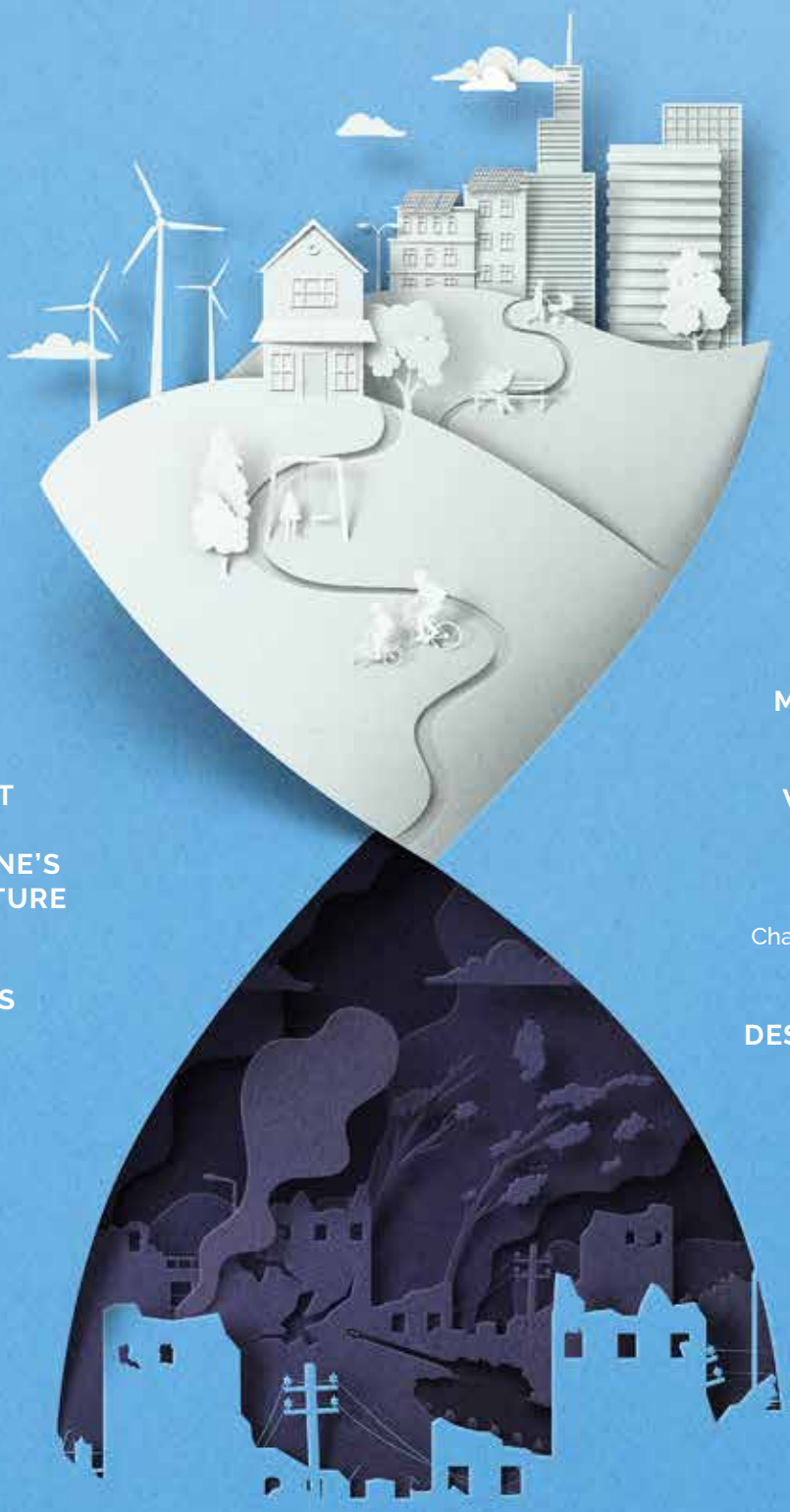
Diplomaatia

Special edition of the Lennart Meri Conference 2022



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EEVA EEK-PAJUSTE
Director of the Lennart Meri Conference
at the ICDS

Tempus Fugit – Time Flees

September 2021, the date of the last Lennart Meri Conference, seems eons ago. Russia's savage war in Ukraine is already in its third month, its fallout landing from Central Asia to North Africa, from the Indo Pacific and the Middle East to Finland and Sweden.

This 15th Lennart Meri Conference was originally intended to mark the 30th anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union and to discuss what was achieved in the brief window of opportunity that followed. President Lennart Meri always reminded us that we were in a great hurry. We in Estonia ran and managed to join NATO and the EU. As usual, President Meri was right - the window soon closed again.

But unfortunately, we are now forced to remember instead a different, rather grim anniversary: the centennial of the creation of the Soviet Union which will fall in December. Russia's imperialistic, colonial war against Ukraine and its direct threats to Georgia, Moldova, and other states and regions has shown how badly, and for how long, the West has misread Russia.

And so regrettably but unavoidably, our conference this year will be centred on the war in Ukraine. We have always sought to use the Lennart Meri Conference to bring Russian expertise to Tallinn. In 2022, with the world asking what is going on in Vladimir Putin's mind and in Russian society, this is more important then ever. We will discuss how state propaganda and limited rights to memory affect the Russian mindset, and the role of Russian and Belarusian exiles.

But Russia's war has far greater reach than its battlefields. It is no exaggeration, even if it has rapidly become a cliché, that 2022 will be a game-changing year for European and global security. The EU, NATO, the international organisations that could not prevent the war, the atrocities, and the crimes against humanity. What should they learn to be relevant in the future?

And how should we respond in domains other than the conventional military. What do we need to do in cyber space, social media, music, culture, intelligence, energy, and arms control?

One thousand years ago, Kievskaja Rus was born in Kyiv. Now, Europe's fate may be determined in the same place. We need to use our collective wisdom to find the best ways to help Ukraine and to shape our own future. Urgently. Time flees.

Slava Ukraini! Слава Україні!
#StandWithUkraine

> *We must not allow ourselves to tire of, or become resigned to, Russia's war in Ukraine.*

ALAR KARIS
President of Estonia and
Patron of the Lennart Meri Conference
pp. 4–5

> *If you are not afraid, Russia will lose.*

HANNA SHELEST
Director of Security Programmes,
Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"
pp. 16–19

ALAR KARIS
President of Estonia and
Patron of the Lennart Meri Conference

Evil is Real: Time to stand up

What words are there when a country launches an all-out attack on its neighbour? "Evil is real," I posted on Twitter on the morning of 24 February. We must recognise the evil of Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and be more courageous in our response.

The peace that had reigned in Europe since the end of the Balkan wars seemed to many to be permanent. The prevailing mindset was that conflict between nations which in the 20th century would have culminated in war could now be resolved diplomatically. Russia's attack on Georgia in 2008, its annexation of Crimea in 2014, and its overt support for separatists in Donbas were not enough to shake this faith in peace.

A murder admitted to in advance

Russia's aggressive foreign policy certainly rattled those countries that feel Moscow's chill breath on their necks. But in many capitals, the frayed nerves on the eastern edge of NATO and the EU were looked upon with a certain disdain. We were, they asserted, merely suffering from post-traumatic stress due to our history. More tactful, but no less dismissive, were the reassurances that central and eastern Europe had nothing to fear: there was no chance of Russia starting a war in Europe.

Those who said these things have been forced to admit that they were wrong and that we were right all along.

Some countries favoured positive engagement with Russia. They hoped that tying up a dangerous, neurotic partner with economic deals would result in mutual dependence and the partner losing all interest in going to war. This too was a mistake – as many of those who pursued it have now admitted.

There is no *schadenfreude* to be derived from this, at least for me. I feel only heavy-hearted. Nonplussed that even in Estonia in late 2021, the prevailing thought was that as much of a danger as Russia presented, it was very unlikely to launch a large-scale military attack in Europe. We did not want to believe that this irrational solution was possible.

My legal adviser, Hent Kalmo, one of Estonia's foremost philosophers of law, wrote in the cultural weekly *Sirp* that, "In hindsight, the attack against Ukraine reads like the story of a murder admitted to in advance. Up until the very last moment, no one wanted to see it as anything other than a diplomatic manoeuvre, or to believe that the wheels of the Russian war machine were about to start rolling."

In many capitals, the frayed nerves on the eastern edge of NATO and the EU were looked upon with a certain disdain.

Many of us failed to recognise this evil for what it was. It was simpler to believe that Russia would eventually come to some sort of agreement with the West. We hoped that international organisations would be able to maintain peace, but none of them – from the UN down – could prevent this conflict.

We found it hard to comprehend that Russia would choose geopolitical isolation and act, as Tsar Alexander III once said, as though its only allies were its army and its navy.

And when Russia did launch its brazen war of conquest against Ukraine, intent on destroying the nation, we announced that … we would not get involved. We would give Ukraine weapons, yes; we would pile political and economic sanctions on Russia, yes; but the West would not intervene on Ukrainian soil.

I think that was a mistake. It reassured Russia that the war would remain a matter between Moscow and Kyiv.

Averting further catastrophe

One idea that I have written about bears repeating. The time has come for us to get over our fear of thinking outside the box. Russia is blockading Ukrainian ports, including grain vessels. World Bank president David Malpass has warned that the war will exacerbate the food crisis in many poorer countries, with record rises in food prices - as much as 37% - leaving hundreds of millions of people below the

bread line. "This is a human catastrophe," he said, "which will soon become a political challenge for governments."

As Western allies, we must not be afraid to debate whether and how, in the spirit and letter of the UN Charter and if invited to do so by the Ukrainian government, we could act to keep the port of Odesa open to Ukrainian grain vessels. The Ukrainians say that their silos already hold 20 million tonnes of grain, likely to rise to 50 million tonnes after this year's harvest. This is too large an amount to be delivered to the global market by railway. Selling it would both earn Ukraine the money it needs to keep running, and help to alleviate the food shortage casting a shadow over poorer countries. The West should assert itself on the Black Sea and guarantee the safe passage of commercial vessels. This would be a true humanitarian mission, particularly for countries in Africa.

Certainly, reaching such an agreement would be very difficult, requiring political will and courage on the part of many countries, including Turkey, which would have to allow warships to escort grain vessels through its straits into the Black Sea. But I harbour hopes – much as they may be dashed – that Russia would not dare to attack Western ships protecting grain vessels in Ukrainian territorial waters.

When Russia launched its brazen war of conquest against Ukraine, intent on destroying the nation, we announced that ... we would not get involved.

We must do more

I recently asked one of Estonia's most astute ambassadors what he thought this war has taught us. "Diplomacy without strength does not prevent war," he said. "Nor does mutual economic dependence when you are dealing with an authoritarian regime. What is needed is the physical presence and deterrence of a united NATO."

No doubt all of us have felt powerless in the face of the images emerging from Russia's war in Ukraine. Governments have been pressed to explain why they are not doing more to stop the aggressor.

And that is what we must do: more. We must provide Ukraine with more, and more effective, weaponry so that it is better able to defend itself. We must impose on Russia more targeted and more powerful sanctions. We must help to document war crimes, because there are faces and names behind every manifestation of evil – those who commit them, and those who order them to be committed. We must enter Ukraine on humanitarian missions, like safeguarding grain vessels or clearing mines.

We must be resourceful. We must be determined. We must be courageous. And we must not allow ourselves to tire of, or become resigned to, this war.

From left: Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Latvian President Egils Levits and Estonian President Alar Karis meeting in Kyiv, 13 April 2022. AP/Scanpix

When Reality Bites

Russia's war in Ukraine is not over, but it is not too soon to start thinking about what comes next – for Ukraine's future, and our own.

MATTI MAASIKAS
Diplomat
The author writes in a personal capacity

In a 2014 article for the Financial Times, Simon Kuper writes: "History in the west often serves as entertainment, something to enjoy from a comfortable distance, rather like a horror movie. That is the spirit of much western remembrance of 1914 this year. In the Balkans, though, history is fresher, more vicious, always about to jump out and bite the present." As far as I am concerned, "eastern Europe" could be added to this sentence. Eastern Europeans of my generation have first-hand experience of big history – the liberation brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union. We know that history can happen, for better or for worse. It cannot be ignored by hiding your head in the sand.

In the past, wars began with flags, parades, and a declaration of war, which could then be followed by weeks or even months before hostilities broke out. Many things are different today. Apart from intelligence services and the military, European air traffic controllers were among the first to learn of Russia's attack on Ukraine. In the early hours of 24 February, Russia issued what is known as a NOTAM to Eurocontrol, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, notifying it of the closure of Ukrainian airspace. This was an unusual announcement. Countries tend to close only their own airspace, not that of neighbours. And Russia did not conceal the fact that the reason for the closure was military action.

I slept three hours a night at that time. A phone call from a high-ranking European transport official at 04:09 Kyiv time

did not wake me. Irresponsible, maybe, but that was how, at around 5 o'clock, I found out what it feels like to wake up to explosions – an experience that, as a European in his fifties, I had fortunately so far avoided.

Eastern European perspectives

In western Europe, this would be unthinkable. As a rule, people can relate personally to two generations before and after them – your grandparents and your grandchildren are the ones you see and whose stories you hear. The sun's extinction in a few billion years is unlikely to be a personal concern for most people today, but the effects of climate change by 2100 may well be. Looking back, the Second World War is beginning to have only academic meaning for most Europeans. As this was the last major upheaval for western Europe, geopolitics tends to be a more theoretical concept towards the western edge of our continent. Furthermore, western and eastern Europeans often have quite different understandings of the war, its conclusion, allied relationships, and similar matters. The dividing line runs where Stalin's troops came to a halt and never left.

