masonry differ, but the house turned out to be quite solid.

Thus, European civilization is both united and diverse. Let us try to clarify what our concept of European civilization actually represents. The very concept of “civilization” is relatively new and was introduced during the era of the French Enlightenment. The encyclopaedist scholars believed that civilization is a society based on the principles of reason and justice.⁸⁰

In one of the reference editions, the term “European civilization” is understood as “a set of features of economic, political, and spiritual cultures that developed on the territory of the European continent and spread on a global scale, especially to the lands of former European colonization in the Americas”. European civilization is also understood as a cultural heritage – in a broad sense, it can be identified as

⁷⁷ CORDIS. (n.d.). *Protestant work ethic behind stronger northern Europe economy: study*. <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/33882-protestant-work-ethic-behind-stronger-northern-europe-economy-study>; Spenkuch, J. L. (2017). Religion and work: Micro evidence from contemporary Germany. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 135, 193–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2016.11.009>

⁷⁸ Weber, M. (1998). *Sotsiologhiia. Zahal'noistorychni analizi. Polityka* (O. Pohorylyi, Trans., Afterword and commentary). Kyiv: Osnovy. ISBN 966-500-091-8 [in Ukrainian]; Kadariia, T. I. (2014). *Hospodars'ka etyka protestantyzmu: filosofs'ko-relihiieznachnyi analiz vykhidnykh idei* [The economic ethics of Protestantism: A philosophical and religious analysis of fundamental ideas]. *Visnyk Cherkaskoho Universytetu. Serii: Filosofiia. Naukovyi zhurnal*, 11(304), 141–145. (See p. 144). [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁹ This creates a dissonance with the concept of enrichment at any cost, which assumes the acceptability of all methods.

⁸⁰ Pyrozhkov, S. I., Maiboroda, O. M., & Shaigorodskyi, Yu. Zh., et al. (Eds.). (2016). *Tsyvilizatsiyni vybir Ukrainy: paradyhma osmyslennia i stratehiia dii: natsional'na dopovid'* [Ukraine’s civilizational choice: A paradigm for reflection and a strategy for action. National report] (p. 43). Kyiv: National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. [in Ukrainian].

a collection of buildings, roads, machines, laboratories, libraries, museums, information systems, historical monuments, cities and villages, as well as the meanings embedded in these objects that serve as tools for transmitting knowledge and experience. Linguistic foundations, cultural influences, the religious component (primarily Christianity), and systems of values are also taken into account.⁸¹

The North American civilization is a derivative of the European (or Western European) civilization, to a lesser extent – the Latin American and Australian civilizations as well. Arnold Toynbee, the author of the concept of the civilizational development of humanity, envisioned this development as a system of coexisting “local civilizations”.⁸² In general, there is no consensus among scholars regarding the definition or criteria of what constitutes a civilization. Among modern classifications, there is the Far Eastern civilization (China, Japan, Korea); another approach distinguishes separately between Chinese (Confucian) and Japanese (Shinto) civilizations. Other identified civilizations include the Islamic (Muslim) model, the Hindu (or South Asian), the Latin American, and the African civilizations. None of these classifications is absolute, as Confucianism was by no means the only religion in China, and Shinto was not the only one in Japan. Muslim countries, like the Indian subcontinent and Africa, are highly diverse – both ethnically and culturally, as well as religiously. It is therefore not surprising that some view European civilization as a unified whole, while others divide it into Western and Eastern European, even though both are Christian. That is why it is so diverse – its formation was shaped by many influences, from Egypt and the Middle East to the Greek, Latin, and even barbarian worlds. Greek art, Roman law, Christian (and Jewish) morality, Arabic mathematics and medicine, the Chinese examination system and paper – these are just some of its components.

It should be noted that many ideas and concepts have changed over the course of thousands of years of their existence and application. For example, polis-based democracy has only a very indirect relation to its modern version, although without it, the modern model of democracy would not have emerged. Incidentally, even its ancient Greek version revealed the possibilities of voter bribery, social populism, and even the potential for the revival of tyranny or oligarchy. The issue of transformation also fully applies to Christianity, which will be discussed in a separate chapter.

The bourgeois revolutions in Europe in the 16th–17th centuries brought significant changes to the social landscape of that time. Undoubtedly, the traditions of urban self-government became the foundation of this process. Urban populations are less conservative, more receptive to innovation, and more mobile. The leading role

⁸¹ Popovych, M. V. (2009). *Yevropeiska tsyvilizatsiia* [European civilization]. In I. M. Dziuba, A. I. Zhukovskiy, M. H. Zhelezniak, et al. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine* [Electronic resource]. Institute of Encyclopedic Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. <https://esu.com.ua/article-17372> [in Ukrainian].

⁸² Toynbee, A. (1995). *Doslidzhennia istorii (T. 1)* [A study of history, Vol. 1]. Kyiv: Osnovy. [in Ukrainian].

in this development was played by the bourgeoisie⁸³ – urban dwellers who owned property (production, trade, capital) and earned income from entrepreneurial activity. The modern era is marked by rapid urbanization, as yesterday's rural population puts on the frock coat of a bureaucrat or the apron of a craftsman.

Entrepreneurial activity did not immediately become part of “social capital”, as early capitalism at times took on grotesque forms. The leftist European ideologies of the 19th century did not arise out of nowhere, and “leftist” ideas still find followers today.

It turned out that two fundamental rights are essential for engaging in business (entrepreneurial activity). The first is individual freedom (here, specifically the freedom of an entrepreneur), and the second is the right to own property. It became clear that only democracy, through the existence and enforcement of appropriate laws, ensures the observance of these freedoms. Any other forms – monarchy, autocracy, tyranny, dictatorship, despotism – place the individual at the mercy of a ruler or official. In such societies, the value of both human life and property usually depends directly on a person's loyalty to the ruling institutions or individuals. It was precisely the need to protect private property that gave rise to modern democracy (the ancient Greek “legacy” of democracy is more of an idea) and shaped social relations and stereotypes.

Democracy, based on the freedom of the citizen, becomes a stable system only under the condition that justice is present. The initial accumulation of capital was poorly aligned with this idea. Only later did entrepreneurial freedom become a social value, when it turned out that the local community was capable of solving most problems. It was then that the idea of personal social responsibility – for one's actions as a businessperson – emerged.

Thus, the goal of modern democracy is the protection of the citizen-owner. Interestingly, in the post-Soviet space, including in Ukraine, democracy is often reduced solely to the electoral process, which is in fact only one of its instruments.⁸⁴

The protection of property rights has become a consistent marker of a prosperous society. For instance, in 2024, Ukraine ranked 102nd out of 125 countries in the International Property Rights Index and was the lowest-ranked country in Central and Eastern Europe.⁸⁵ There is no doubt that this not only hinders investment and impedes business activity, but also has broader institutional implications. It is no coincidence that restitution was carried out in the Baltic states, returning property to its rightful owners.

⁸³ From the French word *bourgeois* – townsman; in Germany – Bürger; in the lands of Ukraine – mishchany (townsman or petty urban dweller).

⁸⁴ For many Ukrainian politicians, participating in elections for many years served as a kind of indulgence for not always honest past deeds (especially during the period of initial capital accumulation). A mayor who came to power through direct voter bribery with money or aid will consider his authority legitimate, since he was “elected” to the post, even though by law he should be in prison. In this case, the institution of citizenship is replaced by the institution of the “voter”.

⁸⁵ International Property Rights Index. (2024). *International Property Rights Index 2024*. <https://internationalpropertyrightsindex.org/#world-map>

What is our modern understanding of democracy? Contemporary notions of individual freedom have been shaped relatively recently and owe their emergence to modern society. The development of bourgeois relations implied that in addition to sellers and producers, there must also be buyers and consumers. Both categories are closely interconnected through economic and therefore social relations, which, one way or another, require regulation through a system of rights and responsibilities. Thus, a regulatory mechanism emerges, partly as an element of society's self-organization, and partly as a function of state authority.

Another factor that contributed to the emergence of the modern democratic system was the political formation of nations. It was precisely within the framework of defining national identity that the foundations of the modern political model were laid. Just a century and a half ago, on August 26, 1789, the French National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which defined individual human rights.

The concept of the nation emerged relatively recently; the modern era is rightly referred to as the age of nationalism. Interestingly, the first to perceive themselves as nations were imperial nations, followed by the peoples they had subjugated. Action provokes reaction; in opposition to imperial chauvinism, anti-imperial nationalism emerges. In essence, it is the desire of a stateless people to have (acquire or restore) their own national state – we may call this nationalism “healthy”. The idea of national sovereignty arises, along with the concept of the national idea, which is usually based on appeals to history as well as historical myth-making, where real history is embellished with mythological constructs. Early nationalism had a romantic nature; it idealized its own nation, appealing to a kind of “golden age” – of just and great rulers, national feats, and heroes. National literature begins to form, and Bible translations play a major role in this process.⁸⁶ By the 19th century, a significant body of works emerges that shapes and popularizes the national idea. For many countries (Italy, Germany), this was the idea of national unification; for others, it was the idea of liberation. In the 19th–20th centuries, this aspiration emerged among Poles, Ukrainians, Serbs, Bulgarians, and others. All of them sought to break away from empires (Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman) and become state nations – and thus political nations.

In turn, within the cultural environment of “imperial” nations, a belief in the superiority of their own nation over others emerges. Austro-Slavism, Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, Ottomanism, and similar ideologies appear. In such cases, the “happiness” of the dominant nation is built on the suppression (non-recognition) of the existence of other peoples. These chauvinistic ideas are also rooted in notions of a “distant antiquity” when rulers were just and feats and heroes were great.

Early “romantic” nationalism, which served as the foundation of 19th-century national liberation movements, was anti-imperial in nature, but the mythologization

⁸⁶ Luther's Bible had a tremendous influence on the development of the German language. William Tyndale, the translator of the Bible into English, is considered an architect of the English language.

of the national idea often carries inherent dangers. Peoples who themselves emerged from colonial oppression sometimes did not refrain from oppressing others – consider, for example, the pacification⁸⁷ of the Ukrainian population in Galicia in 1930, which ultimately led to the radicalization of the Ukrainian liberation movement. The idea of the “greatness” of the German nation, largely rooted in colonialism and eugenic concepts that were popular in early 20th-century Europe, became a kind of “apogee” of such ideologies, though it also demonstrated to the world that this was a dead end. I do not aim to string together a “necklace of shame” of various nations. As a historian, I note that the history of the past (unlike the “history of the future”) has no alternatives; we must learn from mistakes and move forward.

Not all nations managed to stop at the boundary between revolutionary romanticism and national chauvinism (which included elements of colonialism), as the idea of superiority over other peoples can be alluring. Let us recall the remark by British historian and politician Thomas Macaulay about Indian and Arabic literature, which, in his opinion, was not worth even a single shelf of a good European library. Or the French colonial cultural policy, which was aimed at assimilating colonized peoples. “Human zoos”,⁸⁸ where indigenous people were exhibited, were very popular and operated in many European capitals. The international convention banning the use of expanding bullets, signed in The Hague in 1897, did not apply to countries that had not signed it, thereby allowing the use of such ammunition in colonial wars.⁸⁹

The First World War largely destroyed imperial projects, leaving only their overseas colonial versions – the French and British empires – which began to collapse in the mid-20th century. Despite the fall of the empire in Russia, in essence, it remained colonial, replacing slogans about building a “Great Russia” with slogans about creating a country of global Communist Internationalism. The dissolution of the USSR, which occurred through an evolutionary process, should have eliminated the remnants of this worldview – but it did not.

The imperial path of development implies a constant expansion of “living” space – through the annexation of new territories and populations. From an economic perspective, this is an extensive model of development, as growth is driven more by quantity than by quality. When conquests cease, the empire soon ceases to exist as well. Thus, the process of colonization is a necessary condition for the existence of empires. Interestingly, countries that abandoned imperial ideology while

⁸⁷ Pacification – a Polish government policy aimed at quelling or pacifying the Ukrainian population of Galicia and Volhynia, accompanied by extrajudicial repression against local residents. Shurkhalo, D. (2020, September 20). *90 rokiv patsyfikatsii: pol's'ka vlada zmushuvala ukraintsiv “pravyl'no holosuvaty”* [90 years of pacification: Polish authorities forced Ukrainians to “vote correctly”]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30848636.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁸⁸ Keller, M. (2006, August 6). *The scandal at the zoo*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/06/nyregion/thecity/06zoo.html>

⁸⁹ Repa, A. (2006, September 1). *Vid polityky varvarstva do polityky druzhby* [From a policy of barbarism to a policy of friendship]. ZN.UA. https://zn.ua/ukr/SOCIUM/vid_politiki_varvarstva_do_politiki_druzhbi.html [in Ukrainian].

retaining national consciousness began to develop through intensive means. Japan and France serve as good examples of this transition.

“Wilsonianism”⁹⁰ played an important role in shaping European political doctrines of the 20th century. It was U.S. President Woodrow Wilson who initiated the creation of the League of Nations, which was founded at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–1920 (convened after the defeat of the Triple Alliance in World War I). This was by no means the first attempt at postwar settlement: one may recall the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815 (convened after Napoleon’s defeat), or the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856 (convened after Russia’s defeat in the Crimean War).

But the League of Nations became the first intergovernmental organization established to achieve peace and security.⁹¹ For the first time, respect for the rights of national minorities and the peaceful resolution of territorial conflicts were officially declared. And although the League of Nations failed to fulfil this function – as World War II began in Europe – the experience of its formation was significant for the postwar world. Broadly speaking, the central idea of Wilsonianism was the promotion and spread of democracy and capitalism.

Postwar Europe, shaped by the Yalta–Potsdam system, was marked by nearly half a century of military-political confrontation, where a bad peace was seen as better than a good war.

In 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (albeit as a recommendation). In 1950, the member states of the Council of Europe adopted the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Few would dispute ideas such as equality before the law, the presumption of innocence, the inviolability of the person, the prohibition of arbitrary interference with one’s home, honour, and reputation, the right to political activity and social security, the right to leave one’s country and return freely, and the right to freedom of belief, and so on.⁹²

Modern “collective” Western society⁹³ promotes respect for the individual, a balance between individual and collective interests (possibly in favour of the individual), rationalism, the ideals of freedom and equality, respect for private property, and the intrinsic value of labour. The essence of ideal democracy lies in human freedom, but since all people have freedom, the freedom of one individual ends where the

⁹⁰ The term reflects the activities of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921). In 1918, he presented his 14 Points as the basis for ending World War I. He was the founder of the League of Nations, through which he proposed resolving all conflicts peacefully.

⁹¹ I approach the idea of establishing a new UN with caution, since the League of Nations emerged after World War I, and the UN after World War II – thus, reforms are preferable.

⁹² United Nations. (1948, December 10). *Zahal'na deklaratsiia prav liudyny* [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] (UN General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III)). https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_015#Text [in Ukrainian].

⁹³ Traditionalism is more characteristic of the so-called “collective” East, but many “European” ideas do not provoke significant resistance even within the Eastern paradigm of development. Rationalist ideas are very strong in the Far East; what’s lacking is the balance between the collective and the individual, and the ideals of freedom and equality – but the understanding of these values is a matter of time.

freedom of another begins. There is a certain paradox in the fact that democracy is essentially a form of total self-restraint, achieved through compromise between the individual and society.

Let us not forget that, in addition to rights, individuals in society also have duties, most notably, paying taxes and defending the state as citizens.

Democracy works: in 2024, no fewer than 2 billion people voted worldwide, as elections of various levels took place in EU countries, the USA, the UK, India, Mexico, and others.⁹⁴

However, the political system that is meant to serve democracy is not perfect. As mentioned earlier, totalitarian (authoritarian or transitional) societies also hold elections, may have political parties, and even formally independent media. But elections and the existence of political parties do not in themselves constitute democracy, just as the mere presence of the press or a judiciary does not. Even legality is not a marker of democracy, as serfdom, slavery, and colonialism were all entirely legal – and those laws were often passed not by monarchs or dictators, but by elected parliaments.

What should democracy be like?

1) The presence of three branches of power independent of each other: legislative, executive, and judicial.

2) The election of government bodies, ideally all of them, and necessarily the legislative branch.

3) The existence of a system of citizenship, with citizens participating in elections both as voters and as candidates.

4) The presence of political parties and civil organizations as a form of citizen engagement. Widespread use of direct democracy tools such as polls and referendums.

5) The existence of political rights and freedoms, with civil liberty being the most important. Independent media capable of fulfilling the role of a “watchdog” of democracy.

6) The existence of civic duties (ranging from supporting justice to collective defence and maintaining social institutions).

7) Private property and freedom of enterprise. Individual freedom to the extent that it does not infringe on others. The primacy of human rights. Majority rule with protection of minority rights.

8) The fairness of laws. Strict punishment for voter bribery, election fraud, and other actions that distort democracy.

All of these elements are equally important.

⁹⁴ Pylypiv, I. (2023, October 19). *U 2024 rotsi proholosuiut ponad 2 miliardy liudei, u tomu chysli v SSHA, YeS ta Velykobrytanii. Prote vzhe zaraz usi khvyluiut'sia cherez ShI. Shcho vidbuvaet'sia?* [Over 2 billion people will vote in 2024, including in the U.S., EU, and UK. But everyone is already worried about AI. What's going on?]. *Ekonomichna Pravda*. <https://www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2023/10/19/705624/> [in Ukrainian].

Even in countries with established democratic traditions, the “mechanisms” of democracy can fail to function. One of the most sensitive issues may be the balance of powers. Issues arise with the financing of political parties, which sometimes leads to their dependence. The party system is also imperfect; leadership positions can be occupied by political opportunists. Political competition, even in developed democracies, has taken on aggressive forms. And finally, it turns out that one of the major issues of modern times is social populism. The use of nationalist or religious rhetoric may pose a real threat.

The issue of the “voter’s qualification” is often raised. In the post-Soviet space, one can often hear the phrase: “The greatest flaw of democracy is that the vote of an educated and intelligent person weighs the same as that of an idiot.” This quote is a misattribution commonly ascribed to Winston Churchill. However, it is actually a loose interpretation of a quote by H.L. Mencken, an American journalist, cultural critic, and satirist. In his view, democracy is a system that allows uninformed people to make important decisions, which often leads to undesirable outcomes. He was also sceptical of the idea that majority voting is inherently wise and just, since the consequences could be catastrophic.⁹⁵

But there is also an opposing view known as the “wisdom of the crowd”. In 1906, at a fair in Plymouth, 800 people took part in a contest to estimate the weight of a bull. Each participant gave their own estimate, and an average value was calculated. It turned out to be surprisingly accurate – within 1 % error (the bull weighed 1207 pounds; the average estimate was 1198). In recent years, the phenomenon of “wisdom of the crowd” has been actively used in business strategies, marketing, and political science research.⁹⁶

Not only sociologists, but also political technologists and economists have long been interested in the phenomenon of mass human behaviour. The development of the Internet – including communication tools, electronic media, and social networks – has radically changed political technology methods. On the one hand, they study collective “moods”; on the other, they can help shape them or adapt to collective preferences.

Another aspect of modern democracy is that people have become so accustomed to it that they perceive it as a constant, unchanging phenomenon. It turns out that democracy is by no means absorbed with mother’s milk; it is a product of upbringing and understanding of social relations. Democracy is a process – a continuous search for balance between human rights and duties, branches of power, party financing, impartiality, and more. Democracy should not be taken for granted.

The Soviet dissident V. Bukovsky expressed the following opinion in 2007: “The pampered Western democracies have forgotten their past, their essence – namely,

⁹⁵ Studysmarter (n.d.). *H. L. Mencken*. <https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/politics/political-ideology/h-l-mencken/>

⁹⁶ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Wisdom of the crowd*. *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom_of_the_crowd

that democracy is not a cozy home, a nice car, or unemployment benefits, but above all, the right to fight and the will to fight.”⁹⁷

Perhaps it is the lack of this understanding that gives rise to the passivity of the so-called “old” European democracies in the face of totalitarianism or autarkies. Europe not only accepted the annexation of part of Georgia’s territory in 2008, but also blamed the Georgian side for the conflict, thereby endorsing the Russian version of events. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 went almost painlessly for Russia, which in turn gave Putin a free hand in 2022.

Independent media play a crucial role in the democratic process – no wonder they are called the “fourth estate”.⁹⁸ The media have always been significant in the political process, and their influence grew with the advent of television. It is believed that the first politician to benefit from televised debates in winning an election was John F. Kennedy in 1960.⁹⁹

The emergence of social networks and the further virtualization of social and political life have had no less of an impact on democracy. For example, the phenomenon of “social bubbles” is particularly interesting. Through their preferences, choice of information sources, and authorities, a person on a social network forms a personal space that rarely includes people with differing views and beliefs. As a result, a personal informational bubble is formed, which is perceived as a representative cross-section of the entire society. The influence of political technologists on the creation of such bubbles allows them to shape desired perceptions, distort facts, and manipulate audiences. Access to alternative sources within the bubble is minimized or viewed solely through the negative lens of authoritative “bubble” speakers.

There are well-founded concerns that artificial intelligence may become a new challenge to democracy. It is agreed that AI can be used to create problems on the scale of military conflict (let’s hope AI itself is not yet capable of initiating one). Artificial intelligence can be used to influence people. AI can generate texts, videos, audio, images, and clone voices, making it a powerful tool for political technologists to misinform voters. Neural networks also enable targeting of audiences that are critical during elections, increasing politicians’ chances of winning. Researchers fear that AI may become a challenge to democracy and permanently change the electoral process. The military shares these concerns, for example, the chairman of

⁹⁷ Bukovsky, V. (2007). *I vozvrashchaietsia veter...* (Seriia “Biografii i memuary”) [And the wind returns... (Series “Biographies and Memoirs”)]. Moscow: Zakharov. ISBN 978-5-8159-0749-2 [in Russian].

⁹⁸ United Nations Development Programme. (2024, May 2). *Building the strengths of the Fourth Estate: World Press Freedom Day highlights the importance of journalism in the global environmental crisis*. <https://stories.undp.org/building-the-strengths-of-the-fourth-estate>

⁹⁹ Pylypiv, I. (2023, October 19). *U 2024 rotsi proholosuiut ponad 2 miliardy liudei, u tomu chysli v SSHA, YeS ta Velykobrytanii. Prote vzhe zaraz usi khvyluiut'sia cherez ShI. Shcho vidbuvaet'sia?* [Over 2 billion people will vote in 2024, including in the U.S., EU, and UK. But everyone is already worried about AI. What’s going on?]. Ekonomichna Pravda. <https://www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2023/10/19/705624/> [in Ukrainian].

the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, Mark Warner, has spoken about the threat AI poses to elections.¹⁰⁰

It is believed that AI has already been used to influence elections. The electoral process in Slovakia is often cited as an example. In October 2023, the pro-Russian party SMER-SD won the election, overtaking the “Progressive Slovakia” party. The victory was aided by the emergence of a fake audio recording. In the recording, two people discussed how to rig the election, including buying votes from the Roma minority. Slovak voters could recognize the voices of “Progressive Slovakia” leader Michal Šimečka and journalist Monika Tódová. And although it was quickly revealed that the recording was fake, it is believed that the publication still had an effect. Incidentally, Facebook was the platform chosen to spread the recording.¹⁰¹

The issue of combating disinformation has always been relevant and remains so today. The emergence of AI significantly complicates fact-checking. To counter falsification more effectively, researchers propose action on all levels – from obliging AI developers to label their content, to moderating social networks and providing educational services that promote critical thinking across all age groups. The attempt to develop classifiers capable of distinguishing between machine- and human-written texts has so far proven unsuccessful due to low accuracy. Therefore, the recommendation to maintain information hygiene, consume information from official sources and trusted media, remains a relatively effective way to counter falsification.¹⁰²

Thus, one can only agree with Winston Churchill, who once said: “Democracy is the worst form of Government – except for all those other forms that have been tried.” Incidentally, he made this remark after losing his position as Prime Minister (which he held until July 26, 1945), that is, after victory in World War II and the elections that removed him from office.

Any description of the idea of modern European civilization would be incomplete without mentioning the so-called “middle class”. According to the “American middle class” page, the middle class consists of people who have economic security (or stable incomes sufficient to meet material and social needs), work autonomy, comfortable living conditions, and rely on their knowledge for self-sufficiency. They occupy an intermediate position between the richest and the poorest segments of the population.¹⁰³

It is worth noting that working citizens in any country can be broadly divided into two groups: those who work for the state and those who sustain it. At one conference, the origin of these groups was roughly explained as follows. During the colonization of the Wild West, pioneer settlements were established. Over time, res-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Serednii klas* [Middle class]. *Wikipedia*. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Середній_клас [in Ukrainian].

idents realized the need to regulate social relations, so they pooled their money to hire a sheriff, a doctor, a teacher, and to establish a fire brigade. Of course, this is a very simplified model, but it helps to convey the essence.

The first group is business – people who pay taxes to state and municipal budgets. The second group works for the state or municipality; they also pay taxes, but there is a key difference: they receive their salaries from the state or municipal budget. These are primarily civil servants, doctors, educators, military personnel, police officers, firefighters, and so on. Both categories are equally essential to society and play their roles in the social and economic fabric. Which of these groups belongs to the middle class? In terms of living standards – both; in terms of essence – only the first one, as it is the one that pays taxes and thus acts as the customer of state and municipal services.

Few people realize that the creation of the modern middle class was a rather long and painful process. The era of free competition under early capitalism, based on the principles of individualism and rationalism, led to deep social stratification. But trade unions emerged, along with pension schemes, labour protection, health insurance, and growing political attention to workers' rights. The relocation of production to colonies allowed entrepreneurs to accumulate capital there (eventually, even in the colonies, trade unions and political parties emerged). From a purely utilitarian point of view, the desired realm of existence for the middle class is the sphere of comfort. Comfort is not a static phenomenon; perceptions of it change with the development of technology, fashion, and social norms. Some of these ideas remain constant, while others evolve – from the desire to wear unique clothing to the desire to wear branded outfits; from owning a personal car to the rise of autopilot; from an apartment in the city centre to a country house; from home-cooked meals to fast food or gourmet restaurants.

Human life did not immediately become the foundation of other values. As we can see, one of the initial core aspects of middle-class existence was the satisfaction of basic human needs (food, housing, healthcare) and security (public safety, sanitary safety, national defence), while today a central role is played by opportunities for self-realization (education, culture, business) and self-expression. Since the idea of civilization began to take shape at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, it was understood as human achievement in all areas of activity, and the main goal of progress came to be defined as the spiritual development of individuals.¹⁰⁴ In this context, spiritual development should not be opposed to the idea of comfort – they serve different functions and do not contradict each other in any way.

Modern European civilization places great importance on opportunities for self-realization and self-expression. The individual truly becomes the central value, or rather, human capital. The leader of the UK Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher, once said that anyone may climb Everest for themselves, but when they reach the top, they will plant the flag of their country.

¹⁰⁴Schweitzer, A. (1987). *The philosophy of civilization* (p. 91). New York, NY: Prometheus Books.

The wealth of each individual is, in fact, the wealth of the country. Every person should carve their path to their own Everest – that is, to well-being and prosperity. Citizens, as taxpayers, must learn to truly be citizens – members of society who address their immediate needs through self-organization. In turn, businesses must act with social responsibility, and the ideal state should function as a service provider that guarantees basic rights and freedoms. This is a long journey that Europe has travelled – from the bourgeois revolutions to the two world wars.

Perceptions of the middle class in the post-Soviet space are particularly interesting. People tend to perceive the form of this phenomenon rather than its essence. In the 1990s, during Ukraine's first decade of "shock therapy",¹⁰⁵ school teachers' income levels were extremely low. When I started working as a teacher in 1994, my first pay check was enough to buy a single chocolate bar (which I did); there was simply not enough for anything more. Despite this, most school teachers still considered themselves part of the "middle class", even though by all indicators they lived below the poverty line.

For example, according to sociological surveys in 2013, about half of Ukrainians identified themselves as middle class. However, experts believed that, based on living standards, only about 5–10 % of the population in Ukraine at that time could realistically be classified as middle class.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps the Ukrainian middle class still lacks material wealth and opportunities, yet we can observe its formation, at least on the level of perception. In recent years, paternalistic expectations of the state have significantly declined in the country. The roots of this phenomenon go back to the Soviet past, when the state decided how much and where a person should work, how many parking spaces an apartment building should have, how big a doormat should be in the entryway, and so on.

In 2019, 42 % of Ukraine's population believed that the state should bear full responsibility for providing every person with everything they need, while 50 % already saw the main duty of the state as ensuring equal "rules of the game" for all.¹⁰⁷ By 2024, according to the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, only 24 % of Ukrainians believed that the state should take on more responsibility for helping people. At the same time, only 2.8 % supported the idea that people themselves should take more responsibility for helping one another.

¹⁰⁵ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Shock therapy (economics)*. Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shock_therapy_\(economics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shock_therapy_(economics))

¹⁰⁶ Zanuda, A. (2013, June 5). *Serednii klas v Ukraini: nechyslennyi i nevpovyvnyi* [Middle class in Ukraine: Small and powerless]. BBC Ukraina. https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/entertainment/2013/06/130604_ukraine_middle_class_az [in Ukrainian].

¹⁰⁷ Mokan, V. (2021, November 3). *Yak pozbutysia paternalizmu: uroky liderstva v konteksti natsionalno-patriotychnoho vykhovannia* [How to overcome paternalism: Lessons of leadership in the context of national-patriotic education]. Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3343791-ak-pozbutisa-paternalizmu-uroki-liderstva-v-konteksti-nacionalnopatriotichnogo-vihovanna.html> [in Ukrainian].

er.¹⁰⁸ The realization that only an independent individual can be a full-fledged citizen – one who is not enticed by welfare handouts – has not yet fully arrived, but it is gradually making its way.

Interestingly, the idea of rejecting individual social responsibility and trying to shift most personal problems onto the state is typical not only for the post-Soviet space but also for the post-socialist parts of Europe. Take, for instance, the difference between the western and eastern regions of Germany. The eastern regions have still not fully emerged from the “socialist swamp”, and there remains nostalgia for the former GDR. It is also worth noting that a high level of social support can be both beneficial and harmful, especially when it becomes more advantageous to live on welfare than to work. Thus, we are witnessing a process of breaking away from paternalism in Eastern Europe, and possibly the formation of entrenched paternalistic expectations in its Western part.

Thus, the idea of European civilization owes its emergence to modern capitalism, which laid the foundation for the rise of contemporary modern democracy. The development of capitalism coincided with the formation of nation-states and the establishment of national economies. And to Greece, we must be grateful – for the gift of the idea of democracy.

¹⁰⁸ Dembitskyi, S. (2024). *Khto vidihraie vazhlyvu rol v ukrainskomu suspilstvi? Vrazhaiuchi zminy voien-noho chasu* [Who plays an important role in Ukrainian society? Impressive changes during wartime]. Institute of Sociology of the NAS of Ukraine. https://isnasu.org.ua/popsci/022_Dembitskiy_-_Khto_vidihraie_vazhlyvu_rol.php [in Ukrainian].

RELIGION – WHAT REALLY MATTERS

Christianity became a civilizational and cultural choice for Europe; it is no coincidence that European civilization is also called Christian civilization. However, early Christianity,¹⁰⁹ medieval Christianity, and modern Christianity are, in many ways, different religions. There are also significant differences between its Western and Eastern European versions, and the emergence of Protestantism in some cases transformed the religion beyond recognition. Let us also remember that people's values are the product of the historical development of ethnic groups and nations, and religion in this context often serves more as a seasoning to the main course.



Symbols of the Abrahamic religions.¹¹⁰

The Middle East gave humanity three monotheistic (Abrahamic) religions: Judaism, and its offshoots, Christianity and Islam. Although Judaism itself emerged from polytheistic beliefs, it became the first fully monotheistic religion. The spread of Christianity from the Middle East to Europe occurred thanks to the efforts of the Roman Empire. The Jewish War for independence, which lasted from 66 to 70 CE, ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the main Jewish Temple,¹¹¹ as well as the expulsion of Jews from their homeland and their dispersion across the territory of the empire.¹¹² Many of the exiles were followers of Christianity,¹¹³ which contributed to its spread. Gradually, Christianity distanced itself from its parent religion and became independent.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹It is often referred to as Judeo-Christianity.

¹¹⁰Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Symvoli trokh holovnykh avraamichnykh relihii: iudaizmu, khrystyianstva ta islama* [Symbols of the three main Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam] [Image]. *Wikipedia*. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Авраамічні_релігії#/media/Файл:ReligionSymbolAbr.PNG [in Ukrainian].

¹¹¹The only remaining trace of it is part of the foundation known as the “Wailing Wall”.

¹¹²The emergence of the concept of diaspora is closely tied to the dispersion of Jews around the world and the formation of communities based on ethnic and religious affiliation.

¹¹³Roman authorities did not distinguish between Judaism and early Christianity.

¹¹⁴Malina, B. J. (1976). Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward a hypothetical definition. *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, 7(1), 46–57.

But what exactly was borrowed from Judaism by Christianity, and later by Islam?

1. The doctrine of one God. Orthodox Islam emphasizes the shared belief in a single God among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. However, the Christian understanding still differs from that of Judaism and Islam. In Christianity, the central figure is Jesus Christ, who is one part of the Trinity – simultaneously the Son of God and the Son of Man. The concept of original sin is also absent in Islam and Judaism.¹¹⁵ In the Christian version of monotheism, Adam and Eve committed this sin and were expelled from paradise. Christ, born of a virgin mother, redeemed all humanity's sins through his suffering on the cross, thereby saving it.

2. The Tanakh, or Old Testament. At its core lies the Five Books of Moses (the Torah). The texts of the Tanakh and the Old Testament are very similar, mostly identical, but the “Jewish” version pays significantly more attention to family relations and descriptions of customs and everyday life. Many stories from the Tanakh are found in the Quran, though in paraphrased form and with Arabized names – Noah becomes Nuh, Moses becomes Musa, Solomon becomes Sulaiman, etc.

3. The concept of the coming of the Messiah and the Last (Divine) Judgment.

Messianism is one of the foundations of Judaism, from which it transitioned into Christianity and Islam. Christians await the second coming of Christ, and according to the Quran, it is Isa (Jesus) who will save humanity from the false prophet Dajjal before the end of the world.

4. The concept of the creation of the world by God in six days is also recognized in Islam.

5. Moral guidelines. Let us recall that the Ten Commandments were given to Moses by God. In turn, Muslims honor the prophet Musa, and the moral norms of Islam have been undoubtedly influenced by Christianity and Judaism.

6. Ritual practice – to a large extent also borrowed from Judaism. The Christian liturgical calendar and the liturgy were shaped under the influence of Judaism. There is also a visible connection between worship traditions. In Christianity, this involves reading passages from the Bible during services; in Judaism – reading the Torah in the synagogue. Some early Christian prayers were adapted from Jewish ones. For example, Apostolic Constitutions (7:35–38); Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles), chapters 9–12. Let us cite as an example the texts of three prayers – the Jewish Kaddish, the Christian Our Father, and the first surah of the Quran.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ A person is born without sin and sins voluntarily – there is no responsibility for original sin.

¹¹⁶ These are modern prayer texts; the Kaddish has several versions, and the “Our Father” prayer is also known in several versions from the 3rd–4th centuries. The text of the Quran is considered unaltered.

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
<p>Glorified and sanctified be His great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will.</p> <p>May He establish His kingdom in our lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon.</p> <p>May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.¹¹⁷</p>	<p>Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.¹¹⁸</p>	<p>In the Name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds – The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path – The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked Your anger or of those who are astray.¹¹⁹</p>

There are common features in Judaism and Christianity such as the sequence of blessing God's name, confession of sins, and so on. Some Christian rites (sacraments) are similar to Jewish ones, such as immersion in water during baptism and the obligation to immerse in a mikveh in Judaism. Let's also recall the ritual washing (ablution) in Islam. The breaking of bread and consumption of a ritual cup of wine during Passover became part of the Christian Eucharist (Communion). Christian prayer formulas such as Amen, Hallelujah, and Hosanna have Jewish origins.¹²⁰ These borrowings were undoubtedly facilitated by the fact that Judaism in the first centuries AD was considered a rather pluralistic religion, as evidenced by the existence of the Qumran community.¹²¹ Some direct borrowings from Judaism also exist in Islam, such as the call to prayer, present in both religions.¹²²

Let us take a closer look at the concept of messianism. In Christianity, this idea became central and also plays a key role in Islam. The expectation of the messiah is one of the core tenets of Judaism. At the turn of the eras, some Jews (like the Ess-

¹¹⁷Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Kadish* [Kaddish]. *Wikipedia*. <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Кадеш> [in Russian].

¹¹⁸Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Otche nash* [Our Father]. *Wikisource*. https://uk.wikisource.org/wiki/Отче_наш [in Ukrainian].

¹¹⁹Risale. (2018, May 26). *Сурат аль-Фатиха*. <https://risale.in.ua/qoran/2018/05/26/%D1%81%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0-1-%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C-%D1%84%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%96%D1%85%D0%B0/>

¹²⁰Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Amen* [Amen]. *Wikisource*. <https://toldot.com/amen.html> [in Ukrainian]. *Hosanna*. *The Jewish Chronicle*. <https://www.thejc.com/judaism/jewish-words/hosanna-kx5cfkku>; Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Hallelujah*. *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallelujah>

¹²¹Sáenz-Badillos, A. (1996). *A history of the Hebrew language* (J. Elwolde, Trans.). Cambridge University Press; Thiede, C. P. (2000). *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Jewish origins of Christianity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹²²NV (New Voice). (2016, November 16). *Orthodox Jews blocked the ban on loud calls to prayer*. <https://nv.ua/bbc/iudeji-ortodoksi-zablokuvali-zaboronu-na-guchni-zakliki-do-namazu-275164.html> [in Ukrainian].

enes) were waiting for their messiah (*mashiach*). These expectations fell on a turbulent time – the war against Persian rule in 73–66 BC, the capture of Judea by the Romans in 63 BC, and the preparation for an uprising against the Roman Empire. This explains the significant number of wandering preachers mentioned by Josephus Flavius.¹²³ Therefore, the appearance of Christ (by the way, Christ is the Greek translation of the Jewish religious term “Messiah”, God’s messenger and the saviour of mankind) fit well into the context of that era. Let us recall that Jesus himself was a Jew (and in Judaism, nationality is passed through the mother),¹²⁴ and so were his disciples – the apostles. Early Christianity was perceived by contemporaries as a Jewish sect, although Jesus, by his actions, violated many Jewish cultic norms, such as communicating with sinners and forgiving sins – something only God could do in Judaism.

There is no doubt that, being a Jew by birth, Jesus was raised and educated in Jewish traditions, celebrated Jewish religious holidays according to the Torah, etc. We see many references to this in the New Testament. Even his birthplace, Bethlehem, corresponds with the prophecy of Micah that the leader who would save the people of Israel would be born there. The baby was born in a shepherd’s stable. On the eighth day after his birth, he was named Jesus and circumcised. Although the exact date of his birth is unknown, it is traditionally celebrated on December 25 – coincidentally, the same day the god Mithras (the Roman version of the ancient Iranian god Mithra) was born. It is unknown whether Jesus had formal religious education, although it is known that he visited the Jerusalem Temple and even expelled the merchants (there were no other temples in the city at the time).

Jewish Orthodox leaders rose up against Jesus. When he arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, he was brought before the Sanhedrin – the highest political and judicial authority in Jerusalem. The court sentenced Jesus Christ to death and passed this decision to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for confirmation. The Sanhedrin accused Christ of attempting a rebellion against the religion. The court condemned him to execution as an impostor and blasphemer who also declared himself the King of the Jews (referring specifically to a “spiritual” kingdom). It can be said that Jesus was condemned for blasphemy because he declared himself the Messiah and the “Son of God”.

But under Roman law, all matters concerning the relationship between humans and a god (or gods) were considered to be within the gods’ domain and could be resolved by them alone, without human judicial intervention. According to the Roman emperor Tiberius (14–37 AD): “Let the gods deal with such

¹²³ Flavii, I. (1991). *Judejskaia voina* [The Jewish War]. Minsk: Belarus. See pp. 16, 42–43, 155, 166, 170, 285, 294, 297, etc. [in Russian].

¹²⁴ One should also remember that Christian dogma is based on the concept of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. However, in ancient Hebrew, the word *almah* (אִלְמָה) can mean both “young woman” and “virgin”. The meaning depends on the vocalization. This issue also existed in Islam, as Arabic also belongs to the Semitic language family. Only in the 10th century were diacritical marks added to the Quranic text, which is believed to have prevented ambiguity.

offenses against the gods.”¹²⁵ An exception was when Roman emperors declared themselves gods – then the imperial courts effectively became “divine” as well. Thus, Christ was punished not as a religious criminal but as a political one. Interestingly, the inscription on the cross “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” (INCI, or INRI in Latin – IESUS NAZARENUS REX IUDAEORUM) can be interpreted as an accusation of an attempt to separate Judea from the Roman Empire. The rabbis of Jerusalem even asked Pontius Pilate not to place this inscription on the cross. By the way, crucifixion was used to punish criminal and political offenders, while religious offenders were typically executed by stoning. Therefore, it is evident that the true political founder of Christianity should be considered Roman justice.

As previously mentioned, after the Jewish War of 66–71 AD, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and the city was heavily damaged. Many Jews were expelled from the Middle East and resettled throughout the Roman Empire. This migration, which included many Christians, marked the beginning of Christianity’s development as a European religion,¹²⁶ and later as a World religion. The first ecumenical councils gradually distanced Christianity from its original roots, making it an independent religion. However, the ancient so-called pre-Chalcedonian¹²⁷ churches still preserve many Jewish traditions today, such as circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and so on. The importance of Judaism for the history of Christian doctrine is acknowledged by the modern Catholic Church, which in 1965 issued a special encyclical recognizing the unity of God for Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and emphasized the historical connections between the religions.¹²⁸

From the perspective of Orthodox Judaism, Christianity remained a Jewish heresy for many years, although the debate – whether to regard it as idolatry or an acceptable form of monotheism – continues to this day.¹²⁹ By the way, this fact in no way justifies antisemitism, but it does partly explain its nature. Among other things, Reform Judaism has emerged, with some of its adherents recognizing the messianic role of Christ,¹³⁰ although this movement is relatively small. In total, about 14 mil-

¹²⁵Robinson, O. (1973). Blasphemy and sacrilege in Roman law. *Irish Jurist*, 8(2), 356–371. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44027907>

¹²⁶Incidentally, in the first two centuries, Christianity’s main religious competitor was Mithraism, which was highly popular among the Roman nobility.

¹²⁷Churches that, for various reasons, did not recognize the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD.

¹²⁸Pope Paul VI. (1965, October 28). *Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions: Nostra aetate*. Vatican.va. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

¹²⁹ידוהיה סומלופה/הידפיקו. ירצונ-ידוהיה סומלופה. (עודי אל דיראת). הידפיקו יפתתשמ רצונ https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/ידוהיה_סומלופה/הידפיקו

¹³⁰Brown, M. (2016, January 11). *Vatikan oshibaetsia: evreiam nuzhen Iisus* [The Vatican is wrong: Jews need Jesus]. Ieshua.org. <https://ieshua.org/vatikan-oshibaetsya-evreiam-nuzhen-iisus.htm> [in Russian].

lion people identify as Jews,¹³¹ of whom 7.2 million live in Israel.¹³² Many Jews in modern Israel are nominal believers, and a significant number are non-believers as well.¹³³

The adoption of Christianity as a state religion allowed Europe to protect itself from the barbarization of the post-Roman imperial space. Religion became the mechanism that civilized incoming tribes and peoples; the spread of Christianity became a marker of civilization, and the acceptance of the new faith – a matter of state importance. The Christianization of the barbarians gave rise to a new historical reality – the Middle Ages.

Alongside the state adoption of Christianity, the institution of the Church developed and became an integral part of state structures. In Western Europe, Rome for a time positioned itself above secular power, while in the East, Christianity almost immediately became part of the Byzantine bureaucracy. As historical works state, the “Dark Ages” were followed by the Renaissance. Christianity of that period was influenced by classical ideas and was anthropocentric (at least to the extent permitted by religion).

The schism of the Christian Church into Orthodoxy and Catholicism in 1054, although it reflected existing cultural and political differences between Eastern and Western Europe, was not fatal, and Christianity remained one of the key drivers of European development. Even the emergence of Protestantism from Catholicism in the 16th century and the brutal religious conflicts did not lead to a fundamental split in Europe, but ultimately resulted in balance and peaceful coexistence between Catholics and Protestants. However, the price of this balance was high.

The rise of Protestantism led to deep social transformation, the formation of new social relations, the strengthening of the urban middle class, and its transformation into the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The reduced number of religious holidays and the idea that no one can be perfect in their actions encouraged daily efforts to glorify God through one’s life. One of the forms of such glorification was diligence and hard work. Social changes also spurred economic changes – the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th to early 19th century accelerated the course of history.

¹³¹ ZN.UA. (2012, December 23). *Sotsiologhy pidrakhuvaly kil'kist' virian na zemli: naibilshe khrystyian i musul'man* [Sociologists counted the number of believers in the world: Most are Christians and Muslims]. https://zn.ua/ukr/SOCIETY/sotsiologi_pidrahuvali_kilkist_viryan_na_zemli_naybilshe_hristyian_i_musulman.html [in Ukrainian].

¹³² Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Demographics of Israel*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Israel

¹³³ Interestingly, the idea of building a crematorium in modern Israel met resistance from religious fanatics. (2006, November 13). *Evreiskie modernisty khotiat postroit' krematorii v Izraile* [Jewish modernists want to build a crematorium in Israel]. <https://news.narod.co.il/news/97690> [in Russian]; LIGA.net. (2007, August 23). *Izrail' lishilsia edinstvennoho kommercheskoho krematoriia* [Israel lost its only commercial crematorium]. <https://news.liga.net/society/news/izrail-lishilsya-edinstvennogo-kommercheskogo-krematoriya> [in Russian]; RBC-Ukraine. (2011, December 29). *V Izraile proishel miting protiv religioznogo ekstremizma i segregatsii* [A protest was held in Israel against religious extremism and segregation]. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/v-izraile-proshel-miting-protiv-religioznogo-ekstremizma-29122011090800> [in Russian].

Christianity (in all its variations) shapes lifestyles, standards of social behaviour, and moral guidelines. It plays a key role in the formation of statehood and the legitimization of power – from the coronation of the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, the Christianization of Rus by Prince Volodymyr, church reforms in Protestant Zurich, to the Bulgarian struggle for independence under the banner of restoring the Bulgarian Church.

Interestingly, Christianity became a kind of safety valve for social upheaval. It also performs a compensatory function. Religiosity increases in societies where human life is not protected, and an appeal to “higher powers” serves as a kind of compensation for its devaluation. The value of human life is quickly diminished during warfare, as the deaths of many sadly turn into mere statistics. Conversely, in countries with effective citizen protection systems, where human life is a supreme value, religiosity tends to decrease.

In addition to its political functions, Christianity forms a unified system of values within a particular community, as well as their commonality, distinctiveness, or plurality within the coexistence of different communities. Literal adherence to a particular belief system, in the absence of critical perception, leads to religious fanaticism. Unfortunately, this phenomenon remains relevant both in our time and in the future. The behaviour of a believer often implies a monopoly on truth and a worldview shaped by the opposition of “us” vs. “them”. The exclusivity of each religion ranges from the possibility of salvation (Christianity, Islam, to some extent Buddhism) to the direct concept of being divinely chosen (Shinto, Judaism). On one hand, there is diversity; on the other, a source of future conflicts, ranging from internal divisions within a single religion to clashes with “neighbouring” beliefs (geographically, socially, ethnically, etc.), and even global confrontations between monotheistic and polytheistic worldviews.

In Europe, the division of Christianity into Catholicism and Orthodoxy, and later into Protestantism, was not the final stage. Christianity in Europe was successfully divided along national lines – this applies more to Orthodoxy and Protestantism, and to a lesser extent to the Catholic Church. Interestingly, a similar fate befell other world religions. Despite the declaration of a “planetary” ummah (as a concept of Muslims belonging to a single faith), Islam in Algeria and Islam in Tatarstan differ significantly. Like Christianity and Islam, Buddhism served as the backbone of national state formation and felt secure only where it was chosen by rulers as the official religion. Hinduism, the parent religion to Buddhism, although not considered a global religion (despite having over 1 billion followers), fragmented almost from its inception and spread – even within a single state.

Christian civilization (if this term is still appropriate), like any civilization built on religious grounds, depends on its followers. Today, Europe can be called a Christian civilization only to the extent that Christianity is practiced there in all its forms – from formal affiliation or adherence to tradition to fanaticism and a monopoly on truth.

The same applies to Islam, another religion derived from Judaism. During the Meccan period (610–622) of his preaching, Muhammad hoped that not only Arab pagans, but also monotheists (primarily Jewish communities) would follow him. Only after they refused to recognize him as a prophet did Islam become a distinct religion. The main religious tenets of Islam were formed during the Medinan period of preaching (622–632). What do Muslims believe in? First and foremost, in the one God shared by all monotheistic religions – called Allah in Islam. The Muslim understanding is much closer to the Jewish one: God has no image, is omnipotent, and cannot be depicted. Muslims also believe in angels, a belief shared with both Jews and Christians. For instance, Muhammad received the foundations of his doctrine through the angel Jibril (Gabriel in Jewish and Christian traditions). There is also a similar view on the canonicity of religious texts. For Muslims, belief in divine revelation is centred around the canonical text of the Quran. Muslims recognize nearly all figures from the Torah (or the Five Books of Moses) as prophets – Adam, Nuh (Noah), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), and others, which they see as evidence of Islam’s connection to earlier religions. Outside of this tradition, the only notable exception is the recognition of Alexander the Great (Iskander in the Quran) as a prophet. An important concept in Islam is the Masih (“anointed one”); in the Quran, Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus, son of Mary) is called the Masih.

Muslims believe in resurrection and the Day of Judgment. Belief in predestination (fate) is evidently closer to the Jewish understanding and may stem from the idea of closeness by God.

Islamic ritual practices include both external borrowings and distinctly original elements. The status of a mosque is definitely closer to that of a synagogue and does not align with the Catholic-Orthodox understanding of a church (as a building)¹³⁴ as the “body of Christ”.

Some themes from the Avesta (Zoroastrian scripture) were also adopted. For example, in Zoroastrianism, a beautiful maiden meets the soul of the deceased at the Chinvat Bridge (interpreted either as the person’s conscience or as the embodiment of their faith in life). In Islam, the soul must cross the bridge Sirat, and in paradise, the righteous are welcomed by young maidens.

Islam is a living religion, equally capable of modernization. For instance, the concept of jihad (any effort aimed at affirming Islam) was originally understood as a holy war against infidels (pagans or non-Muslims). The first jihad was the war between Muslim Medina and pagan Mecca, which ended in Mecca’s defeat in 630 CE. By the 10th century, when Islam ceased to spread through conquest, the concept of the “land of agreement” emerged, where non-Muslims ruled, but Muslims were free to practice their religion. Accordingly, the definitions of jihad expanded. In addition to the jihad of the sword, there emerged the jihad of the tongue, jihad of the heart,

¹³⁴ The Christian Church unites Christians into a community called the “church” – the body of Christ or the bride of Christ. It is assumed that those who belong to this community will be saved, and others will not. Entry into this community is only possible through the rite of baptism.

and jihad of the hand – encompassing the idea of spreading Islam, strengthening personal faith through overcoming sin, and any action aimed at promoting and affirming Islam.

The idea of the unity of religious and secular power (or its subordination to Islam) is also one of the dominant features of this religion. It was formed when Muhammad became the head of the religious community in Yathrib (Medina) and assumed all top positions – ruler, prosecutor, judge, and commander-in-chief. Islam does not distinguish between morality and law, and although this is now considered a challenge within Islam, many analogies can be found in other monotheistic religions. The cult of death was also traditional for nomadic societies, as a nomadic prison is a contradiction in terms. However, in the 21st century, most Bedouins now “nomadize” in cars only from their homes to shopping malls. The connection between religions is also evident in dietary restrictions, which in Islam are similar to those in Judaism. The Sunnah is rightly called the Muslim Gospel, as it began with stories about the Prophet Muhammad. However, since the Prophet in Islam is still considered human, this text never became fully canonical. Interestingly, Islamic law, Sharia, reflects the desire of many religions to control their followers, although there were fewer practical opportunities to implement this. One of the hidden issues in Islam is the question of consistency among regional Arabic versions of the Quran.¹³⁵ In the absence of a Church institution, full unification of the text is nearly impossible, and this could become a significant reason for a potential split. Let us recall that the division of Islam into Sunnis and Shiites was initially caused by the issue of succession of authority, with theological differences emerging later.

Is reformation possible in Islam? Certainly, but it will not be a “copy” of the European experience. The reason is the same – the absence of a Church institution, which allows Islam to exist rather amorphously within local national frameworks while still seeing itself as a single global ummah. By the way, it is believed that in 2015 the number of Muslims in the world surpassed the number of Christians, and this trend remains steady.¹³⁶ Muslims form the majority in 49 countries, where 73 % of the world’s Muslim population resides, while 87 % of Christians live in 157 predominantly Christian countries. Islam also remains the “youngest” religion in the world, with the average Muslim being 23 years old, the average Hindu 26, and the average Christian 30.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ The Quranic text is considered unaltered, but at least in early Islam, alternative versions did exist. (Reynolds, G. S. (2015, August 7). Variant readings: The Birmingham Qur’an in the context of debate on Islamic origins. *Times Literary Supplement*, 14–15. <https://nd.academia.edu/GabrielSaidReynolds>).

¹³⁶ Pew Research Center. (2015, April 2). *The future of world religions: Population growth projections, 2010-2050 – Why Muslims are rising fastest and the unaffiliated are shrinking as a share of the world’s population*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

¹³⁷ ZN.UA. (2012, December 23). *Sotsiologhy pidrakhuvaly kil'kist' virian na zemli: naibilshe khrystyian i musul'man* [Sociologists counted the number of believers in the world: Most are Christians and Muslims]. https://zn.ua/ukr/SOCIETY/sotsiologi_pidrahuvali_kilkist_viryan_na_zemli_naybilshe_hristiyan_i_musulman.html [in Ukrainian].

Unfortunately, the modern world, including Europe, increasingly encounters religious fanaticism. Let us recall the most high-profile cases in recent times. In 2011, Norwegian “nationalist”¹³⁸ Anders Breivik carried out a series of terrorist attacks, including an assault on a youth camp. During the attacks, 77 people were killed and 151 injured. Breivik cited his hatred of multiculturalism and Muslims, whom he believed were destroying Norwegian society, as his motive.¹³⁹ In 2015, followers of radical Islam attacked the office of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris and killed 12 of its staff members. Another five people were killed during a related attack on a kosher supermarket. The motive for the attack was the magazine’s publication of a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁴⁰ In 2019, 49 people were killed during an attack on mosques in New Zealand.¹⁴¹ In 2020, in France, an Islamic religious fanatic murdered a history teacher who had allegedly shown his students a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad during a lesson.¹⁴² It turned out that the student had lied to her parents about the incident because she didn’t want them to find out about her bad behaviour.¹⁴³ And however banal this statement may seem, it must be said – religious fanaticism poses a serious threat to Europe.

As of today, fanaticism remains an integral part of many religions. Belief in the unquestionable superiority of one’s religion over others sometimes leads to attempts to physically assert this “superiority”. Yet, as can be observed, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism have much in common – far more than the average Christian, Jew, or Muslim tends to imagine. However, it is usually the differences that are highlighted, not the similarities.

What else unites religions? One of the main questions almost every religion seeks to answer is: “Is death the end?” or “Is there life after physical death?” This is precisely why the concept of the immortal human soul was introduced – a soul that (provided one belongs to a certain religion or spiritual school) does not die with the body, but continues its own existence. The concept of the soul holds particular importance in the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). The im-

¹³⁸ According to his own definition.

¹³⁹ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Anders Behring Breivik*. *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anders_Behring_Breivik

¹⁴⁰ BBC Russian Service. (2020, September 1). *Charlie Hebdo pereopublikoval karikatury na proroka. V sredi nachnetsia sud po delu o teraktakh* [Charlie Hebdo republished cartoons of the prophet. The trial on the terrorist attacks case will start Wednesday]. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-53987391> [in Russian].

¹⁴¹ BBC Ukrainian Service. (2019, March 15). *Napad na mecheti v Novii Zelandii: 49 zahyblykh, desiatky poranenykh* [Attack on mosques in New Zealand: 49 dead, dozens wounded]. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-russian-47574485> [in Ukrainian].

¹⁴² Kropman, V. (2020, October 16). *Pid Paryzhem ubytiy vchytel' za karikatury na proroka Mukhammeda* [Teacher killed near Paris for cartoons of Prophet Muhammad]. *Deutsche Welle*. <https://www.dw.com/ru/ubijstvo-v-parizhskom-metro-rasceneno-kak-terakt/a-55305879> [in Russian].

¹⁴³ Herasymenko, Ya. (2024, November 3). *Obezholovlennia vchytelia, yakoho zvynuvatyly v “islamofobii”: u Frantsii sudytymut 8 liudei* [Beheading of a teacher accused of “Islamophobia”: 8 people to be tried in France]. *Hromadske*. <https://hromadske.ua/svit/234000-vbyvstvo-frantsuzkoho-vchytelia-iakoho-zvynuvatyly-v-islamofobiyi-sudytymut-8-liudey> [in Ukrainian].

mortal soul is one of the foundations of belief, and the body is seen as a perishable vessel for the soul. In Buddhism, as in similar karmic religions, the soul undergoes rebirth or attains liberation from the material world.

Belief in the immortality of the soul existed as early as ancient Mesopotamia; after death, the human soul was believed to enter an underground city – the opposite of the earthly one. In ancient China, the soul of the deceased was greeted by an official, for whom his earthly counterpart wrote a reference letter that was buried with the deceased (sometimes even with a bribe attached). The Egyptians preserved mummies, which were seen as vessels for the physiological soul and as a place where the individual soul was expected to return someday. Even today, ultra-Orthodox Jews try to collect all the fragments of a human body if it was damaged by an explosion and bury them together, believing that the body will be resurrected with the coming of the Messiah.

In fact, there is no scientific evidence for the existence of a soul (aside from theological speculation on the topic), and even less so for its immortality. What religion refers to as the soul is, in reality, a set of traits that constitute human individuality, formed on one hand by the capacity of the human mind to think, and on the other, through socialization via education, experience, and upbringing. Damage to the human brain due to an accident can turn a person into a “vegetable”, resulting in a complete loss of individuality. Madness or insanity are conditions that can drastically alter or even destroy a person’s identity. Children raised by animals do not become human in the social sense – they become like animals.

Despite the appeal of the concept of the soul and its immortality, we must admit that all these ideas are essentially products of human fear of death. But if a person has only one life, with no alternate versions or continuations, then life becomes the highest value. Accordingly, the greatest social crime is the taking of another person’s life. And punishment for a crime cannot be postponed to the “afterlife”, “beyond”, “heaven”, “karma”, and so on. If life is the highest value, then the optimal punishment for a murderer would be life imprisonment.

Therefore, atheism denies the existence of gods (or God), spirits, and higher powers, including the deification of nature or the universe, but it is not a rejection of morality or societal norms. Atheism is also not a religion, as it operates not within the framework of faith, but within the framework of knowledge. Incidentally, the spread of atheism in Europe began during the Age of Enlightenment, which gave humanity many atheists and agnostics.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, we are witnessing another wave of atheism spreading. According to religious studies from 1980 to 2020, including data from the World Values Survey (WVS),¹⁴⁴ the importance of religion has declined in most countries.¹⁴⁵ An increase occurred in the former Soviet Union, where the

¹⁴⁴Conducted between 2007 and 2019.

¹⁴⁵Mathers, C. (2020, September 30). *Global trends in religiosity and atheism 1980 to 2020*. <https://colinmathers.com/2020/09/30/global-trends-in-religiosity-and-atheism-1980-to-2020/>; Inglehart, R. (2020). Giving up on God: The global decline of religion. *Foreign Affairs*, 99(5), 110–118. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-08-11/religion-giving-god>

number of both active (practicing) believers and formal (non-practicing) adherents has grown. In contrast, in developed countries of Western Europe and North America, levels of religiosity are decreasing while atheism is on the rise. Africa and Muslim-majority countries, on the other hand, show high levels of religiosity, with even the number of formal (nominal) believers being minimal.

Among European countries with the highest proportion of atheists are the Czech Republic (70 %), Sweden (68 %), Estonia (64 %), and the Netherlands (60 %). Other countries where more than 50 % of the population do not believe in God include Norway, the United Kingdom, France, and Denmark. Australia can also be added to the list, with 45 %. In Switzerland, the rate is 36 %, and in the United States – 25 %.¹⁴⁶ According to New Zealand psychologist Quentin Atkinson from the University of Auckland, these countries are characterized by strong education and social welfare systems, and low levels of social and economic inequality. “In general, people are less afraid of what might happen to them”, the researcher notes.¹⁴⁷

Interestingly, a high level of atheism is characteristic of China (78 %) and South Korea (over 50 %), which may also be explained by the specifics of religiosity in these countries. Even in Shiite Iran in 2020, under the condition of a guaranteed anonymous survey, about 9 % of Iranians identified themselves as atheists, and about 20 % said they do not believe in God or other supernatural beings such as jinn. At the same time, the majority of Iranians (78 %) believe in God, only 37 % believe in life after death, and 30 % believe in heaven and hell.¹⁴⁸

The data above correspond with a Gallup International survey, which covered more than 50,000 respondents in 57 countries. The highest number of believers was found in Ghana (96 %), Armenia (92%), Fiji (92 %), Nigeria (93 %), and Macedonia (90 %). However, overall, between 2005 and 2011, the number of people who claimed to be religious decreased from 77 % to 68 %. Globally, the number of people who consider themselves atheists increased by 3 %. According to estimates, the proportion of atheists in the world is 13 %.¹⁴⁹

If we look closely at the list of European countries, we can see that the leaders in the number of atheists are countries where, until recently, the majority (or a significant part) of the population practiced Protestantism.¹⁵⁰ It can be assumed that athe-

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Nuwer, R. (2014, December 19). *Will religion ever disappear?* BBC Future. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20141219-will-religion-ever-disappear>

¹⁴⁸ ZN.UA. (2012, December 23). *Sotsiologhy pidrakhuvaly kil'kist' virian na zemli: naibilshe khrystyian i musul'man* [Sociologists counted the number of believers in the world: Most are Christians and Muslims]. https://zn.ua/ukr/SOCIETY/sotsiologi_pidrahuvali_kilkist_viryan_na_zemli_naybilshe_hristiyan_i_musulman.html [in Ukrainian]; Mathers, C. (2020, September 30) *Global trends in religiosity and atheism 1980 to 2020*. <https://colinmathers.com/2020/09/30/global-trends-in-religiosity-and-atheism-1980-to-2020/>; Inglehart, R. (2020). *Giving up on God: The global decline of religion*. *Foreign Affairs*, 99(5), 110–118. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-08-11/religion-giving-god>

¹⁴⁹ Nuwer, R. (2014, December 19). *Will religion ever disappear?* BBC Future. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20141219-will-religion-ever-disappear>

¹⁵⁰ The thesis requires further research.

ism will become the new driver of European civilization's development – just as Christianity once was during the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and later Protestantism during the Modern Era.

It should be noted that a significant part of the population still identifies as so-called believers, without any deep faith. For them, it is more of a tribute to tradition. Considering that formalized faith does not promote religious fanaticism, yet is enough to restrain antisocial behaviour, it fully corresponds to the current needs of European society.

Today, for modern European civilization, religion is not a top priority. This is reflected in the draft European Constitution, which contains no mention of religion – its status remains undefined, as European society is understood to consist of people differing in ethnicity and religious beliefs.¹⁵¹

Thus, the Christianization of Europe became one of the foundations for the formation of European civilization, it is no coincidence that it is often referred to as a Christian civilization. Therefore, it should not be abandoned despite current social trends. For many people, religiosity remains a moral imperative that restrains them from antisocial behaviour. Christianity remains – and will continue for a long time to be – one of the world's most widespread religions, followed by about a third of humanity. Christianity ranks first in the world in terms of geographic spread, meaning Christian communities are present in almost every country in the world. On a global scale, Christianity has become an important factor in Westernization. Those branches of Protestantism from which capitalism truly “grew” continue to play an important role. But it is no coincidence that we do not find references to religion in the draft EU Constitution, since, as world history shows, religious issues can become a “bone of contention”. This is because a side effect of religiosity is the rejection of other points of view, lack of critical thinking, dogmatism, and fanaticism. Fortunately, the majority of Europe's population is gradually becoming so-called formal believers, for whom these negative tendencies are not systemic.

In the religious sphere, the greatest challenge for Europe is considered to be its gradual Islamization. Europe has been familiar with Islam almost since its inception, and these relations are difficult to call constructive. The Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, the Crusades in the Middle East, the Ottoman conquests of Southeastern Europe. Globalization has changed the world and offered hope for mutual understanding. Islam should be treated not as an enemy, but as a friend. Through educational and cultural tools, we should emphasize not the differences among the “Abrahamic” religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), but their commonalities. At the same time, extremism must be actively countered – not only within Europe, but also by working with Muslims in Islamic countries, especially in regions that are sources of migration. Perhaps, to achieve this, it is necessary to create a European analogue of USAID (United States Agency for International Development). At the same time,

¹⁵¹ Kovalchuk, T. (2009). *Osoblyvosti formuvannia yedynoho kulturnoho prostoru obiednanoi Yevropy* [Peculiarities of forming a single cultural space of united Europe]. *Viche*, (3), 14–16. [in Ukrainian].

the “Islamic” influence on Europe should not be demonized, since Europe’s functioning bureaucratic system, lifestyle, and educational framework contribute to the adaptation of migrants into European society.

However, under certain circumstances, the potential threat of Islamization in the future should not be ruled out. In such a case, Europe could adopt the experience of Israel, which has a Ministry of Religious Affairs and official religious regulations (such as a ban on working on Saturdays, mandatory kosher food labelling, etc.). However, this should be a temporary measure, as the union of religion and state potentially carries negative consequences.

We can also forecast the emergence of new religions that may become competitors to traditional doctrines. The most likely is the worship of Artificial Intelligence. The cult of singularity will attract many followers. The idea that singularity will not stop on Earth but spread throughout the universe, turning human souls into part of a great “computer” or consciousness (and therefore immortal), will gain many followers after the death of Ray Kurzweil. A number of cults will be associated with robotics, popular computer games, works of fiction, and so on. Various forms of Christianity will not disappear – Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism will continue to have their adherents. Even among traditional faiths, virtual temples, services, sermons, confessions, and more will become popular.

Among the positive factors is the continuous increase in the proportion of citizens who identify as atheists. Atheism is one of the drivers of scientific, technological, and social progress, so scientific and technological achievements should be fully supported and promoted. Education must be free from religious influence, and the state should also remain separate from religion.

*We are not heading to Europe –
we are returning home.*

UKRAINE IS EUROPE

In 2003, the book *Ukraine Is Not Russia* was published, authored by then-President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma.¹⁵² We leave aside the question of whether Kuchma was the actual author or whether the book was the product of ghostwriters working under his direction. What is clear is that the book reflects the views of Kuchma and the Ukrainian leadership of the time regarding relations with Russia. That is why the book, as a kind of “message” to the Russian elites, was first published in Russian in Moscow, and only later translated into Ukrainian. The book also attracted attention from many Ukrainian officials (a kind of post-Soviet bureaucratic “Away from Moscow!”¹⁵³), since mental dependence on Russia – formed through upbringing, education, lifestyle, and a shared Soviet past – remained very strong.

The book provided an overview of 20th-century Ukrainian history, including aspects of Kuchma’s own biography, but its main idea was the need to separate Ukraine’s development path from Russia’s. It contains extensive reasoning as to why Ukraine is not Russia and reflections on whether the path to Europe should be shared with Russia or pursued independently¹⁵⁴.

For modern Ukraine, joining the European Union may not just be a political choice but a matter of survival as a sovereign, independent state. This is understood in the EU: on June 25, 2024, at the first intergovernmental Ukraine–EU conference, official accession talks were launched. But what can Ukraine offer to Europe to become an integral part of its future?

On February 28, 2024, a scientific seminar titled “New Approaches to Teaching the History of the European Union” was held at the European University Institute (Florence, Italy), where I also delivered a presentation. The topic of my presentation was “What Ukraine Can Offer the European Union”.¹⁵⁵ Seven points of advantage which may be of interest to the EU were outlined.

¹⁵²Kuchma, L. D. (2003). *Ukraina – ne Rossiia* [Ukraine is not Russia]. Moscow: Vremia. [in Russian].

¹⁵³The expression is attributed to Ukrainian poet Mykola Khvylovy, who in the 1920s called for the integration of Ukrainian literature into European literature.

¹⁵⁴In May 2025, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that Kuchma’s book *Ukraine Is Not Russia* had become “the foundation of the modern nationalist elites” in Ukraine. See: Shostal, O. (2025, May 23). *Lavrov suddenly made claims against Kuchma. All because of a book published 22 years ago*. 112 Ukraine. <https://pre.112.ua/en/lavrov-raptovo-visunuv-pretenzii-do-kucmi-vse-cerez-knigu-vidanu-22-roki-tomu-64039>

¹⁵⁵Seminar EU-Ukraine: New vectors of cooperation. Debate on Ukraine and the EU. (2024, February 28). *European University Institute*. <https://www.eui.eu/events?id=562443>

1. Territorial potential. In peacetime, Ukraine is one of the transit corridors between Europe and Asia (this potential cannot be realized during war).

2. Raw material potential. Ukraine is rich in natural resources; in particular, it has deposits of rare earth metals and confirmed lithium reserves – the largest in Europe. The country also possesses oil, coal, and uranium deposits. Agriculture has enormous potential as well.

3. Opportunities for economic cooperation, including in the defence sector. Due to the war, Ukraine is actively rebuilding and developing its own military-industrial complex. Ukraine independently produces a wide range of weaponry – from small arms to armoured vehicles. Joint production of small arms is being established with the Czech Republic, and German companies have launched ammunition manufacturing projects in Ukraine. A new global arms race has begun, and such cooperation will undoubtedly be beneficial.

Particular attention should be paid to the issue of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction. The governments of Italy and France have shown an active stance and understanding of the cooperation potential. This is also advantageous for the economies of these countries, as many contracts will be carried out by Italian and French companies.

4. Ukraine has a well-developed human potential¹⁵⁶ – many people have higher or specialized secondary education. Ukrainian refugees have adapted in European countries and, in some (such as Poland), have become a noticeable economic factor.

5. Ukraine has historical and cultural foundations for contributing to European development, as it has been part of European history for centuries. The cultural dimension – and Ukraine possesses remarkable artistic potential – will undoubtedly enrich Europe.

6. Geopolitical dimension and the issue of European security. The problem of security has become increasingly acute for Europe (the question is – do Europeans fully realize this?). Russia's aggression against Ukraine, ongoing since 2014, only became visible to Europe in 2022. But one should also recall the 2008 invasion of Georgia. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could be the next targets. What will stop Russia from violating international law again? Will the mechanisms to protect these countries work? Moldova is also a potential target for Russia. The overarching goal is to make Russia a geopolitical player to be reckoned with due to its nuclear weapons and aggressive ambitions, rather than economic strength or international authority. One should not forget the possibility of Russia becoming a satellite state of China, which would undoubtedly strengthen Beijing's position. After all, one of the most actively discussed topics worldwide – from the media to political scientists – is whether a war between China and the United States is possible.

During the Cold War and the arms race, Europe was under the protection of NATO and the United States. However, there is a threat that the U.S. may now pay

¹⁵⁶It has both qualitative and quantitative components. Ukraine's demographic problems will be discussed later.

less attention to both NATO and Europe (as suggested by statements made by Donald Trump, who has a chance¹⁵⁷ to become the next president). In the worst-case scenario, this could lead to a crisis of NATO as a transatlantic alliance. The likelihood, duration, and consequences of such a crisis are hard to predict, but it may pose a real threat to Europe. A possible solution for Europe is to develop its own defence union (or strengthen that component within NATO). Here, Ukraine's experience may prove useful. Modern Ukraine has, out of necessity, become a country with a strong and capable army – arguably with the most extensive combat experience in the world. The 21st century does not promise to be peaceful.

7. Development synergy is an intangible asset that Ukraine can offer. Every wave of EU enlargement has allowed the Union to effectively leverage the potential of cooperation and the common market. Ukraine's accession could also put an end to discussions about a crisis of European identity, since modern Europe became what it is thanks to democracy, market relations, and the protection of the rights of the citizen-owner.

Interestingly, a few months later, in October 2024, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy presented Ukraine's Victory Plan¹⁵⁸ to the parliament, which consisted of five points.¹⁵⁹ Here are the points:

1. Immediate invitation of Ukraine to NATO.
2. Defence that must “realistically protect Ukrainian positions on the battlefield in Ukraine and, at the same time, necessarily bring the war back to Russian territory”.
3. Deterrence – the development of a comprehensive non-nuclear strategic deterrence package that will be sufficient to protect Ukraine from any military threat from Russia.
4. Strategic economic potential. Zelenskyy reminded that Ukraine is rich in natural resources – “critical metals” (uranium, titanium, lithium, graphite). Ukraine also has globally significant potential in food production.
5. After the war, Ukraine will have one of the most experienced and sizable military contingents with real combat experience. This can strengthen NATO's defence and ensure security in Europe.

As we can see, some of these points overlap, as certain key answers to the question “What can Ukraine offer Europe?” are obvious – or, as the saying goes, “lie on the surface”. The issue of Ukraine's rare earth elements turned out to be particularly

¹⁵⁷The report's text was made public on February 28, 2024. Donald Trump won the election on November 5, 2024, and officially assumed the U.S. presidency in January 2025.

¹⁵⁸“Ukraine's Victory Plan is a plan to strengthen our country, to strengthen our positions. To be strong enough to end the war, for Ukraine to be fully muscular. This plan is achievable. It depends on our partners – I emphasize – on our partners. It certainly does not depend on Russia,” Zelensky said at the beginning of his speech.

¹⁵⁹RFI Ukraina. (2024, October 16). *P'iat' punktiv i try taiemni dodatky: Zelenskyi oholosyv Plan peremohy Ukrainy* [Five points and three secret annexes: Zelensky announced Ukraine's victory plan]. <https://www.rfi.fr/uk/україна/20241016-п-ять-пунктів-і-три-таємні-додатки-зеленський-оголосив-план-перемоги-україни> [in Ukrainian].

sensitive – and not for Europe, but for the United States. Despite significant difficulties, a joint agreement on the use of rare earth metals was eventually signed.¹⁶⁰

But will Ukraine be able to seize the opportunity to become a full-fledged part of European (or more broadly, Western) civilization, given that according to the “frontier” theory, it has long been located on the border between the West and the East?¹⁶¹ This “great border” divided the forested and steppe zones, as well as the sedentary (agricultural) and nomadic (pastoral) ways of life. Life on the border produces its own specific traits and influences a wide range of issues: from geopolitical and national processes to individuals’ awareness of their identity.¹⁶²

Interestingly, this civilizational fault line, to some extent, manifested itself in the 21st century as well. In 2014, Russia managed to seize the part of Ukraine that was once part of the Great Steppe¹⁶³ – the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as Crimea. The ethnogenesis of the Crimean Tatars, who are now undoubtedly the indigenous population of the peninsula, is directly connected with the Mongol conquests of the region, when after 1242, some Mongol tribes settled there. Further Islamization and incorporation into the Ottoman Empire in the 15th–18th centuries only strengthened this “Asian-ness”. The new empire that colonized these territories – the Russian, followed by the Soviet – was, to some extent, also a product of a fusion of European and Asian development paradigms. Although Russia should not be denied its European character, for the sake of peace and progress, it must be liberated from its “Eastern captivity”.

The frontier situation is not unique, especially for Europe, since inter-civilizational contacts in world history have been more the norm than the exception. For European civilization, the border with the East ran across all of Southern and South-eastern Europe – from Spain, which was conquered by the Arabs in the 8th century, to the Balkans, which became the target of Ottoman Turkish expansion in the 14th century, and to the Black Sea, which remained an internal sea of the Ottoman Empire until the late 18th century. We should not focus solely on the factor of conflict,

¹⁶⁰ Butenko, V. (2025, February 24). *US “resisting inclusion of security guarantees” in resource deal with Ukraine, source says*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-administration-news-02-24-25#cm7j3rsvv00003b6mfzly3uvm>; Krotovska, O. (2025, February 24). *EU pidtrymuie Ukrainu bez pretenzii na yii resursy – Koshta* [The EU supports Ukraine without claims to its resources – Koshta]. WeUkraine. <https://weukraine.tv/novyny/jes-pidtrimuje-ukrajinu-bez-pretenzij-na-jiji-resursi-koshta/> [in Ukrainian]; Smorodska, D. (2025, May 12). *Zelenskyi zatverdyl ratyfikatsiiu Radoiu uhody pro korysni kopalyny zi USA* [Zelensky approved the ratification by the Rada of the mineral resources agreement with the U.S.]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/zelenskiy-zatverdiv-ratifikatsiyu-radoyu-ugodi-pro-korisni-kopalini_n2820694 [in Ukrainian].

¹⁶¹ The “frontier” theory suggests that a “borderland” lies at the edge of different societies, is weakly integrated into state institutions, has a dynamic nature, and is characterized by cultural diffusion. See: Febvre, L. (1973). *Frontière: The word and the concept*. In *A new kind of history: From the writings of Febvre* (pp. 208–216). New York; Hromenko, S. (Comp.). (2024). *Ukrainskyi multyfrontyr. Nova skhema istorii Ukrainy (neolit – pochatok XX stolittia)* [Ukrainian multifrontier: A new outline of Ukrainian history (Neolithic – early 20th century)]. Kharkiv: VD “Fabula”. [in Ukrainian].

¹⁶² Veremnych, Ya. V. (2015). *Pivdenna Ukraina na tsyvilizatsiinomu pohranychi* [Southern Ukraine on the civilizational frontier]. Kyiv: Institute of History of Ukraine, NAS of Ukraine. [in Ukrainian].

¹⁶³ This in no way legitimizes those occupations.

since there was also the factor of cultural and economic diffusion. Ultimately, in this figurative “competition”, European civilization succeeded in initiating the Westernization of both the Ottoman Turks and the Arab East. Consequently, at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries, the Islamization of Europe became an important part of reality, so civilizational interaction (it would be better not to call it confrontation) continues. Today, one can even speak of the emergence of a “floating” frontier, where the boundary between Europe and Asia may run within a country, a region, or even a single person. A similar situation can be observed in the East, where the interaction between European and Asian elements has become an integral feature of development.

At the Crossroads of Europe

A closer look at Ukraine’s history makes it clear that its core historical narrative is undoubtedly part of European civilization, specifically, the part located on the border with the East. As Polish historian A. Jablonowski¹⁶⁴ aptly put it, Ukraine was where “the plough met the wild steppe”. Contacts with nomadic peoples are an inseparable part of Ukrainian history, and they reflect a complex mixture of events – from conflict to alliance. Ultimately, the phenomenon of Ukrainian Cossacks is itself a product of the interaction between East and West. The presence of a militarized population along the border is not unusual in itself, but few communities managed to build their own state institutions – as the Zaporizhian Sich rightly can be considered. The Cossacks were not only warriors but also farmers, continuing ancient agricultural traditions. Let us also recall that since the founding of ancient Greek city-states, Roman settlements, and Genoese fortresses along the Black Sea coast, the lands of modern-day Ukraine have supplied grain to Europe. This was also the case during the Lithuanian-Polish and Cossack eras, when grain was exported via Gdańsk to European markets, including Britain. In 1918, Imperial Germany was compensated with food supplies for its alliance with the Ukrainian State led by Pavlo Skoropadskyi. In the 21st century, due to convenient logistics and low cost, Ukrainian grain forms the basis of UN food procurement for Africa.

Let us also agree with the idea that for many years we remained a “people without a history”, but only in the sense that the world knew little about us. Knowledge about Ukraine was included in the “big picture” of world history only fragmentarily, and until recently, the “final word” belonged exclusively to representatives of Russian historical science and propaganda.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ A. Jablonovsky mostly applied this expression to the Cossack era, but we allow ourselves to extrapolate it to other historical periods as well. For the historian, see, for example: Veselska, N. V. (2020). *Ukrainoznavchi doslidzhennia Aleksandra Yablonovskoho (1829–1913)* [Extended abstract of Candidate’s thesis in history]. Pereiaslav [in Ukrainian].

¹⁶⁵ Shotkina, K. (2024, December 16). *Timoti Snajder: “Ukrainci vidkynuly radianskyi heroyizm i neobkhdnist strazhdaty”* [Timothy Snyder: “Ukrainians rejected Soviet heroism and the necessity to suffer”]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/timoti-snajder-ukrajintsi-vidkinuli-radjanskij-herojizm-i-neobkhdnist-strazhdati.html> [in Ukrainian].

Ukraine's integration into the general European medieval context dates back to the arrival of the Normans.¹⁶⁶ People from Scandinavia had a significant impact on European history in the 8th–11th centuries, raiding coastal territories from Northern Europe to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. In the Middle Dnipro region, state formation occurred through the conquest and unification of tribal Slavic alliances. This situation is not unique, as similar processes occurred in the formation of states in Britain and Normandy.

The Norman factor played a decisive role in the formation of the state in this region. Scandinavians came to the Dnipro region from the north, establishing the semi-legendary trade route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”, which explains the chronological priority of the military settlement at Ladoga, the initial centre of colonization. Modern studies based on DNA sequence analysis across the European continent have expanded our understanding of the “Varangian”¹⁶⁷ way of life. It turns out that many Vikings were not of Scandinavian origin, but belonged to conquered peoples – adopting the Viking identity, becoming conquerors, and being buried as Vikings.¹⁶⁸

It all began as ordinary raiding and territorial conquest; chronicles record the name of the tribute – *polyudie*, which may have implied turning people into slaves.¹⁶⁹ The place where the tribute was collected is called *pogost* in the texts (today this word is synonymous with “cemetery” or “graveyard”). Slaves given as tribute were actively traded in the Arab East, which ultimately explains the numerous finds of Arab coins – dirhams – in the lands of Rus', and the near-complete absence of Byzantine drachmas. The Normans even gave this land its name – Rus',¹⁷⁰ under which they united the local Slavic tribal alliances. Historically, the name Rus' specifically referred to the Middle Dnipro region – the territory of the future principalities of Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Pereiaslav. In historiography, this territory is called Kyivan

¹⁶⁶ Normans – “people from the north”, inhabitants of Scandinavia (modern-day Norway, Sweden, and Denmark). The tribes that came to the Dnipro region mostly came from what is now Sweden, although there were also representatives of other areas.

¹⁶⁷ The term “Varangians” is widely used in historical literature, but originally it referred only to those Scandinavians who served the Byzantine emperors.

¹⁶⁸ Margaryan, A., Lawson, D. J., Sikora, M., et al. (2020). Population genomics of the Viking world. *Nature*, 585, 390–396. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-2688-8>

¹⁶⁹ Most researchers understand “polyudie” as a fortified settlement, but this does not explain the origin of the term. See, for example: Braichevskiy, M. Yu. (1960). Po povodu odnogo mesta iz Konstantyna Bahriyanorodnoho [Regarding one passage from Constantine Porphyrogenitus]. *Vizantiyskiy Vremennyk*, 17(42), 144–154. [in Russian].

¹⁷⁰ It is believed that the word was borrowed by the Scandinavians from the Finnish name “Routsi”, and initially served as a self-name for the conquerors (meaning “Scandinavians” or “Swedes”); according to another version, it meant “participant in a sea expedition”. See: Kotliar, M. F. (n.d.). *Rus'* [Electronic resource]. <http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Rus> [in Ukrainian].

Rus',¹⁷¹ which, in our view, serves as a reminder of the political core of that state. The Dnipro region then became a base for further expansion, one direction of which was the northeast – the lands of today's Russian Federation,¹⁷² inhabited at the time by Finno-Ugric tribes. The Rus' and Slavs subjugated the local peoples, and Christianization accelerated the processes of assimilation.