European air traffic controllers were among the first to learn of Russia's attack on Ukraine.

Geopolitics is mainly based on geography and history. It is only natural that living along the edges of the continent, on the borders of civilisations, in the Last Homely House as it were, one develops a sharper sense of geography. The same goes for history, as Simon Kuper suggested.

This difference in experience between western and eastern Europe also explains our different responses to the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the war in Ukraine that began in 2014. In eastern Europe, there was (and still is) great anger, but no shock. As the late Estonian history professor Enn Tarvel put it a few years ago: the question is not whether the Russians will return, but when they will return? I would qualify this by pointing out that, as a responsible NATO member with high defence spending, the question for Estonia is rather: when will the Russians make an attempt to return? For the inhabitants of the Last Homely House, this is reality, always about to jump out and bite.

For the western part of the continent, however, 2014 was a shock. It never occurred to them that two decades of appeasing Moscow might be one of the reasons why the Kremlin decided it could

Parts of the Monument of Friendship lie on the ground as municipal workers dismantle it in Kyiv. EPA/Scanpix

afford to start a war in Europe. At a Foreign Affairs Council meeting in November that year, the foreign minister of a western European country raised his voice at his Lithuanian colleague, who had called for a tougher response to Russia's actions, saying: Linas, I understand that you have your own historical experience, but we need to conduct sensible foreign policy here! The bitter fact that Europe was at war had still not sunk in. Or, people just did not want to accept the fact that Ukraine is part of Europe, that Donbas is in Europe, in our immediate neighbourhood.

From the perspective of normal human experience, there was nothing surprising about this exchange. A distance of two generations makes horrors feel merely theoretical, right? In her excellent book, *The War That Ended Peace* (2014), Canadian historian Margaret MacMillan describes how wars in pre-World War I Europe, from the time of Napoleon onwards, either took place quickly and with little pain, like the wars of German unification between 1864 and 1871; or they were fought far away and did not directly affect the Europeans, like the colonial wars. A century or so later, Crimea and Donbas seemed to fall into the same category.

Mistakes of the past

Too soft a reaction to the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas was just one of the mistakes the EU (and the West in general) made. Even worse was taking the responsibility to end the war too lightly. Creating the so-called Normandy format in June 2014 was understandable – you seize the opportunity and talk to those who are there and open to talking. Excluding the European Union and the United States was shortsighted even then. But proclaiming this format to be the only diplomatic process to end the war, even when not much had been achieved in the seven years from February 2015, was irresponsible. And not only on the part of the participating countries, Russia, France, and Germany (Ukraine made several proposals to expand the group over the years), but also the Americans and the other EU Member States. We let this format tick along, telling ourselves that, well, there is a process – we have Normandy, we have

Geopolitics tends to be a more theoretical concept towards the western edge of our continent.

Minsk, and the OSCE Trilateral Contact Group. Even when we saw that nothing really was being achieved, Russia wasn't picking up the phone, the war was dragging on. But it was dragging on in a seemingly contained way and at a distance, like those colonial wars of the 19th century.

The third mistake was to pay insufficient attention to developments in Ukraine. This is a familiar experience to everyone in eastern and central European countries – the bloodlands, to use Timothy Snyder's chillingly apt description – which are often looked at through the prism of larger actors, without agency or rights of their own, as some function of greater powers. What went unnoticed was a fundamental difference between Russian and Ukrainian society. The latter has no trace of the former's fatalistic inclination to surrender to the will of the tsar, but instead has a strong pluralistic tradition and a growing aspiration towards Europe. Western foreign policy between 2014 and 2022 mostly still sought to treat Ukraine as part of the Russian problem, as a function of it. The European Union, a voluntary club that as far as possible avoids debating divisive issues, had not reached a clear conclusion on whether Ukraine was a country fighting a war on our behalf (the view of one group of member states, albeit with different nuances) or a breeding ground of corruption, draining billions of euros for hard-to-understand reasons and little return (the view of another group of member states, also with nuances). We should not support a corrupt country

Too soft a reaction to the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas was just one of the mistakes the EU (and the West in general) made.

for purely geopolitical reasons, the second group kept insisting.

Ukraine, meanwhile, had developed and freed itself to become far more than just a breeding ground for corruption. It is easy to see why it took the Ukrainians longer than it took, for example, for us in the Baltic countries. Ukraine had even less of a tradition of a state than we did with our two decades of independence in the interwar years. Ukraine was much more integrated with the Soviet system. And a flawed 1990s privatisation model had allowed a caste of oligarchs to emerge. If people do not yet have full trust in a newborn state and see that the market economy offers no just treatment either, then what should trust in that state be based on? This is why Ukraine's emancipation took time. The first warning shot rang out as early as the 2004 Orange Revolution, when people refused to accept blatant electoral fraud. When the same fraudsters sought to turn the country from its European course a decade later, the people rose up. In Ukraine, the years since 2014 have been a time of establishing democracy, the rule of law and European integration, despite all the difficulties and the poor starting position. Away from the old, away from the East, and to the West!

The European Union could not fully recognise this, the continent's greatest geopolitical shift of our time. Because of its roots in economic integration and its legalistic nature, the EU is probably at its most helpless when a country comes along and says: we want to be your friends! Brussels does not say: great, we need allies. Instead, it asks: what is the legal basis for our friendship? We are still a long way from geopolitical thinking.

Momentous shift

Many things have changed since 24 February this year. European leaders are no longer just talking about the need for dialogue (dialogue with an aggressor is, in any case, questionable) and are not refraining from action just out of a fear of 'provoking Russia'. The cliche that there is no military solution to the conflict, which is at best ignorant and at worst only serves to stoke further conflict, is, as far as Russia is concerned, forgotten. On the contrary, EU High

Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell said (in Kyiv, on 9 April) that the war will be won on the ground and the EU will do its part to help Ukraine win. The shift from the approach of just a few months ago has been momentous. The European Union, a peace project and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is coordinating its member states' military aid to Ukraine, with billions in funding! The sanctions policy of the EU, US, UK, Japan, and other countries is also different from past policies. If in 2014 we (the EU) said that the purpose of our sanctions was to make the Russian leadership change course, we now have the courage to say the aim is to have a massive and severe impact on Russia. Earlier in April, US President Joe Biden announced another package of sanctions to "ratchet up the pain for Putin and further increase Russia's economic isolation".

The response to Russia's aggression has brought along the best cooperation between democracies in decades. There is already talk of a rebirth of the West, a much tougher resistance to autocratic regimes than expected. The (at the time of writing, likely) NATO membership applications from Finland and Sweden show the attractiveness of the Alliance, which at the start of the war talked too much about what it could not do. And the Alliance is vigorously strengthening its eastern flank. However, it would be extremely careless and irresponsible to indulge in too much navel gazing about the historical moves we have made, and to leave our action related to the war unfinished or to procrastinate. So, let's get to work.

What must be done

First, we must help Ukraine win this war. Ukrainians must receive as many and as powerful weapons as they need. As the Kremlin is fighting with no holds barred, including the possible use of nuclear weapons, Western countries and organisations should not rule out military response either. Every show of weakness only tempts this aggressor. Our intent to respond to any use of chemical or nuclear weapons should be openly declared.

Also, we must say to ourselves and declare publicly that our policy will not end even if a ceasefire is established in Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy is the president of a democratic nation, and no one should criticise him if he decides that the number of his fallen compatriots is too high and he must make peace, no matter where the Russian forces are on the ground. Even if Ukraine is once again forced to accept a ceasefire at gunpoint, as in 2015, the West will still have the right to say that our goal of inflicting enough pain on Russia to rule out new aggression still stands. In addition, for both practical and moral reasons, we must say yes to Ukraine's aspirations to join Western organisations – the European Union and NATO. For practical reasons, because it is in our interests to have a large new ally in a strategic location. For moral reasons,

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (centre) looks at the covered bodies of civilians killed in Bucha, 8 April 2022.
AP/Scanpix

because Ukraine is a European country in terms of its history, culture and increasingly also in economic terms, contacts between people and even church affiliations. If such a country wants to become part of Europe politically too, if the Ukrainian people have decided to become European, then who on Earth has the right to say otherwise?

Second, we already need to think about what to do with an economically collapsed (and hopefully militarily neutered) Russia. As generals prepare for the last war, and diplomats for the last peace conference, the 20th century offers us two models for treating the vanquished: Versailles and the European Union. It would be extremely shortsighted to try to repeat either. We must start with a question that is closer in time: what mistakes were made in treating the losing side of the Cold War, and what can we learn from them? The Kremlin does not respond in kind to playing it nice; it responds by seeking to exploit the do-gooder and by looking for opportunities for revenge. How do we treat a defeated Russia this time? A new Nuremberg process for Russian war criminals is only part of the solution. The goal must be to render Russian aggression impossible for decades, at least for the two generations that we can realistically relate to.

Western foreign policy between 2014 and 2022 mostly still sought to treat Ukraine as part of the Russian problem.

Third, as many countries and organisations as possible must join these processes. We have no right to repeat the mistakes of narrow formats. All the more so as the things at stake, questions of good and evil, are not as clear cut from a global perspective as they seem to us in Europe and North America. Countries from India to South Africa, not to mention China, also see the war in Ukraine as the West versus everyone else. A side remark: a mission to Odesa by NATO or a coalition of the willing with the humanitarian goal of enabling export of Ukrainian grain to the poorest countries in the world would strongly mitigate this perception. So far as this mission is not on the cards, the continuation of such a perspective is very dangerous, both in terms of the international order and the effectiveness of our sanctions against Russia. But if the West – in fact, the entire democratic world – stands united and determined, we will manage.

A protester calls on the European Union to stop buying Russian oil, outside EU headquarters in Brussels in April 2022. AP/Scanpix

These Challenging Times Demand an Unbending Response

There can be no illusions about the rest of the world's relationship with a Russia ruled by Vladimir Putin.

LINAS LINKEVIČIUS
Ambassador-at-large,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

We sometimes like to say that we live in challenging times. Today, this is not just a throwaway phrase, but a statement of fact. Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine is testing Europe's resilience. For many, Russia's resumption of military violence was a great surprise. But for us in the Baltic countries and others in eastern and central Europe, it was not unexpected. We well remember that freedom is not given for free but has a price. The Soviet empire, and its successor state Russia, do not give up easily or peacefully. Today's new reality only confirms our warnings that Russia is not a state governed by the rule of law, and that it will respect international obligations and agreements only when it is in its own interests to do so. Russia treats the so-called 'near abroad' states as its back yard, an area of 'vital national interest', and expects the world to take this into account – if it does not, it will simply not be respecting Russia.

Anyone surprised that Russia now denies the Ukrainian people their statehood should recall the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. At the NATO-Russia Council, President Putin rebuked NATO leaders: "Who are you working with? With a country that does not exist, it is only an artificial derivative?" The Danish Prime Minister and future NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen tried to retaliate on behalf of the Alliance leaders: "Mr President, this is not the way we talk about our partners". Others simply shrugged. But some of us, though clearly a minority, insisted that Putin meant what he had said. Few believed it at the time, but Russia was already testing the West.

Georgia's forewarning

During the same meeting, the Allies also clashed among themselves over whether to grant Georgia and Ukraine the NATO Membership Action Plan. Some Allies categorically opposed this, arguing that it would provoke Russia. But the same minority of eastern Allies argued that, in fact, it would be not granting the Membership Action Plan that would provoke Russia. It would be a signal that the Allies

A mural of Hitler, Putin and Stalin created by graffiti artist Tuse in Gdansk.
EPA/Scanpix

were not ready to reach out to these countries and would allow Russia to feel unopposed there.

War broke out in the South Caucasus shortly after the summit. Russia occupied twenty per cent of Georgia's territory. The reaction of the West was sharp and principled, but very quickly faded away as the calls to be pragmatic and realistic grew louder. Just a few months later, the West returned to its usual rhythms of cooperation, hiding behind the deplorable formula of 'agreeing to disagree'. Some of us warned that letting Georgia fall would set a precedent for allowing Russia to act with impunity – Russia would certainly not stop at Georgia. I remember mentioning Transnistria and Crimea as future threats, although these possibilities seemed unlikely at the time. Our friend Ronald Asmus, a great supporter of NATO membership for the Baltic states, titled his book on the war, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*. It may have shaken the world a little bit but, unfortunately, it did not wake it up. The aggressor learned lessons and realised that the costs of its hostile occupation could be tolerated. But the West did not learn any lessons.

I remember mentioning Transnistria and Crimea as future threats, although these possibilities seemed unlikely at the time.

Russia turns on Ukraine

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 attracted more attention and resulted in more sanctions and the freezing of cooperation. But Russia saw no need to review its policies. Its war machine had been activated and would be very difficult to stop.

Towards the end of 2021, even the clear evidence that Russia was no longer limiting its interests to Donbas but was preparing for a major military invasion of Ukraine did not persuade some of our colleagues to take decisive action. They frequently repeated that in the event of an invasion sanctions would be crushing. We reminded them that, despite its denials, the Russian army had been operating on Ukrainian territory for a long time. The war had been going on for eight years already. We warned them that if an invasion was imminent, sanctions and preventive measures were needed now, not when Ukraine was destroyed, and thousands killed.

Even as Russia launched a full-scale invasion, not all Allies saw an immediate need to provide the maximum assistance to Ukraine to allow it to defend itself against the aggressor. It seemed to many that arming Ukraine would only prolong the conflict and result in more deaths and, even then, Russia would still win. However, it turned out that helping Ukraine paid off. Russia's planned three-day *blitzkrieg* failed and it was forced into a longer war. But the very fact that international organisations still cannot intervene to stop the brutal killings of civilians, women, and children in the middle of Europe shows their helplessness and leaves unanswered one of the most important moral questions: are civilian victims worth less if they are not members of NATO or the EU?

The UN's failings

There are other questions too. Do we have a credible, functioning, legal framework for resolving conflicts and wars in the world? The answer is no. When the UN Charter was drafted after the Second World War, it simply did not occur to the drafting countries that one of the victors over fascism, one of the permanent members of the Security Council, would itself become an aggressor and occupier. That it would violate basic human rights in the most serious way and abuse its veto in the Security Council. Now, not only is the UN Security Council unable to influence any aspect of the conflict, but it also cannot even pass resolutions to commit its members to the minimum standards of humanitarian protection for the victims.

Do we have a credible, functioning, legal framework for resolving conflicts and wars in the world? The answer is no.

The same happened in 1995 after the Srebrenica massacre, still remembered as a disgrace for the UN and the international community. In 1999, after much hesitation, NATO eventually decided to intervene to stop Milosevic's genocide of Kosovo Albanians. But even then, the UN had not issued a mandate to act. The UN can adopt General Assembly resolutions that take the patient's temperature, but do not make for a cure.

If the world's democracies fail to fundamentally revise the UN Charter after the war in Ukraine, confidence in global justice will fade even further, alongside the already fading belief in the values that democracy has failed to defend. Russia and Belarus have turned from autocratic regimes to totalitarian ones. In the international arena, they are exploiting the weaknesses of democracy and abusing legal loopholes and established mechanisms. They may use the same vocabulary as us, but their context is completely different. We play one game, say football, while they play by the rules of rugby.

Russia's macabre cynicism

For Russia, peacekeeping has nothing to do with peace – rather, it means military intervention to suppress undesirable regimes or leaders. I often say that Russians are the best peacekeepers. They take pieces of land – and they keep them. For them, negotiation means nothing but blackmail, used to gain time as they search for new places to apply political and military pressure while giving the impression of pursuing normal diplomatic processes.

I often say that Russians are the best peacekeepers. They take pieces of land – and they keep them.

In 1945, Churchill prophesied that, "The fascists of the future will call themselves anti-fascists." Today, Russia attempts to justify its aggressive actions with noble causes. It speaks of Ukraine's 'denazification', even as it uses Nazi methods and the ideology of the exclusive supremacy of the Russian nation to deny Ukrainians their own right to independent existence. There are often civilian casualties in war, but it is rare for an aggressor to deliberately target and kill civilians. It is macabre for Russia to claim that its soldiers are protecting civilians from genocide as they murder children, and rape and kill women.

There can be no illusion that Putin will give up his mystical geopolitical ambitions while he remains in power. There can be no tolerance of or illusions about the rest of the world's relationship with a Russia ruled by this leader. Every test of the West by Russia is a stress test. We must learn, albeit belatedly, the lessons we have failed to learn so far. Either our democracy withstands shocks and becomes stronger, or it shatters.

The grave of a civilian killed in Mariupol. Reuters/Scanpix

NIKOLAY NAZAROV
Director of the Research Centre for Regional Security,
Sumy State University

Ukraine's Resilience: Theory meets practice

Although for some years, the Sumy State University had developed a theoretical grasp of the subject, it was not until 24 February 2022 – when Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine – that I had my first real-life encounter with resilience.

When Russia invaded, very few Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel were in the Sumy Oblast. The idea that Russian troops would cross the border there had never been entertained. By lunchtime of the first day of the war, Russian tanks were rolling down the streets in central Sumy, but the occupiers' intentions were unknown to us. The Russian forces would eventually try to block the city, repeatedly open fire at it, and even attempt several times to storm it – all without success.

The importance of self-reliance

One of the key indicators of resilience is the ability of a society to self-organise which, in turn, is related to the levels of trust within the community and between the people and their local authorities. By the morning hours of 24 February, a line of volunteers had already formed at the Sumy military commissariat, waiting to be issued with weapons. The city had opened several humanitarian hubs, and civilians had already begun collecting items needed for defence purposes. The initial shock of seeing enemy tanks on the city streets had quickly transformed into a strong desire to be useful: to collect bottles for Molotov cocktails, to deliver food supplies to the local territorial defence forces, and to raise funds for buying weapons and equipment.

It soon became clear that the city and the region would have to rely primarily on their own territorial defence and guerrilla forces. The government's mobile defence strategy meant that the Ukrainian Armed Forces would only concentrate on certain axes of the enemy's offensive and would be unable to defend every town and village on the long frontline. When war broke out, many administrative and operational concepts had not been fully worked out or implemented. The early days of the war saw anybody with a national passport or an ID card join the defence force in Sumy with no regard to age limitations, although those with combat experience were preferred. The volunteers quickly outnumbered the available firearms, so many were allocated to the reserve.

The municipality was tasked with providing equipment and securing uninterrupted food supplies for the territorial defence forces. The city of Sumy was only partly controlled by Russian troops, allowing some logistical manoeuvrability. We were also able to capitalise on the preceding eight years of emigration – drawing on the Sumy diaspora community in Poland, the Baltic states, the Czech Republic and other EU countries to coordinate supplies. We were able to raise large amounts of funding in mere days and to swiftly place orders with foreign suppliers. A logistical hub was established in Poland to deliver items directly to Sumy. We could thus meet the city's need for medication and military supplies including uninhabited aerial vehicles, radio sets, body armour, thermal imaging goggles, and vehicles.

The war of the mind

The rapid evacuation of civilians was also important for the city's overall resilience. The local authorities scheduled 'humanitarian corridors' to allow women, children, and the elderly to leave by bus. The evacuation of the most vulnerable groups eased the strain on the city's logistics as basic goods and medical supplies were in short supply. Many evacuees, including families with children, continued to help their hometown after reaching safety. They managed fundraising for, and purchase and delivery of supplies from abroad.

Another success story was the 'special evacuation operation' for foreign students in Sumy. Before the war, the city had 1 700 foreign nationals from 50 countries studying at Sumy National University. In the very first week of fighting, Russian propaganda, speaking through President Putin himself, accused the authorities of holding these foreign students hostage – denying their exit from the city to use them as human shields. At the time, there were no safe exit routes from the city, so

evacuation was impossible. The university's administration and student council maintained constant contact with foreign embassies and the students were provided with everything they needed. They safely left the city as soon as an opportunity presented itself, also neutralising Russia's attempt to exploit foreign nationals for information operations.

Psychological resilience also plays a crucial role in wartime. Air strikes and artillery attacks on critical infrastructure in the first weeks of the war were meant to provoke panic among the civilian population. During this period, a broad spectrum of media personalities, analysts, public opinion leaders, and former and current officials worked through social media to maintain public morale. Most importantly, this initiative was not centralised. Social media posts reflected the authors' personal opinions and spheres of expertise. They were used to provide operational updates for the Sumy area, collect reports about enemy positions (special chat rooms were created for this), and share videos calling for specific actions that would be meaningful and practical.

One of the key indicators of resilience is the ability of a society to self-organise which, in turn, is related to the levels of trust within the community and between the people and their local authorities.

An excellent example is the Telegram chat room set up to allow thousands of Sumy residents to report the positions and movements of Russian military convoys on the regional motorways. It was often the case that shortly after the posting of these private messages, we had the satisfaction of reading reports that yet another Russian column had been destroyed overnight.

Street artists and comics also constantly looked for ways to use their talents to boost morale and to relieve psychological stress in people. The city organised concerts and small performances – the most memorable event was a stand-up comedy show held in one of the city's bomb shelters.

Sumy's experiences have highlighted the need to pay great attention to social cohesion if resilience is to be built against the uncertain nature of war. We never expected to find ourselves at the centre of hostilities and many of the processes we found useful were not in place at the outset. As Mati Raidma, a former member of the Estonian parliament, once said during an exercise in Sumy, "A moment of crisis devalues all the pre-existing formulas, and one can only rely on people around and cooperation among them." I agreed with him then. I can repeat his words with certitude now.

Destroyed Russian tanks in the Sumy Oblast, Ukraine, in March 2022. Reuters/Scanpix

Ukraine's Accession to NATO Would Be a Win for Both

Over the course of three months, Ukraine has fought for the values that underpin NATO. Its armed forces have shown courage, strength, and ability. It deserves NATO membership just as much as Finland and Sweden, while NATO deserves a strong Ally like Ukraine.

HANNA SHELEST
Director of Security Programmes,
Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"

"NATO is welcome to join Ukraine. Ukraine has an open-door policy towards NATO." Jokes like these were very popular in March 2022, just weeks after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. They mocked NATO's open-door policy for Ukraine and Georgia, echoing the wording of Alliance documents of recent years. But behind the jokes, relations between NATO and the aspirant countries are complicated.

Misperceptions and miscommunication

Ukraine has intensified the pace of its efforts towards NATO membership since 2019, when the goal of joining the EU and NATO was incorporated into the Constitution. In 2020, Ukraine received the status of NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner. And by February 2022, there were indications and hopes that Ukraine would receive special attention at the Madrid Summit in June, including clear wording in NATO's new Strategic Concept about its possible membership.

However, since February, there have been more questions about the prospects for Ukraine's relations with NATO than there have been visions. What had been presented as a possible obstacle – that if NATO enlarged Russia might commit acts of aggression against Ukraine - had happened even though, of course, no such enlargement had taken place. But many European politicians still failed to understand that preventing Ukraine from joining NATO, or even declining to offer the Membership Action Plan (MAP), had not avoided Russian

action – they had made it more likely, as the Kremlin understood that its threats had worked.

In March, top NATO officials issued a myriad of statements explaining what NATO could not do. It could not implement a no-fly zone, could not provide military jets, and could not put boots on the ground. This was the biggest mistake of the Alliance's strategic communications during the first weeks of the war. These statements created the image of a weak, incapable organisation. In Ukraine, memes claiming that "NATO is the most cowardly organisation" became popular and were further promoted by pro-Russian actors.

At the same time, some Ukrainian politicians had exaggerated expectations about NATO due to their misunderstanding of its capacities. These misunderstandings were amplified through widespread confusion about the Alliance's and individual Allies' capabilities, and the lack of decisions from NATO was perceived and presented as a failure. More and more politicians started to doubt NATO's capabilities to assist Ukraine in the war, and even the value of pursuing integration with this 'weak' organisation. A sociological survey conducted biweekly by the Rating group found that support for Ukraine joining NATO rose from 62% in January to 76% in March, but by April had dropped back to 68%.

Since February, there have been more questions about the prospects for Ukraine's relations with NATO than there have been visions.

Ukraine and NATO had fallen into a vicious circle. NATO officials regularly repeated that the Alliance could not protect Ukraine because it was not a member (for many years, the same officials had often argued against providing the MAP so as not to raise risks for Ukrainian and transatlantic security). Ukraine, in its turn, argued that if NATO did not want Ukraine as a member, it should say so openly, so that Ukraine could seek alternative security arrangements.

NATO is more than Article 5

Just a few experts and politicians were able to explain that for Ukraine, the NATO process was not only about getting the Article 5 collective defence guarantee. The Ukrainian Armed Forces had gained a great deal from the reforms and training carried out to achieve NATO standards. The differences in military culture

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy talks to journalists in the town of Bucha. AFP/Scanpix

between the Ukrainian and Russian Armed Forces were evident from the very first days of the war. The readiness of mid-ranking Ukrainian officers to take responsibility (as against Russia's rigid military hierarchy), improved coordination and communication, and the flexibility to quickly adapt to Western-provided weaponry, ensured that the Ukrainian armed forces could mount a defence that was much more durable than many European politicians expected.

> More and more politicians started to doubt NATO's capabilities to assist Ukraine in the war, and even the value of pursuing integration with this 'weak' organisation.

The absence of clear messages about Ukraine, however, helped Russian malign influence operations in eastern European states, where doubts about NATO's abilities to protect them are widespread. Ukraine and NATO desperately needed a change in communication strategy – a shift in messaging from what NATO could not do, to what NATO had done or could do. This shift became visible after the 24 March extraordinary NATO Summit, where in both a public statement and the text of the Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government, the rhetoric changed. But the issue of Ukraine's membership started to be silenced.

Finlandisation of Ukraine

From time to time, for almost two decades, there have been proposals to introduce a Finnish model of neutrality to Ukraine. Finland's acceptance of a neutral status after World War II was presented as a way to secure its sovereignty and independence. The 2019 changes to the Constitution of Ukraine appeared to make such an option impossible. Nevertheless, it was raised again at the Russian-Ukrainian talks in Istanbul.

For the last two years, Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has talked a lot about the need to create bilateral or multilateral alliances to enhance the security of the state. The proposals have included the Lublin Triangle (Ukraine-Poland-Lithuania), the Ukrainian-Turkish Quadriga format, and the recent Ukraine-Poland-United Kingdom agreement. Initiatives like these, though, were not perceived as alternatives to NATO, but as supplements to be pursued while full membership of the Alliance was not feasible.

After the Istanbul negotiations, the media reported proposals - claimed to be Ukrainian ones - that Ukraine might agree to a neutral status and reject any perspective of NATO membership, but would in exchange receive so-called security guarantees. The reports outlined principles: that these new guarantees should be more effective than the assurances of the Budapest memorandum; that they should be stronger than NATO Article 5; and that the list of guarantors should be long. Points in the proposals about the provision of military support and heavy weaponry could not be presented as benefits, however, as Ukraine had already received such support without any security guarantees.

One immediate problem was that nobody was able to explain what was meant by "stronger than Article 5". Very soon, states such as the UK asserted that the Article 5 principle of collective defence could only be realised within NATO. The key question remained: exactly what security guarantees could Ukraine accept that would be worth abandoning its sovereign right to choose security alliances?