In turn, after settling in Slavic territories, the Scandinavians became Slavicized and transformed from conquerors into state-builders.¹⁷³ The main political centre of this state became Kyiv, to which other lands submitted on a vassal basis. The name of the state Rus' was first mentioned in the treaty with Byzantium in the year 911, and the names of the treaty's signatories from the Rus' side leave us no room to interpret these events otherwise: "We, of the Rus' lineage – Karli, Inegeld, Farlof, Veremud, Rulav, Gudi, Ruald, Karn, Frelav, Ruar, Aktevu, Truan, Lidulfof, Stemir – sent by Oleg..."¹⁷⁴

A key civilizational element in the development of Rus' was the adoption of Christianity. Let us recall that Christianity halted the barbarian invasions and contributed to the formation of barbarian kingdoms. In 988, Rus' adopted Christianity in its Byzantine form. Undoubtedly, this strengthened the European geopolitical and cultural context. Christianity also traditionally contributed to the strengthening of power. While the first Kyiv metropolitan was consecrated in Byzantium, by 1051, Metropolitan Hilarion was appointed by princely authority and only legitimized by the Ecumenical Patriarch.

At the end of the 11th and into the 12th century, Rus' entered a period of fragmentation, which greatly facilitated its conquest by the Mongols in the 1240s. Becoming part of the Mongol Empire,¹⁷⁵ most of the Rus' principalities retained their

¹⁷¹ Kievan Rus is a historiographical construct that, in our opinion, has the right to exist, although in the sources, this political entity is referred to simply as Rus. But then again, India was never called the Empire of the Great Mughals, and the Mongol Empire was actually called "Ulus of the Many Mongols". Historical science is no different from other sciences in that it assigns names to phenomena and events, thereby forming scholarly terminology. In modern Ukrainian historiography, the term "Rus-Ukraine" is also used to emphasize Ukraine's continuity with Rus. It is worth noting that country names can change, and such cases are far from unique. For example, until 1935, Iran was known as Persia. Moreover, the names of countries used in certain languages often differ from the local names. For instance, Nimechchyna (Germany) in Ukrainian is an exonym for the German name Deutschland.

¹⁷² The term Muscovite Rus is also a historiographical construct, referring to a later period – the 14th to 17th centuries. The term was coined by Russian imperial historians who tried to derive the origins of "Muscovite Rus" from Kievan Rus while at the same time distinguishing themselves from it and asserting their own autonomy and uniqueness. Interestingly, the name Russia (Rōsia) is a Greek translation of the name Rus, and this is how Rus appeared in Byzantine sources. That is why the title of the modern-day titular nation of the Russian Federation – russkiye or rossiyane – is a self-designation.

¹⁷³ This does not rule out the existence of proto-state formations among the local population. The institution of the *veche* (assembly) can be considered evidence of established governance traditions, as a body of collective decision-making. There are recorded cases of the *veche* inviting princes to rule or refusing them the throne.

¹⁷⁴ *Povist' vrem'ianykh lit.* (n.d.). [Primary Chronicle]. <http://litopys.org.ua/pvlyar/yar01.htm> [in Ukrainian].

¹⁷⁵ Few people reflect on the scale of the Mongol state at the time, whose capital was the city of Dadu (modern-day Beijing).

local rulers, who were required to receive charters (*yarlyks*) to rule and to pay tribute to the invaders. It was the Mongol conquest that split the historical paths of Rus': the northeastern part (the future Russia), which remained dependent on the Horde until the end of the 15th century, and the original southwestern Rus' (central part of which would later become known as Ukraine), which remained under Mongol rule until the mid-14th century. The dependence of some southwestern principalities was rather nominal. The Grand Prince of Kyiv (1239–1241) and the Prince of Galicia-Volhynia, Danylo Romanovych, in 1245 recognized himself as a vassal of the Horde, while simultaneously attempting to create an anti-Mongol coalition. In 1253, he accepted a crown from the envoys of the Pope and became the first Rus' king, turning the Galicia-Volhynia principality into a European monarchy.

In the 14th century, the territory of Ukraine became part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This process was mostly peaceful, gradual, and stretched over a long period, reaching its peak in the 1360s. It is believed that the decisive battle between the army of Lithuanian Prince Algirdas and the Tatars of the Nogai Horde took place in 1362 near Torhovytsia, close to the crossing on the Syni Vody River. Clearly, for some time the newly acquired lands remained under dual rule – Lithuanian and Tatar. The annexed territories retained their previous administrative systems and socio-economic relations. Even Kyiv region, while already under Lithuanian rule, for some time continued to economically serve the Golden Horde and pay it tribute in silver and food.¹⁷⁶

The formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania would not have been possible without the annexation of Ukrainian territories. For a certain period, the lands of the duchy stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, making it the largest country in Europe. The majority of the state's population consisted of Belarusians and Ukrainians. The declared principle “We do not disturb the old, and we do not introduce the new” was well received by the local elites. The Ruthenian language dominated administrative affairs,¹⁷⁷ and Lithuanian nobles often adopted the Orthodox version of Christianity, while other confessions also operated freely. The social structure fully corresponded to the European traditions of the time, with a division of society into nobles, townspeople, and peasants. The history of this country is clearly underestimated by European historiography, as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was undoubtedly a geopolitical phenomenon in the European world of that era.

The Ukrainian lands became a kind of “golden share” that Poland acquired from Lithuania under the Union of Lublin in 1569. The three Ruthenian voivodeships of the Crown accounted for approximately one-third of its territory. The Ukrainian ar-

¹⁷⁶Cherkas, B. (2016). Podilski viiny 1362–1380 rr. [The Podilian wars 1362–1380]. *Arkheolohiia & Fortyfikatsiia Ukrainy: Zbirnyk materialiv VI Mizhnarodnoi naukovo-praktychnoi konferentsii* [Archaeology & Fortification of Ukraine: Proceedings of the 6th International Scientific and Practical Conference] (pp. 360–369). Kamianets-Podilskyi: PP Buinytskyi O.A. [in Ukrainian].

¹⁷⁷In this context, it refers to the joint Ukrainian-Belarusian administrative language of the 14th–16th centuries, based on the written traditions of Kievan Rus. See: Pivtorak, H. P. (n.d.). *Rus'ka mova* [Rus' language] [Electronic resource]. http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=ruska_mova [in Ukrainian].

istocracy, incorporated into the noble society of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, gained access to the “noble democracy”, the townspeople benefited from Magdeburg rights, and even the peasants remained protected under the Lithuanian Statute of 1566, which continued to be in effect in Ukrainian lands. Religious freedom was also widespread, and in the first half of the 17th century, many members of the political elite adhered to Protestantism, which allows us to speak of a local “golden age” of Reformation movements.

The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was constantly at war with the Muscovite state, the Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman Empire. The need for permanent military forces¹⁷⁸ gave rise to the registered Cossacks, and the Zaporizhzhian Sich played an important role in the strategic plans of the Commonwealth. Today, the history of Ukrainian Cossacks is regarded as a classic example of the frontier between Europe and the East.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, Ukrainian military history is undoubtedly part of the broader European processes of the Military Revolution era.¹⁸⁰

The new realities, when Cossacks began to receive pay for military service and were granted certain social privileges, in some ways brought the Cossack estate closer to the nobility. The two estates were closely connected, as many senior officers¹⁸¹ and hetmans of the Zaporizhian Host came from the nobility, which led to tensions between the Cossack elite and the rank-and-file Cossacks.¹⁸² In turn, the arbitrariness of the magnates in the first half of the 17th century led to the national liberation struggle of the mid-century and the formation of the Cossack state.

It is worth noting that Cossack liberties themselves can serve as an example for European societies, and the Ukrainian National Revolution of the mid-17th century can fully be considered part of the European revolutionary movements of the 16th–18th centuries.

Almost from the very beginning of the revolution in 1648, the formation of governing bodies began – the Cossack regiments and companies (*sotnyas*). The politi-

¹⁷⁸In the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, there was a noble democracy under which military service became a privilege rather than a duty for the nobility, leading to a reluctance of some nobles to participate in wars.

¹⁷⁹Chornovol, I. (2015). *Komparatyvni frontyry: svitovy i vitchyzniani vymir* [Comparative frontiers: global and domestic dimension]. Kyiv: Krytyka. [in Ukrainian].

¹⁸⁰The concept of a “military revolution” suggests that between 1560 and 1660, Europe experienced major changes in military affairs. Chronologically, this coincides with the Early Modern Period. This era saw the continuation of great geographic discoveries, advancements in shipbuilding and military technology. It was a time of creating permanent professional armies with regular artillery and fortifications adapted to cannon warfare. Among other things, it was also the period of the emergence of the first nation-states and new empires. See: Sokyрко, O. (2023). *Kozatskyi Mars: Derzhava ta viys'ko Kozatskoho Het'manatu v dobu Military Revolyutsii, 1648–1764* [Cossack Mars: The state and army of the Cossack Hetmanate during the Military Revolution, 1648–1764]. Kyiv: Tempora. [in Ukrainian].

¹⁸¹Otamans.

¹⁸²Kondratiev, I. (2023). “Starshi” Viiska Zaporozkoho – vykhidtsi z dribnoi shliakhty Osterskoho starostva Kyivskoho voievodstva Rechi Pospolitoi [“Senior” troops of Zaporizhzhia – descendants of minor nobility of the Oster starosty of the Kyiv voivodeship of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth]. In *Ad notam: Kolektyvna monohrafiia pam'ati Volodymyra Kryvoshei (1958–2015)* [Ad notam: Collective monograph in memory of Volodymyr Kryvoshei (1958–2015)] (pp. 46–53). Kyiv: Vyd. «KNT». [in Ukrainian].

cal system of the Hetmanate¹⁸³ was founded on the political traditions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The new regimental structure was based on the traditions of mid-16th-century magnate companies, the urban companies of border towns in the Kyiv Voivodeship, and registered regiments. The Ukrainian nobility played an important role in shaping political institutions, having merged into the new elite through Cossackization and becoming carriers of prewar noble values. This undeniable “noble legacy” influenced the formation of all political institutions in the new state. However, part of the noble class remained loyal to the Crown and fought against the rebels.

It is believed that Bohdan Khmelnytsky, a nobleman with experience in court service, made serious efforts to transform the Hetmanate into a monarchical state. This goal was to be furthered by the marriage of his son Tymish to the daughter of the Moldavian ruler Vasile Lupu. A monarchical form of government would have allowed the Hetmanate to seek protection from stronger states on the basis of vassal-suzerain agreements. For example, the Moldavian principality from the 16th to the early 18th century was under Ottoman suzerainty while enjoying broad autonomy. Tymish’s death in 1653 left this plan unfulfilled. The search for a suzerain compelled Khmelnytsky to turn to the Muscovite state, which led to the recognition of his vassalage to Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich of Moscow in January 1654.

In Soviet historiography, this event would later be called the “reunification” of two “brotherly” nations, although in reality, it was the recognition of vassal dependence in exchange for military assistance. Moreover, each side interpreted the agreements in its own way. When the Cossacks swore allegiance to the Moscow Tsar, the Muscovite boyars refused to swear allegiance to the Cossacks, citing the absence of such a tradition. Incidentally, not all segments of Ukrainian society were willing to swear allegiance to the Moscow Tsar. The townspeople of Pereiaslav were forced to take the oath, as they had resisted it. In Kyiv, the senior Orthodox clergy refused to take the oath. Some Cossacks from the Bratslav and Uman regiments opposed the oath, and the Zaporizhian Cossacks did not swear allegiance either.¹⁸⁴

From the perspective of Khmelnytsky and the Cossack leadership, the decision of the 1654 Council was a choice of vassalage that provided an alliance while preserving broad autonomy for the Cossacks. From the Muscovite point of view, it was the incorporation of the Zaporizhian Host into the Muscovite state. Interestingly, the Muscovite Tsardom regarded the Hetmanate at that time as an annexed foreign territory. This is evidenced by the administrative system introduced – initially, Hetmanate affairs were handled by the Posolsky Prikaz (analogous to today’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and from 1654 (in practice, 1663), the Zaporizhian Host was

¹⁸³ Hetmanate is a historiographical name for the Ukrainian Cossack state. Its official name was the Zaporozhian Host.

¹⁸⁴ Kondratiev, I. (2022). *Pokozachennia osterskoi shliakhty: Vid reiestrovoho kozatstva do uchasti v Ukrainskii natsionalnii revoliutsii seredy XVII st.* [The Ostroh nobility’s Cossackization: From registered Cossacks to participation in the Ukrainian national revolution of the mid-17th century]. *Eminak*, (4)(40), 38–49. [https://doi.org/10.33782/eminak2022.4\(40\).601](https://doi.org/10.33782/eminak2022.4(40).601) [in Ukrainian].

governed through the Little Russia¹⁸⁵ Prikaz. Similarly, the Muscovites governed other annexed territories through dedicated offices – such as the Smolensk¹⁸⁶ Prikaz, the Prikaz of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Livonian Affairs Prikaz, the Kazan Palace, the Siberian and Astrakhan Affairs Prikazes.¹⁸⁷ There was also a Great Russian Prikaz, but it dealt with the “southern Rus’ settlements that were not part of Left-Bank Little Russia” (the so-called Sloboda Ukraine – Bilhorod, Okhtyrka, Sumy, Kharkiv, and Izium). In 1700, this Prikaz was merged into the Posolsky Prikaz.¹⁸⁸ By the end of the 17th century, the Little Russia Prikaz was also returned under the authority of the Posolsky Prikaz. With the creation of collegia,¹⁸⁹ it was subordinated to the Collegium of Foreign Affairs and only in 1722 became a subdivision of the Senate. Meanwhile, the affairs of “core” territories were handled by other administrative bodies – the so-called “quarters” (Vladimir, Galich,¹⁹⁰ Novgorod, Ustyug, etc.).

A direct consequence of the Pereiaslav Council was the deployment of Russian troops on the territory of the Hetmanate. As early as February 23, 1654, a Muscovite garrison entered Kyiv, consisting of 2,650 soldiers and 10 cannons – a considerable force for that era. Within a few years, the garrison would quadruple in size, becoming the largest Muscovite garrison outside its borders. Since then, the Russian garrison has never left Kyiv.¹⁹¹

During the rule of Hetman Ivan Vyhovsky (1657–1659), an attempt was made to join the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on equal terms. In 1658, the Treaty of Hadiach was signed, which was intended to transform the Commonwealth into a confederation of the Polish Crown, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the Zaporizhian Host. Unfortunately, the treaty was never implemented, partly due to Poland’s short-sightedness.

In 1667, under the Treaty of Andrusovo, the Tsardom of Muscovy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ended the 1654–1667 war by dividing Ukrainian lands along the Dnipro River. The Left Bank remained under Muscovite control, the Right

¹⁸⁵In relation to Ukraine, the term “Malorossiia” (Little Russia) was used in Russia. The term appeared due to the need to distinguish Ukrainians from Russians and became widely used in the Russian Empire starting from the 18th century.

¹⁸⁶Smolensk is a historical land of Belarus. The Principality of Smolensk became part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the end of the 14th century. In 1514–1547, it was seized by the Grand Duchy of Moscow. According to the Truce of Deulino, it was returned to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where it remained until 1667.

¹⁸⁷Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Prikaz (organ upravlinnia)* [Prikaz (administrative body)]. *Wikipedia*. [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Приказ_\(орган_управления\)](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Приказ_(орган_управления)) [in Russian].

¹⁸⁸Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Velikorosiiskii prikaz* [Great Russian Prikaz]. *Wikipedia*. https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Великороссийский_приказ [in Russian].

¹⁸⁹The collegia became the central administrative bodies in the Russian Empire.

¹⁹⁰The town of Galich in today’s Kostroma Oblast.

¹⁹¹Sokirko, O. H. (2025). *Derzhava ta viys'ko Kozatskoho Hetmanatu v dobu Military Revoliutsii (1648–1764 rr.)* [The state and army of the Cossack Hetmanate during the Military Revolution (1648–1764)] (pp. 75–76). [Doctoral dissertation, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv]. Kyiv [in Ukrainian].

Bank under the Commonwealth, and the Zaporizhian Sich was recognized as a separate entity under joint control. This marked the beginning of the “Ruin” period, characterized by internal strife and power struggles. As a result of Turkish-Polish conflicts, the Right Bank was devastated, while the Left Bank saw the gradual dismantling of its autonomy.

Realizing the threats posed to the Hetmanate by Muscovy, Hetman Ivan Mazepa (1687–1704) decided to reorient toward Europe. His alliance with Sweden aimed to separate the Cossack state from Russian rule. The defeat and subsequent brutal repression of Mazepa’s followers – including the destruction of the hetman capital Baturyn along with its population – led to the loss of autonomy. Additionally, a large military contingent – over ten Russian infantry, dragoon, and hussar regiments¹⁹² – was stationed in the Hetmanate. Records from 1727–1729 show provisions issued to eight regiments (excluding the Poltava and Pryluky regiments): 4,983¹⁹³ poods of salt, 28,010 chetverts¹⁹⁴ of flour, and 1,755 chetverts of groats.¹⁹⁵

Throughout the entire 18th century, the process of incorporating the Hetmanate into the Russian Empire intensified, although the last Hetman, Kyrylo Rozumovskiy (1750–1764), tried at least formally to restore the autonomy of the Ukrainian state. In 1764, Collegium of Little Russia was reestablished to oversee the Hetmanate according to “Little Russian” law; it operated until 1786. At this time, descendants of the Ukrainian nobility began to fight for recognition as Russian nobles, the Cossack class actively defended its rights, while peasants – under new social and economic conditions – began to turn into serfs. Until 1861, the Russian Empire remained a country where slavery legally existed.

In the 18th century, significant geopolitical changes were taking place in Central and Eastern Europe. The emergence of the “Eastern Question” and Russia’s ambition to turn the Black Sea into an inland sea of the empire intensified its struggle against Turkey. The annexation of the Crimean Khanate in 1783 paved the way for further expansion into both the Caucasus and the southern European Black Sea regions.

At the end of the 18th century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was destroyed and partitioned between the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian monarchies. Ukrainians living on both the left and right banks of the Dnipro were once again united within one state – this time under Russia – while residents of the western Ukrainian ethnic region found themselves within the Habsburg Empire.

In the 19th century, Russia continued its expansionist policy, aiming at best to turn the Black Sea into an inland sea and at least to gain control over the Bosphorus.

¹⁹² An infantry regiment included from 1,000 to 1,300 men. Dragoon regiments had from 800 to 1,000, and hussar regiments – from 400 to 1,000.

¹⁹³ 1 pood = 16.3805 kg.

¹⁹⁴ 1 chetverik (old Russian volume measure) equaled 26.24 liters.

¹⁹⁵ Pryshliak, V. (2014). *Sotsialna elita za hetmanuvannia Danyla Apostola* [The social elite during the Hetmanship of Danylo Apostol]. *Ukrainska derzhava druhoi polovyny XVII–XVIII st.: polityka, suspil'stvo, kultura* [The Ukrainian state in the second half of the 17th–18th centuries: politics, society, culture] (pp. 159–202). Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy. [in Ukrainian].

Defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–1856, which was initiated by the Russian Empire, slowed but did not stop this process. The abolition of serfdom and the subsequent modernization of the empire led to rapid economic growth in Ukrainian territories. The southern governorates – Taurida, Kherson, and Katerynoslav – began to develop. Industrial development began in the region, including iron ore and coal mining, and the emergence of metallurgy and mechanical engineering. One of the empire's most developed economic centres – the Donetsk coal basin – achieved this status thanks to German, French, and Belgian investments. Almost all major cities of the Donbas were founded with the help of immigrants from European countries. Donetsk was founded by the Briton John Hughes, after whom the city was long called Yuzivka. A town called Bunge – named after the chairman of the Russian-Belgian Metallurgical Company – was later renamed Yuzhnokomunarnivsk and is now part of Yenakiieve. The founder of Luhansk is considered to be Scottish engineer Charles Gascoigne, who built the Luhansk foundry. The locomotive factory later “Luhanskteplovovoz” was built by German engineer Gustav Hartmann.¹⁹⁶

Modernization also took place in the Austrian Empire, which, following the Hungarian uprising, was declared the dual Austro-Hungarian Empire. *The Spring of Nations*¹⁹⁷ also led to the activation of the Ukrainian national movement, and the Supreme Ruthenian Council – the first Ukrainian political organization – was established. In an address to the Ukrainian people in 1848, it stated: “We, the Galician Ruthenians, belong to the great Ruthenian (that is, Ukrainian) nation, which speaks one language and numbers 15 million, of which two and a half million inhabit the Galician land.”¹⁹⁸ This was the first declaration that the Ukrainians of the Dnipro region and Galicia were one nation.

One of the factors that contributed to the formation of a modern nation was the colonial status of Ukrainian lands, which were divided between the Russian and Austrian Empires. At the time, Ukrainian political thought ranged from Russophilia and admiration of imperial ideas to resistance against imperial oppressors.¹⁹⁹ In Russia, Ukrainians were called “Little Russians”, in the former Polish territories “Rusyns,” and in Austria-Hungary “Rutenes”. As we can see,

¹⁹⁶Kmet', S. (2014, May 26). *Zasnovanyi yevropeitsyamy Donbas – antyevropeiskyi rehion Ukrainy* [Donbas founded by Europeans – an anti-European region of Ukraine]. *Istorychna Pravda*. https://www.istpravda.com.ua/digest/5380e8fb65441/view_news/ [in Ukrainian]; Bersheda, Ye. (2010, December 17). *Napravlena na budushchee razvitie ukrainsko-belgiiskikh otnoshenii nedavnyaya ekonomicheskaya misiia* [Recent economic mission aimed at future development of Ukrainian-Belgian relations]. ZN.UA. https://zn.ua/SOCIUM/belgiyskoe_proshloe_ukrainskoy_ekonomiki.html# [in Russian].

¹⁹⁷A series of democratic revolutions that took place in Europe in 1848–1849 and had a democratic character.

¹⁹⁸Turii, O. (1999). “Ukrainska ideia” v Halychyni v seredyni XIX stolittia [The “Ukrainian idea” in Galicia in the mid-19th century]. *Ukraina Moderna*, (2–3), 59–75. [in Ukrainian].

¹⁹⁹See in detail: Kolesnyk, I. (2024). Antykolonializm. Postkolonializm. Ukraina (metodolohichniy esei) [Anticolonialism. Postcolonialism. Ukraine (a methodological essay)]. *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, (4), 173–192. [in Ukrainian].

all of these names referenced Rus', which became a unifying factor and a foundation for the idea of shared identity after centuries of division. The self-designation "Ukrainian" spread during the national revival of the second half of the 19th century. The situation is not unique: as an ethnic nation, Ukrainians formed roughly at the same time as other European peoples and similarly passed through the full path from an ethno-cultural community to the formation of a modern nation.

In the First World War, Ukrainians divided by empires fought on opposite sides of the front – both in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies. The end of the war provided a chance to create an independent state, as both the Austro-Hungarian and, to a large extent, the Russian empires collapsed. As a result of the February Revolution in Russia, the Provisional Government came to power. In March, the Ukrainian Central Rada was established in Kyiv; its leaders sought autonomy for Ukraine within a newly democratic Russia. However, this provoked dissatisfaction in Petrograd. The Provisional Government did not recognize the Central Rada, fearing – justifiably – the avalanche-like collapse of the empire. That is why the First Universal of the Central Rada, which proclaimed Ukrainian autonomy, caused outrage in the Provisional Government. The further relationship between Kyiv and Petrograd only confirmed the truth of the notion that Russian democracy always ends at the "Ukrainian question".

The October coup of 1917 in Petrograd brought new realities, but with the same "old content". As early as December 1917, the Bolshevik invasion of Ukraine began. Against this backdrop, on January 22, 1918, the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) was proclaimed a sovereign state. The situation was complicated by internal political struggles. In April 1918, General Pavlo Skoropadskyi seized power in Ukraine, relying heavily on allied German and Austro-Hungarian troops. Skoropadskyi declared himself Hetman, and the official name of the country changed from "UNR" to the "Ukrainian State". The November 1918 revolution in Germany and the withdrawal of allied troops from Ukraine led to the Hetman's loss of power. As a result of the anti-Hetman uprising, the Ukrainian People's Republic was restored. At that time, in November 1918, the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR) was proclaimed in the Ukrainian ethnic territories of Austria-Hungary, with its capital in Lviv. On January 22, 1919, the UNR and ZUNR united into a single country. The formation of statehood was complicated by continuous wars that Ukraine fought with Bolshevik Russia. The first armed conflict lasted from December 1917 to June 1918, and the second war – from November 1918 to April 1920. To provide legal justification for its aggression, Soviet Russia created a proxy state in Kharkiv – the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic – which appealed to Russia for military assistance: "The People's Secretariat appeals to the Council of People's Commissars of Russia for help in liberating Ukraine from the counterrevolutionary Cen-

tral Rada.”²⁰⁰ Incidentally, the situation strongly resembles the creation of the so-called “people’s republics” in Donbas in 2014.

The situation was further complicated by armed conflict with Russian White Guards in 1918–1919. A serious issue was the phenomenon of “otamanshchyna” – the actions of numerous uncontrolled military units led by commanders with various political views or even openly criminal motives. There was no peace in the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic either, which from November 1918 to January 1919 was forced to defend itself from Polish aggression.

From 1919 to 1920, a peace conference was held in Paris, convened by the victorious powers of the First World War. The Entente played a key role (by the end of the war it was represented primarily by Great Britain and France). Delegations from the UNR and the ZUNR were also present. Unfortunately, France supported Poland, providing it with assistance, including military aid, in its fight against Ukraine.²⁰¹ And although Great Britain opposed the Polish annexation of Western Ukrainian lands, it did not change the outcome – Ukrainian ethnic territories that had largely comprised the ZUNR became part of Poland.

As a result of the 1921 Treaty of Riga between Poland and Soviet Russia, Ukraine was divided. On the territory controlled by the Bolsheviks, the formally independent Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was established, which at the end of 1922 became one of the founding republics of the USSR.²⁰²

The establishment of the communist regime in Ukrainian lands was facilitated by the manipulative populism of the Bolsheviks, who promised a quick end to the war and free distribution of land and means of production. Socialist ideas were generally very popular in Europe at the time, and many leaders of the Ukrainian People’s Republic held various socialist views. However, Bolshevism quickly abandoned all European socialist ideas, pursuing the path of destroying democracy and nationalizing all means of production.

The recent experience of national state-building gained by Ukrainians in 1917–1921 led the Moscow authorities to conclude that the national question could not be ignored. The Bolsheviks prudently abandoned the imperial interpretation of Ukrainians (and Belarusians) as parts of a single Russian ethnic group. From 1923 to 1932, the USSR pursued a policy of “korenizatsiya” (in Ukraine – Ukrainization, in Belarus – Belarusization, etc.), which established the dominant status of national lan-

²⁰⁰ Lupandin, O. I. (1994). *Ukrainsko-rosiiskii myrni perehovory 1918 r.* [Ukrainian-Russian peace negotiations of 1918]. *Istorychni zoshyty*, (7). Kulchytskyi, S. V. (Ed.). Kyiv [in Ukrainian]; Lupandin, O. I., Rallie, I. V., & Yakovlev, L. V. (Comps.). (1999). *Myrni perehovory mizh Ukrainskoiu Derzhavoiu ta RSFSR 1918 r.: Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv* [Peace negotiations between the Ukrainian State and the RSFSR in 1918: Collection of documents and materials]. Kyiv–New York–Philadelphia [in Ukrainian].

²⁰¹ One of the key reasons was the desire to find an ally in a potential struggle against Soviet Russia. Ukraine’s isolation at the conference may have also been caused by the fact that the Ukrainian State under Pavlo Skoropadskyi was allied with Germany and Austria-Hungary – countries that lost World War I.

²⁰² Ukraine’s independence was formal, but the Bolsheviks could not renounce it, as the Ukrainian SSR was created as an antithesis to the Ukrainian People’s Republic. Statehood sentiments were present even among some Ukrainian communists.

guages and involved the inclusion of national elements in leadership. Leaders were required to know the language of the local population; administrative work was conducted in national languages, and they were also used in education. Ukrainian national culture developed, but its growth was conditional on compliance with communist ideas or ideological neutrality.

The establishment of Soviet power was accompanied by total terror against “class enemies”, which included “bourgeois nationalists”.²⁰³ The cruellest chapter of Soviet terror was the organization of a man-made famine (the Holodomor) in 1932–1933, which led to the deaths of millions of Ukrainians.²⁰⁴ The Holodomor was made possible due to forced total collectivization between 1929 and 1932. The collective farm labour system and the state’s requisition system turned peasants into semi-serfs.

The industrialization carried out in the Ukrainian SSR should also be noted, as it resulted in the development of industry and the construction of the energy sector. The main efforts were directed toward the military sector, as the USSR was one of the most heavily militarized countries of that time. As early as the 1930s, there was a return to imperial tendencies in the ideological sphere – under the guise of internationalism, the Russian ethnic group was recognized as dominant.

The situation of Ukrainians who found themselves within Poland was controversial. The Polish authorities pursued a policy of assimilation and encouraged the resettlement of Polish colonists (*osadniks*) to Ukrainian lands. In 1930, the authorities carried out a pacification campaign – violent actions against Ukrainians in Galicia, including arrests and physical punishments. All this provoked resistance – Ukrainians united, created cooperatives, cultural societies, and political organizations. Among the latter was the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, which began to fight for Ukraine’s independence.

In 1939, the Second World War began. At that time Nazi Germany and the communist USSR were allies and jointly invaded and divided Poland. Additionally, the USSR annexed the Baltic states and attempted to capture Finland. The territory of the “liberated” Western Ukraine was annexed to the Ukrainian SSR.²⁰⁵ However, the prolonged “friendship” between the dictatorships was hindered by the imperial ambitions of both sides, each striving for hegemony. Therefore, the USSR’s responsibility for the outbreak of World War II is, in fact, no less significant.

But in June 1941, the former allies went to war against each other. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN(r)) took advantage of the outbreak of the So-

²⁰³ “Red Terror” was officially declared in 1918 and enshrined in law (by decree). It was to be applied against social groups declared as class enemies and counter-revolutionaries. In reality, it became a tool of intimidation of the general population and was often applied indiscriminately.

²⁰⁴ According to demographers, the total number of Holodomor victims was no less than 3 million. According to the Institute of Demography of the NAS of Ukraine – 4.5 million. Some researchers support an estimate of 7–10 million deaths.

²⁰⁵ It was at that time that Ukraine’s present borders were more or less established (except for Crimea, which was transferred to Ukraine in 1954). Based on the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which was part of Ukraine, the Moldavian SSR was created in 1940.

viet-German war and, on June 30, 1941, proclaimed the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian State in Lviv.²⁰⁶ The illusion that Germany would allow Ukrainians to have their own state – even a puppet one like Bohemia and Moravia in 1939 – quickly disappeared. Repressions against OUN members began. In 1942, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), a combat unit of Ukrainian nationalists, was formed. In April 1942, combat units were ordered to begin fighting against the Nazis, and at the beginning of 1943, the first clashes with German troops took place.²⁰⁷

Human losses were enormous. Ukrainians were the second largest ethnic group in the Red Army (estimated at 4.5 to 7 million people). The Nazis' "New Order" in the occupied territories was accompanied by mass repressions against civilians; the Holocaust became a major tragedy.²⁰⁸

After the end of World War II, a new global international organization – the United Nations (UN) – was established. In an attempt to gain maximum influence over the organization, the USSR proposed that all Soviet republics join the UN as formally independent countries. As a result, the USSR, the Ukrainian SSR, and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic joined the UN as founding member states. The independence of Ukraine and Belarus was purely symbolic. Nevertheless, Soviet Ukraine was one of the key republics of the USSR; heavy industry was rebuilt here, and Ukraine was traditionally considered the Soviet "breadbasket". A new wave of industrialization in the 1960s–1970s led to rapid urbanization. It became easier to escape from the collective farm "slavery", as people could now go work at large industrial enterprises. Repressions against regime opponents became more targeted. In addition to imprisonment, forced psychiatric "treatment" was used, since it was believed that only a mentally ill person could be dissatisfied with the Soviet way of life.

Formally, there were elections in the USSR, but voters were only offered a single candidate to vote for. These candidates were often workers and peasants, but the activities of local governing bodies – the Soviets – had no real impact, as actual power was held by the Communist Party. Even at enterprises, the head of the party organization (*partorg*)²⁰⁹ acted as a kind of "second director".

The USSR had a "planned" economy that prioritized military needs at the expense of consumer goods production. The range of goods and services was limited, and any item could become scarce. At times, the planned economy reached absurd

²⁰⁶ In 1940, the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) split into OUN(m) and OUN(b) – under the leadership of Andriy Melnyk and Stepan Bandera. Both factions hoped to use Germany to restore a Ukrainian state.

²⁰⁷ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Borotba UPA proty nimetskykh okupantiv* [UPA struggle against German occupiers]. Wikipedia. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Боротьба_УПА_проти_німецьких_окупантів [in Ukrainian].

²⁰⁸ Ukraine lost about 8–10 million people, both military and civilian. The military losses of ethnic Ukrainians in the Red Army amounted to at least 3.1–3.3 million.

²⁰⁹ A *partorg* was a Communist Party official at a Soviet enterprise responsible for promoting party policies, supervising workers' loyalty, and acting as the link between the party and the workplace.

levels – for example, bottled milk with 2.5 % fat was sold only in regional centres and the capitals of republics, while district towns received only 1.5% fat milk.²¹⁰ Better goods and food products were supplied to capital regions, “closed towns” of military personnel or nuclear workers, and regions of the Far East or Siberia. Imported goods were hard to access and were usually of better quality than Soviet ones. The distribution system gave rise to the phenomenon of *blat* – the ability to acquire goods through personal connections or a “call from above”.²¹¹ The party elite established their own system of supply – special distribution centres – giving them better provision and access to scarce goods.

Labor in the USSR lacked motivation for workers and, accordingly, was low in efficiency. Equalized wages offered no incentive, and the state propaganda’s appeal to “labor heroism” was ineffective. A major issue of the time was employee theft of produced goods, which were often unavailable through regular retail channels. Interestingly, Soviet propaganda did not call such thieves “thieves” but rather “carriers” (*nesuny*), since the phenomenon was widespread. Massive quantities of goods were stolen in the food industry, in construction, and on collective farms. Alcoholism was widespread and posed a serious social problem, while the divorce rate was among the highest in the world.

Technological backwardness was also a major issue, with the exception of a few high-tech industries, which were themselves increasingly affected by crises. One should also recall that private entrepreneurial activity in the USSR was considered illegal and could result in actual prison sentences.

The era of Leonid Brezhnev’s rule (1964–1982) is often referred to as the Soviet Union’s “golden age”. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli war (the “Yom Kippur War”), global oil prices surged, which in turn drove up the prices of all other types of fuel. In the 1970s, the USSR began extracting vast reserves of oil and gas, part of which was exported to Europe. The steady influx of petrodollars into the Soviet economy allowed for another wave of modernization and partially satisfied the consumer market with scarce goods. The Soviet budget became increasingly dependent on the “oil needle”, fuelled by rising global energy prices.

Enormous resources in the Soviet Union were spent on the military, and the country’s level of militarization was extremely high, though there was some thaw in relations with the US during the 1970s (up to 1979). In foreign policy, NATO remained the main enemy, and Soviet propaganda was entirely focused on opposing it. At times

²¹⁰ Yaplakal. (2014, November 29). *Moloko i molochni produkty SSSR* [Milk and dairy products of the USSR]. <https://www.yaplakal.com/forum2/topic975482.html> [in Russian]; Milsent, A. (2025, June 11). *Ne take vzhe i naturalne: shcho pidmishuvaly u moloko i smetanu u SRSR* [Not so natural after all: what was added to milk and sour cream in the USSR]. *Obozrevatel*. <https://www.obozrevatel.com/ukr/novosti-obshchestvo/ne-take-vzhe-i-naturalne-scho-pidmishuvali-u-moloko-i-smetanu-u-srsr.htm> [in Ukrainian].

²¹¹ The so-called “telephone law” – a peculiar communication system among the ruling elite that gave them access to scarce goods and services based on the principle “you help me – I help you” or for a certain monetary reward. These communications could concern the purchase of imported furniture, scarce food products, a place in line for an apartment, admission to an educational institution, etc.

it reached absurdity. For example, schoolchildren were forbidden from wearing jeans at school,²¹² because they were made in the USA, a potential wartime enemy.

Additionally, the USSR spent vast sums of money to support communist parties and anti-American regimes in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, as well as to conduct covert wars and special operations across the globe. The pinnacle of this policy was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. From the perspective of Islamic orthodoxy, this was an attack by infidels on a Muslim country, since militant atheism was part of the USSR's state ideology. After the surge in oil prices in 1979–1981, triggered by the Islamic revolution in Iran and the start of the Iran–Iraq war, OPEC²¹³ introduced its first oil production quotas in 1982. The increase in oil supply led to a drop in prices, which fell from \$34 per barrel to \$18 and lower. Aside from occasional spikes – for example, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 – prices remained consistently low and only began to rise in the early 2000s.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the USSR. Under his leadership, significant changes took place that went down in history as “Perestroika”. Gorbachev envisioned Perestroika as a comprehensive modernization of Soviet society and economy, though the first year of his rule was mostly remembered by citizens for the anti-alcohol campaign. Like everything else in the USSR, it focused not on cultivating a culture of consumption, but on restricting alcohol sales, cutting production, and destroying vineyards, among other things. In Ukraine, the anti-alcohol campaign triggered a wave of moonshining; sugar and even caramel candies disappeared from shelves, and yeast became scarce.

Gorbachev also launched “Glasnost”, which aimed to introduce freedom of speech and press, as well as democratic elections, and “Acceleration” in the economy, which aimed to reform the socialist system and introduce market elements. Comparing the Perestroika experience of the communist USSR to that of communist China or Vietnam, one should note that unlike the USSR, Asian reformers did not touch the ideological foundations of their regimes, but in economic terms, they went much further by introducing market relations. The Soviet “500 Days” program of 1990, which aimed to transition from a planned economy to a market one, was never adopted and remained only on paper.

In international politics, thanks to Gorbachev, the Cold War ended, troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Warsaw Pact dissolved, and Germany was reunified. The USSR did not interfere with the “velvet” revolutions in Eastern Europe, during which pro-Soviet proxies were overthrown and democratic forces came to power.

In the early years of Perestroika, among all Soviet republics, the Ukrainian SSR remained a kind of stronghold of conservatism – an “island of stagnation”. Volody-

²¹²There was no official ban of this kind, but I personally witnessed such situations. In 1989, at a citywide military gathering, the organizer, some retired officer, yelled at my classmate on the parade ground for wearing this item of clothing.

²¹³The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is an international cartel created by the largest oil-producing states to stabilize oil prices.

myr Shcherbytsky, who served as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine from 1972 to 1989, was perhaps the only republic leader not replaced by Gorbachev after coming to power. He was succeeded by the equally conservative Volodymyr Ivashko, who held the post for less than a year and used it as a springboard for a further career in Moscow, and he was succeeded by Leonid Kravchuk, who would lead Ukraine through the fateful events of 1991.

At that time, an independent economy of the Ukrainian SSR practically did not exist, as economic ties spanned the entire USSR. Ukraine also introduced cost accounting and lease relations, but the most noticeable marker of change was the opening of cooperatives, which mainly specialized in producing everyday goods, reselling scarce items, and providing food services. Alongside the accumulation of initial capital, organized crime also began to form, peaking in the 1990s.

In social life, Ukraine during this period went from top-down attempts to imitate reforms within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to the establishment of the People's Movement of Ukraine for Perestroika, which became the main opposition political force. Censorship in the Ukrainian SSR was also stricter; a saying believed to have originated in Soviet times goes, "When they cut nails in Moscow, they chop off fingers in Kyiv", which aptly reflects the conservatism of Kyiv's communist leadership. For instance, in 1989, the head of the Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and future first president of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, initiated a resolution by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPU to ban the People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh).

On March 4, 1990, the first democratic elections were held in the Ukrainian SSR – both to the Verkhovna Rada and to local authorities. In several regions – Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk – democratic forces came to power. Representatives of the People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh) and some other political forces gained majority control in local councils, and a significant group of democratic deputies was elected to the Verkhovna Rada, although the majority still belonged to the communists (the so-called "Group 239"). Among the social processes of that time, the revival of religious life in its broadest sense should also be mentioned.

The reforms implemented by Gorbachev significantly contributed to the collapse of the USSR. What seemed unshakable turned out to be a cardboard house that quickly fell apart. There were several reasons for the inevitability of the USSR's collapse. The first – an inefficient economy combined with the falsehood of the Soviet ideological system. For years, Soviet media fed the public triumphant official information from party events and news about the "labour achievements" of workers and peasants. All this sharply contrasted with the often empty shelves of Soviet stores and the reality people saw with their own eyes. The second – high social expectations. Perestroika lifted the "Iron Curtain". Most Soviet citizens could not imagine the standard of living in the West – they were stunned by the apartments, furniture, cars, and dozens of varieties of sausages and cheese in European or American stores. Against the backdrop of empty shelves in the USSR, this caused dissatisfac-

tion with their own lives. The third – neglect of the national question. In the post-war USSR, part of the official ideology was the creation of the person of the future – a supranational Soviet person. However, this person was expected to speak Russian, which was proclaimed the language of interethnic communication among the peoples of the USSR. In Ukraine, during the stagnant 1970s, the number of schools with instruction in Ukrainian gradually declined. “Internationalism” and “friendship of peoples” turned out to be just another ideological fiction. Many of the peoples within the USSR had long-standing conflicts. That’s why the republics of Soviet Central Asia (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek SSRs) and the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) “exploded” in interethnic conflicts.

Some nations had experienced statehood, which they lost as a result of Russian imperial and Soviet annexations and conquests, for example, Armenia²¹⁴ and Georgia.²¹⁵ The residents of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia also remembered well their occupation in 1940. They were the first of all the republics – in 1988-1989 – to proclaim their sovereignty, and after the 1990 elections, they were also the first to declare their withdrawal from the USSR. A “parade of sovereignties” took place.²¹⁶ Estonia declared sovereignty first (1988), followed by Lithuania and Latvia (1989), and then Georgia and the RSFSR in 1990. They were followed by the Uzbek and Moldavian republics, and only later by the Ukrainian SSR (July 16, 1990). On July 27, the declaration of state sovereignty was also adopted in another Soviet “stronghold” – Belarus.



A Soviet postage stamp dedicated to the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine.

Looking back after many years at the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty by the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, one cannot shake the feeling that the communists’ vote, in tandem with Ukrainian patriotic forces, for this undeniably epochal, albeit in many ways a formal document, was carried out under the instruction of the communist leadership. There may be several versions of why this happened. For one thing, the national liberation movement in Ukraine at the time was already quite strong, and adopting the Declaration essentially made the current communist leadership appear to lead the process. The declaration of sovereignty was needed by the leadership to sign a new union treaty. Confirmation of this was the release of a commemorative postage stamp by the USSR, which would have been impossible without the approval of the top ideologists in Moscow. Although it is also possible

²¹⁴The Democratic Republic of Armenia was occupied by the Soviet army in November 1920.

²¹⁵The Democratic Republic of Georgia was occupied by the Red Army in 1921.

²¹⁶According to a statement by a member of the RSFSR parliament.

that this was how the leadership of the Communist Party of Ukraine tried to “let off steam” in society. In Ukraine, what was declared was the proclamation of sovereignty, whereas Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, and Armenia proclaimed its restoration. Theoretically – having the history of the Ukrainian People’s Republic behind it – Ukraine could have followed the same path, but that was impossible under the rule of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Today it is difficult to determine all the aspects and motivations of the participants in adopting the declaration. Many of them invested their own meanings in these events, and let us not forget the Soviet tradition of giving instructions orally, which ruled out the presence of any documentary evidence.

As already mentioned, Perestroika contributed to the collapse of the USSR, although Mikhail Gorbachev himself never intended to destroy it and tried to save it at any cost. There were two ways to stop the process of disintegration. The first was repressive, and the second was to try to halt the process by signing a new union treaty. Gorbachev chose the second path, which did not rule out the use of the first. In December 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR supported his idea of signing a new Union Treaty, and in March 1991, a nationwide referendum was held. Gorbachev planned to create a kind of “USSR-2” on new foundations (with significantly more democracy), but also with the ability to continue using various means of “motivation” toward the leadership of the republics that, for some reason, might ignore the signing.

The use of forceful methods was not ruled out either. In April 1989, Soviet troops brutally dispersed an anti-Soviet demonstration in Tbilisi, and in January 1991, there was an attempt to restore communist power in Vilnius – the key event being the KGB special unit’s assault on the television centre (the so-called “January Events”). In the Baltic republics, pro-Moscow Committees of National Salvation and similar groups emerged.

The signing of the new Union Treaty was planned for August 20, 1991, but a coup began in Moscow the day before. The coup was carried out by the conservative faction of the Soviet leadership, which fully understood that the new treaty would nullify the 1922 agreement. In addition, not all of the fifteen Soviet republics at the time planned to sign the new treaty.

The signing of the new Union Treaty would hardly have immediately destroyed the USSR – it would have stretched the process over many years. But the coup plotters took action, and thanks to their efforts, the country was quickly dismantled and independent states were created (or restored).

The behavior of local elites played a major role in the collapse of the USSR. In 2021, as a journalist for *UA: Suspilne*, I prepared a series of radio programs in Chernihiv called *Faces of Independence*, in which I invited people from various fields: from educators and scholars to journalists, MPs, and military personnel. One episode featured the heads of the local police in 1991. Among other things, they said that on August 19, 1991, they received an order to arrest activists of democratic parties and organizations, but they were in no hurry to carry it out and in fact sabotaged

it. First, they had well-founded doubts about the legal validity of the order, second, there was simply no room for the expected number of detainees. In addition, many officials and law enforcement personnel sympathized with the national-democratic movement. A similar situation occurred in many regions of the USSR. For example, while speaking with a Lithuanian museum colleague, I heard how she, in 1991, was among the defenders of the Vilnius television centre, while officially attending a qualification training course at the republican House of Political Education. In such institutions, CPSU propaganda cadres received theoretical and methodological assistance, but the course director “didn’t notice” her absence. That is why, after the declaration of independence, the vast majority of law enforcement agencies²¹⁷ – the Soviet police, KGB, army, etc., recognized independence and took the oath of allegiance to the people of Ukraine. The behaviour of L. Kravchuk was illustrative – in 1990, he became the chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, while remaining a member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo. When coup representative General V. Varennikov arrived in Kyiv, Kravchuk refused to impose a state of emergency, arguing that there were no grounds for it.²¹⁸ The absence of a state of emergency legally prevented the start of repressions, although General Varennikov had not been sent to Kyiv by accident, as he had all the necessary experience, in particular, he was one of the leaders of the headquarters for dealing with the aftermath of the Chornobyl disaster and commanded Soviet troops in Afghanistan. According to him, Varennikov headed an operational group in Kyiv, which included the leadership of the Verkhovna Rada, the KGB of the Ukrainian SSR, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, three military districts, and the Black Sea Fleet: “This group collected data across the republic, and where intervention was needed, the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR was to resolve the issues independently.”²¹⁹

On August 24, 1991, Ukraine declared its independence. At the same time, a decision was made to hold a nationwide referendum. On December 1, 1991, 90 % of Ukrainian citizens confirmed this decision by their vote. **Leonid Kravchuk** became the first president of Ukraine, who left the ranks of the Communist Party of Ukraine almost simultaneously with its ban following the coup. Kravchuk’s main opponent was Viacheslav Chornovil, a former political prisoner and leader of the national liberation movement. On December 8, 1991, Leonid Kravchuk, Boris Yeltsin, and Stanislav Shushkevich signed the Belavezha Accords, under which the USSR ceased to exist.

²¹⁷The refusal of Soviet KGB special forces “Alpha” to carry out the orders of the State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP) made it possible for the democratic forces to win in Moscow.

²¹⁸Khotyn, R. (2022, August 24). “*V chotyry khody*”. *Yak Kravchuk perehrav Moskvu u serpni 1991 r., nablyzyvshy Nezalezhnist Ukrainy* [“In four moves”. How Kravchuk outplayed Moscow in August 1991, bringing Ukraine closer to independence]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/32001299.html> [in Ukrainian].

²¹⁹Bazak, O. (2013, August 18). *Valentyn Varennikov pro podii 1991: Naspravdi bezlad був не в Україні, а в Москві* [Valentyn Varennikov on the events of 1991: Actually, the disorder was not in Ukraine, but in Moscow]. Grechka. <https://gre4ka.info/interv-iu/5259-valentin-varennikov-pro-podiji-1991-naspravdi-bezlad-buv-ne-v-ukrajini-a-v-moskvi/> [in Ukrainian].

*Contra spem spero!*²²⁰

In 1991, Ukraine faced a number of urgent problems. And the most important one was: which path should the country follow? At that time, society had high expectations, shaped by the era of Perestroika. Before the referendum, the same People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh) distributed leaflets comparing Ukraine's economy to the most developed European countries – in terms of coal, pig iron, sugar, grain production, etc. But these rosy expectations soon collided with the reality of dismantling the Soviet economic model, the closure of many enterprises and institutions, and inflation.

All spheres of life required reform, and there was no precedent for such a process. The countries of Eastern Europe, where the dismantling of pro-Soviet regimes had already begun, had not yet completed it. Moreover, even under Soviet-style socialism, these countries retained some elements of market relations, in some places, there was at least a formal multi-party system, censorship was softer – for example, it did not target rock music, etc. In addition, the communist “experiment” had lasted less time there than in the Soviet republics.

Having renounced Soviet socialism, the country's leadership at the time understood the need for reforms. However, no one fully envisioned what specific reform measures should look like. The ban of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the nationalization of its property was an entirely logical step. In other respects, it was often just a collection of slogans and broad goals. In particular, the institution of private property was not understood as a systemic necessity. The Baltic countries went through restitution,²²¹ which, given the different scale and duration of communist rule, was probably impossible for Ukraine.

In assessing the role of individuals in history, it should be noted that Ukraine's first Prime Minister, Vitold Fokin,²²² could not have become a Balcerowicz²²³ even in theory. Let us recall that among Balcerowicz's achievements was a law allowing

²²⁰“I hope without hope!” – a Latin expression.

²²¹Restitution – the restoration of violated property rights to their original state at the time of the offense. In the Baltic countries, this meant the return of property nationalized by the Soviet authorities to the descendants of its original owners.

²²²October 23, 1990 – October 1, 1992 – the first Prime Minister of Ukraine. Member of the Audit Commission of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) in 1976–1981. Member of the Central Committee of the CPU in 1981–1991. Member of the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1990–1991. Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR during its 11th convocation (1988–1989). People's Deputy of the USSR in 1989–1991. (Data from Wikipedia.)

²²³Leszek Henryk Balcerowicz is a Polish economist and politician, a representative of monetarism. From 1972 to 1974, he studied in the USA. In 1980–1981, he was a consultant for the trade union association “Solidarity”. In 1981, he left the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP). Balcerowicz faced the task of rapidly implementing a plan for Poland's transition from a planned to a market economy (according to Wikipedia).

unprofitable state enterprises to go bankrupt, a law on economic activity for foreign investors, which allowed foreigners to invest in the Polish economy, and so on. The law on banking prohibited Poland's national bank from financing the state budget deficit by printing new money, which prevented the government from solving all problems through inflation, as it happened in Ukraine.

The Soviet planned economy began to collapse already during Gorbachev's Perestroika. A typical situation in which buckwheat was grown in Ukraine, glass jars were made in Tajikistan, lids somewhere in the Urals, and the final product elsewhere, was economically irrational but widely practiced. In the USSR, such economic management was offset by cheap energy resources, raw materials, and labour.

In 1992, the privatization of state property began with the privatization of apartments. That same year, the so-called "small" privatization was launched, followed by "mass" privatization, which was completed in its planned scope by 1998. However, many enterprises were declared strategic and therefore not subject to privatization, which did not prevent their sale in 2003–2004 during the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, when business was closely tied to power. The moratorium on land sales was lifted only in 2020.

Overall, the period of 1991–1992 was a time when the Soviet economy was still trying to function on inertia. Economic ties between former republics collapsed en masse, and debts for goods and services mounted. In the summer of 1992, Ukraine left the ruble zone and switched to the coupon-karbovanets. On the positive side, this allowed Ukraine to break free from Moscow's economic control, but on the negative side – money printing was used to cover budget shortfalls, leading to catastrophic inflation.²²⁴ The state continued to control prices on food products, and price regulation ended only under the government of Volodymyr Groysman (2016–2019).

The general impression of the early 1990s reforms can be summed up as follows: Ukraine experienced a shock, but the recovery was so slow it sometimes resembled torture of the "patient". Some even argued that Soviet communists built the very capitalism they had portrayed in their own propaganda during the USSR – one marked by unemployment, inflation, and crime. After all, the leaders of that time had no solid understanding of liberalism, private property, the free market, or human rights. For generations, Ukrainians had lived under totalitarianism, and when the opportunity to live differently finally arrived, people simply didn't know what to do with that freedom. So, they had to learn.

The absence of an elite with a non-Soviet mentality became a serious challenge for the country's development. Ukraine's case was by no means unique, as throughout the so-called post-Soviet space, former party officials largely came to power under democratic slogans. For example, Lithuania's president from 1993 to 1998 was

²²⁴In 1992, the annual inflation rate was 2,100%; in 1993 – 10,256%; in 1994 – 501%; in 1995 – 281.7%. See: Victorija.ua. (n.d.). *Indeksy inflatsii. Zvedena tablytsia indeksiv za period 1991–2024 rr.* [Inflation indices. Summary table of indices for the period 1991–2024]. <https://www.victorija.ua/indeksy-inflyatsi-yi-zvedena-tablytsya-indeksiv-za-period-1991-2015rr> [in Ukrainian].

Algirdas Brazauskas, a top official of the Lithuanian Communist Party during the 1980s. In Latvia, Anatolijs Gorbunovs became president, having served as the Communist Party's secretary for ideology from 1985 to 1988, and so on.

There was no true change of elites in the country (and whether such a change could have occurred remains an open question). After independence, some members of the opposition joined the government, thereby legitimizing the old party nomenklatura within the new administrative system. Following the 1994 elections²²⁵ to the Verkhovna Rada and local councils, held amid an economic crisis, even more Soviet-era managers came to power. Ideologically, they were no longer communists, but in terms of worldview, experience, and mentality, they remained products of the Soviet era with all its flaws: nepotism, cronyism, and rule by phone calls.

The absence of lustration in the early 1990s – barring former Communist officials and KGB employees from holding office – can be considered one of the greatest mistakes of Ukraine's early years of independence. However, according to Volodymyr Viatrovych, head of the Security Service of Ukraine's archival department in 2006–2010, lustration was virtually impossible, as documents from the late 1970s and 1980s were either destroyed or taken out of Ukraine. According to secret order No. 00150 issued in 1990, files began to be transferred to Russia, primarily from the western regions of Ukraine. Interestingly, the last head of the Ukrainian KGB, Mykola Halushko, moved to Moscow and became a head of the Russian security services.²²⁶

Ukraine's "Law on the Purification of Power"²²⁷, adopted on September 16, 2014, remained largely a fiction and had little real effect in the 23rd year of independence. Most notably, the law once again sidestepped the need to lustrate former KGB officers. As of 1991, a huge number of informants (so-called *seksots*²²⁸) were present in all institutions and work collectives – by regulation, there was to be at least one informant per collective. This practice was abolished only during Viktor Yushchenko's presidency (2005–2010). Many security service agents were among the members and leaders of opposition political parties and movements, including journalists and writers.

More likely, the disclosure of KGB archives was unrealistic for a more prosaic reason. In 1991, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) was largely formed by old Soviet personnel who swore allegiance to the new state. The vast majority of active KGB agents simply became active SBU agents, which made it impossible to dis-

²²⁵ Regular local elections in Ukraine were held on March 4, 1990, and June 26, 1994.

²²⁶ Borkovskiy, A. (2012, February 6). *Luchshe b ikh "zachistili": Ob utrachennom shanse provedeniya lyustratsii v Ukraine* [It would have been better if they had been "cleared out": About the lost chance to conduct lustration in Ukraine]. Argumentua. <https://argumentua.com/stati/luchshe-b-ikh-zachistili-ob-utrachennom-shanse-provedeniya-lyustratsii-v-ukraine> [in Russian].

²²⁷ Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy. (2014, September 16). *Zakon Ukrainy "Pro ochyshchennia vlady" No. 1682-VII* [Law of Ukraine "On cleansing of power" No. 1682-VII]. Official website of the President of Ukraine. [https://www.president.gov.ua/ua/lustration/documents/lustr-docs1#:~:text=Очищення%20влади%20\(люстрація\)%20-%20ц,2](https://www.president.gov.ua/ua/lustration/documents/lustr-docs1#:~:text=Очищення%20влади%20(люстрація)%20-%20ц,2) [in Ukrainian].

²²⁸ The word comes as an abbreviation of *sekretnyy sotrudnik* (Ukrainian – "secret collaborator").

close secret archives or publish the lists of informants (*seksots*). Overall, this situation was typical for most post-Soviet republics, while in the Russian Federation, former KGB officers in fact came to power and usurped it.

The decommunization process was also difficult in post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe. For example, in Germany, former employees of the communist regime's security services could be elected to parliament, but were barred from holding executive positions. The same communist party still exists there today. In the Czech Republic, the lustration process began in 1991. People connected to the secret services cannot be elected to public office or employed in government institutions or state companies. However, access to archival documents remained restricted until 2008. In Poland, a law requiring officials to confess their cooperation with the former regime was adopted in 1992. Lustration was later postponed for several years, and only with the establishment of the Institute of National Remembrance did the process gain momentum – though it still remains incomplete and faces various challenges.²²⁹

As a positive example of lustration and societal cleansing, we can cite Latvia's experience, where the publication of the KGB's unofficial agents' files – who had worked in numerous institutions across the republic – is still ongoing. Among the agents were Alexander, Metropolitan of Riga and All Latvia (agent "Reader"), basketball player Valdis Valters (agent "Steve"), and film director Jānis Streičs (agent "Viktors"). Other agents included heads of linear divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, poets, writers, actors, directors, musicians, artists, lawyers, and scholars. One Latvian professor aptly described the situation: "...Only now have I realized how many of them there were... lecturers at the institute, the head of a hospital department, colleagues' husbands, a colleague's father, my wife's classmate, a former neighbour, a deceased friend, a couple of acquaintances, a writer, journalists... I knew there were many, but only when I saw the actual names, I grasped the scale of it."²³⁰

Let us also recall the experience of Bulgaria. The publication of lists of agents from the political police and intelligence services of the communist regime revealed that many were now bankers, media magnates and government officials. Ten percent of every million civil servants were agents, and ten percent of secret service employees were present in educational institutions, the media, as well as among diplomats, military personnel, and even opposition figures. Out of fifteen metropolitans of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, eleven were agents.²³¹

²²⁹ Konareva, L. (2015, July 21). *Dekumunizatsiia: yak tse vidbuvalosia v Yevropi* [Decommunization: how it took place in Europe]. Tyzhden. <https://tyzhden.ua/terytorii-8-krain-ochystyly-vid-komunistychnykh-symvoliv/> [in Ukrainian].

²³⁰ Kudrin, O. (2018, December 22). *Vidomi sluzhyteli RPC DB, basketbolisty, rezhysery...* [Famous servants of the ROC DB, basketball players, directors...]. Ukrinform. https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/2606688-vidomi-sluzyteli-rpc-db-basketbolisti-reziseri.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawHV-xlleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHVQqVF85D31aUBpNJz-peDVEtuIAFmHhRBYhBTfdK42Tx7A-yJCa38UD_g_aem_JqZoa8qGrslxDy9f9g673A [in Ukrainian].

²³¹ Ohiienko, V. (2013, July 4). *Maiete pravo znaty* [You have the right to know]. Tyzhden. <https://tyzhden.ua/maiete-pravo-znaty/> [in Ukrainian].

Given the extent of state intrusion into the everyday lives of Soviet citizens, the presence of informants (*seksots*) in Ukrainian society was no less – and perhaps even greater. Among the names that became public were Volodymyr Lytvyn, who confirmed his cooperation with the KGB,²³² and Patriarch Filaret. In interviews, Filaret stated that he was forced to cooperate with the KGB, as clergy could not fully perform their duties without such contact.²³³

One of the paradoxes of the era is that it was the communists' political mimicry that made the peaceful attainment of independence in 1991 possible. At the time, Russia was too weak to destabilize the situation in Ukraine, burdened by a deep economic crisis and domestic strife, which culminated in tanks shelling the Russian parliament in 1993. Russia's preoccupation with internal issues prevented it from destabilizing Crimea in Ukraine – unlike the Soviet KGB's earlier success in stirring conflicts in Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and Moldova (Transnistria). Moreover, the Russian ruling bureaucracy could easily find common ground with its Ukrainian counterpart, thanks to their shared Soviet past.

Another key aspect of the early 1990s was Ukraine's failure to grasp its own significance. Firstly, Russia's imperial "project" is impossible without Ukraine. Russia became an empire (in 1721) only after crushing Mazepa and dismantling Ukrainian autonomy. A renewed USSR-2 would also have been impossible without Ukraine – something both Gorbachev and the State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP) understood well. The signing of the Belavezha Accords on December 8, 1991, by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus – on the dissolution of the USSR and the creation of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) – brought the Soviet Union to an end.

Secondly, the modern "European project" would be incomplete without Ukraine. And after February 24, 2022,²³⁴ Ukraine became one of the defining centres of world history.

The importance of Ukraine was also underestimated by the West during the 1990s and early 2000s. A telling example was the visit of U.S. President George H. W. Bush to Kyiv in 1991 – three weeks before the August Coup and a few months before the complete collapse of the USSR. In his speech to the deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, Bush Sr. advocated for preserving the Soviet Union.²³⁵ Although

²³² Borkovskiy, A. (2012, February 6). *Luchshe b ikh «zachistili». Ob utrachennom shanse provedeniia liustratsii v Ukraine* [It would be better if they were 'cleansed': About the lost chance of lustration in Ukraine]. Argumentua. <https://argumentua.com/stati/luchshe-b-ikh-zachistili-ob-utrachennom-shanse-provedeniya-lyustratsii-v-ukraine> [in Russian]; Obozrevatel. (2006, December 9). *Litvyn ziznavsia, zvidky u n'oho berut'sia hroshi* [Lytvyn confessed where he gets his money from]. <https://www.obozrevatel.com/ukr/author-column/65309-litvin-ziznavsia-zvidki-u-nogo-berutsya-groshi.htm> [in Ukrainian].

²³³ Radio Svoboda. (2018, December 23). *"Vyimaie pistlet i kazhe: my mozhemo vas rozstriliaty"* – Filaret rozpoviv pro spivpratsiu tserkvy i KDB ["He pulls out a gun and says: we can shoot you" – Filaret spoke about cooperation between the church and the KGB]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/29671187.html> [in Ukrainian].

²³⁴ The date of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

²³⁵ Portnykov, V. (2021, July 31). *30 rokiv tomu. Ukraina i ostanniy vizyt prezydenta SSHA do SRSR* [30 years ago: Ukraine and the last visit of a U.S. president to the USSR]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/vizyt-dzhorzha-busha-do-ukrayiny-1991/31387273.html> [in Ukrainian].

the collapse of the “Evil Empire” (as U.S. President Ronald Reagan called it) should have served U.S. interests, the influence of “Realpolitik” (as interpreted by Henry Kissinger) led Americans to worry about nuclear proliferation and the potential instability of the post-Soviet space. Yet it is unlikely that any intelligence service in the world, on August 1, 1991, predicted the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union.

For Ukraine, one of the key issues at the time seemed to be the division of the Black Sea Fleet, though in reality, it was not so much about the fleet as it was about Crimea. Since 1991, the issue of Crimea truly became a focal point for all of Russia’s imperial complexes – both Tsarist and Soviet.

In 1991, Ukraine possessed one of the largest military potentials in the world. Its territory hosted three combined arms armies, three tank armies, an army corps, four air armies, an air defence army, a missile army, the Black Sea Fleet, and other military formations. The total number of personnel exceeded 800,000 troops,²³⁶ and its arsenal included 6,500 tanks, 7,000 armoured vehicles, 1,500 aircraft, 350 naval vessels, and more.²³⁷ Ukraine held the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world after the USA and Russia, consisting of 1,272 nuclear warheads on intercontinental ballistic missiles and about 2,500 tactical nuclear weapons. Ukraine also possessed appropriate delivery systems, including both silo-based and mobile launchers. A total of 176 intercontinental ballistic missiles were on active combat duty. Ukraine’s arsenal included 44 strategic bombers equipped with up to 500 nuclear cruise missiles.²³⁸

Ukraine’s relinquishment of nuclear weapons allowed the United States to save enormous sums of money, as the operation of missile defence systems, intelligence efforts, and the maintenance of an equivalent number of warheads and delivery systems carried a very real financial cost for American taxpayers – amounting to tens of billions of dollars. Leonid Kravchuk can be criticized for the loss of nuclear weapons, though the main motivation of Ukraine’s leadership at the time – the lack of technological capability to maintain them and the shortage of funds – also had a certain logic. Ukraine did receive some compensation from the Russian Federation – instead of nuclear weapons, it was provided with fuel for nuclear power plants – but in reality, this was a pittance compared to the amount the United States could have provided in the form of investments in Ukraine’s economy. A “deal of the century” that could have helped Ukraine transition to a modern economic path never happened, not even discussions about it took place.

Ukraine’s nuclear disarmament occurred over a very short period. In September 1993, the Massandra Accords were signed, providing for the transfer of all types of nuclear warheads to the Russian Federation and the supply of low-enriched uranium to Ukraine for its nuclear power plants. In January 1994, Leonid Kravchuk signed the

²³⁶ The vast majority of military personnel swore allegiance to Ukraine.

²³⁷ Drukarnia. (2024, September 18). *Ukrainska armia 1991–2023. Zanepad ta vidrodzhennia* [Ukrainian army 1991–2023. Decline and revival]. <https://drukarnia.com.ua/articles/ukrayinska-armiya-1991-2023-zanepad-ta-vidrodzhennia-BNFik> [in Ukrainian].

²³⁸ Ibid.

“Trilateral Statement” with the presidents of Ukraine, the United States, and Russia, concerning the immediate removal of Ukraine’s nuclear weapons to Russia.²³⁹

On December 5, 1994, Leonid Kuchma signed the Budapest Memorandum, which was supposed to guarantee Ukraine’s security in exchange for its non-nuclear status. On June 1, 1996, the last nuclear warheads were removed to the Russian Federation. In light of Russia’s later aggression and the annexation of Crimea, this document has become one of the most questionable in the history not only of Ukraine but also of the world – when Ukraine, in essence, traded “gold” for “cheap trinkets”. Incidentally, in 2023, former U.S. President Bill Clinton, one of the memorandum’s signatories, admitted that the decision to disarm Ukraine was a mistake.²⁴⁰

Let us also recall another important document signed during Kravchuk’s presidency. Although it did not receive as much publicity as the aforementioned one. In June 1994, Ukraine signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union. It was the first agreement signed by the EU with a country of the former USSR.

In July 1994, Kravchuk’s presidency ended and that of **Leonid Kuchma** began. By fair means or foul, he managed to remain in office for two terms – until January 2005.

Kuchma began his presidency as a pro-Russian politician (in the pro-Soviet sense of that pro-Russian stance), advocating for the restoration of economic ties with Russia, while simultaneously seeking to build relations with the West. “Multi-vector foreign policy” became a hallmark of the early years of his presidency. By the late 1990s, Kuchma began leaning toward the West, but after a series of scandals, he shifted toward a pro-Russian course.

At the time, it seemed that Kuchma had managed to resolve the “Crimean issue”. In 1994–1995, the pro-Russian president of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Yuriy Meshkov, attempted to initiate the process of Crimea joining the Russian Federation, but he was removed from power. However, Ukraine’s subsequent policy on Crimea lacked consistency and did not align with the country’s national interests. In May 1997, the Agreement on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine was signed, under which the territory of the Russian naval base in Sevastopol was leased for 20 years. This was followed by the signing of the Treaty on Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation, which, among other things, guaranteed mutual recognition of borders and respect for territorial integrity.

²³⁹ YouTube. (n.d.). *Amerykanski prezylenty i Ukraina. Realna istoriia vidnosyn* [American presidents and Ukraine. The real history of relations] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZGjQDLITmg> [in Ukrainian].

²⁴⁰ O’Callaghan, M. (2023, April 4). *Clinton regrets persuading Ukraine to give up nuclear weapons*. RTÉ News. <https://www.rte.ie/news/primetime/2023/0404/1374162-clinton-ukraine/>; Izvoschikova, A. (2023, April 5). *Klinton zaivayv, shcho shkoduie pro te, shcho perekonav Ukrainu vidmovytsia vid yadernoi zbroi* [Clinton said he regrets persuading Ukraine to give up nuclear weapons]. *Suspilne*. <https://suspilne.media/435846-klinton-zaaviv-so-skodue-pro-te-so-perekonav-ukrainu-vidmovitisa-vid-adernoi-zbroi/> [in Ukrainian].

A major event during Kuchma's presidency was the adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine in 1996. Despite its many shortcomings, the constitution proved to be viable and enabled the functioning of the Ukrainian state. Considering the division of powers among the branches of government, it is believed that the Constitution established a presidential-parliamentary model of governance.

During Kuchma's presidency, economic reforms continued. In 1995, voucher privatization began in Ukraine. It contributed to the de-nationalization of much of the economy, but did not turn ordinary citizens into real co-owners. Instead, it laid the groundwork for the formation of domestic financial and industrial groups, the most notable being the so-called Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk groups. In the context of the privatization of large enterprises, Kuchma's son-in-law, Viktor Pinchuk, is often mentioned – one of the most influential businessmen of the time.

In 1996, the land of former collective farms was redistributed, and the national currency – the hryvnia – was introduced. The era of inflation came to an end, which contributed to economic development.

In the 1999 presidential election, Leonid Kuchma positioned himself as a pro-Western candidate, in contrast to the communist Petro Symonenko. At this time, foreign policy continued to shift away from multi-vectorism in favour of a pro-Western orientation. As early as 1998, a presidential decree defined the "Strategy of Ukraine's Integration into the EU". At the beginning of 2002, Ukraine declared its intention to obtain associate membership in the EU. In July of the same year, Kuchma signed a decree on Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. On May 19, 2003, he stated that Ukraine had proven the validity of its application for EU membership and hoped for practical progress on the issue at the next Ukraine-EU summit. In 2003, the European Union developed the European Neighbourhood Policy, intended for Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and a number of other countries. The document did not address the question of potential EU membership for these countries, even in the distant future. However, it was a practical instrument of cooperation that declared the principle of "everything but institutions".

However, soon Kuchma found himself at the centre of a series of scandals. In the fall of 2000, recordings allegedly featuring Kuchma speaking with his closest associates in his own office were made public. It is believed that the recordings were made by one of Kuchma's personal bodyguards, Mykola Melnychenko. One of the recordings mentioned Ukraine selling Iraq a cutting-edge electronic intelligence system, which harmed U.S. interests. Although no concrete evidence of the deal was presented, it damaged relations with the United States. The mention of journalist Heorhiy Gongadze in the recordings also caused a major public outcry. A voice resembling Kuchma's spoke of the need to "teach a lesson" to the journalist and to "kidnap" him. Considering that Gongadze was found murdered, suspicion fell on Kuchma as the one who allegedly ordered the crime. In 2013, the investigation identified the perpetrator: Interior Ministry General Oleksiy Pukach, who head-

ed surveillance units from 2000 to 2003. Pukach claimed he was merely following the order of Yuriy Kravchenko, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine at the time. However, after Kravchenko's death in 2005, suspicions that Kuchma ordered Gongadze's murder remained unresolved.

It is worth noting the theory that the "Melnychenko tapes" were part of a Russian intelligence operation. The main goal was to discredit Kuchma, who had chosen a pro-Western course.²⁴¹ Subsequent events have made this theory nearly dominant, although it does not exclude the possible guilt of the individuals involved.

Kuchma's presidency also saw a conflict with Russia over the Tuzla Spit Island. In 2003, Russia began building a dam intended to connect Tuzla with the Krasnodar region, but Ukraine's readiness to defend its territorial integrity made the project impossible to complete. However, the Tuzla conflict outlined the future direction of Russian policy toward Ukraine.

In 2004, Ukraine's foreign policy doctrine was officially changed. Goals of joining NATO and the European Union were removed from the doctrine. A new pro-Russian course was adopted, as evidenced by Kuchma's choice of successor – Viktor Yanukovych. It is believed that if Serhiy Tihipko had been chosen as the "successor", it would have been a more moderate choice. According to Kuchma, he had considered Tihipko as a potential successor but changed his decision because it became clear that Parliament would not approve Tihipko as Prime Minister. Tihipko himself confirmed that such a proposal had indeed existed.²⁴²

It is likely that Kuchma also considered running for a third term himself. In 2003, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine issued a ruling that allowed him to do so, despite the constitutional limit of two consecutive terms.²⁴³ Of course, this would have been a direct violation of the Constitution.

Overall, when assessing Kuchma's role in shaping Ukraine, it is important to highlight his attempt at pursuing European and Euro-Atlantic integration, which was thwarted by Russian intelligence services. His authoritarian style of governance did not facilitate the development of democratic institutions, but it was not critically detrimental to them either. Kuchma became the "father" of the Ukrainian oligarchy, but after the 1998 financial crisis, support for small and medium-sized businesses began, laying the groundwork for a Ukrainian version of the "middle class".

²⁴¹ Solomka, O. (2019, January 21). *Lutsenko nazvav "plivky Melnychenka" spetsoperatsiiei FSB RF pro ty Kuchmy* [Lutsenko called the "Melnychenko tapes" an FSB special operation against Kuchma]. NV (New Voice). <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/politics/lutsenko-nazvav-plivki-melnichenka-specoperaciyeu-fsb-rf-proti-kuchmi-50002555.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁴² Ukrainska Pravda. (2005, October 31). *Bukhhalteriia pomeschala Kuchmi naznachyty Tyhyipko svoiim preemnykom* [Accounting prevented Kuchma from appointing Tyhyipko as his successor]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2005/10/31/4393499/> [in Russian]; Gazeta.ua. (2009, November 21). *Tyhyipko predlahoali stat preemnykom Kuchmy* [Tyhyipko was offered to become Kuchma's successor]. https://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/politics/_tigipko-predlagali-stat-preemnikom-kuchmy/316700 [in Russian].

²⁴³ Tomenko, M. (2004, January 20). *Pro zakonnist tretoho terminu prezidentstva Leonida Kuchmy* [On the legality of Leonid Kuchma's third presidential term]. Holos Ukrainy. <https://www.golos.com.ua/article/237335> [in Ukrainian].

The choice of Viktor Yanukovich as his successor – and more precisely, the electoral fraud associated with it – became the catalyst for the Orange Revolution. Viktor Yushchenko became Yanukovich's main rival. Yushchenko, who previously headed the National Bank, was associated by Ukrainians with a successful monetary reform – the introduction of the hryvnia. From 1999 to 2001, he served as Prime Minister but was dismissed by Kuchma amid the “Ukraine Without Kuchma” protest campaign, after which he joined the opposition.

The fraud in the 2004 elections was not just rumoured – I personally witnessed it. At that time, I was actively cooperating with the NGO “Committee of Voters of Ukraine” as a journalist; during the first round, I led a mobile observer group. While in a fairly large village in Chernihiv region, I accidentally learned from the head of the polling station that the “district leadership” had ordered the election results protocol be delivered to them first. Moreover, the commission's seal and blank forms were to be brought along, and only afterward were they to proceed to the territorial election commission.²⁴⁴ Administrative pressure, falsification of protocols, “carousel” voting – where people were bused around with voter passes to vote multiple times – “dead souls” on the voter lists, and outright bribery of voters all became trademarks of that election.²⁴⁵ In early October 2004, there was an attempt to poison Yushchenko. In 2024, U.S. intelligence released a report suggesting that Russian intelligence services might have been involved in the poisoning.²⁴⁶

The peak of the manipulations came with the actions of the Central Election Commission, headed by Serhiy Kivalov. During the second round, a supposed failure of the CEC server was staged (it was later revealed that there had been direct technical interference). The large monitor froze on numbers showing a narrow victory for Yushchenko, but Yanukovich was declared the winner. This triggered mass protests across Ukraine, which went down in history as the “Orange Revolution”.

The outcome was a sort of compromise. The case was shifted into the legal domain; in the absence of an appropriate law, the Supreme Court ruled to repeat the second round of voting. Viktor Yushchenko won, receiving 53 % of the vote, while Yanukovich secured 44 %. As a compromise, Yushchenko's presidential powers were reduced in what became known as the 2004 constitutional reform, although he retained full authority for another year – until January 1, 2006.

²⁴⁴The clarification that these actions fell under articles of the Criminal Code (new amendments introduced rather severe punishments for election result falsification) had an effect. The actual protocol was delivered to the TEC, which was later confirmed by comparing it with an existing copy.

²⁴⁵Suspilne. (2004). *Rishennia pro falsyfikatsiiu vyboriv 2004 roku* [Decision on the falsification of the 2004 elections] [Video]. <https://mediateka.suspilne.media/media/1229> [in Ukrainian]; Paliĭ, O. (2005, November 15). *Falsyfikatsiia vyboriv-2004: yak orhanizovuvavsia “pidrakhui”* [Falsification of the 2004 elections: how “count it” was organized]. *Ukrainska Pravda*. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2005/11/15/3017827/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁴⁶Denysiaka, O. (2024, November 23). *U rozsekrechenomu zviti rozvidky SSHA zghaduetsia otruiennia Viktora Yushchenka* [The declassified US intelligence report mentions Viktor Yushchenko's poisoning]. *Hromadske*. <https://hromadske.ua/suspilstvo/235058-za-otruyenniam-iushchenka-stoyit-putin-rozvidka-ssha> [in Ukrainian].

Viktor Yushchenko served as the head of Ukraine from 2005 to 2010. Many Ukrainian citizens saw the beginning of his presidency as an irreversible victory for democracy. Some expected rapid political and economic reforms; many were drawn to the idea of justice, which has always resonated with Ukrainian society. One of the main campaign slogans before the repeat of the second round was “Bandits – to prison”, especially since there was a real opportunity to punish those responsible for the fraud. However, in the end, only a few hundred low-level perpetrators were convicted, and none of the actual organizers faced justice.²⁴⁷ No lustration was carried out either, as it was strongly opposed by the then Minister of Justice, Roman Zvarych.²⁴⁸ On the positive side, Yushchenko was the first president to raise the issue of reforming the personnel of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU),²⁴⁹ including reducing their network of representatives in all organizations and institutions across the country.

Yushchenko’s presidency was met with disapproval by Russia, especially since they had already congratulated Yanukovich on his victory. In 2005, trade wars began, which were undoubtedly political in nature. Citing non-compliance with quality standards, Russia banned the export of Ukrainian meat and dairy products. Restrictions were also imposed on the import of pipes. However, the key area where Russia tried to blackmail Ukraine was the gas sector. Back in the summer of 2004, the company RosUkrEnergo was established, with one of Putin’s “moneymen” – Russian-Ukrainian oligarch Dmytro Firtash²⁵⁰ – as a key figure. During Yushchenko’s presidency, this company became the sole supplier of gas to Ukraine, and its branch Ukrhaz-Energo, created in 2006, supplied gas to the industrial sector. Ukraine, which had previously purchased cheap Central Asian gas, lost this opportunity and became fully dependent on Russia’s Gazprom. Over just five years, the gas price increased nearly tenfold – from \$50 (under a contract from the “late” Kuchma era) to \$450 in the 2009 agreement signed by Yulia Tymoshenko.²⁵¹ The peak of the conflict was

²⁴⁷ Palii, O. (2005, November 15). *Falsyfikatsiia vyboriv-2004: yak orhanizovuvavsia “pidrakhui”* [Election falsification-2004: How “Pidrakhui” was organized]. *Ukrainska Pravda*. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2005/11/15/3017827/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁴⁸ Borkovskiy, A. (2012, February 6). *Luchshe b ikh “zachystyly”*: *Ob utrachennom shanse provedeniia liustratsii v Ukraine* [It would have been better if they had been “cleared out”: On the lost chance of lustration in Ukraine]. *Argumentua*. <https://argumentua.com/stati/luchshe-b-ikh-zachistili-ob-utrachennom-shanse-provedeniya-lyustratsii-v-ukraine> [in Russian].

²⁴⁹ Yushchenko, V. (2006, October 2). *Yushchenko dav doruchennia holovi SBU* [Yushchenko gave instructions to the head of the SBU]. *UNIAN*. <https://www.unian.ua/politics/18078-yuschenko-dav-doruchennya-golovi-sbu.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁵⁰ Glavcom. (2015, October 29). *Rossiyskiy politemigrant: Firtash – koshelek Putina* [Russian political emigrant: Firtash is Putin’s wallet]. <https://glavcom.ua/news/244451-rossijskij-politemigrant-firtash-%E2%80%93-koshelek-putina.html> [in Russian]; Rysnyi, D. (2021, December 21). *Ivan Fursin: Ya hovoryv Firtashu – davay “Rosukrenerho” prodamo “Naftogazu”* [Ivan Fursin: I told Firtash – let’s sell “Rosukrenergo” to “Naftogaz”]. *Ekonomichna Pravda*. <https://epravda.com.ua/publications/2021/12/21/680860/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁵¹ Deineha, V. (2018, March 23). *Istoriia hazovykh viyn Ukrainy: koli vse pochalosia ta chym zakinchytisia* [History of gas wars in Ukraine: when it started and how it will end]. *24 Kanal*. https://24tv.ua/istoriya-gazovih-viyn-ukrayini-koli-vse-pochalosya-ta-chim-zakinchytisia_n942253 [in Ukrainian].

Russia's shutdown of gas transit through Ukraine to Europe, with the "gas valve" becoming a constant tool of political pressure.

In 2005, Ukraine signed an Action Plan with the EU. Among other things, the plan envisioned the gradual removal of customs barriers, which allowed trade to develop and helped to some extent minimize Russian influence. The European Union became Ukraine's largest trading partner. Annual summits with the EU became regular, and Ukraine joined many economic and educational programs. In 2007, Ukraine began the transition to a new enhanced cooperation format – the Association Agreement with the EU. In 2008, Ukraine applied for a NATO Membership Action Plan. Unfortunately, the accession process was not initiated – Germany and France opposed it, unwilling to spoil relations with Russia. Notably, it was at this summit that Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that Ukraine was "not even a real state" and hinted at possible territorial claims if it were to join NATO.²⁵² Incidentally, during Yushchenko's presidency, a U.S.-funded program for eliminating surplus weapons was launched. One of the authors of the legislation was then-senator from Illinois, Barack Obama. In 2005, \$48 million was allocated for weapons disposal in the former Soviet republics. In Ukraine, which was considered a priority area, more than 15,000 tons of ammunition, around 400,000 units of small arms, and over a thousand portable anti-aircraft missile systems like Iгла and Strela were destroyed.²⁵³

In 2008, Russia attacked Georgia. Preparation for the attack had been underway since at least 2006, when Russia imposed a ban on the import of agricultural products, wine, and mineral water. On the eve of the aggression, Russian railway troops repaired 50 kilometers of railways and about twenty bridges and tunnels, as the Russian army's military logistics have traditionally relied on rail transport. A month before the invasion in August 2008, Russian aircraft repeatedly violated Georgian airspace.²⁵⁴ Given the involvement of Russian Black Sea Fleet ships in the war, the conflict posed a potential threat to destabilize the situation in Crimea for Ukraine. Yushchenko actively supported Georgia, which received surface-to-air missile systems from Ukraine. This helped to limit the participation of Russian aircraft in the war – 12 Russian military planes were shot down, including a Tu-22 strategic bomb-

²⁵²Ukrainska Pravda. (2008, April 7). *Putin – Bushu: "Ukraina – tse ne derzhava"* [Putin to Bush: "Ukraine is not a state"]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2008/04/7/4437118/> [in Russian].