A second significant issue was the list of potential guarantors. Eleven countries were named at first – Canada, China, Israel, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, Turkey, the US, and the UK – with possible additions if other countries expressed their intent. This list looked suspicious. It would be nonsense to believe in guarantees from Russia, which has violated any number of multilateral and bilateral agreements. China never guarantees the security of others and, moreover, took a quite pro-Russian stance early in the war. Italy and Israel were also deeply influenced by Russia initially and only started to slowly change their rhetoric regarding the war in May. Germany, which had blocked the supply of weapons to Ukraine before the war, and only decided to begin supplying weapons itself after two months of vigorous explanation of why it would not, was another curious addition to the list.

> The differences in military culture between the Ukrainian and Russian Armed Forces were evident from the very first days of the war.

> The media reported proposals that Ukraine might agree to a neutral status and reject any perspective of NATO membership, but would in exchange receive so-called security guarantees.

While this process of negotiation and the search for security guarantees was taking place, non-aligned Finland, which was always presented as an example for Ukraine decided, in the face of the Russian threat, to reject its decades-old posture and apply to join NATO. The Russian Federation thus achieved the opposite of what it had planned. Russia had identified NATO enlargement as an 'existential threat', but its unprovoked aggression would now lead to a greater NATO presence on the eastern flank and possibly the quickest ever accession of two new members – Finland and Sweden.

NATO's double standards?

One unfortunate aspect of this development is that it has highlighted the unequal treatment of Ukraine and Finland. While the two countries share a border with the Russian Federation, and Moscow has threatened both, Finland and Sweden were encouraged to join NATO from the moment they announced their

cautious reconsideration of their status, while Ukraine has spent years knocking at NATO's supposedly open door. In April, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that "Finland and Sweden would be embraced with open arms should they decide to join the 30-nation military organisation and could become members quite quickly".

Ukrainian experts naturally supported the Nordic states joining NATO, but at the same time had reasonable questions to ask. Why were Russian threats and the Russian border not considered obstacles for Finland, while they have been for Ukraine for decades? Even if the promised quick pace of accession can be explained by the high level of democratic development in Finland and Sweden and their interoperability with NATO, why have Ukraine and Georgia never heard that they too would be embraced with open arms? For the past few years, it has seemed that NATO's doors were open, but new members were not really welcome.

Russia had identified NATO enlargement as an 'existential threat', but its unprovoked aggression would now lead to a greater NATO presence on the eastern flank and possibly the quickest accession of two new members.

Three months of war have demonstrated that the Ukrainian Armed Forces and people deserve to be part of NATO, and that the Alliance would benefit from Ukraine's admission. Although the armed forces have for some time worked on interoperability, their rapid adaptation to and practical experience with Western-supplied weapons has accelerated their transformation enormously. Ukraine has the real war experience that many NATO member states lack. And Ukraine's belief in democratic values and principles has been proved by its readiness to fight for them.

Three months of war have demonstrated that if you are afraid of Russia or its actions, you will lose before the fighting even starts. If you are not afraid, it is Russia that will lose. Ukraine is strong now both because of its own forces and resistance, and because it feels NATO members behind it. It is time for a paradigm shift for the NATO-Ukraine-Russia triangle. The Alliance should stop thinking about Moscow and start thinking about itself, and how much stronger it can be with Finland, Sweden, and Ukraine in its ranks.

NATO personnel prepare for the arrival of Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba at NATO headquarters. AP/Scanpix

Support Ukraine, Help Ukrainians!

Ukraine needs our help to defend itself. You can volunteer for NGOs, host war refugees, or donate.

Russia's war in Ukraine has changed Europe in ways that could not be imagined just a few months ago. Today, Ukraine is defending Europe. We need to stand with Ukraine until the Kremlin is stopped and held to account.

Слава Україні! Героям слава! #StandWithUkraine

URGENT HUMANITARIAN HELP

Razom

Razom's Emergency Response project was created to provide urgent help and support in the face of the extreme and unforeseen situation in Ukraine. Today, the sovereign nation of Ukraine has to deal with the most horrendous and catastrophic emergency – a brutal invasion. Razom is responding to this by providing critical medical supplies and amplifying the voices of Ukrainians.

razomforukraine.org

The National Bank of Ukraine – Humanitarian Assistance to Ukrainians Affected by Russia's Aggression

The account is meant for charitable donations from Ukraine and from abroad. Money transferred to this account will be used by the Ministry of Social Policy:

- to provide food and shelter for refugees and citizens that have been displaced due to military conflict
- to provide clothing, shoes, and medicine for them
- to buy staple goods for the population
- to pay out one-off financial aid and to meet other essential needs of the population.

bank.gov.ua/en/

DEFENSIVE HELP

The National Bank of Ukraine – support Ukrainian army directly

The National Bank of Ukraine has opened a special fundraising account to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine directly. The central bank's decision comes after the Ukrainian government imposed martial law throughout Ukraine in response to armed aggression by Russia and the renewed threat to Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity.

bank.gov.ua/en/

Come Back Alive

Come Back Alive is Ukraine's largest army support foundation. It is supplying thermal imagers and night vision devices, mobile surveillance systems, UAVs, mine clearance kits, and other high-precision equipment to military personnel deployed to the Joint Forces Operation in Donbas.

www.comebackalive.in.ua

HELP THE PEOPLE

Save the Children

Distributing essential humanitarian aid to children and their families. Delivering hygiene kits. Providing cash grants to families so they can meet basic needs like food, rent and medicines. Working to help children overcome the mental and psychological impacts of conflict. Providing access to safe, inclusive, quality education.

www.savethechildren.org.uk/where-we-work/europe/ukraine

Voices of Children

Charitable foundation Voices of Children helps children affected by the war in eastern Ukraine. The foundation provides psychological and psychosocial support to help Ukrainian children overcome the consequences of armed conflict.

voices.org.ua/en/

United Help Ukraine

United Help Ukraine (UHU) is working to provide life-saving individual first aid kits (IFAKs, containing blood-stopping bandages and tourniquets) and other emergency medical supplies to the front lines. In addition, UHU is also cooperating with other emergency response organizations to prepare humanitarian aid to civilians directly affected by Russia's attack.

unitedhelpukraine.org

What to Expect from Madrid?

When NATO heads of state and government meet in Madrid at the end of June, they are expected to adopt a new Strategic Concept, the high-level document that sets out the threats facing the Euro-Atlantic area and NATO's role in dealing with them. Camille Grande, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment shares his expectations for what is likely to be NATO's most significant summit in decades.

MARTIN HURT
Research Fellow, ICDS

When NATO last adopted a Strategic Concept, in 2010, Europe was at peace and Russia was seen as a potential strategic partner. China was not mentioned at all. Today, Russia has determinedly turned its back on cooperation with the West and has launched a full-scale war of aggression on NATO's border, while China has emerged as a major global player. Clearly, there is a lot to do at Madrid. Can we begin this conversation with the deliverables you expect the summit to produce?

There is every reason to believe that we will have a momentous summit in Madrid, as it comes at a very specific time in Europe's post-Cold War history – with the return of major war on NATO's borders and the brutal use of levels of force not seen since World War II. In this context, this NATO summit is critical in terms of deliverables – let me highlight three.

The first one is, of course, NATO's Strategic Concept – a document that is endorsed only once in a decade. The last Concept dates back to 2010. Madrid will present an opportunity for the Allies to deliver the most important document after the Washington Treaty. It will also be an opportunity for the heads of state and government to share their vision for the years to come. This document, currently being negotiated by the Allies, aims both to capture the state of affairs in the world and in NATO itself and to formulate our core objectives.

The second point concerns the further adaptation of the Alliance. Since the illegal

annexation of Crimea in 2014, we have embarked on a significant effort to adjust our military posture and defence spending, and we have, indeed, achieved much progress. Now is the time to take it to the next level. We started our discussions as the crisis in Ukraine was unfolding, and it is going to be a major element on the agenda in the runup to the Summit.

Clearly, NATO will need to focus on collective defence and reinforcing our capabilities to shield the Allies from any potential threats on the eastern flank, while retaining the 360° approach because challenges on both the southern and south-eastern flanks (including from Russia) remain. This is a very significant aspect that will drive the Alliance from the military standpoint in the coming year.

Last but not least, there is the implementation of the package, known as 'NATO 2030'. This envisions making the Alliance fit for purpose, as well as guaranteeing that it can address new threats and new challenges. It revolves around climate change, innovation, and technology with the goal of preserving our military edge.

Let me clarify the third point – implementation of the NATO 2030 package. Is this going to be a progress report, or is it a strategic paper to be adopted?

It is a series of concrete decisions that we expect, regarding common funding, tackling climate change, innovation, our priorities across the board and mechanisms for consultation. All of these were already adopted in principle at the 2021 Brussels Summit. Now is the time to enact these decisions.

It must link well with the Concept: we will have a vision in place and some concrete decisions to implement. But moving forward, how did the events that unfolded on 24 February impact what had already been in the pipeline in January and February from Brussels' perspective?

What has happened in NATO since 24 February is, indeed, impressive. Not only did we stand together politically and preserve our cohesion, but we also demonstrated a very strong unity in our response to the crisis in Ukraine - both in terms of supporting Ukraine and in terms of what is necessary to protect all Allies from a possible Russian escalation on NATO territory.

CAMILLE GRAND

Camille Grand has been NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment since 4 October 2016.

He was previously Director and CEO of the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS), the leading French think tank on defence and security (2008-16). His research and publications focused on defence policy, NATO, nuclear policy, and missile defence.

He was also Deputy Director for Disarmament and Multilateral Affairs in the Directorate for Strategic, Security and Disarmament Affairs of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006–2008). In that capacity, he was in charge of chemical and biological non-proliferation and conventional arms control, and served as French representative in several international negotiations and senior groups within the EU and NATO.

Prior to that, he was Special Assistant for International Affairs and Deputy Diplomatic Adviser to the French Minister of Defence (2002–2006), in charge of international defence and armament cooperation, policy planning, and nuclear and missile defence policies.

His publications include several books and monographs and numerous papers in European and American books and journals on current strategic affairs, primarily focused on defence policy, European security, NATO, nuclear policy, missile defence, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Source: NATO

All national leaders, as well as the Alliance itself, have repeatedly sent a crystal-clear message. And this has not been in words only. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, a large portion of our troops in the Euro-Atlantic area (more than 40 000 people) have been put under SACEUR's direct command. Such swift and decisive action is unprecedented. NATO sent a very strong signal, indicating that an escalation of the war in Ukraine into our territory would not only be a terrible idea, but would also be met with our collective resolve and exceptional military capabilities.

Of course, the lingering issue is what lessons we should draw from this conflict. We have seen not only Russia's weaknesses but also President Putin's willingness to use massive force and his complete lack of restraint in military conflicts. This knowledge obliges us to be very solid in our collective defence commitments and our defence posture. NATO might be gradually shifting from forward presence to forward defence on the eastern flank. This probably does not mean a return to a Cold War posture – the numbers on both sides are not there yet. However, it demands that we think through the requirements of collective defence and the risks of a major conflict – specifically, how we can prevent and deter a conflict by taking the right decisions. It is about pushing further and harder towards military adaptation and strengthening our defence and deterrence posture across the board. NATO must be capable of addressing any potential threat and sending a very clear message: there is no loophole or gap in our defence and deterrence posture, and all the Allies will be protected.

If we speculate about the potential accession of at least Finland and possibly Sweden to the Alliance, how would this development affect security in the Baltic Sea region specifically and in Europe more generally?

It is, first of all, their decision. This is a core difference between NATO and Russia: it is for countries to decide whether they apply and then to go through their

national democratic processes. We ought to respect the outcome.

That being said, Finland and Sweden are obviously two very close partners – they are what we call 'enhanced opportunities partners' and have been for many years. We have been working with them on interoperability, as well as on a number of other themes. They have recently participated in several NATO-led crisis management missions. These factors make their military interconnectivity significantly easier than with other Allies who had a much longer road to walk in order to reach full interoperability. This is the good news: should they join, their military integration will be relatively easy.

Their potential accession creates a more robust defence on our northern flank and in the Baltic region. Estonia is, of course, familiar with the fact that it might feel a little bit lonely up there. Having Finland and Sweden on board changes the strategic calculus, facilitates a number of scenarios, and undoubtedly makes a valuable contribution.

> *Since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, we have embarked on a significant effort to adjust our military posture and defence spending, and we have, indeed, achieved much progress. Now is the time to take it to the next level.*

The bottom line is that we would bring two serious countries on board – our two very close partners. Should they decide to join, NATO will significantly enhance their security, but so will they complement NATO's security - not only in the region, but more broadly.

I fully agree with this assessment, and this is precisely how we see it in

> *Not only did we stand together politically and preserve our cohesion, but we also demonstrated a very strong unity in our response to the crisis in Ukraine – both in terms of supporting Ukraine and in terms of what is necessary to protect all Allies from a possible Russian escalation on NATO territory.*

Estonia. Now, let us pivot to NATO's approach to Russia. How will it look like in the near future and also in the longer term?

Firstly, we must recognise that NATO did try to engage with Russia and establish a partnership. There were moments in the early 2000s when such a partnership was taking shape: we had a number of exchange programmes, joint working groups and, of course, the NATO-Russia Council.

It was a deliberate decision by President Putin himself to turn his back on NATO. One could say that from 2008 and onwards, he has been continuously escalating in that direction. Unfortunately for Europe, President Putin shattered the pillars of European security: not only the NATO-Russia Council, but also the arms control treaties, the OSCE commitments etc.

We have witnessed an escalation not only in Mr Putin's rhetoric but also in his actions vis-a-vis NATO. In this context, NATO has to take stock of the situation and finally recognise that Russia does not fall into the partner category at this point.

We certainly hope that we will be able to rebuild a mutually beneficial dialogue with Russia. However, under the current circumstances, this does seem increasingly difficult. There is no willingness on the part of Russia to engage. Thus, for the time being, our relationship is primarily meant to preserve some deconfliction measures and avoid escalation by continuing minimal levels of transparency. We maintain that NATO is not at war with Russia. We have always been a defensive alliance, and we intend to stay a defensive alliance. Nevertheless, we do stand ready to defend ourselves in the situation in which Russia demonstrates zero interest in engaging constructively with the Allies on any topic whatsoever.

Let me ask a follow-up question. You mentioned preservation of the existing deconfliction measures. Do those measures work as intended? Do they exist at this point? What is their current status?

I am going to answer with rather general words on this matter, if I may. What I would say is that for the time being, some caution is exercised – certainly by NATO – in order to avoid any misunderstanding of our actions and those of the Russian forces.

With regard to the deconfliction mechanism, we do not have a robust mechanism in place akin to that employed in Syria, for instance. Obviously, there is always readiness on our part to keep the channels open to avoid any unwanted escalation or unfortunate accidents.

I suggest we switch to China. How will the new Strategic Concept reflect NATO's approach to China?

We do include China in our strategic thinking. It is a relatively new subject for NATO since China was hardly mentioned previously. Today, we have to realise that we have already entered an era of strategic

> *Finland and Sweden's potential accession creates a more robust defence on our northern flank and in the Baltic region. Having them on board changes the strategic calculus.*

competition. China is no longer a rising power but a major player on both the Asian and global stages. This is the reality we have to take into account.

We also have to recognise that in the context of the war in Ukraine, China has, to a large extent, sided with Russia. It has endorsed the Russian government's narratives and criticised NATO's alleged role. As an Alliance, we do have to take note of that.

We also have to understand that even if we were to try to ignore China, it has already come rather close to our shores and our borders. We do see limited joint exercises in the Baltic Sea and in the Mediterranean. We do see China's presence in cyber space and space proper that could pose challenges to NATO. Hence, we have to think through how this China dimension comes into play.

I will not elaborate on the exact words for the Concept because they are still under consideration. We are essentially contemplating how to move forward recognising that China is, in fact, part of the strategic competition environment. China is, however, different from Russia, since it remains open for a real dialogue whenever our interests might coincide on some issues, such as arms control and climate change.

To conclude, is there any other subject you would like to highlight that might be relevant in view of the upcoming Madrid Summit?

I would like to focus on my own portfolio and responsibilities to keep NATO's military edge. We, in the West, have been complacent, believing ourselves to be uncontested leaders in the military domain. But recent events and technological developments by Russia and China, as well as by others, have proven that this is not always the case in all domains. We really need to stay at the top of our game, which means focusing on innovation and defence investment today, as well as investment in the future, to guarantee that not only do we have the best equipment, but also the command and control and cyber defence capability. It is a precondition for NATO to remain what it has always been – the strongest military alliance in human history.

> *We certainly hope that we will be able to rebuild a mutually beneficial dialogue with Russia. However, under the current circumstances, this does seem increasingly difficult. There is no willingness on the part of Russia to engage.*

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen visiting Tapa garrison, Estonia, in March 2022. Jürgen Randma / Government Office of Estonia

KYLLIKE SILLASTE-ELLING
Director General of the Security Policy Department,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

Charting NATO's Future: The new Strategic Concept

NATO is putting together a new Strategic Concept. The process, which began last September, will be completed in June, in time for the Madrid Summit, where the new concept will be adopted. Alongside the North Atlantic Treaty, the Strategic Concept is one of the Alliance's most important policy documents. It is a strategic document that quite literally focuses on the big picture: NATO's key objectives. NATO's first Strategic Concept was completed in 1950, shortly after the Alliance was created, and its first publicly announced concept was rolled out after the Cold War, in 1991.

What must NATO do?

The previous Strategic Concept was adopted in 2010. The fundamental principles that NATO stands by have not changed since then. Ensuring the freedom and security of all members remains its main purpose. NATO is the key security organisation in the Euro-Atlantic area and will remain so. However, the 2010 Concept, which sees Russia as a strategic partner and only deals in passing with new threats such as cyber attacks, is clearly outdated. Even those long sceptical about the need for a new strategic concept have now realised that the current document, which was adopted more than a decade ago, is no longer relevant. What is needed is a concept that takes account of the new political and military efforts launched by NATO in recent years and helps to integrate them into a single strategic whole.

The central question that the concept must answer is: what are NATO's core functions? In other words, what must NATO do to continue to ensure security in the Euro-Atlantic area? It is clear that the security environment – in our region and beyond – has changed enormously recently and is bound to become even more fragile in the coming years. The threats are getting more serious and new topics are constantly arising. It is crusial to single out the most important tasks because in the end, NATO cannot and should not deal with everything.

The central question that the concept must answer is: what are NATO's core functions?

According to the 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO has three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security or partnerships. There is widespread agreement among the Allies that all three continue to be relevant and should underpin the new concept. However, it is also clear that both the security situation and NATO's priorities have changed since 2010. As a result, the importance of each task and the balance between them have inevitably changed too. In 2010, NATO placed much emphasis on crisis management operations, such as its mission in Afghanistan. Today, with Russia's aggression against Ukraine, NATO must have a clear focus on collective defence and its defence and deterrence stance. However, it is not yet clear how this will be addressed in the Strategic Concept.

What is clear is that it will not be easy to reach agreement on balancing the three core tasks and on other fundamental issues, such as how to deal with partnerships or China. Every Allied nation, including Estonia, has its interests to protect. Each Ally has its own threat perception. While it is important for us to highlight the Russian threat and collective defence, other Allies may prioritise partnerships and events in the Western Balkans. NATO's priorities – both old and new – must be set out, but it would obviously be unreasonable to list them all. The Allies must make choices and reach compromises to avoid ending up with an overcrowded wish list. It takes time to reach a consensus on such an important document. Fortunately, several weeks have been planned for discussions among the Allies.

Threats

Regarding the details of the document, the Allies agree that the first part - on the security environment - definitely needs to be updated. The threats we face today are very different from those of ten years ago. According to the 2010 Strategic Concept, the threat of a conventional attack against the Alliance at the time was low. Today, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this assessment clearly no longer holds. The security environment, both globally and in the Euro-Atlantic

Every Allied nation, including Estonia, has its interests to protect. Each Ally has its own threat perception.

area, has become more complex and unstable over the last decade. Competition between states has markedly intensified. New adversaries as well as new threats have emerged that NATO must take into account.

The threat to security in the Euro-Atlantic area posed by Russia is manifest and must be unequivocally highlighted in the new Strategic Concept and formulated as clearly as possible. In addition, the threat of terrorism and new challenges, such as climate change, new and groundbreaking technologies, space, and China, must also be reflected. While the 2010 Strategic Concept points to an increase in the likelihood of cyber attacks, the new concept needs to pay much more attention to cyber issues, especially given the great emphasis NATO has placed on developing its cyber capabilities in recent years. Most importantly, the description of the security environment must be realistic, not based on hopes, but on indisputable facts.

For Estonia, the preparation of a new Strategic Concept is an excellent opportunity to contribute to guiding NATO's activities in the coming years. This is only the second Strategic Concept that we have been involved in preparing as a NATO member. As NATO's Strategic Concepts are updated approximately once a decade, rather than every year or at every summit, we need to take this process very seriously.

Our desire is to produce a forward-looking document that will not lose relevance in a few years' time. On the other hand, we have no certainty about what the world will be like in five or ten years. We can only rely on the current security environment and trends. We need to be as realistic as possible about the future and flexible in our plans because the security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area may change unexpectedly. Ultimately, only time will tell whether the new Strategic Concept will meet the challenges lying ahead.

The threat to security in the Euro-Atlantic area posed by Russia is manifest and must be unequivocally highlighted in the new Strategic Concept.

Russian soldiers run past an S-400 air defence battery, in Crimea, in 2010, the year NATO last published a strategic concept.
TASS/Scanpix

Finland and Sweden in NATO: Completing the *mare nostrum*

In the next few months Finland and Sweden will likely become the 31st and 32nd members of NATO. What kind of Allies will they be, and what will this mean for the security of the Nordic-Baltic region?

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Finland hopes to be an observer member of NATO by the time of the Madrid Summit in June 2022, and a full member by the end of the year. Sweden will likely follow the same course. This unexpected turn of events will complete the *mare nostrum* imagined by the 2014 Lennart Meri Conference, with the Baltic Sea finally becoming an EU and NATO 'inner sea'. NATO will admit as members two stable Nordic democracies that have few illusions about Russia and will contribute a set of robust military capabilities to the Alliance's collective defence effort. The implications are various, ranging from an opportunity to reimagine the defence of the region to a need for Finland and Sweden to adjust their strategic cultures. What kind of members will Finland and Sweden be?

To everyone's surprise, it was the voice of the Finnish people that led Finland to the cusp of joining NATO. Viewed from May 2022, Finland's domestic processes and deliberations on seeking NATO membership may look preordained, but even in

early April, NATO membership was neither the only nor perhaps even the preferred solution of the political leadership. It quickly became clear to the political decisionmakers, however, that the foundation of Finland's post-Crimea security policy had cracked. Supported by a majority of the population, much of the political spectrum turned its attention to shepherding Finland towards NATO membership. By late April, two-thirds of the population supported this, having recognised even before the political leadership that Finland must not await Ukraine's fate.

To the dismay of at least some Swedes, the vox pop tidal wave quickly spread to their shores too. After a few initial stumbles, such as suggesting that membership would destabilise the region (when in reality it would be Russia's reaction that would do that) and trying to talk the Finnish political leadership out of the 'NATO process', the Swedish political leadership has also adjusted course. In addition to the near-daily dialogue between Finnish and Swedish counterparts, the fact that almost six in ten Swedes now support NATO membership has contributed to a readiness on Finland's part to adjust its own national schedules to allow the two countries to seek membership together (a goal frequently stated by politicians over the past years). While it is tempting to analyse the two as a pair, it is also useful to understand how national histories, perspectives on defence, and geography may impact each country's identity as NATO members.

NATO will admit as members two stable Nordic democracies that have few illusions about Russia and will contribute a set of robust military capabilities to the Alliance's collective defence effort.

What kind of Allies?

On joining, both Finland and Sweden will have to adjust their strategic cultures. Due to the need to reverse its unfortunate decision to demolish its territorial defence capability while retaining a robust set of capabilities for international operations, Sweden has already taken steps towards building a new strategic culture. Over the past half-decade, practising for the defence of Sweden

Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson receives Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin in Stockholm in April 2022. EPA/Scanpix

with others has become the dominant lens through which Sweden has sought to rebuild its national defence capabilities. Finland, meanwhile, has over the past decade significantly increased the size, scope, complexity, and volume of its participation in international exercises and, since 2017, the Finnish Defence Forces have had the task of preparing to give and receive international assistance. Nonetheless, the idea that Finland prepares to fight alone has remained the conceptual framework for Finland's defence. The Finnish population and political establishment, as well as the military, will have to adjust psychologically to being part of a collective defence family.

Practising for the defence of Sweden with others has become the dominant lens through which Sweden has sought to rebuild its national defence capabilities.

Finland and Sweden's entry will be unlikely to change the primary dynamics of what is a political transatlantic alliance. American expectations regarding increased spending by European powers on collective defence, for example, will not disappear because new member Finland already spends 2% of GDP. However, what Finland and Sweden can do in a Baltic Sea context, together with the United States and other Allies, is put increasing pressure on Germany to deliver credible, operationally relevant combat power on land, at sea and in the air over the next decade.

Collective defence

Both Sweden and Finland will also, for political and practical reasons, continue to enhance their bilateral cooperation with each other, trilateral cooperation with the United States, and efforts within multilateral frameworks such as the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force. Finnish officials have already stressed that as a NATO member, Finland would continue to push for deeper EU-NATO cooperation, focusing on practical solutions. This would include continued support for and engagement in a range of EU initiatives related to societal resilience and defence, while recognising that collective military defence will remain the purview of NATO.

On matters of collective defence, Finland and Sweden will both want to be seen as security contributors to the Alliance. The primary focus of these efforts will logically be in the Baltic Sea region and the Arctic (the high north) but, as has become the norm in NATO, both are likely to want to also contribute to NATO efforts across Alliance territory (for example, in naval operations in the Mediterranean). As both Finland and Sweden already focus on security and development issues in Africa and the Middle East, there is little reason to expect them to ignore the interests of NATO members further south, even while their defence preparations may be focused on the north.

If Finland and Sweden are both members by the end of 2022, the Graduated Response Plans for the region can be thoroughly reconceptualised. Here Sweden and Finland's roles and competences are likely to differ. Sweden's NATO membership will not result in any notable additional defence planning concerns, but geography – a long border with Russia – means that Finland's membership will add some challenges to NATO defence planning. However, Finland has over a century of experience in planning for its defence and already has a very robust defence capability.

The membership of the two countries will make it easier to defend both existing Nordic and Baltic Sea Allies. There is a good argument for NATO's planners to listen to how Sweden and Finland have already planned to defend parts of the Baltic Sea. Finland also has insight into how defence around its borders should be planned and signalled to Russia. A new operational headquarters may need to be considered too, perhaps located in Sweden.

On matters of collective defence, Finland and Sweden will both want to be seen as security contributors to the Alliance.

The Finnish population and political establishment, as well as the military, will have to adjust psychologically to being part of a collective defence family.