²⁵³LIGA.net. (2005, August 29). *Senatory USA R. Lugar i B. Obama namereny posetit Donetsku oblast v ramkakh programmy utilizatsii boepripasov* [US Senators R. Lugar and B. Obama intend to visit Donetsk region within the ammunition disposal program]. <https://news.liga.net/politics/news/senatory-ssha-r-lugar-i-b-obama-namereny-posetit-donetskuyu-oblast-v-ramkakh-programmy-utilizatsii-b> [in Russian]; UAINFO. (2015, March 11). *Chem zanymalsia Obama v Donetske: foto i yoho lystni spohady* [What Obama did in Donetsk: photos and his personal memories]. <https://uainfo.org/blognews/509035-chem-zanyimalsya-obama-v-donecke-foto-i-ego-lichnye-vospominaniya.html> [in Russian].

²⁵⁴Institute for War & Peace Reporting. (2014, August 4). *Russia's war with Georgia: 2008 timeline*. <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/russias-war-georgia-2008-timeline>; Panfilov, O. (2017, January 4). *Yak Rosiya khotila zakhopyty Hruziyu v 2008 rotsi* [How Russia tried to capture Georgia in 2008]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/columns/olegpanfilov/yak-rosiya-hotila-zahopiti-gruziyu-v-2008-roci-391256.html> [in Ukrainian].

er.²⁵⁵ Unfortunately, Western countries did not respond adequately to the Russian aggression – the imposed sanctions were mostly symbolic. The European Union Commission created to investigate the events of the war even concluded that “Georgia’s actions cannot be justified under international law.”²⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, this gave Russia a free hand in its future plans.

During Yushchenko’s presidency, negotiations began on granting Ukraine visa-free access to European countries. The negotiations continued during Yanukovych’s presidency, and the final agreement was signed under President Poroshenko.

Viktor Yushchenko paid great attention to the restoration of historical memory. In 2006, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory was established, and three years later, the President issued a decree “On the declassification, publication, and study of archival documents related to the Ukrainian liberation movement, political repressions, and famines in Ukraine.” It was during his presidency that the Verkhovna Rada legally recognized the Holodomor of 1932–1933 as a genocide of the Ukrainian people. Yushchenko is justifiably called the “father” of Baturyn – one of the hetman capitals of Ukraine. According to Yushchenko himself, in the summer of 2005 he invited thirty of the wealthiest Ukrainian businessmen to Baturyn and asked them to contribute to restoring the hetman capital.²⁵⁷

During Yushchenko’s presidency, the economy showed fairly dynamic growth, particularly due to favourable international market conditions – rising prices for food, cement, and metal. Over four years, both the gross domestic product and the state budget doubled. This allowed to increase funding of social programs, including a rise in financial assistance for childbirth.

Tensions soon arose within the “Orange Revolution” team, caused by both the ambitions of its leaders and the lack of a clear ideological foundation. Upon becoming the president, Viktor Yushchenko brought Yulia Tymoshenko to power as Prime Minister and appointed Petro Poroshenko as Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council.²⁵⁸ At a press conference on September 5, 2005, Oleksandr Zinchenko, former State Secretary of Ukraine, accused Petro Poroshenko and sev-

²⁵⁵ NV (New Voice). (2023, January 10). *Spasytel'ni komplekсы PVO v viyni 2008 roku. Hruziya vidsutnyaie povernuvaty Ukraini ZRK Buk: chomu i pro yaku tekhniku idet' rech* [Rescue air defense complexes in the 2008 war. Georgia refuses to return the Buk SAM system to Ukraine: why and what equipment is involved]. <https://nv.ua/world/countries/gruziya-ne-vernula-ukraine-pvo-zrk-buk-s-2008-goda-pochemu-novosti-ukrainy-50296589.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁵⁶ Zilhalov, V. (2009, October 1). *Dopovid EU: Ukraina takozh vynna u rozpalyuvanni viiny v Hruzii (yevropeiska presa)* [EU report: Ukraine also responsible for fueling the war in Georgia (European press)]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1841155.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁵⁷ Kyiashko, L. (2024, February 23). *Vidrodzhenyi Baturyn – yak pam'iatnyk: chomu Yushchenka nazivaiut “batkom” hetmans'koi stolytsi. Do 70-richchia tret'oho prezydenta* [Revived Baturyn as a monument: why Yushchenko is called the “father” of the hetman capital. For the 70th birthday of the third president]. Novynarnia. <https://novynarnia.com/2024/02/23/vidrodzhenyj-baturyn-yak-pamyatnyk-chomu-yushhenka-nazyvayut-batkom-getmanskoyi-stolyczi-do-70-richchya-tretogo-prezydenta/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁵⁸ The NSDC – the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine. It is an advisory body to the President of Ukraine and deals with matters of national security and defense.

eral other officials close to the president of corruption. Zinchenko claimed that these individuals used their power for personal gain, creating a clan system and blocking access to the president.²⁵⁹ On September 8, 2005, Yushchenko dismissed the government headed by Tymoshenko, and Poroshenko was also dismissed.²⁶⁰ The conflicts between former allies led to the Party of Regions, led by Viktor Yanukovych, forming the largest faction in the 2006 parliamentary elections. He became the new Prime Minister and held the position from August 2006 to December 2007.

In 2007, Yushchenko dissolved the Verkhovna Rada, citing the unconstitutional method of forming a constitutional majority by including individual deputies instead of entire factions. The Party of Regions used this method in an attempt to secure a parliamentary majority. In the new elections, the Party of Regions received 34.37 %, the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc – 30.71 %, and Our Ukraine – 14.20 %. Yushchenko once again nominated Yulia Tymoshenko for the position of Prime Minister, and she returned to the post.

Against the backdrop of the 2008 economic crisis, relations between the former allies deteriorated again. Tymoshenko criticized Yushchenko for his actions as the president, while he accused her of political manipulation.²⁶¹

In the next presidential election, the former allies became political rivals. Perhaps as a result, Yanukovych came in first in the first round, Tymoshenko second, and Yushchenko placed fifth with 5.45 % of the vote. In the runoff between Tymoshenko and Yanukovych, the latter became the president.

Viktor Yushchenko's presidency gave Ukrainians invaluable experience. On the one hand – while not dramatic, there was economic growth; regular elections accustomed people to democratic institutions; and the focus on national history contributed to the formation of national identity.

At the same time, democracy was reduced to the electoral process, and the necessary reforms – from the judiciary and police to local and central government – were not carried out. The slogans of the Maidan contradicted the everyday lives of Ukrainians, while infighting and lack of unity undermined belief in change and led

²⁵⁹ Radio Svoboda. (2005, September 5). *Derzhsekreter Ukrainy, kolyshniy derzhsekreter Ukrainy Oleksandr Zinchenko zvyuvachuye nayblyzhche ocholennya Viktora Yushchenka u koruptsiyi. Skandal u verkhivtsi vlady, chy matyme vin prodovzhennya?* [Secretary of State of Ukraine, former Secretary of State Oleksandr Zinchenko accuses Viktor Yushchenko's inner circle of corruption. Scandal at the top of power: will it continue?]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/934315.html> [in Ukrainian]; Ukrainska Pravda. (2005, September 5). *Skandal'na pres-konferentsiya Zinchenka* [Scandalous press conference of Zinchenko]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2005/09/5/3012998/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁶⁰ Ukrainska Pravda. (2005, September 9). *Tymoshenko na Interi: "Mene pidstavylo ototchennya Yushchenka"* [Tymoshenko on Inter: "I was set up by Yushchenko's circle"]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2005/09/9/3013223/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁶¹ Radio Svoboda. (2008, December 22). *Yushchenko-Tymoshenko: permanentnyy konflikt pereyshov u vidkrytu viynu?* [Yushchenko-Tymoshenko: permanent conflict turned into open war?] <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1362194.html> [in Ukrainian]; Motyl, O. (2010, June 29). *Ukrainskyi blyuz: skhodzhennya do vlady Yanukovycha, zanepad demokratiyi* [Ukrainian blues: Yanukovych's rise to power, decline of democracy]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/politics/374040-ukrajinskiy-blyuz-shodjennya-do-vlady-yanukovicha-zanepad-demokratiji.htm> [in Ukrainian].

to a resurgence of pro-Russian forces. Let us agree with historian Yaroslav Hrytsak's assessment of Yushchenko's presidency: "Yushchenko had every chance to enter the Ukrainian history books as... a new Mazepa... a great statesman. This did not happen."²⁶²

Viktor Yanukovych served as President of Ukraine from February 25, 2010, to February 22, 2014. Ukrainian journalist Iryna Borovyk described him as follows: "a scandalous politician, leader of the "Donetsk" clan and the Party of Regions, a repeat-offender president who fled from justice to Russia".²⁶³ Yanukovych was in many ways a person with a "post-Soviet" mentality, specifically in its Donetsk variant. For example, in Donbas, serving time in prison was never seen as shameful – it was almost a point of pride. He served two prison sentences – in 1967 and 1970 – and spent about three and a half years behind bars.²⁶⁴ Interestingly, his "youthful sins" did not prevent him from building a career even in Soviet times. Starting in 1976, he became the director of a motor depot, joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1980, and from 1987 held leadership positions related to the coal industry. There is a claim that Yanukovych's rapid career advancement was due to collaboration with the KGB – a version voiced by former Ukrainian MP Hryhoriy Omelchenko.²⁶⁵ However, this information cannot be reliably confirmed today.

Yanukovych's political career began in 1996, when he became the first deputy head of the Donetsk Regional State Administration, and in May 1997 he was appointed the head of the Donetsk region. As already noted, Kuchma's second presidential term was marked by the strengthening of regional industrial and financial clans, especially the "Donetsk" clan. In 2002, Yanukovych, as a representative of this clan, was appointed Prime Minister of Ukraine. In 2003, he was elected the head of the Party of Regions, and the following year he was nominated as a presidential candidate. After losing the election to Yushchenko, Yanukovych moved into the opposition and became a member of parliament in 2006. Thanks to the formation of the so-called "anti-crisis" coalition (together with the Socialists and Communists), his candidacy was submitted for the post of Prime Minister. Yanukovych held this post until November 2007, when Tymoshenko once again became Prime Minister.

²⁶² Hrytsak, Ya. (2024). *Slabkist' Yushchenka / Pomylyky Poroshenka / Populizm Zelenskoho* [Yushchenko's weaknesses / Poroshenko's mistakes / Zelensky's populism] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTowQERUiBA> [in Ukrainian].

²⁶³ Borovyk, I. (2021, September 14). *Yanukovych Viktor. Ukrainskyi polityk, kryminálnyk pry vladi, prezident-utičak* [Viktor Yanukovych. Ukrainian politician, criminal in power, runaway president]. Parlament.ua. <https://parlament.ua/dossier/yanukovich-viktor/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁶⁴ Gazeta.ua. (2018, December 15). *Yanukovycha v tiur'mi nazyvaly khamom: eks-prezydent sel v 17 rokiv* [Yanukovych was called a rude person in prison: former president jailed at 17]. https://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/politics/_anukovicha-v-tyurme-nazyvali-hamom-eksprezydent-sel-v-17-let/875043 [in Russian].

²⁶⁵ Gordonua. (2017, November 14). *Omelchenko: general KDB rozpoviv meni, yak vin buv kuratorom Yanukovycha i yak yoho verbuval* [Omelchenko: KGB general told me how he supervised Yanukovych and recruited him]. <https://gordonua.com/ukr/news/politics/-omelchenko-general-kdb-rozpoviv-meni-jak-vin-buv-kuratorom-janukovicha-i-jak-jogo-verbuval-217257.html> [in Ukrainian].

In 2010, Yanukovych defeated Tymoshenko in the second round and became President of Ukraine.²⁶⁶

After becoming the president, he managed to gain control over the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, the Supreme Court, and the High Council of Justice. In October 2010, the Constitutional Court reinstated the 1996 Constitution, overturning the results of the 2004 constitutional reform – even though such a decision could only legally be made by the Verkhovna Rada.²⁶⁷

In domestic politics, Ukraine began drifting from democracy toward authoritarianism. The arrest and conviction of Yulia Tymoshenko – a former rival in the presidential race – was seen by many as the beginning of political persecution. However, it more likely reflected the sentiment once expressed by a Latin American politician: “For friends – everything, for enemies – the law.”²⁶⁸

In foreign policy, Yanukovych formally appeared to return to a “multi-vector” approach, while simultaneously making several important concessions to Moscow.²⁶⁹ In April 2010, the so-called Kharkiv Accords were signed. In exchange for a gas price discount valid until 2042, the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on Ukrainian territory was extended.²⁷⁰ From a geopolitical standpoint, this agreement significantly strengthened Russia’s position in the Black Sea region and its influence over Ukraine.

Pro-Russian views were also characteristic of Yanukovych’s inner circle. For example, Prime Minister Mykola Azarov emphasized the importance of the Customs Union as an economic market for Ukraine.²⁷¹ The head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), Oleksandr Yakymenko, was formerly a citizen of the Russian Federation.²⁷² At that time, the Ministers of Defence were Mykhailo Yezhel (2010–2012), Dmytro

²⁶⁶Borovyk, I. (2021, September 14). *Yanukovych Viktor: Ukrainskyi polityk, kryminálnyk pry vladi, prezident-utičak* [Viktor Yanukovych. Ukrainian politician, criminal in power, runaway president]. Parliament.ua. <https://parlament.ua/dossier/yanukovich-viktor/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁶⁷Ibid.

²⁶⁸This phrase is attributed to former President of Peru, Óscar Benavides.

²⁶⁹Yeremytsa, V. (2011, February 23). *Ukraina za Yanukovycha: yakym buv pershyi rik prezidentstva?* [Ukraine under Yanukovych: What was the first year of presidency like?]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/2318611.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁷⁰Motyl, O. (2010, June 29). *Ukrainskyi blyuz: skhodzhennia do vlady Yanukovycha, zanepad demokratii* [Ukrainian blues: Yanukovych’s rise to power, the decline of democracy]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/politics/374040-ukrajinskyi-blyuz-shodjennia-do-vlady-yanukovicha-zanepad-demokratiji.htm> [in Ukrainian]; Deynega, V. (2018, March 23). *Istoriia hazovyykh viin Ukrainy: koli vse pochalosia ta chym zakinchytsia* [The history of Ukraine’s gas wars: When it began and how it will end]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/istoriya_gazovih_viy_n_ukrayini_koli_vse_pochalosya_ta_chym_zakinchytsia_n942253 [in Ukrainian]; Borovyk, I. (2021, September 14). *Yanukovych Viktor: Ukrainskyi polityk, kryminálnyk pry vladi, prezident-utikach* [Viktor Yanukovych. Ukrainian politician, criminal in power, fugitive president]. Parliament.ua. <https://parlament.ua/dossier/yanukovich-viktor/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁷¹Radio Svoboda. (2013, June 5). *Bez Mytnoho soiuzu ukraintsi zalyshat’sia bez roboty – Azarov* [Without the Customs Union, Ukrainians will be left without work – Azarov]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25007539.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁷²Shersten, A. (2023, November 30). *Ivan Babenko i Denys Ivanov, prokurory u “spravakh Maidanu”. Yanukovych dav vkazivku Zakharchenku striliaty po mitinhualnykakh blyzko 7-i ranku 20 liutoho* [Ivan Babenko and Denys Ivanov, prosecutors in the Maidan cases. Yanukovych ordered Zakharchenko to shoot protesters around 7 a.m. on February 20]. Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3793583-ivan-babenko-i-denis-ivanov-prokurori-u-spravah-majdanu.html> [in Ukrainian].

Salamatin (2012), and Pavlo Lebedev (2012–2014). Since 2015, Mykhailo Yezhel has been residing in Belarus.²⁷³ Lebedev, who obtained Ukrainian citizenship in 2005, fled Ukraine even before Yanukovich's resignation and aided Russia in the seizure of Crimea.²⁷⁴ In 2020–2022, criminal proceedings were initiated against all former defence ministers on suspicion of treason. Vladimir Sivkovich, Deputy Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council (2010–2013),²⁷⁵ and Andriy Klyuyev, Head of the Presidential Administration in 2014, were also suspected of cooperating with the FSB.²⁷⁶

A key agent of Russian influence was Viktor Medvedchuk, whose political rise occurred from 2002 to 2005, when he headed President Kuchma's Administration. Medvedchuk actively supported the idea of federalizing Ukraine and maintained close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Interestingly, Yanukovich was in active contact with Medvedchuk on February 20, 2014 – the day of the shootings on Instytutska Street.²⁷⁷

Incidentally, it was during Yanukovich's presidency that Ukraine lost its status as a country capable of quickly restoring its nuclear weapons. After the signing of the Budapest Memorandum, Ukraine retained a certain amount of highly enriched uranium – enough to create several (at least two) atomic bombs. It was assumed that the uranium was retained for scientific research purposes. During Yanukovich's visit to the U.S. and his meeting with Barack Obama, Kyiv agreed to dispose of these reserves by 2012. In an official U.S. statement: "President Obama acknowledged Ukraine's unique contribution to nuclear disarmament and assured that the security guarantees provided under the Budapest Memorandum of December 5, 1994, remain in force." In December 2010, under the agreement with the U.S., 21 containers with more than 50 kg of highly enriched uranium were transported to Russia.²⁷⁸

²⁷³ Thinktanks.by. (2018, June 19). *Byvshyi posol Ukrainy Mykhail Ezhel stal bezhentsem v Belarusi* [Former Ukrainian ambassador Mykhail Ezhel became a refugee in Belarus]. <https://thinktanks.by/publication/2018/07/19/byvshiy-posol-ukrainy-mihail-ezhel-stal-bezhentsem-v-belarusi.html> [in Russian].

²⁷⁴ Ohneva, M. (2025, March 21). "*Dobroporiadnyi*" kryvavyi investor. Yak Rosiia rozplatylasia z eksministrom oborony Ukrainy ["Respectable" bloody investor. How Russia paid off the ex-Minister of Defense of Ukraine]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/publications/dobroporjadnij-krivavij-investor-jak-rosija-rozplatylasja-z-eksministrom-oboroni-jakij-zradiv-ukrajinu-1050264.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁷⁵ Zolotukhin, D. (2023, July 31). *Volodymyr Sivkovich – biografiia. 30 rokiv zrady. Chastyna persha* [Volodymyr Sivkovich – biography. 30 years of betrayal. Part one]. Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3742699-volodimir-sivkovic-biografia-30-rokiv-zradi-castina-persa.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁷⁶ Finance.ua. (2025, April 12). *RNBO zaprovyyv sankcii proty nyzky biznesmeniv i eksvysokoposadovciv* [The NSDC imposed sanctions on a number of businessmen and former high officials]. <https://news.finance.ua/ua/rnbo-zaprovadyla-sankcii-proty-nyzky-biznesmeniv-i-eksvysokoposadovciv> [in Ukrainian].

²⁷⁷ Ukrinform. (2023, February 18). *Yanukovich aktyvno spilkuvavsia z Medvedchukom pid chas rozstriliv na Maidani – prokuror* [Yanukovich actively communicated with Medvedchuk during the shootings on Maidan – prosecutor]. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3671965-anukovic-aktivno-spilkuvavsia-z-medvedchukom-pid-cas-rozstriliv-na-majdani-prokuror.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁷⁸ Ukrainska Pravda. (2010, April 12). *Yanukovich zdav ostannii zbroiovyi uran* [Yanukovich handed over the last weapons-grade uranium]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2010/04/12/4931460/> [in Ukrainian]; BBC News Ukraina. (2010, December 31). *Ukraina vyvezla ponad 50 kg uranu do Rosii* [Ukraine exported more than 50 kg of uranium to Russia]. https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news/2010/12/101231_uranium_ukr_is [in Ukrainian].

At the same time, the army was being massively downsized and weapons were being sold off. For example, in my city, Chernihiv, almost all military units had been disbanded by 2013. Some of their territories were sold in 2012 to Yanukovych's son for cottage development.²⁷⁹ Among other things, the railway track leading to nearby weapons storage facilities was dismantled.

Russia made every effort to strengthen its influence, including offering Ukraine to join the Customs Union, but Yanukovych avoided giving a direct answer. At the same time, pro-government media continued to speculate on the European integration vector, and preparations were underway to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013.²⁸⁰ For example, in his speech dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, Yanukovych stated: "The European choice has become the foundation of Ukraine's foreign policy identity, and European values – the basis of our development... We want to join the great European project – building a united Europe based on the values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law."²⁸¹ Whether he actually believed in this speech written for him is doubtful. More likely, he saw "multi-vector policy" as a chance to balance between Moscow and Europe, while simultaneously turning Ukraine into his own personal domain.

When Ukraine's Constitution was adopted in 1996, it is unlikely that then-President Kuchma imagined that the presidency could be taken over by a "businessman" who would use it for personal enrichment, as Kuchma saw himself more as an "arbiter".²⁸² But Yanukovych began to take control of the most profitable sectors of the economy, primarily the oil and gas industry. It is believed that one of his "money men" was the newly created oligarch Serhiy Kurchenko, who was the formal owner of these assets.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Moe misto – Chernihiv. (2012, December 3). *Mer Chernihova Oleksandr Sokolov prodav synu Yanukovycha zemli chernihivskoho polka zviazku?* [Mayor of Chernihiv Oleksandr Sokolov sold land of Chernihiv communications regiment to Yanukovych's son?]. <https://map.cn.ua/uk/news/7647/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁸⁰ Borovyk, I. (2021, September 14). *Yanukovych Viktor: Ukrainskyi polityk, kryminálnyk pry vladi, prezident-utikach* [Viktor Yanukovych. Ukrainian politician, criminal in power, fugitive president]. Parliament.ua. <https://parlament.ua/dossier/yanukovich-viktor/> [in Ukrainian].

²⁸¹ Yanukovych, V. (2011, August 24). *Zvernennia Prezydenta Ukrainy Viktora Yanukovycha do ukrainskykh hromadian z nahody 20-ii richnytsi Nezalezhnosti Ukrainy* [Address of the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych to Ukrainian citizens on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Ukraine's Independence] [Archived version]. President of Ukraine. <https://web.archive.org/web/20111106161015/http://www.president.gov.ua/news/20998.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁸² However, this did not stop him from facilitating the business development of his son-in-law, Viktor Pinchuk, who in 2004 purchased Ukraine's largest metallurgical enterprise – "Kryvorizhstal" – for \$800 million. Later, the deal was declared invalid, the enterprise was re-auctioned and sold to Mittal Steel for \$4.8 billion. See: Holos Ameryky. (2004, June 14). *Viktor Pinchuk kupyv Kryvorizhstal* [Viktor Pinchuk bought Kryvorizhstal]. <https://www.holosameryky.com/a/a-49-a-2004-06-14-5-2-86969652/224804.html> [in Ukrainian]; BBC News Ukraina. (2005, October 24). *Mittal Steel kupyla Kryvorizhstal* [Mittal Steel bought Kryvorizhstal]. https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/domestic/story/2005/10/051024_kryvorizhstal_sold [in Ukrainian].

²⁸³ Strus, H. (2024, November 14). *Yoho nazyvaly "hamantsem" Yanukovycha: de zaraz oliharkh Kurchenko i shcho pro noho vidomo* [He was called "Yanukovych's wallet": Where is oligarch Kurchenko now and what is known about him]. Telegraf News. <https://news.telegraf.com.ua/ukr/ukraina/2024-11-14/5886164-yogonazivali-gamantsem-yanukovicha-de-zaraz-oligarkh-kurchenko-i-shcho-pro-nogo-vidomo> [in Ukrainian].

At the last moment, Yanukovich refused to sign the Association Agreement with the EU, which triggered the start of the Euromaidan movement in the centre of Kyiv. On the night of November 30, 2013, the Berkut special unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was deployed to disperse the Euromaidan protest. The main participants in the protest were young people, and the Euromaidan demonstrations were peaceful. Despite this, the dispersal was extremely violent – people were thrown to the ground, beaten with rubber batons and kicked. All of this was recorded by journalists, and the footage was broadcast by many TV channels the following morning. On December 1, more than a million Ukrainians gathered on the country's central square, Maidan Nezalezhnosti, to protest against the government's actions,²⁸⁴ which eventually led to its overthrow.

It seems that the violent dispersal of student youth on the night of November 30 was part of a Russian intelligence operation aimed at pressuring the then-Ukrainian government. The beginning of this special operation can be traced back at least to the late 1990s. The goal was to anchor Ukraine within the Russian sphere of influence – either through “Belarusization” (preserving formal attributes of statehood while remaining dependent on Russia) or through the outright elimination of Ukraine as a sovereign country. Visible events of this process included the “cassette scandal”, which buried Kuchma's political career and led to the collapse of an already superficial pro-European course, the poisoning of Yushchenko, attempts to federalize Ukraine during the Orange Revolution, and so on.

The events of 2013–2014 were preceded by a years-long anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign conducted under the slogans of fighting “fascism”. In general, the labelling of opponents as fascists is characteristic of both Soviet and contemporary Russian propaganda. In the 1930s, nearly all “bourgeois” European countries were labelled as fascist – from Lithuania and Finland to the United Kingdom and France. The phrase “fascist Germany” became a standard expression, even though the ideology that ruled Germany at the time was not fascism but Nazism. At that time, the only truly fascist country was Mussolini's Italy.

“Anti-fascist” rhetoric was first actively used in Ukraine during the 2004 elections, following guidance from Russian political strategists. During Viktor Yushchenko's visit to Donetsk in October 2003, he was met with billboards depicting him in a caricatured form with Nazi symbols.²⁸⁵ At the same time, the concept of di-

²⁸⁴ According to the investigation, the decision to disperse the student Maidan by force was made by V. Yanukovich himself. See: Ukrainska Pravda. (2019, April 5). “*Kurchenko heit*”: *prokuratura kazhe, shcho posyluie robotu u spravi oliharkha* [“Kurchenko gate”: Prosecutor's office says it is stepping up work in the oligarch's case]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2019/04/5/7211421/> [in Ukrainian]. Shershen, A. (2023, November 30). *Ivan Babenko i Denys Ivanov, prokurory u “spravakh Maidanu”. Yanukovich dav vkazivku Zakharchenku striliaty po mitinhualnykakh blyzko 7-ii ranku 20 liutoho* [Ivan Babenko and Denys Ivanov, prosecutors in the Maidan cases. Yanukovich ordered Zakharchenko to shoot protesters around 7 a.m. on February 20]. Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3793583-ivan-babenko-i-denis-ivanov-prokurori-u-spravah-majdanu.html> [in Ukrainian].

²⁸⁵ Ukrainska Pravda. (2005, February 17). *Donetski deputaty vyznylysia pered Yushchenko* [Donetsk deputies apologized to Yushchenko]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2005/02/17/4385763/> [in Russian].



Election leaflet, 2013

Yanukovych – Gleb Pavlovsky, a supporter of violently dispersing the Maidan protests.²⁸⁷ Interestingly, between 2011 and 2013, so-called “anti-fascist” rallies and other similar events were held in Ukraine under the aegis of the Party of Regions. For example, in October 2011, a so-called “International Anti-Fascist Congress” was planned, with participants including representatives of the Communist Parties of Ukraine and Russia.²⁸⁸ Civil servants and students were forced to attend the rallies. There was such a rally in Chernihiv as well; by the way, I didn’t let my students attend it, offering them the choice – either stay for the lesson or go protest against some unknown “fascism”. In May 2013, a 40,000-strong “anti-fascist” rally under the banner of the Party of Regions took place in Kyiv. The event was held under the slogan: “To Europe – without fascists.”²⁸⁹

At the same time, propaganda began to actively use the so-called “St. George’s ribbon” – a Russian two-coloured ribbon with three black and two yellow horizontal stripes. The ribbon resembled its Soviet counterpart – the Guards ribbon. It’s hard to disagree with the opinion expressed back in 2011 by journalist Pavlo Pushchenko: “The St. George’s ribbon is an imperial syndrome, a means of Russian geopolitical

²⁸⁶ Rukh CHESNO. (2022, April 6). *Pamiataete skandalnu lystivku pro try sorty ukrainsiv?* [Remember the scandalous leaflet about three sorts of Ukrainians?] [Facebook post]. https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=5365693476803650&id=278157378890644&set=a.281241881915527&locale=ru_RU [in Ukrainian].

²⁸⁷ Korrespondent. (2004, December 7). “*Revoliutsii vovremia ne dali v mordu*”. *Interviu Hleba Pavlovskoho* [“Revolutions were not punched in time.” Interview with Gleb Pavlovsky]. <https://korrespondent.net/world/worldabus/108656-ng-revoluyicii-vovremya-ne-dali-v-mordu-intervyu-gleba-pavlovskogo> [in Russian]; Kramatorsk.info. (2012, January 27). *Fil'm Bi-bi-si: Putin buv hotov zupynyty “oranzhevu revoliutsiiu” syloiu* [BBC film: Putin was ready to stop the “Orange Revolution” by force]. <https://www.kramatorsk.info/view/113294> [in Ukrainian].

²⁸⁸ Ukrainska Pravda. (2011, October 26). *Vo L'vovi zapretyly antyfasystskiy kongres iz-za Yanukovycha* [Antifascist congress banned in Lviv because of Yanukovych]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2011/10/26/6706519/> [in Russian].

²⁸⁹ BBC Russkaia sluzhba. (2013, May 18). *V Kyieve proshly dva mnogotysyachnykh mytynha* [Two mass rallies took place in Kyiv]. https://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2013/05/130518_ukraine_rallies [in Russian].

influence through certain symbols.”²⁹⁰ It’s no coincidence that this symbol became emblematic of Russian aggression in 2014.

“Historical memory” was also enlisted in the service of Russian propaganda.²⁹¹ After 2012, when the “Immortal Regiment” campaign was first held in Russia, the Russian authorities quickly realized its powerful potential and began promoting it both domestically and abroad. The campaign’s essential attributes included Soviet and imperial symbols, portraits of Stalin, and so on.²⁹²

As previously mentioned, modern Russian propaganda continues to actively label others as “fascists”. For example, before Russia’s 2008 invasion, Georgia was labeled as fascist.²⁹³ The information campaign about a war against Georgian “fascists” continues to this day.²⁹⁴ In the eyes of Russian propagandists and their satellites in Transnistria, fascism is being cultivated in Moldova. Here are some titles of propaganda materials: “Moldova – stronghold of national fascism, state terrorism and American globalism,” “Why Moldova voted in the UN to glorify Nazism”, “Moldovan children are taught to honour Romanian fascists”.²⁹⁵ Currently, according to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), the Kremlin is creating an informational foundation for a new aggression against former Soviet republics and Finland, which have joined NATO. Accusations of Nazism are a common tactic used by the Russian Federation to justify its aggres-

²⁹⁰ Pushchenko, P. (2016, May 9). *Tse post pro tendentsii* [This is a post about trends] [Facebook post]. <https://www.facebook.com/pavlo.pushchenko/posts/pfbid028TFxUaKa9dkPQSyZHWjLRWbU4hb5-BqrGvvrnbr77qqfY5a8GTn3ZuaLuTunBASYbl> [in Ukrainian].

²⁹¹ “Historical memory” should be understood both as real memory of events passed down within families and society over a certain period (typically no more than three generations), and as historiographical and political concepts, including historical myths formed long after the actual events.

²⁹² Zholobovych, I. (2019, May 9). “*Bessmertnyi polk*” v Ukraine: kak lokalizovat opasnuiu dlia gosudarstva aktsiiu [“Immortal Regiment” in Ukraine: how to localize a state-dangerous action]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/ru/bessmertnyj_pol_k_v_ukraine_kak_lokalizovat_opasnuju_dlja_gosudarstva_akciju_n1150862 [in Russian].

²⁹³ Zhirinovskii, V. (2007, September 28). *Vladimir Zhirinovskii: “Gruzinskii fashizm segodnia nalitso*” [Vladimir Zhirinovsky: “Georgian fascism is evident today”]. REGNUM. <https://regnum.ru/news/892089> [in Russian].

²⁹⁴ Politforumi. (2017, June 16). *Av gust 2008 goda: govorit gruzinskii narod!* [August 2008: The Georgian people speak!]. <https://politforumi.com/ru/aktualnaya-tem/2008-tslis-agvisto-laparakobs-kartvelikhalkhi-video-2> [in Russian]; LES.media. (2022, May 20). *Idei natsizma i fashizma v Gruzii ne umirali nikogda: Zarskaia tragediia* [Ideas of Nazism and fascism in Georgia never died: Zarskaya tragedy]. <https://les.media/articles/301299-idei-natsizma-i-fashizma-v-gruzii-ne-umirali-nikogda-zarskaya-tragediia> [in Russian].

²⁹⁵ REGNUM. (2009, February 26). *Moldaviia – oplot natsional-fashizma, gosudarstvennogo terrorizma i amerikanskogo globalizma: Pridnestrov’e za nedeliu* [Moldova – stronghold of national fascism, state terrorism and American globalism: Transnistria in a week]. <https://regnum.ru/article/1129645> [in Russian]; Partiia komunistiv Respubliki Moldova. (2024, November 13). *Pochemu Moldova v OON progolosovala za geroizatsiiu natsizma* [Why Moldova voted for the heroization of Nazism at the UN]. https://perm.md/ru/novosti/view/pochemu_moldova_v_oon_progolosovala_zh_geroizatsiiu_natsizma [in Russian]; Nezavisimaya Gazeta. (2025, February 19). *Moldavskikh detei uchat uvazhat rumynskikh fashistov* [Moldovan children are taught to respect Romanian fascists]. https://www.ng.ru/cis/2025-02-19/5_9196_moldova.html [in Russian].

sion.²⁹⁶ Russia also accuses EU countries and even Canada of promoting neo-fascism. According to Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov: “Russia will continue to fight manifestations of neo-Nazism and discrimination. We are particularly concerned about the rise of such sentiments in Ukraine, as well as in the EU, including the Baltics, and in Canada, where Ukrainian nationalists who fled justice in the 1940s reside... We will devote constant attention to uniting international efforts to combat all forms of neo-Nazism, Russophobia, and other types of racial and religious intolerance.”²⁹⁷

Accusations of neo-fascism became one of the main justifications for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, when Putin called Ukraine a neo-fascist state and named “denazification” as one of the main goals of the war.²⁹⁸

The Return of Europe

Returning to the night events of November 30, 2013, let us once again focus on the disproportionate brutality used to disperse the peaceful protest and the society’s expected response. About 400 protesters were present on Independence Square, who were surrounded in the morning by around 2,000 police officers. The official reason for the operation was the “clearing of the area for setting up the New Year tree”. At least 79 people were injured in the beating, and 35 participants were detained by the police.²⁹⁹ Footage of the student crackdown was shown on all major TV channels, and the next day a million-strong protest took place in Kyiv. It is worth noting that back in 2010, political scientist Alexander Motyl had pointed out the existence of protest potential: “Faced with growing popular resistance, Yanukovych may try to

²⁹⁶Berendii, Yu. (2025, April 21). *V Kreml “zlyly” novi plany shchodo viiny: v ISW poiasnyly, do choho hotuiut rosiian* [New war plans “leaked” in the Kremlin: ISW explained what Russians are being prepared for]. Glavred. https://glavred.net/war/v-kreml-slili-novye-plany-po-voyne-v-isw-obyasnili-k-chemu-gotoviyat-rossiyan-10657769.html?utm_source=ukrnet_news [in Ukrainian].

²⁹⁷Rline.tv. (2025, February 19). *Lavrov: RF bespokoit vsplesk neonatsizma na Ukraine, v EU i Kanade* [Lavrov: Russia is concerned about the surge of neo-Nazism in Ukraine, EU and Canada]. <https://www.rline.tv/news/2025-02-19-lavrov-rf-bespokoit-vsplesk-neonatsizma-na-ukraine-v-es-i-kanade/> [in Russian].

²⁹⁸EUvsDisinfo. (2022, September 20). *Kliuchevye narrativy prokremlievskoi dezinformatsii: “NATSISTY”* [Key narratives of pro-Kremlin disinformation: “NAZIS”]. <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/ru/ключевые-нарративы-прокремлевской-д-6/> [in Russian]; Meduza. (2022, February 28). *Putin nazyvaet ukrainskikh liderov natsistami, a sobytiia v Donbasse – genotsidom. Eto nepravda. Zaivlenie issledovatelei natsizma, genotsida, Kholokosta i Vtoroi mirovoi* [Putin calls Ukrainian leaders Nazis, and events in Donbas a genocide. This is false. Statement of researchers on Nazism, genocide, Holocaust, and WWII]. <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/02/28/putin-nazyvaet-ukrainskikh-liderov-natsistami-a-sobytiya-v-donbasse-genotsidom-eto-nepravda> [in Russian].

²⁹⁹Shepel, I. (2023, November 30). *Desiat rokiv tomu vidbuvsia rozhin Maidanu: skilky prychetnykh prytiahnuły do vidpovidalnosti i shcho zi spravamy Sivkovycha i Kliuieva* [Ten years ago, the Maidan dispersal happened: how many involved were held accountable and what about Sivkovych’s and Kliuyev’s cases]. Obozrevatel. <https://war.obozrevatel.com/ukr/desyat-rokiv-tomu-vidbuvsya-rozhin-majdanu-skilki-prichetnih-prityagnuli-do-vidpovidalnosti-i-scho-zi-spravami-sivkovicha-j-klyueva.htm> [in Ukrainian].

use repression against dissenters. But such a step will most likely lead to violence and destabilize Ukraine.”³⁰⁰

The confrontation with the authorities lasted for three months. According to sociological studies, about 20 % of the country’s population participated in the events of Euromaidan throughout Ukraine: 5 % were involved directly in Kyiv; 6 % in other localities; and 9 % provided various forms of support to the protesters. Residents of Central and Western Ukraine were the most active participants, while those from the South and East were less involved.³⁰¹

The situation in Kyiv gradually escalated. In January, the first blood of Euromaidan activists was shed.³⁰² Confrontations began on Hrushevsky Street, with protesters on one side and security forces on the other. Additionally, the government organized the so-called Anti-Maidan, gathering its supporters.

On February 18, 2014, an attempt was made to forcibly disperse the Maidan, the protesters began to resist.³⁰³ The situation escalated, reaching its peak with the shooting of unarmed protesters by law enforcement officers, which was broadcast live. On February 20, 48 people were killed. Later, all those killed on the Maidan became known as the Heavenly Hundred. According to investigators, all the events of February 18–20 took place with the knowledge of Yanukovich, and it was with his consent that the heads of law enforcement acted.³⁰⁴

Fearing the escalation of the conflict, Yanukovich signed an agreement on February 21 to return to the norms of the 2004 Constitution, form a coalition government, and hold early elections.³⁰⁵ That same day, security forces withdrew from the government quarter and central Kyiv. The Verkhovna Rada voted to reinstate the provisions of the 2004 Constitution.

³⁰⁰ Motyl, O. (2010, June 29). *Ukrainskyi blyuz: skhodzhennia do vlady Yanukovycha, zanepad demokratii* [Ukrainian blues: Yanukovich’s rise to power, decline of democracy]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/politics/374040-ukrajinskiy-blyuz-shodjennya-do-vladi-yanukovicha-zanepad-demokratiji.htm> [in Ukrainian].

³⁰¹ Kutsenko, Ye. (2015). Rehionalna dyferentsiatsiia elektoralnoho prostoru Ukrainy: aspekt vyborchykh tekhnolohii [Regional differentiation of Ukraine’s electoral space: aspect of electoral technologies]. *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I.F.Kurasa NAN Ukrainy*, (2), 209–223.

³⁰² Fedchenko, A., & Chepurko, V. (2015, January 22). *Raskryt ubiistvo Nyhoiana, pershoho ubytoho na Hrushivskoho, praktychno nemozhlyvo* [Solving the murder of Nyhoian, the first killed on Hrushevskyi, is practically impossible]. KP.ua. <https://kp.ua/politics/487182-ubyistvo-nyhoiana-ny-ulyk-ny-svydetelei> [in Russian].

³⁰³ Shershen, A. (2023, November 30). *Ivan Babenko i Denys Ivanov, prokurory u “spravakh Maidanu”. Yanukovich dav vkazivku Zakharchenku striliaty po mitinhualnykh blyzko 7-i ranku 20 liutoho* [Ivan Babenko and Denys Ivanov, prosecutors in the Maidan cases. Yanukovich ordered Zakharchenko to shoot protesters around 7 a.m. on February 20]. Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3793583-ivan-babenko-i-denis-ivanov-prokurori-u-spravah-majdanu.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Digital Maidan. (n.d.). *Khronolohiia Revoliutsii Hidnosti* [Chronology of the Revolution of Dignity]. <https://digitalmaidan.org/history/history-maidan/hronologija-revoliuciji-gidnosti> [in Ukrainian]; Borovyk, I. (2021, September 14). *Yanukovich Viktor: Ukrainskyi polityk, kryminálnyk pry vladi, prezident-utikach* [Viktor Yanukovich. Ukrainian politician, criminal in power, fugitive president]. Parlament.ua. <https://parlament.ua/dossier/yanukovich-viktor/> [in Ukrainian].

Interestingly, during those days, the central (and therefore still pro-government) TV channels in Ukraine began broadcasting reports that the protesters had seized key government buildings – the Cabinet of Ministers, the Verkhovna Rada, etc. This information was broadcast in sync with similar Russian news reports. The viewer was meant to perceive complete anarchy in Kyiv, a total loss of control over events, further bloodshed, chaos, looting, and so on. In the following days, edited videos emerged showing the escalation of violence. A similar video was made about Chernihiv,³⁰⁶ although nothing of the sort had happened there – the footage with gunfire was actually taken from the shooting on Instytutska Street in Kyiv.

The synchronized and biased presentation of information suggests that this was a planned information operation by Russian intelligence services. The investigation into the Maidan shootings noted that from December 2013 to February 2014, FSB officers regularly came to Kyiv under the pretense of providing so-called assistance. At least twenty such visits were documented; six of the visitors held general ranks, including the former head of the Russian president's security service, Viktor Zolotov.³⁰⁷ Between February 18–20, Yanukovich spoke with Putin 11 times. During the same days, V. Zakharchenko had 12 communications with Russian Interior Minister V. Kolokoltsev, and SBU head O. Yakymenko spoke three times with FSB director A. Bortnikov.³⁰⁸

In reality, none of the government institutions were seized by protesters; the Cabinet of Ministers was guarded by Maidan participants, and a session of the Verkhovna Rada was held, allowing the situation to be brought into the legal realm. Surprisingly, some members of the Party of Regions faction played a role by declaring their withdrawal from the faction. Most likely, Ukraine was saved at that time from the beginning of a full-scale Russian aggression, which was initially limited to Crimea and later extended to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

On February 22, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Volodymyr Rybak resigned, and Oleksandr Turchynov was elected as speaker. Members of Parliament voted to remove Viktor Yanukovich from the office of President of Ukraine. On February 27, 2014, Yanukovich, who had fled to Russia, declared that he considered the decisions of the Verkhovna Rada to be illegal.³⁰⁹ To this day, Russian propaganda attempts to portray these events as a coup d'état, although in Ukraine they are rightly called the Revolution of Dignity – when Ukrainians rose up against the usurpation of power and the violation of human rights.

³⁰⁶ Unfortunately, this video has now been removed from all platforms.

³⁰⁷ Shershen, A. (2023, November 30). *Ivan Babenko i Denys Ivanov, prokurory u "spravakh Maidanu". Yanukovich dav vказivku Zakharchenku striliaty po mitinhualnykakh blyzko 7-ii ranku 20 liutoho* [Ivan Babenko and Denys Ivanov, prosecutors in the Maidan cases. Yanukovich ordered Zakharchenko to shoot protesters around 7 a.m. on February 20]. Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3793583-ivan-babenko-i-denis-ivanov-prokurori-u-spravah-majdanu.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Borovyk, I. (2021, September 14). *Yanukovich Viktor. Ukrainskyi polityk, kryminálnyk pry vladi, prezident-utikach* [Viktor Yanukovich. Ukrainian politician, criminal in power, fugitive president]. Parlament. ua. <https://parlament.ua/dossier/yanukovich-viktor/> [in Ukrainian].

Against the backdrop of events in Kyiv, the Russian Federation moved to seize Crimea, a move that had been prepared since at least December 2013, when the Russian Ministry of Defense announced a tender for the production of the “For the Return of Crimea” medals. Two contracts with the “Moshtamp” factory were signed on December 17 and 30, 2013. Although Russia later denied the existence of the award, its presence is confirmed by numerous documents, videos, and photo evidence.³¹⁰ The medal itself bears two dates: 20.02.14 – 18.03.14. Therefore, while snipers were shooting protesters in Kyiv, the Russian operation in Crimea was already underway. It is worth noting that on February 20, Yanukovych was still in Kyiv and was acting as President of Ukraine.



The Russian Medal
“For the Return of Crimea”.

On the eve of the annexation of Crimea, Russia conducted a large-scale readiness check of its armed forces, and unannounced military exercises were held near Ukraine’s borders. There is a well-founded claim that these exercises served as a cover for the beginning of war.³¹¹

On February 23, a mass rally took place in Sevastopol, where calls for separation from Ukraine were voiced. Pro-Russian sentiments were indeed widespread in Crimea. The reasons for this included both the inconsistency and political miscalculations of Kyiv, and Russia’s long-standing, systematic propaganda campaign. Since the 1990s, Russia actively exploited pseudo-historical Russian myths, emphasizing the alleged illegitimacy of Crimea’s transfer to the Ukrainian SSR, Khrushchev’s voluntarism, and so on. With the creation of the concept of the “Russian World”, propaganda promoting a special “Russian identity” and “pan-Slavic unity” came to the forefront. Ukrainians were portrayed as Banderites-nationalists, and Banderites were equated with fascists.³¹²

³¹⁰ Forum pravda.com.ua. (2021, March 29). *MO RF ob'явило tender na izgotovlenie medalei "Za Krym" v dekabre 2013* [Russian Ministry of Defense announced a tender for the production of “For Crimea” medals in December 2013]. <https://forum.pravda.com.ua/index.php?topic=1097028.msg25185095#msg25185095> [in Russian]; Drachuk, S., Kates, G., & Krym.Realii. (2014, April 26). *Tainá medal "Za povernennia Krymu"* [Secret medal “For the Return of Crimea”]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25363506.html> [in Ukrainian].

³¹¹ Aksenov, P. (2022, February 15). *Ihra muskulamy. Chasto li Rossiia zbyrala voienni hrupuvannia, sravnymye s nyneshnymy?* [Muscle flexing. How often has Russia assembled military groupings comparable to the current ones?]. BBC Russkaia sluzhba. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-60377472> [in Russian].

³¹² Turanskyi, M. (2017). Propahandystska kampaniia Rosii u pidhotovtsi do aneksii Krymskoho pivostrova [Russian propaganda campaign in preparation for the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula]. *Vyskovo-istorychnyi meridian. Elektronnyi naukovi fakhovi zhurnal*, (3(17)), 67–80 [in Ukrainian].

On February 23, Russian Black Sea Fleet checkpoints appeared on the approaches to Sevastopol. Numerous Russian paramilitary formations were brought into Crimea, along with active Russian agents and soldiers disguised in civilian clothing. These forces formed the so-called “Crimean self-defence”. On the night of February 27, Russian special forces seized the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. According to Igor Girkin, a Russian FSB operative who actively participated in those events, members of the Crimean parliament were “rounded up” to hold a vote on secession from Ukraine: “Militiamen (*opolchentsi*)³¹³ gathered the deputies to force them into the hall to adopt (the referendum resolution – I.K.). And I was one of the commanders of those militiamen.” According to him, the Crimean authorities and law enforcement agencies “did not side with the population”, but continued – albeit reluctantly – to follow orders from Kyiv. The only notable force to side with Russia was the Crimean unit of Berkut (a special police unit in Ukraine). Of particular interest is Girkin’s stated date of arrival in Crimea – February 21.³¹⁴

On February 28, Russian troops began blocking Ukrainian military units, the “Belbek” airport in Sevastopol was seized, control was established over the Kerch ferry crossing, and military checkpoints appeared at Crimea’s entrances. The Armed Forces of Ukraine did not resist, although military regulations required them to. The lack of clear orders from Kyiv also played a role. In addition, many commanders of the Armed Forces, Security Service officers, police, and other security personnel had been recruited by Russian intelligence services – either in advance or during the annexation itself.³¹⁵

On the same February 28, a meeting of the National Security and Defence Council was convened in Kyiv. Acting President of Ukraine and Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, Oleksandr Turchynov, was the only one who voted to impose martial law. Unfortunately, the other members of the NSDC did not support the decision, arguing that martial law could complicate the holding of presidential, parliamentary, and local elections. Yulia Tymoshenko³¹⁶ was present at the meeting and spoke out against

³¹³ Russian propaganda tried to portray the events in Crimea as the work of local residents, calling Russian soldiers “militiamen”, “little green men”, “polite people”; and in Donbas – “miners”, etc. Undoubtedly, some part of the local population joined the occupiers, but according to Girkin himself, it would have been impossible to ignite this war without direct Russian involvement. See: BBC Russkaya sluzhba. (2014, November 20). *Strelkov soobshchil, chto eto on nachal voynu na Ukraine* [Strelkov stated that he started the war in Ukraine]. BBC Russian Service. https://www.bbc.com/russian/rolling_news/2014/11/141120_rn_strelkov_war_responsibility [in Russian].

³¹⁴ Ukrainskaya pravda. (2015, January 24). *Girkin rasskazal, kak “sgonyal deputatov” v Krymu goslovat’ za prisoedinenie k RF* [Girkin told how he “rounded up deputies” in Crimea to vote for joining the Russian Federation]. Ukrainska Pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2015/01/24/7056252/> [in Russian].

³¹⁵ General Prosecutor of Ukraine. (n.d.). *Khronolohiia okupatsii Krymu* [Chronology of the occupation of Crimea]. <https://ark.gp.gov.ua/ua/chronology.html> [in Ukrainian]; Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Aneksiia Krymu* (2014) [Annexation of Crimea (2014)]. *Wikipedia*. [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Анексія_Криму_\(2014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Анексія_Криму_(2014)) [in Ukrainian].

³¹⁶ Tymoshenko was not a member of the NSDC; she justified her presence at the meeting by leading the largest parliamentary faction.

the imposition of martial law: “Not a single tank should leave the barracks, not a single soldier should raise his weapon, because that would mean defeat. No martial law or military mobilization! We must become the most peaceful nation on the planet, simply behave like doves of peace...”³¹⁷ Turchynov, who had to shoulder the most difficult early days of Russian aggression, recalled those events: “At that time, half the country was on fire. The entire east and south from Kharkiv to Odesa was engulfed in separatist uprisings organized by Russian special services (the “Russian Spring” operation). For me, martial law was needed to restore order in the country as quickly as possible.”³¹⁸

Clearly, the position of the United States also played an important role here. Then-President Barack Obama advised avoiding military confrontation with Moscow.³¹⁹ In 2023, Obama made an interesting statement explaining why the U.S. did not prevent the annexation of Crimea: “There is a reason there was no military intervention in Crimea. Because there were many Russian-speaking people in Crimea, and there was some sympathy for the views represented by Russia.”³²⁰ Let us recall that the Russian neo-imperial concept of the “Russian World” is based on the idea that Russia’s borders lie wherever the Russian language is spoken. But this is precisely a neo-imperial concept, and why countries of Western democracy were supposed to agree with it remains a mystery. Former Spanish colonies speak Spanish, Portuguese ones speak Portuguese, and in former English and French colonies, the colonizers’ languages are typically well known, just as in the United States English is spoken – yet that does not give the UK any prerogative. Beyond the effectiveness of Russian propaganda, such conformism may stem from their own imperial complexes, because, as Trump’s presidency demonstrated, such complexes exist within part of the American establishment – at least verbally.³²¹

On March 16, 2014, a pseudo-referendum was held in Crimea, and already on March 18, the “Treaty on the Accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation” was

³¹⁷ *Militarnyi*. (n.d.). *Povna versii stenohramy zasidannia RNBO vid 28 liutoho 2014 roku* [Full version of the NSDC meeting transcript of February 28, 2014]. <https://militarnyi.com/uk/articles/povna-versiya-stenohramy-zasidannia-rnbo-vid-28-lyutogo-2014-roku/> [in Ukrainian].

³¹⁸ Titoff, O. (2020, April 13). *Turchynov ziznavsia, chomu v 2014 rotsi ne vviv viiskovyi stan v Ukraini* [Turchynov admitted why in 2014 he did not introduce martial law in Ukraine]. *Obozrevatel*. <https://news.obozrevatel.com/ukr/politics/turchinov-ziznavsia-chomu-v-2014-rotsi-ne-vviv-vijskovij-stan-v-ukraini.htm> [in Ukrainian].

³¹⁹ Firtka. (2015, August 25). *Illarionov: Ofitsiino pidtverdzheno: Obama radiv Ukraini ne pruchatysia Putinu i ne zakhyshchati Krym* [Illarionov: Officially confirmed: Obama advised Ukraine not to resist Putin and not to defend Crimea]. <https://firtka.if.ua/blog/view/illarionov-oficijno-pidtverdzeno-obama-radiv-ukraini-ne-pruchatysia-putinu-i-ne-zahisati-krim84954> [in Ukrainian].

³²⁰ *Ukrainska pravda*. (2023, June 23). *Obama poiasnyv, chomu SSHa ne vtrutylys, koly aneksuvaly Krym: tam bulo bahato sympatykiv RF* [Obama explained why the US did not intervene when Crimea was annexed: there were many sympathizers of the Russian Federation]. *Ukrainska Pravda*. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2023/06/23/7408222/> [in Ukrainian].

³²¹ *Radio Svoboda*. (2024, December 26). *Tramp zrobyv novi huchni zaiavy pro Kanadu, Hrenlandiiu ta Panamskyi kanal* [Trump made new loud statements about Canada, Greenland, and the Panama Canal]. *Radio Svoboda*. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-tramp-kanada-hrenlandiya-panamskyy-kanal/33253550.html> [in Ukrainian].

signed.³²² But Russia aimed for much more. The period from late February to May 2014 became a real trial for Ukraine. On February 27, 2014, Russian media reported that Viktor Yanukovich had appealed to the Russian authorities to guarantee his safety and called the decisions of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine illegitimate. On March 1, 2014, Russia officially announced the possibility of sending troops into Ukraine, with the Russian Federation Council granting Putin the corresponding authorization.³²³ On March 3, Russia's representative to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, presented Yanukovich's letter to Vladimir Putin requesting³²⁴ the use of Russian troops in Ukraine to "restore legality".³²⁵ On March 28, 2014, a new statement from Yanukovich emerged, in which he blamed the new authorities for the loss of Crimea and described the actions of the separatists as a reaction of the people to military operations and poor leadership.³²⁶

In April, pro-Russian militants seized administrative buildings in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, and other cities. On April 7, the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic" were declared. On April 8, special units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs carried out a clearance operation at the Kharkiv Regional State Administration building, which prevented the destabilization of the situation in Kharkiv.

Only when, on April 12, 2014, militants led by the aforementioned Igor Girkin seized Sloviansk in Donetsk Oblast, the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) adopted a resolution "On urgent measures to counter the terrorist threat and preserve territorial integrity", announcing the beginning of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO), which started on April 14.³²⁷ The situation was tense; many residents of the region were under the influence of Russian propaganda – they obstructed the actions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, blocked military equipment, and so on.

³²²Yurliga. (2014, March 20). *Derzhduma ratyfikuvála dohovir pro pryiniattia Krymu do skladu Rosii* [The State Duma ratified the treaty on the admission of Crimea to the Russian Federation]. Yurliga. https://yurliga.ligazakon.net/news/107474_derzhduma-ratifkuvála-dogovr-pro-priynyattya-krimu-do-skladu-ros [in Ukrainian].

³²³LB.ua. (2014, March 1). *TSE VIINA. Rada Federatsii Rosii dozvolyla Putinu vvesty viiska v Ukrainu* [THIS IS WAR. The Federation Council of Russia allowed Putin to send troops into Ukraine]. LB.ua. https://lb.ua/news/2014/03/01/257751_sovet_federatsii_odobril_vvedenie.html [in Ukrainian].

³²⁴The President of Ukraine has no legal rights to invite foreign troops into the country.

³²⁵Ukrainska pravda. (2014, March 3). *Yanukovich zaklykav Putina napasty na Ukrainu* [Yanukovich urged Putin to attack Ukraine]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/03/3/7017396/> [in Ukrainian]; LB.ua. (2014, March 3). *Yanukovich poprosyv Putina vvesty viiska v Ukrainu* [Yanukovich asked Putin to send troops into Ukraine]. https://lb.ua/news/2014/03/03/258044_yanukovich_poprosil_putina_vvesti.html [in Ukrainian].

³²⁶Borovyk, I. (2021, September 14). *Yanukovich Viktor. Ukrainskyi polityk, kriminalnyk pry vladi, prezident-utikach* [Viktor Yanukovich. Ukrainian politician, criminal in power, fugitive president]. Parlament.ua. <https://parlament.ua/dossier/yanukovich-viktor/> [in Ukrainian].

³²⁷Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. (n.d.). *2014 – ofitsiino oholosheno pro pochatok Antyterorystychnoi operatsii na skhodi Ukrainy* [2014 – officially announced the start of the Anti-Terrorist Operation in eastern Ukraine]. <https://uinp.gov.ua/istorychnyy-kalendar/kviten/14/2014-ofitsiyno-ogolosheno-pro-pochatok-antyterorystychnoyi-operatsiyi-na-shodi-ukrayiny> [in Ukrainian].

On May 2, 2014, mass riots took place in Odesa. A march of pro-Ukrainian demonstrators and “Anti-Maidan” supporters escalated into a large-scale clash, resulting in fatalities.³²⁸

Let us recall that during this time, an election campaign was underway in Ukraine, with the elections scheduled for May 25, 2014. Throughout this period, there was a threat of a direct Russian invasion. For example, on May 9, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby stated that the U.S. Department of Defence had intelligence confirming the presence of Russian troops on Ukraine’s border who were on high alert and ready to enter Ukrainian territory.³²⁹ It should be added that the threat of direct Russian invasion remained until the end of summer 2014. In the summer of that year, I expressed my well-founded concerns about the inevitability of war with Russia on my Facebook page.³³⁰ I have decided to cite that post here with minor literary editing:

“I’m not panicking, but for Putin, there is simply no other option than war with Ukraine. Let me try to explain:

The first reason is geopolitical. An empire cannot exist without external expansion of its borders. Putin’s foreign policy is an attempt to restore at least part of the Soviet Union’s influence (which is practically impossible, because that space is already occupied not only by the U.S., but also by China).

Second – the Russian Empire (for Putin, it’s the same as the USSR³³¹) cannot exist without Ukraine and its resources. Russia became an empire only with Ukraine.

Third – Russia’s economic condition in the near future is miserable, considering that 80 % of its exports are raw materials – it’s disastrous. Any fluctuations in world market prices tear not just holes, but gaping wounds in its budget.

Fourth – surprisingly, Putin’s main resource is the Ukrainian people. Take a look at Russia’s demographics, its population density, and the extinction of its Slavic population – in 30 years, Russia will no longer exist. Ukrainians are a unique human resource for Russia, and what’s more, they assimilate easily. Why doesn’t Rus-

³²⁸ Ishchenko, M. (2025, May 2). *Rosii tut ne mistse. Shcho vidbuvalosia 2 travnia v Odesi 11 rokiv tomu (fotokhronika)* [Russia has no place here. What happened on May 2 in Odesa 11 years ago (photo chronicle)]. Telegraf News. <https://news.telegraf.com.ua/ukr/odessa/2025-05-02/5907571-rosii-tut-ne-mistse-shcho-vidbuvalosya-2-travnja-v-odesi-11-rokiv-tomu-fotokhronika> [in Ukrainian]; Lov, I. (2024, May 23). *Vynni u trahedii 2 travnia v Odesi otrymaly shans unyknyty pokarannia* [Those guilty of the May 2 tragedy in Odesa got a chance to avoid punishment]. Intent.press. <https://intent.press/news/crime/2024/vinni-u-tragediyi-2-travnja-v-odesi-otrimali-shans-uniknuti-pokarannya/> [in Ukrainian].

³²⁹ Obozrevatel. (2014, May 10). *Rossiiskie voiska gotovy k vtorzheniiu v Ukrainu – Pentagon* [Russian troops are ready to invade Ukraine – Pentagon]. Obozrevatel. <https://news.obozrevatel.com/politics/53610-rossiiskie-vojska-gotovyi-k-vmorzhnenniu-v-ukrainu-pentagon.htm> [in Russian].

³³⁰ Kondratiev, I. (2014, July 14). *Ia ne panikuiu, prosto drugogo sposoba kak voina s Ukrainoi u Putina prosto ne sushchestvuet* [I am not panicking, it’s just that there is no other way for Putin than war with Ukraine] [Facebook status]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/kondratch/posts/pfbid086Qohy4JFbm2bvA13AP6BypMASzV83ZWcBNkRkUCm9iFmZg6rEcfnnaSaz33cwarl> [in Russian].

³³¹ By the way, if you look at the top leadership of the Russian Federation, you’ll see that many of its leaders were once members of the CPSU – including former KGB officer V. Putin, Federation Council Chair V. Matviyenko, Foreign Intelligence Service Head S. Naryshkin, Defense Minister S. Shoigu, Security Council Secretary M. Patrushev, and others.

sia have a Ukrainian-style child support system?³³² The answer is simple: the Islamic factor. The Caucasus and Volga regions³³³ will continue having children and receiving money for it, preparing to become the dominant religion in Russia within the next 20 years. By the way, the so-called concept of the “Russian World” is primarily focused on Ukraine – and perhaps only on Ukraine in practice – we now have more Orthodox Christians than Russia itself.

Fifth – surprisingly, the vast Russian Federation cannot feed itself; two-thirds of its territory is unsuitable for agriculture.³³⁴ Despite all attempts to ban imports from Ukraine, cheese, meat, and many other products are still allowed in – because there’s a shortage – almost everything is imported into Russia.

Sixth – Russia’s so-called critical import of high-tech Ukrainian goods. For example: docking units for space stations, electronic components (guidance systems) for intercontinental ballistic missiles, helicopter engines, and much more.

Of course, most of these ties have been severed, but some small components remain – and these are crucial. Let’s not forget the fact that Russia’s nuclear missiles still rely on “Dnipropetrovsk” guarantees.³³⁵ Of course, much of it can be replaced – but it takes time and serious money.

Seventh – Ukraine is a very important buyer of Russian products, primarily gas and oil. In recent years, we have been providing the greatest profit to Gazprom (and to Putin). And that’s the state budget – pensions, salaries, and benefits. If we refuse these purchases (and with reforms in energy and energy efficiency policy this is possible within a few years), a hole will appear in the Russian budget that is unlikely to be filled by sales to China. A similar situation applies to the purchase of nuclear fuel for nuclear power plants – the Americans would gladly take over one of the largest markets in the world in this field. And there will also be a place for cooperation in the military sphere (even without joining any alliances).

Eighth – if Ukraine implements even half of the necessary reforms (which are needed in all sectors – from education and healthcare to business, governance, and the state itself), by the way, I haven’t seen these reforms yet; the standard of living of Ukrainians will surpass that of Russians. A Ukraine without corruption is still a myth, but if it becomes a reality, the question will arise – why were Ukrainians able to do it (many Russians see Ukrainians as semi-Russians), and why then is Russia unable to exist without corruption? The success (or even the potential) of reforms in Ukraine is a nail in the coffin of Russia’s imperialism.

Ninth – for the Russian authorities, it is necessary to stop Europe and push its borders back as far as possible. Otherwise, that “plague” spreads its “values” and

³³²In Russia, there is a practice of granting a “maternity capital” – a one-time payment given at the birth of a child, which can be used to improve housing conditions or for the child’s education.

³³³The regions of the North Caucasus and the Volga area are traditional centres of Islam in Russia.

³³⁴Due to global warming and a milder climate, the area of agricultural land and crop yields are increasing.

³³⁵The Dnipro-based “Pivdenmash” (Yuzhmash) plant was one of the key producers of strategic missiles in the USSR; many of them were still in service with the Russian Federation.

hits hard at Russia's sacred foundations. "Ukraine does not exist as a state" – this is Putin's obscurantism, but there is another message – Ukraine is Russia. (At one time, L. Kuchma understood this and responded with the statement – "Ukraine is not Russia"). The attempt to oppose Europe and the USA to Russia is the essence of both the foreign and domestic policy of the Russian Federation.

Tenth. The personal factor – or the role of personality in history. Putin already now has the opportunity to become either the great "reviver" of Russia or its great gravedigger – Crimea is a tactical victory and clearly a short-lived one, for a "great victory," a strategic victory is also needed, and that is not Donbas and Luhansk – it's Ukraine.

But what this war will look like – it will vary – there are countless scenarios and all of them will work against us. The paradox is – the more successfully we live at home – the worse (objectively) it will be for Russian imperialism in all its forms – so, strangely enough, the fate of Russia also lies in our hands."

Let me remind you that this text was written in July 2014 and reflects the reality of that time. By the way, when I was asked on February 23, 2022: "Will there be a war tomorrow?" I replied: "No". But I was terribly wrong. Although I based my answer on the fact that there would be no positive outcome for Russia in the case of a full-scale invasion – Ukraine would defend itself.

The events of February–May 2014 were undoubtedly a so-called turning point in history, when the course of history changes, and the consequences of certain events may manifest years later. History has no alternatives for events that have already happened, and without attempting to "revise" historical facts in any way, I would only point out the possibility of seeing the unrealized – or dreaming about such alternatives. In 2015, the Centre for East-West Studies at the University of Regensburg (Germany), in cooperation with Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, held an essay competition titled "Ukraine between East and West: Apocalypse or Model of the Future?" One of the winning essays was my work entitled "The Third Chance?" which was published in 2016 in Ukraine and Germany.³³⁶ Here is an excerpt from the essay:

"After Yanukovych fled and an acting president was appointed, the new leadership of the country faced the urgent need for reforms – one of the first demands of the Maidan was the drafting and adoption of the law on "Cleansing and Stabilizing the Judicial System", as well as laws "On Temporary Staffing of the Police, Prosecutor's Office, and Security Agencies". Although the Venice Commission later noted that certain provisions of the adopted laws were inconsistent with the Constitution

³³⁶ Kondratiev, I. (2016). Tretii shans? In: *Ukraina mizh Skhodom ta Zakhodom: apokalipsys chy model maibutnoho? Tsentri skhidno-zakhidnykh studii Regensburzhskoho universytetu "Europeum"*, [Third chance? In: Ukraine between East and West: Apocalypse or a model for the future? East-West Center for Studies of the University of Regensburg "Europeum"], Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Eds.) (pp. 36–40). Kyiv: Sammit-Knyha. [in Ukrainian]; Kondratjew, I. (2016). Eine dritte Chance? In: W. Koschmal (Ed.), *Die Ukraine hat das Wort. Stimmen zu Gegenwart und Zukunft* (pp. 104–112). Berlin: OEZ Berlin-Verlag. [in German].

in force at the time, subsequent events proved the legitimacy and necessity of adopting these acts.

Starting in late February, the “Reforms for the Future” commission began its work, which became a platform for preparing major reforms in the country. The best experts were involved in the process, and Georgia provided significant assistance to Ukraine.

The judicial and prosecutorial reforms undoubtedly attracted the most attention. 90 % of the personnel were replaced, and thousands of judicial and prosecutorial positions were filled by recent university graduates. Key positions were given, as the then acting president joked, “to the boys and girls from Harvard,” although only three actually held a diploma from that university.

One of the first cases that demonstrated the irreversibility and correctness of the reforms was the “coal case”, which uncovered a web of fraud surrounding state coal subsidies. For embezzlement of public funds on a particularly large scale, 1,500 officials of all levels, mine directors, and owners were convicted.

The second, no less high-profile case was the case of the titushky,³³⁷ in total, several thousand people were involved in this case, the investigation proved the formation of illegal armed groups, and the main organized crime groups in seven regions of the country were effectively eliminated.

However, perhaps the greatest challenge for the new government was resolving the so-called “Crimean crisis”. As early as February 27, at a historic meeting of the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC), a document titled “On urgent steps to restore constitutional order in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea” was adopted, along with an appeal to the signatory states of the Budapest Memorandum. A session of the UN General Assembly was convened in the shortest possible time, during which the United States and the United Kingdom expressed their firm stance. Peacekeeping forces of all the guarantor countries divided the Crimean Peninsula into zones of responsibility, with Russia receiving control over Sevastopol only.

A crucial role in resolving the conflict was played by the heroic resistance of the Zhytomyr special forces, who managed to halt the operation of the Kerch crossing, thereby preventing the invasion of the “little green men”. The coastal waters of Crimea were rapidly mined by NATO countries’ peacekeeping minesweepers.

Between March and May, the top leadership of the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk was arrested, and thanks to the “Steel Doors” operation, the inflow of military experts and weapons from the neighbouring country was cut off.

An important step in stabilizing the economic situation was the election of a new Verkhovna Rada and President of Ukraine. Understanding their full responsibility for the future, the major political parties had agreed on the parameters of future reforms even before the elections.

³³⁷Wikipedia contributors (n.d.). *Titushki*. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titushky>

An important victory for the democratic forces was the rejection of the majoritarian system and the inclusion of the best specialists in open party lists. Many politicians had to set aside their personal ambitions, and at least two party congresses experienced a kind of “revolution”, which enabled a renewal of parliamentary lists by more than 80 %. Several high-profile corruption scandals involving the new authorities prevented some well-known politicians from running for office. A key element of democracy and the irreversibility of reforms was the adoption in spring 2015 of the law “On the Recall of People’s Deputies of All Levels and the Recall of the President of Ukraine”, which introduced an effective model of public oversight over the legislative and presidential branches of power.

At the end of November 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the 8th convocation adopted a number of urgent legislative acts. International experts noted the high quality of the country’s newly formed state budget. For example, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde called the adopted budget an important document for development and stabilization. For the first time, the budget did not include subsidies for the coal industry, and the gas market was liberalized.

Experts noted that the new government succeeded in minimizing corruption risks, with the Law “On Public Procurement” and the new Tax Code being named among the most successful.

Of course, among the reforms implemented during 2015–2017, there were some that did not fully take effect, and not all reforms led to the desired outcomes, while certain laws, such as “On State Innovations” or “On Stabilization of Exchange Rates and Risks”, were later recognized as corrupt and repealed. Some legislative changes – such as the gradual increase of the retirement age – were unpopular among the population. However, the reforms aimed at economic demonopolization proved more successful – including examples of the nationalization of several enterprises followed by their sale to Western investors.

The pace of reforms turned out to be truly impressive, as in 2015 the GDP growth rate was under 3 %, in 2016 it reached 18 %, and in 2017 – a fantastic 27 %.

A lot was accomplished in less than three years; here are just a few areas of reform that help us recall those years of change:

- the most important was the implementation of administrative reform, which included decentralization, reduction of the state apparatus, and optimization of maintenance costs. Finally, presidential administrations were transformed into executive committees, while presidential representatives (whose offices essentially became legal departments, and thus were mostly held by lawyers) retained the right of cassation. An important element of this reform was the education reform and healthcare reform;

- one of the first steps of the new government was halving the size of the state apparatus and eliminating most regulatory bodies. The drastic reduction of the number of taxes to five, along with simplified tax administration, became a powerful tool for economic growth;

- starting with the 2015 budget, the state supported and implemented energy-saving programs – both in industry and in the housing and utilities sector. This made it possible to reduce natural gas imports by a quarter within three years. The commissioning of three shale gas fields in 2017 reduced purchases by another 30%. Housing and utility companies were privatized, and a law regulating their activities was adopted. Among other measures, all value-added tax (VAT) collected from utility payments was legislatively directed to energy-saving and modernization programs. All payments for previous years' debts were also directed there;

- for the first time in Ukraine, the Antimonopoly Committee operated in the interest of the economy rather than specific oligarchic groups, and reformers focused heavily on demonopolization and deregulation. A series of laws and initiatives encouraged business development and created conditions for domestic and foreign investment. Public-private partnership programs enabled the attraction of foreign capital for production modernization. The government's initiatives in the agricultural sector, including land reform, generated perhaps the greatest interest from private capital;

- the unpopular pension reform and the more successful social protection system reform minimized the negative effects of rising prices for socially vulnerable groups, and some pensioners even benefited from the monetization of benefits;

- a key area of reform was the improvement of the judicial system, primarily the introduction of trial by jury. Reforms were carried out in the civil service and the police, and the Law "On Police Activity" was adopted;

- the reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is ongoing according to NATO standards.

The irreversibility of the initiated reforms is evidenced by Ukraine's international rankings, which have been improving for the third year in a row."

Let me remind you that this text was written in 2015 and represents only a dream-like attempt to see unrealized potential in historical events that have already taken place, and therefore, in reality, have no alternatives. However, the direct participants of those events still question whether everything was done to repel Russian aggression in 2014. For example, former prosecutor of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea Viktor Shemchuk notes: "No one will convince me that it would have been difficult to order the closure of the Kerch crossing, to unblock government institutions, to withdraw the fleet and Crimean military units from their bases."³³⁸ Without aiming for a detailed analysis of those events, I will only highlight the main arguments that are voiced in such discussions.

³³⁸ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Aneksiia Krymu (2014)* [Annexation of Crimea (2014)]. Wikipedia. [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Анексія_Криму_\(2014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Анексія_Криму_(2014)) [in Ukrainian].

Arguments against resisting the aggression in Crimea	Arguments in favor of resisting the aggression in Crimea
After the events of Maidan, not all regional elites and the population recognized Turchynov as the legitimate leader. One could speak of a certain lack of legitimacy of the government; the situation was to be resolved by the presidential election, but it took place only in May 2014. Kyiv's unwillingness to take responsibility, primarily that of Prime Minister A. Yatsenyuk, who pointed out the devastating consequences a full-scale war would have for Ukraine.	According to Girkin himself, the local authorities in Crimea were not particularly eager to join Russia and rather acted like a weather vane. A significant portion of the population took a neutral or wait-and-see stance. The majority of the Crimean Tatar population expressed their support for Ukraine.
Widespread bribery of military commanders, high loyalty of Crimean law enforcement to the occupiers, and outright betrayal by parts of the command. Mass betrayal by employees of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). Absence of orders, caused both by treason and by a lack of political will.	At the beginning of the annexation, up to 20,000 Ukrainian servicemen were present in Crimea (including border guards and internal troops). The Armed Forces and the Navy of Ukraine still had officers loyal to their oath who were ready to follow the orders.
Russian troops numbered around 25,000–30,000 and had clear motivation. Use of hybrid warfare tactics – absence of identification marks, use of local population and paramilitary Cossack units.	The presence of some military personnel who could offer real resistance. The possibility of sending reinforcements, blocking the Kerch crossing by military or special means. Armed resistance, even sporadic, could have slowed down the annexation and shifted public sentiment.
The nuclear status of the Russian Federation.	As events of 2022–2025 have shown, nuclear status does not guarantee the use of nuclear weapons.
Non-intervention by the United States, with Obama advising against direct confrontation. Merely formal reactions from the US, EU, and NATO with “condemnation” and “concern” over Russian aggression. Lack of real assistance mechanisms in the Budapest Memorandum.	The West's reaction if Crimea had actually been defended remains unknown – it could have been either positive or negative.
Lack of “political will” among Ukraine's leadership.	Russian aggression since 2014 continues to follow the “domino principle” (similar to falling dominoes), where each shift triggers subsequent changes in a chain reaction. Such changes can only be stopped by resistance.

Let me remind you that there are no real answers to these questions, since history does not recognize the subjunctive mood. However, it is crucial for forecasting the future, as it allows us to model alternative outcomes for past events and apply them to future scenarios. From a geopolitical perspective, it was Crimea that allowed Russia to feel like an empire again, thus making further aggression against Ukraine and the spread of revanchism across the so-called “post-Soviet” space inevitable. In turn, the loss of Crimea by Russia could very well become the key event

leading to the collapse of the empire – something that even the theoretical loss of Kaliningrad would not produce. The power of propaganda Russia invested in justifying its claims would, in that case, result in an equally powerful wave of public disillusionment.

Petro Poroshenko served as president (2014–2019) during a challenging period for the country – the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. Despite the onset of Russian hybrid aggression, voter turnout exceeded 60 %, which eliminated potential concerns about the legitimacy of the government.

Few remember now, but in his election campaign, he promised a swift end to the war. In his inauguration speech, he stated: “Peace is the most important thing the Ukrainian people seek today.” Among other things, he promised decentralization of power, free use of the Russian language, and a “firm intention” not to divide Ukrainians into “right” and “wrong” ones. Quote: “The word ‘work’, like ‘peace’, ‘salary’, ‘pension’, ‘scholarship’, sounds the same or very similar in both Ukrainian and Russian. Having a job is what gives a person the opportunity to live without poverty.” He went on to say that local elections must be held in Donbas to seek compromise, but the issues of Ukraine’s unitary state structure and territorial integrity are not up for discussion.

A significant part of the speech was devoted to Ukraine’s European choice, and European democracy was described as “the best form of government ever invented by mankind”. Poroshenko promised (and fulfilled his promise) to immediately sign the Association Agreement, which was to be the first step toward Ukraine’s full membership in the EU, a free trade agreement with the European Union, and an agreement on the introduction of a visa-free regime. Let us also recall this phrase: “No one has the right to veto Ukraine’s European choice”, clearly addressed to Moscow.³³⁹

On June 20, 2014, Ukraine announced a one-week ceasefire. Poroshenko proposed a peace plan to resolve the conflict, suggesting decentralization and early elections in Donbas.³⁴⁰ However, the proposal did not meet with understanding, nor could it have, since the plan involved dialogue with local elites who had, in fact, already either been replaced or were controlled by Russia. For many local politicians, the actions of the Crimean authorities served as an example, so they expected a swift annexation by Russia with the preservation of their positions and powers.

Afterwards, the Armed Forces of Ukraine launched an operation to liberate Donbas. There is every reason to believe that at that time Russia was preparing

³³⁹ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Promova Prezydenta Poroshenka pid chas tseremonii inavhuratsii* [President Poroshenko’s speech during the inauguration ceremony]. *Wikisource*. https://uk.wikisource.org/wiki/Промова_Президента_Порошенка_під_час_церемонії_інавгурації [in Ukrainian]; 5 kanal. (2014, June 7). *Inavhuratsiia Prezydenta Petra Poroshenka (povne video)* [Inauguration of President Petro Poroshenko (full video)] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgOEWSs9ckQ> [in Ukrainian].

³⁴⁰ Hryshko, L. (2014, June 7). *Plan myru vid Poroshenka* [Poroshenko’s peace plan]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/uk/план-миру-від-порошенка/a-17691378> [in Ukrainian].

to shift from hybrid warfare to a full-scale invasion under the guise of peacekeepers. On July 17, 2014, a Malaysian airliner was shot down over the occupied part of Donetsk region. The Boeing 777 of Malaysia Airlines was on a flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was hit by a missile from a Buk surface-to-air missile system brought from Russia. The crash claimed the lives of 298 people, including 80 children. An international investigation determined that the missile was launched by pro-Russian militants and the missile system belonged to the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade of the Russian Armed Forces. In 2018, Australia and the Netherlands officially accused Russia of the tragedy.³⁴¹ In May 2025, the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) ruled that Russia bears responsibility for the downing of flight MH17 and violated the Chicago Convention by unlawfully using weapons against a civilian aircraft.³⁴²

There is a theory that the real target was a Russian plane, but the Buk missile system miscalculated and shot down the Malaysian aircraft.³⁴³ This very mistake saved Ukraine from a large-scale invasion. Nevertheless, regular Russian troops did enter Ukrainian territory, though on a much smaller scale and with more localized objectives. This led to the August tragedy near Ilovaisk, one of Ukraine's largest losses in the early stages of the war. Ukrainian troops were encircled, and the Russians allegedly promised to let them retreat through a "humanitarian" corridor. But the promise was broken. While exiting, the corridor was attacked with deadly force, resulting in hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers killed and wounded.³⁴⁴ There were repeated artillery and missile attacks on Ukrainian positions launched from Russian territory.³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ Yermakov, V. (2016, September 28). *Yak Rosiia zbyla malaiziiskyi "Boeing"*. *Rezultaty mizhnarodnoho rozsliduvannia* [How Russia shot down the Malaysian Boeing: Results of the international investigation]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/publications/yak-rosiya-zbila-malayziyskiy-bojing-rezultati-rozsliduvannia-375034.html> [in Ukrainian]; Herashchenko, I. (2024, July 17). *10 rokiv pislia trahedii MH17: chomu Rosiia dosi ne pokarana?* [10 years after the MH17 tragedy: Why has Russia still not been punished?]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/columns/geraschenko/10-rokiv-pislja-trahediji-mh17-chomurosija-dosi-ne-pokarana-1010484.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁴² Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. (2025, May 12). *ICAO-Raad: Russische Federatie verantwoordelijk voor neerhalen van vlucht MH17*. Rijksoverheid. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/nieuws/2025/05/12/icao-raad-russische-federatie-verantwoordelijk-voor-neerhalen-van-vlucht-mh17>

³⁴³ Mart, Yu. (2014, August 7). *Rosiia planovala zbyty litak "Aeroflotu" dlia vypravdannia vtorhnennia v Ukrainu – SBU* [Russia planned to shoot down an Aeroflot plane to justify the invasion of Ukraine – SBU]. RAI. <https://rai.ua/novyny/rosiia-planovala-zbyty-litak-aeroflotu-dlia-vypravdannia-v-torgnennia-v-ukrainu-sbu> [in Ukrainian].

³⁴⁴ Semenova, I. (2024, August 18). *Bytva za Ilovaisk. Desiat holovnykh faktiv pro naibilshu trahediiu chasiv ATO i priame vtorhnennia Rosii, yakoho "ne pomityv" svit* [The battle for Ilovaisk: Ten key facts about the greatest tragedy of the ATO and Russia's direct invasion, which the world "did not notice"]. NV (New Voice). <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/ilovayska-tragediya-istoriya-kotla-foto-video-i-spogadi-uchasnikiv-bojiv-novini-ukrajini-50347134.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁴⁵ Klochko, N. (2022, July 11). *Visim rokiv tomu Rosiia vpershe vidkryto atakuvala Ukrainu* [Eight years ago, Russia openly attacked Ukraine for the first time]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/country/incidents/visim-rokiv-tomu-rosiya-vpershe-vidkryto-atakuvala-ukrainu-foto-video-859737.html> [in Ukrainian].

Among other evidence of the involvement of regular forces was the capture of Russian paratroopers in the summer of 2014.³⁴⁶

A direct consequence of Ilovaïsk was the signing of the so-called Minsk Protocol (or Minsk-1) by the Ukrainian leadership in September 2014. According to analysts from The Washington Post, President Poroshenko was pushed into signing the ceasefire agreement under very unfavourable terms by French and German leaders François Hollande and Angela Merkel.³⁴⁷ The agreement called for an immediate ceasefire, the establishment of a security zone, and OSCE monitoring. The political component of the agreement included decentralization of power, including the adoption of a law on special status for certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.³⁴⁸

This did not stop the war. Under pressure from Europe and Russia, on February 12, 2015, the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, known as Minsk-2,³⁴⁹ was signed. It provided for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact. Once again, it mentioned holding local elections, and to this end, on September 16, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law “On the Special Procedure for Local Self-Government in Certain Areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions”.³⁵⁰

Minsk-2 also envisaged the restoration of socio-economic ties (Clause 8), including the payment of social and other benefits, and the resumption of tax payments. To achieve this, it was planned to restore “control over the segment of its (Ukrainian – I.K.) banking system”.

The main stages of the planned resolution of the conflict were:

1) constitutional reform by the end of 2015, taking into account the “peculiarities of certain areas” of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and the adoption of permanent legislation on their special status (Clause 11);

³⁴⁶LB.ua. (2014, September 17). *Rosiïski desantnyky, yaki “zablukaly” v Ukraini, povernutisia na sluzhbu* [Russian paratroopers who “got lost” in Ukraine will return to service]. https://lb.ua/world/2014/09/17/279724_rossiyskie_desantniki.html [in Ukrainian].

³⁴⁷The Washington Post. (2024, August 2). *Ukraine watches warily as prisoner swap shows Moscow and West can negotiate: After a landmark prisoner deal showed Moscow and Washington can still do business, Kyiv said it would hold President Biden to his promise: ‘Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine’*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/08/02/ukraine-russia-prisoner-swap-war/>

³⁴⁸Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs. (2018, September 6). *Minskyi protokol (2014)* [Minsk Protocol (2014)]. https://mtt.in.ua/slovnyk_minskyj-protokol-2014/ [in Ukrainian].

³⁴⁹Ukrainska pravda. (2015, February 12). *Kompleks zakhodiv z vykonannia Minskikh uhod. Povnyi tekst* [Package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Full text]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2015/02/12/7058327/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁵⁰Zakon Online. (2014). *Zakon Ukrainy № 1680-VII vid 16.09.2014 “Pro osoblyvyi poriadok mistsevoho samovriaduvannia v okremykh raionakh Donetskoi ta Luhanskoi oblasti”* [Law of Ukraine No. 1680-VII of 16.09.2014 “On the special procedure for local self-government in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions”]. https://zakononline.com.ua/documents/show/355705___710534 [in Ukrainian]. The law included provisions for holding local elections under Ukrainian law, guaranteed amnesty, allowed the use of the Russian language in the region, granted special status for certain districts for three years, and ensured economic support and infrastructure recovery. The law was part of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, but its enforcement was unlikely from the outset. It was officially repealed on January 1, 2023.

2) elections in the “certain areas” based on constitutional amendments (Clause 9);

3) restoration of full control over the state border, which was to begin on the first day after the elections and be completed “after a comprehensive political settlement” (also Clause 9).

For the “certain areas,” Ukraine also guaranteed the right to “linguistic self-determination”, participation of “local self-government bodies” in appointing heads of prosecutor’s offices and courts, and the facilitation of cross-border cooperation with regions of the Russian Federation.

There was also interest in the possibility of creating “people’s militia units by decision of local councils in order to maintain public order in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions”. Notably, Clause 10 of the agreements called for the withdrawal from Ukrainian territory of “foreign armed formations, military equipment, and mercenaries... and the disarmament of all illegal groups”.³⁵¹

At the time, Russia made every effort to avoid acknowledging its role in the war it had initiated. Russian ambassador M. Zurabov signed the agreement more as a witness than as a party to the conflict, while former President Leonid Kuchma signed on behalf of Ukraine, and the separatist side was represented by the “leaders” of the so-called republics – O. Zakharchenko and I. Plotnyskyi.

The agreement allowed for very broad interpretation. Ukraine understood foreign armed formations to mean the Russian army and its proxies, while Russian propaganda continuously mentioned thousands of NATO mercenaries supposedly fighting on Ukraine’s side. Without doubt, the Russians also meant the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps “Right Sector”. At the beginning of the Russian aggression, members of this organization went to fight in Donbas³⁵² and made their contribution to the struggle against the enemy. Especially considering the chaos of the first weeks of the war and the unpreparedness (and in some cases lack of understanding³⁵³) of the security agencies in countering Russia’s hybrid aggression. The attempt to disarm the Right Sector in April 2015 was likely related to efforts to implement Clause 10 of the Minsk agreement. Units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were stationed near the Right Sector base in the Dnipropetrovsk region, after negotiations, the conflict

³⁵¹ Ukrainska Pravda. (2015, February 12). *Kompleks zakhodiv z vykonannya minskykh uhod. Povnyi tekst* [Comprehensive measures for implementing the Minsk agreements. Full text]. Ukrainska Pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2015/02/12/7058327/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁵² Volunteers played an important role in the early stages of the war, as the Armed Forces of Ukraine were unprepared to repel the aggression.

³⁵³ One of the greatest tragedies at the beginning of the war occurred on May 22, 2014, when militants opened fire on the checkpoint of the 51st Separate Mechanized Brigade. The soldiers were not ready for the confrontation: “they did not fire to kill, since war had not been declared in Ukraine, firing warning shots into the air, or at the attackers’ legs, etc.” See: Volynski Novyny. (2015, May 22). *Yikhni blokpost rozstrilyaly rivno rik tomu. Pamiati 18 Heroiv 51 OMB* [Their checkpoint was shot exactly a year ago. In memory of 18 heroes of the 51st mechanized brigade]. Volynski Novyny. <https://www.volynnews.com/news/vidsichagresoruukrayinayedina/khniy-blokpost-rozstrilialy-rivno-rik-tomu-pamiati-18-heroyiv-51-omb/> [in Ukrainian].

was resolved, and the Right Sector continued its activity, but as part of Ukrainian forces.³⁵⁴

No one can accuse Ukraine of unwillingness to implement other parts of the agreement. On August 31, 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted constitutional amendments on decentralization in the first reading. However, this decision sparked mass protests outside the parliament, as part of society believed these amendments could grant excessive powers to the occupied areas of Donbas. During clashes near the Verkhovna Rada, one National Guard serviceman was killed and dozens were injured.³⁵⁵ No further steps in this direction were taken.

There is also a valid opinion that the signing of the “Minsk agreements” allowed Ukraine to strengthen its Armed Forces. However, at the same time, the enemy’s military forces were also strengthening, new governing bodies were being formed, hostile propaganda was active, and creeping integration into Russia continued. It is possible that Kyiv hoped for the existence of pre-war ties with regional elites. Holding elections could have brought to power a number of political forces loyal to Kyiv, whose core would likely have consisted of former members of the Party of Regions.

Against the backdrop of events in Donbas, “Crimean” policy was pushed to the background. Already in the fall-summer of 2014, Ukraine lost all ability to influence the Russian annexation, and military units that remained loyal to the oath were withdrawn from the peninsula. Interestingly, Putin even allowed the transfer of their weapons and military equipment to Ukraine.³⁵⁶ The Ukrainian Armed Forces brigades covering the Crimean direction were soon redeployed to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, while only small units remained in the south. At that time, the Crimean isthmus was also mined. According to Lieutenant General S. Naiev, 1,500 mines were laid, though at least 200,000 were needed. In addition, no anti-terrorist operation regime was introduced in the Black Sea coastal regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, which significantly complicated the work of the military.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴Radio Svoboda. (2015, April 8). *Dobrovoltsi lehalizuiutsia v Zbroinykh sylakh Ukrainy* [Volunteers are being legalized in the Armed Forces of Ukraine]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26944303.html> [in Ukrainian]; Radio Svoboda. (2015, April 29). *Konflikt iz “Pravym sektorom” vycherpano – administratsiya Poroshenka* [Conflict with the “Right Sector” resolved – Poroshenko administration]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26984913.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁵⁵Ukrainska Pravda. (2015, August 31). *Rada ukhvalyla zminy do Konstytutsii v pershomu chytanni* [Rada adopted constitutional amendments in the first reading]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2015/08/31/7079619/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁵⁶ZN.UA. (2014, March 28). *Putin prikazal odat Ukrainie ostavshuyusya v Krymu voennuyu tekhniku* [Putin ordered to give Ukraine the remaining military equipment in Crimea]. https://zn.ua/POLITICS/putin-prikazal-odat-ukraine-ostavshuyusya-v-krymu-voennuyu-tehniku-142132_.html [in Russian].

³⁵⁷Texty.org.ua. (2025, November 2). *“Tam malo lezhaty zo 200 tysyach min”. Sho rozpoviv general Nayevev pro pochatok velykoi viiny ta oboronu Pivdnia* [“There are only about 200 thousand mines there.” What General Nayevev told about the start of the great war and the defense of the South]. <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/114433/tam-malo-lezhaty-zo-200-tysyach-min-sho-rozpoviv-heneral-nayevev-pro-pochatok-velykoyi-viiny-ta-oboronu-pivdnia/> [in Ukrainian]; Chernysh, O. (2025, February 24). *Chomu Rosiya tak shvydko okupuie pivden Ukrainy: vidpovidi na chotyry holovni pytannia* [Why Russia occupied southern Ukraine so quickly: answers to four main questions]. BBC Ukraina. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c30ml7861z0o> [in Ukrainian].

In August 2014, the Verkhovna Rada passed the law on the Free Economic Zone “Crimea” (FEZ “Crimea”), which regulated economic activity in this temporarily occupied territory, but in reality, became a duty-free³⁵⁸ “loop-hole” for Ukrainian goods exported to the Russian Federation. Ukrainian MP Rustem Umerov later described this FEZ as “fake”, as it “allows the businesses of Ukrainian oligarchs to operate in the peninsula occupied by the Russian Federation, paying taxes to the budget of the aggressor state, and at the same time discriminates against Crimeans by recognizing them as non-residents³⁵⁹ in Ukraine.” Due to criticism and problems related to corruption and smuggling, the FEZ Crimea was completely abolished only on November 21, 2021.³⁶⁰ In December 2014, Ukraine signed an agreement on supplying electricity to the Crimean Federal District,” which was denounced as unacceptable by the head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, Refat Chubarov.³⁶¹ It should be added that Ukraine never developed an effective information policy for the annexed Crimea.³⁶²

The situation could have been different if Ukraine had not been left alone to face the aggressor, even in the context of hybrid warfare. Russia’s aggression against Georgia in 2008 and the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014 revealed a crisis in both the European and global security systems. For a long time, the West failed to acknowledge this war; for example, in 2014, the BBC referred to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as the “Ukrainian crisis”.³⁶³ I would like to share a couple of personal experiences. In 2016, I had to wait several hours for a flight at Gdańsk airport, during which a news channel was playing continuously in the waiting area. There was news from France, Indonesia, the U.S., and Brazil on the screen – but nothing from Ukraine. Even though heavy fighting was ongoing in the Donbas at the time. In 2017, I won one of the prizes in a competition for journalists for the best explanation and coverage of the implementation of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union (organized by the Association4U initiative). A media ethics training was arranged for the winners, during which two guest journalists from

³⁵⁸ Taxes were paid to the Russian budget under Russian legislation.

³⁵⁹ A non-resident is a legal or natural person who operates in one country but permanently resides in another.

³⁶⁰ Focus.ua. (2021, July 1). *Rada skasovala vilnu ekonomichnu zonu “Krym”: shcho tse oznachaye* [Rada canceled the free economic zone “Crimea”: what it means]. <https://focus.ua/uk/economics/486872-rada-otmenila-svobodnyu-ekonomicheskuyu-zonu-krym-chto-eto-oznachaet> [in Ukrainian].

³⁶¹ Interfax-Ukraine. (2015, December 23). *U dohovi mizh Ukrainoyu ta RF pro postachannya elektroenerhii Krym maye buty zaznachenyi yak tymchasovo okupovana terytoriia – Chubarov* [In the agreement between Ukraine and Russia on electricity supply Crimea must be designated as temporarily occupied territory – Chubarov]. <https://interfax.com.ua/news/political/313283.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁶² Instytut masovoi informatsii. (2025, March 10). *11 rokiv propagandy: yak Kreml zminyuvav informatsiinu stratehiu v Krymu* [11 years of propaganda: how the Kremlin changed the information strategy in Crimea]. <https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/11-rokiv-propagandy-yak-kreml-zminyuvav-informatsijnuyu-strategiyu-v-krymu-i67079> [in Ukrainian].

³⁶³ Robson, D. (2014, June 12). *The best way to predict the future*. BBC Future. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20140612-the-best-way-to-see-the-future>

Germany strongly advised against referring to the militants in Donbas as terrorists, militants, or aggressors, since, according to “journalistic standards”, they were to be described as a “warring party” or “armed formations”, etc. In fact, they didn’t even manage to call the war a war.

Let us also recall that U.S. President Barack Obama advised against confronting Russia over Crimea. The main “peacekeepers” became Russia itself (which formally was not even recognized as the aggressor), as well as Germany and France, which at the time had strong economic ties with it. The “Crimean” sanctions were superficial – they did complicate Russia’s administration of Crimea but did not make it impossible.

The United Nations also demonstrated its ineffectiveness. Yes, the UN repeatedly condemned the annexation of Crimea and adopted resolutions in support of Ukraine’s territorial integrity. The first UN General Assembly resolution on the occupation of Crimea was adopted on March 27, 2014.³⁶⁴ Since then, the UN has adopted a series of resolutions regarding both Crimea and the occupied Donbas. But when the aggressor is a member of the UN Security Council with veto power, everything boiled down to mere documentation of the process.

The attitude of European countries began to shift around 2017, when statements demanding an end to the war started to emerge,³⁶⁵ as it became clear that the “Normandy Format”³⁶⁶ was ineffective precisely because of Russia. In January 2018, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the law “On the Peculiarities of State Policy for Ensuring the State Sovereignty of Ukraine over the Temporarily Occupied Territories in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts”, which officially recognized Russia as an aggressor state and designated the territories it had seized as occupied.³⁶⁷ On April 30, 2018, the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) was officially concluded, and the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) was launched.

The war gradually transitioned from an active phase to a stage of positional confrontation. During this time, the Armed Forces of Ukraine strengthened, which forced the Russian Federation to abandon plans for a full-scale offensive. A possible reason for the shift in aggressive plans was also the drop in oil prices. *Brent* crude

³⁶⁴Tsentr prav liudyny ZMINA. (2024, March 27). *10 rokiv tomu Henasambleia OON ukhvalyla pershu rezoliutsiiu shchodo okupatsii Krymu* [10 years ago the UN General Assembly adopted the first resolution on the occupation of Crimea]. <https://ctrcenter.org/uk/10-rokiv-tomu-genasambleya-on-uhvalyla-pershu-rezolyucziyu-shhodo-okupacziyi-krymu> [in Ukrainian].

³⁶⁵Ukrainska Pravda. (2017, June 26). *Makron nazvav Rosiiu ahresorom i zaharbnikom Krymu* [Macron called Russia an aggressor and occupier of Crimea]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2017/06/26/7147974/> [in Ukrainian]; Radio Svoboda. (2017, August 29). *Zaiava Merkel i Makrona – ostannie poperedzhennia Putinu pryynyty viinu na Donbasi* [Merkel and Macron’s statement – the last warning to Putin to stop the war in Donbas]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28703778.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁶⁶The Normandy Format is a diplomatic negotiation format involving Ukraine, Germany, France, and Russia aimed at resolving the “Donbas conflict”.

³⁶⁷Novynarnia. (2018, February 23). *Ofitsiyno: Povnyi tekst zakonu pro deokupatsiyu Donbasu* [Officially: Full text of the law on de-occupation of Donbas]. <https://novynarnia.com/2018/02/23/ofitsiyno-povnyi-tekst-zakonu-pro-deokupatsiyu-donbasu/> [in Ukrainian].

oil, which cost over \$100 per barrel at the beginning of 2014, had dropped to \$37 per barrel by the end of 2015.³⁶⁸

However, the refusal to launch a “large-scale” offensive proved to be only temporary. A key element of the future invasion was the 2017 reform of the military dis-



Map of troop and equipment movements in 2014–2016³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Svirnevska, V. (2024, September 9). *Yak zminylasia tsina etalonnoho brendu nafty za 10 rokov* [How the price of the benchmark oil brand changed over 10 years]. 24 Kanal. Financy. https://financy.24tv.ua/tsini-naftu-po-rokah-yak-zminilasya-tsina-nafti-brent-za-10-rokiv_n2635608 [in Ukrainian].

³⁶⁹ Kniazeva, N. (2017, January 6). *Kto i kuda: opublikovana detalna karta rossiyskogo vtorzheniya v Ukrainu* [Who and where: detailed map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine published]. Inform-UA. <https://inform-ua.info/world/kto-y-kuda-opublykovana-detalnaya-karta-rossiyskoho-vtorzheniya-v-ukraynu-> [in Russian].

tricts of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation,³⁷⁰ as the primary function of such formations is to ensure preparedness for war.

Between 2017 and 2019, six military ammunition depots with massive stockpiles were “suddenly” blown up: three in 2017, two in 2018, and one in 2019.³⁷¹ Undoubtedly, these were operations carried out by Russian intelligence services.

Military exercises were constantly conducted along the Ukrainian border. In September 2018, the Eastern Military District hosted the Vostok-2018 exercises, which became the largest in the entire post-Soviet history. Officially, around 300,000 military personnel participated, along with over a thousand aircraft and helicopters, 36,000 units of armoured vehicles, and more.³⁷² In November 2018, Russia seized three small Ukrainian vessels with 23 sailors in the Kerch Strait. In response, martial law was declared in Ukraine’s border regions.³⁷³ The imposition of martial law was hardly justified by such a relatively minor incident, but it was entirely logical considering the buildup of Russian military forces near Ukraine’s border in November–December 2018.³⁷⁴

Significant European integration efforts during Poroshenko’s presidency were made in the sphere of foreign policy. As previously mentioned, on June 27, 2014, the Association Agreement with the European Union was signed in Brussels. Let us recall that Yanukovych’s refusal to sign it was the catalyst for the beginning of Euro-maidan. In addition, Ukraine signed the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement with the EU as part of the Association Agreement. The agreement came into force on January 1, 2016.³⁷⁵

The Euro-Atlantic direction was also active, including an attempt to obtain the status of a major non-NATO ally.³⁷⁶ In 2017, Ukraine defined membership in this or-

³⁷⁰President of the Russian Federation. (2017, April 19). *Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 19.04.2017 № 177 Ob utverzhdenii Polozheniya o voennom okruge Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 177 of 19.04.2017 On the approval of the Regulations on the military district of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation]. Kremlin. <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41873> [in Russian].

³⁷¹Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Spysok vybukhiv ta pozhezh na viyskovykh skladakh v Ukraini* [List of explosions and fires at military depots in Ukraine]. *Wikipedia*. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Список_вибухів_та_пожеж_на_військових_складах_в_Україні [in Ukrainian].

³⁷²Aksenov, P. (2022, February 15). *Ihra muskulamy: Chasto li Rossiya sobirala voennye gruppировки, sravnivayemye s nyneshnimi?* [Muscle flexing: Has Russia often gathered military groups comparable to the current ones?]. BBC News Russkaya sluzhba. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-60377472> [in Russian].

³⁷³Poroshenko, P. (2018, November 26). *Ukaz Prezidenta Ukrainy №393/2018 “Pro vvedennia voiennoho stanu v Ukraini”* [Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 393/2018 “On the introduction of martial law in Ukraine”]. Official internet representation of the President of Ukraine. <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3932018-25594> [in Ukrainian].

³⁷⁴Ukrainska Pravda. (2018, December 3). *Poroshenko: vdol hranytsi z Ukrainoiu rezko zvelychylos kilkist voisk RF* [Poroshenko: along the border with Ukraine, the number of Russian troops sharply increased]. Ukrainska Pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/12/3/7200034/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁷⁵Association “Ukrainian Agrarian Business Club”. (n.d.). *Zona vilnoi torhivli z YES (DCFTA)* [Free trade zone with the EU (DCFTA)]. UCAB. https://ucab.ua/ua/doing_agribusiness/zovnishni_rinki/zona_vilnoi_torgivli_z_es_dcfta [in Ukrainian].

³⁷⁶Yevropeiska Pravda. (2014, September 18). *Poroshenko poprosyv u SSHA zbroiu ta status soiusnyka poza NATO* [Poroshenko asked the US for weapons and non-NATO ally status]. Yevropeiska Pravda. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2014/09/18/7026145/> [in Ukrainian].

ganization as one of its key priorities.³⁷⁷ On February 7, 2019, the Verkhovna Rada enshrined in the Constitution the strategic course toward membership in the European Union and NATO.³⁷⁸ Ukraine also completed and implemented the necessary procedures to obtain a visa-free regime with the EU.

It was only in 2018 that Ukraine officially ended its participation in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), although it had never been a full member of this organization.³⁷⁹ That same year, the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation was suspended.³⁸⁰

The domestic policy during Poroshenko's presidency was expected to be defined by the campaign slogan "Living in a new way". As already mentioned, the demand for social justice – despite the vagueness of the term – remained important to voters. Lustration was supposed to play an important role in this process. The corresponding law was signed by the President in October 2014.³⁸¹ The law prohibited officials from the Yanukovich era from holding positions in government. As of the end of 2014, there were approximately 380,000 civil servants in Ukraine.³⁸² By 2017, the list of lustrated officials included as many as 932 individuals, but some of them (at least 68 people) managed to return to their positions through court decisions.³⁸³

Another step in breaking with the communist past was the continuation of decommunization. In 2014, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory was reinstated as

³⁷⁷ Ukrainska Pravda. (2017, July 6). *Poroshenko pidpysav zakon pro priorytet intehtratsii v NATO* [Poroshenko signed the law on NATO integration priority]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2017/07/6/7148843/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁷⁸ Lavreniuk, S. (2019, February 8). *Verkhovna Rada zakripyla v Konstytutsii kurs na chlenstvo v YES ta NATO* [Verkhovna Rada enshrined in the Constitution the course for membership in the EU and NATO]. Holos Ukrainy. <https://www.golos.com.ua/article/313499> [in Ukrainian].

³⁷⁹ Martynov, A. Yu. (n.d.). *Spivdruzhnist Nezalezhnykh Derzhav (SND)* [Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)]. Institute of History of Ukraine NASU. <https://surl.li/cluae1> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸⁰ Zakon.rada. (2018, December 6). *Zakon Ukrainy "Pro prypynennia dii Dohovoru pro druzhbu, spivrobitnytstvo i partnerstvo mizh Ukrainoiu i Rossiiskoiu Federatsiiu"* [Law of Ukraine "On termination of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation"]. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2643-19#Text> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸¹ Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. (2020, March 10). *Zakon Ukrainy "Pro ochyshchennia vlady" vid 16.09.2014 № 1682-VII* [Law of Ukraine "On Purification of Power" dated 16.09.2014 No. 1682-VII]. <https://uinp.gov.ua/pro-instytut/vykonannya-zu-pro-ochyshchennya-vlady/zakon-ukrayiny-pro-ochyshchennya-vlady-vid-16092014-za-no-1682-vii> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸² Fond "Vidkryte suspilstvo". (n.d.). *Chomu kil'kist' chynovnykiv v Ukrayini za rik skorotylasya na 0,4%?* [Why did the number of officials in Ukraine decrease by 0.4% in a year?]. FRA. <https://fra.org.ua/uk/an/publikatsii/novosti/chomu-kil-kist-chinovnikiv-v-ukrayini-za-rik-skorotilasias-na-0-4> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸³ Peshko, K. (2017, May 23). *Povstannya lyustrovanykh. Spysok zvilnenykh chynovnykiv, yaki vzhe diyshly do Yevrosudu* [The uprising of the lustrated. List of dismissed officials who have already reached the European Court]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/publications/povstannya-lyustrovanih-spisok-zvilnenih-chinovnikiv-shecho-vzhe-diyshli-do-jevrosudu-416348.html> [in Ukrainian]; ASPInews. (2020, June 2). *Z 2014 roku 68 lyustrovanykh chynovnykiv ponovylis na posadakh cherez sud* [Since 2014, 68 lustrated officials have been reinstated through court]. ASPInews. <https://aspi.com.ua/news/suspilstvo/z-2014-roku-68-lyustrovanih-chinovnikiv-ponovilis-na-posadakh-cherez-sud#gsc.tab=0> [in Ukrainian].

a central executive authority.³⁸⁴ However, the exposure of former Soviet intelligence agents' names was once again left untouched. In May 2015, the so-called “decommunization” laws were signed.³⁸⁵ Of particular note is the law “On the condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and the prohibition of propaganda of their symbols.” The law condemned the communist regime and banned the use of Nazi and Soviet symbols.³⁸⁶ As of August 2016, more than 1,200 Lenin monuments had been dismantled and 987 settlements and 26 districts had been renamed in Ukraine.³⁸⁷ It is worth noting that communist symbols are banned in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Moldova. Their public use is also banned (on par with Nazi symbols) in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.³⁸⁸

Attention was paid to supporting the Ukrainian language. In 2018, a decree “On urgent measures to strengthen the state status of the Ukrainian language and promote the creation of a unified cultural space of Ukraine” was adopted. At the same time, the rights of Ukraine’s national minorities were guaranteed.³⁸⁹

Among the aspects of humanitarian policy, we should also recall Poroshenko’s key role in the creation of a United Local Orthodox Church in Ukraine. On January 6, 2019, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew signed the Tomos of autocephaly, officially recognizing the independence of the Ukrainian Church.³⁹⁰ However, this step was perceived

³⁸⁴Konareva, L. (2015, July 21). *Dekomunizatsiya: yak tse vidbuvalosya v Yevropi* [Decommunization: how it happened in Europe]. Tyzhden. <https://tyzhden.ua/terytorii-8-krain-ochystyly-vid-komunistychnykh-symvoliv/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸⁵Let us recall that communist totalitarianism has been condemned in the PACE Resolutions “On the Crimes of Communism and the Need for Their Condemnation” (2006), “The Reunification of the Divided Europe” (2009), the European Parliament Resolution “On European Conscience and Totalitarianism” (2009), and the Prague Declaration “On European Conscience and Communism” (2008).

³⁸⁶Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. *Zakon Ukrainy “Pro zasudzhennya komunistychnoho ta natsional-sotsialistynoho (natsystskoho) totalitarnoho rezhymiv v Ukraini ta zaboronu prohandy yikh symboliky” № 317-VIII vid 09.04.2015* [Law of Ukraine “On condemnation of communist and national-socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols” № 317-VIII dated 09.04.2015]. <https://uinp.gov.ua/dokumenty/normatyvno-pravovi-akty-rozrobleni-v-instituty/zakony/zakon-ukrayiny-pro-zasudzhennya-komunistychnoho-ta-natsional-sotsialistynoho-nacystskoho-totalitarnyh-rezhymiv-v-ukrayini-ta-zaboronu-propagandy-yihnoyi-symvoliky-no317-viii-vid-09042015> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸⁷Ukrainska Pravda. (2016, August 23). *V Ukrayini demontovano ponad 1,2 tys. pam'yatnykiv Leninu* [More than 1.2 thousand Lenin monuments dismantled in Ukraine]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/08/23/7118431/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸⁸Sharpinska, I. (2012, July 16). *Terytorii 8 krain ochystyly vid komunistychnykh symboliv* [Territories of 8 countries cleared of communist symbols]. Tyzhden. <https://tyzhden.ua/terytorii-8-krain-ochystyly-vid-komunistychnykh-symvoliv/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁸⁹President of Ukraine. (2018). *Ukaz Prezidenta Ukrainy №156/2018 “Pro nevidkladni zakhody shchodo zmitsnennya derzhavnoho statusu ukrainskoi movy ta spriannya stvorenniu yedynoho kulturnoho prostoru Ukrainy”* [Decree of the President of Ukraine №156/2018 “On urgent measures to strengthen the state status of the Ukrainian language and promote the creation of a single cultural space of Ukraine”]. <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1562018-24258> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹⁰For the role of P. Poroshenko, see: Epifaniy. (2018). *Zavdyaky rishuchosti Poroshenka v Ukrayini vidbulosia stvorennia yedynoi pomisnoi pravoslavnoi tserkvy* [Thanks to Poroshenko’s decisiveness, the creation of a united local Orthodox Church took place in Ukraine] [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IDvV8_COB8 [in Ukrainian].

by society in an ambiguous way. According to the Razumkov Center, as of 2019, the level of religiosity among Ukrainians was 66 %, slightly lower than in 2018 (71.7 %) and in 2014–2016 (76 %).³⁹¹ That same year, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) conducted its own research. 48.8 % identified themselves as members of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), 14.2 % as members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), 16.3 % identified simply as Orthodox, 8.8 % as Greek Catholics, 4.9 % belonged to other denominations, 4.3 % identified as atheists, and 2.7 % did not respond.³⁹² The paradox lies in the fact that while 93 % of the population identified with a denomination, the level of religiosity was only 66 %. This means either non-believers attend church, or respondents confuse denominations, such as the OCU and UOC. The granting of the Tomos did not lead to a mass denominational shift, and this remains the case today. The overall level of religiosity is also not increasing. In 2024, 68 % of Ukrainians considered themselves believers. The highest level of religiosity was in Western Ukraine (85 %), and the lowest in the East (55 %). Young people (18–24) were less religious, while among older groups this figure reached 76 %. Women were more religious than men (76 % versus 58 %). The level of trust in the church as an institution in 2024 was 62.5 %.³⁹³

One of the successful reforms of this period was the beginning of decentralization. It started back in 2014, with key elements including fiscal decentralization (where part of the taxes remains in local communities) and expanded powers for local self-government bodies. Among other things, capacity criteria for communities were defined, which led to the need for their consolidation. The process was launched in 2015 and continues to this day.³⁹⁴ As a result of the reform, by 2017 the number of subsidized local budgets had decreased by 24 %, while the number of donor budgets increased by 12.5 %.³⁹⁵ Within the framework of the reform, a special

³⁹¹ Babchenko, H. (2019, November 16). *Tsentr Razumkova vstanovyv riven relihiynosti sered ukrainsiv* [Razumkov Center established the level of religiosity among Ukrainians]. URLinform. <https://ura-inform.com/uk/suspilstvo/2019/11/16/tsentr-razumkova-proveril-uroven-religioznosti-sredi-ukraintsev-foto-2/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹² Open Orthodox University. (2019, May 24). *Konfesiina struktura naseleennia Ukrainy i stvorennia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy Ukrainy: traven 2019* [Confessional structure of Ukraine's population and the creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine: May 2019]. <https://oou.org.ua/2019/05/24/konfesiina-struktura-naseleennia-ukrayiny-i-stvorennia-pravoslavnoyi-cerkvy-ukrayiny-traven-2019/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹³ Yakobchuk, A. (2025, February 28). *Riven relihiynosti v Ukrayini znyzhuietsia: dani Tsentru Razumkova za 2024 rik* [The level of religiosity in Ukraine is declining: data of Razumkov Center for 2024]. Slovoproslovo. <https://slovoproslovo.info/riven-relihiynosti-v-ukraini-znyzhuetsia-dani-tsentru-razumkova-za-2024-rik> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹⁴ Kazyuk, Ya. (2023, November 3). *Analiz metodyk otsiniuvannia spromozhnosti terytorialnykh hromad, vysnovky, propozyitsii* [Analysis of methods for assessing the capacity of territorial communities, conclusions, proposals]. Center for Political and Legal Reforms. <https://pravo.org.ua/blogs/analiz-metodyk-otsiniuvannia-spromozhnosti-terytorialnykh-gromad-vysnovky-propozytsii/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹⁵ Furdychko, L. Ye. (2017). *Finasova detsentralizatsiia: formuvannia i vykorystannia miscevykh biudzhetyv Ukrainy, yikh vplyv na rozvytok krainy* [Financial decentralization: formation and use of local budgets of Ukraine, their impact on the development of the country]. *Investytsii: praktyka ta dosvid*, (23), 23–30. (See p. 24) [in Ukrainian].

procedure for local self-government in the occupied territories of Donbas was also considered, including the proposed introduction of the institution of prefects, who would oversee compliance with the law.³⁹⁶

The successes of this period in reforming the army were significant. Although there were positive assessments confirming the promised transition to NATO standards,³⁹⁷ there were also claims that in many aspects, the Armed Forces of Ukraine were reformed according to Soviet-era traditions.³⁹⁸ In any case, as of 2022, the Ukrainian army was capable of repelling the Russian aggressor, and a significant share of the credit for this belongs to Petro Poroshenko.

One of the key needs of Ukrainian society remained (and still remains) the idea of justice, despite the fact that people understand justice differently: from equality before the law to economic equality (a remnant of the “Soviet” mentality). During Poroshenko’s presidency, a number of anti-corruption and related reforms were launched.

In the spring of 2015, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine was established to combat corruption and other criminal offenses committed by high-ranking officials that pose a threat to national security.³⁹⁹ A law on the prosecution was also adopted, and judicial reform was carried out. In the economic sphere, an anti-raider law was adopted, and the ProZorro public procurement system was introduced. Electronic declarations were introduced for officials, civil servants, and politicians. This innovation caused a significant public response. After the adoption of the Law “On the Prevention of Corruption” in October 2014, a state register of declarations was created. The register became operational in August 2016, and officials, deputies, and civil servants were required to submit their data. The declarations were verified by the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP).⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ 5 Kanal. (2015, July 1). *Prefekty matymut pravo vidminiaty rishennia orhaniv samovriaduvannia – Prezydent* [Prefects will have the right to cancel decisions of local self-government bodies – President]. <https://www.5.ua/polityka/prefekty-matymut-pravo-vidminiaty-rishennia-orhaniv-samovriaduvannia-prezydent-85909.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹⁷ Kostiuk, B. (2016, June 6). *Reforma ukrainskoi armii. “My nareshiti buduiemo efektyvni Zbroiny syly” – Poroshenko* [Reform of the Ukrainian army. “We are finally building effective Armed Forces” – Poroshenko]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27841706.html> [in Ukrainian]; European Solidarity (2019, December 6). *Za roky prezydentstva Petra Poroshenka riven doviry do armii viris utrychi* [During Petro Poroshenko’s presidency, the level of trust in the army tripled]. <https://eurosolidarity.org/2019/12/06/za-roky-prezydentstva-petra-poroshenk/> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹⁸ Chornyi, O. (2018). *Ukraina v yevropeiskii tsyvilizatsiinii konkurentsii* [Ukraine in European civilizational competition]. *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I. F. Kurasa NAN Ukrainy*, Issue 2, 33–60. (See p. 48) [in Ukrainian]; UNIAN. (2019, April 19). *ZSU – ulamok radianskoi armii: ekspert poyasniv, chomu Poroshenko rozcharuvav viiskovykh* [Armed Forces of Ukraine – a fragment of the Soviet army: expert explained why Poroshenko disappointed the military]. <https://www.unian.ua/politics/10522704-zsu-ulamok-radianskoji-armiji-ekspert-poyasniv-chomu-poroshenko-rozcharuvav-viyskovih.html> [in Ukrainian].

³⁹⁹ NABU. (n.d.). *Eradicate and prevent. Eradicating top corruption for the sake of a successful society and an effective state*. <https://nabu.gov.ua/en/>

⁴⁰⁰ Stasiuk, A. (2023, September 9). *One z dvoh: chomu parlament ponoviv e-deklaruvannia, ale zalyshyv reiestr deklaratsii zakryty* [One of two: why the parliament renewed e-declaration but left the declaration register closed]. *Suspilne*. <https://suspilne.media/569281-odne-z-dvoh-comu-parlament-ponoviv-e-deklaruvanna-ale-zalisiv-reestr-deklaracij-zakritim/> [in Ukrainian].

In 2015, large-scale police reform also began. Based on international experience, especially Georgian, the National Police of Ukraine was established to replace the old Soviet-style militia system. A shift from a repressive model to a service-oriented one was envisioned; changes were made in the work of the patrol police, and a fight against corruption was announced.

Despite positive trends, the reforms faced many problems, particularly in staff renewal and the effectiveness of the fight against corruption. Several major scandals were linked to the activities of the NABU, which was supposed to become a showcase for anti-corruption efforts. Within a few years, employees of this organization were found to be involved in financial schemes, connections with criminal circles, suspected of leaking high-profile cases, abusing official powers, helping relatives of corrupt officials avoid punishment, and more.⁴⁰¹ Some judges and prosecutors who made unlawful decisions during the Kuchma and Yanukovych eras remained in office, and mechanisms of influence over the judiciary persisted. The register of electronic declarations revealed that many officials possessed significant wealth of questionable origin. There are numerous cases when officials “live” off the income of a successful spouse, or when retired parents give money to their adult children, etc.⁴⁰² All of this can be regarded as attempts to legalize illegally obtained funds. Several high-profile incidents involving police abuse of power, including mistreatment and the use of forced confessions, also shocked society.⁴⁰³ Around 60 law enforcement officers who were involved in crimes during the Revolution of Dignity retained their positions in the newly formed police.⁴⁰⁴

The author by no means considers all officials, judges, civil servants, police officers, etc., to be corrupt or criminal. Moreover, corruption exists even in countries with the most advanced democratic institutions. In Ukraine, corruption remains a serious issue that affects many areas of life, but it is not all-encompassing. There is a public demand in Ukrainian society for fighting corruption. Let us also recall that this struggle yields gradual and not always quick results. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International), Ukraine ranked 104th out of 180 countries in

⁴⁰¹ Instytut heopolitychnoho vymiru. (2025, April 18). *TOP-10 huchnykh provaliv NABU: koruptsiia, narkotyky ta zrady za 10 rokiv isnuvannia* [TOP-10 loud failures of NABU: corruption, drugs and betrayals over 10 years of existence]. <https://igs.org.ua/top-10-guchnyh-provaliv-nabu-koruptsiya-narkotyky-ta-zrady-za-10-rokiv-isnuvannya/koruptsiya/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁰² See: Donchenko, T. (2017, May 13). *Bahati podatkvitsi: zvidky zh nabuti statky?* [Rich tax officials: where did the acquired wealth come from?]. *Telegraf*. <https://www.telegraf.in.ua/topnews/10061777-bagat-podatkv-c-zvdki-zh-nabuti-statki.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁰³ Shumak, Yu. (2020, September 2). *Reforma ukrainskoi politzii: yak vona prokhodyla* [Reform of the Ukrainian police: how it happened]. *Dyvys.info*. <https://dyvys.info/2020/09/02/reforma-ukrayinskoyi-politsiyi-yak-vona-prokhodyla/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁰⁴ Shershen, A. (2023, November 30). *Ivan Babenko i Denys Ivanov, prokurory u “spravakh Maidanu”. Yanukovych dav vkazivku Zakharchenku strilyaty po mitinguvalnykh blyzko 7-i ranku 20 lyutoho* [Ivan Babenko and Denis Ivanov, prosecutors in the Maidan cases. Yanukovych ordered Zakharchenko to shoot at protesters around 7 a.m. on February 20]. *Ukrinform*. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3793583-ivan-babenko-i-denis-ivanov-prokurori-u-spravah-majdanu.html> [in Ukrainian].

2024.⁴⁰⁵ For comparison, in 2014, Ukraine was ranked 142nd out of 175 countries.⁴⁰⁶ A number of anti-corruption institutions have been established in Ukraine, and these bodies are active and achieving success. For example, in 2024, several high-profile NABU cases ended with guilty verdicts. Among them was the case of more than \$60 million in losses at the State Food and Grain Corporation, for which the culprit was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Abuses in a city council in Odesa region were investigated – the perpetrators, a deputy and the mayor, received prison sentences of 10 and 9 years, respectively for a \$50,000 bribe. A “gas scheme” was investigated, and its organizers – a former MP and his financial director – were sentenced to 15 and 12 years in prison for causing the state approximately 3 billion UAH in losses.⁴⁰⁷

An important social reform was the healthcare reform. It was aimed at changing the healthcare financing model and improving access to medical services. The state began guaranteeing medical services based on the principle of “money follows the patient”.⁴⁰⁸ Although this reform was heavily criticized during Poroshenko’s presidency, it proved to be viable and laid the foundation for further development of healthcare.

Reforms also continued in the economic sphere. A reform of the banking sector took place – insolvent banks were closed. In 2016, PrivatBank was nationalized, which is believed to have been due to serious issues with capital and the loan portfolio.⁴⁰⁹

In addition to the anti-corruption measures already mentioned, there was also a “de-oligarchization”,⁴¹⁰ although the president himself did not quit business and retained ownership of the Roshen corporation. Despite his pre-election promises to sell his assets if elected president, Poroshenko did not sell a single one.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁵ Transparency International Ukraine. (2025, February 11). *Corruption Perceptions Index – 2024*. <https://ti-ukraine.org/en/research/corruption-perceptions-index-2024/>

⁴⁰⁶ Transparency International Ukraine. (2014, December 3). *CPI-2014. Press Release*. <https://ti-ukraine.org/en/research/cpi-2014/>

⁴⁰⁷ Porady.org.ua. (2025, February 14). *TOP-10 obvynuvalnykh vyrokiv, yaki byly ukhvaleni u spravakh NABU i SAP u 2024 rotsi* [Top 10 convictions issued in NABU and SAP cases in 2024]. <https://porady.org.ua/top-10-obvynuvalnykh-vyrokiv-yaki-buly-ukhvaleni-u-spravakh-nabu-i-sap-u-2024-rotsi> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁰⁸ Bombela, V. (2019, February 5). *Reformy Suprun: choho dosyahla v.o. ministra i shcho bude z medytsynoyu* [Suprun’s reforms: achievements of the acting minister and the future of healthcare]. *Fakty*. <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/20190205-reformy-suprun-chogo-dosyagla-v-o-ministra-i-shho-bude-z-medytsynoyu/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁰⁹ Supivska, Ye. (2024, December 18). *Za lashtunkamy skandalnoyi natsionalizatsiyi – shcho bulo z PrivatBankom* [Behind the scenes of the scandalous nationalization – what happened with PrivatBank]. *Novyny.live*. <https://novyny.live/ekonomi/za-lashtunkami-skandalnoyi-natsionalizatsiyi-shcho-bulo-z-privatbankom-220147.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴¹⁰ Dubenskyi, V. (2015, March 28). *Poroshenko – za “deoligarhizatsiyu” Ukrainy* [Poroshenko supports the “de-oligarchization” of Ukraine]. *Deutsche Welle*. <https://www.dw.com/uk/порошенко-висловився-за-деолігархізацію-україни/a-18347527> [in Ukrainian].

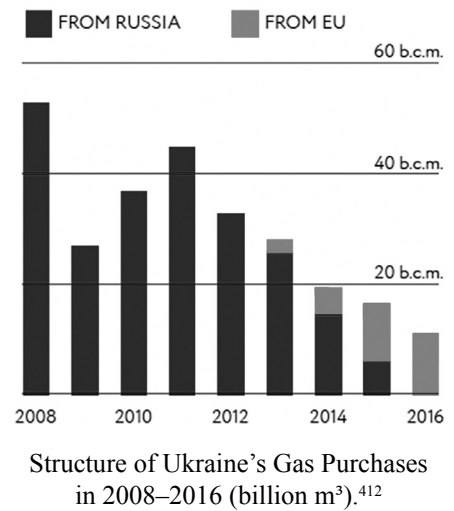
⁴¹¹ Slidstvo.info. (2018, September 19). *Prybutok Roshen za chasy prezydentstva Poroshenka zris u 2,3 razy* [Roshen’s profit increased 2.3 times during Poroshenko’s presidency]. <https://www.slidstvo.info/news/prybutok-roshen-za-chasy-prezydentstva-poroshenka-zris-u-2-3-razy/> [in Ukrainian].

A major problem for Ukraine remained its economic dependence on Russian gas. During this period, Ukraine stopped importing gas from Russia and began purchasing it on the European market. The reform of the country's gas sector should be considered one of the greatest successes of this period.

Another important step was the radical regulation of gas prices for households through a 6.6-fold increase in domestic tariffs over three years. The sharp increase in gas tariffs, even despite generous subsidies, significantly improved the state budget's financial condition. Naftogaz was also reformed, with its unbundling according to the EU's Third Energy Package being a crucial step aimed at demonopolizing gas supply to households.⁴¹³

However, dealing with coal dependency proved more difficult for Ukraine. At least one-third of the country's electricity was produced by thermal power plants and combined heat and power stations. The loss of control over part of Donbas in 2014 raised the issue of coal replacement. The situation was further complicated by the fact that, since June 2014, Russia had stopped supplying gas to Ukraine.⁴¹⁴ On November 21, 2014, Russia also stopped coal deliveries, despite Ukrainian companies having paid in advance.⁴¹⁵ A solution was found: coal started being purchased from the occupied territories of Donbas.

Apparently, the decision to purchase coal from the Separate Raions of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts was made at the highest level. Viktor Medvedchuk is named as a possible negotiator with the militants and Russia.⁴¹⁶ To give the deal a veneer of legality, a condition was set that the coal must come from state-owned mines that had undergone re-registration in Ukraine. The main suppliers became the Kyseliov mine in Torez, Donetsk region, and 16 mines of the state enterprise Luhanskvuhil-



⁴¹² Vox Ukraine. (n.d.). *Providnyk reform: shist' dosyahren' y sim nevdach Ukrayiny z chasiv peremohy Maidanu* [Guide to reforms: six achievements and seven failures of Ukraine since the Maidan victory]. <https://voxukraine.org/longreads/three-years-of-reforms/index-ua.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Dorosh, S. (2022, January 18). *Vuhillia, za yake sudiat Poroshenka. Shcho vidbulos z palyvom v Ukraini u 2014 rotsi* [The coal for which Poroshenko is being tried: What happened with fuel in Ukraine in 2014]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-59970360> [in Ukrainian].

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Stasiuk, A. (2022, January 16). *Poroshenko, Medvedchuk i vuhillia. U chomu zvynuvachuiut piatoho prezidenta* [Poroshenko, Medvedchuk, and coal: What the fifth president is accused of]. *Suspilne Novyny*. <https://suspilne.media/192770-poroshenko-medvedchuk-i-vuhilla-ak-zakupovuvali-antracit-ta-u-comu-zvinuvacuut-patogo-prezidenta/> [in Ukrainian].

lia.⁴¹⁷ Interestingly, payment for fossil fuel from the occupied territories was made in cash, since there was no other way to transfer money to areas not controlled by Ukraine. This information was confirmed by Yuriy Prodan, Minister of Energy and Coal Industry in the first government of Arseniy Yatsenyuk (held office from February 27 to December 2, 2014).⁴¹⁸ Petro Poroshenko also confirmed the purchase of coal from occupied territories, stating that the funds paid were used solely to pay miners' wages.⁴¹⁹ In December 2021, the State Bureau of Investigation charged Poroshenko with treason and aiding terrorist organizations. According to the investigation, over UAH 200 million was transferred to the occupation authorities in 2014–2015, and the overall scheme cost the state budget about UAH 1.5 billion.⁴²⁰

A key element in the supply of coal from the occupied territories was the railway, which operated even during active hostilities. An interesting event occurred in May 2016, when a protest was held in Yasynuvata by railway workers employed in the territory controlled by the “DPR” militants. The protesters demanded that Ukraine pay their salaries, since they had not received any wages from either the Ukrainian state or the militants since February of that year.⁴²¹

Back in 2014, there was an attempt to shift part of electricity generation to coal from the Republic of South Africa, but it was deemed low-quality and expensive.⁴²² According to Arsen Avakov, then Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, a campaign was launched against coal supplies from South Africa that “served the interest of making us dependent on the Russian Federation and on the pseudo-organizations

⁴¹⁷ Dorosh, S. (2022, January 18). *Vuhillia, za yake sudiat Poroshenka. Shcho vidbulos z palyvom v Ukraini u 2014 rotsi* [The coal for which Poroshenko is being tried: What happened with fuel in Ukraine in 2014]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-59970360> [in Ukrainian].

⁴¹⁸ Radio Svoboda. (2015, January 9). *Ukraina prodovzhuie zakupovuvaty vuhillia na okupovanykh terytoriiakh Donbasu – Ziukov* [Ukraine continues to purchase coal in the occupied territories of Donbas – Zyukov]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26784794.html> [in Ukrainian]; Volynski Novyny. (2022, May 24). *Eksministr energetyky pidtverdyl, shcho Poroshenko kupuvav vuhillia u “DNR” za hotivku* [Ex-minister of Energy confirmed that Poroshenko bought coal from the “DNR” for cash]. <https://www.volynnews.com/news/all/eksministr-enerhetyky-pidtverdyl-shcho-poroshenko-kupuvav-vuhillia-u-dnr-za-hotivku/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴¹⁹ Radio Svoboda. (2015, January 9). *Ukraina prodovzhuie zakupovuvaty vuhillia na okupovanykh terytoriiakh Donbasu – Ziukov* [Ukraine continues to purchase coal in the occupied territories of Donbas – Zyukov]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/26784794.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²⁰ Stasiuk, A. (2022, January 16). *Poroshenko, Medvedchuk i vuhillia. U chomu zvinuvachuiut piatoho prezidenta* [Poroshenko, Medvedchuk, and coal: What the fifth president is accused of]. *Suspilne Novyny*. <https://suspilne.media/192770-poroshenko-medvedchuk-i-vuhillia-ak-zakupovuvali-antracit-ta-u-comu-zvinuvacuut-patogo-prezidenta/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²¹ Glavcom. (2016, May 30). *Zaliznychnyky, shcho pratsuyut na “DNR”, vymagayut hroshey vid Ukrainy* [Railway workers employed by the ‘DNR’ demand money from Ukraine]. <https://glavcom.ua/news/zaliznychnyky-shcho-pratsuyut-na-dnr-vymagayut-hroshey-vid-ukrajini-foto-353839.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²² Dorosh, S. (2022, January 18). *Vuhillia, za yake sudiat Poroshenka. Shcho vidbulos z palyvom v Ukraini u 2014 rotsi* [The coal for which Poroshenko is being tried: What happened with fuel in Ukraine in 2014]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-59970360> [in Ukrainian]; Bazak, O. (2014, November 10). *Poroshenko zasumnivavsia v pokhodzhenni afrykanskooho vuhillia?* [Did Poroshenko doubt the origin of African coal?]. Grechka. <https://gre4ka.info/suspilstvo/poroshenko-zasumnivavsia-v-pokhodzhenni-afrykanskooho-vuhillia/> [in Ukrainian].

‘DPR’ and ‘LPR’”. In 2016, the case concerning the purchase of low-quality coal was closed.⁴²³ The previously mentioned Yurii Prodan stated that South African coal showed better performance in use than coal from Donbas.⁴²⁴

During the energy crisis of 2014–2015, Ukraine began purchasing coal from Russia.⁴²⁵ In 2016, Ukraine spent \$1.467 billion on coal imports, and in 2017 – up to \$2.744 billion.⁴²⁶ Ukraine also continued to receive coal from the uncontrolled territories. This was acknowledged by then Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman.⁴²⁷ The purchases continued until February 2017, when ATO veterans blocked railway and road links with the occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.⁴²⁸ Russian coal imports also declined – in 2018, only \$1.67 billion worth was purchased, accounting for 61.91 % of total imports. The geography of coal imports also expanded, with deliveries beginning from the USA and Canada.⁴²⁹

In 2019, Russia banned coal exports to Ukraine, and since then, Ukraine began importing coal from Belarus.⁴³⁰ At that time, according to Volodymyr Omelchenko, Director of Energy Programs at the Razumkov Centre, about half of thermal power plant units were converted to use another type of coal extracted in different regions

⁴²³ Dorosh, S. (2022, January 18). *Vuhillia, za yake sudiat Poroshenka. Shcho vidbulos z palyvom v Ukraini u 2014 rotsi* [The coal for which Poroshenko is being tried: What happened with fuel in Ukraine in 2014]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-59970360> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²⁴ Volynski Novyny. (2022, May 24). Eksministr enerhetyky pidtverdyyv, shcho Poroshenko kupuvav vuhillia u “DNR” za hotivku [Ex-minister of Energy confirmed that Poroshenko bought coal from “DNR” for cash]. <https://www.volynnews.com/news/all/eksministr-enerhetyky-pidtverdyyv-shcho-poroshenko-kupuvav-vuhillia-u-dnr-za-hotivku/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²⁵ RBC-Ukraine. (2021, June 4). Poroshenko rozkrytykuvav vladu za import elektroenergii ta vuhillia z Rosii u 2020–2021 [Poroshenko criticized the government for importing electricity and coal from Russia in 2020–2021]. <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/poroshenko-raskritikoval-vlast-import-elektroenergii-1622814648.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²⁶ Slovo i dilo. (2018, January 9). Ukraina zbilshyla valiutni vytraty na kupivliu rosiiskoho vuhillia [Ukraine increased foreign currency expenditures on the purchase of Russian coal]. <https://www.slovovidilo.ua/2018/01/09/novyna/ekonomika/ukrayina-zbilshyla-valyutni-vytraty-kupivlyu-rosijskoho-vuhillya> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²⁷ Dorosh, S. (2022, January 18). *Vuhillia, za yake sudiat Poroshenka. Shcho vidbulos z palyvom v Ukraini u 2014 rotsi* [The coal for which Poroshenko is being tried: What happened with fuel in Ukraine in 2014]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-59970360> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²⁸ Depo.ua. (2018, December 13). *U 2018 rotsi postavky vuhillia z Rosii koshtuvaly Ukraini \$1,67 mlrd* [In 2018, coal supplies from Russia cost Ukraine \$1.67 billion]. <https://www.depo.ua/ukr/money/u-2018-roci-postavki-vugillya-z-rosiyi-koshtuvali-ukrayini-1-67-mlrd-20181213885250> [in Ukrainian]; Stasyuk, A. (2022, January 16). Poroshenko, Medvedchuk i vuhillia. *U chomu zynuvachuiut p'atoho prezidenta* [Poroshenko, Medvedchuk, and coal: What the fifth president is accused of]. *Suspilne Novyny*. <https://suspilne.media/192770-poroshenko-medvedchuk-i-vugilla-ak-zakupovuvali-antracit-ta-u-comu-zvinuvacuut-patogo-prezidenta/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴²⁹ Depo.ua. (2018, December 13). *U 2018 rotsi postavky vuhillia z Rosii koshtuvaly Ukraini \$1,67 mlrd* [In 2018, coal supplies from Russia cost Ukraine \$1.67 billion]. <https://www.depo.ua/ukr/money/u-2018-roci-postavki-vugillya-z-rosiyi-koshtuvali-ukrayini-1-67-mlrd-20181213885250> [in Ukrainian].

⁴³⁰ Solonyna, Ye. (2021, December 13). *Vuhilna “yama”: yak Ukraina podolaie enerhetychnu kryzu i do choho tut DTEK, Rosia ta import z Bilorusi* [Coal “pit”: How Ukraine overcomes the energy crisis and the role of DTEK, Russia, and imports from Belarus]. *Radio Svoboda*. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/vugillya-kryza-tes-aes-dtek-bilorus-rossiya-import/31602912.html> [in Ukrainian].

of Ukraine, thereby reducing the demand for anthracite.⁴³¹ Interestingly, Ukraine continued purchasing electricity and coal from Belarus and Russia practically until February 2022. In 2021, Petro Poroshenko criticized the current government for this: “Let Zelensky now explain why in 2020–2021 he spent a billion dollars buying electricity and coal from the occupied territories and from Russia, when we had already rebuilt the power stations and converted them to coal mined in Ukraine.”⁴³²

Russia remained a partner of Ukraine in the nuclear sector. In 2018, a contract between NNEGC Energoatom and the Russian company TVEL was extended until 2025 for the supply of nuclear fuel from Russia to Ukraine. Under the agreement, fuel supply for most Ukrainian nuclear power plant units was ensured.⁴³³ The agreement was terminated in 2022. Since then, agreements have been signed with the American company Westinghouse, the Canadian company CAMECO, and the British company Urenco, allowing Ukraine’s nuclear power plants to meet their needs.⁴³⁴

In 2019, Petro Poroshenko instructed the Verkhovna Rada to consider a draft law on completing the construction of power units at the Khmelnytskyi NPP. It was planned to use Czech reactors for the completion. However, it was soon discovered that the Czech company Škoda JS was controlled by the Russian Gazprom, and the agreement was abandoned.⁴³⁵

In summary, despite noticeable achievements, the pace of reforms remained uneven, and cooperation with the Russian Federation continued in the economic sphere. The inconsistency of the actions taken led to a significant drop in Poroshenko’s ratings and his loss in the elections.

Volodymyr Zelensky took the oath of office as President of Ukraine on May 20, 2019. He became the first head of state whose election united all regions of the country, receiving majority support from voters both in the East and in the West. Interestingly, he was supported by young people aged 18–39, as well as those with higher education (67 % of those who have it). He also rallied around himself the

⁴³¹ Dorosh, S. (2022, January 18). *Vuhillia, za yake sudiat Poroshenka. Shcho vidbulos z palyvom v Ukraini u 2014 rotsi* [The coal for which Poroshenko is being tried: What happened with fuel in Ukraine in 2014]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-59970360> [in Ukrainian].

⁴³² Gazeta.ua. (2021, June 4). *Nekhai Zelenskyi poiasnyt, chomu zaraz Ukraina kupuye vuhillia i elektryku v okupantiv – Poroshenko* [Let Zelensky explain why Ukraine is currently buying coal and electricity from the occupiers – Poroshenko]. https://gazeta.ua/articles/politics/_nehaj-zelenskij-poyasnit-chomu-zaraz-ukrayina-kupuye-vugillya-i-elektriku-v-okupantiv-poroshenko/1035857 [in Ukrainian].

⁴³³ ZN.UA. (2018, December 20). *Ukraina taimno prodovzhyla kontrakt na postachannia iadernoho palyva z RF* [Ukraine secretly extended the contract for nuclear fuel supply from the Russian Federation]. https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/ukrayina-tayemno-prodovzhyla-kontrakt-na-postachannya-yadernogo-paliva-z-rf-297609_.html [in Ukrainian].

⁴³⁴ Stasyuk, A. (2022, July 12). *Bez rosiiskoho palyva na ukrainskykh AES. Yak pratsiuvatymut reaktory* [Without Russian fuel at Ukrainian NPPs. How reactors will operate]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/258626-bez-rosijskogo-paliva-na-ukrainskih-aes-ak-pracuvatymut-reaktori/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴³⁵ Radio Svoboda. (2019, April 9). *Proekt na 70 miliardiv: Poroshenko pidpysav ukaz shchodo budivnytstva dvoh enerhoblockiv Khmelnytskoi AES* [A 70-billion project: Poroshenko signed a decree on construction of two power units of Khmelnytskyi NPP]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-schemes-poroshenko-khaes/29870815.html> [in Ukrainian].

so-called protest electorate – those who opposed the “traditional” political elites⁴³⁶ and voted for an actor and comedian with no political experience. All of this clearly indicates a significant public demand for change and dissatisfaction with the “old” elites. This may have been one of the key reasons for Zelensky’s victory.

During his inaugural speech, Zelensky dissolved the Verkhovna Rada,⁴³⁷ and as a result of new elections, the pro-presidential party “Sluha narodu” (“Servant of the People”) won 254 out of 450 seats and formed a majority. This removed all restrictions on implementing the election program, which consisted of 71 promises. Interestingly, according to monitoring data, as of February 10, 2022, 18 promises (27 %) had been fulfilled. Among the achievements were the land market, the introduction of the “zero declaration” for businesses, and the Open Skies Agreement with the EU. Eight promises were deemed failed according to the monitoring, primarily the effort to bring the shadow economy into the light. Another 45 commitments were at various stages of implementation.⁴³⁸ Key points of the program included the introduction of a jury composed of “ordinary people”, the return of Ukrainian labor migrants, and the adoption of major decisions online, among others.⁴³⁹

A kind of hallmark of the reforms was the *Great Construction* program, which aimed to modernize the country’s infrastructure – from roads and bridges to hospitals and schools. And indeed, much was done. In two years, over 13,000 km of roads were renovated and built – 40 % of the main network – and hundreds of social facilities were modernized, including over 200 schools and kindergartens, 150 healthcare institutions, and more.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ Radio Svoboda. (2019, April 8). *Natsionalnyi ekzypol: naiaktyvnishe za Zelenskoho holosovali lyudy vid 30 do 39 rokiv* [National exit poll: People aged 30 to 39 voted most actively for Zelensky]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-ekzyt-pol-zelenskyi-vybortsi-do-39-rokiv/29868087.html> [in Ukrainian]; Institute of Regional Research (2019, May 8). *Khto ti vybortsi, yaki obraly Zelenskoho ta holosovali za Poroshenko – sotsiologhy dali kharakterystyky elektoratam obokh kandydativ* [Who are the voters who elected Zelensky and voted for Poroshenko – sociologists gave characteristics of both candidates’ electorates]. https://www.irf.ua/khto_ti_vybortsi_yaki_obrali_zelenskoho_ta_golosovali_za_poroshenko_sotsiologi_dali_kharakterystyky_elektoratam_obokh_kandydativ/ [in Ukrainian].

⁴³⁷ Kushnir, M. (2019, May 21). *Rozpusk Verkhovnoi Rady: zakonno chy ni i shcho kazhut holovy fraktsii?* [Dissolution of the Verkhovna Rada: legal or not and what faction leaders say]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/rozpusk-rady-zakonno-chy-ni/29955049.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴³⁸ Slovo i Dilo. (2022, February 10). *Velykyi rozbir prohramy Zelenskoho: yak spravy z vykonannyam kozhnoi z peredyvborchyykh obitsiank* [Comprehensive analysis of Zelensky’s program: progress on fulfilling each election promise]. <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2022/02/10/statija/polityka/velykyj-rozbir-prohramy-zelenskoho-yak-spravy-vykonannyam-kozhnoyi-peredyvborchyyx-obitsyanok> [in Ukrainian].

⁴³⁹ Official website of Zelensky’s election campaign. (2019). *Peredyvborcha prohrama kandydata na post Prezidenta Ukrainy Volodymyra Zelenskoho* [Election program of the candidate for the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky]. <https://program.ze2019.com/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁴⁰ Zelenskyi, V. (2021, December 24). *Za dva roky v mezhakh prohramy “Velyke budivnytstvo” obnovleno y pobudovano ponad 40% osnovnoi merezhi dorih Ukrainy* [Over two years, more than 40% of Ukraine’s main road network was renewed and built within the “Great Construction” program]. *Official Internet Representation of the President of Ukraine*. <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/volodimir-zelenskij-zadva-roki-v-mezhah-programi-velike-bud-72245> [in Ukrainian]; Zelenskyi, V. (2021, June 24). *“Velyke budivnytstvo” – realno kruta prohrama, yaka dopomohla zberety robochi misia pid chas pandemii* [“Great Construction” – a really cool program that helped save jobs during the pandemic]. *Official Internet Representation of the President of Ukraine*. <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-velike-budivnytstvo-realno-kruta-programa-yaka-dopo-69217> [in Ukrainian].

The program undoubtedly helped improve the country's infrastructure. From personal observation – a modern and high-quality highway finally appeared between Chernihiv and Kyiv. Road infrastructure also played an important role in Ukraine's defence: after February 24, 2022, it allowed for the rapid deployment of resources to critical areas.

Implementation of the program created new jobs and stimulated local development by involving local authorities in co-financing. In many territorial communities, modern administrative service centres (CNAPs), outpatient clinics, and other facilities were established. At the same time, the program had many critics.⁴⁴¹ Opponents criticized the lack of transparency, significant corruption risks, and inflated budgets. There were also instances of poor-quality work. The program was financed from all available sources – from external loans to money from the COVID fund.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic turned out to be an unpredictable factor. In Ukraine, as in most countries around the world, quarantine was declared. On March 12, 2020, educational institutions were closed and initial restrictions were introduced, and on March 25, the Cabinet of Ministers declared a state of emergency throughout the country.⁴⁴²

At the end of 2021, in the President's annual address to the Verkhovna Rada, certain reform results were summarized.⁴⁴³ The main indicators for 2021 were named as the growth of Ukraine's economy, a reduction in the national debt, and an increase in foreign exchange reserves. New government programs were announced, primarily the *Ukrainian Dream* – a 5 % housing loan program for those who repay loans honestly; the *Great Thermomodernization* – a program expected to become a reality in 2022 – and other initiatives.

Attention was given to international activities and strengthening national defence. Strengthened cooperation with the USA, the United Kingdom, Turkey, France, and others was mentioned. A definite achievement was the adoption of the Strategy for the Reintegration and De-occupation of Crimea for the first time. The document ad-

⁴⁴¹ 5 kanal. (2021, March 28). *Prohrama prezydenta "Velyke budivnytstvo" chy "Velyke kradyvnytstvo"? – rozsliduvannia "Espresso"* [President's program "Great Construction" or "Great Theft"? – Investigation by "Espresso"]. <https://www.5.ua/polityka/prohrama-prezydenta-velyke-budivnytstvo-chy-velyke-kradyvnytstvo-rozsliduvannia-espresso-240480.html> [in Ukrainian]; Zahrebelska, A. (2021, August 24). *Koruptsiia ta neefektyvnist u "Velykomu budivnytstvi"* [Corruption and inefficiency in the "Great Construction"]. Nashi hroshi. <https://nashigroshi.org/2021/08/24/koruptsiia-ta-neefektyvnist-osnovni-ryzyky-velykoho-budivnytstva-iaki-dosi-ne-zniato> [in Ukrainian]; Nikolov, Y. (2022, January 5). *"Velyke budivnytstvo": yk Ukraina vtrachala hroshi* ["Great Construction": how Ukraine lost money]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/ECONOMICS/velike-budivnytstvo-jak-ukrajina-vtrachala-na-nomu-hroshi-v-2021-rotsi.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁴² Havrylenko, V. (2020, July 15). *Koly v Ukrayini pochavsia karantyn: khronolohiia podiy i shcho zminylosia vid ioho pochamky* [When quarantine began in Ukraine: chronology of events and what changed since its start]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/koli-pochavsya-karantin-v-ukrayini-2020-hronologiya-shho-zminylosya_n1378121 [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁴³ Less than three months after the reporting, a "full-scale" war began, which drastically changed everything.

dressed diplomatic efforts, military aspects, information policy, and legal measures to protect Ukrainian citizens living in the temporarily occupied territory.

The Law “On the Fundamentals of National Resistance”, which was later adopted, played a very important role. It defined the principles for forming territorial defence, regulated issues of resistance movements, and prepared citizens to defend the state.⁴⁴⁴ It is worth noting that the existence of the Territorial Defence Forces (TDF) became a crucial element in repelling Russian aggression in February 2022.

The aforementioned report also announced a *Missile Program*, a program for rebuilding the Ukrainian Navy, and the creation of cyber forces.⁴⁴⁵ The fate of the missile program is of particular interest. It was largely launched thanks to the efforts of Oleksandr Turchynov, Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) from 2014 to 2019.⁴⁴⁶ The process intensified in 2019, when the US and Russia withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which gave Ukraine an opportunity to launch its own missile program.⁴⁴⁷ Interestingly, Ukraine was not a signatory to this treaty, but it was assumed to adhere to its principles.

Ukraine had scientific, technical, and industrial potential for missile development dating back to Soviet times. The most well-known Ukrainian missile to date, the Neptune,⁴⁴⁸ underwent testing in 2019–2020, and in 2021 the Ministry of Defence ordered the first production division, which began entering service.⁴⁴⁹ In 2021,

⁴⁴⁴ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (2021, July 16). *Priynyato Zakon “Pro osnovy natsionalnoho sprotysu”* [Adopted the Law “On the Basics of National Resistance”]. <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/Povidomlennya/212686.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁴⁵ YouTube. (2021, December 1). *Shchorichnyi zvit Prezydenta Ukrainy Volodymyra Zelenskoho u Verkhovnii Radi Ukrainy* [Annual report of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5Fi2ep8-RU> [in Ukrainian]; Pravo.ua. (2021, December 1). *Shchorichnyi zvit Prezydenta Ukrainy Volodymyra Zelenskoho u Verkhovnii Radi Ukrainy* [Annual report of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine]. <https://pravo.ua/shchorichnyi-zvit-prezydenta-ukrainy-v-zelenskoho-u-verkhovnii-radi-ukrainy/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁴⁶ LB.ua. (2018, July 16). *Turchynov nazvav rozrobku raketnoi zbroi prioritetom ukrainskoho OPK* [Turchynov named missile weapons development a priority of the Ukrainian defense industry]. https://lb.ua/economics/2018/07/16/402925_turchinov_nazval_razrobotku.html [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁴⁷ Shynko, A. (2019, March 7). *Rozval Rosiyeyu systemy kontrolyu nad ozbroyenniam znimaye z Ukrainy obmezheniya po raketam – Poroshenko* [The collapse by Russia of the weapons control system removes missile restrictions from Ukraine – Poroshenko]. UkrMilitary. <https://www.ukrmilitary.com/2019/03/big-rockets-soon.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁴⁸ With the help of “Neptune” in April 2022, the flagship of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, the cruiser Moskva, was destroyed.

⁴⁴⁹ Defense UA. (2020, August 23). *Berehovi raketnyi kompleks RK-360MC “Neptun” pryiato na ozbroiennia ZSU* [Coastal missile system RK-360MC “Neptune” accepted into service of the Armed Forces of Ukraine]. https://defence-ua.com/news/beregovij_raketnij_kompleks_rk_360mts_neptun_prijnato_na_ozbrojennja_zsu-1479.html [in Ukrainian]; Sudarenko, A. (2021, March 15). *VMS Ukrainy otrymaly pershi protykorabelni rakety “Neptun”* [The Ukrainian Navy received the first Neptune anti-ship missiles]. Suspilne Novyny. <https://suspilne.media/odesa/113712-vms-ukraini-otrimali-persi-protikorabelni-rakety-neptun/> [in Ukrainian].

the Armed Forces of Ukraine adopted the Vilkha-M missile system.⁴⁵⁰ Unfortunately, as of 2022, the Hrim-2 project⁴⁵¹ (an analogue of Russia's Iskander), which had been showcased during a parade back in 2018,⁴⁵² had not reached its final stage. However, funding for missile projects was insufficient and inconsistent.⁴⁵³ In 2020–2021, several key enterprises within Ukroboronprom publicly reported delays in state orders, not only in the missile sector.⁴⁵⁴ Although it was claimed that by the end of 2020, the state order had been fulfilled by 99.5 %.⁴⁵⁵

By voting for Zelensky, Ukrainians primarily expected an end to the war. Zelensky promised to “secure peace for Ukraine”. To achieve this, it was planned to involve the guarantors of the Budapest Memorandum and EU partners in order to gain support “in the effort to end the war, return temporarily occupied territories, and compel the aggressor to compensate for the damage caused”. It was stated that “the surrender of national interests and territories cannot be the subject of any negotiations”.⁴⁵⁶ During the election campaign, Zelensky also said his well-known phrase: “we just need to stop shooting” and promised to end the war in Donbas

⁴⁵⁰ Defense UA. (2020, September 21). “Ob’ednani zusylia-2020”: proyshly vyprobuвання modernizovanoi partii raket dlia kompleksu “Vilkha” (foto) [“Joint Efforts-2020”: tests of the modernized batch of missiles for the “Vilkha” system passed (photo)]. https://defence-ua.com/news/objednani_zusillja_2020_projshli_viprobuвання_modernizovanoji_partiji_raket_dlja_kompleksu_vilha_foto-1677.html [in Ukrainian]; NV (New Voice). (2020, May 7). *ZSU otrymaut na ozbroiennia novitnii raketyi kompleks Vilkha-M v 2021 rotsi* [The Armed Forces will receive the new Vilkha-M missile system in 2021]. <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/raketa-vilha-m-nadijde-na-ozbroyennya-zsu-v-2021-roci-novini-ukrajini-50086741.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁵¹ Expected to be deployed to the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2025.

⁴⁵² Lysitsyn, M. (2024, November 2). *Ukraina maizhe postavyla na ozbroiennia raketu, iaka “mozhe vbiti Putina”*: shcho pro neyi z’iasuvaly ZMI [Ukraine has almost put into service a missile that “can kill Putin”: what the media found out about it]. Informator. <https://informator.ua/uk/ukrajina-mayzhe-postavila-na-ozbroyennya-raketu-yaka-mozhe-vbiti-putina-shcho-pro-neji-z-yasuvali-zmi-2> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁵³ For more details on Ukrainian missile programs, see: Zhyrokhov, M. (2025, April 28). *Raketnyi shchyt Ukrainy. Chastyna 1. Operatyvno-taktychnyi kompleks “Hrim-2”* [Missile shield of Ukraine. Part 1. Operational-tactical system “Hrim-2”]. Pechera. <https://pechera.info/oglyadu/495-raketnii-shhit-ukrayini-castina-1-operativno-taktychnyi-kompleks-grim-2.html> [in Ukrainian]; Zhyrokhov, M. (2025, May 24). *Raketnyi shchyt Ukrainy. Chastyna 2. “Neptun”* [Missile shield of Ukraine. Part 2. “Neptune”]. Pechera. <https://pechera.info/oglyadu/557-raketnii-shhit-ukrayini-castina-2-neptun.html> [in Ukrainian]; Zhyrokhov, M. (2025, June 15). *Raketnyi shchyt Ukrainy. Chastyna 3. “Vil’kha,” “Taifun,” “Koral,” “Korshun 2”* [Missile shield of Ukraine. Part 3. “Vil’kha,” “Typhoon,” “Coral,” “Korshun 2”]. Pechera. <https://pechera.info/oglyadu/605-raketnii-shhit-ukrayini-castina-3-vilxa-taifun-koral-korshun-2.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁵⁴ NV (New Voice). (2021, October 18). *COVID-19 i ne tilky. Chomu v Ukraini zryvaiutsia oboronni zamovlennia – poiasnennia Minoborony* [COVID-19 and more. Why defense orders in Ukraine are being disrupted – explanations from the Ministry of Defense]. <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/zriv-oboronnih-zamovlen-hto-vidpovidalnyi-poyasnili-v-minoboroni-novini-ukrajini-50189832.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁵⁵ ArmiyaInform. (2021, February 2). *Oboronne derzhzamovlennia na 2020 rik vykonano na 99,5% – Andriy Taran* [Defense state order for 2020 fulfilled by 99.5% – Andriy Taran]. <https://armyinform.com.ua/2021/02/22/oboronne-derzhzamovlennia-na-2020-rik-vykonano-na-995-andriy-taran/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁵⁶ Official website of Zelenskyy’s election campaign. (2019). *Peredviborcha prohrama kandydata na post Prezydenta Ukrainy Volodymyra Zelenskoho* [Electoral program of the candidate for the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky]. <https://program.ze2019.com/> [in Ukrainian].

within a year. However, after becoming president, he changed his rhetoric, clarifying that achieving a ceasefire is a complex process and does not depend solely on Ukraine.⁴⁵⁷

The efforts of the first two years were focused on returning prisoners and establishing a lasting ceasefire. To unblock the negotiation process, on October 1, 2019, Zelensky supported the so-called “Steinmeier Formula”, and at the same time, troops were withdrawn at three front-line areas. This decision sparked public controversy, as under the Minsk agreements, the formula included a mechanism for granting special status to certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions after holding local elections there. However, Ukraine’s position became more flexible, and Zelensky’s team stated that they did not rule out revising or even exiting the Minsk process if Russia failed to show progress toward a peaceful settlement.⁴⁵⁸

Both opponents and supporters of Zelensky pointed out the lack of communication with Ukrainian military personnel, the parliamentary opposition, and civil society activists.⁴⁵⁹ The handover of Volodymyr Tsemakh to Russia as part of the prisoner exchange on September 7, 2019, caused a negative public reaction. Tsemakh is considered a key witness in the case of the downing of the Malaysian airliner. The suspect in the MH17 downing case was extracted from the occupied territory of Donbas through a special operation. Fighters from the 74th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion of the Armed Forces of Ukraine worked alongside the intelligence services. During the operation, one intelligence officer was killed and another lost a leg.⁴⁶⁰ As a result of that exchange, 35 Ukrainian citizens returned to Ukraine, in-

⁴⁵⁷ Radio Svoboda. (2020, May 20). “*Perestat streljat slozhno*”: *shcho dumaje zaraz Zelenskyy pro zayavlennja rizhnykh rikiv tomu?* [“It’s hard to stop shooting”: what Zelensky thinks now about statements from a year ago]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30624339.html> [in Russian]; Lysytsyn, N. (2021, August 5). *Zelenskyy vspomnyv frazu “prosto treba perestat streljat”, ale pereformuljuvav jiji* [Zelensky recalled the phrase “we just need to stop shooting” but reformulated it]. *KP v Ukraini*. <https://kp.ua/politics/702062-zelenskyyi-vspomnyl-o-fraze-prosto-nado-perestat-streliat-no-pereformulyroval-ee> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁵⁸ Miller, K. (2019, October 2). *Shcho take “formula Shtajnmajera” i chy kapituljuvav Zelenskyy pered Moskvou?* [What is the “Steinmeier formula” and did Zelensky capitulate to Moscow?]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/formula-shtajnmajera-kapituliacija-chy-peremoha/30195839.html> [in Ukrainian]; Shtogrin, I. (2019, October 2). “*Formula Shtajnmajera*” i krytyka na adresu Zelenskoho. *Zajavy partij ta ocinka ryzykiv ekspertamy* [The “Steinmeier formula” and criticism directed at Zelensky. Party statements and expert risk assessments]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30195390.html> [in Ukrainian]; Democracy House. (2019, December 15). *Polityka Volodymyra Zelenskoho shchodo myrnoho vrehuljuvannja: sylni i slabki storony* [Volodymyr Zelensky’s policy on peaceful settlement: strengths and weaknesses]. <http://www.democracyhouse.com.ua/ua/2019/zelenskyis-policy-on-peaceful-settlement-strengths-and-weaknesses/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁵⁹ Democracy House. (2019, December 15). *Polityka Volodymyra Zelenskoho shchodo myrnoho vrehuljuvannja: sylni i slabki storony* [Volodymyr Zelensky’s policy on peaceful settlement: strengths and weaknesses]. <http://www.democracyhouse.com.ua/ua/2019/zelenskyis-policy-on-peaceful-settlement-strengths-and-weaknesses/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁶⁰ Omelianchuk, O. (2019, September 7). *Yak naspravdi vyvozyly Tsemakha. Rozpovidaie uchasyk operatsii* [How Tsemakh was really taken out. A participant of the operation tells the story]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/obmin-polonenymy-tsemakh-mh17-operation/30151314.html> [in Ukrainian].

cluding film director Oleg Sentsov, Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko, and others.

Before the meeting with the Russian president, which took place within the Normandy format on December 9, 2019, at the Élysée Palace in Paris, Zelensky expressed a desire to look Putin in the eye, believing it would help him better understand the man. This was the first and only personal meeting between the two leaders, during which they discussed a ceasefire, prisoner exchange, and gas agreements. Later, in 2020, Zelensky stated that he saw in Putin's eyes a desire to end the war.⁴⁶¹ In the end, the meeting did not resolve the existing problems, as Russia demanded amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine.

In the winter of 2020, the number of shellings along the front line even increased, as evidenced by reports from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.⁴⁶² In March 2020, Serhiy Syvokho, a former showman appointed by Zelensky as an adviser to the Secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council – and also known for supporting Viktor Yanukovich during the Revolution of Dignity – announced the presentation of a reconciliation platform for Donbas. However, the platform's presentation was disrupted by veterans of the Azov Regiment.⁴⁶³ On July 27, members of the Minsk group agreed on another ceasefire, which turned out to be more or less effective.⁴⁶⁴ In reality, what seemed like a gradual freezing of the conflict continued along the front line.

In reality, all of Ukraine's peace efforts, even with concessions such as the implementation of the Minsk agreements, were of no interest to Russia. After all, the main goal of the aggression that began in 2014 was the destruction of Ukrainian statehood and identity. The very existence of Ukraine as an independent, pro-European state is perceived by many Russian elites as a threat to Russia's existence – as a project of the collective West called “Anti-Russia”, an existential threat and a historic defeat. Many contemporary Russian “philosophers” (such as A. Dugin and S. Kurgin-

⁴⁶¹ Gazeta.ua. (2019, December 6). *Zelenskyi: Budu dyvytysya v ochi Putinu i pytaty z noho* [Zelensky: I will look into Putin's eyes and demand answers from him]. https://gazeta.ua/articles/politics/_zelenskij-budu-divytysya-v-ochi-putinu-i-pitaty-z-nogo/941853 [in Ukrainian]; 5 kanal. (2020, 11 liutoho). “*Popry vsi dani rozvidky*”: Zelenskyi pobachyv v ochakh Putina bazhannia zakinchyty viinu [“Despite all intelligence data”: Zelensky saw in Putin's eyes a desire to end the war]. <https://www.5.ua/polityka/popry-vsi-dani-rozvidky-zelenskyi-pobachyv-u-ochakh-putina-bazhannia-zakinchyty-viinu-208051.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁶² Runets, V. (2020, December 29). *Naidovshe peremyria. Naskilky uspishnymy buly initsiatyvy Kyieva shchodo prypynennia boiovykh dii na Donbasi* [The longest truce. How successful Kyiv's initiatives were to stop hostilities in Donbas]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/pidsumky-zelenskyy-donbas/31024251.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁶³ Milanova, Ya. (2020, March 12). *Skandal, sutchyky, zatrymannia: Syvokho prezentuvav platformu prymyrennia* [Scandal, clashes, detentions: Syvokho presented the reconciliation platform]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/19158-nackorpus-zirvav-prezentaciю-platformi-primirennia-sivoho-cerez-zaavi-pro-vnutrisnij-konflikt/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁶⁴ Runets, V. (2020, December 29). *Najdovshe peremyria. Naskilky uspishnymy buly initsiatyvy Kyieva shchodo prypynennia boiovykh dii na Donbasi* [The longest ceasefire. How successful were Kyiv's initiatives to end hostilities in Donbas]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/pidsumky-zelenskyy-donbas/31024251.html> [in Ukrainian].

yan) view Ukraine as a part of the “Russian World”, and a key part at that – because without it, Russian civilization cannot be whole. In 2021, Putin published an article titled *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*, in which he claimed that the West is supposedly turning Ukraine into an anti-Russian project, with the main goal of weakening Russia. In his view, Ukrainians and Russians are one people, and an independent Ukraine poses a challenge to Russia’s national security.⁴⁶⁵

In that same year, 2021, Russia issued a kind of ultimatum to Western countries, which no one took seriously. In December, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published two draft treaties concerning “security guarantees” for Russia.⁴⁶⁶ The demands to the West and NATO included a halt to NATO’s further expansion (especially regarding the accession of former Soviet republics), the withdrawal of foreign troops and NATO infrastructure from Eastern European countries that joined the alliance after 1997 (such as the Baltic states, Poland, and others), and a ban on NATO military activity in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Putin stated that these proposals were not an ultimatum, but demanded a clear response within a short timeframe. If the US and NATO refused to give Russia “security guarantees”, he warned that Russia’s “response” could be anything, including “military-technical measures”.⁴⁶⁷ And one Russian diplomat stated: “It is absolutely essential for us that Ukraine never becomes a member of NATO.”⁴⁶⁸

Let us also recall the meeting of the Russia-NATO Council that took place in January 2022. The key topic of the meeting was NATO’s refusal to halt its expansion.⁴⁶⁹ In the end, Russia’s demand was rejected. Interestingly, even then, experts were voicing concerns about the seriousness of Russia’s intentions and the possibility that it might seek to “resolve” the NATO expansion “problem” by military means.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁵ Putin, V (2021). *Ob istoricheskom edinstve russkikh i ukrainsev* [On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians]. The President of the Russian Federation. <https://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181> [in Russian].

⁴⁶⁶ Meduza. (2021, December 20). *Rossiia vydvinula Zapadu ultimatum po povodu rasshireniya NATO. Pochemu eto novaya strategiya – i ona opasnee prezheny? Govorim s Aleksandrom Baunovym* [Russia issued an ultimatum to the West over NATO expansion: why this is a new strategy – and why it is more dangerous than before? Conversation with Aleksandr Baunov]. Meduza. <https://meduza.io/episodes/2021/12/20/rossiya-vydvynula-zapadu-ultimatum-po-povodu-rasshireniya-nato-pochemu-eto-novaya-strategiya-i-ona-opasnee-prezhney-govorim-s-aleksandrom-baunovym> [in Russian].

⁴⁶⁷ Ukrainska Pravda. (2021, December 26). *Putin skazal, chto budet delat', esli SSHA i NATO ne vypolnyat trebovaniya RF* [Putin said what he would do if the US and NATO do not meet Russia’s demands]. Ukrainska Pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2021/12/26/7318677/> [in Russian].

⁴⁶⁸ NV (New Voice). (2021, December 23). *“Garantii bezopasnosti”. Rossiya “dolzhna isklyuchit” vstuplenie Ukrainy v NATO – MID RF* [“Security guarantees”. Russia “must exclude” Ukraine’s accession to NATO – Russian Foreign Ministry]. NV (New Voice). <https://nv.ua/world/geopolitics/ryabkov-zayavil-cto-rossiya-dolzha-isklyuchit-vstuplenie-ukrainy-v-nato-poslednie-novosti-50204085.html> [in Russian].

⁴⁶⁹ NATO. (2022, January 12). *V Bryusselye prokhodit zasedanie Soveta Rossiya–NATO* [Meeting of the Russia–NATO Council takes place in Brussels]. https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/news_190643.htm [in Russian].

⁴⁷⁰ Atanesyan, H. (2021, December 23). *Predlog dlya voyny ili blef? Zapadnye eksperty ob ultimatumye Putina NATO po povodu Ukrainy* [A pretext for war or a bluff? Western experts on Putin’s ultimatum to NATO regarding Ukraine]. BBC News Russkaya sluzhba. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-59763225> [in Russian].