Increasing deterrence has been stated as the primary reason for Finland to seek NATO membership. It thus makes sense that Finland would contribute to existing and new NATO efforts to increase conventional deterrence. Making an initially small contribution to the enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia, perhaps with a combat engineering unit of the kind that participates annually in Estonian national exercises, would make sense. Taking one of the Baltic Air Policing rotations would also be sensible and relatively easy, especially if Finnish fighters could be based in Finland. Sweden could contribute to the mission from Šiauliai, Lithuania, as well as continuing its sub-surface and air intelligence gathering efforts.

Nuclear deterrence

The additional deterrence provided by nuclear weapons has also been cited by Finnish political leaders in the NATO membership debate. While Finland would not seek nuclear weapons on its territory during peacetime, it is unlikely to insist on any specific limitations or restrictions, including *in extremis* being open to contributing to nuclear missions. In line with this, Finland's participation in the Nuclear Planning Group is to be expected. This pragmatic view of nuclear deterrence slightly contrasts with that of Sweden, where the issue of nuclear weapons has historically been more politically explosive.

In the end, if all goes as planned, it is perhaps not surprising that it was the collective and urgent scream of the Finnish population, whose forefathers have over centuries felt the scourge of Russian aggression, that would lead to *de facto* unification of the Nordic and Baltic Sea security architectures in a way not previously seen – a *mare nostrum* of our time.

ANDRÉ LOESEKRUG-PIETRI
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Defence Investment in a Changed World

The return of large-scale, inter-state war to Europe will have wide and deep impact. The most significant consequences will emerge from the decisions we take about our future foreign, security and defence policies, and military strategies. At a more tactical level, some of our existing defence and security capabilities will also need to be rethought.

Disruptive technologies

One competence that we need to strengthen is our ability to recognise and use disruptive technologies. The exploitation of these technologies by our adversaries, combined with their application of hybrid doctrines, make our own strategic foresight, manoeuvrability, and speed of execution more critical than ever. The Ukrainian and Armenian conflicts have shown that the most important tools, those that can deliver the greatest effects, are not always the most expensive.

The Ukrainians, for example, have been able to penetrate Russia's much-feared Anti Access/Area Denial regimes using relatively simple drones such as the Bayraktar TB2, whose cost has been estimated at just $2M. Operating as both surveillance drone and loitering weapon, the TB2 has brought tactical surprise to the Ukrainian side in the conflict as well as becoming an important asset in their information war.

Europe's much-delayed Eurodrone programme will deliver a medium altitude long endurance unmanned aerial vehicle–like the TB2–but at an estimated $100M apiece. For this price, the Eurodrone will naturally have a higher specification and better performance. But it will be an expensive asset that nations may be reluctant to risk losing in contested areas. Eurodrone partners might be well advised to think again about the type of aerial vehicles that would best suit the requirements of the modern battlefield.

Lessons from the war in Ukraine should also prompt rethinks of other major capability programmes. The Russian Air Force has – unexpectedly – played only a minor part in the war. This should also be a spur for reflection about the best type of platform, or mix of platforms, necessary to secure air dominance in future conflict. Europe's large and expensive Future Combat Air System project needs more thought about – at least – the increased role of antimissile systems and light anti-aircraft systems such as 'Stinger' in contemporary conflict, as well as some reflection on the importance of interoperability across multiple domains and the relevance of nuclear capability.

Other domains

In the maritime domain, meanwhile, the sinking of the Moskva, apparently by two relatively simple Neptune missiles (albeit with likely US intelligence support) should prompt us to think about the need for and role of major surface naval vessels in future conflict, and how they might be protected.

The war in Ukraine has also emphasised the need for reliable intelligence in warfare. With the rise of crowd sourcing and open-source collection and analysis, which can contribute to filtering data, looting and disinformation, and situation awareness, state intelligence agencies are no longer the only players. The war has seen a revolution in Western intelligence practice too: the massive declassification of intelligence to pressure foes, and allies.

Information must not only be collected, but also shared and used. Russia has suffered in Ukraine through a lack of integrated command and control systems capable of advanced data merging between observation, command, situation awareness, traditional intelligence and open-source intelligence. Ukraine, on the other hand, has demonstrated how constellations such as Starlink can add critical redundancy to communication networks, and has used strategic communication, in particular from its President, as an integral part of its warfare for hearts and minds and to secure weapons' deliveries.

Finally, in addition to the technology itself, we should reconsider how we deliver capability and the way we use money. We need to go beyond the concept of 'dual use', as all technologies can be weaponised, and reinvent the way we conduct armament programmes, possibly by sponsoring non-recurring costs in order to avoid vendor-lock and keep systems updatable in the future.

Proper preparation, including through the wise application of technology, has a major role in deterring future conflict. We must learn from the tragedy of Ukraine to prepare for wars we hope not to fight.

BORIS RUGE
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Zeitenwende in Germany's Foreign Policy?

In October 2020, a year ahead of Germany's national elections, the Munich Security Conference (MSC) published a special report on German foreign policy entitled *Zeitenwende* – the 'turn of an era' or 'paradigm shift'.

We argued that "Germany's commitment falls short not only of the expectations of its most important partners but also of the requirements arising from the strategic environment." Truth be told, we were hardly the only ones to come to this conclusion; in fact, this was the majority view in think tanks in Berlin. However, for years successive governments had paid little heed to warnings from at home and abroad.

On 27 February 2022, three days after Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine, Chancellor Scholz gave what has rightly been described as an historic speech in the Bundestag. He announced a massive increase in defence spending and confirmed that Germany would deliver weapons directly to Ukraine. The key term in his speech, coincidentally, was *Zeitenwende*.

Since then, in part because of the drawn-out debate over providing heavy weapons to Ukraine, some have questioned whether there has in fact been a tectonic shift in German foreign policy or whether Berlin will soon return to business as usual. Which raises a further question: what exactly does it take to have a *Zeitenwende*?

In my view, we should assess six factors. We might call them cash, hardware, Ukraine, mindset, trust-building, and decision-making.

Cash. Budgets do not lie. The resources made available for defence will be a key metric in judging whether Berlin has changed course. In his February speech, Chancellor Scholz announced the creation of a special 100 billion euro fund. He also announced that Germany "will now – year after year – invest more than two percent of our gross domestic product in our defence." Not everyone is enthusiastic for this prospect. Others question whether defence spending will remain at 2% for longer than a few years. The 100 billion package is yet to be adopted by the Bundestag (requiring a two-thirds majority). So, the jury is still out. But we can safely assume that partners and allies will take the Chancellor at his word - backsliding on this historic commitment would carry major risks.

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Hardware. How this money is spent will be equally important. Will the special fund be devoted to defence only, or will it also be used for development and diplomacy? Will additional spending go to fixing the most pressing readiness issues? Will German defence investments contribute to addressing key security threats or only to 'feathering our nest'? Will Germany invest sufficiently in emerging and disruptive technologies? How fast will projects be taken forward? Will Germany, as signalled by Foreign Minister Baerbock in April, ramp up its presence on the eastern flank and contribute to a stronger, permanent posture above and beyond the enhanced forward presence?

Ukraine. In the short-term, supporting Ukraine will be a key test of *Zeitenwende*. Germany is doing more than many realise. But the pace of decision-making and a minimalist approach to communication have raised questions. Ukraine will by necessity be part of a new German policy towards Russia, which should be based on the understanding that there can be no return to the status quo ante and that it must be closely aligned with partners and allies.

Mindset. All the above will not matter unless there is a fundamental change in mindset and strategic culture. As became evident in the past weeks, "the world according to Germany" (to quote Thomas Bagger's 2019 article) bore little resemblance to the real world. Germany needs to come to terms with great power competition and systemic rivalry. It must acknowledge that the use of force is a currency in European security and that over-dependence (as in the case of China) will be used against us. This kind of paradigm shift does not happen overnight. It requires hard work, and above all, leadership. If in the process we overcome

Supporting Ukraine will be a key test of *Zeitenwende*. Germany is doing more than many realise.

a widespread arrogance that somehow extracts from German history a sense of moral superiority, it will be a bonus.

Trust-building. German leaders feel that they have taken huge steps since 24 February and not without reason. However, not only are many in the EU and NATO critical of Berlin's handling of the current crisis, but there is also a sense that for years Germany ignored partners and allies, dismissing what turned out to be accurate assessments of Putin's intentions. Reflecting on this, and referring specifically to Nordstream 2, President Steinmeier spoke in April of a "loss of credibility with eastern European partners." Rebuilding credibility will take more than words. But it is worth remembering that the Federal Republic has always done well when making the extra effort to listen to its partners and factoring in their concerns and interests.

Decision-Making. In its 2020 report, the MSC argued that Germany's national security architecture was not up to the task. We pointed to the increasing complexity of security issues, the need to coordinate a growing number of government agencies, and the ever-shrinking timeframes confronting decision-makers. One remarkable aspect of Nordstream 2 is how Berlin treated energy policy as unrelated to national security. Whether Berlin beefs up the existing Federal Security Council or creates a new structure will tell us a great deal about Berlin's willingness to learn from recent failure.

Russia's attack on Ukraine was a brutal wake-up call for Germany. The government coalition and the conservative opposition understand that change is needed. Polls suggest that many voters agree. Clearly, turning *Zeitenwende* into something real will be hard work, not least because the coalition has other projects that it must take forward. However, it is also clear that defending Europe's core interests and values requires Germany to finally take on its responsibilities. Call me an optimist, but in the end, I believe we will deliver.

There is a sense that for years Germany ignored partners and allies, dismissing what turned out to be accurate assessments of Putin's intentions.

A protest rally in front of the Federal Chancellery in Berlin in April 2022. AP/Scanpix

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Shifting Sands? Military cooperation in Central Asia

When the Kazakh authorities decided to cancel their 2022 Victory Day parade, they dealt a blow to the Russian understanding of 'self' and the heavy militarism which constitutes a central part of it. While the decision was officially taken for financial reasons, everyone understood that it was, in fact, a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russians saw it this way too. Most famously, TV host Tigran Keosayan warned the Kazakhs that they would now have to face the consequences. "Look carefully at what is happening in Ukraine", said Keosayan, "if you think you can get away with trying to be so cunning, and imagine that nothing will happen to you, you are mistaken. The world has changed, everything has changed".

The world has indeed changed. Russia has exposed to all its full-blown neo-imperialist character. When analysts dismissed the idea that Russia would launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, they often pointed to the rift that such an invasion was expected to cause between Russia and its formal allies among the former Soviet republics.

Critics insist that we should move beyond the notion of 'former Soviet republics' and see these states for what they are today and where they are going, rather than for where they have been. In this, they are of course right. However, in invading Ukraine. Russia has made it painfully clear that it still sees the sovereignty of these states as something to be violated at will. Put differently, these states are seen less as states and more as former colonies. But this also suggests that their response to Russian neo-imperialism is likely to be explicitly framed in terms of a post-colonial struggle.

Dependence on Russia

This is especially so in Central Asia, where the five states still struggle to reduce their dependence on Russia. Their relations with Russia continue to be characterised by high degrees of inequality, particularly for those who depend on access to the Russian labour market and remittances to sustain their economies. Russia can easily manipulate this access, giving it a convenient tool to reward or punish those states which support or oppose its line on any given issue.

There is also a military dependence. This was seen most recently in Kazakhstan in January 2022, when Russian-led troops operating under the flag of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) intervened briefly at the request of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, then under pressure from widespread political unrest. Russian troops were sent in to restore his authoritarian order and to prevent political instability from spreading further across the region and possibly beyond.

In invading Ukraine. Russia has made it painfully clear that it still sees the sovereignty of these states as something to be violated at will.

Military dependence is also seen clearly in Tajikistan, where Russia's 201st military base hosts as many as 7 000 troops. This facility, left over from the Soviet era when military planners imposed themselves on every corner of the empire deemed strategically valuable, has played an important role for Russia for three decades – from the Tajik civil war to the return of the Taliban to Kabul in 2021. It is Russia's most distant military outpost – originally designed to protect the empire from both internal and external threats and later kept, largely because it could be, to support the interests of the Russian state.

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are all members of the CSTO. Uzbekistan was a founding member, but left as part of a re-orientation away from Russia. The Uzbek authorities reaffirmed their decision in 2021, noting that "today we see no need for Uzbekistan to rejoin the CSTO on the belief that there will be some offensive by regiments, armies or divisions (..). However, threats and challenges from some terrorist organisations that continue operating on the territory of Afghanistan cannot be ruled out".

All four states, though, are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. So is Russia, but it plays a secondary

role only as China is the heavyweight partner. China's heavy gravitational pull has recently drawn all the Central Asian states, including neutral Turkmenistan, closer. This is true also in the military sphere, where China is leading the kind of cooperation referred to by the Uzbeks: more focused, and designed to fight smaller, possibly irregular, formations. Considering the war in Ukraine, this may be even more attractive than before – if "some offensive by regiments, armies or divisions" were to be launched against the Central Asian states, it would very likely be by Russian troops.

Conflicting factors

Future military cooperation in Central Asia is likely to be shaped by conflicting factors. On the one hand, the Central Asian leaders may want insurance against political unrest threatening to remove them from power. Similarly, they may be concerned about the long-term consequences of the return to power of the Taliban – any ideological spillover from Afghanistan into the region would challenge the largely secular Central Asian regimes, especially Tajikistan. Faced with this uncertainty, leaders may be tempted to preserve military ties with Russia, in particular within the CSTO, because the costs of cutting them would simply be prohibitively high.

China's heavy gravitational pull has recently drawn all the Central Asian states, including neutral Turkmenistan, closer.