As we can see, in 2021–2022 Russia declared its intention to divide spheres of influence in Europe and the world. Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space, including the former “Central Asian” republics, were declared zones of its influence. Let us recall that Putin seriously considers the collapse of the USSR to be “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century” – a view he expressed in 2005.⁴⁷¹ For the Soviet Union, NATO was the main enemy, and Soviet propaganda focused on a potential confrontation with it. Interestingly, in 2000, at the very beginning of his presidency, he even spoke of the possibility of Russia joining NATO.⁴⁷² Putin’s rhetoric began to change after 2004 – the accession of the Baltic states to NATO, and especially the events of Ukraine’s 2005 Orange Revolution, which from Putin’s point of view marked a defeat for Russia. The point is that in the Soviet worldview, there was a strange coexistence of the fight against capitalism and imperialism with an underlying acknowledgment of the greatness of imperial Russia. This largely paved the way for the emergence of an “ideological mess” in modern Russian state propaganda, which simultaneously glorifies both the USSR and the Russian Empire, Lenin and Nicholas II.

The first publicly recorded discussion of the possibility of a regime change in Ukraine took place in October 2021 at the *Valdai Discussion Club*. It was there that representatives of Russia’s security agencies entertained the idea of achieving such changes by force. Similar statements were repeatedly made in the lead-up to the full-scale invasion of 2022.⁴⁷³

To understand the events of February 2022, it is worth recalling how the Russian propaganda machine’s attitude toward Zelensky evolved. After his election victory, Russian media adopted a wait-and-see approach, while suggesting that Zelensky might be more “willing to negotiate” than Poroshenko.⁴⁷⁴ After he refused to implement the Minsk agreements as Russia saw fit, Zelensky began to be portrayed negatively in Russian narratives, and on the eve of the invasion, he was being labeled a “drug addict” and a “puppet of the West”. He was ac-

⁴⁷¹ Ukrainska Pravda. (2005, April 25). *Rozpad SRSR Putin nazvav naybilshoyu heopolitychnoyu katastrofoyu* [Putin called the collapse of the USSR the greatest geopolitical catastrophe]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2005/04/25/3009187/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁷² Hoffman, D. (2000, March 6). *Putin: Russia could be a NATO member*. The Seattle Times. <https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/20000306/4008777/>

⁴⁷³ Radio Svoboda. (2023, April 25). *“Vyorstka”: Putin prinyal reshenie o voyne s Ukrainoy eshchyo v 2021 godu* [“Layout”: Putin made the decision to go to war with Ukraine back in 2021]. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/vyorstka-putin-prinyal-reshenie-napastj-na-ukrainu-eschyo-v-2021-godu/32378867.html> [in Russian].

⁴⁷⁴ NV (New Voice). (2019, April 8). *Polezen ili net? Chto govoryat o Zelenskom i kak otvechayut na ego zayavleniya vlasti RF* [Is he useful or not? What is said about Zelensky and how Russian authorities respond to his statements]. <https://nv.ua/world/geopolitics/polezen-ili-net-cto-govoryat-o-zelenskom-i-kak-otvechayut-na-ego-zayavleniya-vlasti-rf-50015425.html> [in Russian]; Barysheva, E. (2019, April 22). *Vybory v Ukraine: Reaktsii v RF na pobedu Zelenskogo* [Elections in Ukraine: Reactions in Russia to Zelensky’s victory]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/ru/реакции-в-рф-на-победу-зеленского-нормальная-демократия-для-нас-как-чудо/a-48435402> [in Russian].

cused of committing genocide against the “people of Donbas” and later of being a neo-Nazi.⁴⁷⁵

In foreign policy, Zelensky continued the course of his predecessors toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration. As early as 2019, he stated that he would defend the European choice of Ukrainians if elected president. During the debate at the Olympic Stadium in Kyiv, he emphasized that Ukraine had chosen the path to Europe, and that this was the most important thing, as Ukrainians had paid a high price for it.⁴⁷⁶ After becoming president, he stressed that NATO membership was a strategic goal for the country and an essential element of its security. In August 2021, a decision by the National Security and Defence Council (NSDC) to strengthen efforts toward Ukraine’s integration into the Alliance was enacted. At that time, the president hoped to receive a clear answer about obtaining a NATO Membership Action Plan during his meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden.⁴⁷⁷

At this time, Ukraine actively continued denouncing international agreements with Russia and within the CIS framework. For example, in November 2020, Ukraine withdrew from the Agreement on Coordinated Antimonopoly Policy, the Agreement on the Establishment of the Council of Heads of Financial Intelligence Units of CIS Member States, and others.⁴⁷⁸

As previously noted, Russia had been preparing for a large-scale invasion in advance. Military districts were restructured, the army was rearmed, and large-scale military exercises were conducted near Ukraine’s borders. In 2020, exercises were conducted in the Southern Military District (involving up to 80,000 servicemen), and in 2021, the Zapad-2021 exercises involved 200,000 troops. At the time, Ukrainian Defence Minister A. Taran stated in his address to the European Parliament that the largest number of Russian troops since 2014 (about 110,000) had been concentrated near Ukraine’s borders. Russian exercises involved aviation, air defence systems, and ships of the Black Sea Fleet, reinforced by large landing ships transferred from

⁴⁷⁵ Titov, A., & Ber, I. (2022, May 13). *Pravdivy li video, dokazyvayushchie, chto Vladimir Zelenskiy upotreblayet narkotiki?* [Are the videos proving that Volodymyr Zelensky uses drugs true?]. Provereno.Media. <https://provereno.media/blog/2022/05/13/pravdivy-li-video-dokazyvayushchie-cho-vladimir-zelenskij-upotreblayet-narkotiki-3/> [in Russian]; iStories. (2022, July 22). *Sobranie rossiyskikh feykov: ukrainskie natsisty, prezident-narkoman, zaraznye komary-kusaki i drugie vragi russkogo mira* [Collection of Russian fakes: Ukrainian Nazis, drug-addicted president, infectious biting mosquitoes, and other enemies of the Russian world]. <https://istories.media/investigations/2022/07/22/sobranie-rossiyskikh-feikov/> [in Russian].

⁴⁷⁶ Yevropeiska pravda. (2019, April 19). *Zelenskiy poobitsiav zakhyschaty yevropeyskyi vybir ukrainsiv* [Zelensky promised to protect the European choice of Ukrainians]. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2019/04/19/7095424/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁷⁷ Slovoidilo. (2021, August 24). *30rokiv Nezalezhnosti: yak zminyvalosyastavlennyaukrainsivdochlenstvav NATO* [30 years of Independence: how Ukrainians’ attitude toward NATO membership changed]. <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2021/08/24/infografika/suspilstvo/30-rokiv-nezalezhnosti-yak-zminyvalosya-stavlennya-ukrayincziv-chlenstva-nato> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁷⁸ Ukrainska pravda. (2020, July 7). *Zelenskiy vyviv Ukrainu z ishche odnoyi uhody SND* [Zelensky withdrew Ukraine from another CIS agreement]. <https://www.ppravda.com.ua/news/2020/07/7/7258560/> [in Ukrainian].

the Baltic and Northern Fleets. Vessels from the Caspian Flotilla were redeployed to the Black Sea.⁴⁷⁹

It is believed that it was in late February – early March 2021 that Putin made the final decision to launch a new stage of aggression. According to journalists from the independent Russian socio-political online media outlet *Verstka*, rumours circulated in Putin's inner circle that the decision was made partly under the influence of "some personal grievance and a desire for revenge". The journalists linked this information to the shutdown in Ukraine of media assets belonging to pro-Russian politician Viktor Medvedchuk, a close associate of Putin.

Putin may also have been influenced by the opinion of his close friend, businessman Yuri Kovalchuk, who insisted that Europe was divided by contradictions and that "now is the best time for a swift operation".⁴⁸⁰ The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in August 2021 – which resembled a retreat – may also have played a role. This may indeed have given confidence that the West would not intervene in this war.

Another source cited by the *Verstka* publication stated that in December 2021, Russia was discussing the future division of Ukraine's economy among major Russian corporations. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu did not oppose the invasion either. According to the outlet, he "did not understand the real state of the army... believed that the military operation would be no more difficult than the annexation of Crimea". However, it is believed that the majority of the political and military elite were against the war, although that in no way stopped its preparation.⁴⁸¹ Of course, there is no guarantee that the sources cited by the publication are telling the truth, and therefore that the events actually took place. But the current level of insight into the Kremlin's internal political processes remains extremely low. Recall that secrecy was also a hallmark of the top leadership in the USSR, which is why Sovietologists⁴⁸² often resorted to *Kremlinology* – guessing who the next leader would be by analysing the order of Politburo member mentions in Pravda during the next round of Kremlin funerals. We face a similar level of secrecy in today's Russia, so we take this information into account – especially since it does not contradict subsequent events.

One of the key figures in those events was indeed Viktor Medvedchuk. He held a number of high-ranking positions in Ukraine's political life: head of Pres-

⁴⁷⁹ Aksenov, P. (2022, February 15). *Ihra muskulamy. Chasto li Rossiya zbyrala voienni hrupuvannya, sravnymyi z nynishnimy?* [Flexing muscles. How often did Russia assemble military groups comparable to the current ones?]. BBC Russkaia sluzhba. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-60377472> [in Russian].

⁴⁸⁰ Radio Svoboda. (2023, April 25). "*Vyorstka*": Putin prynyal reshenie o voyne s Ukrainoy eshcho v 2021 godu ["Layout": Putin made the decision to go to war with Ukraine back in 2021]. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/vyorstka-putin-prynyal-reshenie-napastj-na-ukrainu-eschyo-v-2021-godu/32378867.html> [in Russian].

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Sovietology is an interdisciplinary study of the Soviet Union – its political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. It emerged in the West during the Cold War.

ident Kuchma's Administration from 2002 to 2005, and a Member of Parliament from 1997 to 2002 and again from 2019 to 2023. Given his openly pro-Russian views, his political career should have ended after the Revolution of Dignity. However, during Poroshenko's presidency, he became Ukraine's representative in the Trilateral Contact Group for the settlement of the conflict in Donbas. His role was to deal with humanitarian issues, including matters related to prisoner exchanges.⁴⁸³ A number of Ukrainian media outlets were also under Medvedchuk's influence. He controlled the TV channels *112 Ukraine*, *NewsOne*, and *ZIK*, which actively promoted pro-Russian rhetoric and criticized Ukraine's pro-European course.⁴⁸⁴

It was Medvedchuk who could have convinced Putin that an attack on Ukraine would be an easy task, that the Kyiv authorities had no support among the population, and that the Armed Forces of Ukraine would not defend the country. This ultimately explains the introduction of the "Special Military Operation" format and the ceremonial uniforms found among the belongings of Russian soldiers, who were preparing for a quick victory parade on Khreshchatyk. At the same time, Medvedchuk was used to channel funds to FSB spy networks and to support pro-Russian activists and organizations.⁴⁸⁵ In the spring of 2022, he was arrested on suspicion of high treason. On September 22, 2022, Medvedchuk was exchanged for 215 Ukrainian prisoners of war.⁴⁸⁶ Judging by the fact that he still publishes articles blaming the

⁴⁸³ Samar, V., & Marchenko, V. (2024, September 6). *Anatomiia zrady. Kontakter Medvedchuka i "ekspert" z hlobalnoho rozvytku Shkrabo* [Anatomy of betrayal. Medvedchuk's contact and a "global development" expert Shkrabo]. Arhument. <https://argumentua.com/stati/anatomiya-zradi-kontakter-medvedchuka-i-ekspert-z-globalnogo-rozvitku-shkrabo> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁸⁴ Omelianuk, M. (2021, May 25). *"Dyzelna truba" u vlasnosti Medvedchuka opynylasya z vidoma Poroshenka – Bihus.info* ["Diesel pipe" owned by Medvedchuk appeared with Poroshenko's knowledge – Bihus.info]. Suspilne Novyny. <https://suspilne.media/133456-dizelna-truba-u-vlasnosti-medvedchuka-opinilasya-z-vidoma-poroshenka-bigusinfo/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁸⁵ NV (New Voice). (2022, March 19). *"Vytratyli shaleni hroshi". Radnyk ochilnyka MVS rozpoviv pro rol Medvedchuka u pidhotovtsi vtorgnennia Rosii v Ukrainu* ["Spent crazy money." Advisor to the Minister of Internal Affairs told about Medvedchuk's role in Russia's invasion preparation in Ukraine]. <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/geopolitics/medvedchuk-gotuvav-gubernatoriv-dlya-vtorgnennya-rf-v-ukrajinu-radnyk-glavi-mvs-ostanni-novini-50226424.html> [in Ukrainian]; Kornilov, M. (2022, September 22). *U rozvidtsi poyasnyly, chomu Rosiia pohodylasia na obmin Medvedchuka* [Intelligence explained why Russia agreed to exchange Medvedchuk]. Telegraf. <https://war.telegraf.com.ua/ukr/ukraina/2022-09-22/5717251-v-razvedke-obyasnili-pochemu-rossiya-soglasilas-na-obmen-medvedchuka> [in Ukrainian]; Katrychenko, T. (2023, January 18). *"Partiia myru" abo "uriad u vyhnanni". Navishcho Rosiia reanimuie Viktora Medvedchuka* ["Peace party" or "government in exile." Why Russia is reviving Viktor Medvedchuk]. Focus.ua. <https://focus.ua/uk/politics/545746-chto-oznachaet-statya-medvedchuka-v-izvestiyah-i-zachem-rossia-reanimiruet-eks-nardepa> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁸⁶ Smirnov, Yu. (2022, September 22). *Heroi Azovstali povertaiutsia domomu. Shcho vidomo pro naibilshyi obmin velykoi viiny* [Heroes of Azovstal return home. What is known about the largest exchange of the great war]. LIGA.net. <https://www.liga.net/ua/politics/articles/geroi-azovstali-vozvrashchayutsya-domoy-chto-izvestno-o-krupneyshem-obmene-bolshoy-voyny> [in Ukrainian]; Radio Svoboda. (2023, December 19). *WSJ oprylyudnyuie podrobytsi obminu Medvedchuka na "azovtsiv"* [WSJ publishes details of Medvedchuk exchange for "Azov" fighters]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-wsj-medvedchuk-azovci-obmin/32739058.html> [in Ukrainian].

West for the war,⁴⁸⁷ the Kremlin does not consider him a “spent” figure and may plan to use him again in the future.

Let us recall that in January 2022, Russia, as the main beneficiary of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization)⁴⁸⁸, deployed troops to Kazakhstan after unrest erupted there. The successfully conducted policing operation created the illusion that other tasks could be resolved just as easily.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began with the joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises Allied Resolve-2022, held from February 10 to 20, 2022, on the territory of Belarus. Western countries warned Kyiv that these exercises could mark the beginning of an invasion.⁴⁸⁹ On February 17, 2022, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield stated that Russia was “moving toward an imminent invasion”. On June 11, 2022, U.S. President Joe Biden noted that Zelenskyy had ignored warnings that Russia would launch a full-scale invasion. In February, Zelenskyy stated that such rumours were being spread to create a constant sense of anxiety, and in the summer of 2022, he explained that announcing Russian invasion plans would have caused panic and economic collapse, plunging the country into chaos and making it an easy target for the occupiers.⁴⁹⁰

Was Ukraine preparing to repel the aggressor? Yes. As already mentioned, in July 2021 the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of National Resistance”, which established the Territorial Defence Forces as a component of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The law came into force on January 1, 2022. After February 24, the TDF became a key element of defense, with their units participating in battles even on the front lines.

On the eve of the war, several appointments were made in the military command. Perhaps not all of them were successful, but on July 27, 2021, Valerii Zaluzhnyi was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Among other appointments, we can mention Viktor Nikolyuk, who in October 2021 became the head of Operational Command “North”.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁷Radio Svoboda. (2023, January 16). *Medvedchuk: v voine vinovat Zapad, Ukrainie krashche but' "eshche odnoi RF"* [Medvedchuk: West is to blame for the war, Ukraine would be better as “another Russia”]. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/medvedchuk-v-voyne-vinovat-zapad-ukraine-luchshe-bytj-eschyo-odnoy-rossiey-/32225203.html> [in Russian].

⁴⁸⁸Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.) *Collective Security Treaty Organization*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_Security_Treaty_Organization

⁴⁸⁹Honcharenko, R. (2022, February 10). *Voienni navchannia Rosii i Biorusi: shcho pro nykh potribno znaty* [Military exercises of Russia and Belarus: what you need to know]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/ru/fevral'skie-voennye-uchenija-rossii-i-belarusi-chto-o-nih-izvestno-a-chto-net/a-60700969> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁹⁰Focus.ua. (2022, August 16). *“Nas by zabraly za try dni”: Zelenskyi poiasnyv, chomu ne poperedyv krainu pro napad* [“They would have taken us in three days”: Zelensky explained why he did not warn the country about the attack]. [Video]. <https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/525640-nas-by-zabrali-zatri-dnya-zelenskiy-obyasnil-pochemu-ne-predupredil-stranu-o-napadenii-video> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁹¹Kvasnevskaya, D. (2023, March 13). *Ne dav vorohu zakhopyty Chernihiv: henral Nikoliuk stav komanduvachem pidgotovky Sukhoputnykh viisk* [Did not let the enemy capture Chernihiv: General Nikoliuk became commander of the Ground Forces training]. 24tv. https://24tv.ua/viktor-nikoliuk-stav-komanduvachem-pidgotovki-sukhoputnih-viysk_n2272993 [in Ukrainian].

Ukraine continued to receive some modern weapons. The first Javelin⁴⁹² systems arrived in Ukraine back in 2018; at the end of January 2022, the United States delivered 300 units of the FGM-148 Javelin to Ukraine. Since 2019, Bayraktar⁴⁹³ drones have been in service with the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The first combat use occurred back in October 2021, when one of the drones destroyed a Russian howitzer in Donbas.⁴⁹⁴

Ukraine also implemented measures to protect military equipment, including aircraft. It was reported that military aircraft were flown into the air on the night of February 24 to avoid their destruction in the first hours of the attack. This move made it possible to preserve a significant part of the aircraft fleet and ensure the ability to continue combat operations.⁴⁹⁵

From February 10 to 20, 2022, large-scale military exercises took place in Ukraine, aimed at increasing the combat readiness of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the face of the threat of a full-scale invasion.⁴⁹⁶ This made it possible to carry out the combat deployment of the Armed Forces and organize resistance to the aggression. However, according to Lieutenant General S. Naiev, on the eve of February 24 he did not receive intelligence reports about the formation of Russian strike groups: “On the 23rd, no information from any official was received at my command post, as Commander of the Defence Forces of Ukraine, indicating that war would start the next day.” However, orders for the operational deployment of troops before the invasion were issued, in part thanks to the decisions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Zaluzhnyi.⁴⁹⁷ As we can see, much was done – but was everything possible done? Clearly, not.

⁴⁹² Militarnyi. (2018, May 1). *Raketni kompleksi Javelin vzhe v Ukraini!* [Javelin missile systems already in Ukraine!]. <https://militarnyi.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Raketni-kompleksy-Javelin-vzhe-v-Ukrayini.png> [in Ukrainian]; Patteson, C. (2022, 26 January). *US sends 300 Javelin missiles to Ukraine in latest military aid during Russia standoff*. Nypost. <https://nypost.com/2022/01/26/us-sends-hundreds-of-anti-tank-missiles-in-latest-military-aid-to-ukraine/>

⁴⁹³ Ukrainska Pravda. (2021, July 16). *V Ukrayini vyprobuvaly modernizovanyy udarnyy dron dlya floty Bayraktar* [In Ukraine, a modernized strike drone Bayraktar was tested for the fleet]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2021/07/16/7300728/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁹⁴ Kuzmin, A. (2022, March 29). *Dzheveliny ta Bayraktary. Zbroya, yaka vzhe stala legendarnoyu v Ukrayini* [Javelins and Bayraktars. Weapons that have already become legendary in Ukraine]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/publications/dzheveliny-ta-bayraktari-zbroya-yaka-vzhe-stala-legendarnoyu-v-ukrajini-833745.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁹⁵ Zakharchenko, Yu. (2023, August 19). *Zberehly aviaciyu: komanduvach Povitryanykh syl ZSU rozpoviv, yaki nakazy viddav na pochatku vtorgnennya RF* [Saved the aviation: Commander of the Air Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine told what orders he gave at the beginning of the Russian invasion]. Fakty. <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/suspilstvo/20230819-zberehly-aviaciyu-komanduvach-povitryanyh-syl-zsu-rozpoviv-yaki-nakazy-viddav-na-pochatku-vtorgnennya-rf/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁹⁶ Zakharchenko, Yu. (2022, February 7). *Vyprobuyut Bayraktary ta Dzheveliny: Reznikov pro zaplanovani navchannya ZSU* [Bayraktars and Javelins will be tested: Reznikov about planned exercises of the Armed Forces of Ukraine]. Fakty. <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/suspilstvo/20220207-vyprobuyut-ukrayinski-bajraktary-ta-dzhaveliny-reznikov-pro-zaplanovani-navchannya-zsu/> [in Ukrainian].

⁴⁹⁷ Texty.org.ua. (2025, November 2). *“Tam malo lezhaty zo 200 tysyach min”*. *Sho rozpoviv heneral Nayeve pro pochatok velykoyi vijny ta oboronu Pivdnya* [“About 200 thousand mines were supposed to be placed there.” What General Nayeve said about the beginning of the great war and the defense of the South]. <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/114433/tam-malo-lezhaty-zo-200-tysyach-min-sho-rozpoviv-heneral-nayeve-pro-pochatok-velykoyi-vijny-ta-oboronu-pivdnya/> [in Ukrainian].

The full-scale Russian invasion began on the morning of February 24, 2022. The Russian army launched air and missile strikes on airfields, military units, and infrastructure facilities. The offensive began along the entire border with Russia, from the territory of annexed Crimea, and toward Kyiv region and partly Chernihiv region – from Belarus. Russia referred to the invasion as a “special military operation”. Its stated goals were “demilitarization” and “denazification”. However, from the very beginning, the Russians encountered resistance from the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The enemy’s expectation of being welcomed with bread and salt proved futile.

Unexpectedly for many, Zelensky rejected the U.S. offer to evacuate from Kyiv and took charge of the resistance, although Ukraine was given little chance. As mentioned in the section *The Reality of Forecasting*, U.S. intelligence gave Ukraine seven days, Russian intelligence expected to capture Kyiv in three to four days, while German and French intelligence considered the invasion impossible.

Apparently, the Russians’ initial plan was to enter Ukraine with combat columns and quickly seize key military, political, and economic targets. After the capture of Kyiv, some kind of “transitional government” was supposed to enter the city and declare a change of power. This could have involved the return of Yanukovich along with some of his allies, or the previously mentioned Medvedchuk. From Moscow’s perspective, resistance was expected to be sporadic, and to suppress it, SOBR units (Special Rapid Response Units), part of the Russian National Guard, were deployed alongside regular troops to deal with street unrest.

The reality for the Russian invaders turned out to be completely different. Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy held out. It turned out that despite the “mechanization” of war, water obstacles, as in centuries past, still served as natural barriers, and even in the 21st century, cities can become fortresses and significantly delay the enemy’s advance.

Kharkiv held out – had the Russians managed to capture the city, they would have gained the key to the entire Left Bank. The Russian army planned to take the city with overwhelming force, but met fierce resistance.

The situation turned out worse in the south. Within just a few hours, Russian military convoys from Crimea managed to reach Nova Kakhovka, covering distances of up to 80 km in some places.

Crimea is connected to Ukraine by only two main highways and five key bridge crossings. The Ukrainian military command stated that all five bridges had been mined, and minefields were laid on the routes to Kalanchak and Chaplynka as early as 2014⁴⁹⁸ The direction was covered by a separate battalion whose soldiers were to

⁴⁹⁸ Chernish, O. (2025, February 24). *Chomu Rosiya tak shvydko okupuvala pivden Ukrainy: vidpovidi na chotyry holovni pytannya* [Why Russia occupied the south of Ukraine so quickly: answers to four main questions]. BBC Ukrainia. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c30ml7861z0o> [in Ukrainian].

destroy the bridges in case of a threat.⁴⁹⁹ On February 24, the enemy had numerical superiority in this area – 20,000 Russians against 250 Ukrainian marines and a small number of border guards. For reasons still unclear, the plan to block the exits from Crimea was not put into effect.⁵⁰⁰ According to Lieutenant General S. Naiev, only two of the five bridges were damaged – an explosion on the railway bridge at Chonhar and a demolition (partial – I.K.) of the road bridge on the Arabat Spit. On the Arabat Spit, Vitalii Skakun blew up the bridge at the cost of his own life.⁵⁰¹ But this did not stop the enemy. A participant in the defence of the Crimean isthmus, Senior Sergeant Ivan Sestrivatovskiy, who was supposed to blow up one of the bridges, recalled: “I tried to detonate it, but there was no explosion. I’m not a sapper, but there are two options: either a sabotage group was deployed, or the wires were damaged by mortars.”⁵⁰² According to Naiev: “I told the commander of the group in that direction to bring the readiness of those bridges to detonation. And when the offensive began, the soldiers were to blow up the bridges. But we must understand that the bridges weren’t blown up by robots – they were ordinary people, like you and me. And they had to do it while bombs and missiles were falling.”⁵⁰³ The possibility of betrayal should not be ruled out either – for example, during one of the routine checks of the charges, some of the explosive crates were found to be empty or half-filled.⁵⁰⁴

At the same time, the Russian army was advancing in the east. In late February and early March, Berdyansk, Melitopol, and Enerhodar with the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant were captured. The siege of Mariupol began, and the city held out until mid-May. However, the advance toward Odesa was halted at the defensive lines near Mykolaiv. This may have affected Russia’s further plans to land a naval assault force in Odesa.

But in early April 2022, Russian troops withdrew from the Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions. This became possible due to constant resistance from the Ukrainian

⁴⁹⁹Texty.org.ua. (2025, November 2). “*Tam malo lezhaty zo 200 tysyach min*”. *Sho rozpoviv heneral Nayev pro pochatok velykoyi vijny ta oboronu Pivdnya* [“About 200 thousand mines were supposed to be placed there.” What General Nayev said about the beginning of the great war and the defense of the South]. <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/114433/tam-malo-lezhaty-zo-200-tysyach-min-sho-rozpoviv-heneral-nayev-pro-pochatok-velykoyi-vijny-ta-oboronu-pivdnya/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁰⁰Chernish, O. (2025, February 24). *Chomu Rosiya tak shvydko okupuvala pivden Ukrainy: vidpovidi na chotyry holovni pytannya* [Why Russia occupied the south of Ukraine so quickly: answers to four main questions]. BBC Ukrayina. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c30ml7861z0o> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁰¹Ibid.

⁵⁰²Safronov, T. (2023, July 6). *Uchasnyk podiy rozpoviv, chomu mosty na Chongari ne pidirvaly* [Participant in events explained why the bridges at Chongar were not blown up]. *Militarnyi*. <https://militarnyi.com/uk/news/uchasnyk-podiy-rozpoviv-chomu-mosty-na-chongari-ne-pidirvaly/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁰³Texty.org.ua. (2025, November 2). “*Tam malo lezhaty zo 200 tysyach min*”. *Sho rozpoviv heneral Nayev pro pochatok velykoyi vijny ta oboronu Pivdnya* [“About 200 thousand mines were supposed to be placed there.” What General Nayev said about the beginning of the great war and the defense of the South]. <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/114433/tam-malo-lezhaty-zo-200-tysyach-min-sho-rozpoviv-heneral-nayev-pro-pochatok-velykoyi-vijny-ta-oboronu-pivdnya/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁰⁴Chernish, O. (2025, February 24). *Chomu Rosiya tak shvydko okupuvala pivden Ukrainy: vidpovidi na chotyry holovni pytannya* [Why Russia occupied the south of Ukraine so quickly: answers to four main questions]. BBC Ukrayina. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c30ml7861z0o> [in Ukrainian].



Aftermath of the March 2022 bombing of Chernihiv (photo sourced from the Internet).

Armed Forces, stretched supply lines, and the onset of positional warfare. A major event of that time was the destruction of the Russian Black Sea Fleet's flagship, the missile cruiser *Moskva*. This was accomplished by a strike with Ukrainian Neptune anti-ship missiles.

After Kyiv region was liberated, evidence of mass killings, torture, and rape of civilians were discovered in Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, and other settlements. In the Bucha district alone, over 9,000 war crimes committed by the Russian army during the occupation were documented. More than 1,700 civilians were killed, around 700 of them in Bucha itself.⁵⁰⁵ In the village of Yahidne, Chernihiv region, during the occupation, Russian soldiers held 368 villagers – including 69 children – in the basement of the local school for 27 days. People lived in inhumane conditions – without access to fresh air, water, or food. As a result, 10 people died.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵Borysenko, T. (2024, September 5). *Na Kyivshchyni sudytymut rosiiskoho soldata, yakyi vbyv zhinku pid chas okupatsii Buchi* [A Russian soldier who killed a woman during the occupation of Bucha will be tried in Kyiv region]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/kyiv/829913-na-kiivsini-suditimut-rosijskogo-soldata-akij-vbiv-zinku-pid-cas-okupacii-buci/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁰⁶Sadovnyk, A. (2023, April 3). *Peklo v Yahidnomu: rosiyskyi voyennij zlochyn, ne pomichenyi Amnesty International* [Hell in Yahidne: Russian war crime unnoticed by Amnesty International]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/302246-peklo-v-agidnomu-rosijskij-voennij-zlocin-ne-pomicenij-amnesty-international> [in Ukrainian].

Russian aviation bombed residential areas of Chernihiv. On March 3, several bombs were dropped on Chornovola Street; 47 people were killed in apartment buildings and on the street. The Russian pilot Krasnoyartsev knew perfectly well that he was striking civilian targets.⁵⁰⁷ I will never forget that day – I was no more than 1 km from the site of the explosions and remember how the floor trembled under my feet.

One of the most horrific episodes of Russian aggression was the tragedy in the city of Izyum in Kharkiv region. After the city was liberated in September 2022, a mass grave containing over 400 people was discovered, most of them civilians. Many of the bodies showed signs of torture.⁵⁰⁸ And this is truly only the tip of the iceberg – many more places like Bucha and Izyum will be discovered. The Ukrainian authorities called these events genocide and appealed to international judicial bodies for investigation. Let us also recall the crimes of Russian troops against Ukrainian prisoners of war⁵⁰⁹ – at least 150 executions of Ukrainian POWs by Russians have been documented.⁵¹⁰ Those who returned from captivity report having been subjected to torture.⁵¹¹

It is also worth mentioning the world's reaction to this war – the largest war of the 21st century to date, and the largest in Europe since World War II. The weakness of international institutions has already been discussed. There is little reason to expect anything from the UN when an aggressor with veto power sits on the Security Council. But this time, the West did not leave Ukraine alone with the aggressor.

Unlike in 2014, when sanctions against Russia were mostly symbolic, in 2022 they became significant and more effective. When it became clear that Ukraine was successfully resisting the aggression – especially given the disparity in capabilities – aid began to arrive. Modern war is a war of resources. Everything involved in war – equipment, weapons, supplies, and sadly – people. Seeing readiness of Ukrainians

⁵⁰⁷ Semenets, Yu., Hadzyska, I., Bodnar, P., Drozdova, Ye., Makukha, O., Kelm, N. (2022, December 13). *Bomby, smert i zbytyi lotchyk. Try dni bombarduvannya Chernihova v berezni 2022 roku* [Bombs, death, and a downed pilot: Three days of bombing Chernihiv in March 2022]. Texty.org.ua. <https://texty.org.ua/projects/108382/bomby-litaky-smert-i-pomsta-try-dni-z-zhyttya-chernihova-v-berezni-2022-roku/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁰⁸ Magda, Ye. (2022, September 20). *Trahediya Izyumu. Movchaty ne mozhna* [The tragedy of Izyum. Silence is not an option]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/columns/yemagda/trahediya-izjumu-movchatine-mozhna-876580.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁰⁹ Novytska, T. (2025, May 13). *Orkestr mors'koyi pikhoty v rosiys'komu poloni. Istoriya vyvolenoho muzykanta* [Marine infantry orchestra in Russian captivity. Story of a freed musician]. The Claquers. <https://surl.li/tocolu> [in Ukrainian].

⁵¹⁰ Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (2025, May 24). *Zafiksowano ponad 150 vypadkiv strat ukrayintsiv, yaki potrapyly u polon do rosiyan* [More than 150 cases of executions of Ukrainians captured by Russians recorded]. Ukrinform. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3996484-dedali-bilse-pramih-nakaziv-vbivati-polonenih-u-gur-zafiksuvani-ponad-150-strat-ukrainskih-vijskovih.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵¹¹ Yankovskyi, O., & Badiuk, O. (2023, December 13). *Katuvannya "azovtsiv" v Olenivtsi: zhurnalisty z'iasuvaly, khto prychemnyi do tortur* [Torture of "Azov" fighters in Olenivka: journalists revealed who is responsible for the torture]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovya-stalovidomo-khto-katuvav-azovtsiv-v-olenivtsi/32727882.html> [in Ukrainian].

to defend their country, the West began to provide support – financial, military, technical, and humanitarian. Without this support, Ukraine would not have held out for so long or been able to continue fighting. Among other things, Europe accepted several million refugees, saving them from the war. One can speak endlessly about the crisis of European civilization, but this war is being fought for Ukraine’s right to belong to it. And Europe extended a helping hand to Ukraine.

Western assistance to Ukraine was unprecedented both in scale and form, which fundamentally distinguished 2022 from 2014. As early as late February, Ukraine received anti-tank systems such as Javelin and NLAW, and gradually received Soviet-style weaponry (T-72 tanks, IFVs), much of which remained in Eastern Europe. But when those stocks ran out, Ukraine began receiving the most modern weapons – from tanks (Abrams, Leopard, Challenger) to air defence systems (Patriot, NASAMS, IRIS-T) and aircraft (F-16, Mirage, ASC 890). Western countries also provided ammunition, drones, and intelligence data. On April 26, 2022, the first meeting of defence ministers from 43 countries, including NATO, EU members, and other partners, took place at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany at the initiative of the United States.⁵¹² This marked the beginning of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (also known as the Ramstein Group), which coordinates the provision of military aid to Ukraine. Ukrainian military personnel began receiving essential training, supported by the establishment of the European Coordination Centre (ECCU/IDCC). Also in 2022, the RISE Ukraine coalition was established, bringing together Ukrainian and international organizations to ensure transparency and efficiency in Ukraine’s recovery process.

It should be noted, however, that Ukraine did not always receive what was promised – weapons often arrived in much smaller quantities or with significant delays. Among purely logistical or financial reasons, there are also claims that the West feared a direct confrontation with Russia.⁵¹³ To a large extent, this “tied the hands” of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Financial assistance also played an important role – provided both in the form of grants and loans. Sanctions policy against Russia also played a significant role. Freezing Russian assets in Western countries was likely an unexpected move for Putin. The total amount is estimated at \$300 billion. Around €200 billion of that is held in EU countries.⁵¹⁴ The majority of the funds are reserves of the Central Bank of the

⁵¹² Vasylenko, V. (2022, July 8). *Antiputinska koalitsiya – garantii bezpeky dlya vsikh* [Anti-Putin coalition – security guarantees for all]. Borysfen Intel. <https://bintel.org.ua/analytics/politics/antiputinska-kolaliciya-garantii-bezpeki-dlya-vsikh/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵¹³ Burtseva, A. (2023, May 30). *Shchob Putin ostatochno ne zbozhevoliv: Zakhid dozovano postachaye Ukraini zbroyu z 2 prychyn* [To prevent Putin from going completely mad: The West supplies Ukraine with weapons in a measured way for 2 reasons]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/zbroya-dlya-ukrayini-chomu-zahid-ne-daye-vsyu-zbroyu-odrazu-dumka_n2323934 [in Ukrainian].

⁵¹⁴ Rankin, J. (2025, May 14). *Calls for Russia’s frozen assets held in Belgium to be used in rebuilding Ukraine*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/14/calls-for-russias-frozen-assets-held-in-belgium-to-be-used-in-rebuilding-ukraine>

Russian Federation. In addition to state reserves, about \$58 billion in private assets were also frozen, including property belonging to Russian oligarchs.⁵¹⁵

And finally, on June 23, 2022, the European Council officially granted Ukraine candidate status for EU membership. This decision was made during a meeting of the European Council attended by the heads of state and government of the 27 EU member countries.

And what about Russia? After the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, the Russian side proposed negotiations with Ukraine in Belarus. Ukraine initially refused, as Belarus was effectively a Russian ally in the war. However, after a phone call between V. Zelensky and A. Lukashenko, the first meeting took place on February 28. The main topic of the negotiations was a ceasefire, but no concrete results were achieved.⁵¹⁶ After several unsuccessful meetings, Turkey stepped in as an initiator of new negotiations. On March 29, 2022, another meeting between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations took place in Istanbul.

The parties were working on a draft “Treaty on the Settlement of the Situation in Ukraine and the Neutrality of Ukraine”.⁵¹⁷ The following demands were made of Ukraine. All of Donbas (in Russia’s terms – the Donetsk and Luhansk “republics”) was to come under Russian control. Ukraine was to recognize this through constitutional amendments. Since Russia did not control the entire territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Russian diplomats suggested that Putin and Zelensky personally determine the eastern borders. However, Ukraine rejected this option. According to some Ukrainian negotiators, Russia “demonstrated willingness” to withdraw troops from Ukraine, but not from Donbas and Crimea. The details of the withdrawal were to be discussed directly by the presidents. On its part, Ukraine was reportedly willing to give up the territories occupied since 2014.

⁵¹⁵Fossum, S. (2023, March 9). *US and its allies have frozen more than \$58 billion from Russian oligarchs*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/09/politics/russian-oligarchs-frozen-repo/index.html>

⁵¹⁶Zelenskyi, V. (2022, February 27). *Pid chas rozmovy z Lukashenkom domovylysya pro umovy zustrichi z delegatsiyeyu RF* [During talks with Lukashenko, conditions were agreed for a meeting with the Russian delegation]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zelensky-lukashenko-perehovory/31726417.html> [in Ukrainian]; OHO (Novyny Rivnoho). (2022, February 28). *Perehovory Ukrayina-Rosiya u Bilorusi: khto predstavlyaye delegatsiyi* [Ukraine-Russia negotiations in Belarus: who represents the delegations]. <https://ogo.ua/articles/view/2022-02-28/122005.html> [in Ukrainian]; Kutsenko, V. (2022, February 28). *U Bilorusi zakinchyls' pershi za chas viyny perehovory Ukrayiny z Rosiyeyu* [The first Ukraine-Russia negotiations during the war ended in Belarus]. Telegraf. <https://war.telegraf.com.ua/ukr/politika/2022-02-28/5697837-v-belarusi-proydu-t-pervye-za-vremya-voyny-peregovory-ukrainy-s-rossiyey-onlayn-translyatsiya> [in Ukrainian].

⁵¹⁷Melnyk, R. (2025, January 22). *Zelenskyi pro perehovory u Stambuli: RF khotila zaminuty mene na Medvedchuka ta zabraty ves' Donbas* [Zelensky about the negotiations in Istanbul: Russia wanted to replace me with Medvedchuk and take all of Donbas]. Hromadske. <https://hromadske.ua/viyna/238308-zelenskyy-pro-perehovory-u-stambuli-rf-khotila-zaminuty-mene-na-medvedchuka-ta-zabraty-uves-donbas> [in Ukrainian]; NV (New Voice). (2024, April 27). *“Zdatsyia shliakhom perehovoriv”: proiekt uhodu, iaku Ukraina ta Rosiia mohly uklasty na pochatku povnomashtabnoi viiny* [“Surrender through negotiations”: draft agreement that Ukraine and Russia could have signed at the beginning of the full-scale war]. <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/geopolitics/peregovori-z-rf-pro-shcho-domovlyalisya-v-stambuli-v-2022-roci-50413716.html> [in Ukrainian].

Ukraine was also expected to bear the costs of restoring Donbas infrastructure destroyed since 2014.

In the military sphere, Ukraine was to reduce its army to 50,000 (according to other sources – 85,000) personnel, with only 1,500 officers. Ukraine aimed to maintain a force of 250,000. Russia demanded the destruction of all long-range weapons with a range over 20 km and the limitation of the number of multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS). Ukraine would also lose the right to develop, produce, purchase, or deploy missile systems with a range of over 250 km on its territory. The number of tanks was to be reduced to 342 units, and armoured vehicles to 1,029 (Ukraine insisted on 800 tanks and 2,400 armoured vehicles). According to Russia's version, Ukraine's navy would consist of only two ships (Ukraine insisted on eight), and so on.

In the political sphere, Ukraine was to adhere to a neutral status, although the document did not contain a direct ban on Ukraine's accession to the EU. Ukraine would also be obligated never to possess nuclear weapons, not to allow foreign troops on its territory, not to grant other countries access to its military infrastructure, and not to participate in military conflicts or joint military exercises with other countries.

For its part, Russia promised not to attack Ukraine again. The proposed security guarantors were to include Russia itself, as well as the U.S., the UK, France, and China. Ukraine also wanted to include Turkey among the guarantors, while Russia insisted on including Belarus. According to Russia's proposal, any decision to assist Ukraine would have to be unanimously approved by all guarantors, effectively giving Russia the power to block any such decision. In turn, Ukraine demanded that the security guarantors establish a no-fly zone over its territory in case of attack, but Russia rejected this demand. The agreements did not apply to Crimea and Sevastopol, which would remain under Russian control. It was also proposed that the remaining unresolved points of the treaty would be discussed personally by Putin and Zelensky.

After the Istanbul summit concluded, Russia presented additional demands – including granting Russian the status of a second official language, the official ban in Ukraine on “fascism, Nazism, and aggressive nationalism” (Russia had prepared a list of Ukrainian laws it viewed as examples of “Nazification and glorification of Nazism”), and the restoration of property rights for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Ukraine was also to lift all sanctions and withdraw all lawsuits filed since 2014. Ukraine rejected all of these additional demands.

But when the Russian army was forced to withdraw from Ukraine's northern regions in early April, the atrocities committed by Russians in Bucha came to light. The Bucha tragedy became one of the most horrific symbols of Russian aggression against Ukraine. All negotiations were called off. Perhaps a role in this was played by then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who visited Kyiv on April 9. At least, that's what Ukrainian delegation member Davyd Arakhamia claimed. It was then

declared that Ukraine would continue its resistance. Johnson later denied this information.

So, the negotiations in Istanbul did not result in a peace agreement. But even if one had been signed – the question remains: would Russia have honoured it? After all, it was Russia that violated key agreements between the countries – the Budapest Memorandum, the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation (1997), which enshrined the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the Treaty on the Ukrainian-Russian State Border (2003), which defined the borders between the two countries and their legal status, and so on.

Since the autumn of 2022, fierce fighting has continued in eastern and southern Ukraine. In September, as a result of a lightning counteroffensive, the Armed Forces of Ukraine liberated nearly all of the previously occupied parts of Kharkiv region.

During this period, Russia attempted to legitimize the territories it had previously seized. From September 23 to 27, so-called “referendums” were held in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions. At that time, Russia did not fully control any of these regions. On September 30, Putin signed the so-called “treaties” on the annexation of these regions by Russia, and on October 5, federal laws ratifying these “treaties”. The next day, a new version of the Constitution was published, listing the occupied territories as constituent parts of the Russian Federation.⁵¹⁸

The only regional capital captured by Russia after 2022 was Kherson, located on the right bank of the Dnipro River. This gave Ukraine’s Armed Forces the opportunity to destroy the Russian grouping on the right bank. A liberation operation began, and Kherson was freed on November 11.⁵¹⁹ Realizing the futility of further fighting, the Russian army – which risked being trapped between the front line and the Dnipro River – withdrew to the left bank. In 2024, the book *War* by American journalist Bob Woodward was published. In it, he reveals that in autumn 2022, the U.S. administration feared that encircling and destroying a large Russian force (about 30,000 soldiers with equipment and weapons) could provoke Russia to use tactical nuclear weapons. The probability was estimated at 50 %. Therefore, the U.S. delayed the start of Ukraine’s offensive, which allowed the Russian army to retreat. The book cites a claim that Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian General Staff,

⁵¹⁸ Bohdaniok, O. (2022, October 5). *Putin pidpysav zakony pro “pryedydannia” tymchasovo okupovanykh terytorii Ukrainy do Rosii* [Putin signed laws on the “annexation” of temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to Russia]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/288682-putin-pidpisav-zakon-pro-priednanna-timchasovo-okupovanih-teritorij-ukraini-do-rosii/> [in Ukrainian]; ZN.UA. (2022, October 6). *Rosiia zakripyla aneksiuu chotyrok oblastei Ukrainy u svoii Konstytutsii* [Russia enshrined the annexation of four Ukrainian regions in its Constitution]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/POLITICS/rosiia-zakripila-aneksiju-chotyrok-oblastej-ukrajini-u-svojij-konstitutsiji.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵¹⁹ Mazurenko, I. (2024, November 11). *Dva roky svobody. Yak Kherson povertavsia v Ukrainu (arkhivni foto ta video)* [Two years of freedom. How Kherson returned to Ukraine (archive photos and videos)]. Telegraf News. <https://news.telegraf.com.ua/ukraina/2024-11-11/5885529-dva-roki-svobody-yak-kherson-povertavsya-do-ukraini-arkhivni-foto-ta-video> [in Ukrainian].

threatened the use of nuclear weapons during a conversation with U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley.⁵²⁰

The U.S. persuaded Ukraine to refrain from a series of strikes on targets in Russia on the first anniversary of the full-scale Russian invasion. One possible reason was concern that Russia might respond with tactical nuclear weapons.⁵²¹ Washington strongly urged Kyiv to stop attacking Russian oil refineries, believing such actions could raise oil prices and provoke retaliation.⁵²² However, the inability to refine oil at destroyed Russian facilities would instead force Russia to export more crude, thus lowering the price.

It's also worth recalling the ban on using Western weapons to strike Russian territory, which the West believed could provoke Russia. The ban was lifted only at the end of May 2025, after which Ukraine was allowed to strike deep into Russian territory with Western weapons.⁵²³

It turned out that even private individuals could influence military operations. In 2022, SpaceX founder Elon Musk refused to activate Starlink satellite internet for Ukrainian forces in the area of temporarily occupied Crimea. Musk explained his refusal by citing the desire to avoid escalation and dragging his company into the war.⁵²⁴ The case of a private individual influencing military operations was also met with disapproval in the United States itself.⁵²⁵

During the winter of 2022–2023, intense fighting took place in the Donbas region. The battles near Bakhmut continued.⁵²⁶ Russia committed significant forces

⁵²⁰ Trachtenberg, J. A., Simonetti, I., & Barba, R. (2024, October 8). *New Book Reveals Trump's Putin Calls and Russian Nuclear Threats: Bob Woodward's 'War' sheds new light on global leaders and high-stakes conflicts*. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/business/media/bob-woodward-book-war-trump-putin-3411d928>; TopWar. (2025, January 11). *Ukrainian Armed Forces allowed Russian Armed Forces to retreat from Kherson calmly due to US pressure on Kyiv*. <https://en.topwar.ru/257295-amerikanskij-zhurnalists-vsu-pozvolili-spokojno-otstupit-iz-hersona-vs-rf-iz-za-davlenija-ssha-na-kyiv.html>; Nikk.ua. (2025, January 12). *The United States forced the Ukrainian Armed Forces to allow a 30,000-strong Russian group to quietly retreat from Kherson in 2022 – Bob Woodward after communicating with US officials in the book "War"*. <https://nikk.ua/en/the-united-states-30/>

⁵²¹ Radio Svoboda. (2023, April 24). *SHSA ubedyly Ukrainu vidmovytsya vid atak na ob'iekty v Rosii 24 liutoho* [The USA convinced Ukraine to refrain from attacks on targets in Russia on February 24]. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/wp-ssha-ubedili-ukrainu-otkazatsya-ot-atak-na-obekty-v-rossii-24-fevralya/32377088.html> [in Russian].

⁵²² BBC. (2024, March 22). *SSHA tysnut na Ukrainu ne byty po rosiiskyykh NPZ. U Kyievi obureni, yak reahuiut u sviti?* [The USA pressures Ukraine not to strike Russian oil refineries. Outrage in Kyiv, how the world reacts?]. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c9ed7578yrpo> [in Ukrainian].

⁵²³ Poroshchuk, N. (2025, May 26). *Kreml zapanikuvav pislia zniattia obmezhen' na vykorystannia dalekobiinoi zbroi Ukrainoiu* [The Kremlin panicked after lifting restrictions on the use of long-range weapons by Ukraine]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/world/world-politics/kreml-zapanikuvav-pislja-znjattja-obmezhen-na-vikoristannja-dalekobijnoji-zbroji-ukrajinoju-10605> [in Ukrainian].

⁵²⁴ Jordan, D. (2023, September 8). *Elon Musk says he withheld Starlink over Crimea to avoid escalation*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-66752264>

⁵²⁵ Ukrinform. (2023, September 13). *Musk lays out new version of Starlink shutdown over Crimea*. <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-ato/3760677-musk-lays-out-new-version-of-starlink-shutdown-over-crimea.html>

⁵²⁶ The battle for the city lasted from August 2022 to May 2023.

to storm the city, including the private military company Wagner, led by Yevgeny Prigozhin. Prisoners from Russian penal colonies were recruited into his units, being offered amnesty in exchange for service.⁵²⁷ Russian troop losses in the battles for Bakhmut were heavy. According to estimates, total Russian casualties in this direction could have reached between 60,000 and 100,000 killed and wounded.⁵²⁸ A significant share of the casualties were among fighters from the Wagner private military company.⁵²⁹

In May 2023, Ukraine launched a counteroffensive, particularly in the Zaporizhzhia region. Unfortunately, during that time, Russian forces had managed to build a system of fortifications there, complicating the efforts of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. There were also a number of purely military miscalculations by the command, which attempted to advance along the entire front line. Other factors may have played a role, such as the leak of classified Pentagon documents in April 2023, which revealed parts of Ukraine's offensive planning online.⁵³⁰ On June 6, 2023, the Russian army blew up the Kakhovka dam, apparently believing it to be one of the key routes for the Ukrainian offensive. As a result, Ukraine's gains on the front were local in nature and came at a high cost in casualties.

A potential chance to end the war emerged on June 23, when the private army of the previously mentioned Prigozhin revolted. For two days, Prigozhin's forces advanced toward Moscow in a military convoy. The uprising was triggered by Moscow's intention to disband the Wagner Private Military Company. At that time, Yevgeny Prigozhin was widely known in Russia and publicly criticized the leadership of the Russian Ministry of Defense and the Kremlin. After an attempt to disarm Wagner forces, they seized the headquarters of the Southern Military District and marched toward Moscow, stopping just 200 km short of the capital. The column moving toward the Russian capital encountered little resistance. Prigozhin called it a "march for justice", demanding that Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov be held accounta-

⁵²⁷ Focus.ua. (2023, February 9). *Vidbyly bud'iake bazhannya: PVK "Vagner" pryzupynyla nabor zekiv u svoji lavi – Pryhozhyn* [Any desire was crushed: PMC "Wagner" suspended recruitment of prisoners into its ranks – Prigozhin]. <https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/549083-otbili-vsyakoe-zhelanie-chvk-vagner-priostanovil-nabor-zekov-v-svoi-ryady-prigozhin> [in Ukrainian]; Censor.net. (2023, February 9). *Pryhozhyn prypynyv nabor uv"yaznenykh do PVK "Vagner"* [Prigozhin stopped recruiting prisoners to PMC "Wagner"]. <https://censor.net/ua/news/3398704/prigozhyn-prypynyv-nabir-uvyaznenykh-do-pvk-vagner> [in Ukrainian].

⁵²⁸ Feschenko, A. (2023, June 4). *Vtraty Rosiyi pid Bakhmutom vrazhayut: ZSU nazvaly kil'kist' likvidovanykh okupantiv* [Russian losses in the battles near Bakhmut are staggering: AFU announced the number of eliminated invaders]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/country/incidents/vtraty-rosiji-pid-bakhmutom-vrazhajut-zsu-azvali-kilkist-zahiblih-okupantiv-931994.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵²⁹ Focus.ua. (2023, March 16). *"Po 800 ubytykh na kilometr": stalo vidomo, skil'ky soldativ vtratyla RF u Bakhmuti* ["About 800 killed per kilometer": it became known how many soldiers Russia lost in Bakhmut]. <https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/555316-po-800-ubityh-na-kilometr-stalo-izvestno-skolko-soldat-poteryala-rf-v-bahmute> [in Ukrainian].

⁵³⁰ Adams, P., & Wright, G. (2023, April 12). *Ukraine war: Leak shows Western special forces on the ground*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65245065>

ble.⁵³¹ However, on June 24, Prigozhin announced a halt to the advance and the return of Wagner troops to their field camps.⁵³² A month later, Prigozhin and his associates died in a plane crash.⁵³³

Before the mutiny, Prigozhin was considered one of Putin's trusted associates and a key figure in the Russian-Ukrainian information war (he founded the "troll factory" – an organization operating on social media for propaganda purposes).⁵³⁴ However, Prigozhin clearly did not see himself as a puppet or servant, but rather as an ally, which made him a fairly independent figure. If the coup had succeeded – and there was a real possibility – he likely would have changed the Kremlin's policies. The removal of Putin, despite all the propaganda-driven glorification surrounding him, would likely not have faced significant resistance either from ordinary Russians or the ruling elite. One possible outcome could have been a civil war in Russia, which would have aligned with Ukraine's interests. Let us also recall that in one of his speeches, Prigozhin claimed the war did not start because of the West or Ukraine, but for other reasons related to the Russian leadership. So, the chances to end the war were quite real. Unfortunately, it did not happen.⁵³⁵

At the same time as Ukraine's attempts at offensive operations, defensive battles were also ongoing. The fiercest fighting was near Avdiivka, where a large-scale Russian offensive began in October 2023, but the city held out until mid-February 2024.

At the end of 2023, the U.S. announced it had run out of funds for new military aid packages to Ukraine. The last package, worth \$250 million, was approved on De-

⁵³¹ Radio Svoboda. (2024, June 24). *Rik po "Vahneru". Yak zakolot Pryhozhyn vplivuv na Putina i yaki vysnovky toy zrobyv* [One year since "Wagner". How Prigozhin's mutiny affected Putin and what conclusions he made]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/pryhozhyn-naslidyky-zakolotu-vahnera-cherez-rik/33007002.html> [in Ukrainian]; Kuzmenko, Yu. (2024, June 23). *Zakolot Pryhozhyn rik tomu: yak tse bulo, de zaraz PVK "Vahner" ta chy mozhlyvyi shche odyin bunt* [Prigozhin's mutiny a year ago: how it happened, where the PMC "Wagner" is now, and whether another revolt is possible]. *Suspilne*. <https://suspilne.media/774043-zakolot-prigozhina-ak-ce-bulo-de-zaraz-pvk-vagner-ta-ci-mozhlyvij-se-odin-bunt/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵³² Prokaieva, A. (2023, June 25). *"Bunt "Vahnera" pokazav, shcho tyl voroha zovsim nezakhyshcheny" – Ivan Stupak* ["The "Wagner" mutiny showed that the enemy's rear is completely unprotected" – Ivan Stupak]. *Gazeta.ua*. https://gazeta.ua/articles/life/_bunt-vagnera-pokazav-scho-til-voroga-zovsim-nezahischenij-ivan-stupak-/1148491 [in Ukrainian]; Focus.ua. (2023, June 24). *Pokhid na Moskvu skasovuyetsya: Pryhozhyn zayaviv, shcho rozvertaie kolony i yide u zvorotnomu napryamku* [The march on Moscow is canceled: Prigozhin announced he is turning his columns and moving in the opposite direction]. <https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/574708-pohid-na-moskvu-skasovuyetsya-prigozhin-zayaviv-shcho-rozvertaye-koloni-i-jide-u-zvorotnomu-napryamku> [in Ukrainian].

⁵³³ BBC News Ukraina. (2023, August 24). *"Dumayu, bratan, tse kinets". Shcho vidomo pro aviakatastrofu z Pryhozhynym* ["I think, brother, this is the end." What is known about the plane crash with Prigozhin]. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-66593170> [in Ukrainian].

⁵³⁴ Wikipedia contributors (n.d.). *Pryhozhyn Yevhen Viktorovych* [Yevgeny Viktorovich Prigozhin]. *Wikipedia*. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Пригожин_Евген_Викторович [in Ukrainian].

⁵³⁵ Rudenko, E. (2023, June 27). *Hromke zayavleniya Pryhozhyn o prychynakh viyny z Ukrainoyu: ekspert poyasnyv, chomu vono poyavilosia* [Prigozhin's loud statement on the causes of the war with Ukraine: expert explained why it appeared]. *Telegraf*. <https://war.telegraf.com.ua/novosti-rossii/2023-06-27/5797402-guchna-zayava-prigozhina-pro-prichini-viyni-z-ukrainoyu-ekspert-poyasniv-chomu-vona-zyavilasya> [in Ukrainian].

cember 27, 2023. Further funding was blocked due to disputes in Congress.⁵³⁶ The next aid package arrived a year later, in December 2024, and consisted of HIMARS ammunition, unmanned aerial systems, and equipment for repairing artillery and armoured vehicles.⁵³⁷

The lack of American assistance undoubtedly affected the course of combat operations, but the war continued. Significant supplies began arriving from Europe, and Ukraine also ramped up its own weapons production. During this time, the tactics of the war began to change. Ukraine began using drones to strike deep into the European part of Russia, destroying oil refineries, depots, and terminals.⁵³⁸ In 2025, Russian military airfields, depots, and factories increasingly became targets for drone strikes.⁵³⁹ Between 2023 and 2025, Ukraine continued to use naval drones, which became a powerful counter to Russia's Black Sea Fleet.⁵⁴⁰ There were also reports of combat use of Ukraine's operational-tactical missile system Hrim-2, with a range of up to 500 kilometres⁵⁴¹.

The trend of shifting combat operations into Russian territory was solidified by the Kursk Operation. On August 6, 2024, the Armed Forces of Ukraine crossed the Russian border near the town of Sudzha and advanced into Russian territory. At its peak, the area controlled by the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Kursk Oblast reached about 1,300 square kilometres. Putin was even forced to deploy soldiers from allied North Korea to this front. Only after assembling a force of 60,000 Russian troops and 11,000 North Koreans were Ukrainian forces pushed out of much of the Kursk

⁵³⁶The War Zone. (n.d.). *Ukraine Situation Report: U.S. Aid Funds Have Run Out*. <https://www.twz.com/ukraine-situation-report-u-s-aid-funds-have-run-out>

⁵³⁷Kunytskyi, O. (2024, December 13). *USA оголошув нову військову допомогу на 500 млн доларів* [The US announced new military aid worth 500 million dollars]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/uk/boepripasi-i-tehnika-ssa-ogolosili-vijskovu-dopomogu-ukraini-na-500-mln-dolariv/a-71042847> [in Ukrainian].

⁵³⁸Orel, I. (2024, March 15). *Chotyry NPZ za try dni. Yaki naslidky druhoi u 2024-mu khvili atak na rosiysku naftopererobku – karta vluchan* [Four oil refineries in three days. Consequences of the second wave of attacks on Russian oil refining in 2024 – hit map]. Forbes Ukraina. <https://forbes.ua/war-in-ukraine/chotiri-npz-za-tri-dni-yaki-naslidki-drugoi-u-2024-khvili-atak-na-rosiysku-naftopererobku-karta-vluchan-15032024-19910> [in Ukrainian]; Pryshliak, N., & Hirnyk, K. (2024, March 17). *Ukrainski drony atakuvaly chervoyi NPZ u Krasnodarskomu kraji RF* [Ukrainian drones attacked another oil refinery in Russia's Krasnodar region]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/war/ukrajinski-droni-atakuvali-chergoviy-npz-u-krasnodarskomu-kraji-rf-dzherelo-12575628.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵³⁹LRT.ua. (2025, July 5). *Ukrayinski drony atakuvaly kliuchovi pidpriemstva VPK ta aerodromy v Rosii* [Ukrainian drones attacked key military-industrial enterprises and airfields in Russia]. <https://www.lrt.lt/ua/novini/1263/2555885/ukrayins-ki-droni-atakuvali-kliuchovi-pidpriemstva-vpk-ta-aerodromi-v-rosiyi?srsltid=AfmBOoNwUnEDPC8dv0Oly4CDXEgW04EtP5PQNUsh0XrwuysFd0QI-2> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴⁰Smyshliaiev, S. (2023, November 11). *Morski drony urazyly vzhe shist korabliv ChF RF – Fedorov* [Sea drones have already struck six ships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet – Fedorov]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/uk/ukrajinski-morski-droni-urazili-vze-sist-suden-cornomorskogo-flotu-rf-fedorov/a-67377117> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴¹Synytsin, M. (2023, March 9). *Ye vidpovid na vorozhi obstrely: rosiyany boyatsya ukrayinskykh raket, yakymy mozna byty po Krymu* [There is a response to enemy shelling: Russians fear Ukrainian missiles that can strike Crimea]. Telegraf. <https://war.telegraf.com.ua/ukr/tehnologii/2023-03-09/5782266-est-otvet-na-vrazheskie-obstrely-rossiyane-boyatsya-ukrainskikh-raket-kotorymi-mozhno-bit-po-krymu> [in Ukrainian].

region,⁵⁴² but even now (as of summer 2025), the Ukrainian army still controls several dozen kilometres there.⁵⁴³ The operation boosted the morale of Ukrainian troops and society, showing that the war can be fought on the enemy's territory.

Russia also changed its tactics in the war, aiming primarily to intimidate Ukrainian civilians. Drone and missile attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure began. On November 23, 2022, one of the most massive attacks occurred: for the first time in history, all four operational Ukrainian nuclear power plants were shut down simultaneously. Power supply was partially lost in all regions of the country.⁵⁴⁴ Between March 22 and August 31, 2024 alone, Russian Armed Forces carried out nine waves of coordinated attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, damaging or destroying numerous generation, transmission, and distribution facilities.⁵⁴⁵ The largest attack on thermal power plants occurred on December 25, 2024, when Russia launched 78 missiles and 106 drones.⁵⁴⁶ In 2024, the Russians destroyed nearly 10 GW of generating capacity.⁵⁴⁷ The Zmiiv and Trypillia thermal power plants were completely destroyed, and key hydroelectric plants were damaged or destroyed. The Ladyzhyn, Burshtyn, Dobrotvir, Kurakhove, Kryvyi Rih, and Dnipro TPPs suffered critical damage (over 80 %). About half of the high-voltage power transmission substations were damaged.⁵⁴⁸ In 2024, power outages were regular; electricity was supplied only during scheduled hours, but even that did not guarantee availability.

⁵⁴² Slovo i dilo. (2024, December 2). *Kurska operatsiya ZSU: yak zminyuvalasya ploshcha kontroliovanoyi terytoriyi* [Kursk operation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine: how the controlled territory area changed]. <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2024/12/02/infografika/bezpeka/kurska-operacziya-zsu-yak-zminyuvalasya-ploshha-kontrolovanoyi-terytoriyi> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴³ NV (New Voice). (2025, May 8). *Syly oborony Ukrayiny zayshly v selyshche T'otkino Kurskoyi oblasti* [Ukrainian Defense Forces entered the village of Tyotkino in Kursk region – ISW]. <https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/boji-v-kurskiy-oblasti-u-rayoni-totkino-fiksuyetsya-prosuvannya-zsu-karta-isw-50512301.html> [in Ukrainian]; RBC-Ukrayina. (2025, May 20). *ZSU prosunulytsya v Kurskiy oblasti, bilya Borovoyi ta Toretska: karty ISW* [Armed Forces of Ukraine advanced in Kursk region, near Borova and Toretsk: ISW maps]. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/zsu-prosunulysya-kurskiy-oblasti-bilya-borovoyi-1747710100.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴⁴ Radio Svoboda. (2022, November 24). *Zahroza dlya Yevropy i svitu: udary po energetychniy systemi Ukrayiny mozhut sprychynyty yadernu katastrofu* [Threat to Europe and the world: strikes on Ukraine's energy system could cause a nuclear disaster]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/rosiya-raketni-obstrily-zahroza-aes-yaderna-katastrofa/32147455.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴⁵ OHCHR Ukraine. (2024, September). *Ataky na enerhetychnu infrastrukturu Ukrayiny: shkola tsyvil'nomu naselenniu* [Attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure: harm to the civilian population]. <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/uk/Attacks-on-Ukraines-Energy-Infrastructure-Harm-to-the-Civilian-Population> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴⁶ OHCHR Ukraine. (2024, December 26). *Masshtabna ataka na enerhetychnu infrastrukturu Ukrayiny zavdaie shkody ta sprychyniaie pereboi u nadanni zhyttievo vazhlyvykh posluh* [Massive attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure damages and disrupts essential services]. <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/uk/Massive-Attack-on-Ukraine-s-Energy-Infrastructure-Damages-and-Disrupts-Essential-Services> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴⁷ Ukrinform. (2025, May 23). *Iz liutoho 2022 roku cherez rosiiski masovani udary ta tochkovi ataky v Ukraini poshkodzeni 63 tys. ob'ektiv enerhetychnoi infrastruktury* [Since February 2022, 63 thousand energy infrastructure facilities damaged in Ukraine due to Russian massive and targeted strikes]. <https://surli.cc/lczqvq> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁴⁸ Slovo i dilo. (2024, June 11). *U KSE pidrakhuvaly zbytky enerhosektoru Ukrayiny vid rosiiskyykh atak* [KSE calculated the losses of Ukraine's energy sector from Russian attacks]. <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2024/06/11/novyna/ekonomika/kse-pidrakhuvaly-zbytky-enerhosektoru-ukrayiny-rosiiskyykh-atak> [in Ukrainian].



18.07.2024



Power outage schedule for household consumers of Chernihivoblenergo for July 18, 2024

(from the author's archive).⁵⁴⁹

But Ukraine held out in the energy sector as well; despite the critical situation, energy workers managed to provide electricity. Equipment assistance was provided by allies – Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, and other countries.⁵⁵⁰

In 2025, new factors emerged that influenced the course of the war. On January 20, 2025, Donald Trump became the 47th President of the United States. Immediately after the inauguration, he signed a number of executive orders on immigration policy and the fight against illegal migration. A state of emergency was declared at the border with Mexico, which had been a constant source of illegal migrant influx. A global tariff war was also launched. According to Trump, the new tariffs are intended to encourage companies to relocate production to the U.S. and create new jobs.

Trump also set ambitious foreign policy goals, and some of his statements make one check the calendar to be sure it's not the 19th century and that colonial empires aren't vying for control of the world. Trump has already denied Canada's sovereignty – suggesting it should become a U.S. state – as well as Greenland's, which he believes should also join America, and declared the need to regain control over the Panama Canal and rename the Gulf of Mexico to the American Gulf.

Trump also set out to solve all global issues – to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, stop Iran's nuclear program,⁵⁵¹ rein in the Yemeni Houthis, and end the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The new U.S. administration seized on Zelensky's proposal to create a Joint Investment Fund between the U.S. and Ukraine to develop rare earth mineral extraction. Ukraine tried to include a clause on security guarantees from the U.S. in the agreement. In turn, the U.S. rejected this and put forward a number of unacceptable demands. For instance, the U.S. demanded that all previous American grants and subsidies provided during the war be recognized as Ukraine's debt. However,

⁵⁴⁹ Such schedules were set for each day over the course of several months.

⁵⁵⁰ UA-Energy. (2024, September 24). *Oprylyudnyly sumu dopomohy Ukrayini dlia vidnovlennia enerhetyky vid "G7 plus"* [Published amount of aid to Ukraine for energy restoration from "G7 Plus"]. <https://ua-energy.org/uk/posts/oprylyudnyly-sumu-dopomohy-ukraini-dlia-vidnovlennia-enerhetyky-vid-g7-plus> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁵¹ On June 22, 2025, U.S. aviation struck Iranian nuclear facilities, but to what extent this halted the nuclear program is unknown.

this idea was rejected during the negotiations.⁵⁵² The finalized agreement was to be signed by Zelensky and Trump in Washington in February 2025. But the meeting turned into a public confrontation. President Trump accused Zelensky of “ingratitude” and claimed he was “playing with the lives of millions”, demanding that he agree to “compromises” with Russia.⁵⁵³ As a result, in March 2025, military aid that had been allocated during Joe Biden’s presidency was suspended. In subsequent negotiations, a compromise was reached that secured the resumption of U.S. military assistance. The minerals agreement was also signed.⁵⁵⁴

One of the popular topics among historians is the role of the individual in history. Undoubtedly, individuals are part of the historical process, and sometimes it is their actions or preferences that shape historical change, especially when such a person holds concentrated power. The office of the U.S. President can be described as one of the most influential – if not the key – positions in world history. And although this office is assumed to be an institution shaped by laws, traditions, and history, it is well known that a person’s knowledge base, worldview, life experience, and psychological traits also matter.

It is difficult to say what exactly influenced Donald Trump’s worldview on the Russian-Ukrainian war, but the following narratives have clearly formed part of his worldview:

1) Trump sees himself as the sole peacemaker and blames the previous administration for all the mistakes. For example: “I will end every international crisis created by the current administration, including the horrible war between Russia and Ukraine, which would never have happened if I had been president.”⁵⁵⁵ Blaming Biden is, in fact, one of the key themes in most of his speeches;

2) The assistance provided by the Biden administration was undoubtedly crucial, but Trump overestimates its scale. Let us also recall that, due to internal political disagreements, it was delivered with significant delays and was often conditioned by the U.S. ability to influence Kyiv’s decision-making (for instance, the recommendation not to attack Russian oil refineries with drones⁵⁵⁶). Trump quote: “If not for American

⁵⁵²Kyiv Post. (2025, February 23). *Prezydent pro dopomohu SSHA: Kyiv ne vyznavatyme granty yak bor-dhy* [President about US aid: Kyiv will not recognize grants as debts]. <https://www.kyivpost.com/uk/post/47673> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁵³Holos Ameryky. (2025, February 28). *Stenohrama. Zayavy Trampa i Zelenskoho v Bilomu domi* [Transcript. Statements of Trump and Zelensky in the White House]. <https://www.holosameryky.com/a/white-house-meeting/7992893.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁵⁴ZN.UA. (2025, May 24). *Trump demonstruie nezvychnu terpinnia shchodo Putina – Axios* [Trump shows unusual patience towards Putin – Axios]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/POLITICS/trump-demonstruje-nezvichne-terpinnja-shchodo-putina-axios-.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁵⁵Hlushchenko, O. (2024, July 19). *Trump mentions war in Ukraine while speaking at Republican convention*. Ukrayinska pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2024/07/19/7466428/>

⁵⁵⁶Romashova, N. (2024, April 12). *Zmova z Kremlem chy vyborchi vyhody: chomu u Baidena vymahayut ne atakuvaty NPZ v Rosiji* [Conspiracy with Kremlin or electoral benefits: why Biden is urged not to attack refineries in Russia]. Focus.ua. <https://focus.ua/uk/politics/639907-zmova-z-kremlem-chi-viborchivigodi-chomu-u-baydena-vimagayut-ne-atakuvati-np-z-v-rosiji> [in Ukrainian].

weapons, this war would have ended.”⁵⁵⁷ According to him, U.S. aid amounts to \$350 billion, although in reality, as of February 2025, the total was about \$122 billion (including \$66.5 billion in military aid and \$50 billion in financial and humanitarian assistance). The total support from Europe stands at \$132 billion.⁵⁵⁸ Without American aid, Ukraine would have had a much harder time – but the numbers do matter;

3) Trump treats Ukraine as a country that has effectively lost the war and is incapable of continuing the fight: “You have no cards. Your people are dying; you’re running out of soldiers.” From Trump’s perspective, Ukraine does not realize this: “If you don’t want a ceasefire, I do. You should be grateful.”⁵⁵⁹ In his campaign speeches, he greatly exaggerated and catastrophized Ukraine’s losses, calling the country “completely destroyed”, with “millions and millions of people” dead.⁵⁶⁰ It seems Trump would have been more comfortable if Ukraine had lost back in 2022. This is suggested by his comments about Russian tanks getting stuck in the mud, which he claimed prevented Putin from capturing Kyiv within a few hours,⁵⁶¹ among other similar statements;

4) Trump places the blame for the war on both sides. He has rarely directly called Russia the aggressor, which is reflected in statements from his administration. In April 2025, the U.S. opposed the use of the term “aggressor” for Russia in the G7 communiqué marking the third anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.⁵⁶² In his peace initiatives, Trump promises Putin relief from sanctions and stronger economic ties,⁵⁶³ claiming that “Putin wants peace”.⁵⁶⁴ Trump also blames

⁵⁵⁷ Koval, V. (2025, February 28). *Napruzhenyi dialoh u Vashyntoni: naiyasiavkashi tsytaty iz zustrichi Trampa i Zelenskoho* [Tense dialogue in Washington: brightest quotes from Trump and Zelensky meeting]. *Telegraf News*. <https://news.telegraf.com.ua/ukr/ukraina/2025-02-28/5900099-napruzheniy-dialog-u-vashingtoni-nayyaskravishi-tsitati-iz-zustrichi-trampa-i-zelenskogo> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁵⁸ Дзюба, М. (2025, February 20). *Milyardy dlia Ukrayiny: skilky naspravdi vydylyly SSHA ta chy ne perebilyuie Tramp* [Billions for Ukraine: how much the US really allocated and whether Trump exaggerates]. *Vikna*. <https://vikna.tv/dlia-tebe/vijna-v-ukrayini/tramp-zayavyv-shho-ssha-nadaly-ukrayini-350-mlrd-pravda-chy-manipulyaciya/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁵⁹ Koval, V. (2025, February 28). *Napruzhenyi dialoh u Vashyntoni: naiyasiavkashi tsytaty iz zustrichi Trampa i Zelenskoho* [Tense dialogue in Washington: brightest quotes from Trump and Zelensky meeting]. *Telegraf News*. <https://news.telegraf.com.ua/ukr/ukraina/2025-02-28/5900099-napruzheniy-dialog-u-vashingtoni-nayyaskravishi-tsitati-iz-zustrichi-trampa-i-zelenskogo> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁶⁰ Bondaryova, Kh., & Oliynyk, T. (2024, September 25). *Trump zayavyv, shcho “Ukrayiny yak takoyi ne isnuye” i zmanipulyuvav u faktakh pro viynu* [Trump said that “Ukraine as such does not exist” and manipulated facts about the war]. *Ukrayinska Pravda*. https://pda.pravda.com.ua/news/id_7476800/ [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁶¹ RBC-Ukraine. (2025, May 17). *Trump invents reason why Russian tanks didn’t reach Kyiv in 2022*. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/trump-invents-reason-why-russian-tanks-didn-1747486895.html>

⁵⁶² Paskevych, A. (2025, February 20). *SSHA zaklykaly ne nazyvaty Rosiyu ahresorom u zayavi G7: upershe za try roky viyny* [US urged not to call Russia an aggressor in G7 statement: first time in three years of the war]. *Obozrevatel*. <https://news.obozrevatel.com/ukr/abroad/ssha-zaklikali-ne-nazivati-rosiyu-agresorom-u-zayavi-g7-upershe-za-tri-roki-vijni.htm> [in Ukrainian]

⁵⁶³ ZN.UA. (2025, May 24). *Tramp demonstruye nezvychnu terpinnya shchodo Putina – Axios* [Trump shows unusual patience toward Putin – Axios]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/POLITICS/tramp-demonstruje-nezvichne-terpinnja-shchodo-putina-axios-.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁶⁴ CNN. (2025, May 19). *Trump says he does believe Putin wants peace*. <https://edition.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-presidency-news-05-19-25#cmavj9k1400003b6n7fxzfvel>

Zelenskyy for the war: “Zelensky should never have let this war start, because it’s unwinnable.”⁵⁶⁵

These statements indicate several things. Does Trump seek to position himself as a peacemaker? Yes, especially since it is one of his campaign promises. Does he show sympathy toward Russia while being critical of Ukraine? Yes, at least verbally. Is Trump influenced by Russian narratives about the war? Undoubtedly, yes. Can he change his position? Yes.

Trump’s policies during the first months of his presidency suggest that he largely sympathizes with Russia, ignoring Ukraine’s more than three years of struggle for survival, its capable military, and European support. According to Francis Fukuyama, who voiced this opinion back in 2023, if Trump becomes president, it will be a disaster for everyone. He will not support Ukraine; he is on Russia’s side.⁵⁶⁶

U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink opposed appeasement of the “strong” and blackmail of the “weak”, resigning specifically over Trump’s foreign policy. Here are excerpts from her statement:

- “Unfortunately, since the beginning of the Trump administration, the policy was to pressure the victim, Ukraine, rather than the aggressor, Russia. That is why I could no longer, in good conscience, carry out the administration’s policy and felt it was my duty to resign... Peace at any cost is not peace at all; it is appeasement.”

- “Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, it has committed what can only be described as pure evil: killing thousands of civilians, including 700 children, with missiles and drones that struck their homes and apartments in the middle of the night. Russia has committed over 150,000 war crimes, abducted 20,000 children from their families, and forced millions of men, women, and children to flee to Europe and other countries. We have not seen such systematic, large-scale, and horrific violence in Europe since World War II.”

- “Why does Russia’s invasion of Ukraine matter to the United States? It matters because how we handle this war will speak volumes to both our friends and our adversaries. If we allow Putin to redraw borders by force, he won’t stop with Ukraine. Take my word for it: Putin wants to resurrect the imperial past – and he cannot do that without threatening the security of our NATO allies. And if Putin succeeds, it will send signals to China that will destabilize the security balance in Asia and across the globe. This will have profound consequences for America’s security and prosperity.”⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁵Ignatova, I. (2025, January 21). *Chy bude “kinets viyny za 24 hodyny”: shcho skazav Tramp pro Ukrayinu pislya inavhuratsiyi [Video]* [Will there be an “end of the war in 24 hours”: what Trump said about Ukraine after inauguration]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGjaxHx1FR0> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁶⁶Stetsenko, S. (2023, October 19). *Ukrayina zasluzhyla nazyvatysya liberalnoyu demokratiyeiu – Frensis Fukuyama* [Ukraine deserved to be called a liberal democracy – Francis Fukuyama]. Krym.Realii. <https://ru.krymr.com/a/fukuyama-intervyu-ukraina-rossiya-ssha/32644654.html> [in Russian].

⁵⁶⁷Texty.org.ua. (2025, May 16). *Bridzhyt Brink: Ya bula poslom SSHA v Ukrayini. Ya pishla u vidstavku cherez zovnishnyu polityku Trampa* [Bridget Brink: I was the US ambassador to Ukraine. I resigned because of Trump’s foreign policy]. <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/115093/bridzhyt-brink-ya-bula-poslom-ssha-v-ukrayini-ya-pishla-u-vidstavku-cherez-zovnishnyu-polityku-trampa/> [in Ukrainian].

At the same time, there are also positive trends. After signing the agreement on rare earth metals, the United States resumed providing intelligence to Ukraine⁵⁶⁸ and the sale of previously contracted weapons.⁵⁶⁹ In May, the sale of F-16 aircraft and related equipment to Ukraine was approved, totalling \$310.5 million.⁵⁷⁰ Trump declared that U.S. support for Ukraine would continue until an agreement with Russia is reached, though he expressed a desire to “return the money to the American people”.⁵⁷¹ Sanctions against Russia were extended for another year.⁵⁷² Russian assets remain frozen. In May, the G7 countries confirmed their support for Ukraine in a joint statement, condemned the war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and emphasized that Russian frozen assets will remain immobilized until Russia ends its aggression and pays for the damage it has caused Ukraine.⁵⁷³ Let us recall that such a statement would not have been possible without U.S. support.

U.S. statements on troop withdrawal from Europe have also become less categorical. At the end of May 2025, German Defence Minister B. Pistorius stated that the United States is not withdrawing troops from Europe and is not abandoning the nuclear umbrella protecting the continent: “There are currently no signs indicating a significant reduction of U.S. military presence in Europe or a retreat from their nuclear strategy.”⁵⁷⁴

However, the threat of the U.S. reducing its military presence in Europe in the future cannot be ruled out, nor can the deterioration of relations with Ukraine for

⁵⁶⁸ Sobenko, N. (2025, March 12). *Holova amerykanskoj natsrozvidky pidtverdyla ponovlennya obminu rozviddannymi z Ukrainoyu* [Head of US National Intelligence confirmed renewal of intelligence sharing with Ukraine]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/968599-golova-amerikanskoi-nacrozvidki-pidtverdila-ponovlenna-obminu-rozviddanimi-z-ukra> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁶⁹ Kinsha, D. (2025, March 12). *SSHA povnistyu vidnovily postachannya zbroi Ukraini ta obmin rozviddannymi – CNN* [US fully restored arms supplies to Ukraine and intelligence sharing – CNN]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/969241-ssa-povnistu-vidnovili-postacanna-zbroi-ukraini-ta-obmin-rozviddanimi-cnn/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁷⁰ Venkina, E. (2025, May 3). *V SSHA odobren paket dlya zakupky i obsluzhivaniya F-16 dlya VSU* [In US approved package for purchase and servicing of F-16s for Ukrainian Armed Forces]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/ru/gosdep-ssa-odobril-vydelenie-sredstv-na-zakupku-i-obsluzivanie-f16-dla-ukrainy/a-72423653> [in Russian].

⁵⁷¹ LB.ua. (2025, February 26). *Trump says aid to Ukraine may continue until deal with Russia is reached*. https://en.lb.ua/news/2025/02/26/35022_trump_says_aid_ukraine_may_continue.html [in English].

⁵⁷² Ukrinform. (2025, May 24). *Prezydent SSHA Donald Tramp pidpysav ukaz, yakym shche na odyn rik prodovzhyv sanktsiyi proty Rosiyi, zaprovadzeni u kvitni 2021 roku* [US President Donald Trump signed decree extending sanctions against Russia, introduced in April 2021, for one more year]. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/3981437-tramp-prodovziv-na-rik-diu-ukazu-bajdena-sodo-sankcij-proti-rosii.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁷³ Hrytshyn, O. (2025, May 22). *G7 pro rosijski aktyvy: Zalyshatymutsya zamorozhenymy do prypynennya ahresiyi ta vidshkoduвання zbytkiv* [G7 on Russian assets: will remain frozen until end of aggression and compensation for damages]. Censor.net. <https://censor.net/ua/n3553821> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁷⁴ RBC-Ukraine. (2025, May 24). *Yaderna parasolka SSHA dlya Yevropy ne mozhe buty zaminena v nayblyzhchomu chasi – Pistorius* [US nuclear umbrella for Europe cannot be replaced in the near future – Pistorius]. RBC-Ukraine. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/derna-parasolka-ssha-evropi-mozhe-buti-zaminena-1748083583.html> [in Ukrainian].

the sake of improving ties with Russia, although forecasting the Trump administration's policy remains rather difficult. Trump's rhetoric raises concerns both among U.S. allies and in Ukraine, as the consequences may be unpredictable. He has been accused of inconsistency, unimplemented sanctions, and weak pressure on Putin.⁵⁷⁵ Ultimately, this could divide NATO unity and contribute to further Russian aggression.