On the other hand, the undisguised neo-imperialist nature of the Russian invasion of Ukraine will continue to reverberate through the region for a long time, causing nervousness as regional leaders wonder who might be next. This nervousness is only likely to grow as Russian president Vladimir Putin models a radicalised version of his regime to deal with the aftermath of his military defeat in Ukraine. This will cause Central Asian leaders to re-think their alliance commitments with Russia. In this situation, the only realistic alternative is China. Military cooperation in Central Asia may thus very well see a re-orientation towards China – all because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Kyrgyz servicemen take part in the Collective Security Treaty Organization's "Rubezh-2021"military exercise, Edelweiss training area, Balykchi, in September 2021. AFP/Scanpix

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The Arctic: Cooling cooperation between Russia and China

When China applied to join the Arctic Council as an observer in 2013, Barack Obama's secretary of state, John Kerry, worked late into the night to convince his counterparts, particularly Russia and Canada, to admit it and four other Asian states – Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and India. He succeeded, securing greater international cooperation on a region deeply vulnerable to climate change.

The camaraderie of that meeting, where John Kerry and his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, shared a microphone to discuss cooperation on Syria, seems to come from an entirely different era. Less than a year later, Russia annexed Crimea, eliciting Western sanctions that pushed the Kremlin to pivot to the east. In 2016, Brexit and the election of Donald Trump sent shock waves through Europe and the US. At the Arctic Council ministerial in Finland in 2019, Trump's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, declared that China's claim to be a 'near-Arctic state' entitled it to exactly nothing.

Meanwhile, China's self-imposed, two-and-a-half-year isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed progress on the brick-and-mortar projects associated with President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a multi-trillion dollar global infrastructure and development programme launched in 2013. Beijing has shifted its attention from railways, ports, and bridges to the 'Digital Silk Road', which comprises telecommunications networks, subsea cables, satellites, and smart cities. China's COVID-19 quarantine has also curtailed the diplomatic and scientific cooperation that many imagined (or feared) would follow its admission to the Arctic Council.

China's COVID-19 quarantine has curtailed the diplomatic and scientific cooperation that many imagined would follow its admission to the Arctic Council.

China and Russia: Arctic partners

Yet even during the pandemic, it seemed that China could count on one constant in the Arctic: Russia. While the Kremlin contended with sanctions, China found one Beijing-backed project after another in the western Arctic blocked or cancelled, from plans to build civilian airports in Greenland to 5G in Sweden. Pushed closer together by their isolation from the West, Russian and Chinese officials floated plans to transform the Northern Sea Route, Russia's Arctic shipping passage, into a 'Polar Silk Road' that would shorten sailing times between Europe and Asia. Arctic trade routes were formally included in the BRI in 2017. Burgeoning relations between Russia and China culminated in major investments in projects like Yamal Liquefied Natural Gas and its follow on, Arctic-2 LNG, along with two 30-year agreements to export gas from Siberia to China. Then, in February 2022, following their meeting at the Beijing Winter Olympics' opening ceremony, Xi and Vladimir Putin announced in a joint statement that the two countries "agreed to continue consistently intensifying practical cooperation for the sustainable development of the Arctic" and called upon all countries to cooperate in the "development and use of Arctic routes."

Beijing is waiting on the sidelines to assess whether collaboration with Russia will undermine its broader plans for Arctic and global development.

Twenty days after Russia and China's profession of a friendship without limits, however, Russia invaded Ukraine. In early March, the Arctic Council – chaired by Russia until May 2023 – announced a pause in cooperation, with devastating consequences for cross-border work on the environment, climate change, and Indigenous Peoples. In April, in response to Russia's intensified isolation within a region where it remains dominant but which it badly needs funding to develop, Putin stated, "under the ruling circumstances, we must more actively engage in Arctic cooperation with countries and

alliances from outside the region." He likely had China and India in mind – the two major countries which abstained from a United Nations resolution deploring Russian aggression.

As Ukraine suffers horrific violence and Russia weathers global condemnation, Beijing is waiting on the sidelines to assess whether collaboration with Russia will undermine its broader plans for Arctic and global development. State-owned oil companies are avoiding new contracts for Russian oil for fear of being seen as Kremlin supporters. Chinese buyers are also reducing imports of Russian coal, much of which comes from the Arctic. With Western corporations pulling out of Russia and halting sales of crucial technologies to develop Arctic fossil fuels, China may see opportunities. But Beijing has been warned by US President Joe Biden of the consequences of undermining Western sanctions.

China may thus need to find a more self-sufficient path to realising the four goals for the region outlined in its 2018 Arctic Policy: to understand, protect, and develop the Arctic and participate in the region's governance. These aims were reiterated by Gao Feng, China's Special Representative for Arctic Affairs, in a speech in Beijing in late March. Whereas previously China might have pursued them in cooperation with Arctic states, or at least Russia, it may now go it alone. This would align with Chinese plans to become a 'technological great power' and boost its scientific self-reliance. In the Arctic, this approach manifests in China launching polar-observing satellites (which can provide data about the cryosphere, from ship locations to sea ice conditions), developing ice-class vessels, and improving access to the global commons from the Central Arctic Ocean and outer space.

In the Arctic, China is launching polar-observing satellites, developing ice-class vessels, and improving access to the global commonsfrom the Central Arctic Ocean and outer space.

There are parallels between China's strategic and scientific reorientation in the Arctic and the BRI, which is also digitising frontiers. From Southeast Asia to Africa and South America, China seeks to build fibre optic cables and export space-based services like Beidou satellite navigation. Before the invasion of Ukraine, the number of trains using the revitalised railways between China and Europe – many of them via Russia – had been increasing. As these dwindle, and as Russia is frozen out of its own backyard, China may have to literally go above and beyond Moscow to realise its visions for polar and global development.

China's polar icebreaker Xuelong 2 (Snow Dragon 2). Imago/Scanpix

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Better Late than Never: The EU and the Western Balkans

Russia's aggression in Ukraine has created a European momentum. To not use this would be imprudent at best. It may be the last chance for the EU to become a strategic actor with a place on the global chessboard, which is increasingly defined not only by the globalisation of production and consumption and the rapid evolution of sometimes disruptive technologies, but also by revisionist powers deploying various forms of hybrid geopolitics.

The EU's recently adopted Strategic Compass sets a clear course for building the capability to act autonomously while contributing to sustainable transatlantic cooperation. It is also a step in the gradual emergence of a common strategic culture for the continent's security community of practice. The defence assistance for Ukraine, and successive rounds of Russia sanctions based on the ability to find common ground from diverse political and economic interests, testify to the member states' political resolve. But this determined political action, heeding the calls to make the EU more 'geopolitical', now needs to extend, in earnest, to its neighbourhood.

The EU should enlarge

The EU should seek to complete the enlargement process in the Balkans – and also to bring into its fold the associated partners that were once part of the Soviet empire. This is not about an imperial, or civilising mission. Indeed, the pacification of the EU's frontier has been put to the foreground of its security policy – to the point of enacting external limitations on sovereignty (Bosnia) and force presence. Nor is it alien rule, establishing formal or informal hierarchical orders. This enlargement is, fundamentally, about expanding, peacefully, the liberal commonwealth of European nations that share the fundamental norms and values of the Union; integrating their economies for mutual prosperity; establishing common institutions to manage this integration; and last but not least, due to the density of their interactions, forming a security community where conflict is expected to be resolved without resort to violence.

> The EU should seek to complete the enlargement process in the Balkans.

The enlargement process has suffered from many obstacles that need no exposition here. Suffice to say that they relate to the internal political and economic (re-)structuring of prospective member states; wavering on the side of the EU; and increasingly also geopolitics in the form of providing incentive structures to follow alternative courses by third powers (Russia, China) – something much less tangible in previous waves of enlargement, including the accession of my own country and its neighbours.

How should the EU proceed to make this enlargement a reality? First, it should unfreeze the integration processes and maintain its solid reputation for making good on good faith expectations by launching accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia and putting in place visa liberalisation with Kosovo. Acceleration should, by no means, imperil the integrity of the accession process. The latter is paramount both to ensure the smooth integration of the candidate countries and to ensure the credibility and fairness on which the EU needs to build its global reputation as a normative power. At the same time, while individual member states' interests and concerns need to be taken into consideration, they should not hold hostage the process that is in the greater interest of the Union. The resurgence of nationalism is now a fact of global life, but matters of history and identity should not stand in the path of a common democratic, secure and prosperous future.

Eyes on the prize

If irresolvable at the moment, these concerns should at least be deferred so that the EU can maintain a credible membership perspective for partner countries in the Western Balkans, keeping their 'eyes on the prize'. The EU should also make clear that their elites' pursuing alternative geopolitical projects with Russia or China would mean derailing the integration process while carrying costs of its own in terms of malign

external influence, state capture, or asymmetric dependencies used to exert pressure.

Conditionality has been writ large into both the enlargement and neighbourhood policies. The idea is not to displace it, but to foreground the large, (geo-)political issues, insist less on preconditions, limit the ambiguity that reduces effectiveness, and mitigate the related process in which the local elites are (self-)constructed as entrepreneurs seeking the best bargain on the geopolitical market – often in the short term dictated by electoral cycles. To hedge against these alternative bargains, the EU should, moreover, upgrade investment, including in critical infrastructure – while insisting on adopting clear and transparent rules on foreign investment in general – support partner countries in post-COVID-19 recovery and their energy choices and engage in strategic communication sensitive to the deeper cultural patterns and affective regimes – e.g., in the Serbian people's affinity for Russia.

The issue is pragmatic deferral to ensure that being part of the European commonwealth remains the best offer in town.

Second, where the membership perspective is indelibly to remain distant, the EU should revive the outdated concept of formal associate membership to keep the partners close. While this would necessitate change in the treaties, it would make the partner countries more stakeholders in EU politics – so that, to paraphrase Romano Prodi, associate membership would entail not "everything but institutions", where the latter was meant to stand for (non-)participation in formal decision making, but "everything and some institutions".

There is no denying that this change in approach to enlargement would need to strike a difficult balance. It must take into account the big geopolitical picture while not compromising on the value fundamentals. That said, the shift can, and should, operate from the realist paradigm recognising the imperfection of human nature and its creations, including political institutions – both in and out of the EU – and the processes such as rule of law mechanisms for upholding the basic community norms that are in place, and in use for the member states. At the moment, the issue is less compromise and more pragmatic deferral to ensure that being part of the European commonwealth remains the best offer in town. D

Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić inspects a Russian-made *Kornet* anti-tank guided missile, Pancevo, 3 January 2022.
AP/Scanpix

CLARA PORTELA
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The Sanctions Regime on Russia: A turning point for the EU

Observers are debating whether the robust sanctions packages introduced by the EU in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine are an effective tool to halt aggression. Although this looks unlikely, the question detracts from the fact that the sanctions operation is a turning point in EU policy with lasting repercussions for the Union's role in the new security reality.

The current sanctions regime against Russia is not typical of the sanctions that have been implemented through the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Rather than being adopted in reaction to democratic backsliding, repression of civilians, or civil strife, these packages were wielded in response to an act of international aggression. While this is the type of situation most likely to attract resolute action from the EU, it is, paradoxically, unlikely to succeed in compelling the invading forces to retreat, or in reducing bellicosity.

Historical context

Historically, sanctions have been closely linked to armed conflict. More often than not, sanctions have been used as a companion, or a prelude, to the application of military force. Only in the early 20th century did the idea emerge that sanctions could be used as a substitute for force. This idea was reflected in the Covenant of the League of Nations, which foresaw the automatic application of a full embargo on any country that committed aggression against another. But the hope that sanctions could replace military force to address aggression was soon abandoned. The Charter of the United Nations, the League's successor, allowed the Security Council a choice of measures to apply to repel aggression.

> The current sanctions regime against Russia is not typical of the sanctions that have been implemented through the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Since the end of the Second World War, we have witnessed a preference for imposing arms embargoes on violent conflicts in the hope of reducing their deadliness. Often, these have been accompanied by military deployments. This shift is a result of both the difficulties experienced by global organisations in mounting a collective response to aggression, and of the realisation that there is a mismatch between the speed at which military operations and sanctions can achieve effects. Military force is swift while sanctions are slow. Sanctions have been applied with at least some success on less urgent situations, such as coercing majority-rule regimes (in Rhodesia and South Africa) or preventing nuclear proliferation (in Iran or post-Gulf War Iraq).

The big question

As regards Ukraine, the big unknown is whether Western sanctions will eventually be able to halt Russia's invasion. The odds do not look good. Sanctions, no match for military force in terms of speed, are generally unsuitable instruments to stop war. This is also true of the war in Ukraine, despite the exceptional severity and speed of the sanctions packages. In addition, the current sanctions on Russia face the particularly daunting task of hitting an economy that has been shielded against sanctions for years. Moscow, under limited sanctions since 2014, knew what was coming, and had time to prepare.

Furthermore, as the crisis was planned in advance by Russia, Western sanctions were deprived of most of their surprise effect. Moscow anticipated both economic harm and stigmatisation, but still its calculations favoured the option of launching a war – it is thus unlikely that the actual imposition of punitive measures will alter this equation. Chancellor Olaf Scholz justified Germany's reticence to agree to a ban on the import of gas,

contending that "if Putin were open to economic arguments, he would not have started this absurd war".

The sanctions as a turning point

Nevertheless, the EU's sanctions effort constitutes a turning point in its security policy that may well have effects lasting beyond the current crisis. The EU packages are remarkably severe. Never have such robust restrictions been adopted at such speed. The successive waves have come more swiftly than even those deployed by the EU in reaction to the Syrian war in 2011. And some measures, such as the withdrawal of Russia's most-favoured-nation status which had allowed tariff reductions, are entirely new to the EU's security policy toolbox.