From May 8 to 11, Russia declared a ceasefire. In response, Ukraine and its partners proposed a 30-day truce. This was a coordinated demand from Europe and the U.S., with new sanctions awaiting Russia in case of noncompliance. Russia rejected the proposal, claiming the time would be used to strengthen Ukraine. Thus, Russia demanded a ban on foreign military aid to Ukraine (while receiving a substantial amount of weapons from North Korea itself) and suggested a return to the 2022 Istanbul format. Ukraine had virtually no choice, but President Zelensky offered Putin a personal meeting and negotiations. It was doubtful anyone believed Putin would come to Istanbul, although Trump had promised him a meeting.⁵⁷⁶ On May 16, 2025, delegations from Russia and Ukraine met in Istanbul. If the very fact of starting negotiations can be seen as a positive shift, then let it be so. More concrete results included exchanges of prisoners and the remains of soldiers.⁵⁷⁷

However, after the Istanbul negotiations, where no agreement was reached on a 30-day ceasefire, the joint decision by Europe and the United States to implement new sanctions was not put into action. Only on May 24 did European consultations begin – specifically, there are plans to lower the price cap on Russian oil to \$45 per barrel.⁵⁷⁸ If the United States does not join these efforts (as of July 2025, it has not), we may be witnessing the beginning of a split in the allied coalition, at least regarding the issue of the Russia-Ukraine war. This is understood in Europe: the EU is discussing the possibility of replacing U.S. support for Ukraine,⁵⁷⁹ including by purchasing

⁵⁷⁵ Ignatius, D. (2025, May 23). *Trump's road to failure in Ukraine: For all the president's efforts, peace has only gotten further away*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/05/23/trump-putin-ukraine-russia-peace-talks/>

⁵⁷⁶ Balachuk, I. (2025, May 16). *Tramp, yakyi hovoryv pro mozhlyvu poizdku v Stambul, pislia vizytu v OAE povernetsia domu* [Trump, who spoke about a possible trip to Istanbul, will return home after visiting the UAE]. Ukrainska pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/05/16/7512471/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁷⁷ Rzhetska, L. (2025, May 16). *Ochiuvane "nichoho": yak v Ukraini otsinyly zustrich u Stambuli* [Expected "nothing": how the meeting in Istanbul was assessed in Ukraine]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/uk/ocikuvane-nicogo-v-ukraini-skepticno-ocinuut-peregovori-z-rf-u-stambuli/a-72571692> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁷⁸ Kapustianska, I. (2025, May 24). *Bloomberg: ES planuie vidklychyty ponad 20 rosiiskykh bankiv vid systemy SWIFT u mezhakh 18-ho paketu sanktsii* [Bloomberg: EU plans to disconnect more than 20 Russian banks from the SWIFT system as part of the 18th sanctions package]. LB.ua. https://lb.ua/world/2025/05/24/678114_bloomberg_ies_planuie_vidklyuchiti.html [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁷⁹ Arni, A. (2025, June 7). *General Bundesveru: ES zdaten zaminyty dopomohu SSHA Ukraini* [Bundeswehr general: EU can replace US aid to Ukraine]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/uk/nimeckij-general-es-spromoznij-zaminiti-dopomogu-ssa-ukraini/a-72828284> [in Ukrainian].

American weapons for Ukraine.⁵⁸⁰ It's worth recalling that Trump himself has repeatedly stated that the United States is ready to exit the negotiation process if there is no progress⁵⁸¹ and to fully suspend all aid to Ukraine.⁵⁸² However, the United States soon allowed the sale of weapons on the condition that they be paid for by allies.⁵⁸³

So, what has Russia gained? According to *The Times*, after conversations with Trump, Putin believes he has the upper hand in the war, viewing the U.S. readiness for negotiations as a sign of Western weakness.⁵⁸⁴ Accordingly, the Kremlin will not agree to any ceasefire without serious pressure. Ukraine will continue to be denied agency, as great efforts have been made to discredit both the entire Ukrainian leadership and President Zelensky personally. A clear example of this are Moscow's statements about the need to eliminate the "root causes of the crisis". Furthermore, if Russia manages to play on Trump's ambitions, it could completely destroy the coalition. It is believed that Trump is sympathetic to authoritarianism.⁵⁸⁵ However, lately⁵⁸⁶ Trump has increasingly expressed his disappointment with Putin: "I'm not happy with what Putin is doing. He's killing a lot of people, and I don't know what the hell happened to him. I've known him for a long time – we always got along – but he's sending missiles into cities and killing people, and I really don't like it." Or: "I always said he wants all of Ukraine, not just a part of it – and maybe that's proving to be true. But if he does that, it will lead to Russia's collapse!"⁵⁸⁷ A scenario where

⁵⁸⁰ Tkach, E. (2025, May 24). *Na vypadok vidmovy Trampa: Yevropa khoche kupyty u SSHA zbroiu dlia Ukrainy*, – Bloomberg [In case of Trump's refusal: Europe wants to buy weapons for Ukraine from the USA – Bloomberg]. RBC-Ukraina. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/vipadok-vidmovi-trampa-evropa-hoche-kupiti-1748109698.html> [in Ukrainian]; Lebedyna, O. (2025, June 15). *Vashington bilshe ne postachatime zbroiu Kyievy: kurs Trampa – perehovory zamiist zbroi – The Telegraph* [Washington will no longer supply weapons to Kyiv: Trump's course – negotiations instead of weapons – The Telegraph]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/war/vashinton-bilshe-ne-postachatime-zbroju-kijevu-kurs-trampa-perehovori-zamist-zbroji-the-telegraph.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁸¹ Chowdhury, M., Hammond, E., & Sangal, A. (2025 May 20). *Trump implies he's prepared to "back away" from Ukraine-Russia talks if progress isn't made*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/politics/live-news/trump-presidency-news-05-19-25#cmav1q7iv00003b6n54m9m73x>

⁵⁸² Kostina, I., & Tyshchenko, K. (2025, April 12). *Bundeswehr: German military needs to be rearmed by 2029, when Russia may attack NATO*. Українська правда. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/04/12/7507296/>

⁵⁸³ Kurs. (2025, July 19). *ZMI dyznalys, yak SSHA pererozpodiliat postavky zbroi zarady Ukrainy* [Media learned how the US will redistribute arms supplies for Ukraine]. <https://kurs.com.ua/novost/1384939-smi-uznali-kak-ssha-budut-pereraspredeljat-postavki-oruzhija-radi-ukraini?source=ukrnet> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁸⁴ Boyes, R. (2025, May 23). *After talking to Trump, why Putin thinks he's winning: The Kremlin chief has many reasons to keep fighting in Ukraine*. The Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/comment/columnists/article/trump-putin-russia-ukraine-war-deal-history-8bs2t59tt>

⁵⁸⁵ Hertsinger, R. (2023, August 23). *Tramp i amerykanskyi shliakh do avtoritaryzmu* [Trump and the American path to authoritarianism]. Tyzhden. <https://tyzhden.ua/tramp-i-amerykanskyj-shliakh-do-avtorytaryzmu/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁸⁶ Since the end of May 2025, when Russia began to massively attack peaceful Ukrainian cities with combined missile and "Shahed" drone strikes.

⁵⁸⁷ Pyshkin, S. (2025, May 26). *Tramp obrushyvsia z krytykoiu na Rosiiu y vidpoviv, chy rozhliadae vvedennia sanktsii* [Trump criticized Russia and responded whether sanctions are considered]. RBC-Ukraine. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/tramp-obrushivsvia-krytykoyu-rosiyu-y-vidpoviv-1748237519.html> [in Ukrainian].

Putin becomes the gravedigger of Russia is actually very plausible – and here, one can fully agree with Trump, even if he means something else entirely. It's already clear that Trump can say one thing and do another. What's more, Trump can portray any defeat as a victory – he doesn't lose, even if the whole world thinks otherwise. But can Putin do something absurd that would anger Trump and make him an ally of Ukraine? Yes. This raises the question: does an analysis that assumes a mistake will definitely happen even make sense? We'll see.

The delay in negotiations will be used by Russia to prepare and launch its summer offensive in 2025. The Office of the President of Ukraine has outlined Putin's plan – full occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk regions by the end of this year, and the occupation of all Ukrainian territories east of the Dnipro River in 2026.⁵⁸⁸ Therefore, Putin is not inclined to make serious concessions in dialogue with Trump. Meanwhile, Europe fears that the U.S. President may pressure Kyiv into accepting an unfavourable peace.⁵⁸⁹

Russia's ultimate goal in this prolonged war remains unchanged. At most, it seeks the destruction of Ukrainian statehood; at minimum, it aims to impose post-war neutrality on Ukraine, limit its defence capabilities, and promote further fragmentation of the Ukrainian state. To this end, Moscow will do everything to undermine Ukraine's ability to resist, demoralize the population, and wait for Western support to weaken.⁵⁹⁰

Accordingly, the Kremlin will not agree to any ceasefire without serious pressure. Ukraine's minimum objective is to hold the line and repel the offensive with minimal losses, while striking deep into Russian territory in return. In foreign policy, efforts should focus on maintaining the anti-Putin coalition, possibly by more actively involving China and countries of the so-called Global South and the East.

What has the war brought to Ukraine? As of February 2025, official data reported more than 46,000 Ukrainian soldiers killed due to the full-scale Russian invasion. Thousands of people are missing or held in captivity, and around 380,000 have been wounded.⁵⁹¹ According to independent estimates, as of May 2025, the confirmed death toll of Ukrainian soldiers had reached 70,935.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸ ZN.UA. (2025, June 14). *ZSU za dopomohoiu HIMARS rozbyly kolonu okupantiv u Makiyivtsi: desiatky zhertv* [UAF destroyed a column of occupiers in Makiivka using HIMARS: dozens of casualties]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/war/zsu-za-dopomohoiu-himars-robili-kolonu-okupantiv-u-makijivtsi-desjatki-zhertv-.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁸⁹ ZN.UA. (2025, May 19). *Putin upevnenyi u vlasnij perevazi pered rozmovoju z Trampom – Bloomberg* [Putin confident in his advantage before talks with Trump – Bloomberg]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/WORLD/putin-uevnenij-u-vlasnij-perevazi-pered-rozmovoju-z-trampom-bloomberg.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁹⁰ Zaklinska, R. (2025, May 24). *Putin prahne “peremohy”*: rozvidka SSHA rozkryla plany Kremlya na 2025 rik [Putin seeks “victory”: US intelligence revealed Kremlin's plans for 2025]. Hlavred. https://glavred.net/war/putin-stremitsya-k-pobede-razvedka-ssha-raskryla-plany-kremlya-na-2025-god-10667489.html?utm_source=ukrnet_news [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁹¹ Sobenko, N. (2025, February 16). *Ponad 46 tysiach zahyblykh: Zelenskyi nazvav vtraty Ukrainy u viini* [Over 46 thousand killed: Zelensky named Ukraine's losses in the war]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/949947-ponad-46-tisac-zagiblih-zelenskij-nazvav-vtrati-ukraini-u-vijni/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁹² Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Russian invasion of Ukraine*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_invasion_of_Ukraine

According to UN data, as of April 30, 2025, civilian casualties in Ukraine include 13,134 people killed and 31,867 wounded, though the real numbers may be higher due to the lack of data from the occupied territories. According to the UN, 700 children have been confirmed killed.⁵⁹³ According to Russian Children's Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova, over 700,000 Ukrainian children⁵⁹⁴ have ended up in Russia since the beginning of the war – though this figure also includes children from the occupied territories. It should also be noted that millions of Ukrainians have become refugees and fled the war across the world.

What has Russia lost? On February 4, 2025, in an interview with British journalist Piers Morgan, President Zelensky stated that Russia had lost around 350,000 troops killed in the war in Ukraine.⁵⁹⁵ According to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, total Russian losses since February 24, 2022, amount to approximately 922,340 personnel (killed and wounded). British intelligence estimates total Russian casualties (killed and wounded) at around 875,000. Officially, Moscow has not updated its casualty data since September 2022, when it reported 5,937 dead.⁵⁹⁶ By the time this book was published (summer 2025), the number had surpassed one million (killed and wounded).⁵⁹⁷

* * *

The war is not over, but the logic of the narrative requires drawing some preliminary conclusions. Ukraine has withstood the onslaught, gained international support, and now possesses one of the strongest armies in Europe and has proven its ability to resist Russian aggression. For a country that, according to Russian leaders, supposedly has no right to exist, this is an excellent result. And there is every reason to believe that Ukraine will preserve its independence. Although after 2015, the country lost control over Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions (around 7 % of its territory), and after 2022 – following Russia's seizure of parts

⁵⁹³ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Casualties of the Russo-Ukrainian War*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualties_of_the_Russo-Ukrainian_War

⁵⁹⁴ Mykhailov, D. (2023, July 31). *L'vova-Bielova zayavyla, shcho vidpochamkyviiny RF pryynyala ponad 700 tysiach ukrains'kykh ditey* [Lviv-Belova stated that since the beginning of the war, the Russian Federation has taken over 700 thousand Ukrainian children]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/540681-lvova-belova-zaavila-so-vid-pocatku-vijni-do-rf-vivezli-ponad-700-tisac-ukrainskih-ditej/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁹⁵ Sobenko, N. (2025, February 16). *Ponad 46 tysiach zahyblykh: Zelenskyi nazvav vtraty Ukrainy u viini* [Over 46 thousand killed: Zelensky named Ukraine's losses in the war]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/949947-ponad-46-tisac-zagiblih-zelenskij-nazvav-vtrati-ukraini-u-vijni/> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁹⁶ Radio Svoboda. (2025, April 5). *Henshtab ZSU onoviv dani pro vtraty rosiiskoi armii v Ukrayini* [General staff of the AFU updated data on Russian army losses in Ukraine]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-henshtab-zsu-vtraty-rosiiska-armiia/33374337.html> [in Ukrainian]; Radio Svoboda. (2025, March 4). *Zhurnalisty vstanovyly imena mayzhe 98 tysiach rosiiskyykh viiskovykh, zahyblykh na viyni proty Ukrayiny* [Journalists identified names of nearly 98 thousand Russian military personnel killed in the war against Ukraine]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-rosia-vtraty/33348162.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁵⁹⁷ The calculation method is flawed, as a person could have been wounded multiple times or wounded and later killed.

of Donetsk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions – this area increased to 20 %, Ukrainian forces continue to fight, including for the liberation of occupied territories.

Ukrainian society has demonstrated a high level of solidarity, which has become one of the defining features of its resistance to Russian aggression. From the start of the aggression, Ukrainians organized protest demonstrations in the occupied territories, refusing to obey the Russian invaders. Throughout the years of war, the level of trust in volunteers and the Armed Forces of Ukraine has remained above 90 %.⁵⁹⁸ One can also speak of record national unity. As of summer 2024, 88 % of Ukrainians were proud of their citizenship.⁵⁹⁹ By the end of the same year, 71 % of Ukrainians believed in a bright future for the country, and 69 % – in its victory.⁶⁰⁰ All this suggests that identity and solidarity have become key factors of survival – with language or religion playing far less decisive roles.

Ukrainian society has become a powerful force influencing the state. Where the government proves ineffective, the volunteer movement has played and continues to play a major role – with many Ukrainian citizens taking part. Almost three-quarters of the population participated in volunteering in one form or another, especially during the first two years of the war. And although the current level of involvement has decreased, it is still impressive.⁶⁰¹

Putin's aggression managed to achieve something previously thought impossible – the consolidation of the nation. Interestingly, before February 2022, a significant portion of Ukrainian society still held onto some illusions about the possibility of peaceful coexistence with Russia. But thanks to Moscow's actions, we can now speak of a historical rift between Ukrainians and Russians – one that is reflected in Ukrainians' attitudes toward Russian history and culture.

However, by the fourth year of war, fatigue has predictably started to set in. The most noticeable sign of this is attitudes toward mobilization. Although, according to President Zelensky, the rate of mobilization has not changed over the past

⁵⁹⁸RBC-Ukraine. (2025, April 11). *Armiya, ryativnyky, tserkva, prezident: komu naibil'she doviryayut ukrayintsi pid chas viiny* [Army, rescuers, church, president: whom Ukrainians trust the most during the war]. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/armiya-ryativniki-tserkva-prezident-komu-1744353112.html> [in Russian].

⁵⁹⁹ZMINA. (2024, August 22). *Mayshe 90% opytanykh ukrayintsiv pyshayutsya svoim hromadyanstvom – opytuvannya* [Almost 90% of surveyed Ukrainians are proud of their citizenship – survey]. <https://zmina.info/news/majzhe-90-opytanyh-ukrayincziv-pyshayutsya-svoyim-gromadyanstvom-opytuvannya/> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁰⁰Yakobchuk, A. (2025, February 7). *Opytuvannya: 71% ukrayintsiv viryat' u svitle maybutnye krainy, 69% – u peremohu* [Survey: 71% of Ukrainians believe in a bright future for the country, 69% – in victory]. Slovo pro Slovo. <https://slovoproslovo.info/patriotyzm-v-ukrayini-opytuvannya-2025> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁰¹Ukrainian Volunteer Service. (2023). *74% ukrayintsiv doluchalys' do volonterstva pislya 24 liutoho 2022 roku: shcho pokazaly rezultaty doslidzhennya* [74% of Ukrainians engaged in volunteering after February 24, 2022: what the survey results showed]. <https://volunteer.country/library/74-ukrayinciv-doluchalis-do-volonterstva-pislia-24-liutogo-2022-roku-shho-pokazali-rezultati-doslidzhennia> [in Ukrainian].

two years.⁶⁰² According to sociological data, in 2025 most Ukrainians still demonstrate readiness for long-term resistance. Notably, the percentage of those ready for very prolonged resistance (65 %) is twice as high as those who are not. This points to a gradual depletion of patience and resources – but not to any surrender sentiment.⁶⁰³

In the economic sphere, decrees were adopted to strengthen economic liberalization and deregulation. However, the level of monopolization remains quite significant, and the process of “de-oligarchization” is still incomplete, as the influence of many Ukrainian multi-billionaires on political and economic processes is ambiguous and often detrimental to the country.

An undeniable achievement was the launch of the land market, which is expected to promote further development of the agricultural sector. Attitudes may vary toward the *Great Construction*⁶⁰⁴ program, but under this initiative, excellent roads were built across Ukraine. A key step into the 21st century was the launch of Diia – a convenient public services app. As part of the country’s digitalization, other electronic applications have also been launched.

The economy is functioning, with the defence industry becoming a crucial sector. At the beginning of the war, Ukraine relied on Western weaponry, but today, its defence industry largely meets its own needs. Over 40 % of the weapons used on the front line with Russia are now domestically produced. For some categories – such as drones and electronic warfare systems – this figure approaches 100 %.⁶⁰⁵ Ukraine produces more artillery systems than all NATO countries combined.⁶⁰⁶ The Ukrainian defence industry is producing more weapons than ever before, though it is still not enough to hold back Moscow’s forces alone. Ukraine’s allies are increasingly allocating funds for the production of weapons inside Ukraine. Ukrainian equipment often outperforms Western analogues, as it is created with front-line realities in mind. For instance, the Limma electronic warfare system has shown greater ef-

⁶⁰² ZN.UA. (2025, May 28). *Zelenskyi vidpoviv, chy zminylsya v Ukrayini tempi mobilizatsii* [Zelensky answered whether mobilization rates in Ukraine have changed]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/war/zelenskij-vidpoviv-chi-zminilysja-v-ukrajini-tempi-mobilizatsiji-.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁰³ Honcharova, K. (2025, April 23). *Sotsiolog Volodymyr Paniotto: Bil'shist' ukrayintiv zberihayut hotovnist' do tryvaloho oporu* [Sociologist Volodymyr Paniotto: Most Ukrainians remain determined to sustain prolonged resistance]. RBC-Ukraine. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/volodimir-paniotto-mir-narazi-mozhliivy-lishe-1745329663.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁰⁴ In 2022–2023, amid a lack of transparency in army funding and massive fundraising by volunteers, the public and some politicians began to actively criticize the continuation of infrastructure projects, including the “Great Construction” initiative.

⁶⁰⁵ ZN.UA. (2025, May 18). *Ukrayina vyroblyaye bil'she zbroyi, nizh bud'-koly, ale tsoho vse shche nedostatno, aby protystoyaty Rosiyi samotuzhky – WSJ* [Ukraine produces more weapons than ever, but it’s still not enough to stand against Russia alone – WSJ]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/war/ukrajina-virobljaje-bilshe-zbroji-nizh-bud-koli-ale-tsoho-vse-shche-nedostatno-abi-protistojati-rosiji-samotuzhki-wsj.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁰⁶ Coles, I., & Sivorka, I. (2025, May 18). *Ukraine Is Making More Weapons Than Ever – but Still Can’t Fight Russia*. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/world/ukraine-weapons-manufacturing-industry-8a48bbf1>

fectiveness against Russian glide bombs than its Western counterparts.⁶⁰⁷ It is precisely this innovative component that has enabled Ukraine to change the course of the war in many respects. Among the positive trends is the successful development of public-private partnerships. A notable example is the decentralized production of flying drones – developed and manufactured by small businesses, volunteers, and even individuals.

Despite the war, the financial and banking systems continue to function, and the country holds record-high gold and foreign currency reserves.⁶⁰⁸ Ukrainians receive pensions and social benefits, and funding is provided for education, healthcare, and culture.

During the war, Ukraine's budget continues to be formed both from taxes paid by Ukrainians – which go towards the country's defence – and from aid provided by Western countries.⁶⁰⁹ The European Union ranks first in terms of aid provided, allocating a total of €84.99 billion: €77.18 billion in financial aid, €2.21 billion in humanitarian aid, and €5.6 billion in military aid. Until 2025, the United States was Ukraine's largest financial supporter, with a total of nearly €68 billion: €24.03 billion in financial aid, €1.45 billion in humanitarian aid, and €42.22 billion in military aid. Germany ranks third, with a total of €22.06 billion: €1.41 billion in financial aid, €2.95 billion in humanitarian aid, and €17.70 billion in military aid.⁶¹⁰ Part of the revenues comes from interest generated by frozen Russian assets – a kind of contribution imposed on Russia for violating fundamental principles of international law.

Despite the challenges of war, the **political system** has proven viable and operational – the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government are functioning. Territorial communities have become an important part of self-governance and self-organization.

The Verkhovna Rada is functioning, laws are being adopted, committees are working, and the majority of MPs are focused on constructive work. Let us recall that in 2019, two-thirds of the parliament was renewed. However, over time, many “complaints” have accumulated regarding the quality of the MPs, including from

⁶⁰⁷Lebedyna, O. (2025, June 15). *Vashynton bil'she ne postachatyme zbroyu Kyivu: kurs Trampa – perehovory zamicmb zbroyi* – *The Telegraph* [Washington will no longer supply weapons to Kyiv: Trump's course – negotiations instead of weapons – The Telegraph]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/war/vashinhton-bilshe-ne-postachatime-zbroju-kijevu-kurs-trampa-perehovori-zamist-zbroji-the-telegraph.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁰⁸Interfax-Ukraine. (2025, May 7). *Mizhnarodni rezervy Ukrayiny u kvitni zrosly na 10,2% – do \$46,7 mlrd* [Ukraine's international reserves grew by 10.2% in April – to \$46.7 billion]. <https://interfax.com.ua/news/economic/1069819.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁰⁹Martsyash, I. (2024, February 18). *Shcho potribno Yevropi, aby povnistyu zaminyty dopomohu SSA dlya Ukrainy: u IFW daly vidpovid'* [What Europe needs to fully replace US aid for Ukraine: IFW answered]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/dopomoga-ukrayini-shho-yevropa-povinna-zrobiti-shhob-zaminiti_n2496964 [in Ukrainian].

⁶¹⁰Ibid.

the ruling party “Servant of the People”⁶¹¹ – some deputies have been caught taking bribes, committing state treason, fraud, lying in asset declarations, and engaging in illegal proxy voting.

There is a political opposition that freely expresses its views. However, relations between the authorities and the opposition are marked by a low level of political culture. There is no practice of working through and adopting joint decisions. The “active” opposition focuses solely on negative factors, often exaggerating them or portraying them only in a negative light, while also emphasizing its own indispensability and managerial experience.

It is also worth noting that, under wartime conditions, pro-Russian parties and organizations are banned, and freedom of speech is reasonably restricted. Although martial law prohibits elections, President Zelensky’s leadership is far from resembling a dictatorship. At the same time, Zelensky is reasonably criticized for his emotionality and for selecting officials based on personal preferences – though this largely continues the country’s established political traditions. Ending the war in the near future would revive all areas of political life, since – despite the war – there is still pluralism of opinion on all key issues. Political parties are active, campaign headquarters are functioning, and political campaigning continues on social media. Democracy, in some aspects, has been “put on pause”, but nothing more than that.

One of the key reforms that Ukrainian society needs – judicial reform – had not been carried out by the time of the Russian invasion. Courts have not become the “blind” and high-quality service they were expected to be.

Corruption in Ukraine has not been overcome – let us recall the 2023 scandal over inflated prices in food procurement for the army, which led to a series of dismissals in the leadership of the Ministry of Defence. The activities of the Ministry of Economy raise many questions, deoligarchization remains incomplete, and some sectors still show a high level of monopolization.

However, public oversight over the authorities exists, and in many cases, the government responds to criticism and takes corrective action. For example, in 2023, the Verkhovna Rada passed a bill to restore electronic asset declarations for officials but left the declaration registry closed, which caused public outrage. In response, Zelensky vetoed the law, and the new version adopted included immediate opening of the declaration registry.

Zelensky’s **foreign policy** can be considered successful. In June 2022, Ukraine was granted candidate status for EU membership, and in June 2024 – two years later – official accession talks with the EU were launched. Ukraine has also not given up on its right to join NATO. The country succeeded in uniting around itself a powerful international coalition that enabled it to withstand direct Russian aggression. The Russian blitzkrieg failed due to the heroism and resilience of Ukrainians on the

⁶¹¹ 17 deputies were expelled from the “Servant of the People” faction (or left it voluntarily due to scandals or political reasons). In total, around 40 deputies either left the faction, joined others, or resigned their mandates.

one hand, and Western support on the other. Support continues, and in 2025, its volume is expected to exceed that of all previous years of the war. Ukraine's defence industry has begun to receive significant support from Western partners.⁶¹² These are investments not only in Ukraine's defence, but in Europe's security as a whole.

Any summary would be incomplete without a brief analysis of the state of the **Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU)**. The current stage of the Russian-Ukrainian war, along with the disproportion in military power and resources, has led to numerous military innovations. Forced to defend itself, Ukraine has at times employed asymmetric deterrence tools, effectively rewriting military textbooks and rules of warfare. Countries around the world rushed to develop FPV drones (First Person View) in their own armies, which have proven to be a truly revolutionary weapon. FPV drones are widely used as strike kamikaze drones and have become a key element of warfare, capable of destroying expensive equipment using relatively cheap means. Notably, the AFU managed – for the first time in history – to destroy an enemy helicopter using a drone. Ukrainian intelligence services operate deep behind enemy lines. In June 2025, drones launched from containers (117 units) transported by ordinary trucks, guided by AI, destroyed nearly a third of Russia's active strategic aviation (about 12 missile-carrying bombers).⁶¹³ Ukrainian sea drones have performed impressively in combating the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, sinking several ships and even downing a helicopter.

Ukrainian specialists are developing new information technologies and actively utilizing the potential of Artificial Intelligence. Unique computer programs have been developed in Ukraine that allow real-time updates of combat data and enable efficient use of artillery and drones in warfare.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine conducted the first fully robotic battle in history, which took place in December 2024 in the Kharkiv region. The AFU used unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs) and FPV drones there, which successfully destroyed Russian positions without involving infantry.

Let us recall that Ukraine has been resisting the “second army of the world” for over three years – and this is not a miracle.

In concluding this section, I would once again emphasize the role of the individual in history. Few could have imagined that not a politician, but a producer, actor, and comedian would lead the resistance to full-scale aggression and become one of the organizers of national defence. His constitutional term in office expired on May 20, 2025, but according to the law, he remains the legitimate president until martial law is lifted, elections are held, and a new president is officially declared. As long as the war continues, there is no other legal path. Having become the leader of the

⁶¹²Levitska, K. (2025, June 4). *Rekordna dopomoha pislya “Ramshhtaynu”: shcho poobitsyaly Ukrayini soyuznyky* [Record aid after “Ramstein”: what the allies promised Ukraine]. RBC-Ukraine. <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/rekordna-dopomoga-pislya-ramshtaynu-shcho-1749058434.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶¹³Michaels, D., & Lytvynenko, J. (2025, June 2). *Ukraine's Stunning Assault Roils Russia's Global Military Strategy*. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/world/ukraines-stunning-assault-upends-russias-global-military-strategy-094f8c1c>

resistance, he has earned his place in history books – not only Ukrainian ones. He became one of the symbols of resistance – but this chapter in the textbook is not yet finished.

Any war will end, and this one will too. Certainly not the way Russia wants, and maybe not exactly how Ukraine dreams of. But the future belongs to Ukraine – it is inevitable. The return of soldiers home is inevitable, the return of refugees to their homes is inevitable, post-war reconstruction is inevitable, the path to Europe with all its problems and breakthroughs is inevitable. Everything is still ahead, and everything is already here – today, right now.

*Nothing in life just happens.
It is not enough to believe in something;
you have to have the stamina
to meet obstacles and overcome them, to struggle.*
Golda Meir

PROSPECTS FOR ENDING THE WAR

Any war comes to a halt or ends. There are several possible scenarios. A temporary halt – when both sides are at a “stalemate” and cannot win (or achieve something they can present as a victory). Such a suspension may last for years or even decades. Think of the divided Korea or Cyprus. Under certain conditions, such lines of separation may flare up again, but there’s always an alternative – they may become permanent borders or disappear due to political agreements (recall German reunification). Another scenario – the root causes of the conflict are exhausted or one side wins. This war will be no exception. It will not end by the time this book is published – summer 2025.

Causes of the conflict. In this war, the aggressor is the Russian Federation. For Russia, the main reason is the desire to control Ukraine – in other words, to deprive it of all or part of its sovereignty. Several scenarios are possible – from turning Ukraine into a satellite like Belarus, to full territorial annexation. The slogans of the so-called “SMO” (“special military operation”) – “denazification”, “demilitarization”, “regime change in Kyiv” – are merely propaganda for domestic Russian use. Before 2014 – the start of Russian aggression – Ukraine was actively disarming, selling off Soviet weapon stockpiles around the world, including to Russia itself (in 1999, Russia received strategic bombers and missiles from Kyiv⁶¹⁴). And what Russian politicians label as “Nazism in Ukraine” is simply Ukraine’s support for its own language, history, and culture. Let us recall that Nazi ideology excludes democracy and liberalism, promotes dictatorship, state antisemitism and racism. Nazis aimed to build a society based on racial purity, justifying their beliefs with pseudoscientific racial hierarchy theories. Nazism also required the militarization of all areas of life. Interestingly, Hitler saw pacifism as just as dangerous as Marxism, Bolshevism, liberalism, and democracy – all considered tools of “global Jewry”.⁶¹⁵ However, the

⁶¹⁴Zakrevska, S. (2024, November 26). *Rosīia b'ie po Ukraīni zi stratehichnykh bombarduvalnykiv, yaki 25 rokiv tomu yii viddav Kyiv – “Skhemy”* [Russia strikes Ukraine with strategic bombers Kyiv gave it 25 years ago – “Schemes”]. OBOZREVATEL. <https://war.obozrevatel.com/ukr/rosiya-be-po-ukraini-zi-strategichnih-bombarduvalnikiv-yaki-25-rokiv-tomu-ij-viddav-kiiv-shemi.htm> [in Ukrainian].

⁶¹⁵We specifically refer to the Russian Wikipedia to ensure there are no terminological discrepancies. The key factors we present are universal and appear in all encyclopedias and reference books. See: Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Natsyzm* [Nazism]. *Wikipedia*. <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Нацизм> [in Russian].

current President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is Jewish by origin and has never hidden this fact. In a 2020 interview with *The Times of Israel*, he said he was born in an ordinary Soviet Jewish family but was never religious. He also noted that there is no antisemitism in Ukraine and that his Jewish background does not play a role in politics.⁶¹⁶

But Ukraine does indeed pose a threat to Russia – it is the threat of Ukraine becoming a liberal democratic country (a sort of “showcase of Western democracy”⁶¹⁷). This is precisely why Russian media react so painfully to this idea.⁶¹⁸ Russian media actively mention the “showcase of democracy” along with “double standards”, “Western hypocrisy”, and so on.

There are valid grounds to claim that Ukraine will succeed in becoming a democratic and liberal country, overcoming corruption, and creating an effective model of human, social, and economic development. Ukraine already has power transitions through fair elections and free political competition (the current limitations stem from the war with Russia and are an objective necessity). Could this not become an example for Russians? Will the Russian authoritarian model of power survive then? Might this not mark the end of the Russian imperial project?

Therefore, for Ukraine, this war is defensive and just. Ukraine’s minimum program is to end the war and retain sovereignty over its existing territories; the maximum goal is to regain the territories annexed and seized by Russia. Both goals are impossible without creating a security system that would guarantee the impossibility of further Russian aggression, as Russia will act according to the “domino principle”. Let us also recall the opinion of F. Fukuyama expressed back in 2023: “I believe the only way Russia will leave the territories it occupies is through a Ukrainian

⁶¹⁶Romanenko, V. (2020, January 20). *Zelenskyi rozpoviv pro svoji yevreiski korni ta rozmovy z Bohom* [Zelensky spoke about his Jewish roots and conversations with God]. *Ukrainska Pravda*. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2020/01/20/7237880/> [in Ukrainian]; Horovitz, D. (2020, January 19). *A serious man: Zelensky bids to address Ukraine’s dark past, brighten its future*. *The Times of Israel*. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-serious-man-zelensky-bids-to-address-ukraines-dark-past-brighten-its-future/>

⁶¹⁷The phrase is attributed to political expert O. Ponomar, who first used it regarding Ukraine (See: Ponomar, O. (2019, August 7). *Vitrina zapadnoy demokratii* [Showcase of Western Democracy]. <https://www.ponomaroleg.com/vitrina-zapadnoj-demokratii/> [in Russian]). There is no exact English equivalent for “vitryna demokratii” (“showcase of democracy”), but the term “showcase democracy” is sometimes used to describe countries that aim to demonstrate successful democratic development.

⁶¹⁸See: EADaily. (2023, January 9). *Na Ukrayine – avtoritarnyy rezhym, a SMI prodovzhuyut razduvat myf pro demokratiyu* [In Ukraine – an authoritarian regime, and media continue to inflate the myth of democracy]. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2023/01/09/tac-na-ukraine-avtoritarnyy-rezhim-a-smi-prodolzhayut-razduvat-mif-o-demokratii> [in Russian]; 5 kanal. (2025, April 6). *Porodyly Frankenshteyna: kak Ukraina prevratilas v poligon dlya eksperimentov Zapada* [They gave birth to Frankenstein: how Ukraine became a testing ground for Western experiments]. <https://www.5-tv.ru/news/5020669/porodili-frankenstejna-kak-ukraina-prevratilas-vpoligon-dla-eksperimentov-zapada/> [in Russian]; Morozov, V. (2025, June 8). *O kovarstve Zapada i ego razoblachitelyakh: rossiyskaya vneshnepoliticheskaya mysl i samoizolyatsiya Rossii* [On the West’s deceit and its expositors: Russian foreign policy thought and Russia’s self-isolation]. *Polit.ru*. <https://polit.ru/articles/medlennoe-chtenie/o-kovarstve-zapada-i-ego-razoblachitelyakh-rossiyskaya-vneshnepoliticheskaya-mysl-i-samoizolyatsiya--2005-11-29/> [in Russian].

victory”.⁶¹⁹ Unfortunately, the unsuccessful counteroffensive of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2023 has made this prospect more distant.

After 2014, a policy of Ukraine’s self-reliance or multi-vector policy has become impossible. There are not many real paths to strengthening Ukraine’s defence capability. The first is joining NATO⁶²⁰ or creating some kind of regional (European) defence alliance. Controversial statements by D. Trump regarding a possible reduction of the American role in European security may lead to an institutional crisis of NATO – something Russia is ultimately hoping for. In the event of an alliance crisis, the creation of a new defence union – an imagined “Brussels Treaty” – cannot be ruled out. Such a union could include EU countries, but also countries beyond Europe – like Canada. In that case, Ukraine would become the largest northeastern frontier of the new alliance.

As of today, Ukraine simply has no alternatives: European integration is not just the main foreign policy priority, but a condition for the country’s survival. The alternative to this process is turning the country into a region of the Russian Federation and total Russification of all spheres of life. After 2014, the Russian Federation carried out systematic Russification and de-Ukrainianization of the annexed Ukrainian territories; since February 2022, this has escalated to ethnocide in the occupied territories.⁶²¹

However, Ukraine’s accession to the EU, though a necessary step, does not in itself guarantee protection from Russian aggression. Incidentally, the EU understands this well and is discussing possible security alternatives, including the creation of its own military alliance independent of the USA.⁶²² Programs for rearming European armies have also been launched, including with modern air defence systems and missile technology.⁶²³

The second real step to strengthening national security, in the absence of membership in any military alliances, is the possession of nuclear weapons – as a “universal” guarantee preventing conflict between nuclear-armed states. The conflict be-

⁶¹⁹Stetsenko, S. (2023, October 19). *Ukraina zasluzhyla nazyvatysia liberalnoyu demokratiieyu – Frensis Fukuyama* [Ukraine deserved to be called a liberal democracy – Francis Fukuyama]. Krym.Realii. <https://ru.krymr.com/a/fukuyama-intervyu-ukraina-rossiya-ssha/32644654.html> [in Russian].

⁶²⁰By the way, NATO expansion is another “bogeyman” for Russians pushed by the Kremlin’s propaganda machine. Russia’s direct aggression against Ukraine has already led to Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) joining NATO. In 2025, Austria began discussing possible membership in the alliance.

⁶²¹Ukrinform. (2022, April 4). *Tse zaklyky do henotsydu: ombudsmen poiasnyla, shcho oznachaie stattia v RIA “Novosti”* [These are calls for genocide: Ombudsman explained what the article in RIA “Novosti” means]. [Arkhib]. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220404202402/https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3448528-ce-zaklyki-do-genocidu-ombudsmen-poasnila-so-oznacae-stattia-v-ria-novosti.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶²²RBC-Ukraine. (2025, February 24). *Europe may need its own military alliance instead of NATO – German Chancellor candidate*. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/europe-may-need-its-own-military-alliance-1740407320.html>

⁶²³Kostina, I., & Tyshchenko, K. (2025, April 12). *Bundeswehr: German military needs to be rearmed by 2029, when Russia may attack NATO*. Ukrainska Pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/04/12/7507296/>

tween India and Pakistan once again proved that a “nuclear shield” can serve as a real deterrent to escalation. Armed clashes were brief and limited to border areas, and the search for compromises was effective.

Ukraine possesses uranium reserves, necessary metals, a developed nuclear energy sector, partial uranium enrichment technologies, a scientific base, and qualified specialists. All this makes the potential acquisition of nuclear weapons possible. And I believe it is only a matter of time. Let us recall that since February 2022, Russia has regularly threatened the use of nuclear weapons, conducted related military exercises, and deployed tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of its ally Belarus.⁶²⁴ The failure of Ukraine’s security guarantors to uphold the provisions of the Budapest Memorandum – under which Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons – somewhat “frees Ukraine’s hands” as well.

Could Russia use nuclear weapons in the war against Ukraine? And here, there should be no illusions – yes. But is it guaranteed to happen? No. Let us imagine a “new reality” in which a nuclear country uses nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear state in order to subjugate it or avoid its own defeat. There would be two main consequences of such a decision. First – the beginning of an era of nuclear weapons use in regional conflicts: between India and Pakistan, China and India, Russia and China, Israel and Iran (despite the destruction(?) of Iran’s nuclear facilities by the U.S. in 2025, as long as religious fanatics remain in power, the problem is only postponed). The use of nuclear weapons would become possible in conflicts where one side possesses them and the other does not – like North Korea versus South Korea and Japan, China versus Taiwan, Russia versus Ukraine. The second consequence would be the mass nuclear armament of currently non-nuclear states – Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, South Korea, Canada, Turkey, and possibly Japan. The doctrine of French General Pierre Gallois, who predicted that the current phase of global geopolitical evolution is defined by the leading role of missile-nuclear weapons, would gain new relevance. Therefore, the consequences would be truly catastrophic, even in the case of tactical nuclear weapon use. This is exactly what gives hope for China’s decisive opposition to Russia’s use of nuclear weapons – but

⁶²⁴Radio Svoboda. (2022, February 2). *Putin nakazav perevesty syly strymuvannya v osoblyvyi rezhym nesennia sluzhby* [Putin ordered to transfer deterrence forces to a special duty regime]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-putin-osoblyvyi-rezhym/31726414.html> [in Ukrainian]; Yankovskyi, O. (2022, September 30). *Yaderni pohrozy Putina Ukraini. Shcho mozhe staty spuskovym hachkom Kremlya?* [Putin’s nuclear threats to Ukraine. What could be the Kremlin’s trigger?]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryazovya-putin-yadernyy-udar-rosiya-ukrayina/32058932.html> [in Ukrainian]; Bliznyakova, O., & Melnyk, Kh. (2023, June 19). *Yaderna zbroia RF v Bilorusi – navishcho Rosiya yii tam rozmishchue ta shcho pro tse dumaiut bilorusy i soiuznyky Ukrainy* [Russia’s nuclear weapons in Belarus – why Russia places them there and what Belarusians and Ukraine’s allies think]. Suspilne. <https://suspilne.media/510527-aderna-zbroia-rf-v-bilorusi-naviso-rosia-ii-tam-rozmisue-ta-so-pro-ce-dumaut-bilorusi-j-souzniki-ukraini/> [in Ukrainian]; Espresso. (2023, January 19). *Medvedev naperedodni Ramshteynu pryhroziv yadernoyu viynoyu v razi porazky RF, Peskov pidtverdyv, shcho tse vidpovidaie rosiyskiy doktryni* [Medvedev threatened nuclear war before Ramstein in case of Russia’s defeat, Peskov confirmed it aligns with Russian doctrine]. <https://espresso.tv/medvedev-naperedodni-ramshtaynu-prigroziv-yadernoyu-viynoyu-v-razi-porazki-rf-peskov-pidtverdiv-shcho-tse-vidpovidaie-rosiyskiy-doktrini> [in Ukrainian].

whether this will definitely happen remains uncertain. Additionally, the issue of nuclear weapons use was revived by the United States. In June 2025, a U.S. administration official stated that a tactical nuclear strike on the uranium enrichment facility in Fordow (Iran) was being considered.⁶²⁵ Later, the White House denied this information.⁶²⁶ Now imagine a situation in which Iran already had an atomic bomb ready to be used in its nuclear laboratories⁶²⁷ – would a tactical nuclear strike then be justified? But even voicing such a possibility is a gift to Putin or to Kim Jong Un.

The Russian-Ukrainian war also carries global significance. Putin has managed to rally all the major dictatorships and autocracies of the world to his side – Communist China, Juche-style North Korea, and the theocracy of Iran's ayatollahs. For Russia's allies, an important aspect of this war is observing the actions of the so-called "collective" West. Had Russia managed to capture Kyiv "in three days" and had the West accepted it, it is likely that China would already have launched an aggression against Taiwan. This is why the behaviour of Donald Trump – who may initiate the withdrawal of the U.S. from the European security system – is potentially not only destructive but catastrophic for the current model of European security.⁶²⁸ But, as already noted, Trump's words and Trump's actions are different things. The policy of the Trump administration remains an unpredictable variable in possible developments. Still, it is highly likely that Trump's "flirtation" with Putin will end in logical failure, since Putin interprets such U.S. behaviour as a sign of weakness. Sooner or later, this could lead to real disappointment on Trump's part in his "friend" Putin and a shift not only in rhetoric but also in policy toward Russia. Trump still has many "trump cards" in his arsenal – from long-term military loans and arms sales to Ukraine, to bans and restrictions on Russian oil purchases. All these steps are entirely possible, but not guaranteed. Unfortunately, Washington's policy could also take a diametrically opposite direction – one that obstructs Kyiv's efforts to resist Russian aggression. We may agree with the notion that Trump does not believe in Ukraine's ability to withstand Russia and is sceptical about continuing any kind of support. But predicting the decisions of the U.S. President is difficult.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁵ Chernovol, K. (2025, June 20). *SSHA ne vykliuchaiut udara po Iranu taktychnym yadernym oruzhiem* [US does not exclude strike on Iran with tactical nuclear weapons]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.net/world/iran-obekt-fordo-ssha-ne-isklyuchayut-udara-takticheskim-yadernym-oruzhiem-po-iranu-13043481.html> [in Russian].

⁶²⁶ RBC-Ukraine. (2025, June 20). *SSHA mozhut vdariti yaderkoyu po tsilyam v Irani? Shcho napysaly SMI i hovoryat v Bilomu domi* [Can the US strike Iran with nuclear weapons? What the media wrote and what the White House says]. <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/ssha-mozhut-vdariti-derkoyu-tsilyam-irani-1750373538.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶²⁷ Incidentally, Iran's nuclear program has been damaged but likely not destroyed, which will lead to a new set of problems in the near future.

⁶²⁸ This refers to the collapse of a model, not of Europe itself, since another model will simply take its place – one where the nuclear umbrella will be provided by at least the UK and France.

⁶²⁹ Shamshur, O. (2025, June 9). *Ukrainskyi rubikon Donalda Trampa* [Donald Trump's Ukrainian Rubicon]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/usa/ukrajinskij-rubikon-donalda-trampa.html> [in Ukrainian].

Potential for continuation of the conflict. Having become mired in the war, Russia aims to establish control within the administrative borders of four Ukrainian regions that were “incorporated” into the Russian Federation, with corresponding amendments to the Russian Constitution. This was done based on pseudo-referendums, even though one of the regional capitals (Zaporizhzhia) was never captured by Russia, and another (Kherson) was quickly lost. Additionally, Russia is trying to remove the “question of Crimea’s status” from the agenda altogether.

As of now (late spring – summer 2025), Russia has chosen to continue the war with the goal of fully capturing these territories. And if possible – to “acquire” new ones as well (for example, Kharkiv, Sumy, or Dnipropetrovsk regions). Following the logic of previous occupations, it is enough to seize a part of a region to “hold a referendum” and then annex it into the Russian Federation. At the negotiations in Istanbul in May 2025, the head of the Russian delegation, V. Medinsky, openly voiced these intentions, stating the possibility of seizing the Kharkiv and Sumy regions.⁶³⁰

By incorporating the conquered territories into its composition, Russia violated both international law and its own legislation. According to the law of December 17, 2001, No. 6-FKZ “On the procedure for admitting to the Russian Federation and forming a new subject within the Russian Federation”, expansion of the Russian Federation is only possible through the accession of foreign states or their parts as federal subjects. Moreover, this can happen exclusively by mutual consent of Russia and the other state. Additionally, the initiative must come from the state itself, not from any part of it. In 2004, while considering the request of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia to join Russia, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation ruled accordingly. It was later planned to regulate this issue, but due to the annexation of Crimea, all the draft laws intended to resolve this “problem” were never adopted.⁶³¹ The annexation of Crimea in 2014 was to some extent “simplified” by its status as an autonomous republic within Ukraine. In contrast, for Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Russian curators had to create the so-called “people’s republics” in April 2014, which were “recognized” by Russia on the eve of the invasion – on February 21, 2022. However, when on September 29, 2022, Russia proceeded to “recognize the independence” of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions (!), it no longer even pretended to create any “statehood”. All the more cynical appears Russia’s reference to universally recognized principles and norms of international law, including “the principle of equality and self-determination of peoples, enshrined in the UN Charter”.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Nikolishyn, M. (2025, May 16). “*Hotovy voevat vechno*”: v RF prigorozili zakhvatom eshche dvukh oblastey Ukrainy [“Ready to fight forever”: Russia threatened to seize two more regions of Ukraine]. Hlavred. <https://glavred.info/war/gotovy-voevat-vechno-v-rf-prigorozili-zahvatom-eshche-dvuh-oblastey-ukrainy-10665323.html> [in Russian].

⁶³¹ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Sub’ekty Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Subjects of the Russian Federation]. Wikipedia. https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Субъекты_Российской_Федерации [in Russian].

⁶³² BBC News Russkaya sluzhba. (2022, September 29). *Putin priznal “nezavisimost” Khersonskoy i Zaporozhskoy oblastey Ukrainy. Eto formal’nost’ dlya ikh anneksii* [Putin recognized the “independence” of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine. This is a formality for their annexation]. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-63084494> [in Russian].

The territorial issue will inevitably become one of the key topics in intergovernmental negotiations. However, any future references by the Russian delegation to the immutability of the Russian Constitution – which provides no mechanism for federal subjects to secede – are in fact legally null and void, since the accession of the “new subjects” to the Russian Federation was carried out in violation of legal norms. By the way, this is precisely what may allow a future Russian government to renounce the seized territories through decisions of its own courts, since appealing to the legislation of an aggressor is a thankless endeavour.

It should also be recalled that the Constitution of Ukraine enshrines the principles of integrity and inviolability of the state’s territory. According to its provisions, Ukraine’s sovereignty extends to its entire territory, and the territorial structure is based on the unity and integrity of the state. Any changes to Ukraine’s territory may occur only through a nationwide referendum. In its rulings, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine has emphasized that holding local referendums to change the territorial status of certain regions, particularly the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, is insufficient and contradicts constitutional principles.⁶³³

The key issue for Ukraine today is ending the war on acceptable terms – but not on terms of capitulation, especially since there are no grounds for such an outcome. Russia’s creeping offensive throughout 2024–2025 has allowed it to seize certain territories, but at the cost of immense human and material losses. Moreover, it has become clear that Kyiv is capable of seizing the tactical initiative by carrying out successful localized operations – even on Russian territory, such as in the Kursk region. Air and naval drones make it possible to carry out combat missions over long distances and to resist aggression with smaller forces.

The minimum goal of Ukrainian diplomacy is to stop the war along the current front line; the optimal goal is to return to the territorial status as of February 23, 2022, the day before the full-scale invasion; the ideal goal is to return to the status of February 2014.

The most realistic scenario is halting the war along the current line of contact, but as of today, Russia has chosen the path of further escalation. The Kremlin leader’s theory of victory is based on the assumption that the Russian army can sustain its slow, incremental progress on the battlefield longer than Ukrainian forces can hold the line – and longer than the West is willing to support Ukraine.⁶³⁴

Another urgent question, without which forecasting is impossible, is the assessment of the capacity to continue the war. As previously noted, any war is a war of

⁶³³ Constitutional Court of Ukraine. (n.d.). *Kataloh yurydychnykh pozytsiy Konstytutsiynoho Sudu Ukrayiny (za rishennyamy, vysnovkami): 3. Osnovy konstytutsiynoho ladu. Zahal’ni pryntsypy: 3.15. Terytorial’ni pryntsypy* [Catalogue of legal positions of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (by rulings, conclusions): 3. Foundations of constitutional order. General principles: 3.15. Territorial principles]. <https://ccu.gov.ua/storinka-knygy/315-terytorialni-pryncypy> [in Ukrainian].

⁶³⁴ Labiak, I. (2025, June 12). *Shcho zmusyt Putina perehlyanuty yoho teoriyu peremohy: vysnovok ISW* [What will force Putin to revise his theory of victory: ISW conclusion]. TSN. <https://tsn.ua/ato/shcho-zmusyt-putina-perehlyanuty-yoho-teoriiu-peremohy-vysnovok-isw-2847725.html> [in Ukrainian].

resources. Neither Russia nor Ukraine was prepared for a war that would last into its fourth year and become the largest conflict in Europe since World War II.

The resources of Russia have proven not to be inexhaustible. This is precisely why Russia turned to North Korea for help and received not only weapons but also manpower, which is now fighting in the Kursk region. Russia has nearly depleted its Soviet-era military stockpiles. Its economy has undergone deindustrialization, making the development and production of new types of weaponry either impossible or highly difficult. Western sanctions have also proven to be effective – though in many ways inconsistent. Oil prices in 2025 are trending downward, leading to reduced budget revenues and, consequently, a potential shortage of funds to sustain the war. In the event of an economic crisis, the Russian government is likely to address its consequences by “printing money”, which could result in hyperinflation and economic stagnation. Russia is also facing problems with human resources, as evidenced by its widespread use of foreign mercenaries and the large payouts offered to new contract soldiers. Russian society is gradually growing weary of the war; the number of those in favour of negotiations is increasing (61 %), while only 31 % believe the war should continue. However, public sentiment cannot yet be described as overtly anti-war, as 78 % of Russians still support the government’s war policy.⁶³⁵

The economic situation in Ukraine is in some ways similar and in other ways distinct. In 2022, Ukraine managed to repel the first wave of invasion using its accumulated resources, and from the summer onward, it began receiving extensive Western aid, which has expanded in response to emerging challenges. Ukraine receives funding from the EU, the World Bank, Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom, and by 2025, also from the United States. Even if American aid were to cease, the possibility of purchasing U.S. weaponry would remain. The number of military cooperation projects is steadily increasing, and Ukraine’s own military-industrial complex is growing.

However, Ukraine has a significantly smaller human resource (estimated at 30–34 million people⁶³⁶), while Russia’s population officially stands at 146.7 million. There is also a noticeable war fatigue. As of early summer 2025, 60 % of Ukrainians said they were ready to endure the war for as long as necessary. Another 20 % stated they could endure for a few more months or half a year. However, this figure has decreased compared to previous years: in 2024, the willingness to resist long-term was 71–73 %, dropping to 54 % by March 2025. Yet, from March to June

⁶³⁵The figures are based on a survey by the Levada Center. Given the general state of sociology in Russia, it is difficult to say whether they reflect reality. See: Yesikova, K. (2025, February 12). *Opytyvannia “Levada-tsentr”: 78% rosiyan pidtrymuyut viinu v Ukraini, ale 61% khoche myrnykh perehovoriv* [“Levada Center” poll: 78% of Russians support the war in Ukraine, but 61% want peace talks]. Espresso. <https://espreso.tv/svit-opituvannya-levada-tsentr-78-rosiyan-pidtrimuyut-viynu-v-ukraini-ale-61-khoche-mirnikh-peregovoriv> [in Ukrainian].

⁶³⁶Haiduk, Yu. (2025, January 22). *Naselennya Ukrayiny u 2025 rotsi ta metody vyrishennya demohrafichnoyi kryzy: prohnaz eksperta* [Population of Ukraine in 2025 and methods to solve the demographic crisis: expert forecast]. Fakty. <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/20250122-naselennya-ukrayiny-u-2025-roczyi-ta-metody-vyrishennya-demohrafichnoyi-kryzy-prohnaz-eksperta/> [in Ukrainian].

2025, there has been a renewed increase in readiness to fight.⁶³⁷ By the fourth year of the war, however, problems with mobilization became apparent and are now actively discussed in society.⁶³⁸ The total number of security personnel in Ukraine exceeds 1 million, with the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) officially comprising about 800,000 troops. Another 1 million people are in the AFU reserve.⁶³⁹ The total number of men of mobilization age is over 11 million. As of July 2025, 1.5 million men had not updated their military registration records, while 30,000 men are conscripted into the Ukrainian Armed Forces each month.⁶⁴⁰

The greatest shortage in the war is among infantry soldiers, which is linked to the highest losses in these combat units. And although Ukraine's losses are lower than Russia's, they are more noticeable to the public. As of today, the situation is indeed serious, but not yet critical. Among the obvious measures, a logical step would be to make more effective use of the human resources available. Many men serve in the national police or at the border; women could replace them in these positions. However, the war can take different forms, and under certain circumstances, it will be difficult to avoid total mobilization.

Let us recall that, as of spring 2025, the number of Russian troops involved in the aggression was estimated at between 620,000 and 640,000, with around 200,000 constantly deployed on the front line.⁶⁴¹ However, the size of the Russian army is constantly increasing; since the beginning of the war, it has been expanded three times.⁶⁴² In 2024 alone, the authorized strength of the Russian Armed Forces was increased to 2,389,000, of which 1.5 million are active-duty soldiers.⁶⁴³ In early sum-

⁶³⁷ Mezha. (2025, June 6). *60% ukrayintsiv hotovi terpyti viynu stilkly, skilkly potribno – opytuvannya KMIS* [60% of Ukrainians are ready to endure war as long as needed – KMIS survey]. <https://mezha.net/ua/bukvy/2025-survey-60-ukrainians-ready-to-endure-war-long-term/> [in Ukrainian]; Hrushetskyi, A. (2025, June 6). *Skilkly chasu ukrayintsi hotovi nesti tyahar viyny: Presreliz. KMIS* [How long Ukrainians are ready to bear the burden of war: Press release. KMIS]. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=rep&ort&id=1534&page=1> [in Ukrainian].

⁶³⁸ Without justifying anyone, it is worth noting that, for example, among surveyed Poles, only 5% expressed a desire to undergo voluntary military training, 26% were interested, and 71% showed no interest. See: Kyiv Post. (2025, May 12). *Bil'shist' poliakiv ne khotiat' yty navit' na viys'kovu pidhotovku* [Most Poles do not even want to undergo military training]. <https://www.kyivpost.com/uk/post/52475>

⁶³⁹ Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.) *Armed forces of Ukraine* [Збройні сили України]. *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armed_forces_of_Ukraine

⁶⁴⁰ Karbunar, N. (2025, July 19). *Nardep rozpoviv, skilkly lyudey Ukrayina mobilizuye shchomisatsya* [MP told how many people Ukraine mobilizes monthly]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/country/incidents/nardep-rozpoviv-skilki-ljudey-ukrajina-mobilizuje-shchomisatsja-1069007.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁴¹ Litnarovych, V. (2025, March 3). *Russian Military Presence in Occupied Territories of Ukraine and Kursk Region Reaches 620,000 Soldiers*. United24 Media. <https://united24media.com/latest-news/russian-military-presence-in-occupied-territories-of-ukraine-and-kursk-region-reaches-620000-soldiers-6379>

⁶⁴² YouTube. (2025, June 11). *Putin prikazal v tretiy raz s nachala voyny uvelichit shchatnuyu chislennost rossiyskoy armii* [Putin has ordered the Russian army's official troop strength to be increased for the third time since the war began]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZmp2ZtaayA> [in Russian].

⁶⁴³ Pohorylov, S. (2024, September 16). *Putin uvelichil chislennost svoey armii do 1,5 milliona voennykh* [Putin increased the size of his army to 1.5 million soldiers]. *Ukrainska Pravda*. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2024/09/16/7475327/> [in Russian].

mer 2025, an order was issued to increase the size of the ground forces,⁶⁴⁴ indicating both heavy losses and preparation for a new offensive. Let us recall that Russia is fighting against Ukraine with contract soldiers; conscripts were used only at the beginning of the war.

Ukraine's decision to limit conscription of men under the age of 25 was absolutely correct, as it helped preserve the country's most valuable resource – its youth. Ukraine cannot afford to burn through its human resources in “meat assaults” as Russia does. Therefore, the emphasis should be on technological superiority: developing robotics, broadly using drones, and ensuring that, if necessary, there are more drone operators than infantry. Soldier training should be based as much as possible on the combat experience gained by the AFU, and military medicine and support systems must be the most advanced. Are there positive examples? Yes. Are there negative ones? Unfortunately, also yes. Will these trends become widespread? Probably not, but even limited implementation can save thousands of lives.

Therefore, as of 2025, there is no reason to believe that the war will end this year. However, there is hope for 2026 – a year of expected economic crisis in Russia, which could make Moscow more accommodating. It is likely that this will begin with a temporary truce, with the prospect of ending active hostilities along the line of contact.

Is peace possible? Yes. In my view, this war is highly personalized and closely linked to Vladimir Putin's desire to go down in history as a “great ruler” of Russia. If Putin disappears (we are not considering a palace coup scenario, which is highly unlikely – age is a more probable factor, as Putin is 72), military actions would likely end within one to two months. This would not guarantee the immediate return of territories, but such a discussion would become possible with the new Russian leadership.

Russia as a whole is heading into “interesting” times. The so-called “traditional” clans in Russia are the “siloviki” – connected to the FSB, the army, and the police. In essence, Russia is a country of siloviki and bureaucrats. However, modern Russia lacks regional clan systems, even in the way they exist in Ukraine (like the “Donetsk” or “Dnipropetrovsk” groups). There are no established and influential “Siberian,” “Far Eastern,” or “Ural” clans. All attempts to strengthen and institutionalize local elites are suppressed by Moscow. One example is the fate of Sergey Furgal, governor of Khabarovsk Krai from 2018 to 2020, who was sentenced to 22 years in a high-security prison. One of the main reasons for his prosecution was his independence and popularity among the people of Khabarovsk.

The Russian government traditionally relies on obedient officials, trying to detach them from specific regional affiliations. However, things could change rapid-

⁶⁴⁴Horiova, V. (2025, June 11). *Na tli vtrat v Ukraini. Putin nakazav „kratno” posylyty suhoputni viyska* [Amid losses in Ukraine, Putin ordered a “multiple” strengthening of ground forces]. NV (New Voice). <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/countries/putin-nakazav-posiliti-suhoputni-viyska-rosiji-na-tli-mayzhe-milyon-nih-vtrat-v-ukrajini-50521392.html> [in Ukrainian].

ly, and strong regional forces could quickly legitimize themselves and become real players in Russian politics – as was the case during Yeltsin’s presidency with the leadership of Tatarstan.

The only region in Russia where clans are organized not by “sectoral” affiliation but by regional identity is the North Caucasus – primarily Chechnya. During the Second Chechen War, Moscow followed the classic colonial strategy of “divide and conquer.” Among several Chechen clans, the clan of Akhmat Kadyrov was chosen – a clan belonging to one of the largest Chechen teips (tribes). In exchange for loyalty to the central government, Kadyrov received weapons, money, and other support, which allowed him to suppress rivals and come to power in the republic. Interestingly, these events were even reflected in Russian cinema. In the TV series *Brigada* (2001), Sasha Belyi’s gang had to deliver weapons to Chechnya and ensure they reached FSB-designated rebels.

The death of Ramzan Kadyrov would trigger a power struggle both within his own teip and beyond, as his son Adam will not be able to maintain his father’s legacy. Additionally, the question will arise: was the symbolic “vassal’s oath” sworn personally to suzerain Putin or to the Russian state? It should be recalled that Chechens in the Russian Federation are essentially not subject to Russian law. Most legal violations committed by them are forgiven – they kidnap and torture people, pressure law enforcement and the courts, and publicly use violence. Chechens are perceived by Russian society as a pillar of the regime, and their main function is to carry out any order from the Kremlin if other security agencies cannot or do not want to. Chechen fighters were already used during the Bolotnaya protests of 2011–2012, when part of Russian society protested against election fraud and yet another “victory” by Putin.

The impunity of “Caucasians” and the growing number of Muslims is perceived negatively by a significant portion of the “Slavic ethnic group”. Among ethnic Russians, many are dissatisfied with the dominance of “aliens” (as non-Slavs were once called in the Russian Empire). A possible split in Russia might run along the line of: Slav vs. non-Slav, or Orthodox Christian vs. Muslim. Under certain circumstances, this could become a time bomb for Russian society – especially against the backdrop of economic depression. One of the most heavily subsidized regions of Russia is the Chechen Republic. A decrease in budget revenues will lead either to reduced subsidies for Chechnya or to cuts for other regions while maintaining subsidies for the North Caucasus. In the first case, this will spark a wave of redistribution of property and spheres of influence, as there will be a need to compensate for the losses. In the second – it will cause dissatisfaction among residents of other Russian regions, especially those in decline. In both scenarios, this will result in growing social discontent, exacerbated by everyday conflicts. A key role in this process will be played by “the man with a rifle” – demobilized participants of the Russian-Ukrainian war who have combat experience and are used to solving problems by force. By then, some of them, unable

(or unwilling) to integrate into the traditional social system, will find their place in crime – either reinforcing or displacing traditional criminals, much like the Afghan war veterans once did. The end of the war will severely affect the well-being of Russia's hinterland, as payments for participation in the “special military operation” (money to contract soldiers, compensations for the dead and wounded, etc.) currently sustain the economy of many regions. In addition, once the war ends, the economy will need to return to a peacetime mode, and demilitarization processes will mean reduced military production, job losses, and lower wages. These events could also occur if the war continues – triggered, for example, by a global economic crisis.

Judging by all indications, Russia is on the verge of an economic crisis. Based on the report by the Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics (SITE), presented in April 2025 to the finance ministers of EU countries,⁶⁴⁵ it can be stated that Russia has already encountered a number of economic problems linked to the prolonged war against Ukraine. Among other issues: a significant increase in off-budget military spending is creating a “shadow” state debt; Russia's revenues from hydrocarbon exports are substantially decreasing – yet foreign currency earnings are a key source of war funding; the National Wealth Fund of Russia is nearing exhaustion; inflation remains high, negatively affecting economic growth; investments in the civilian sector are shrinking, etc. The general conclusion: Russia is facing serious financial difficulties due to the combination of high military expenditures, declining revenues from energy exports (caused both by Western sanctions and the general drop in oil prices⁶⁴⁶), depletion of reserves, and inflationary pressure. To this we should add the technological lag, with a critical dependence on foreign equipment, lack of access to international financial markets, and the constant threat of new sanctions.

One should also recall that the sanctions policy of the U.S. and Europe has a strong impact on the Russian economy. However, in many respects it lacks consistency. The key sources of the Russian budget are profits from oil and gas sales, which make up 60 % of exports and account for one-third of the federal budget. Since the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022, Russia has earned three times more from hydrocarbon exports than Ukraine has received in aid from its allies.⁶⁴⁷ It was only in June 2025 that the European Commission proposed a draft resolution aiming to ban imports of Russian oil and gas by the end of 2027. The proposal envisions a

⁶⁴⁵ Stockholm School of Economics. (2025. April 17). *Behind the budget: Hidden spending and financial fragility in Russia*. <https://www.hhs.se/en/about-us/news/site-publications/2025/spring-2025-report-russian-war-economy/>. See also: Worldscope. (2025, March 31). *Russia's War Economy*. <https://global-worldscope.blogspot.com/2025/03/russias-war-economy.html>

⁶⁴⁶ The Iranian “crisis” caused only a short-term increase in price.

⁶⁴⁷ Shevchenko, V. (2025, May 30). *Yak Zakhid dosi dopomahaye Rosiyi finansuvaty viynu proty Ukrainy* [How the West still helps Russia finance the war against Ukraine]. BBC News Ukrayina. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c80kxzyv292o> [in Ukrainian].

gradual phase-out of Russian pipeline gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG), as well as a complete halt to imports of Russian oil.⁶⁴⁸

Overall, Putin’s policies usually lead to outcomes that are completely opposite to those he desires. For example, he has managed to “revive” NATO and make the organization relevant again (if the U.S. were to leave, it would become a symbolic “Brussels Treaty”), and Russia’s border with NATO countries has doubled following Finland’s accession. Russia has lost its place in oil and gas trade, having completely or significantly lost the European markets. It has also damaged its relations with all Western democracies and lost its seat in the “Group of Eight” (G8). Therefore, Russian opposition figures and political analysts (such as A. Piontkovsky, G. Kasparov, and others) are right to call Putin the “gravedigger” of Russia.

Russia’s Demands. As of 2025, Russia puts forward a number of demands to end its war against Ukraine.⁶⁴⁹ Let us try to analyse them by identifying potential challenges in their implementation – for both Russia and Ukraine – as well as by considering acceptable solutions for Ukraine.

Russia’s Demand	Possible Challenges in Implementation	Possible Solutions for Ukraine
Cessation of NATO expansion to the East. Ban on Ukraine joining the Alliance.	For Russia and Ukraine: The issue of NATO expansion does not depend solely on Ukraine.	May be the subject of negotiations. However, Ukraine must receive security guarantees, and Russia, which seeks to become the sole “guarantor”, cannot fulfil this role. Ukraine needs to maintain a strong army, and the deployment of foreign troops (excluding Russian or CSTO member states) is also possible as a guarantee against future Russian aggression.

⁶⁴⁸European Commission. (2025, June 17). *Commission proposes a plan to phase out Russian gas and oil imports*. https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/commission-proposes-plan-phase-out-russian-gas-and-oil-imports-2025-06-17_en

⁶⁴⁹Kostina, I. (2025, February 21). *Reuters: RF mozhe postupytyisia \$300 mlrd. zamrozhennykh aktyviv v ramkakh myrnoho vrehuliuvannia* [Reuters: Russia may concede \$300 billion of frozen assets as part of a peace settlement]. *Yevropeiska Pravda*. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2025/02/21/7205558/> [in Ukrainian]; Yesikova, K. (2025, March 13). *RF peredala SSHA svoi vymohy shchodo uhody pro prypynennia viiny v Ukrayini*, – *Reuters* [Russia submitted its demands to the US regarding a peace deal in Ukraine, – Reuters]. *Espresso*. <https://espresso.tv/svit-rf-peredala-ssha-svoi-vimogi-shchodo-ugodi-propripinennya-viyni-v-ukraini-reuters> [in Ukrainian]; Faulconbridge, G. (2025, May 28). *Exclusive: Putin’s demands for peace include an end to NATO enlargement, sources say*. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-ukraine-peace-wants-pledge-halt-nato-enlargement-sources-say-2025-05-28/>

Russia's Demand	Possible Challenges in Implementation	Possible Solutions for Ukraine
Russia's demand: Neutral status for Ukraine.	<p>For Ukraine: The key issue is the need to protect itself from future Russian aggression. In the absence of effective security guarantees, the country will be left alone against Russia in a potential war – but with neutral status, without nuclear weapons, with limited military capability, and no allied support.</p> <p>Ideally: Ukraine's accession to NATO or a future European military alliance would be optimal. Let us also recall one of Russia's latest demands – the destruction of weapons provided by Western countries</p>	Neutral status can be the subject of negotiations, but only with real guarantees – for example, a return to nuclear status.
Russia's demand to “protect” the Russian-speaking population.	<p>For Ukraine: this issue requires public consensus.</p> <p>For Russia: Ukraine may demand the opening of Ukrainian-language schools, other educational and cultural institutions in places with large Ukrainian populations, with guaranteed funding from the Russian budget.</p>	Can be the subject of negotiations. A possible solution could be aligning Ukraine's language legislation with EU standards.
Sanctions and the use of frozen assets.	<p>For Russia: Russia may agree to use part of the frozen assets for Ukraine's reconstruction.</p> <p>For Ukraine: Russia will insist that part of these funds be spent on the regions it controls.</p>	<p>Can be the subject of negotiations. Although Zelensky has repeatedly stated that frozen assets should belong to Ukraine, this issue is not fully regulated legally. Its practical implementation depends on Europe and the United States.</p> <p>The issue of easing or strengthening sanctions is primarily under the jurisdiction of European countries, the U.S., and others. Ukraine's influence is significant but not decisive.</p>

Russia's Demand	Possible Challenges in Implementation	Possible Solutions for Ukraine
<p>Russia's demand for recognition of territorial changes.</p>	<p>For Ukraine: Russia demands international recognition of the annexation of Crimea and full control over four Ukrainian regions – Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson. Putin rules out the return of these territories to Ukraine and demands withdrawal of Ukrainian troops.</p> <p>For Russia: Russia does not fully control any of the four desired regions. Their inclusion into the Russian Federation occurred in violation of both international and Russian law. Moreover, legal recognition by Ukraine would require a national referendum, and even if held, it is highly unlikely to result in an outcome favorable to Russia.</p>	<p>For Ukraine, this will likely be the most difficult negotiation issue (after security guarantees).</p> <p>Diplomatically – it is possible to appeal to international and Russian law, as well as the actual situation – even by Russian estimates, Russia controls about 75 % of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions, and over 99 % of Luhansk.</p> <p>Considering Russia does not control the two regional centers it claims, Ukraine can raise the issue of their complete liberation.</p> <p>Due to Ukraine's partial control of Bryansk, Belgorod, and Kursk regions (even without control of their administrative centres) – by Russia's own legal logic this is sufficient grounds to negotiate a territorial exchange – region for region. However, the full return of occupied territories is only possible after a change of power in Russia.</p>
<p>Change of government in Ukraine</p>	<p>For Russia: Elections can be held only after martial law is lifted, which is realistic only after hostilities end and the Ukrainian parliament passes the corresponding decision. There is no guarantee that the ruling political force (or its successor) would not win the elections, which would likely be unacceptable to Russia.</p> <p>For Ukraine: It is impossible to hold elections during martial law. Russia may demand the participation of banned pro-Russian parties and politicians.</p>	<p>Can be the subject of negotiations, but should be postponed until after martial law is lifted.</p>

Russia's Demand	Possible Challenges in Implementation	Possible Solutions for Ukraine
Humanitarian issues – exchange of prisoners, wounded persons, bodies of the deceased, the status of Ukrainian citizens in occupied territories, return of children, etc.	<p>For Russia: Return of children from new families, amnesty for political prisoners. Releasing prisoners and captives exposes the inhumane detention conditions and torture in Russian prisons.</p> <p>For Ukraine: A number of issues that are currently not on the agenda include the question of amnesty for collaborators (whose hands are not stained with blood) in case Crimea or other occupied territories are returned. As of today, this aspect is not yet relevant, but preparations for it are necessary.</p>	Can be the subject of negotiations.

Let us recall that Russia operates according to the “domino principle”, and for the Russian leadership, the root cause of the “Ukrainian crisis” is the very existence of Ukraine as a separate state and Ukrainians as a distinct nation. Throughout its history, Russia has repeatedly destroyed national elites in conquered territories, carried out russification, restricted the use of language and culture,⁶⁵⁰ conducted deportations, and settled these territories with people brought from afar. Russia has rewritten history, trying to erase and destroy entire pages of the past. In May 2025, Russian State Duma deputy V. Sobolev declared that the goal of the “Special Military Operation” is to create a “Union State” of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.⁶⁵¹ The head of the Russian delegation, V. Medinsky, recently stated that “the conflict in Ukraine should be viewed as a confrontation between an ‘older and younger brother,’ not as a conflict between countries with their own culture and history”.⁶⁵²

Thus, the Kremlin does not recognize Ukraine as a state, but is also unable to fully conquer it. As of now, positional fighting continues with minimal territorial changes (on the scale of the conflict). Russia has failed to realize its offensive po-

⁶⁵⁰ Starting September 1, 2025, Russia banned the study of the Ukrainian language in all occupied territories. See: Patrikieieva, N. (2025, June 26). “*Heopolitychna sytuatsiia zminylas’*”. *Yak Rosiia povnistiu zaboroniaie ukrainsku movu v shkolakh okupovanykh rehioniv* [“The geopolitical situation has changed.” How Russia completely bans the Ukrainian language in schools of occupied regions]. BBC News Ukraina. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/cev0en0wnlpo> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁵¹ Rusinko, B. (2025, May 23). *Metoiu “SVO” ie stvorennia “soiuznoi derzhavy” Rosii, Ukrainy ta Bilorusi – deputat Derzhdumy V. Soboliev. VIDEO* [The purpose of the “special military operation” is the creation of a “union state” of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus – State Duma deputy V. Sobolev. VIDEO]. Censor.net. <https://censor.net/ua/v3553880> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁵² Luxmoore, M. (2025, June 10). *Russia's Top Peace Negotiator Is Historian Who Justified the War: Vladimir Medinsky warns that Ukraine would lose more territory if it doesn't agree to Moscow's demands*. WSJ. <https://www.wsj.com/world/russia/russia-negotiator-vladimir-medinsky-85612fec>

tential, and the Russian armed forces are experiencing a shortage of resources – personnel, equipment, and ammunition. This explains the involvement of North Korean soldiers, the receipt of weapons from the DPRK, recruitment of foreigners, and the high payments to Russian contract soldiers. In this context, Russia's demand that Ukraine destroy the weapons provided by its Western partners does not seem accidental. According to one Russian diplomat: "All these excesses must be destroyed. All international algorithms are known. They must be reduced, disposed of, and with guarantees."⁶⁵³

Ukraine, in turn, must defend its independence, act in its own interests, and understand that trusting Putin is senseless, as he has violated all existing international agreements. Russia's current demands essentially amount to a demand for capitulation, but there are no grounds for such a surrender. Nor can Ukraine disarm, as Russia desires.

One of the major problems in these negotiations is that Putin appears to be waging war not against Ukraine, but against the "collective West". Yet he places all responsibility for the "collective West" on Ukraine (this is convenient for Putin, since Russia cannot defeat the West economically or socially – so why not "defeat" Ukraine instead? Though even that has failed). Therefore, the idea of signing a "broad agreement" with key Western countries as guarantors is justified. Ideally, such an agreement should include a package of measures that would make further Russian aggression impossible – both against Ukraine and other European countries.

Europe now understands that the war will continue. This was recently stated by the new German chancellor Friedrich Merz, as Putin perceives the very fact of negotiations as a sign of weakness.⁶⁵⁴ European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasized that the Kremlin only understands the language of force, and that continued pressure is needed to push Russia toward a ceasefire.⁶⁵⁵

There are also a number of issues the West will not agree to – such as halting NATO expansion or NATO's "withdrawal" from the Baltic and Eastern European countries. The imaginary "time machine" that resets everything to 1991 exists only in Putin's mind. However, not all Western countries fully grasp the situation. This includes, first and foremost, the current U.S. administration, which may choose to abandon its role as the global "guardian of democracy" and focus on domestic issues. Moreover, there is a sense that Trump neither knows how nor wants to nego-

⁶⁵³ Lovitska, L. (2020, June 16). *Rosiia postavyla Ukraini novu vymohu dlia prypynennia viiny: shcho zadumaly u Kremli* [Russia has made a new demand to Ukraine for ending the war: what Kremlin plans]. Today.ua. <https://today.ua/479707-rosiya-postavila-ukrayini-novu-vimogu-dlya-pripinennya-vijni-sho-zadumali-u-kremli/> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁵⁴ Hulyichuk, D. (2025, May 26). *Voyna v Ukrainie budet prodolzhat'sya dol'she, chem my vse khotim – Merts* [The war in Ukraine will last longer than we all want – Merts]. TSN. <https://tsn.ua/ru/ato/voyna-v-ukraine-budet-prodolzhat'sya-dolshe-chem-my-vse-hotim-merts-2836469.html> [in Russian].

⁶⁵⁵ Ozturk, I. (2025, May 16). *Putin ne hotovyi do myru? Ursula fon der Lyaien poyasnyla, yak diaty* [Is Putin not ready for peace? Ursula von der Leyen explained what to do]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/world/world-politics/putin-ne-hotovij-do-miru-ursula-fon-der-ljajjen-pojasnila-jak-dijati-1059109.html> [in Ukrainian].

tiate – especially where he is unwilling to compromise. For instance, back in 2018, during his first presidential term, Trump viewed Russia as a key player in resolving the Iran issue.⁶⁵⁶ Over the years, his position has not changed,⁶⁵⁷ as he wished for Iran to transfer its enriched uranium to Russia as a compromise. The Israeli-U.S. operation in June 2025 rolled back Iran's nuclear program and may potentially lead to the downfall of its theocratic regime. As a result, Russia's "assistance" is no longer needed by the USA.⁶⁵⁸ Additionally, it turns out that Trump tends to claim others' achievements as his own. For example, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi denied Trump's claim that the U.S. had mediated the India–Pakistan conflict.⁶⁵⁹

Let us recall that there are different perspectives in the U.S. regarding support for Ukraine. There are politicians who understand the importance of American aid, such as Republican Congressman Bacon: "Ukraine must be armed to the teeth, and the harshest sanctions imposed against the Russian Federation."⁶⁶⁰ There are also opponents who echo Trump's claim that both sides are to blame for the war.⁶⁶¹

But can the U.S. truly exclude itself from global politics? Hardly, because there will always be those willing to remind the country of its former role. In the minds of many dictatorships, theocracies, and autocracies, the U.S. symbolizes the Western way of life. Therefore, isolating itself from the world simply won't work.

It is also important to understand that aid to Ukraine costs less than what the West would have to spend if Ukraine loses. Russia would strengthen its imperial ambitions, possess an army trained in modern warfare, refined logistics, and a developed military industry. Russia is also not interested in the simultaneous demobilization of all participants in the "special military operation", as this would cause a number of negative consequences – primarily a rise in crime. All this could serve as an additional incentive to launch another war (or a new stage of the current one). The first targets of aggression could be the former post-Soviet republics, and the Baltic states are especially vulnerable. Lithuania could be attacked because of the Suwałki "corridor" – a narrow strip of land between Poland and Lithuania that is of strategic importance to Russia as it connects to the Kaliningrad region. Or Estonia, which

⁶⁵⁶ BBC News. (2018, May 9). *Iran nuclear deal: Trump pulls US out in break with Europe*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44045957>

⁶⁵⁷ Bloomberg. (2025, March 4). *Putin agrees to help Trump broker nuclear talks with Iran*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-03-04/iran-putin-to-help-trump-broker-nuclear-talks-with-tehran>

⁶⁵⁸ Trump may view Russia as a mediator in negotiations with North Korea.

⁶⁵⁹ ZN.UA. (2025, June 18). *Prypynennia vohniu mizh Indijeiu ta Pakistanom: Modi zaperechyv zaiavu Trampa pro poserednytstvo SSA* [Ceasefire between India and Pakistan: Modi denied Trump's statement about US mediation]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/WORLD/pripinennja-vojnju-mizh-indijeju-ta-pakistanom-modi-zaperechiv-zajavu-trampa-pro-poserednytstvo-ssha.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁶⁰ Censor.net. (2025, May 25). *Kongresmen-respublikanets Beykon: Ukrainu potribno ozbrojity do zubiv ta zaprovadyty maksymalni sanktsii proty RF* [Republican congressman Bacon: Ukraine must be armed to the teeth and maximum sanctions against Russia introduced]. <https://censor.net/ua/news/3554247/kongresmen-beyikon-zaklykaye-ssha-ta-soyuznykiv-do-rishuchyh-krokiv> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁶¹ Fields, A. (2025, June 8). *Tuberville accuses Zelensky of attempting to 'lure NATO' into Russian conflict*. The Hill. <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/5338745-tuberville-accuses-zelensky-of-attempting-to-lure-nato-into-russian-conflict/>

has the largest Russian diaspora that could act as a “fifth column”. Belarus, in fact a Russian satellite, is unlikely to be annexed, as it serves as a kind of “imperial showcase” for Russia – formally a state, with a population that still believes in its sovereignty. Unless a major domestic political crisis in Russia arises – one that requires immediate public consensus (a “pressure release”) – the Kremlin might proceed with the slogan “Belarus is ours”,⁶⁶² considering such an operation no more difficult than Crimea. Interestingly, had the democratic forces won in Belarus in 2020–2021, it is almost certain that Russia would have occupied the country under the guise of a CSTO operation. As a result, the front line in the Russia-Ukraine war would have expanded by more than a thousand kilometres. Therefore, oddly enough, negative scenarios can sometimes have positive outcomes. Potentially, the Belarusian regime will fall after the Russian one – it’s only a matter of time – and the country will soon join the EU.

Kazakhstan could be considered easy prey for Russia, but China is more likely to stand up for it, being closely linked to the country through economic ties. Among the countries of the South Caucasus, Georgia has become a Russian satellite, Azerbaijan is under the protection of Turkey, and Armenia has to some extent secured itself by lacking a shared border with Russia, but this factor would not help in the event of Georgia’s annexation.

Despite the presence of a Russian enclave in Moldova – the “Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic” being an excellent springboard for regional expansion – a real threat to Moldova would only emerge if Russia reaches its borders, which would require either Ukraine’s defeat in the war or its loss of the South – both scenarios currently impossible. Overall, Ukraine could contribute to resolving the Transnistria issue, which would remove all obstacles to Moldova’s future unification with Romania – something that is only a matter of time, likely within the next 10–20 years.

Russia will also seek to strengthen its influence in Eastern Europe. It is unlikely that direct aggression will be used against Poland, Romania, or Hungary. More likely, this will involve the buying off of elites, their corruption, interference in political processes to bring loyal or allied regimes to power, as well as economic and cultural influence. Given the potential collapse of NATO, it is worth considering the creation of a European defence union that would allow the redistribution of resources

⁶⁶² Russia and Belarus are the parts of the so-called “Union State,” which is positioned as a supranational entity established under the treaty of December 8, 1999. Its goal is the gradual creation of a shared political, economic, military, customs, currency, legal, and humanitarian space between the two countries. In the early 2000s, Putin proposed accelerating the integration of the “Union State” through a referendum and the adoption of a new constitution based on the Russian one. If implemented, this would eliminate the remaining Belarusian sovereignty. See: Shary, A. (2002, August 15). *Putin fakticheski predlozhit Belorussii voiti v sostav Rossii* [Putin actually suggested that Belarus join Russia]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/24190894.html> [in Russian]; In 2019, Russia proposed that the Republic of Belarus delegate up to 95% of its state governance powers to a “supranational level. See: Khvylya. (2020, July 1). *Putin predlagal Lukashenko sdats pochty ves suverenitet Belarusi, – posol* [Putin offered Lukashenko to give up almost all of Belarus’s sovereignty, – ambassador]. <https://hvylya.net/news/210667-putin-predlagal-lukashenko-sdat-pochty-ves-suverenitet-belarusi-posol> [in Russian].

and forces among member states and effectively respond to current threats – from hybrid to conventional ones.

Is China interested in ending the war? Both yes and no. Yes, because this war has made Russia completely dependent on the Middle Kingdom. China is Russia's largest trading partner, the biggest buyer of hydrocarbons, and the Russian consumer market relies heavily on Chinese goods. Moreover, China does not even place production components in Russia, keeping the main profits for itself. Russia's current level of dependence on China can be considered critical. Also important for China is the potential alliance with Russia in a possible conflict with the United States.

Objectively, China might also be interested in a Russian victory. Firstly, it would mean the defeat of the "collective West"; secondly, China views the war through Russia's perspective, projecting it onto its own relationship with Taiwan.

At the same time, there are arguments that might push China to adopt a peacemaker's stance. The Taiwan situation also parallels Ukraine's situation with Crimea. Russia took Crimea, the West "took" Taiwan. China stands for unity and sovereignty.

Trump's interest in Russia is also a sensitive matter for China, as it concerns the possibility of a future alliance (or more likely, neutrality) in a potential military conflict between Washington and Beijing. Thus, paradoxically, it is in China's interest that the U.S. supports Ukraine, as this drives a wedge between Moscow and Washington. Additionally, a prolonged war undermines international trade and fuels tensions, which could affect China's already pre-crisis economy. China is also not interested in any potential use of nuclear weapons by Russia.

What could be the possible scenarios for ending the war? For convenience, we'll use the forecast provided by analysts from the geopolitical centre of the investment bank JP Morgan, published in May 2025.⁶⁶³ The report outlines four possible scenarios:

1. The "South Korea" scenario, with a 15 % probability. Ukraine does not gain NATO membership, but European security forces may be stationed in the country. In the territory controlled by Kyiv (about 80 % of the country), a prosperous democratic state begins to take shape, funded by frozen Russian assets.

2. The "Israeli" scenario⁶⁶⁴ – with a 20 % probability. The West continues to provide strong military and economic support, but without military presence. Ukraine actively develops its defense sector, but the war with Russia remains permanent.

⁶⁶³ Chollet, D., & Sawyer, L. (2025, May). *The Russia-Ukraine endgame and the future of Europe*. JPMorgan Chase. <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/content/dam/jpmorganchase/documents/center-for-geopolitics/jpmc-cfg-russia-ukraine.pdf>; Savin, T. (2025, May 23). *Prypynennia vohnyu – do lypnia: analityky JP Morgan maliuiut' Ukrayini "hruzynskiy stsenarii"* [Ceasefire – by July: JP Morgan analysts outline a "Georgian scenario" for Ukraine]. Focus. https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/707555-prypynennya-vohnyu-v-ukrajini-mozhlive-do-lipnya-prognoz-jp-morgan?utm_source=ukrnet_news [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁶⁴ According to F. Fukuyama, the situation in Ukraine will most closely resemble that of Israel – in the sense that Russia is not going anywhere, and Ukraine must be prepared for continued confrontation. See: Stetsenko, S. (2023, October 19). *Ukraina zasluhila nazyvatsya liberalnoy demokratiei – Frensis Fukuyama* [Ukraine has earned the right to be called a liberal democracy – Francis Fukuyama]. Krym. Realii. <https://ru.krymr.com/a/fukuyama-intervyu-ukraina-rossiya-ssha/32644654.html> [in Russian].

3. The “Georgian” scenario (50 %). A lack of Western support leads to the collapse of Western integration and Ukraine’s return to Russia’s sphere of influence.

4. The “Belarusian” scenario (15 %). The withdrawal of the U.S. and Europe results in Ukraine’s full capitulation, turning it into a vassal state. In this case, Russia effectively wins the war, divides the West, and overturns the world order established after World War II.

When assessing the possibility of an agreement, analysts note that the war has entered its “endgame” phase, but there will be no comprehensive peace deal.

There is a saying that all experts like to write about bad news, because “bad” news sells better than good news. Let’s try to focus on the positive. What seems most realistic⁶⁶⁵ for us?

2025 – The U.S. reviews its sanctions policy and tightens measures against Russia.

2026 – Amid internal economic crisis and Western pressure, Russia agrees to a ceasefire along the entire line of contact.

2026–2027 – A peace deal is signed, with possible minor territorial exchanges. The war is effectively frozen. The agreement’s implementation is ensured by international guarantees.

2027–2028 – Mass unrest in the Caucasus and the beginning of Russia’s disintegration. Some annexed territories return to Ukraine.

2030–2031 – Ukraine joins the EU and possibly NATO. At negotiations with Russia, the issue of the return of all occupied and annexed territories is being raised.

Negative scenario may unfold as follows:

2025 – The U.S. softens its sanctions policy toward Russia; Ukraine stops receiving American weapons, with needs partially compensated by European allies.

2026 – Against the backdrop of an internal economic crisis and Western pressure, Russia agrees to cease military actions along the entire line of contact; a ceasefire is signed.

2027–2028 – Despite agreements, the situation on the border remains tense; provocations and local clashes continue. A dictatorship is established in Russia.

2030–2031 – The beginning of a new stage of Russian aggression.

⁶⁶⁵There is undoubtedly an element of wishful thinking here.

*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago;
the next best time is now.*
Chinese proverb.

THE FUTURE OF UKRAINE

Ukraine received its chance to become a developed state in 1991. Step by step, Ukrainian citizens learned to build both personal and societal well-being, shaping new economic and political relations. Step by step, civil society emerged in Ukraine, defending – at critical moments – the right of Ukrainians to be citizens of their own country.

In the context of Russian aggression, planning is difficult – but necessary. Therefore, let us try to look into the future and highlight the most pressing developmental challenges that must be addressed – some of which, in our view, require immediate action.

Demography and social capital. In the 20th century, Ukrainians participated in two world wars and suffered three famines – 1921–1923, 1932–1933, and 1946–1947. According to demographic estimates, total Ukrainian losses in the 20th century amounted to no less than 15–20 million people (including those who were never born).⁶⁶⁶ Many Ukrainians left at the beginning of the 20th century in search of a better life, emigrating to the U.S., Canada, Argentina, and other countries, where a Ukrainian diaspora still exists today. From the times of the Russian Empire through the Soviet Union, Ukrainians were used to settle newly acquired territories – from Kuban and the Caucasus to the Far East. A significant number of Ukrainians left Ukraine between 1991 and 2022, some as labour migrants, others for education. Each demographic loss represents several potential generations that were never born, and in the case of migrants, were born elsewhere.

In 1991, the population of Ukraine was 52 million people; by 2025, it had decreased to approximately 30–32 million. According to statistics, 70.4 % of the population lives in cities and 29.6 % in rural areas. Women make up 53.5 %, and men 46.5 %. As of early 2025, the average age of Ukrainians is nearly 42 years.⁶⁶⁷ Life

⁶⁶⁶Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Demohrafichni vtraty Ukrainy v pershii polovyni XX stolittia* [Demographic losses of Ukraine in the first half of the 20th century]. *Wikipedia*. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Демографічні_втрати_України_в_першій_половині_XX_століття [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁶⁷Vaskovska, V. (2025, May 12). *Skilky liudei prozhyvaie v Ukraini i skilky zalyshytsia pislia viiny: dani demohrafa* [How many people live in Ukraine and how many will remain after the war: demographer's data]. *Fakty*. <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/20250512-skilky-lyudej-prozhyvaye-v-ukrayini-i-skilky-zalyshytsya-pislya-vijny-dani-demografa> [in Ukrainian]; *Ukrainska pravda*. (2025, February 12). *Naseleennia Ukrainy stanovy 32 mln. osib – vitsepremier Chernyshov* [Ukraine's population is 32 million – Deputy Prime Minister Chernyshov]. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/02/12/7497876/> [in Ukrainian].

expectancy is lower than in most European countries. For example, in neighboring Poland, current life expectancy is 73.4 years for men and 81.1 years for women.⁶⁶⁸ In Ukraine, it is 60 and 77 years, respectively.⁶⁶⁹

Ukraine follows the general European trend of declining birth rates. In 1991, more than 500,000 children were born in Ukraine; in 2024, around 150,000. The overall mortality and birth rate dynamics in Ukraine are as follows: in 2024, there were 495,000 deaths and 176,000 births. Thus, the difference between deaths and births over the year is a negative 319,000.⁶⁷⁰ It is worth noting that the Ministry of Justice registers demographic indicators only for the territory under Ukrainian government control.

According to UN estimates, Ukraine's current population is 37.4 million. It is expected to grow to 38.5 million by 2030, decline to 32.1 million by 2050, reach 25.1 million by 2069, and may shrink to 15.3 million by 2100.⁶⁷¹ Less pessimistic forecasts suggest a rapid recovery for Ukraine, with a population decline of only 21 % by 2052.⁶⁷²

For the future, the age and gender structure of the population is of much greater importance, and in Ukraine (as in Europe), it is characterized by progressive demographic aging. A declining working-age population leads to lower tax revenues for the state budget, and the lack of insurance contributions creates challenges in the allocation and payment of pensions. The level of aging is expected to continue rising, while the so-called potential support ratio – the number of working-age people per older person – will continue to decrease.⁶⁷³

Currently, there are approximately 10.8 million working individuals in Ukraine who pay contributions to the Pension Fund, and nearly 11 million pensioners re-

⁶⁶⁸ Polskie Radio. (2023, July 28). *U Polshchi zrosła srednia tryvalist zhyttia* [Average life expectancy in Poland has increased]. <https://www.polskieradio.pl/398/7856/Artykul/3216352,y-polszci-zrosla-serednia-trivalist-zhittia> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁶⁹ Hladun, O. (2025, April 21). *Srednia tryvalist zhyttia cholovikiv v Ukraini – 60 rokiv, a zhinok – 77 rokiv* [Average life expectancy of men in Ukraine is 60 years, and women – 77 years]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/UKRAINE/oleksandr-hladun-serednja-trivalist-zhittja-cholovikiv-v-ukrajini-60-rokiv-a-zhinok-77-rokiv-.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁷⁰ Kyiv News. (2024, December 15). *Shcho bude z naselenniam Ukrainy pislia viiny: prohnaz demohrafa* [What will happen to Ukraine's population after the war: demographer's forecast]. <https://surl.lu/bvxexc> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁷¹ Khvyliya. (2024, July 15). *V OON pidrakhuvaly, yak skorotytsia naselennia Ukrainy do 2100 roku* [The UN calculated how Ukraine's population will shrink by 2100]. <https://hvyliya.net/uk/news/296043-v-oon-podschitali-kak-sokratitsya-naselenie-ukrainy-k-2100-godu> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁷² Ueffing, P., Adhikari, S., Goujon, A., KC, S., Poznyak, O., & Natale, F. (2023). *Ukraine's population future after the Russian Invasion – The role of migration for demographic change*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2760/607962>

⁶⁷³ BusinessUA. (2024, October 17). *Yake spivvidnoshennia pensioneriv i pratsiuiuchykh v Ukraini soiodni* [What is the ratio of retirees to working people in Ukraine today]. https://businessua.com/robo/100498yake-spivvidnoshennia-pensioneriv-i-pracyuyuchih-v-ukraini-sogodni.html#google_vignette [in Ukrainian].

ceiving pensions.⁶⁷⁴ As we can see, the ratio of workers to pensioners is one to one,⁶⁷⁵ which is critically low for a pay-as-you-go pension system even in peacetime. (For comparison: in Austria, the ratio is 1.6 workers per pensioner; in Germany and Spain – 1.8 and 2.2 to 1, respectively).⁶⁷⁶

The number of children in Ukraine is 7.6 million (under the age of 18).⁶⁷⁷ Two million children were forced to leave Ukraine and ended up in Europe.⁶⁷⁸ Many children remained in occupied territories or were taken to the Russian Federation.

It is no surprise that Ukraine's demographic situation is referred to as a "structural crisis", a "demographic catastrophe", "the fastest depopulation in Europe", and "on the verge of demographic extinction".

Ukraine does not have the lowest birth rate in the world. In 2019, 100 women in Ukraine gave birth to 116 children,⁶⁷⁹ while in South Korea the number was only 72, in China – 110, and in Japan and Italy – around 125.⁶⁸⁰ In Ukraine, this figure currently ranges from 90 to 98 children per 100 women, according to various estimates.⁶⁸¹

Russian aggression has worsened the demographic situation. Part of Ukraine's population – around 6 million⁶⁸² – found itself in occupied territories, and no fewer

⁶⁷⁴ Kyrylenko, T. (2024, August 18). *Pensiina demohrafiia: 10 milioniv pratsiuiuchykh utrymuiut usikh, a na odnoho narodzhuvanoho – troie pomerylykh* [Pension demographics: 10 million workers support everyone, and for every newborn there are three deaths]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/ECONOMICS/pensijna-demohrafija-10-miljoniv-pratsujuchikh-utrimujut-usikh-a-na-odnoho-narodzhuvanoho-troje-pomerlikh.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁷⁵ For comparison: at the beginning of independence in Ukraine, six workers "supported" one pensioner.

⁶⁷⁶ Klymenko, O. (2024, June 5). *Pratsiuvaty do starosti: u Minsotspratsy poiasnyly, chomu v ukrainsiv ne bude vysokykh pensii* [Working until old age: The Ministry of Social Policy explained why Ukrainians will not have high pensions]. Focus.ua. <https://focus.ua/uk/economics/650492-pracyuvati-do-starosti-u-minsopolitiki-poyasnili-chomu-v-ukrajinciv-ne-bude-visokih-pensiy> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁷⁷ Inmol.org. (n.d.). *Chyselnist ditei vikom vid narodzhennia do 18 rokiv v Ukraini* [Number of children aged from birth to 18 years in Ukraine]. <https://inmol.org/stat/children-count-ua/> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁷⁸ Kyrylenko, T. (2024, August 18). *Pensiina demohrafiia: 10 milioniv pratsiuiuchykh utrymuiut usikh, a na odnoho narodzhuvanoho – troie pomerylykh* [Pension demographics: 10 million workers support everyone, and for every newborn there are three deaths]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/ECONOMICS/pensijna-demohrafija-10-miljoniv-pratsujuchikh-utrimujut-usikh-a-na-odnoho-narodzhuvanoho-troje-pomerlikh.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁷⁹ Kyiv News. (2024, December 15). *Shcho bude z naseleнням Ukrainy pislia viiny: prohnaz demohrafa* [What will happen to Ukraine's population after the war: demographer's forecast]. <https://surl.lu/bvxeuc> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁸⁰ Kasiyanchuk, M. (2025, January 22). *Liudstvo vymyraie i sytuatsiia ne pokrashchuietsia: yaka kraina mozhe vtratyt 96% svoho naseleння* [Humanity is dying out and the situation is not improving: which country may lose 96% of its population]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/zakordon24/nazvano-krayinu-shho-mozhe-vtratiti-96-naseleння-analiz-demografiv_n2735079 [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁸¹ Kyiv News. (2024, December 15). *Shcho bude z naseleнням Ukrainy pislia viiny: prohnaz demohrafa* [What will happen to Ukraine's population after the war: demographer's forecast]. <https://surl.lu/bvxeuc> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁸² Yermolenko, A., Parashchak, O., Zavrivukha, A., & Zhabska, Ye. (2024, August 8). *Zradnyky chy ni: istorii ukrainsiv, yaki zhyvut na okupovanykh terytoriiakh* [Traitors or not: stories of Ukrainians living in the occupied territories]. Gazeta.ua. https://gazeta.ua/articles/life/_zradniki-chi-ni-istoriyi-ukrayinciv-yaki-zhyvut-na-okupovanih-teritoriyah/1191935 [in Ukrainian].

than 5 million Ukrainians have been granted temporary protection in Europe. Let us not forget the direct demographic losses caused by military actions. The pace of population decline depends largely on the duration of the war.⁶⁸³

Another challenge awaits Ukraine after the war ends: some Ukrainians will leave the country, while others will return home. Ukraine's accession to the EU will significantly simplify employment opportunities in Europe. The experience of the Baltic countries shows that this will likely trigger another wave of labour migration.

Demographics also influence economic growth rates, and the dynamics and nature of reproductive processes determine the current and future size of the employed population. In modern economic systems, a person plays two key roles: as a labour force and, at the same time, as a consumer.

By the start of the full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian labour market had lost nearly 5.5 million working-age individuals, which accounted for about one-third of the available workforce at that time.⁶⁸⁴ Analysts at Bloomberg have estimated that if 2.8 million working-age women do not return to Ukraine, it will cost the country 10 % of its pre-war annual GDP – about \$20 billion per year.⁶⁸⁵

So, what is to be done?

First, it must be understood that the sheer number of people does not automatically ensure prosperity and well-being. Let us recall that, as of 2025, both Norway and Finland have populations of 5.5 million each, while small Israel, with 9.5 million people, successfully resists external threats and has a developed economy. A large population does not guarantee sustainable economic development either – many densely populated countries in Asia and Africa experience high levels of poverty. Even in countries with huge populations – such as the U.S., China, or Russia – vast areas remain sparsely populated.

In addition, the process of urbanization in Ukraine is not yet complete, so the rural population (along with villages) will continue to decrease, while the urban population will increase. Appeals to revive the Ukrainian village, of course, have a right to exist, but purely in the ethnographic dimension.⁶⁸⁶ An increase in the rural population would only be possible in the case of total technological degradation – for ex-

⁶⁸³Palian, Z., & Vynohradova, M. (2020). *Demografichna sytuatsiia v Ukraini: druhyi demografichni perekhid ta nevyznachenist* [Demographic situation in Ukraine: Second demographic transition and uncertainty]. *Visnyk Kyivskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni Tarasa Shevchenka. Serii: Ekonomika*, 3(220), 32–40 (pp. 38–39). <https://doi.org/10.17721/1728-2667.2020/220-3/5> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁸⁴Kyrylenko, T. (2024, August 18). *Pensiina demohrafiia: 10 milioniv pratsiuiuchykh utrymuiut usikh, a na odnoho narodzhuvanoho – troie pomerylykh* [Pension demographics: 10 million workers support everyone, and for every newborn there are three deaths]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/ECONOMICS/pensijna-demohrafiia-10-miljoniv-pratsiujuchikh-utrimujut-usikh-a-na-odnoho-narodzhuvanoho-troje-pomerlikh.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁸⁵Radio Svoboda. (2023, October 17). *Ukrainski bizhentsi dopomohly zmenshyty defitsyt robochoi sylu u YeS – yevrokomisar* [Ukrainian refugees helped reduce the labor shortage in the EU – European Commissioner]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-ukrainski-bizhentsi-defitsyt-robocha-syla-es/32-641409.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁸⁶In the event of global catastrophes, the situation would be reversed – rural populations would have a better chance of survival.

ample, as a result of a planetary catastrophe, when large human collectives would once again be needed to grow agricultural products. Meanwhile, new technologies, mechanization, robotization, and the like will only reinforce urbanization trends. Naturally, some villages will remain, and the recreational industry, rural tourism, and similar sectors will develop. Local processing industries, crafts, and seasonal work will also continue to exist.

According to demographers, Ukraine's main task in the postwar period will be to stabilize the population so that it does not decline at a rapid pace.⁶⁸⁷ In other words, Ukraine is undergoing a process of “demographic compression”, in which the projected population is expected to stabilize. A much bigger problem may be the progressing demographic aging, where the younger population will have to support the elderly, who are either incapable of working or barely able to.

Secondly, population stabilization should occur both through an increase in life expectancy and through an increase (or stabilization) in birth rates. Life expectancy in Ukraine, as already mentioned, is lower than in Europe. Therefore, improving medical services, ensuring occupational safety conditions, compliance with water and food quality standards, environmental programs, and a culture of health – all of this should contribute to longer life expectancy in Ukraine. Incidentally, this will largely be achieved by adhering to the relevant EU standards.

An important element of the new demographic policy should be the ongoing support and promotion of childbirth, since demography cannot be regulated quickly. The approach must be comprehensive and include healthcare, education, infrastructure, and so on. The upbringing and education system must become a powerful social, economic, and cultural cluster. Families must have access to affordable mortgage housing, quality healthcare, and social protection. Tax regulation is possible, whereby the tax rate decreases for each child born (1 child – by 25 %, two – by half, etc.). As existing experience has shown, the number of social benefits for a child also matters. It is also important to reconsider the role of men in childcare and upbringing, especially regarding those who have experienced the war. The state must create conditions for combining parenthood with professional employment or business, and provide psychological and informational-consultative support; conduct educational and awareness-raising activities to increase the level of reproductive culture, and so on.⁶⁸⁸

Thirdly. There will be changes in the labour market. Given the gender and age structure of the population, Ukraine will be forced in the coming years to contin-

⁶⁸⁷ Kyiv News. (2024, December 15). *Shcho bude z naseleнням Ukrainy pislia viiny: prohnoz demohrafa* [What will happen to Ukraine's population after the war: demographer's forecast]. <https://surl.lubvxeuc> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁸⁸ Kyrylenko, T. (2024, August 18). *Pensiina demohrafiia: 10 milioniv pratsiuiuchykh utrymuiut usikh, a na odnoho narodzhuvanoho – troie pomerylykh* [Pension demographics: 10 million workers support everyone, and for every newborn there are three deaths]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/ECONOMICS/pensijna-demohrafiia-10-milioniv-pratsiujuchykh-utrimujut-usikh-a-na-odnoho-narodzhuvanoho-troje-pomerlikh.html> [in Ukrainian].

ue raising the retirement age, as the existing solidarity system no longer functions. It should be replaced by a funded (initially mixed – solidarity and funded) pension system with individual pension accounts, to which a portion of a person's social contributions is directed.

After the war, traditional postwar challenges will have to be addressed, including the labour reintegration of veterans. Businesses and the state will need to invest in systems for their adaptation, retraining, and education.

As already mentioned, a potential EU accession in 2030–2031 will drastically affect the labour market. Ukrainians will gain the opportunity for free employment across Europe. Conversely, the influx of highly qualified specialists from the EU should not be ruled out, as salaries and profits in certain sectors in Ukraine may be higher. In particular, many jobs will be created in the defence industry. Ukraine will traditionally remain a producer of agricultural products, with expected development in mechanical engineering, the energy sector, and transport industry. Ukraine's reconstruction will be linked to a boom in construction. Economic sectors connected to Internet capabilities will expand. Interest in Ukraine is expected to stimulate the tourism industry.

An analysis of the labour market would be incomplete without mentioning the “labour revolution” associated with the integration of AI. Artificial intelligence is capable of fully replacing many professions or at least easing human labour across various fields. For example, professions such as call centre operators, accountants and translators are expected to disappear, and even teachers, lawyers, and psychologists may be partially affected. A component of this “labour revolution” will be the process of robotization, which will gradually affect low-skilled labour sectors – from cleaning to manufacturing. However, in Ukraine this process will occur with a delay, as human labour will remain relatively cheaper. In the long-term perspective, robotization will make it possible to reduce the workweek and avoid a significant increase in the retirement age.

Fourthly. A sensible migration policy is needed, which should include programs aimed at the return of Ukrainians. The presence of private property – apartments, land, and other real estate – could motivate migrants to return,⁶⁸⁹ as around 86% of Ukrainian refugees owned housing in Ukraine.⁶⁹⁰ We must also not forget our fellow citizens from the occupied territories.

However, Ukraine will not manage without involving labour migration resources. The post-Soviet republics of Central Asia could become a source of labour, and over time, even citizens of today's adversary countries may come as migrant workers. Obviously, this will lead to a rise in xenophobia and increased popularity of far-

⁶⁸⁹For more details on the role of private property, see the section “The Idea of European Civilization.”

⁶⁹⁰FPDI. (2023, December 15). *Yak povernuty ukrainsiv z-za kordonu? Svizhe doslidzhennia ta analiz demohrafiv shchodo mihratsii* [How to bring Ukrainians back from abroad? Fresh research and demographic analysis on migration]. <https://fpdi.org.ua/2023/12/15/iak-povernuty-ukrainsiv-z-za-kordonu-svizhe-doslidzhennia-ta-analiz-demohrafiv-shchodo-mihratsii/> [in Ukrainian].

right parties. Moreover, the process of normalizing relations will be quite lengthy, since unlike Germany, which went through a process of repentance after Nazism, Russia is unlikely to be capable of anything similar.

Therefore, the situation in the demographic sphere is indeed serious and requires the implementation of a comprehensive set of measures. Economic growth should become an important safeguard against depopulation.

In addition to purely demographic indicators, social institutions are of key importance,⁶⁹¹ with their fundamental element being the so-called **“social capital”**. By definition, it is the set of social ties, norms, trust, and interactions among people that contribute to effective societal cooperation.

The components of this phenomenon are:

- 1) the possibility of self-realization, which should be included among basic human rights – its components are educational, cultural, social, and economic opportunities;
- 2) social trust – the presence of opportunities for cooperation and reciprocity, and a willingness to help others while expecting others to help you.

According to the *World Values Survey*, Ukrainians trust their fellow citizens much less than Danes or Swedes do.⁶⁹² Therefore, distrust hinders development, although the latest available data refers to the year 2022.⁶⁹³ Since then, much has changed – for example, we witnessed a powerful volunteer movement,⁶⁹⁴ which undoubtedly became another step toward the formation of civil society. These changes began in 1991, when Ukrainians voted for independence in the referendum, during the “Maidans” of 2004 and 2013–2014, when people fought for their right to choose, and when the Ukrainian people began resisting Russian aggression – we continue to change with each passing year.

Historically, in Ukrainian society – as in any other nation – various models of behaviour can be found. The “Cossack” page of history instilled in Ukrainians a love of freedom; the “urban” and “noble” traditions fostered respect for laws; while the “peasant” tradition, with its idea of “khutorianstvo” (living on individual farmsteads), cultivated respect for private property.

The “khutir” (farmstead) is not only a form of farming but also a philosophy. The worst expression of this philosophy is often cited as the saying “my house is on the

⁶⁹¹ Radio Svoboda. (2024, October 14). *Nobelivsku premiiu z ekonomiky prysudyly za doslidzhennia vidmin-nosti u protsvitanni krain* [The Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded for research on differences in countries' prosperity]. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-nobelivska-premiya-ekonomika/33157920.html> [in Ukrainian]; The Nobel Prize. (2024). *The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2024 – Press release*. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2024/press-release/>

⁶⁹² World Values Survey. (n.d.). *Cultural map – WVS wave 7 (2017–2022)*. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>

⁶⁹³ Research results are published every four years; the next report is scheduled for release in 2026.

⁶⁹⁴ Pershyi miskyi (Kryvyi Rih). (2022, December 31). *Okolo 10% ukraintsev ni razu za vremia polnomasshtabnoho vtorzheniia ne donatily na pomoshch VSU, – sotsopros* [About 10% of Ukrainians have never donated to help the Armed Forces during the full-scale invasion – poll]. <https://one.kr.ua/ru/news/44999> [in Russian].

edge” (meaning “it’s none of my business”), which in fact has a foundation in “my house”. Today, it is interpreted as an attempt to avoid responsibility and as a sign of lacking social trust.⁶⁹⁵ But in reality, it reflects a reliance on private property, its inviolability, the value of family, and the results of one’s labour – the very things that make us European and give us a chance for development.⁶⁹⁶ Therefore, democracy is natural to us because it is rooted in our mentality, and the success of each Ukrainian is the success of all Ukraine – this is what makes us true citizens.

So, the priority must be the success of the Individual. Your prosperity is the prosperity of your Community and your Country. Your prosperity is your Independence. And it can be achieved through honest work. The task of the state is to help – or at least not hinder – the citizen. In turn, a citizen has duties that make them a true citizen – such as paying taxes, fulfilling military obligations, and so on. I don’t recall exactly where, but I once came across this statement: “Taxes are a subscription fee for using the state.”⁶⁹⁷ Therefore, taxes must be overseen by society, and their distribution must be transparent.

Let us also recall that private property is the foundation of the modern European world; it is precisely what gave rise to democracy, which protects the property owner – the citizen. Few people reflect on the fact that private property is one of the foundations of familial – and therefore historical – memory. In our society, few people remember their ancestors beyond the fourth generation (great-grandfather), because for many years we lacked the basis – ancestral property.

As of today, various scenarios for building the political future coexist within Ukrainian society. The key scenario around which there is national consensus is accession to the European Union. Ultimately, the idea of political “multi-vectorism” was flawed from the start. Joining the EU means partially delegating state sovereignty in favour of the EU’s supranational institutions – this is part of the concept of “pooled sovereignty”. This includes, among other things: aligning laws with European legislation, delegating certain powers, recognizing the primacy of European Court rulings over national law, and – in the case of joining the Eurozone – losing control over monetary policy, among other changes. However, accession to the EU does not mean a complete loss of sovereignty; states retain key elements of national identity and self-governance. As previously mentioned, EU accession is currently a matter of survival for Ukraine.

⁶⁹⁵ I spoke about this in more detail at the 13th “Rozumovsky Meetings” conference in November 202. See: Kondratiev, I. V. (2024, November 28). *Vystup na konferentsii XIII “Rozumovski zustrichi”* [Speech at the XIII “Rozumovsky Meetings” conference] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v30RupgReM0> [in Ukrainian].

⁶⁹⁶ The phrase is actually very close to the English expression “My house is my castle”, which is attributed to the 17th-century English jurist Edward Coke (1552–1634). See: Liberty Fund. (n.d.). *Sir Edward Coke declares that your house is your “Castle and Fortress”* (1604). <https://oll.libertyfund.org/quotes/sir-edward-coke-declares-that-your-house-is-your-castle-and-fortress-1604>

⁶⁹⁷ A similar quote “Taxes are what we pay for civilized society” is attributed to American judge Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

Russian aggression and the severing of ties with the Russian Federation and Belarus have intensified demands for building a national state – including the protection of the Ukrainian language, culture, and the study of history. Additionally, it has become evident that nation-states are more resilient than empires, and thus, the national state-building component should not be abandoned. As a historian, I will also say a few words about national myths.⁶⁹⁸ Among the key myths for Ukraine are the ideas of Kyivan Rus and the Cossack era. The first refers to antiquity, the second – to freedom. It has already been mentioned that Russia's monopolistic claims to the legacy of Kyivan Rus became almost a key cause of the war. The restoration of an empire requires historical antiquity, continuity, and a Christian component. Back in 1833, in imperial Russia, the so-called “theory of official nationality” was formulated, based on three pillars: “Orthodoxy – Autocracy – Nationality”. The fact that Christianity was adopted in Kyiv, not Moscow, and the existence of a Ukrainian nation distinct from the Russian one, do not fit into this theory. Nor does Ukraine's chosen democratic path of development.

Incidentally, the majority of both ethnic Russians and Russified Ukrainians did not accept the idea of the “Russian world” (which Putin was counting on) and instead stood in defence of Ukraine. Although the “language issue”, in its broadest context, will remain relevant for a long time – both in domestic political processes and in international relations (such as with Hungary). It is worth recalling that bilingualism or even trilingualism is a normal phenomenon in modern Europe.⁶⁹⁹ For many Ukrainian citizens, their native language is Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar, Romanian, or another language.

And finally, let us recall the fact that nationalism made nations into states, but it was liberalism that made them prosperous and great in freedom, and I know of no exceptions to this thesis. The ideal model of the state presupposes that it is the result of a social contract, in which citizens delegate part of their powers to state institutions, granting them the right to use force for the sake of establishing social peace and justice. This is the essence of the fundamental contradiction between the state and society – the eternal search for a compromise between the interests of the state as a public institution and the interests of individuals united in civil society. The search for balance is the core of relationships on all levels – between the individual and the state, the state and the nation, the nation and the individual, the individual and society, the national and the supranational. Democracy is a process.

What exactly needs to be done in Ukraine. Let us try to outline the urgent steps for reform and postwar recovery of the country. Of course, these steps are subjective, and of course incomplete; at times it is difficult to separate the economy from

⁶⁹⁸ A national myth is a symbolic representation of the past that shapes a nation's collective identity. It explains its origins, values, heroes, and mission. Such representations combine historical facts with legends and fabrications.

⁶⁹⁹ The protection of minority languages in the EU is an important aspect of human rights policy, cultural diversity, and non-discrimination.

the political sphere, civil society from national security, and so on. In addition, EU accession requires Ukraine to comply with the so-called Copenhagen criteria, thereby formalizing many aspects.

Economy and Labor Productivity. The economic situation in Ukraine was not optimistic even before 2022, and after the full-scale invasion, the country's GDP dropped by 28.8 % within a year. The pace of recovery has been moderate – in 2023, growth reached 5.5 %, in 2024 – 2.9 %, and it is expected to remain modest in 2025 as well.⁷⁰⁰ However, the main task of the Ukrainian economy – to survive and stabilize – has been more or less achieved. More significant progress can only be expected in the event of peace.

Well-known global examples – such as 10–20 % annual GDP growth, as in the case of South Korea – became possible through large-scale economic modernization. The existence of a functioning market economy is also a prerequisite for joining the EU.

One of the key problems of the Ukrainian economy is low labour productivity. Ukrainian workers, working no less – and often more – than their EU counterparts, earn significantly less for their labour. This is directly related to the nature of the products being manufactured, which have much lower added value. For example, Ukraine is one of the world's leading countries in terms of iron ore reserves and exports. As of summer 2025, the current export price of iron ore is \$80–100 per ton, scrap metal – \$110–140 per ton, and structural steel channel – \$1100–1800 per ton. For comparison, a new Volkswagen Passat B8 (model year 2023) weighs around 1.5 tons and costs between \$32,000 and \$42,000 in Ukraine – depending on configuration, engine type, transmission, and additional options. Of course, a car also contains plastic, rubber, and glass, but most of its weight still comes from metal.

The same applies to agricultural products: one can export wheat grain (depending on the grade – \$240–280 per ton), or one can export alcohol (\$9,200), or even luxury vodka. One can sell an apple, or one can sell purée or jam made from it – providing jobs to producers of jars, labels, and lids, engaging designers, logisticians, merchandisers, and others. That is why agrarian countries that specialize solely in agriculture will never be wealthy, and those dependent on raw materials – for example, oil – will always be subject to fluctuations in demand. Of course, in addition to goods with high added value, raw materials will always be produced as well, but the emphasis should be placed on the production of high value-added products.

In the GDP structure of developed countries, a significant share is formed by the service sector – education, healthcare, culture, tourism, transportation, and so on. Altogether, this accounts for no less than 60–70 %. Meanwhile, industry accounts for 25–30 %, and agriculture – only 2–5 %. A modern economy is impossible without a functioning financial sector, the sale of intellectual property, the entertainment

⁷⁰⁰Bohdan, T. (2025, June 30). *Dvyhun ekonomiky hlohne. Potriben kapitalnyi remont* [The engine of the economy stalls. A major overhaul is needed]. ZN.UA. <https://zn.ua/ukr/macroeconomics/dvyhun-ekonomiki-hlohne-potriben-kapitalnij-remont.html> [in Ukrainian].

industry, the digital economy, developed infrastructure and logistics, high-tech industries, and so on. In today's world, emotions sell better than weapons. In 2022, The Walt Disney Company earned \$82.7 billion in total revenue.⁷⁰¹ For comparison, in the same year, Russia earned around \$8 billion from arms exports.⁷⁰²

Thus, post-war Ukraine will need to move away from the model of a raw-material-exporting country with low value-added production. The future lies in an export-oriented economy focused on high-tech sectors and services. The foundation for this must be the recognition that adherence to the rule of law increases capitalization. In turn, the state's key function should be the protection of investors, the rule of law, and ensuring justice.

The liberal economic model suggests that the state should not interfere in the economy, but such economies probably do not exist today. However, a comprehensive audit of the public administration system across all sectors, including the economy, is undoubtedly necessary for Ukraine. The goal is to minimize interference. The ideal role of the state is to facilitate development. For example, to encourage the emergence of high-tech industries, the state could exempt equipment imports from taxes. Support may also be needed for small agricultural producers, who could be granted temporary tax incentives or access to affordable loans. As domestic experience shows – the less the state tries to regulate something, the better it is for business.

Another urgent need is the demonopolization of the economy: existing monopolies must be brought under public oversight through the creation of effective anti-monopoly legislation. Auditing state-owned companies and assets should facilitate privatization, and the state must abandon subsidizing state enterprises as a non-market method of competition. Importantly, post-war recovery and modernization plans must not include the restoration of outdated technologies and inefficient enterprises.

In Ukraine, the number of taxes must be reduced and their administration simplified. The level of simplification should be as high as possible,⁷⁰³ so that an ordinary entrepreneur can handle accounting without the help of specialists. The tax service (as well as customs) needs to continue its transformation into a service-oriented agency. All forms of tax benefits and exemptions must be justified and temporary. Taxes should encourage innovation and production modernization, primarily by promoting foreign investment in industry, construction, infrastructure, and high-tech sectors. Capital amnesty may also be introduced, provided the capital is invested in the real sector of the economy. Another related issue is the parallel existence of separate (and more complicated) accounting systems for public institutions and sim-

⁷⁰¹ Disney revenue 2010–2025 | DIS. (n.d.). *Macrotrends*. <https://www.macrotrends.net/stocks/charts/DIS/disney/revenue>

⁷⁰² Kropman, V., & Saakov, V. (2024, March 11). *SIPRI: Import zbroi v Yevropu zrostaie, eksport z Rosii padaie* [SIPRI: Arms imports to Europe are rising, exports from Russia are falling]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/uk/sipri-import-zbroi-v-evropu-zrostaie-eksport-z-rosii-padaie/a-68476207> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁰³ Kondratiev, I. (2015, November 27). *Everest dla sebe* [Everest for oneself]. ZN.UA. https://zn.ua/ukr/finances/everest-dlya-sebe_.html [in Ukrainian].

plified ones for private businesses, despite the formal unity of the system. Accounting should become “unified”, simple, clear, and as automated as possible.

The state’s capabilities should also be used to promote an export-oriented economic model – through incentives and coordination. Diplomacy should serve the economy by promoting Ukrainian goods and services, including in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Ukraine needs an audit of its financial system, including the banking sector, and most state-owned banks should be privatized. One of the largest public expenditures is the servicing of Ukraine’s external debt, which requires restructuring. As of the first half of 2025, Ukraine’s total external debt (sovereign and state-guaranteed) amounted to \$180.97 billion.⁷⁰⁴ It is worth noting that Ukraine has been resisting Russian aggression for more than three years. For comparison, financial aid to Greece from 2010 to 2015 totalled €326 billion, of which more than €240 billion was provided by EU countries.⁷⁰⁵ As of the end of 2024, Greece’s external debt amounted to €562.87 billion.⁷⁰⁶

As already mentioned, developing the economy requires understanding the availability of labour. A population census will make it possible to determine the number of working-age people, children, and pensioners. In addition to using indirect methods, it makes sense to involve local communities in conducting the census.

The emergence and integration of Artificial Intelligence in the coming years will impact the existence of many professions – something that must be taken into account in economic planning. For example, Ukraine is already experiencing a shortage of mathematics and physics teachers. Developing specialized AI systems alongside the creation of dedicated classrooms and the presence of a human assistant could help solve this issue.

Many new jobs will be created in the defence-industrial complex, which is expected to become one of the drivers of the economy. There has long been discussion about the need for a real program to incentivize private businesses to collect and process secondary raw materials, among other initiatives.

It is evident that the retirement age in Ukraine will increase, which will also change the labour market. Pension reform should begin with an audit of the functionality of the Pension Fund and the entire social insurance system.

⁷⁰⁴Finance.ua. (2025, June 26). *Derzhavnyi borh Ukrainy zris na miliard dolariv* [Ukraine’s public debt increased by a billion dollars]. <https://news.finance.ua/ua/derzhavnyy-borh-ukrainy-zris-na-mil-yard-dolariv> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁰⁵Ukrinform. (2018, August 23). *U Hretsii teper tochno ye vse, krim odnogo – ekonomichnoi kryzy* [In Greece, there is now everything except one thing – the economic crisis]. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/2523293-u-grecii-teper-tochno-e-vse-krim-odnogo-ekonomichnoi-krizi.html> [in Ukrainian]; Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Borhova kryza v Hretsii* [Debt crisis in Greece]. *Wikipedia*. https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Боргова_криза_в_Греції [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁰⁶Eulerpool. (n.d.). *Hretsia: Zovnishnii borh do valovoho vnutrishnoho produktu (VVP)* [Greece: External debt to gross domestic product (GDP)]. <https://eulerpool.com/uk/macro/греція/зовнішній-борг-до-ввп> [in Ukrainian].

The service sector will remain traditionally important for Ukraine's economy, with key areas being tourism, healthcare, and education (for example, military academies will train officers for countries in Asia and Africa).

Ukraine will remain an industrial country. A development priority must be energy efficiency – alternative energy with real market competition and the elimination of subsidies for monopolists. Paradoxically, Russia's destruction of Ukrainian power plants creates an opportunity to accelerate the transition to decarbonized, more resilient, and simpler forms of energy generation.⁷⁰⁷ Supporting energy independence will also require the further development of nuclear power. After the war, there is a high probability that Ukraine will regain its status as a transit country.⁷⁰⁸

The country will also remain one of the key producers of agricultural products. The adoption of new agrotechnologies and the trend toward climate warming will make it possible to increase yields and cultivate new crops. The state must preserve the land market along with effective antitrust legislation and promote the cooperation of small landowners. A state program will also be created to facilitate the return of agricultural land to use (over 3 million hectares of land are currently mined).⁷⁰⁹

The housing and utilities sector (communal services) remains a traditionally problematic area in Ukraine. The government's main task is to create competition in this sector through effective antimonopoly legislation and incentives for energy conservation. An urgent step is to prohibit billing for heat based on square meters, transitioning instead to billing based on actual gigacalories consumed.

In the **social sphere**, an audit of state services, including social guarantees and benefits, must be conducted. Mandatory health insurance should be introduced, ensuring a guaranteed package of medical services. It is also important to justify the national vaccination program.

Funding for science and education must be protected as essential budget items. In this area, an audit of state responsibilities should also be conducted. For instance, edu-

⁷⁰⁷ ZN.UA. (2024, July 21). *Ruinuvannia Rosiieiu elektrostantsii maie i pozytyvnyi rezultat dlia ukrainsiv – The Economist* [The destruction of power plants by Russia also has a positive result for Ukrainians – The Economist]. <https://zn.ua/ukr/energetics/ruinuvannja-rosijeju-elektrostantsij-maje-i-pozitivnij-rezultat-dlja-ukrajintsiv-the-economist.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁰⁸ The transit of Russian gas through Ukraine continued until the end of the five-year contract with Gazprom (2020–2025) and ceased on January 1, 2025. Oil transit through Ukraine continues under a ten-year agreement signed in 2019 between Ukrtransnafta and Russia's Transneft. The contract is valid until the end of 2029. The main recipients of this oil are Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Germany also receives Kazakh oil through this system (without purchasing Russian oil). See: Bohuta, N. (2025, January 13). *Ukraina prodovzhuie postachaty rosiisku naftu do YeS: chomu ta koly zupyniat tranzyt* [Ukraine continues to supply Russian oil to the EU: why and when the transit will be stopped]. *Focus.ua*. <https://focus.ua/uk/economics/688175-chomu-ukrajina-ne-zupinila-tranzit-rosiyskoji-nafti-cherez-ukrajinu-do-yevropi-novini-ukrajini> [in Ukrainian]; Dobrovolska, K. (2025, February 7). *Popry znyzhennia tranzytu rosiiskoi nafty: yaka kraina YeS lidyruie za obsiahmy postavok* [Despite the decrease in Russian oil transit: which EU country leads in supply volumes]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/economy/tranzit-rosiyskoyi-nafti-cherez-ukrajinu-zmenshivsyia-kudi-postachayetsya_n2747708 [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁰⁹ AgroNews. (n.d.). *V Ukraini ponad 40% zemel s/h pryznachennia vylucheno z obrobitku* [In Ukraine, more than 40% of agricultural land has been withdrawn from cultivation]. <https://agronews.ua/news/v-ukrayini-ponad-40-zemel-s-g-pryznachennia-vylucheno-z-obrobitku/> [in Ukrainian].

cational institutions should receive funding based on the number of students they educate – similar to the healthcare model where “money follows the patient”. The state should then introduce a system for ensuring the quality of education, with the ultimate goal of producing specialists needed by society and the economy. Knowledge must become the only criterion for educational advancement, and most admission privileges should be abolished. Priority areas in education should include training IT specialists, engineers, and scientists – but the humanitarian component, including teacher training, must not be neglected. Universities should become centres not only of education but also of science, which can be developed through state grants. Artificial Intelligence will offer promising opportunities for scientific research. The state should also support the development of biotechnology and genetic engineering. The National Academy of Sciences must be reformed, and sectoral academies should be dissolved.

Ukraine will pursue an active and consistent cultural policy aimed at supporting both the Ukrainian language and culture, as well as the languages of national minorities. When implementing this policy, it is important to recognize that sociocultural changes take many years. The state must renounce support for specific religions or denominations; all religious institutions should be registered as private entrepreneurs and pay taxes.

A key element of development should be the transformation of cultural programs into a system of long-term state grants, on the basis of which creative collectives will operate. Libraries should become social, cultural, and educational hubs while also preserving knowledge bases. A national program to support museums, architectural preservation, and archaeological heritage must be introduced – first and foremost, a ban on illegal excavations, which destroy the nation’s history. It would be appropriate to abandon honorary titles such as “Honored” or “People’s” artist as outdated remnants of a past era. The state should also cease direct budgetary funding of public organizations.

The **political system** will also undergo improvement. The state must become a service provider for citizens (including through further digitalization), and its operation must guarantee democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights. EU legislation will be integrated into national law.

A comprehensive audit and lustration of the entire administrative system will be carried out. Unnecessary powers will be eliminated. A review and harmonization of legislation is long overdue – the law must become a fair, logical, simple, and understandable tool for social development.

Among the urgent changes is the reform of the Constitution, which must clearly define the balance of powers among the branches of government. Constitutional amendments should complete the territorial reform. Regional state administrations will become executive committees, and positions of prefects – presidential representatives with the right to veto potentially illegal decisions of local authorities – will be introduced at the local level. The powers of central and local authorities will be clearly delineated.

The number of Members of Parliament in the Verkhovna Rada will be reduced. In the case of voting on important laws, each MP must stand up and announce their decision aloud. The majoritarian system should be abolished in parliamentary elections in favour of party lists, while in local elections, it would be logical to abandon party lists in favour of a majoritarian system. One of the most urgently needed steps is a Law on the Recall of Deputies at All Levels, with an actually functioning mechanism for their removal.

The fight against corruption must be pursued at all levels. Full transparency of government budgets (unless it poses a risk to national security). Simplification of documentation procedures, publication of all decisions on the websites of governmental bodies, and the possibility of public oversight. Vote-buying should be punished by life imprisonment.

Reform of the Prosecutor's Office and a genuine judicial reform are essential. A fully functioning jury system must be established, in which twelve tax-paying citizens decide a case according to their conscience (as law and justice do not always align). A jury trial would at least depoliticize certain cases. A revision of the punishment system for crimes is also necessary: more leniency for minor offenses, and stricter penalties for serious ones. A performance evaluation system for judges should be introduced.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) are a strong, combat-ready, and high-tech military. The army should be based on a contract system. A national AFU reserve should be created following the Swiss model, with universal military training.

A consistent policy must be pursued to reintegrate the annexed Crimea and the occupied territories in the informational, economic, and political spheres.

In foreign policy, Ukraine becomes one of the guarantors of European security. Ukraine is a participant in several strategic alliances, whose existence is linked to its role as a buffer between the European world and totalitarian Russia. As we can see, Ukraine remains the eastern frontier of Europe.

To conclude this section, let me note that the main criteria for reforms in Ukraine must be the building of a legal democratic state and a market economy. I hope Ukraine will pass this test.

*If you doze off for 20 minutes while watching the news today,
you might sleep through two paragraphs of a future history textbook.*
Modern folklore

QUO VADIS,⁷¹⁰ EUROPE?

What place does modern Europe hold in the world? The area of the European continent is about 10.2 million square kilometres, making it the sixth largest – only Australia is smaller.⁷¹¹ The continent's population is approximately 745 million people (including the European parts of Russia and Turkey). For context, the global population is currently around 8 billion. Europe consists of 48 independent states, but there are also dependent territories and so-called partially recognized states (such as Kosovo and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), along with Russian-backed pseudo-states like Abkhazia and Transnistria.

The European economy accounts for roughly 22–25 % of global GDP in nominal terms, depending on whether one considers only the European Union or the entire continent. The EU's GDP (27 countries) stands at around \$19 trillion USD. In comparison, the nominal GDP of the United States is about \$29 trillion (28 % of global GDP), and China's is \$19 trillion (18 %).

The strongest military alliance on the planet is NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), which includes 31 countries – among them the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, and Turkey. NATO has the largest combined military budget in the world—over \$1 trillion annually. It includes three nuclear powers: the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Even in a hypothetical scenario where the United States withdraws from NATO, the alliance would still retain a combined force of no fewer than 1.5 million active military personnel.

Twenty-seven countries are members of the European Union, which was established to ensure stability, peace, and prosperity. The EU is a unique union of political and economic cooperation. Among other things, its members are united by shared values – support for democracy, human rights, the rule of law, as well as the promotion of freedom, equality, and social justice. Perhaps that is why Europe remains the most democratic region in the world.

In light of the above, questions arise: Does Europe hold a proper place in global politics and the international security system? Is there potential for its growth within the global economy? Where is Europe heading next – and what threats lie ahead? After all, in the 21st century, the European community has repeatedly faced crises

⁷¹⁰“Quo vadis?” – a Latin expression meaning “Where are you going?”

⁷¹¹The data here and below are taken from Wikipedia.

and managed to endure them through collective action. Let us recall the 2008 global financial crisis, the 2015 migration crisis, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

What other challenges must Europe prepare for? There are many – from demographic shifts to climate change. Will there be enough strength and resources? And is everything truly well within the current social, economic, and political model?

For a European reader, it may be interesting to compare life in Europe and Ukraine. Here is the perspective of Ukrainian refugees who were forced to relocate to Europe in 2022.⁷¹² According to them, some aspects of life in Europe are better, while others are not.

Based on a survey by the Ukrainian research company Gradus Research, the following are better in Ukraine:

- lifestyle and mentality, people and relationships;
- opportunities for personal development;
- easier access to medical services – in Europe, waiting times to see a doctor can be days or weeks, while Ukrainian pharmacies operate 24/7;
- significantly cheaper dentistry;
- lower utility tariffs;
- more convenient store hours – for example, in Poland only some small shops may open on Sundays and only until midday, while in Ukraine most necessary goods can be purchased on Sundays;
- price-quality ratio in the beauty sector;
- car repairs and many other services are considered better in Ukraine than in many EU countries;
- delivery services in the EU often lag behind the speed of Ukrainian companies;
- more affordable and higher-quality mobile communication (compared to France);
- Ukraine has better digitalization of commercial, government,⁷¹³ and financial services (Ukrainians praise digitalization only in Estonia to a similar extent). For example, many Ukrainian refugees in Germany complain about bureaucracy in German banks – to get a bank statement, one must visit a bank branch, whereas in Ukraine it can be obtained anytime through a mobile app. Banking services are bureaucratic in Portugal as well, and in some stores, it is not possible to pay with Visa or MasterCard because only local cards are accepted. The situation is similar with

⁷¹²Trebunskykh, I., & Zhovtun, V. (2022, June 2). *Obmin dosvidom: shcho v Ukrayini krasche nizh v YES, a chomu varto povchytyts* [Experience exchange: what is better in Ukraine than in the EU and what is worth learning]. Grechka. <https://gre4ka.info/statti/69610-obmin-dosvidom-shcho-v-ukraini-krashche-nizh-v-yes-a-chomu-varto-povchytyts/> [in Ukrainian]; Maydanyuk, V. (2023, November 13). *Shcho v Ukrayini krasche, anizh zakordonom?* [What is better in Ukraine than abroad?]. Infolight. <https://infolight.in.ua/2023/11/13/shcho-v-ukraini-krashche-anizh-zakordonom/> [in Ukrainian].

⁷¹³Ukraine became the first country in the world to legally equate the electronic passport in the “Diia” app with a physical one.

government services: in Ukraine, many certificates from state registries can be obtained online without queues or visiting government offices.

What is better in Europe:

- urban infrastructure;
- accommodations for people with disabilities;
- quality of tap water;
- adherence to law and order;
- wage levels;
- waste sorting.

Of course, comparing price levels is not entirely accurate, since wages in Ukraine are much lower, and with their increase, the cost of services, utilities, and so on would also rise. References to lifestyle and mentality can be attributed to nostalgia for Ukraine and the difficulty of adapting quickly to a new social environment. However, over time, Ukrainians have only reinforced some of their impressions. In 2023, a new survey was conducted among Ukrainian refugees.⁷¹⁴ Government online services in Ukraine were rated significantly better (71 %) than in Europe (16 %). Likewise, financial and banking services in Ukraine scored much higher (70 % vs. 14% in Europe). Availability of medical services was also considered better in Ukraine (71 % vs. 21 %), as was their quality (60 % vs. 25 %). Opinions on education were divided. Preschool and school education were rated slightly better in Ukraine (42 %) than in Europe (35 %), while higher education was considered better in Europe (43 %) than in Ukraine (32 %). Public transportation is better in Europe (77 %) than in Ukraine (14 %), as are roads (85 % vs. 5 %). Housing was considered more affordable in Ukraine (57 %) than in Europe (22 %). According to Ukrainians, the beauty industry is better in Ukraine (85 %) than in Europe (5 %), are cafés and restaurants (60 % vs. 16 %), postal and delivery services (54 % vs. 25 %). Online shopping also scored better in Ukraine (51 % vs. 22 % in Europe). As for retail chains and stores, opinions were split: 42 % considered them better in Ukraine, 36 % in Europe.⁷¹⁵

Remembering the saying “Before you say something, put your own house in order”, we must still acknowledge that there is always room for improvement. We may also point out a number of major problems that could pose a threat to the development of European civilization.

One of the key challenges facing modern Europe is **demographic change**. Europe is experiencing significant aging; the so-called median age of the EU population in 2024 was 44.7 years.⁷¹⁶ The birth rate in the EU is very low – in 2023, the

⁷¹⁴Researchers from the Rating Sociological Group note that regional differences in how Ukrainians experience life in Europe are not linear. Housing availability, financial and banking services, and higher education show almost no regional variation.

⁷¹⁵BusinessUA. (2023, September 9). *Plyusy ta minusy zhyttya v Yevropi* [Pluses and minuses of life in Europe]. <https://businessua.com/finance/90053plyusi-ta-minusi-zhittya-v-evropi.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁷¹⁶Eurostat. (n.d.). *Population structure and ageing*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing#:~:text=The%20median%20age%20of%20the,each%20of%20these%20EU%20countries

total fertility rate (TFR) was only 1.38 children per woman.⁷¹⁷ Low birth rates and high life expectancy are leading to a labour shortage. Although the situation is not as critical as in Ukraine (a 1:1 ratio), in 2024 there were, on average, about three workers for every European pensioner.⁷¹⁸ Several EU countries officially use migration as a tool to address demographic issues.⁷¹⁹ These include Germany, Sweden, France, and the Netherlands. According to Eurostat, as of the end of 2022, around 8 % of the EU population were foreigners (3 % citizens of other EU countries, 5 % from third countries). Each year, a significant number of migrants arrive in the EU – for instance, around 2.3 million in 2021.⁷²⁰

The large number of migrants results in an uneven integration process into European society. The involvement of Turkish migrants in the development of the German economy can be considered successful, with certain sectors (construction, automobile manufacturing) having relied heavily on Turkish guest workers.⁷²¹ The attitude of EU citizens toward this issue is also mixed.⁷²² The appearance of mosques or the activity of Sharia courts – even within Muslim communities – raises concerns for many. Increases in crime are often associated with Muslims, although the majority of Muslims in Europe are law-abiding citizens.⁷²³ This has fuelled the popularity of far-right parties (such as Germany's Alternative for Germany or Britain's Reform UK), which promise to implement tougher immigration policies. Islamophobia is also on the rise, some voters are growing distrustful of traditional elites, and both Euroscepticism and radicalism are intensifying. The ideas of multiculturalism are not universally embraced either.

⁷¹⁷ Eurostat. (2023). *Fertility statistics*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Fertility_statistics#:~:text=3,in%20the%20EU%20in%202023

⁷¹⁸ Eurostat. (2024). *Population structure and ageing*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing#:~:text=match%20at%20L242%20dependency%20ratios,in%202024

⁷¹⁹ Shvets, S. L. (2023). Migratsiyni potoky v krayiny YES: vyklyky ta shlyakhy rehulyatsiyi [Migration flows to EU countries: challenges and regulation ways]. *Politykus: naukovyy zhurnal*, (3), 63–67. [in Ukrainian].

⁷²⁰ Eurostat. (2023). *Migration and asylum in Europe – 2023 edition*. [⁷²¹ Danisman, Y., & Kanevskyi, D. \(2011, October 31\). *Yak Nimechchyna stala krayinoyu migrantiv* \[How Germany became a country of migrants\]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/uk/як-німеччина-стала-країною-мігрантів/a-15500771> \[in Ukrainian\].](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/migration-2023#:~:text=%C2%A9%20fizkes%2FShutterstock;Herasymenko, P. (2024, February 8). Chomu v Yevropi zrostaye popularnist pravykh: pro sumny naslidky nekontrolovanoi migratsii [Why the popularity of the right-wing is growing in Europe: about the sad consequences of uncontrolled migration]. ZN.UA. https://zn.ua/ukr/WORLD/chomu-v-jevropi-zrostaje-populjarnist-pravikh-pro-sumni-naslidki-nekontrolovanoji-mihratsiji.html [in Ukrainian].</p>
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⁷²² The issue clearly exists, as it has been raised by leading European politicians, including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. See: OstWest.TV. (2025, June 26). *Merts i Meloni spivmicno ishchut puti, yak derzhaty bezhentsiv za predelamy Yevropy* [Mertz and Meloni jointly seek ways to keep refugees outside Europe]. <https://ostwest.tv/news/merc-i-meloni-sovmestno-ishhut-puti-kak-derzhat-bezhencev-za-predelami-evropy> [in Russian].

⁷²³ Council of Europe. (2007, January 22). *Muslims are discriminated against in Europe*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/muslims-are-discriminated-against-in-europe>

When discussing societal values, I would like to recall another story. A recent news report mentioned the death in the war of Michael Gloss, the son of a CIA deputy director. He studied environmental humanities and took part in social protests – advocating for women’s rights and fighting against climate change. He travelled the world by bicycle and volunteered. According to friends, he spoke about the decline of Western civilization and shared videos about the situation in Palestine. Over time, influenced by conspiratorial materials, he became interested in moving to Russia. After traveling around the country, he managed to sign a contract to fight in the war against Ukraine, where he was ultimately killed.⁷²⁴ The question is – what led a social activist, a representative of the climate movement, a socially engaged individual, to join the army of an aggressor state? Ignorance? The influence of propaganda?

Of course, Gloss is not a European but an American, yet he is undoubtedly a product of certain societal trends characteristic of modern Western civilization. A well-known example involves pro-Palestinian student protesters at Western universities who often have only a vague understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁷²⁵ And do anti-globalists realize that the disappearance of globalization would likely result in significant economic decline and bring about new problems rather than solve old ones?

Of course, one can always refer to youthful maximalism and the desire to belong to a shared cause, to be part of some “movement”.⁷²⁶ But is the so-called TikTok generation even capable of distinguishing good from evil? And will their concept of good and evil align with ours? Or is this merely a crisis of growing up – after all, many of the hippies of the ‘60s were wearing business suits by the ‘80s?

One more thing about values. One of the real political threats to modern Europe is considered to be both leftist radicalism and far-right ideology. It’s worth remembering that ideologies only gain traction when they are in demand and reflect certain societal fears or expectations.

Traditionally, nearly all streams of political thought were present in Europe, but gradually the “ideological” vector of development began to fade. Except for “leftist” ideas, which the West so eagerly cultivated in the late 19th and 20th centuries (with a kind of revival in the early 21st), most modern political parties have become

⁷²⁴Ostapchuk, R. (2025, April 25). *Khotiv pasport RF, shchob “vykonaty svoje pryznachennya”*. *Na viyni proty Ukrainy zahynuv syn zastupnytsi dyrektora CRU* [Wanted a Russian passport to “fulfill his mission”. The son of the deputy CIA director died in the war against Ukraine]. NV (New Voice). <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/countries/maykl-gloss-yak-sin-topposadovici-cru-opinivsyia-v-rosiyskiy-armiji-ta-zag-inuv-na-viyni-proti-ukrajini-50509231.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁷²⁵Hmyria, A. (n.d.). *V SSHA studenti-protestuvalnyky staly vypravdovuvaty HAMAS* [In the USA, protesting students began to justify Hamas]. The Page. <https://thepage.ua/ua/politics/studenti-v-ssha-pidtrimuyut-hamas> [in Ukrainian]; PBS Frontline. (n.d.). *Transcript. Crisis on Campus*. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/crisis-on-campus/transcript/>; Green, E. (2023, December 15) How a Student Group Is Politicizing a Generation on Palestine. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-education/how-a-generation-is-being-politicized-on-palestine>

⁷²⁶Danylyuk, T. (n.d.). *Shcho oznachaye dvizh* [What “dvizh” means]. Reporter. <https://reporter.zp.ua/sho-oznachaye-dvizh-g.html> [in Ukrainian]; Onukh, Ye. (2020, October 31). *Molodvizh* [Molodvizh]. Tyzhden. <https://tyzhden.ua/molodvizh/> [in Ukrainian].

de-ideologized. Their platforms promote everything “good” and oppose everything “bad”. Naturally, the distinction between right and left is quite relative, if only because a social group or individual may take a left-wing stance on one issue and a right-wing stance on another – something perfectly normal. Still, certain trends can indeed be identified. The following text is believed to have been written by Michael Cantrell. It is rather humorous in nature, but as the saying goes, “there’s a grain of truth in every joke”:

If you don't know whether you're right-wing or left-wing, here's a great test:

- *If a right-winger doesn't like guns, he simply doesn't buy one.*
- *If a left-winger doesn't like guns, he wants all guns banned.*
- *If a right-winger is a vegetarian, he doesn't eat meat.*
- *If a left-winger is a vegetarian, he wants to ban meat for everyone.*
- *If a right-winger is homosexual, he quietly lives his life.*
- *If a left-winger is homosexual, he demands legal recognition and respect.*
- *If a right-winger goes bankrupt, he thinks how to improve his situation.*
- *A left-winger wonders who will take care of him.*
- *If a right-winger doesn't like a talk show host, he switches the channel.*
- *A left-winger demands that anyone he doesn't like be fired.*
- *A non-believing right-winger just doesn't go to church.*
- *A non-believing left-winger demands a ban on any mention of God or religion.*
- *And finally, if a “right-winger” reads this text – he'll laugh, but a “left-winger”*

will be offended.

For as long as society exists, **social problems** will exist – from the state of education and healthcare services to issues of social inequality and poverty risks. Should Europe try to change something here?

Europe has an excellent educational sphere, envied by many other countries and regions – with long-standing traditions and academic centres that gave rise to numerous scientific schools. Boundless educational opportunities emerged with the Internet, and the advent of AI is simplifying the search and systematization of learning information. But let's imagine a situation – one we hope never happens in the real world – where all mathematicians, physicists, and chemists disappear from the planet. Or maybe not all, but only key figures. Would our civilization remain the same? Could the education system train new specialists? What would be the impact of the time gap between the disappearance of the “old” specialists and the emergence of the “new” ones? Therefore, knowledge and understanding have weight – both individual and collective.

Let's recall another fear voiced by science fiction writers – a powerful plasma ejection from the Sun causes strong magnetic storms on Earth. This could potentially set our civilization back by centuries, since much of our modern knowledge exists solely in digital form. Although the likelihood of such destruction is considered extremely low, it is still wise to preserve key knowledge in printed form (after all, that's why humanity invented libraries).

Beyond the physical loss of knowledge, the next problem could be potential educational degradation. And there may be several causes – from a decline in the quality of education itself to the spread of pseudo-education. For example, today the world is experiencing a real boom in astrology. According to forecasts by the consulting firm Allied Market Research, spending on astrological services will grow to \$22.8 billion by 2031, compared to \$12.8 billion in 2021.⁷²⁷ Interestingly, around 70 % of Americans, in one way or another, believe in astrology.⁷²⁸

The greatest threat to education is artificial intelligence, which should have been used as a supporting tool, but is in fact becoming its imitator. The situation where students submit AI-generated work for review, and another AI checks it, is no longer science fiction. In addition, current versions of AI (as of 2025) can make mistakes, invent facts, and confuse authoritative sources with rumours. Over time, once these “growing pains” are resolved, it will be nearly impossible to distinguish between texts written by humans and those generated by machines. The Authors Guild in the U.S. has already launched the Human Authored platform, where writers can confirm their works were created by a human. The platform allows authors to register their works in a digital database and receive a special label that can be used on covers.⁷²⁹ But the case where an AI successfully registers a work as its own is not far off.

On the other hand, hasn't the desire to cheat in exams existed ever since formal education and testing were introduced? Science and pseudoscience have always gone hand in hand, so – nothing new, except for new opportunities brought by technological progress.

Nevertheless, we observe a number of negative trends in both European and broader “Western” education. The cost of education is rising (but is its value increasing?), the income gap between people with and without education is gradually narrowing, and sometimes jobs that don't require significant educational effort bring higher earnings.⁷³⁰ In addition, the emergence of AI is radically changing the job market, and education may simply fail to keep up.

The situation in the education market will resemble that of the labour market. The introduction of AI in many sectors will change the demand for certain professionals. Online you can find phrases like: “We thought robots would sweep the streets, but they started writing poetry and painting pictures.” And it's hard to argue with that.

⁷²⁷ PR Newswire. (2023, January 25). *Astrology Market to Reach \$22.8 billion, Globally, by 2031 at 5.7% CAGR: Allied Market Research*. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/astrology-market-to-reach-22-8-billion-globally-by-2031-at-5-7-cagr-allied-market-research-301730436.html>

⁷²⁸ The Harris Poll. (2024, February). *Astrology Survey: The Role of Astrology in Society*. <https://theharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Astrology-Survey-February-2024.pdf>

⁷²⁹ Bukvy. (2025, January 31). *Hildiia avtoriv SSA sertyfikuvatyme knyzhky, stvoreni “liudskym intelektom”, a ne SHI* [The US Authors Guild will certify books created by “human intelligence,” not AI]. <https://bukvy.org/gildiia-avtoriv-ssa-sertyfikuvatyme-knyzhky-stvoreni-lyudskym-intelektom-a-ne-shi/> [in Ukrainian].

⁷³⁰ The situation in Ukraine is not representative, but typically, a university lecturer earns less than a security guard in a large supermarket.

Europe can boast one of the most developed social protection systems. It is believed that social inequality in the EU is relatively moderate compared to other regions, though it differs significantly between countries. The Gini index (a measure of income inequality) across the EU averages around 30 %, which is lower than in the U.S. (over 40 %).⁷³¹ Europe also has a well-developed healthcare and social security system. For perspective – total social spending in 2022 amounted to €4,319 billion or 26.9 % of the EU's GDP.⁷³²

The level of social assistance in Europe guarantees a minimum decent standard of living. The key idea behind social support is that work should be more beneficial than inactivity, and the benefits system should encourage people to re-enter the labor market. However, in some cases, social benefits may exceed wages in low-paying jobs, creating a “poverty trap” – people fear losing their benefits if they start working.⁷³³ After all, in addition to the benefits themselves, they receive housing (or rent compensation), health insurance, additional child support, transport and food subsidies, clothing, and language courses.

Let's also recall another function of social assistance. The social and economic adaptation of migrants can be long and not always successful, and problems also arise among “native” Europeans. When a person is left without means of subsistence, it leads to a deterioration in the crime situation. In such cases, assistance acts as a kind of social payment for “peace”. On the one hand, it covers a person's basic needs; on the other – it prevents them from becoming a criminal. After all, the cost of increasing police, court, and prosecution staff, penitentiary systems, crisis centres, etc., would be significantly higher.

As already noted, the **European economy** is one of the largest and most developed in the world. In 2025, among the top 100 largest companies (by market capitalization), 19 % are European. Moreover, unlike the U.S. and China, Europe has shown growth. Nevertheless, the leading position still belongs to U.S. companies, which account for more than 60 %.⁷³⁴ Among the top 500 companies (by market

⁷³¹ Eurostat. (n.d.). *Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income – EU-SILC survey*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_di12/default/table?lang=en; Eurostat. (n.d.). *Living conditions in Europe – income distribution and income inequality*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_income_distribution_and_income_inequality

⁷³² Eurostat. (n.d.). *Social protection statistics – social benefits*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Social_protection_statistics_-_social_benefits

⁷³³ Relocate.to. (n.d.). *Robota chy sotsialna dopomoha: koly vyhidnishe ne pratsiuvaty?* [Work or social assistance: when it is more profitable not to work?]. <https://relocate.to/uk/p/praciuvati-ci-otrimuvati-dopomogu-teoriiia-i-realnist-2344> [in Ukrainian].

⁷³⁴ WorldBank.org.ua. (2023, March 23). Top 20 biznes-imperii [Top 20 business empires]. <https://www.worldbank.org.ua/3865-20-naybilshikh-kompaniy-svitu.html> [in Ukrainian]; Economy Pedia. (n.d.). Naikrashchi kompanii Yevropy [The best companies in Europe]. <https://uk.economy-pedia.com/11041180-top-companies-europe> [in Ukrainian]; PwC. (2025, May). *Global Top 100 companies by market capitalisation*. <https://www.pwc.co.uk/audit/assets/pdf/global-100/companies/global-top-100-companies-2025.pdf>

capitalization), Europe also holds about 20 % (99 companies), while the U.S. has 277 and Asia – 112.⁷³⁵

Of course, any rankings are somewhat conditional; they sometimes don't consider ownership structures or the specifics of corporate governance, since in a globalized world, supranational corporations play an increasing role, and capital is becoming more international. Europe is well represented in the industrial, energy, pharmaceutical, financial, and consumer sectors, but less so in the high-tech IT segment. Just think of Dutch Shell, Germany's Volkswagen and Siemens, France's BNP Paribas, Switzerland's Nestlé, and others. And yet, you won't find companies in these lists similar to the American Apple, Microsoft, or Amazon.

Europe is also well represented among the world's top agricultural exporters – including the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and Poland. However, progressing climate change over the next few decades may worsen the current positive forecasts for agricultural production, or force a radical change in the types of crops grown.

Certain segments of the European economy are key to the entire global market. A textbook example: Dutch company ASML Holding NV is the world's only producer of EUV photolithography machines – a crucial technology in microchip production. The company's main client is Taiwanese semiconductor manufacturers.

Europe's role in the global financial sector is well reflected by the location of SWIFT's headquarters near Brussels – the international system for financial messaging between banks and other institutions. SWIFT is used by more than 11,000 banks and financial organizations in over 200 countries.

The current economic policy of the White House administration will undoubtedly increase the euro's share in international transactions. As of 2024, the euro's share in SWIFT transactions was about 22 %, while the dollar's share was around 47 %, and the Chinese yuan's – about 5 %.⁷³⁶ The euro also remains the world's second most important reserve currency, and there is every reason to believe its share will grow.

In the context of globalization, it is generally difficult to speak of truly local segments of the global economy, and Europe is no exception. A favourite example used with students – the ordinary ballpoint pen, which is in high demand even in the “electronic” age. Purchased in a store, it is most likely of Chinese origin, produced on equipment based on Japanese, American, or European patents. The plastic it's made from likely comes from oil or gas, possibly from China, Russia, or Qatar. If the ink is black, its base is carbon black, which could be produced in Germany or India. If blue or coloured, it consists of distilled water, glycerine, dye (such as indigocarmine,

⁷³⁵Proud, L. (2024, October 16). *EU champions' hope will slam into hard M&A reality*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/eu-champions-hope-will-slam-into-hard-ma-reality-2024-10-16/>

⁷³⁶Around 57% of all euro transactions take place within the eurozone itself and are therefore not international, which significantly inflates the euro's share in the statistics. See: Atlantic Council. (2024, May 21). *The Euro's share of international transactions is likely smaller than it looks*. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/the-euros-share-of-international-transactions-is-likely-smaller-than-it-looks/>

methylen blue, or aniline dyes), and modifiers – alcohols, sugars, surfactants – from a dozen countries. In many models, the ball at the tip is made of brass – an alloy of copper and zinc. The copper may come from Chile or Myanmar, and the zinc from Peru or Australia. Office supplies are packaged in cardboard boxes made from Siberian pulp, and shipped in containers – a concept developed by American entrepreneur Malcolm McLean. A container ship built in South Korea, with Filipino sailors and a Ukrainian captain, will deliver the goods to Gdańsk, Poland. A Ukrainian customer will buy the product using the SWIFT system and track its delivery via the Internet. And this is just the tip of the iceberg of all the interconnections – without even analysing ownership structures and financial flows. For example, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink noted that Europe is the U.S.’s largest trading partner, with trade volume of \$1.6 trillion, supporting 16 million jobs across both continents.⁷³⁷

In the modern global economy, Europe feels fairly confident, though this does not free it from certain risks. Some of these are global in nature. For example, economic crises are considered a byproduct of economic development – a kind of mechanism for economic renewal (the so-called “Kondratiev cycles”⁷³⁸). Among other issues, we can mention the unevenness of economic development, which in its extreme forms raises questions of poverty and food security. There is also the issue of consumption and the limited availability of raw materials (the depletion of natural resources), as well as the resulting environmental challenges according to many criteria. Natural disasters, including climate change, should also be mentioned. Another issue is the detachment of the financial system from the real economy, where capital circulates within itself without being invested in production. Technological and social challenges, including demographic changes, also play a role. Some of these problems pose a direct threat to Europe; others have been caused by the advancement of European civilization. In some cases, Europe is not among the “victims” but rather among the countries capable of contributing to the resolution of global problems.

The Eurozone economy is also affected by geopolitical instability. Russian aggression has forced Europe to accelerate changes in its energy policy; the war has also influenced inflationary processes. The potential escalation of the conflict – such as further Russian aggression against the Baltic states – could threaten the region’s economic stability. Attempts by the current U.S. administration to introduce protective tariffs on European goods would also be detrimental to both Europe and the United States.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁷Texty.org.ua. (2025, May 16). *Bridzhyt Brink: Ya bula poslom SSA v Ukrayini. Ya pishla u vidstavku cherez zovnishnyu polityku Trampa* [Bridget Brink: I was the US ambassador to Ukraine. I resigned because of Trump’s foreign policy]. <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/115093/bridzhyt-brink-ya-bula-poslom-ssha-v-ukrayini-ya-pishla-u-vidstavku-cherez-zovnishnyu-polityku-trampa/> [in Ukrainian].

⁷³⁸Mykola Kondratiev (1892–1938) was a prominent economist best known for developing the theory of long waves of economic development, known as “Kondratiev cycles”.

⁷³⁹Yevropeiska pravda. (2025, July 13). *U Minfini Nimechchyny poperedyly: taryfy Trampa nebezpechni dlya SSA takozh* [The German Ministry of Finance warned: Trump’s tariffs are also dangerous for the USA]. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2025/07/13/7215827/> [in Ukrainian].

As already mentioned, in modern economic relations a person plays two key roles: as a labour force and, at the same time, as a consumer. Economic growth requires constant expansion of consumption (both domestic and international). However, this model is often considered irrational, as it is tied to the issue of limited natural resources.⁷⁴⁰

Let us also recall that the logic of the market forces production to move to countries with cheaper labour. The loss of jobs in countries with “expensive” labour leads to negative trends in those very countries. Unemployment, combined with high levels of established social expectations, causes people to be unwilling to work in low-paying sectors, which are gradually filled by migrants. At the same time, the standard of living in “poor” countries gradually rises (China is a good example), and the advantage of “cheap” labour is lost – production may then shift to other regions with lower wages or even return to its original location. In addition, the final cost of key goods or services often becomes irrelevant, as it is largely offset by the tax component.

It is worth noting that as of today, Europe is experiencing a labour shortage in a number of sectors, especially in transport and services. Incidentally, many of these jobs have been taken by forced migrants from Ukraine.⁷⁴¹

Another global trend in the world economy is automation and digitalization of labour. According to estimates, the potential risk of full automation affects 10–15 % of jobs in the EU, particularly in manufacturing industries with a high proportion of routine operations (such as machine operators, warehouse workers, and agricultural labourers).⁷⁴² At the same time, new professions will emerge. It is believed that AI will be able to replace a number of occupations – for example, salespeople, drivers, and accountants – and serve as assistants to lawyers and doctors. Some professions will be transformed, and entirely new ones may appear, tied to the emerging specifics of work. It is no coincidence that massive investments are currently being made in AI development.⁷⁴³

There are already some negative experiences. For example, when AI was entrusted with managing an office vending machine, it failed and quickly went bankrupt.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴⁰The UN strategy envisions a shift toward “limited consumption”. However, in that case, economic growth becomes either a local (sectoral) phenomenon or is nullified altogether.

⁷⁴¹Sokolenko, Ye. (2024, October 15). *Yevropa ne viddast ukraintsiv Ukrayini pislya viyny: ekspert podilivsya pesymistychm prohnzom* [Europe will not return Ukrainians to Ukraine after the war: expert shared pessimistic forecast]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/society/migraciya-z-ukrajini-ekspert-nazvav-golovni-riziki-12787671.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁴²Eurofound. (n.d.). *Employment impact of digitalisation*. <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/employment-impact-digitalisation>

⁷⁴³Kobzar, Yu. (2024, April 27). *Microsoft i Google zbilshat investytsii v SHI* [Microsoft and Google will increase investments in AI]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/techno/neiroseti/shtuchniy-intelekt-ta-neyromerezhi-viznano-vartimi-vitrat-microsoft-i-google-zbilshuyut-investiciji-12618888.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁴⁴Ponomarenko, D. (2025, June 30). *SHI doviryly keruvaty spravzhnim magazynom – za misyats vin zbankrutuvav i zbozhevoliv* [AI was entrusted to manage a real store – it went bankrupt and went crazy within a month]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/techno/neiroseti/doslidniki-dovirili-ai-keruvati-spravzhnim-magazynom-i-poshkoduvali-pro-ce-13053291.html> [in Ukrainian].

There are a number of other risks associated with active AI use – ranging from cybersecurity issues to the problem of information generation: the more AI generates information, the higher the chance that it is based on content created by previous AIs. Any mistake that enters this generative chain is likely to be amplified. However, it is quite possible that these are simply “growing pains”.

Let us recall that Europe already has some experience in implementing reforms in other areas. For example, in 2019, the EU officially launched its transition to green energy, aiming to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. This transition involves not only technical changes but also legislative reforms, financial incentives, and environmental taxes that promote the development of clean energy.⁷⁴⁵ An important element of energy independence has been the diversification of energy imports.⁷⁴⁶ The share of renewable sources in final energy consumption is expected to reach at least 42.5 % by 2030, in line with the EU’s climate goals (a 55 % reduction in emissions by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050).⁷⁴⁷ If necessary, a similar EU initiative could be envisioned in the field of artificial intelligence implementation.

Europe’s economic prospects should be viewed not only as part of the global economy but also through the lens of changes in Europeans’ lifestyles. On one hand, the aging of the population is transforming many aspects of life: medicine and recreation are developing more actively, and movie heroes are increasingly portrayed as older individuals. At the same time, the younger generation is becoming virtualized – communicating and entertaining themselves online, receiving virtual education, shopping in online stores, and so on. Many of them struggle to concentrate for extended periods, as they are used to processing information in short fragments, like TikTok clips. This will further change the economy, which will continue its virtualization. Modern smartphones may eventually be replaced by virtual reality glasses, leading to the emergence of a new realm of human existence.

Interestingly, in the Western world, fewer young people are striving to obtain driver’s licenses. The car is no longer seen as the ultimate dream of youth.⁷⁴⁸ Of course, this won’t apply to all young people – there will always be drivers, athletes, civic activists, and so on. These trends are influenced by differences in upbringing, financial circumstances, education, habits, and more – but the tendency is clear.

⁷⁴⁵ Kulzhenko, V. (2025, January 26). *Vykorystannya zelenoyi enerhetyky: yak u Yevropi vstanovyly richnyy rekord* [Use of green energy: how Europe set an annual record]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/trends24/zele-na-energetika-yevropi-skilki-yiyi-vikorislovuvali-2024-rotsi_n2738320 [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁴⁶ European Commission. (2024, September 11). *EU makes progress in ensuring secure and affordable energy for all*. https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/eu-makes-progress-ensuring-secure-and-affordable-energy-all-2024-09-11_en

⁷⁴⁷ European Commission. (n.d.). *EU action to address the energy crisis*. https://commission.europa.eu/topics/energy/eu-action-address-energy-crisis_en

⁷⁴⁸ Deseret News. (2024, October 7). *What’s keeping teenagers from getting their driver’s license?* <https://www.deseret.com/lifestyle/2024/10/07/teenager-drivers-license-historic-low-e-bikes/>; Amouyal, M. (2024, August 20). *Fewer Teens Want to Drive*. Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/lifestyle/teens-drivers-license-car-sales-595c521d>

Any discussion of the prospects of European civilization would be incomplete without addressing **security issues**, which, in today's globalized world, are also global in nature. As with the economy, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between purely internal and purely external threats to development – since terrorism, radicalization, cybersecurity (including the potential threat of AI), military threats, migration waves, energy security, environmental challenges, and others typically transcend borders. In the end, it would be impossible to list all possible influences – they are numerous, interconnected, and stem either from natural causes or predominantly human factors. Let us focus only on the most pressing of them.

Among the foremost concerns are the risks of natural disasters and man-made catastrophes – eternal companions of civilizational development. However, the most alarming sector is energy. In April 2025, a massive blackout occurred, resulting in widespread power outages in Spain, Portugal, and parts of France and Belgium. The energy sector may become a component of hybrid warfare, and disruptions in it can influence the EU's internal politics. The threat of terrorism also remains constant. Although, without weapons of mass destruction, terrorism mainly poses a danger as a tool of societal intimidation. Under modern conditions, it too has become an element of hybrid conflicts. Cyber threats will steadily increase. With the use of AI capabilities, the effectiveness of information warfare will grow – through traditional mass disinformation and by modelling “alternative realities” in the information space.

At present, the most serious problem facing Europe is Russian aggression. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has become the largest war in Europe since World War II. Under certain circumstances, the war may spill over into EU territory and even serve as a prelude to a much larger conflict.

In reality, Russia is already waging war against Europe – even in the absence of direct military confrontation – by employing the tactics of “hybrid warfare”, including propaganda,⁷⁴⁹ cyber operations, economic pressure, and hybrid sabotage. For the first time in decades, there is a real threat of the direct use of nuclear weapons (the last comparable instance being the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962). The situation is further exacerbated by a potential NATO crisis, related to the unpredictable policies of the United States.

At the same time, Russia's ambitions have proven to be disproportionate to its actual capabilities. According to South Korean intelligence, North Korea has delivered 12 million artillery shells to Russia⁷⁵⁰ and has also promised infantry soldiers

⁷⁴⁹For example, U.S. and German intelligence services recently uncovered that Russia had been financing an ultra-left Islamist online portal in Germany. See: Oshuiev, N. (2025, July 9). *Vlasty FRG: RF pidtrymuvala islamistskyi portal v Berlyni* [The German authorities: Russia supported an Islamist portal in Berlin]. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/ru/vlasti-frg-rf-podderzivala-propalestinskij-ultralevyj-portal-v-berline/a-73198762> [in Russian].

⁷⁵⁰Novyny-N. (2025, July 3). *KNDR peredala RF ponad 12 mln snariadiv – rozvidka* [DPRK transferred over 12 million shells to Russia – intelligence]. <https://novosti-n.org/ua/news/KNDR-peredala-RF-ponad-12-mln-snaryadiv-rozvidka-319110> [in Ukrainian].

and rear-area labourers. Iran has taught Russia how to manufacture Shahed drones, and Russian weaponry contains numerous Chinese components.⁷⁵¹ In turn, Russia is expanding its exchange with these countries in “sensitive” technologies, knowledge, and materials related to the space, nuclear, and missile sectors.

In the near term, Russia will remain the source of most of Europe’s problems, as Henry Kissinger’s⁷⁵² doctrine of “realpolitik” no longer functions effectively in the modern era. It has become clear that cooperation with authoritarian regimes only strengthens those regimes and ultimately weakens democracies. Fortunately, Europe has come to understand this and has chosen to support Ukraine.

Russia, in turn, interprets its war against Ukraine as a war for certain “special” Russian values, and much of modern Russian propaganda is built on anti-European and anti-American slogans. We can agree with Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who stated that Russia has made several strategic miscalculations. Quote: “I would say this war is the greatest tactical and strategic mistake in modern history because Putin intended to pacify Ukraine. But now it is on its way to becoming a member of the European Union – and ultimately of NATO. He intended to dissolve NATO. Instead, he doubled the NATO border via Finland. He aimed to destroy the transatlantic partnership. Well, now we are increasing our defence spending together to 5 % of GDP over the next 10 years. He intended to dismantle the EU. Well, I’ve never seen it this united. He failed on every front.”

The United States remains an important direction for Europe, although the behaviour of the new American administration has been inconsistent on many issues. Will a grand American “era of isolationism”, as predicted by Francis Fukuyama, actually begin?⁷⁵³ But will various fundamentalists and dictators allow America to do so? After all, they would then lose their external enemy. Secondly, will the current president continue this policy – and even more so, will his successor?

As of now, the transatlantic partnership remains the “key” to European security and economic stability. The U.S. is the backbone of NATO, the EU’s main ally, and one of the largest investors in Europe. Cooperation between the continents continues across all fields – from education and culture to science and defence. There is also hope for the development of a joint policy toward Russia. In the first half of 2025, the U.S. administration took unprecedented steps toward Russia that more closely resembled an attempt to impose defeat on Ukraine. However, Trump’s summer 2025

⁷⁵¹ Yulina, Yu. (2024, September 24). *V OP zayavyly, shcho 60% importnykh komponentiv u rosiyskiy zbroi ye kitayskymy* [The Office of the President stated that 60% of imported components in Russian weapons are Chinese]. Espresso. <https://espresso.tv/tekhnologiyi-v-op-zayavili-shcho-60-importnykh-komponentiv-u-rosiyskiy-zbroi-e-kitayskimi> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁵² He served as U.S. Secretary of State from 1973 to 1977 and was a national security advisor to American presidents from 1969 to 1975.

⁷⁵³ Fukuyama, F. (1993). *The End of History and the Last Man*. Harper Perennial; Perepelytsia, N. (2019). The development of the political views of Francis Fukuyama. *Political Studies Bulletin*, 82, 29–36. <https://doi.org/10.17721/2415-881x.2019.82.29-36>

promise to supply weapons to Ukraine, and the fifty-day “ultimatum” to Putin,⁷⁵⁴ offer grounds for renewed hope. As former U.S. Ambassador to Kyiv Bridget Brink stated: “The United States must lead the free world... We must show leadership in the face of aggression, not weakness or complicity. When America does not lead the free world, our own success as a nation is put at risk.”⁷⁵⁵

Europe’s largest economic partner in the East is China, which is also one of its main competitors. For example, in 2023, EU–China bilateral trade exceeded €730 billion, with a surplus of more than €290 billion in China’s favour.⁷⁵⁶ To forecast future trends in relations with China, two questions must be answered. First – will an economic crisis begin in China? Second – what will U.S. policy toward the PRC look like in the coming years?

A potential economic crisis in China⁷⁵⁷ could lead either to a change in leadership or to an attempt to annex Taiwan. “Reunification” with Taiwan could help consolidate Chinese society around Xi Jinping. Putin achieved a similar consensus after the annexation of Crimea. However, in the case of Taiwan, a confrontation with the U.S. cannot be ruled out. Incidentally, there is an opinion⁷⁵⁸ that Trump’s flirtation with Putin is precisely linked to the U.S. desire to pull Russia away from dependence on China.

A scenario in which an economic crisis in China triggers a “Chinese Spring” (or “Panda Spring”) is also quite realistic. Instances of social disobedience were recorded during the COVID-related lockdowns,⁷⁵⁹ so the population may rise up against the authorities. Additionally, much will depend on the level of unemployment among Chinese youth and the government’s willingness to opt not for compromise but for harsh suppression of potential unrest – which, in turn, would only inten-

⁷⁵⁴Chebortnikova, I. (2025, July 14). *Ultimatum dlya Rosiyi, 100-vidsotkovi myta i krytyka Putina: rezonansni zayavy Trampa* [Ultimatum for Russia, 100 percent tariffs, and criticism of Putin: Trump’s resonant statements]. 24 Kanal. https://24tv.ua/ultimatum-dlya-rosiyi-100-vidsotkovi-mita-kritika-putina-rezonansni_n2870208 [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁵⁵Texty.org.ua. (2025, May 16). *Bridzhyt Brink: Ya bula poslom SSA v Ukrayini. Ya pishla u vidstavku cherez zovnishnyu polityku Trampa* [Bridget Brink: I was the US ambassador to Ukraine. I resigned because of Trump’s foreign policy]. <https://texty.org.ua/fragments/115093/bridzhyt-brink-ya-bula-poslom-ssha-v-ukrayini-ya-pishla-u-vidstavku-cherez-zovnishnyu-polityku-trampa/> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁵⁶European Commission. (n.d.). *China. EU trade relations with China*. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china_en

⁷⁵⁷Ozturk, I. (2025, January 10). *Kytai skochuietsia u kryzu, yaka tryvatyme desiatylittia – Bloomberg* [China is sliding into a crisis that will last decades – Bloomberg]. Glavcom. <https://glavcom.ua/world/world-economy/kitaj-skochujetsja-u-krizu-jaka-trivatime-desjatlittja-bloomberg-1039642.html> [in Ukrainian].

⁷⁵⁸Turker, H. (2025, February 23). *Trump’s Russia Strategy: Breaking the Sino-Russian Alliance or Strengthening It?* Geopolitical Monitor. <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/trumps-russia-strategy-breaking-the-sino-russian-alliance-or-strengthening-it/>; Ignatius, D. (2025, April 3). *Trump bets on a ‘Reverse Kissinger’*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/04/03/trump-foreign-policy-reverse-kissinger-china-russia-gamble/>

⁷⁵⁹BBC. (2022, November 27). *“Si Tsinzpin, ydy het!” Yak vynykly shokuiuchi protesty po vsomu Kytaiu* [“Xi Jinping, go away!” How shocking protests arose across China]. <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-63747112> [in Ukrainian].

sify the protests. However, things may take a more peaceful turn if a more moderate branch of the Communist Party of China comes to power and allows certain democratic reforms – for example, formal multi-party representation. In that case, Taiwan could become an associated part of the PRC, potentially under better conditions than those experienced by Hong Kong.

But in the event of a direct military confrontation between China and the United States, the situation would be catastrophic. Among the systemic safeguards that could prevent the worst-case scenarios is globalization itself, which has tightly bound all global players with economic ties. Thus, any use of force would be akin to “sawing off the branch you’re sitting on”.

To conclude on Europe’s prospects: at the beginning of the 21st century, Europe emerges as a global player with significant political, military, and economic potential. The paradox lies in the fact that even if Europe is not fully ready for this role, it will be forced to take it on. Any attempts at isolationism are doomed to fail. The foundation of Europe’s development will remain the primacy of democratic institutions and a market economy. As an open society, Europe will experience social crises and sharp political competition – this is both the weakness of the system and its strength.

*I have noticed that even people who assert everything is predetermined
and that we can change nothing about
it still look both ways before they cross the street.*

Stephen Hawking

CHAPTER WRITTEN BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Most likely, within a year or two, books written by AI will become, if not the norm, then at least a common phenomenon. Let us leave aside for now the question of whether modern Artificial Intelligence (as of 2025) can truly be called “intelligence” – capable of generating original thoughts – or whether it is merely an advanced search system that, through algorithmic processing, can produce generalized responses. I believe the near future will provide answers to these questions. Considering the theme of this book, it was hard to resist the temptation to pose a few questions to Artificial Intelligence. This is precisely how this chapter came to be.

All questions were formulated by me and asked in English. Two programs served as the “interviewers”. Primarily, it was JPT Chat, but in some cases, inquiries were directed to Deep Seek (as noted in the text). The answers were obtained on May 3, 2025. The conditions set for the responses included structured presentation, academic rigor, and logical justification. The AI was also asked to write in a style characteristic of a historian or expert in world history. One of the current drawbacks of AI is its tendency to fabricate non-existent sources or references, so it was decided to omit them altogether. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Vladyslava Kovalenko, whose practical experience made this part of the work considerably easier.

It should also be noted that the queries themselves – their formulation, structure, and logic – are my own intellectual property. Accordingly, Artificial Intelligence functions here solely as a tool through which the answers were provided. The text has undergone light editorial revision for literary style, but without altering the substance of the responses. For example, technical phrases like “Would you like to know more about...” were removed. All of this makes the chapter an integral part of the original scholarly and literary work that this book represents, and thus the text is protected by copyright.

Question: How is European civilization defined?

ChatGPT said:

European civilization is best understood as the evolving tapestry of cultural, religious, political, and intellectual traditions that took shape on the European continent, particularly from the fall of the Western Roman Empire onward. In the medi-

eval period – roughly the 5th to the 15th centuries – this civilization was defined by a fusion of three major elements:

The legacy of Rome – The memory of Roman law, governance, and infrastructure persisted in fragmented forms and deeply influenced medieval political thought and administrative structures.

Christianity – The Roman Catholic Church was the central unifying institution in medieval Europe. It shaped everything from kingship and law to education, art, and the rhythm of daily life. The Church preserved classical knowledge and became the primary transmitter of culture.

The Germanic and Celtic tribal traditions – After the migrations and invasions that marked the early Middle Ages, these groups formed the foundations of medieval kingdoms, blending their customs with Christian and Roman traditions.

Medieval European civilization was also defined by its hierarchical social order – feudalism – where loyalty, land, and military service created networks of obligation between lords and vassals. It was a civilization rooted in the land, in sacred time, and in a worldview that saw the divine as intimately involved in every facet of life.

Crucially, it was during this period that the idea of Europe as a cultural and spiritual entity – Christendom – took form, distinguishing it from both the Islamic world and the Byzantine East. This self-definition would lay the groundwork for later European identity.

Question: What are the main factors that influenced its formation (or: what are the key components of European civilization)?

ChatGPT said:

To understand the formation of European civilization, especially as it emerged and developed during the medieval period, one must view it as a layered process in which diverse traditions and influences merged over centuries. Far from being a product of a single event or culture, European civilization is the outcome of a dynamic interplay between ancient legacies, spiritual forces, social structures, and intercultural encounters. Its formation was not linear but shaped by disruption, continuity, and transformation. Below are the key components that contributed to this complex civilization.

1. The legacy of the classical world (Greece and Rome).

European civilization would not have taken its distinctive shape without the deep imprint left by classical antiquity. Ancient Greece contributed philosophical inquiry, civic ideals, and early models of democratic governance – ideas that would later be revived and reinterpreted during the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Even more directly influential was the Roman Empire, which provided:

A legal framework that persisted in both secular and ecclesiastical law.

The Latin language, which became the *lingua franca*⁷⁶⁰ of scholarship, governance, and the Church throughout the Middle Ages.

⁷⁶⁰ A language used as a universal means of communication among scientists from different countries.

Models of urban organization, architecture, engineering, and imperial administration.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, its cultural and institutional memory continued to shape the newly emerging polities in Europe. The Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire also remained a powerful source of influence for centuries.

2. The Christian faith and the Catholic Church.

Christianity was not merely a religion in medieval Europe – it was the foundation of worldview, law, education, and identity. With the conversion of Roman emperors and later Germanic kings, Christianity became the spiritual glue that bound diverse peoples into what was often called Christendom. The Church played a central role in:

- Defining moral and legal norms.
- Preserving and transmitting classical texts through monasteries.
- Structuring the calendar, festivals, and daily life.
- Promoting a sense of shared European identity in contrast to non-Christian “others” (pagans, Muslims, Jews).
- Acting as a political actor, with the Pope often claiming authority over kings and emperors.

The idea of a Christian commonwealth – transcending linguistic, ethnic, or regional differences – was a distinctive feature of European civilization in the Middle Ages.

3. The Germanic tribal tradition and the formation of medieval kingdoms.

Following the collapse of Roman authority in the West, various Germanic tribes (such as the Franks, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Anglo-Saxons, and Lombards) filled the power vacuum. These groups brought their own customs, laws, and warrior aristocracies. However, rather than erasing Roman and Christian traditions, they gradually adopted and adapted them.

A crucial moment was the rise of the Carolingian Empire under Charlemagne in the 8th–9th centuries. This attempted revival of Roman imperial ideals under a Christian monarch set a precedent for future European rulership and helped establish the idea of a united Christian empire in the West.

4. Feudalism and the rural economy (manorialism).

The economic and social fabric of medieval Europe rested on land. Feudalism, often misunderstood as merely a political system, was in fact a deeply rooted way of organizing society based on personal bonds of loyalty, land tenure, and military service. At its core were the relationships between:

Lords, who granted land (fiefs) to vassals in exchange for service.

Serfs and peasants, who worked the land and supported the entire structure.

This system fostered local autonomy and stability in a time of political fragmentation and constant threat (e.g., Viking and Magyar invasions). It also created a decentralized but resilient network of power and obligation that lasted for centuries.

5. Monasticism and the preservation of knowledge.

In a largely illiterate and unstable post-Roman world, monasteries were sanctuaries of order, literacy, and learning. Monks not only copied ancient texts but also developed new forms of art, music (Gregorian chant), and philosophy (Scholasticism). The Benedictine Rule emphasized labor, discipline, and prayer—values that influenced broader European culture.

From these religious centers arose cathedral schools and eventually universities (Paris, Bologna, Oxford), which became sites for intellectual development and debate, especially in theology, law, and philosophy. This tradition of organized scholarship became a hallmark of European civilization.

6. Intercultural exchange and conflict.

Despite its insularity in some respects, medieval Europe was not isolated. Contact with the Islamic world, especially during the Crusades and in places like al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) and Sicily, introduced Europeans to advanced knowledge in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy. The rediscovery of Aristotle—preserved in Arabic translation—was particularly transformative for Christian theology and intellectual life.

Trade with the Byzantine Empire, contacts with Jewish communities, and travel through pilgrimage and crusade all contributed to a growing sense of Europe as a cultural and religious entity in dialogue (and often conflict) with others.

7. Geographical diversity and political fragmentation.

Europe's geography—its peninsulas, mountain ranges, rivers, and coastlines—created natural barriers and regional identities. Unlike vast centralized empires, medieval Europe developed as a mosaic of small kingdoms, principalities, and city-states. This fragmentation, while sometimes a source of conflict, also fostered:

Political experimentation and institutional diversity.

Competition between rulers, cities, and regions, which spurred economic and cultural innovation.

A balance between unity (under Christendom) and diversity (in governance and culture).

In conclusion:

European civilization formed through the interaction of ancient classical ideals, Christian spiritual authority, Germanic tribal customs, feudal social organization, and intellectual revival—all within a framework shaped by intercultural exchange and regional diversity. What emerged was a complex, dynamic, and evolving civilization, rooted in faith, enriched by learning, and marked by both unity and variety. It was in the medieval period that many of the institutions, identities, and values we now associate with “the West” first took form.

Question: How do you think - was there a possibility, that European civilization would not be formed? What were the alternatives?

Chat JPT said:

As an AI, examining the question from a theoretical and historical systems perspective, we can say that the formation of European civilization as we know it was

not inevitable. History is shaped by a web of contingencies – small and large – that could have led to radically different outcomes. Several plausible alternatives to the development of European civilization existed, and they demonstrate that the current form of European identity, institutions, and culture was only one of many potential paths. Here are some of the most significant possibilities:

1. A stronger, enduring Roman Empire.

Had the Western Roman Empire resisted collapse in the 5th century – perhaps by reforming its military, stabilizing its economy, or managing succession more effectively – Europe might have developed as a continuous Roman civilization, rather than the fragmented medieval patchwork that followed. Christianity would likely still have played a role, but within a more centralized imperial structure, possibly delaying or transforming the feudal, decentralized model that emerged after Rome's fall.

Alternative outcome: A pan-European imperial state with centralized governance, stronger urban continuity, and earlier technological progress.

2. A dominant Islamic Europe.

The rapid expansion of the Islamic Caliphates in the 7th–8th centuries brought Muslim rule to much of the Iberian Peninsula and threatened large parts of France and Italy. If Muslim forces had won key battles – such as the Battle of Tours in 732 or advanced further into the continent – Europe could have developed under Islamic cultural, political, and religious leadership. This alternative Europe might have blended Roman traditions with Islamic law, science, and philosophy.

Alternative outcome: A Western Islamic civilization, possibly multilingual, advanced in mathematics and medicine, centered around cities like Córdoba or Baghdad rather than Paris or Rome.

3. Continued pagan or polytheistic Europe.

If Christianity had not become dominant – whether through earlier suppression, resistance by Germanic tribes, or a different trajectory of belief – Europe might have retained or developed a diverse set of regional religious systems rooted in pagan, animist, or local spiritual traditions. This could have resulted in a civilization less unified culturally, more decentralized spiritually, and less hierarchical in religious authority.

Alternative outcome: A more fragmented Europe culturally, perhaps rich in regional diversity but lacking a unifying ideological force like the Church.

4. Stronger Byzantine or Eastern influence.

If the Byzantine Empire had succeeded in reasserting control over Western Europe (as it tried under Emperor Justinian in the 6th century), or if the schism between Eastern and Western Christianity had not deepened, Orthodox Christianity and Greek cultural traditions might have shaped Europe far more than Latin and Roman Catholic ones. Legal codes, art, and theology would have developed differently, and power might have centered on Constantinople rather than Rome or Paris.

Alternative outcome: A unified Christian Europe with Eastern Orthodox values, Greek liturgical influence, and stronger ties to the Middle East.

5. Mongol or nomadic dominance.

During the 13th century, Mongol forces penetrated deep into Eastern Europe. Had they advanced further west or established more lasting control, they could have disrupted existing European power structures or replaced them with Eurasian nomadic governance. This would likely have altered trade, law, and societal organization on a continental scale.

Alternative outcome: A Europe more connected to Central Asia, perhaps organized under khanates or Mongol-influenced polities, with less emphasis on Church authority.

6. Collapse due to repeated plagues or ecological disaster.

In a more abstract but still realistic scenario, if the Black Death (1347–1351) or other ecological catastrophes had been even more destructive – disrupting social order entirely – Europe might have failed to recover. Urban decline, economic collapse, and mass depopulation could have stalled civilization-building, making Europe a marginal or depopulated region for centuries.

Alternative outcome: A fragmented or regressed Europe overshadowed by more stable civilizations in the Middle East, India, or China.

Final reflection:

From a systems analysis perspective, European civilization is the result of a specific alignment of historical, geographical, cultural, and political conditions – not a predetermined endpoint. If certain battles had been lost, religious choices reversed, or empires held together longer, the shape of civilization on the continent might have been profoundly different. The “Europe” we know today – grounded in Greco-Roman law, Christian ethics, feudal social systems, and Enlightenment rationality – is just one of many possible civilizations that could have emerged.

Question: How do you think – was there a possibility, that European civilization would not be formed? What were the alternatives?

Deep Seek said:

1. If Ancient Greece Had Been Crushed (e.g., by Persia).

Alternative: A more Persian-influenced Mediterranean world, with less emphasis on democracy, philosophy, or the “Western” intellectual tradition.

Why? Greek victories at Marathon (490 BCE) and Salamis (480 BCE) were narrow; a Persian win might have redirected Europe’s cultural foundations toward Eastern models.

2. If Rome Had Fallen Earlier (or Never Rose).

Alternative: A fragmented Europe with no unifying legal (Roman law) or infrastructural legacy (roads, Latin). Celtic, Germanic, or other tribal societies might have dominated longer, delaying centralized states.

Why? Rome's collapse in the 5th century did fracture Europe – but an earlier fall (e.g., to Hannibal in the 3rd century BCE) could have prevented its cultural diffusion entirely.

3. If Christianity Had Not Spread (or Islam Dominated Europe).

Alternative: A pagan or Islamic Europe. Without Christian monasteries preserving texts, Europe's intellectual trajectory might have relied more on Arab or Norse traditions.

Why? Christianity's adoption by Constantine (4th century) was pivotal; Muslim victories at Tours (732) or Vienna (1683) could have reshaped religion, language, and law.

4. If the Mongols Had Pushed Further West (13th Century).

Alternative: A Eurasian steppe culture dominating Eastern/Central Europe, disrupting feudalism and the rise of nation-states.

Why? The Mongols reached Hungary but withdrew after Ögedei Khan's death (1241); a sustained campaign might have redirected European political development.

5. If the Renaissance Had Been Stifled (e.g., by Ottoman Control of Italy).

Alternative: A slower revival of classical knowledge, delaying the Enlightenment and scientific revolution. Byzantium's fall (1453) already shifted scholarship westward – Ottoman dominance in Italy could have cut off this flow.

6. If Colonialism Had Been Reversed (e.g., Native American or African Powers Colonizing Europe)

Alternative: A world where Europe was the periphery, not the core, of global power. Imagine Aztec or Mali empires exploiting European resources instead.

Why? Europe's colonial edge relied on specific technological and geopolitical advantages; a shift in these could have inverted hierarchies.

Key Takeaway.

- European civilization was the product of fragile, interconnected tipping points.

The most likely alternatives would involve:

- A more "Eastern" Europe (Persian, Islamic, or Mongol-influenced).
- A decentralized, tribal continent (without Roman or Christian unification).
- A subordinate Europe in a global order led by other powers.

Question: What are the strongest aspects of European civilization?

Chat JPT said:

1. Intellectual and philosophical tradition.

European civilization is profoundly shaped by its classical heritage. Ancient Greece introduced methods of critical thinking, logical argumentation, and philosophical exploration of ethics, politics, and metaphysics. Socratic dialogue, Platonic idealism, and Aristotelian logic formed the foundation for centuries of inquiry. Rome, in turn, contributed political theory, practical governance, and a codified legal system. These ideas were not lost after antiquity – they were preserved by

Christian scholars, especially in monasteries, and later reinterpreted by Islamic and Jewish scholars, then revived in medieval universities. During the Renaissance and Enlightenment, these traditions evolved, promoting secular reasoning, individual autonomy, and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. The European intellectual tradition values debate, skepticism, and the idea that progress arises from rational inquiry, not blind authority.

2. Legal and institutional development.

The evolution of European law and governance reflects a long-term effort to restrain arbitrary power and build accountable institutions. Roman law introduced concepts such as property rights, contracts, and legal equality that influenced European legal systems for centuries. The medieval period saw the emergence of common law (in England) and civil law (in continental Europe), which institutionalized procedures for justice. The Magna Carta (1215) marked an early moment in limiting monarchy by law. By the early modern period, many European countries had developed parliamentary bodies, councils, and bureaucracies, helping balance royal authority. The Enlightenment expanded ideas about legal equality, natural rights, and constitutionalism. These culminated in modern democracies with separation of powers, electoral representation, and protections for civil liberties. Today, the European Union further exemplifies legal cooperation among sovereign states under shared principles.

3. Cultural richness and diversity.

Europe's cultural achievements are vast and varied. From the Parthenon and Roman aqueducts to Gothic cathedrals and Renaissance palaces, European architecture expresses both artistic mastery and evolving social values. Literature spans Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Dostoevsky, and Kafka – offering deep explorations of human nature. European music includes medieval chants, Bach's counterpoint, Mozart's elegance, Beethoven's drama, and modernist innovations from Stravinsky or Schoenberg. Visual arts – from the realism of Caravaggio to the abstraction of Kandinsky – reflect not just beauty but shifts in worldview. This cultural depth is enriched by linguistic diversity and regional traditions. European civilizations have also preserved and studied their own history extensively through museums, archives, and academic disciplines. Cultural institutions like the Louvre, the British Museum, and the Prado continue to shape global aesthetic standards.

4. Scientific and technological innovation.

The Scientific Revolution, beginning in the 16th century, marked a shift from religious or speculative explanations of nature to empirical observation and experimentation. Figures like Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton revolutionized astronomy and physics. Later, during the Enlightenment, thinkers like Descartes and Leibniz developed mathematics and rationalist philosophy. The Industrial Revolution, starting in Britain in the late 18th century, transformed agriculture, transportation, and production – introducing steam engines, railways, factories, and mechanized labor. European societies invested in research, founded scientific societies,

and emphasized innovation. These achievements shaped global modernity: medicine, chemistry, electricity, computing, and engineering all developed rapidly. Institutions like the Royal Society and universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, and the Sorbonne fostered long-term scientific inquiry. Even today, Europe leads in many fields – from green energy to particle physics (e.g. CERN).

5. Commitment to education and knowledge transmission.

Europe was the birthplace of the university as an institution. Bologna (1088), Paris (1150), and Oxford (1096) were early centers where theology, law, medicine, and philosophy were taught systematically. Over time, this expanded into broader curricula including sciences and humanities. Education became a vehicle for upward mobility, social cohesion, and innovation. In the 19th and 20th centuries, public education systems were established, increasing literacy and civic awareness. Education became seen as a right, not a privilege. Europe also contributed to the creation of the modern research university, where teaching and knowledge production are integrated. Today, Europe maintains world-class universities and academic networks, with Erasmus programs and academic mobility fostering cross-border education and research cooperation.

6. Human rights and civil liberties.

While Europe's history includes periods of persecution, absolutism, and empire, it also developed some of the world's strongest traditions of human rights. Thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant influenced revolutions in thought and politics. The Declaration of the Rights of Man (France, 1789) and the Bill of Rights (Britain and the US) articulated the principle that governments exist to protect individual freedoms. After the atrocities of World War II, Europe took the lead in formalizing human rights protections with the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), enforced by the European Court of Human Rights. European countries have since developed laws safeguarding freedom of speech, religion, assembly, gender equality, and minority rights. While enforcement varies, the commitment to human dignity and legal protection is a core part of modern European identity.

7. Cultural pluralism and synthesis.

Europe's geographical position and history of migration, conquest, and trade led to constant cultural exchange. The continent absorbed influences from the Middle East, North Africa, the Americas, and Asia. During the Crusades, Renaissance, and colonial periods, Europe engaged with and borrowed from other civilizations in philosophy, science, cuisine, and technology. For example, Arabic translations helped reintroduce Aristotle to Western Europe; Indian numerals (via the Islamic world) revolutionized mathematics. Despite wars and religious conflicts, many regions developed multicultural cities – Venice, Cordoba, Istanbul, Prague – where diverse communities coexisted. In the modern period, immigration, globalization, and European integration have created new, more inclusive identities. The EU promotes cross-border mobility and unity in diversity. Cultural pluralism has allowed Europe to remain dynamic, resilient, and relevant.

Summary of the strongest aspects of European civilization:

1. Intellectual and philosophical tradition – rooted in Greek and Roman thought, sustained by medieval scholasticism, and expanded through the Enlightenment.
2. Legal and institutional development – with an emphasis on rule of law, constitutionalism, and democratic governance.
3. Cultural richness and diversity – including world-renowned contributions to art, literature, architecture, and music.
4. Scientific and technological innovation – from the Scientific Revolution to the Industrial Revolution and beyond.
5. Commitment to education and knowledge transmission – through the creation of universities and widespread public education.
6. Human rights and civil liberties – forming a key part of modern European identity and institutions.
7. Cultural pluralism and synthesis – with an ability to adapt and incorporate diverse influences while fostering unity through shared values.

Question: What are the weakest aspects of European civilization?

Chat JPT said:

1. Colonialism and its lasting effects.

One of the most significant and controversial aspects of European history is its colonial past. Beginning in the 15th century, European powers expanded across the world, establishing vast empires in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Colonialism resulted in exploitation, the destruction of indigenous cultures, and the extraction of resources. While European countries often justified this expansion with a sense of racial superiority and a civilizing mission, it inflicted immeasurable harm on local populations, leading to oppression, enslavement, and displacement. The legacy of colonialism is still visible today in the form of global inequalities, ethnic tensions, and unresolved historical grievances. In some parts of the world, European colonialism has left a lasting impact on local governance, economies, and social structures, contributing to ongoing struggles for justice, reparations, and reconciliation.

2. Social inequality and class divisions.

Despite Europe's advancements in human rights and democratic governance, social inequality remains a persistent problem. The history of European civilization is deeply marked by stark social hierarchies, where class distinctions have often determined individuals' rights, opportunities, and quality of life. Feudalism, slavery, and later industrial capitalism entrenched these divisions, and although the modern era saw improvements through labor movements and the development of welfare states, inequality persists. Wealth distribution is highly uneven, and despite European claims to social democracy, many countries face rising income inequality, poverty, and unemployment, particularly in marginalized communities. While Europe has made strides in expanding social mobility, the challenges of addressing inequality remain prominent in both economic and social spheres.

3. Religious intolerance and conflict.

Religion has been both a unifying and divisive force throughout European history. While Europe gave birth to key philosophical ideas about religious freedom and secularism, it has also been a battleground for religious intolerance, especially during the Middle Ages and Early Modern period. The Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Protestant Reformation all demonstrated how religion could fuel violence, exclusion, and division. Religious minorities, such as Jews, Muslims, and Romani people, faced persecution and forced conversions, while inter-Christian conflicts – such as those between Catholics and Protestants – resulted in wars, violence, and suffering. Even in the modern era, the legacy of religious conflict is felt, and while secularism has taken hold in many European societies, religious intolerance still exists in certain contexts, particularly with the rise of xenophobic and nationalist movements that target Muslims, Jews, and other minority groups.

4. Nationalism and ethnic conflicts.

Although European civilization has promoted ideals of unity, cooperation, and shared values, nationalism has frequently undermined these principles. Nationalism, while a powerful force in uniting people and promoting self-determination, has also led to significant conflict, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries. The breakup of empires and the creation of nation-states often left minorities marginalized or excluded. The two World Wars were driven, in part, by aggressive nationalistic and imperialistic aspirations. The Balkan Wars and the collapse of Yugoslavia, as well as ongoing tensions in places like Catalonia, Scotland, and Ukraine, illustrate how ethnic and national identities continue to challenge the cohesion of Europe. Furthermore, the rise of far-right, ethnocentric nationalism in recent years has led to a reassertion of national borders and a backlash against multiculturalism and European integration.

5. Environmental degradation and unsustainable development.

One of the most pressing challenges facing modern European civilization is the environmental crisis. Europe's Industrial Revolution, which drove economic growth and technological innovation, also led to extensive environmental degradation. From the burning of coal to the rapid urbanization of cities, industrial Europe contributed significantly to global environmental problems, including pollution, deforestation, and the depletion of natural resources. While European countries are at the forefront of climate change mitigation today, their historical contribution to global warming is undeniable. Furthermore, the rapid pace of economic growth has often been unsustainable, and many of Europe's natural landscapes have been severely altered. Addressing these environmental challenges – particularly the shift to renewable energy, conservation, and sustainable development – remains a key concern for European societies in the 21st century.

6. Integration vs. sovereignty.

The European Union (EU) represents one of Europe's greatest achievements in terms of political and economic cooperation. However, the idea of regional integra-

tion faces significant challenges. The EU has successfully created a single market, promoted peace among European nations, and increased cooperation in areas like security, trade, and human rights. Yet, it also faces ongoing debates about the loss of national sovereignty. Some countries, like the UK (which ultimately left the EU in 2020), have expressed concerns that European integration erodes their ability to make independent decisions. Nationalist and populist movements in other European countries also argue that the EU imposes undue influence, undermining local identities and democratic processes. The balance between fostering unity and respecting national sovereignty remains a difficult issue for the EU, especially as economic crises, immigration challenges, and geopolitical tensions test its cohesion.

7. Historical revisionism and forgetting dark legacies.

Another challenge for European civilization is the tendency toward historical revisionism, where certain darker aspects of history are downplayed or forgotten. For example, while Europe has made great strides in confronting the Holocaust, the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and exploitation are often inadequately addressed or acknowledged. Many countries fail to adequately confront their roles in slavery, empire-building, and oppression of indigenous peoples. The tendency to romanticize certain periods of history or overlook their negative consequences contributes to societal amnesia and prevents the healing and reparative processes necessary to address past wrongs. These unresolved historical issues continue to affect contemporary European identities and relations with former colonies and minority groups.

8. Economic instability and unemployment.

Despite its wealth and economic development, Europe has faced significant economic challenges, particularly in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008. Some countries, especially those in the Eurozone, have struggled with debt crises, high unemployment, and slow economic growth. The European Union's economic policies have been criticized for exacerbating inequalities, particularly between wealthier and poorer member states. Southern European countries, like Greece, Spain, and Italy, faced severe austerity measures that disproportionately affected lower-income populations. Youth unemployment remains high in some regions, and there are growing concerns about economic polarization, with rural and economically disadvantaged areas feeling left behind. The rise of populism in response to economic hardship also highlights a deep dissatisfaction with current economic models.

9. Crisis of identity and cultural fragmentation.

In recent years, many European societies have struggled with questions of identity and cultural cohesion. The influx of refugees and migrants from war-torn regions, particularly the Middle East and Africa, has sparked debates about the future of European identity. While some European countries have embraced multiculturalism and diversity, others have reacted with fear, hostility, or cultural conservatism. The ongoing challenges related to immigration and the rise of nationalist movements have intensified questions about what it means to be "European". Additionally, the

European project itself is questioned by those who see it as a threat to national identities and traditions. As Europe becomes more diverse, reconciling local cultures with pan-European values presents a unique and complex challenge.

Summary of the weakest or most challenged aspects of European civilization:

1. Colonialism and its lasting effects – the long-term consequences of exploitation, racism, and inequality.
2. Social inequality and class divisions – persistent disparities in wealth and social mobility.
3. Religious intolerance and conflict – the legacy of religious wars, persecution, and division.
4. Nationalism and ethnic conflicts – challenges related to ethnic diversity, national sovereignty, and the rise of separatism.
5. Environmental degradation and unsustainable development – the historical impact of industrialization and current environmental concerns.
6. Integration vs. sovereignty – the ongoing tension between European unity and national autonomy.
7. Historical revisionism and forgetting dark legacies – failure to adequately address the negative aspects of history, including colonialism and slavery.
8. Economic instability and unemployment – economic disparities, austerity measures, and challenges of unemployment.
9. Crisis of identity and cultural fragmentation – debates over European identity, immigration, and multiculturalism.

Question: What are the major threats to the development of European civilization in the areas of economy, politics, society, domestic policy, and international relations?

Chat JPTsaid:

The development of European civilization faces various major threats across key areas, such as the economy, politics, society, domestic policy, and international relations. These threats are interconnected and often reinforce one another, posing significant challenges to the stability and progress of European civilization. Here's a comprehensive breakdown of these threats:

1. Economic Threats.

a. Economic Inequality and Instability.

Economic disparity within European nations and across the continent remains a critical threat to stability. The European Union, while promoting economic cooperation, has seen significant gaps between richer and poorer countries, particularly after the 2008 financial crisis. Southern European countries like Greece, Spain, and Italy have faced prolonged economic difficulties due to austerity measures and lack of economic recovery, while wealthier nations have experienced more robust growth. These disparities lead to high unemployment rates, particularly among youth, and growing poverty levels. Economic inequality also contributes to social unrest and

undermines the trust in institutions. Furthermore, an uneven distribution of wealth and resources exacerbates tensions within the EU, with populist movements often capitalizing on the frustration of economically marginalized populations.

b. Dependence on Global Supply Chains.

Europe's reliance on global supply chains for essential goods, especially energy, technology, and raw materials, presents a vulnerability. The disruption of these supply chains, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis triggered by the Russia-Ukraine war, highlights Europe's dependence on foreign markets. Europe's limited domestic production of critical goods and overreliance on external suppliers make it susceptible to geopolitical shocks, trade imbalances, and price volatility. This dependency has exposed weaknesses in Europe's economic resilience and capacity to self-sustain during global crises.

c. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability.

Climate change poses a significant threat to European economies. Extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and the degradation of ecosystems have the potential to disrupt agricultural production, increase the frequency of natural disasters, and strain infrastructure. Europe's economies are highly integrated with natural resources, and climate change can exacerbate challenges related to energy production, water scarcity, and food security. While the EU has made strides toward a green transition, the high costs of shifting to renewable energy sources, coupled with resistance from certain sectors, may slow down progress.

2. Political Threats.

a. Populism and Erosion of Democratic Norms.

Across Europe, populist and nationalist movements have gained traction, challenging the stability of liberal democratic institutions. These movements often reject traditional political elites, criticize the EU, and promote anti-immigrant, anti-globalist, and protectionist agendas. Populist leaders and parties are increasingly appealing to disaffected voters who feel excluded from the benefits of globalization and economic progress. This rise of populism threatens democratic norms, as it undermines trust in institutions, fosters polarization, and erodes political compromise. In some cases, populist governments have attempted to weaken judicial independence, press freedom, and other key elements of democracy.

b. Declining Trust in Institutions.

Public trust in political institutions, both at the national and EU levels, has steadily declined. The EU, while a significant political and economic entity, often faces criticism for its bureaucratic nature and perceived lack of accountability. At the national level, disillusionment with political elites has led to a rise in voter apathy and alienation, which populist and extremist movements have exploited. A decrease in political participation and the increasing influence of non-governmental actors, like multinational corporations and interest groups, weaken democratic processes and contribute to political instability.

c. Weakening of European Integration.

The process of European integration, which was a key factor in ensuring peace and stability in the continent after World War II, faces growing skepticism. The United Kingdom's departure from the EU (Brexit) has raised questions about the future of the Union. Eurosceptic movements in other member states, like Hungary, Poland, and Italy, continue to challenge EU policies on migration, governance, and economic regulation. These divisions threaten the unity of the EU and its ability to act cohesively in the face of global challenges. The erosion of trust in European institutions could hinder further integration or lead to fragmentation.

3. Social Threats.

a. Demographic Decline and Aging Population.

One of Europe's most pressing social threats is its aging population. Birth rates in many European countries are below replacement level, while life expectancy is rising. This demographic shift creates a growing dependency ratio, with fewer working-age individuals to support an increasing number of elderly citizens. As a result, public pension systems, healthcare, and social services face immense pressure. The labor force is shrinking, and without sufficient young workers, economic growth could slow down. Immigration is often proposed as a solution, but it brings its own set of challenges in terms of integration, cultural cohesion, and social acceptance.

b. Immigration and Social Cohesion.

Europe has faced significant challenges in integrating immigrants, especially refugees from conflict zones like Syria, Afghanistan, and parts of Africa. Immigration has led to demographic shifts, but it has also sparked debates about cultural identity, national sovereignty, and social cohesion. While immigrants contribute to the labor force and enrich European culture, the integration process is often fraught with challenges. The rise of anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, threatens social harmony and undermines the values of inclusivity and diversity that are central to European civilization.

c. Rising Inequality and Social Fragmentation.

Economic inequality is translating into social fragmentation. Wealth and opportunity are increasingly concentrated in urban centers, while rural areas and certain social groups are left behind. This disparity leads to social unrest, alienation, and frustration among marginalized groups. Additionally, the rise of social media and digital platforms has fostered echo chambers and polarization, where people are less likely to engage in constructive dialogue across ideological lines. This fragmentation weakens social cohesion and creates an environment in which extremist ideologies can flourish.

4. Domestic Policy Threats.

a. Resistance to Reform and Institutional Inertia.

While Europe has often been at the forefront of political and economic innovation, there is a significant challenge in addressing systemic issues within its political and economic structures. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, outdated regulations, and resistance to reform in areas like taxation, welfare, labor markets, and public services hinder

progress. Institutional inertia makes it difficult to adapt to changing global realities, such as technological advancements, the digital revolution, and climate change. Moreover, political fragmentation and rising populism often stall meaningful reforms.

b. Overburdened Welfare States.

Europe's social welfare systems, which have long been a model for the world, are increasingly under strain due to demographic challenges and the high cost of public services. Public healthcare, pensions, unemployment benefits, and other social programs face growing fiscal pressures. In some countries, the welfare state is being reformed to address these challenges, but such reforms often provoke political resistance. The question of how to maintain a generous welfare system while balancing fiscal responsibility is a key domestic policy challenge.

5. International Relations Threats.

a. Geopolitical Instability and External Threats.

Europe's geopolitical position remains precarious, with rising tensions on its borders. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which erupted in 2014 and escalated in 2022, is a stark reminder of the volatility in Europe's immediate neighborhood. The risk of conflict, both within Europe and with external actors like Russia, Turkey, and China, presents a significant challenge to European security. Europe's role in global power politics has diminished in comparison to the United States and China, which poses challenges for its ability to assert its interests on the global stage.

b. Tensions with the United States and China.

While Europe and the US have shared interests, particularly within NATO, growing political and economic divisions between them have surfaced in recent years. Disagreements over issues such as trade policy, climate change, and the response to global crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine) have strained relations. Similarly, Europe faces growing challenges in its relationship with China. As China becomes a more dominant global power, European countries are caught between maintaining economic ties and addressing concerns about human rights, trade imbalances, and geopolitical influence.

c. Global Migration and Refugee Crises.

Ongoing conflicts, climate change, and economic instability in parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia continue to drive large-scale migration toward Europe. While the EU has developed policies to manage migration, it remains an area of contention. The integration of refugees and migrants, as well as the political divisions over immigration policy, presents significant challenges for European solidarity and unity. Additionally, Europe's ability to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty and conflict, remains limited.

Conclusion: The Major Threats to European Civilization.

In summary, the major threats to European civilization across economy, politics, society, domestic policy, and international relations include:

Economic Inequality and Instability – disparities within and between European nations, dependence on global supply chains, and environmental sustainability.

Populism and Erosion of Democracy – the rise of populist movements, decline in trust in institutions, and weakening of European integration.

Demographic Challenges – an aging population, challenges in immigration integration, and social inequality.

Resistance to Reform – bureaucratic inertia, the overburdened welfare state, and resistance to systemic changes.

Geopolitical Instability – external threats from Russia and other global powers, tensions with the US and China, and the ongoing refugee crisis.

These threats are interconnected and require coordinated responses at both national and EU levels to ensure the continued development and cohesion of European civilization.

Question: Can you define any other threats?

Chat JPT said:

In addition to the threats already discussed, there are several other emerging and long-term threats to the development and stability of European civilization. These threats can be seen in various aspects of technology, culture, security, and global dynamics, and while some are interrelated, they all present unique challenges to Europe's future. Here are additional threats:

1. Technological Disruption and Cybersecurity Threats.

a. Technological Unemployment.

As automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and robotics continue to advance, many industries in Europe face the possibility of massive job displacement. The rise of machine learning and automation technologies threatens traditional manufacturing and service jobs, potentially leaving millions of workers unemployed or underemployed. This shift may lead to significant economic inequality and social unrest if adequate measures are not put in place for retraining workers or creating new job opportunities in emerging industries. The challenge is not just technological but also educational, as European education systems must adapt to prepare future generations for a rapidly changing job market.

b. Cybersecurity Risks.

With the digitalization of virtually every sector, Europe faces increasing risks from cyber-attacks. Cybersecurity threats, ranging from attacks on critical infrastructure to data breaches and disinformation campaigns, have become more frequent and sophisticated. Hackers, both state-sponsored and independent, target government institutions, businesses, and even citizens, undermining trust in institutions and causing significant economic and reputational damage. Moreover, the rise of ransomware attacks and the potential for cyberwarfare means that Europe's digital infrastructure could become a significant vulnerability in the face of both geopolitical tensions and criminal activity.

c. AI and Ethical Concerns.

As AI technology progresses, Europe must grapple with the ethical dilemmas it presents. Issues such as surveillance, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the poten-

tial for AI to replace human decision-making in critical areas (e.g., healthcare, law enforcement, and finance) require strong regulatory frameworks. Failure to regulate AI and technology effectively could lead to the erosion of civil liberties, inequality in AI benefits, and exacerbate the digital divide within European countries.

2. Environmental and Natural Resource Depletion.

a. Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss.

While previously mentioned in terms of economic sustainability, the environmental threat posed by climate change and the loss of biodiversity is worth further attention. Extreme weather events, including floods, droughts, and heatwaves, are becoming more frequent, severely impacting agriculture, infrastructure, and public health. Moreover, the destruction of natural habitats, deforestation, and the degradation of ecosystems threaten Europe's biodiversity. These environmental changes are not only a risk to human life but also to the European economy, which is heavily reliant on sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and natural resources. Climate-induced migration, both within and outside of Europe, could further strain resources and infrastructure.

b. Water and Resource Scarcity.

Europe's reliance on a finite number of water sources for drinking, agriculture, and industrial processes makes the continent vulnerable to water shortages, especially in southern Europe. As climate change worsens, regions like Spain, Italy, and Greece may face increasingly severe droughts and reduced agricultural output. The depletion of non-renewable resources, such as fossil fuels and minerals, also poses a challenge, as Europe must transition to more sustainable and renewable alternatives while ensuring energy security. The global competition for resources may intensify, and Europe's ability to secure sufficient supplies for its population will become a critical issue.

3. Terrorism and Security Threats.

a. Radicalization and Domestic Terrorism.

The rise of extremist ideologies – both far-right and Islamist – has contributed to a climate of fear and insecurity across many European nations. Terrorist attacks, such as the 2015 Paris attacks and the 2016 Brussels bombings, have highlighted the vulnerability of European cities to radicalized individuals or groups. Radicalization can occur through online platforms, making it difficult to detect and prevent. The challenge for European governments is to combat terrorism while balancing the need for civil liberties and social cohesion.

b. External Terrorist Threats.

In addition to domestic threats, Europe faces the possibility of external terrorist organizations targeting its cities and citizens. Groups like ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and other jihadist organizations continue to pose risks, especially in the wake of military engagements in the Middle East and Africa. These groups have historically used Europe as a target for attacks, and as geopolitical tensions rise in various regions, the risk of terrorist retaliation or recruitment could increase.

c. Refugee Terrorism Link.

While most refugees are fleeing war, persecution, and poverty, there have been instances where individuals within refugee groups have been radicalized or have ties to extremist organizations. The fear that terrorism may be hidden within waves of refugees is a significant source of political tension in Europe, particularly in countries with high numbers of asylum seekers. Balancing humanitarian obligations with security concerns remains one of the EU's most difficult challenges.

4. Cultural and Identity Crisis.

a. Loss of Cultural Cohesion.

As Europe becomes increasingly multicultural due to immigration, debates about cultural identity have intensified. Many Europeans fear that their traditional values and national identities are being diluted by growing cultural diversity. The rise of nationalist and populist movements often plays on these concerns, arguing that Europe's cultural unity is at risk. The challenge lies in integrating immigrants and refugees into European societies without eroding the foundational values of liberal democracy, freedom, and human rights. Societal tensions related to these issues could lead to further polarization, undermining social cohesion.

b. Decline in Religious Influence.

Historically, religion has played a key role in shaping European civilization. However, in recent decades, secularization has led to a decline in religious practice and influence in many European countries. This cultural shift, particularly in Western Europe, may weaken shared moral and ethical frameworks, leading to questions about the role of religion in public life and the ethics of governance. As traditional religious values wane, some argue that Europe may experience a void in shared cultural norms, which could lead to a sense of fragmentation and confusion about its collective identity.

5. Geopolitical and International Power Struggles.

a. Competition with Rising Powers.

The shift in global power dynamics, particularly the rise of China, India, and other emerging economies, poses a challenge to Europe's traditional geopolitical influence. Europe must navigate an increasingly multipolar world where it no longer holds the central position in international affairs. The competition for influence, markets, and resources could put Europe at odds with rising powers, potentially leading to tensions over trade, security, and technology. Moreover, the decline of the Western-dominated international order could erode Europe's ability to shape global policies and norms.

b. Loss of Global Influence and Soft Power.

Europe's global influence, which was historically based on its colonial empire, has waned in the face of new global powers and regional conflicts. While the EU is still a significant player in international diplomacy and trade, its soft power has been diluted by internal divisions and external competition. In addition, the rise of nationalism and regionalism within Europe weakens its collective ability to exert

influence globally, especially on issues like climate change, international law, and human rights.

Conclusion.

To summarize, additional threats to the development of European civilization include:

- Technological Disruption and Cybersecurity Risks – technological unemployment, AI challenges, and vulnerabilities to cyberattacks.
- Environmental and Resource Depletion – climate change, water scarcity, and the depletion of non-renewable resources.
- Terrorism and Security Threats – radicalization, terrorism (both domestic and external), and the security risks associated with migration.
- Cultural and Identity Crisis – loss of cultural cohesion, challenges to traditional values, and the decline of religious influence.
- Geopolitical and International Power Struggles – competition with emerging powers and the decline of Europe's global influence.

Each of these threats can have profound implications on Europe's future, both individually and in how they interact with one another. Addressing them will require a coordinated effort across European nations, the EU, and international stakeholders to create sustainable, secure, and resilient systems.

Question: What are the possible scenarios (or forecasts) for the development of European civilization? Should this include, for instance, 5 positive and 5 negative scenarios?

Chat JPT said:

When considering the possible scenarios or forecasts for the development of European civilization, it's useful to explore both positive and negative outcomes, as these scenarios often emerge from the complex interplay of various social, political, economic, environmental, and technological factors. Below, I present five positive and five negative scenarios, reflecting both optimistic and pessimistic views of Europe's future.

Positive Scenarios for the Development of European Civilization.

1. Sustainable Economic Growth with Green Transition In this scenario, Europe successfully transitions to a green economy. Investment in renewable energy, green technologies, and sustainable industries spurs economic growth while reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Europe becomes a global leader in climate change mitigation, carbon neutrality, and environmental innovation. The green transition creates new jobs, stimulates technological advancement, and increases overall prosperity without compromising the planet's health. The EU becomes a model for other regions, setting the standard for environmental stewardship.

1. Technological Innovation and Digital Transformation Europe embraces technological advancement and becomes a global leader in cutting-edge fields like AI, biotechnology, quantum computing, and space exploration. These innovations en-

hance Europe's global competitiveness, stimulate economic growth, and improve living standards. The digital transformation improves productivity, boosts efficiency across sectors (including healthcare, education, and manufacturing), and addresses critical challenges, such as aging populations, by enhancing automation and health-tech solutions. Europe also strengthens its cybersecurity and data protection, ensuring a safe and equitable digital space for its citizens.

2. **Social Cohesion and Inclusive Society** Europe's long-standing commitment to democracy, human rights, and social equality leads to greater social cohesion. While immigration and cultural diversity present challenges, European societies manage to integrate immigrants successfully, ensuring that multiculturalism thrives alongside shared democratic values. Education systems evolve to address future workforce needs, leading to lower unemployment rates, increased social mobility, and reduced inequality. The rise of inclusive policies results in greater gender equality, better rights for marginalized communities, and the protection of fundamental freedoms for all citizens.

3. **Strengthened European Unity and Global Diplomacy** In this scenario, the European Union (EU) overcomes internal divisions and strengthens its political cohesion. The EU becomes a more united, influential player in global affairs, able to address regional and global crises effectively. Cooperation within the EU intensifies, leading to greater economic, political, and defense integration. Europe plays a pivotal role in global diplomacy, advocating for peace, humanitarian intervention, and international law. Through stronger defense cooperation and partnerships with the UN, NATO, and other international organizations, Europe helps address global security challenges.

4. **Cultural Renaissance and Preservation of Heritage** Europe experiences a cultural renaissance as its rich history, arts, and intellectual traditions continue to inspire creativity and innovation in the 21st century. European countries prioritize the preservation of their cultural heritage while also fostering new forms of artistic and cultural expression. Europe becomes a hub for art, literature, philosophy, and scientific discovery, attracting global talent. Europe's cultural diversity becomes a source of strength, with increased collaboration in areas like music, theater, cinema, and design. The continent's cultural soft power grows, influencing the global narrative and fostering global understanding.

Negative Scenarios for the Development of European Civilization.

1. **Economic Decline and Inequality** In this scenario, Europe struggles to maintain economic growth amid global competition, demographic shifts, and the challenges of transitioning to a green economy. Unemployment rates rise due to automation, and large sectors of the population, particularly in Southern and Eastern Europe, face economic stagnation. The growing wealth gap exacerbates social inequality, leading to widespread discontent and potential political unrest. The EU faces difficulties in managing economic integration across member states, and some countries may experience economic crises that destabilize the region. The European

economy fails to diversify, becoming overly dependent on outdated industries and unable to compete with emerging markets.

2. **Political Fragmentation and Populism** The rise of populist and nationalist movements across Europe leads to growing political fragmentation. The European Union faces challenges in maintaining unity and decision-making efficiency. National governments prioritize short-term national interests over collective European goals, undermining the EU's effectiveness in addressing issues like migration, security, and climate change. The disintegration of the EU becomes a possibility, as some member states push for greater sovereignty and reject EU-led initiatives. This fragmentation could lead to trade barriers, reduced global influence, and internal divisions that weaken Europe's collective power.

3. **Climate Crisis and Resource Scarcity** Europe is unable to fully address the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation. Extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts, and wildfires, become more frequent and devastating. This disrupts agriculture, infrastructure, and public services, leading to food shortages, economic losses, and a rise in migration within the continent. Water scarcity becomes a pressing issue in Southern Europe, while the depletion of natural resources increases geopolitical tensions over access to critical commodities. The European Union faces difficulty implementing coordinated climate policies, leading to severe long-term economic and social costs.

4. **Geopolitical Instability and Security Threats** Europe becomes increasingly vulnerable to external geopolitical threats and military aggression, particularly from powers like Russia, China, or the United States. The erosion of Europe's military capabilities and defense cooperation weakens its position on the global stage. Europe struggles to address security threats, such as terrorism, cyberattacks, and regional conflicts that spill over into EU territory. Rising instability on Europe's borders, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, forces European countries to confront military conflicts that drain resources and create internal divisions. A failure to maintain a cohesive foreign policy leads to strategic isolation and a diminished role in global diplomacy.

5. **Social Unrest and Identity Crisis** Europe faces rising social unrest due to economic inequality, political corruption, and a lack of trust in institutions. Nationalism and xenophobia increase, with rising tensions between different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. The fear of losing national identity amid immigration and globalization fuels populist rhetoric and political polarization. Europe's commitment to democratic values is tested as authoritarian tendencies gain ground, and civil liberties are undermined. Social unrest leads to increased violence, protests, and political instability, which further destabilize European society. Cultural conflicts, along with integration challenges for refugees and migrants, add to a sense of identity crisis that weakens social cohesion.

Conclusion.

The future development of European civilization is uncertain and contingent on how the continent navigates the interplay of political, economic, technological, en-

vironmental, and social factors. Both positive and negative scenarios are possible, depending on how Europe addresses key challenges.

Positive scenarios involve strong economic growth, technological leadership, political unity, and social harmony, while negative scenarios involve economic decline, political fragmentation, and rising threats from environmental and geopolitical crises.

In the long term, Europe's success in avoiding negative scenarios will depend on its ability to foster collaboration, innovation, and resilience in the face of global challenges. Conversely, its failure to adapt and address pressing issues could lead to fragmentation, instability, and diminished global influence.

Question: Can you conduct a deep analysis of all the information available to you, including contemporary news, and provide your prognosis on the future of European civilization?

Chat JPT said:

Current State of European Civilization.

1. Geopolitical Landscape.

Shifting Alliances: The United States' recent policy shifts, including reduced support for Ukraine and a closer alignment with Russia, have prompted Europe to reconsider its strategic autonomy. This has led to the formation of alliances like Weimar+, comprising France, Germany, Poland, and the UK, aimed at promoting European sovereignty and geopolitical influence independent of the U.S.

Defense Initiatives: In response to security concerns, the EU has proposed the Readiness 2030 defense initiative, aiming to mobilize up to €800 billion to strengthen Europe's military capabilities and reduce reliance on external allies.

2. Economic and Demographic Challenges.

Aging Population: Europe faces a significant demographic shift, with a decreasing working-age population and an increasing number of retirees. This trend places pressure on pension systems and healthcare infrastructure.

Economic Growth Concerns: Countries like Germany are experiencing economic stagnation due to a shrinking workforce and challenges in maintaining industrial competitiveness.

3. Health and Environmental Issues.

Noncommunicable Diseases: The WHO reports that noncommunicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer, account for a significant portion of premature deaths in Europe. Factors like high alcohol and tobacco consumption contribute to these health challenges.

Climate Change: Europe is experiencing the fastest warming among WHO regions, leading to increased heat-related deaths and agricultural disruptions.

Prognosis for the Future of European Civilization.

Optimistic Scenario: A Resilient and Unified Europe.

Strategic Autonomy: Europe strengthens its geopolitical position by fostering unity among member states and forming strategic alliances like Weimar+ and the European Political Community.

Economic Innovation: The adoption of green technologies and digital transformation leads to sustainable economic growth, mitigating the impacts of demographic challenges.

Health and Environmental Stewardship: Proactive measures to combat noncommunicable diseases and address climate change result in improved public health and environmental sustainability.

Pessimistic Scenario: Fragmentation and Decline.

Geopolitical Instability: Internal divisions and external pressures lead to weakened alliances and diminished global influence.

Economic Stagnation: An aging population and lack of innovation contribute to economic decline, increasing reliance on external powers.

Health and Environmental Crises: Inadequate responses to health challenges and environmental degradation result in public health emergencies and ecological collapse.

Conclusion:

The future of European civilization hinges on its ability to adapt to demographic shifts, embrace technological advancements, and foster unity among its diverse nations. While challenges are significant, proactive and coordinated efforts can pave the way for a resilient and prosperous Europe.

Question: Can you say, what are the chances for positive and negative scenario?

Chat JPT said:

The chances of a positive or negative scenario for the future of European civilization depend on how key challenges are addressed in the coming years. While it's difficult to predict exact outcomes, we can evaluate the likelihood of each scenario based on current trends, ongoing developments, and the strategies that European leaders and institutions are implementing.

Chances for Positive Scenarios.

Strategic Autonomy and Stronger Geopolitical Unity.

Likelihood: Moderate to High.

Europe is actively working to increase its geopolitical autonomy, particularly as the influence of the US wanes in global affairs and with ongoing geopolitical tensions (e.g., Russia's aggression in Ukraine). The formation of alliances like Weimar+ and the European Political Community (EPC) demonstrates a move toward greater political cohesion.

However, these initiatives are still in early stages, and internal political divisions (e.g., the rise of populism) could slow down progress. If the EU can strengthen its defense capabilities, diversify its strategic partnerships, and avoid internal fragmentation, this positive scenario has a strong chance of materializing.

Economic Growth Driven by Green and Digital Transformation.

Likelihood: Moderate.

The EU's Green Deal and the digital transformation offer strong potential for long-term sustainable economic growth. Investment in renewable energy, smart cities, and green technologies could lead to new industries and high-paying jobs.

However, Europe's aging population, economic inequality between member states, and the complexity of the green transition (e.g., cost, regulation) may pose obstacles. While the green economy is growing, it will require considerable investment and policy coordination across EU countries to ensure broad success.

Health and Environmental Stewardship.

Likelihood: Moderate.

Europe's proactive stance on climate change and efforts to reduce emissions under international agreements (e.g., the Paris Agreement) have shown promise. The EU's goal to be carbon neutral by 2050 is ambitious and signals a genuine commitment to environmental sustainability.

On the health front, Europe is investing in healthcare innovation, preventive care, and environmental health policies. However, health crises, such as those caused by pandemics or noncommunicable diseases, could still strain resources. If policies are robust and global cooperation increases, this positive scenario is achievable.

Social Cohesion and Inclusivity.

Likelihood: Moderate.

Social cohesion in Europe is a priority, with an increasing focus on human rights, gender equality, and the integration of immigrants. Policies like inclusive education and diversity-driven labor markets could help mitigate social divisions.

The challenge lies in the rise of nationalism and populism, which threatens to reverse gains in social integration. Economic inequality and the struggle to maintain social stability amid migration may create tensions. If Europe can manage diversity effectively and foster stronger social safety nets, the chances of a cohesive society remain promising.

Chances for Negative Scenarios.

Geopolitical Instability and Fragmentation.

Likelihood: High.

The EU faces significant external and internal threats. Russia's aggression in Ukraine and China's geopolitical ambitions complicate Europe's security landscape. Moreover, the Brexit example shows how political fragmentation can disrupt European unity.

Internal divisions are deepening in some EU countries due to the rise of populism, nationalism, and opposition to European integration. Economic disparities between Eastern and Western Europe, combined with differing national interests, further exacerbate the risk of fragmentation. The threat of more countries opting to leave the EU or refusing to cooperate on key issues (e.g., defense, climate change) is substantial.

Economic Decline and Growing Inequality.

Likelihood: Moderate to High.

Europe's aging population, coupled with declining birth rates and increasing pension burdens, presents a significant economic challenge. While technological advancements and green investments can provide some economic stimulus, they may not be enough to counterbalance the demographic shift.

Economic inequality between member states remains a persistent problem, with poorer countries struggling to keep up with the wealthier nations. A failure to address these disparities could lead to growing social unrest and an erosion of trust in European institutions. Economic stagnation in key countries like Germany could have a ripple effect across the continent.

Health and Environmental Crises.

Likelihood: Moderate.

Climate change presents an undeniable threat to Europe's future, with the region experiencing more extreme weather events, heatwaves, and flooding. These environmental factors could disrupt agriculture, infrastructure, and public health, especially if mitigation efforts fail.

Public health also remains a concern, as the rise in noncommunicable diseases (e.g., cardiovascular diseases, cancer) and the potential for future pandemics could overwhelm Europe's healthcare systems. Failure to address these health challenges in time could strain social stability and economic productivity.

Rise of Authoritarianism and Political Polarization.

Likelihood: Moderate to High.

The rise of populist and nationalist movements across Europe has undermined democratic institutions and stability in some countries. Leaders with authoritarian tendencies in countries like Hungary and Poland are challenging EU norms and values.

A shift toward authoritarianism could weaken Europe's commitment to human rights, democracy, and rule of law, leading to internal political instability. This could also result in reduced public trust in the EU and its institutions, further deepening the fragmentation of the continent.

Social Unrest and Identity Crises.

Likelihood: Moderate.

Europe is grappling with challenges related to immigration, identity, and cultural assimilation. Nationalist movements are capitalizing on fears of losing national identity due to immigration, which fuels xenophobia and social unrest.

Additionally, inequality and the erosion of social safety nets could lead to rising tensions between different social groups. Youth unemployment, particularly in Southern Europe, could further exacerbate these tensions. If left unaddressed, these issues could result in widespread social protests, violence, and the erosion of social cohesion.

Overall Prognosis.

Based on the current trends and challenges, the likelihood of negative scenarios (particularly geopolitical instability, economic decline, and political fragmentation) appears to be high, especially given the existing geopolitical tensions, economic disparities, and internal divisions.

However, Europe has significant opportunities to mitigate these risks by:

- Strengthening EU unity and cohesion;
- Pushing forward with green and digital transitions;
- Addressing demographic challenges through immigration and labor force participation;
- Fostering social cohesion and inclusivity in a rapidly changing world.

If Europe can overcome its internal divisions, address economic inequalities, and remain a leader in sustainability and technological innovation, the chances of achieving a positive scenario are still strong. The next few decades will be critical in determining whether Europe can adapt to these complex challenges and position itself as a resilient, unified civilization in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Question: Can you say, what are the chances for positive and negative scenario?

DEEP SEEk said:

Prognosis for the Future of European Civilization: A Deep Analysis

European civilization stands at a crossroads, shaped by historical legacies, contemporary challenges, and global shifts. Drawing from **current trends (as of mid-2024), historical patterns, and geopolitical forecasts**, here's a structured prognosis:

Key Factors Shaping Europe's Future

1. Demographic Decline & Immigration

- **Problem:** Aging populations, low birth rates (1.5 avg. fertility), and labor shortages threaten economic sustainability.

- **Opportunity:** Controlled immigration (skilled workers, cultural integration) could mitigate decline – but political resistance is high.

- **2024 Status:** Rising far-right parties (e.g., AfD in Germany, Le Pen in France) oppose multiculturalism, while pro-migration policies struggle.

**2. Geopolitical Vulnerabilities

- **Russia's War in Ukraine:** Energy insecurity, military spending surges, and NATO's expansion redefine European security.

- **U.S. Commitment Uncertainty:** If Trump wins in 2024, Europe may need autonomous defense (EU army talks accelerating).

- **China's Influence:** Economic dependence on Chinese EVs, tech, and rare earths risks strategic subordination.

**3. Economic Stagnation vs. Green Transition

- ****Stagnation Risks:**** Germany's industrial decline, debt crises (Italy, Greece), and competition from U.S./Asia threaten growth.

- ****Green Opportunity:**** EU's ****Green Deal**** could make it a leader in renewables – but costs and populist backlash (farmers' protests) loom.

****4. Cultural & Political Fragmentation****

- ****Rise of Far Right:**** Elections in 2024 (EU Parliament, France) may shift policies toward nationalism, anti-EU sentiment.

- ****Urban vs. Rural Divide:**** Progressive cities (Berlin, Barcelona) clash with conservative hinterlands over identity, climate policies.

****5. Technological Lag vs. AI/Innovation Potential****

- ****Lagging Behind U.S./China:**** Few tech giants (no European Google, TikTok), reliance on American AI, semiconductor shortages.

- ****Potential Breakthroughs:**** Strong research (Sweden's AI, Dutch ASML), but scaling up remains a challenge.

****Scenario Probabilities****

| Scenario | Probability | Key Characteristics |

| ****Managed Decline & Adaptation (40 %)**** | Most Likely | Slow economic growth, controlled immigration, EU survives but weaker, green transition partial. |

| ****Renaissance 2.0 (20 %)**** | Possible If Reforms Succeed | Tech boom, federalized EU, demographic recovery via pro-natalist/AI-driven labor policies. |

| ****Fragmentation & Nationalist Backlash (30 %)**** | High Risk | EU erosion, trade wars, anti-migrant policies, conflict with Russia escalates. |

| ****Civilizational Collapse (10 %)**** | Unlikely but Possible | Major war (NATO-Russia), economic collapse, mass emigration, climate disasters. |

****Prognosis: Most Probable Path (2025-2050)****

1. ****Short-Term (2025-2030):****

- ****Political turbulence**** (far-right gains, EU struggles to reform).
- ****Economic stagnation**** (energy costs, deindustrialization in Germany).
- ****Security focus**** (higher military spending, Ukraine war frozen).

2. ****Mid-Term (2030-2040):****

- ****Either:****
- ****Gradual federalization**** (if pro-EU forces win).
- ****Disintegration**** (if nationalism dominates).
- ****Demographic crisis deepens**** (robotics/AI may offset labor shortages).

3. ****Long-Term (2040+):****

- ****Best Case:**** Europe becomes a "green superpower", balances U.S./China.
- ****Worst Case:**** Declines into irrelevance, overshadowed by Africa/Asia.

****Final Verdict****

- ****Positive Scenario (Renaissance 2.0): 20 %**** (needs bold reforms, unlikely without crisis-driven unity).

- ****Negative Scenario (Fragmentation/Decline): 70 %**** (current trajectory favors slow erosion).

- **Catastrophic Collapse: 10 %** (requires multiple systemic failure).

Recommendation: Europe’s future hinges on **immigration policy, tech investment, and EU cohesion**. Without rapid adaptation, it risks becoming a secondary power in a multipolar world.

Scenario Probabilities		
Scenario	Probability	Key Characteristics
Managed Decline & Adaptation (40 %)	Most Likely	Slow economic growth, controlled immigration, EU survives but weaker, green transition partial.
Renaissance 2.0 (20 %)	Possible If Reforms Succeed	Tech boom, federalized EU, demographic recovery via pro-natalist/AI- driven labor policies.
Fragmentation & Nationalist Backlash (30 %)	High Risk	EU erosion, trade wars, anti-migrant policies, conflict with Russia escalates.
Civilizational Collapse (10 %)	Unlikely but Possible	Major war (NATO-Russia), economic collapse, mass emigration, climate disasters.

*We all have our time machines, don't we.
Those that take us back are memories...
And those that carry us forward, are dreams.*
H.G.Wells

CONCLUSIONS

Today, futurology is not yet a science, at least not in the classical sense. It is more of an interdisciplinary field that combines elements of sociology, economics, politics, and so on. However, perhaps the best tool for studying social processes is history. The extrapolation of historical processes from the past to the present and future sometimes allows us to “glimpse” a hypothetical tomorrow. Researchers often use the so-called “historical experience” – a certain set of events and phenomena that have already led to specific outcomes. Of course, analogies do not always work, but this model has a right to exist. Therefore, futurology can be seen as a kind of “history of the future”, with the key difference that, in classical history, events have already occurred and cannot be changed, while in the “future”, they have not yet happened and are thus variable.

Understanding future prospects is necessary in all spheres – from business and public administration to science, education, and ecology. Planning is especially important for young people – the architects and builders of Europe.

European civilization is undoubtedly one of the cornerstones of modern global development. Its foundations can be found in the Greco-Roman world, in barbarian traditions, and in the Christianization of Europe. The concept of individual good, as part of the common good, came to dominate thanks to the ideas of the Reformation and defined future development. In turn, this shaped the core idea of modern European civilization – the existence of a citizen who lives by their own labour and owns private property. The need to protect private property gave rise to modern democracy and shaped social relations.

Since the Age of Great Geographical Discoveries, European civilization has made itself the centre of historical development. The search for new meanings of the public good was difficult for Europe itself and was hard-won through numerous mistakes – from bloody religious wars to the creation of colonial empires.

A crucial factor in the development of European civilization was scientific and technological progress, which transformed it into an industrial civilization. This foundation enabled Europe to continue developing and transition into a post-industrial society. Progress made comfort accessible, changed the perception of it, made daily life, education, medicine, transportation, and communication easier, allowed

for better standards of living, and completely reshaped how those standards are understood.

Europeans have also long been interested in the search for an ideal society. Some unsuccessful attempts at this pursuit included totalitarian models such as imperial chauvinism (in its colonialist form), communism, fascism, and Nazism. The more successful ones involved a symbiosis of the individual and the collective, the national and the supranational, and, ultimately, the emergence and establishment of liberalism. It is liberalism that has made the modern idea of European civilization appealing to the world. European civilization has always laid claim to the universality of its culture and values. The most powerful driver of this influence is imitation. Some adopted the external features – comfort, scientific and technological development – while others embraced the core: democracy, human rights, the balance between individual and societal interests, collective security, and personal self-expression.

Interestingly, the ideas of liberalism are actively devalued in totalitarian societies, as they pose a threat to such regimes. It is from those societies that one hears about the “crisis of democracy”, the “systemic crisis of parliamentarism”, the “degradation of democratic institutions”, or the “stupidity of the electorate”, and so on. Notably, such statements are not always part of deliberate disinformation campaigns – sometimes they are simply the product of long-standing educational and ideological systems. This is clearly visible in the so-called “post-Soviet space” (especially in the Russian Federation), where the words “democrat” and “liberal” have acquired a negative connotation. Democracy is certainly not perfect, but all its alternatives are worse.

Europe withstood the turbulence of the 20th century – two World Wars, the post-war division of Europe, and the looming threat of nuclear catastrophe. The collapse of the USSR and the democratization of Eastern Europe were perceived as an opportunity to finally live in peace. Understandably, Europe became absorbed in building its own house and began to transform from the centre of global history into a political periphery. However, the 21st century brought new “old” challenges. It turned out that decolonization never occurred in Russia, which continues to operate according to imperial patterns. Ultimately, the imperial model of development relies on an expansive path – acquiring new territories, populations, and resources. And without Ukraine, this imperial project is doomed to fail.

Thus, once again, Ukraine finds itself on the border – the border between East and West, between democracy and totalitarianism, between free development and the imperial paradigm. And there is every reason to believe that this time the desire for freedom will prevail, and Ukraine’s return to the European family may become one of the most important institutional decisions of the 21st century, shaping Europe’s development for centuries to come.

In truth, it is not only Ukraine, but all of humanity that once again stands at a crossroads. In world history, there have been cases where advanced civilizations de-

generated or even disappeared entirely – along with their cultures, political traditions, and economic systems. Could the same happen to European civilization, as it could to any other? Theoretically – yes. Some are already anticipating a Third World War and a global redistribution of power. But is that outcome guaranteed? No.

We are living in a new era – an era of change. A technological leap lies ahead, possibly involving integration with artificial intelligence, the miniaturization, robotization, and virtualization of life. We already learn about global events almost the moment they occur. What seemed unshakable yesterday disappears in days, and what appeared eternal is now subject to scrutiny. History has accelerated – vast flows of information that were unimaginable a hundred years ago now spread across the globe in seconds. Our era is the era of globalization, geopolitics, geo-ideology, geostrategy, geoeconomics, geofinance, and geoculture. The world has compressed. We have new meanings, a new worldview, and a new space. And it turns out that democracy is essential – because it works – and it is headed for a renaissance, one tied to the use of modern digital technologies: electronic plebiscites, voting, and public polling. We are living in the tomorrow that begins today.

In this context, European civilization (or the so-called “collective West”) has long become not just a way of life, but an idea. It is a value – a value worth fighting for. And this idea has a future. There is no “end of history” as long as humanity exists.

People must once again look to the sky – and give names to the constellations.

AFTERWORD

The idea for this book emerged in the fall of 2021, when a new university course for students was being planned – although I had always been interested in futurology, and I’ve been fascinated by science fiction since my teenage years. Eventually, a lecture course was developed, but almost none of it made it into this edition – that’s how it goes sometimes. Until February 2022, the book was envisioned quite differently – both in structure and in content. Its central theme was to be the history of Europe, and a chapter on Russian history was also planned, but it is not included here. The purpose of the book also changed – from a comprehensive analysis of the prospects for European civilization to an emphasis on its development in the Ukrainian context.

The conditions under which this book was written can hardly be called “academic”. In the first year of Russia’s full-scale invasion, it was impossible to write – and whatever was done happened more on “autopilot”. Due to my health, I was unable to join the fight. Life under air raid sirens, hiding from shelling in a basement, the lack of medicine and food, waiting anxiously for news from loved ones, evacuating from a semi-encircled city, staying in evacuation, the first losses – people I knew, people I taught. Coming home, hearing the buzzing of Shahed drones overhead, rocket explosions, energy blackouts, and hours without electricity.

Some of these experiences found their way into this publication. A book created in a particular historical era becomes, in itself, a historical document. And yes, this book was written by a historian. Working on it gave me a chance to express thoughts I may have wanted to voice, but could hardly have done so within the bounds of my usual academic focus – the history of Ukraine in the 14th–18th centuries.

A few words to fellow historians. Studying current events – which many historians would interpret as political – often entails using specific types of sources, ranging from opinions on Facebook or X (Twitter) to something as mundane as a “matchbox label”, which might serve as a vivid sign of the times.

This book draws on a fairly broad range of sources. Where necessary, statistics and official documents (laws, decrees, regulations, etc.) were examined – usually the least controversial for historians, though even such documents can mislead researchers. Personal sources – social media posts or blogs, interviews, reflections, and so on – are subjective, but sometimes more representative than official records. Perhaps most factual content came from the news, which explains the extensive use of media sources – websites, newspapers, magazines, news aggregators, TV productions, and so on. But the Internet includes both original sources and reposts. Where possible, original sources were cited; in other cases, reposts were referenced. This

is partly due to the nature of the Internet – information doesn’t remain on all servers for long. A “secondary” source was also cited when a particular news item was widely repeated across multiple outlets. In some cases, the choice of source aimed to reflect a certain societal or individual response. At the time of publication, most Internet links were still active. When URLs were too long, they were shortened using appropriate services (such as sURL).

Numerous footnotes in the book refer to encyclopaedic sources – including Wikipedia. This allows the author to avoid lengthy explanations of terminology, saving time for both writer and reader. The particularity of Wikipedia is that it is freely editable, but all changes are tracked on the article’s page. To avoid potential confusion, readers should check the date of edits and align it with the publication date of the book.

Another challenge lies in tracing the original source of many ideas, as some have become common and widely used. I’ve come across the saying: “So much has already been said by people that any new thought is just someone else’s quote.” When I asked an AI (in this case, Copilot) to identify the author of this phrase, the response was: “It might be a modern interpretation or a free adaptation of an idea expressed by many thinkers – from Montaigne to Mark Twain.” Whether fortunately or not, many ideas spread quickly and become shared by a wide circle of intellectuals, political commentators, and journalists. Therefore, I make no claims to authorship of most of the ideas presented – it is entirely possible that someone has said something similar before, and the thought simply resonated in my reasoning, especially when dealing with the subtle boundary between past, present, and future.

Forecasting is generally an ungrateful task – even if you succeed, you’ll either be misunderstood or your words twisted. And if you fail – even more so. When an expert is always right, they’re not an expert – they’re an insider. I’m not sure everything predicted will come true; timelines may shift, because the future is variable. Even if some predictions don’t materialize, they will serve as examples of expectations – and thus become evidence of an era. One more note: I tried not to write about “bad” things in the book, although, as it’s said, “bad sells better”.

A word about subjectivity – both mine and the reader’s. I make no claims to absolute truth. Every person is entitled to their own political, religious, aesthetic, or other preferences. Consider, for example, the 2024 Paris Olympics opening ceremony. In one much-discussed video, some saw an allusion to the Last Supper, others – a pagan ritual. The difference in interpretation is wonderful – the alternative to diversity is uniformed masses marching across large squares under the same flags.

And finally. I hope that if you’re reading these lines, it means you’ve read the book – and therefore have formed your own opinion about it. I’ll be grateful for any constructive feedback or corrections. If there’s a second edition, I’ll be sure to consider them.

Every day, 2,753 new books are published worldwide.⁷⁶¹ I'm not sure this one will become a bestseller. Its main task is to contribute its share to the advancement of European development – because the known alternatives (totalitarian, authoritarian, or “hybrid” regimes, “managed democracies”, etc.) tend to be rather terrifying. The American writer Richard Bach once said that one way to choose a future is simply to believe it is inevitable. I've also heard the half-joking claim that historians can change the past for the better. I'll add this: it is a rare privilege to help change the future for the better.

Victory will be ours.

⁷⁶¹ According to the online store Toner Buzz, 1,005,000 books are published globally each year – about 2,753 books per day.

Abstract

Ihor Kondratiev. Perspectives on European Civilization: The Ukrainian Context

The main aim of the study is to determine the prospects of European Civilization through the role of Ukraine in its past, present, and future.

The section devoted to the possibilities of scientific forecasting of the future examines the role of prediction in human life. Modern futurology is an attempt to model a general concept of the future by combining social, economic, and technological processes of the present. Scientific forecasting relies on appropriate scientific methods selected according to the defined object and subject of study, the formulated aim, and specified tasks.

Historical research can become an important tool for forecasting, as what is to happen in the future is based on the past and the present.

The historical process does not guarantee absolute repetition, which necessitates classifying forecasts as probable, possible, or unlikely. This led to the emergence of a section on the realities of forecasting. Science fiction played an important role in the development of scientific forecasting. Works of science fiction accompanied the development of science and rapid industrialization. Many modern innovations were described by writers long before they actually appeared. Scientists' forecasts also play a significant role in scientific progress.

Understanding the research problem would be incomplete without grasping the core ideas underlying the existence of European Civilization. This section focuses both on the foundations and on the contemporary aspects of its development. A key role in this process was played by the emergence of Protestantism, which influenced the development of bourgeois relations. The formation of capitalism requires individual freedom and the existence of private property. In turn, the need to protect private property gave rise to modern democracy, the goal of which is to protect the citizen-owner. The political formation of nations also played a role in the development of European Civilization.

The religious factor is considered separately. Christianity became Europe's civilizational, political, and cultural choice. However, a byproduct of religiosity can be a lack of critical thinking, dogmatism, and fanaticism. Therefore, attention should be paid to what unites – the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) share many commonalities. In modern Europe, the number of atheists is also significantly increasing.

The book includes a historical overview that presents Ukraine's history as part of European history. Ukraine has long been situated on the border between

West and East, between sedentary (agricultural) and nomadic (pastoral) ways of life. The frontier situation is not unique, especially for Europe, as intercivilizational contacts have generally been the norm rather than the exception in world history.

The core history of Ukraine is part of the history of European Civilization. The formation of statehood began at least from the time of the Norman conquest. In the 14th century, the territory of Ukraine became part of major European powers – first the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and from 1569, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Constant struggles with the Muscovite state, the Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman Empire gave rise to the phenomenon of Ukrainian Cossacks. And although such social groups are well known in world history, this one stands out by establishing its own state – the Hetmanate (Zaporizhian Host), and the Ukrainian national revolution of the mid-17th century can be considered part of the broader European revolutionary movements of the 16th–18th centuries. The vassal dependence on the Muscovite state, accepted by the Cossacks at the Pereiaslav Council, ultimately led to the liquidation of the Hetmanate.

The chance to once again follow the path of statehood emerged after the end of World War I. In March 1917, the Ukrainian Central Council was established in Kyiv, and in November, the Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed. However, it was soon seized by Moscow and turned into a proxy state – the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Only in 1991, when Ukraine gained independence from the USSR, did Ukrainians have a new chance to live in a free country – until 2014, when Russia invaded Ukraine. This war continues to this day.

Considering the potential threat of Russian aggression to all of Europe, a separate section is devoted to the prospects for ending the war. Among other things, it explores the causes of Russian aggression, the potential for the continuation of the war, Russia's demands on Ukraine, and possible options for resolving the conflict.

The need for reforms in Ukraine and the threats it faces in the coming years are addressed separately. Notably, the demographic problem and the development of social institutions (so-called “social capital”) are highlighted. The state of the economy and labor productivity are considered, and the necessity of changes in political and social spheres is emphasized.

The section “Quo vadis, Europe?” attempts to define the prospects of European Civilization. Among the greatest challenges are demographic shifts and the associated migration issues. The attitudes of Europeans toward social values and societal problems remain traditionally important. The prospects of the European economy and security issues are also addressed.

The final section of the study was created by Artificial Intelligence, which was asked the following questions: “How is the concept of ‘European civilization’ de-

fined?”, “What key factors influenced its formation?”, and “Were there alternatives to its emergence?” AI also identified the strongest and weakest aspects of European civilization and forecasted possible development scenarios – both positive and negative.

In conclusion, it is asserted that not only Ukraine, but also Europe – and all of humanity – once again stands at a civilizational crossroads.

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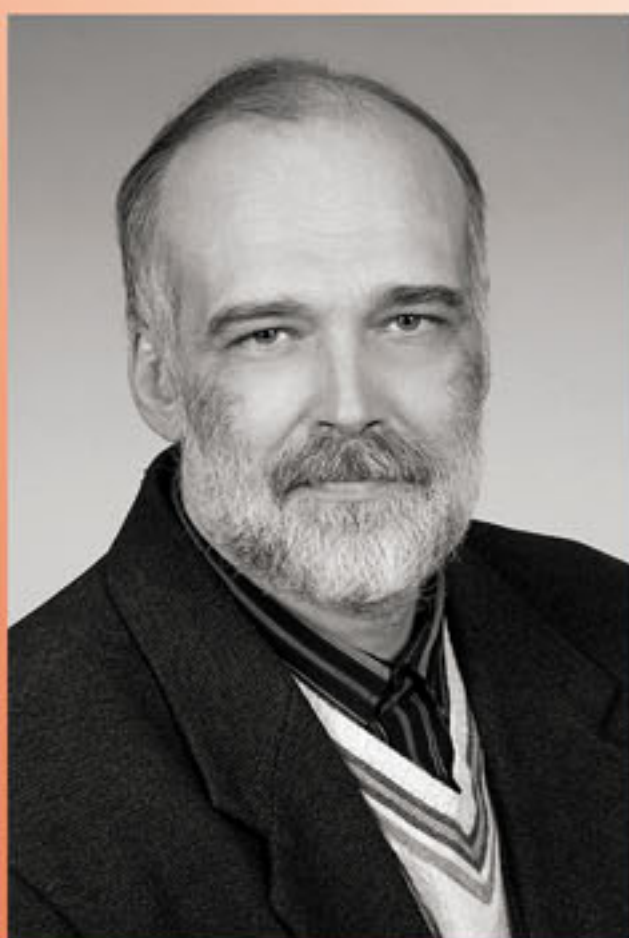
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Among other subjects, he has taught courses such as History of Eastern Religions, History of Christianity, Global Contemporary Issues, Medieval History of Europe and America, and Prospects for European Civilization. He is the author of around 150 scholarly and educational-methodological works, including five monographs.

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