The level of coordination with Western allies has also been unprecedented, including not only traditional partners like the US and Canada, but also Japan, Australia and South Korea. This group of like-minded countries sees itself as substituting for the action that the UN Security Council is prevented from taking due to the Russian veto.

Most importantly, the current effort heralds a new era. The EU is boosting its agility and preparedness in the sanctions field. Export controls are being strengthened and will approximate those operated by the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls in the Cold War.

Sanctions, no match for military force in terms of speed, are generally unsuitable instruments to stop war.

They may well remain in place after the end of the Ukraine war.

This is also a turning point in sanctions implementation. For the first time, action is being coordinated with non-EU countries. The Commission has set up a Freeze and Seize task force to orchestrate cooperation among EU member states and to work alongside the G7's Russian Elites, Proxies, and Oligarchs task force. This transformation, effected in less than one month, is nothing short of revolutionary - particularly against the background of a major reorganisation of energy supplies to EU countries and a steep increase in military spending by key member states like Germany.

The hope is that the current approach can become the new standard for an EU better equipped to address security challenges in the post-Ukraine war international environment.

The EU plans to gradually ban Russian oil. Reuters/Scanpix

ANDREI SOLDATOV
Independent Russian journalist

From Fake News to Good News

Living in London in exile since 2020, I have struggled to find anything positive to say in the dark months that began on 24 February, when Vladimir Putin launched a full-scale attack on Ukraine. Mostly, I have felt a combination of shame and anger, but also the sense of complete failure shared by many Russian liberals these days – we feel that we have lost our people to Putin's warmongering propaganda, and so we have lost the country.

But after two months of the war, one thing has emerged which surprisingly gives me some hope – Internet technologies and their role in the war.

Putin's dark net

Since 2016, when Putin's spies and political operators were caught interfering in the US election, the global community of cyber experts has come to think of the Internet in terms of threats rather than opportunities. The Russians, Chinese, Iranians, and North Koreans had found a way to use the Internet to spread disinformation and propaganda, undermining Western democracies from within with wild conspiracy theories and lies. Global platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Google, once beacons of Western entrepreneurial spirit and creativity, were completely compromised. Global connectivity which had been a dream in the 1990s and 2000s suddenly became a big vulnerability.

This very dark perception of the Internet perfectly matched Putin's picture. Putin and his closest associates from the KGB were trained to see the world in terms of 'threats'. Since Putin came to power, that world had always included the Internet – the very first Doctrine of the Information Security of the Russian Federation, signed by Putin in 2000, includes on its list of potential threats "manipulation of information (disinformation, concealment or misrepresentation)."

Until 2016 there was a dissonance in terminologies between Western and Russian cyber officials. Western officials used 'cyber security' and 'cyber threats' because they wanted to talk about computers and network security, while the Russians insisted on using 'information security' and 'information warfare' because they believed the content on the Internet could pose a threat to the Kremlin and to the political stability of Putin's regime – which they called 'Russia's digital sovereignty'.

> Global connectivity which had been a dream in the 1990s and 2000s suddenly became a big vulnerability.

But after 2016, many American cyber experts admitted to me in private that the Kremlin was indeed correct – online content, on social media primarily, might pose a threat to democracy. Putin's cyber operations might have been exposed in the US and Europe, but he won at least one round – he got the world to think of the biggest achievement of Western civilisation – the Internet – in dark and paranoid terms.

It is not a surprise that a perception of the Internet dominated by security concerns became widely accepted. Who would blame the public? Disinformation operations did not stop after the 2016 debacle. We all came to believe that every crisis with Russia would include a disinformation campaign coupled with cyber-attacks.

Russia's disinformation failures

And indeed, when the war in Ukraine started, so did Russian disinformation operations and cyber-attacks. But – here comes the good news – they failed to inflict any real damage on Ukraine. They also failed to confuse the Western public about the war – the Kremlin's narrative of a 'special military operation' against the Nazis gained no traction in the world. The darkest predictions about the information side of the war proved to be wrong.

In fact, the opposite happened. The tide turned the other way for the first time since 2016. Social media became instrumental in spreading news about what was going on in Ukraine, including to those Russians who wanted to know the truth about the war. War crimes have been documented, and those who committed them have been identified almost in real time. Thanks to journalists and social media, we know what it was like to live through the bombings in Kyiv,

Putin got the world to think of the biggest achievement of Western civilisation – the Internet – in dark and paranoid terms.

and to survive the occupation in Bucha and besieged Mariupol. Thanks to social media, we saw the real face of the war. We know how Ukrainian soldiers, civilians and volunteers look and sound. We know how Russian soldiers look and sound, as well as Russian antiwar protesters and cheerleaders for the war.

The Kremlin tried hard to secure an information monopoly as soon as the war started. On 24 February, Kremlin censors instructed the Russian media to use only official information about the war in Ukraine. Words like 'invasion', 'war' and 'offensive' were banned in favour of Russia's preferred 'special military operation'. On 4 March, the Russian Parliament adopted legislation on fake news about the war, threatening prison sentences of up to 15 years for spreading information counter to the Russian government's position.

But the global platforms, almost a cursed concept before the war, proved resilient. The Russian censors failed, not least because platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter refused to succumb to the Kremlin's pressure and did not flinch at the threat of being blocked. And when Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were blocked, they made every effort to keep their connections with Russians alive – for instance, going as far as to offer Russians the option of using Facebook on Tor.

YouTube, along with Telegram, has emerged as the main source of uncensored news in the Russian language – many of my colleagues, journalists forced to leave the country, moved to YouTube and Telegram channels and found multi-million strong audiences. Many Russians watch anti-war YouTube channels as they used to watch morning television. Global connectivity is now once again the biggest hope for awakening public consciousness in Russia.

Social media became instrumental in spreading news about what was going on in Ukraine, including to those Russians who wanted to know the truth about the war.

Russian troops sending stolen Ukrainian items home through Belarus. Telegram/Hajun_BY

ALEXEY LEVINSON
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The Deepening Abyss between Russia and the West

Most readers will have been shocked by President Vladimir Putin's decision to launch wage large-scale war on 24 February. They will also have been shocked to learn about the crimes that Russian troops have committed in the so-called 'special military operation' zone. And they will have been shocked for a third time upon reading the results of the surveys conducted by the Levada Centre and others showing 80% approval levels among Russians for Putin's and the military's actions. As a senior researcher at the Levada Centre, I would like to comment on this last aspect. (This commentary was written in late April: the situation in the conflict zone, in Russia, and in the world may have since changed dramatically.)

The story the numbers tell

Let us begin with the level of approval of the Russian public for President Putin's actions. Post-1991, the social and cultural climate in Russia has been characterised by rising resentment and a persistent fear of the country's further dissolution. These feelings were instrumental in replacing the 'weak' Yeltsin with a strongman. They conditioned the population for the rise of Putin, who was entrusted with guaranteeing the nation's survival, and granted him a 60% advance approval rating. Since the year 2000, his approval has rarely fallen below 60% – this level has been his baseline. The victory in the Georgian war in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 propelled his approval numbers up to nearly 90%. Putin was seen as challenging the West and thus making Russia a great power.

> Since the military campaign in Ukraine began, the public has revised the meaning it attaches to the office of the president.

In late 2021, his approval had been stalled at 65 +/- 2% for several months. The first sign of confrontation with the US and NATO had, by late April, boosted his popular support to 83%. It is commonly understood, both in Russia and abroad, that Russian polling figures are unreliable and exaggerated. But we have verified them. They are as accurate as any polling data can be. The issue is not the validity of the surveys, but the extraordinary state of public opinion. If the Russian public comes to believe that the president has won another victory over the country's enemies, his approval may grow even higher.

On the qualitative side, the Levada Centre's in-depth research indicates that since the military campaign in Ukraine began, the public has revised the meaning it attaches to the office of the president. History has seen such developments before. In 2013, Putin was widely criticised by the public, yet his successful campaign to annex Crimea saw him rebranded as a warrior and defender of the nation. From 2018 to 2020, his appeal diminished; but with the current developments he has been re-imagined as a charismatic leader and a brilliant strategist of extraordinary ingenuity. The very fact that his action was entirely unexpected, and contradictory to basic notions of rationality and legality (which was widely debated), was later reinterpreted by the Russian public not as a mistake or a miscalculation, but as evidence of levels of political wisdom unattainable by dull minds. Ordinary Russians view him as *a priori* superior to other political leaders – whom in turn the Russian public seeks to discredit and humiliate. Unlike the Western public, the Russian people have not respect but utter contempt for Ukraine's president and the leaders of all NATO member states.

Glorifying the armed forces

Russians also endow their armed forces with a unique, historic mission, which makes any proper conversation about the military aspects of the campaign in Ukraine impossible. Led by their Commander-in-Chief, the Russian army fights evil – and Western nations, the people

believe, are the historical embodiment of evil. Russians deny agency to the Ukrainian armed forces. In their view Ukrainians are acting either on foreign orders or are blindsided by foreign ideology (such as 'Nazism'). Ukraine has not – at least not yet – been perceived as a 'real' military adversary by the average Russian.

As regards public support for the Russian troops' behaviour in Ukraine, it must be stressed that Russian people operate on information that mostly diverges factually from that of the West. Even when the same facts are available, they are assessed in dramatically different ways. The interpretation of the atrocities committed by the Russian military prevalent in the Ukrainian and Western media, for example, is illegal in Russia. The images from Ukraine broadcast on Russian TV are meant to inspire pride in the Russian army and incite hatred toward the enemy. The armed forces were a rather trusted institution in modern Russia in peacetime. The recent developments have only solidified this public trust.

Both sides have an obvious predisposition for building a new 'wall' or casting a new 'iron curtain'. Both sides share the desire to self-isolate.

Shared perspectives

While there is a dramatic difference in perspectives between Western and Russian viewers, there are some similarities too. For example, both sides have an obvious predisposition for building a new 'wall' or casting a new 'iron curtain'. Both sides share the desire to self-isolate – from Russia in the West and from the West in Russia. And many ideologists, and the general public, seem convinced that any ambition for rapprochement between Russia and the West is doomed, and that their breakup is final.

It is clear to all that the relationship between Russia and the West is worse today than it has been in the past one hundred years. A severe blow has been dealt to relations between neighbouring nations. Moreover, the toughest times may be yet to come, and to be followed by years of inertia. It is already clear that these nations will not easily forgive the evil done and the wounds suffered.

But history teaches us that people can build bridges over the deepest abyss. I hope that readers will share my conviction that we will build these bridges, and that we can and must start thinking how to do so today. This commentary is intended to serve that purpose.

Putin supporters at a concert marking the 8th anniversary of Crimea's reunification with Russia, Luzhniki stadium, Moscow, 18 March 2022. EPA/Scanpix

Helping Those Who Stand against the War

Russia has cracked down brutally on independent media sources. Europe must support them and other activists to help smooth the transition to a better Russia once Putinism falls.

ANTON BARBASHIN
Editorial Director, Riddle Russia

Since Russia began its war in Ukraine, it has conducted a large-scale campaign against everyone and everything even remotely critical of it, especially organisations and groups that can spread information or potentially self-organise. Despite reports of considerable support for the war, the Russian state acts as if it is fighting a substantial foe within – a foe that only grows bigger with every week of the fighting in Ukraine. This increase in domestic repression might be explained by Russia's transformation into a totalitarian state, in which any deviation from official thinking is considered dangerous. But the truth is more trivial – support for the war is not as high as reports indicate. More importantly, the state does not regard this support as reliable.

The Russian state has attacked the independent media and individual journalists with increasing force for at least a decade, but since February this assault has crossed new lines. Remaining oases of independent journalism, like Echo of Moscow and the Dozhd TV-channel, have finally been shut down. Platforms that work from abroad have been censored. For example, Novaya Gazeta – one of the few remaining independent media outlets that was forced to halt its operations in Russia until the end of the war – opened a new website from abroad, Novaya Gazeta Europe. In Russia, this was blocked less than two weeks after its launch. Almost daily, all types of independent media content run from aboard and Russian regional media that was still

operating in relative freedom before the war, are being banned.

With equal ferocity, Russians are being designated as individual foreign agents. Almost 200 individuals, mostly journalists and bloggers, have received this status, making it much harder for them to continue working inside Russia. Independent NGOs and every corner of civil society not run or controlled by the state tell similar stories.

The war on 'foreign agents'

The Kremlin now wants the power to designate people as foreign agents even in the absence of formal proof that they are financed from abroad, let alone working in the interests of a foreign state. This would allow the state to disfranchise Russian citizens simply accused of 'foreign influence', a system clearly open to abuse.

Even so, 2022 is not 1937 and the Putinist state is not Stalin's USSR. Russia does not have the reach to be properly totalitarian (though not for lack of trying). In its latest assault on Meta (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) the state blocked the websites of Facebook and Instagram, but allowed WhatsApp to remain - officially because it is a tool of communication not of information, but in fact because it is used by 86% of Russians, including Putin's core electorate. Similarly, YouTube, which hosts the most prolific anti-Putin and anti-war content, is watched by 80 million Russians, mostly for entertainment rather than independent content, and has not been banned.

Despite reports of considerable support for the war, the Russian state acts as if it is fighting a substantial foe within – a foe that only grows bigger with every week of the fighting in Ukraine.

In March, seven of the top ten most downloaded apps were VPNs – services that allow users to bypass national bans on online content. Many Russians use VPNs to access Instagram, which reportedly lost only half of its audience in Russia after being banned. But the readership of the most successful independent news platform in Russia – Medusa, a Latvian-based, blocked website - increased from 25 million monthly visits in January to nearly 50 million in March. The more niche outlet, Mediazona, increased its readership from one to four million in the same period and even the human rights project, OVD-info, grew its readership six-fold between January and March, achieving 600 000 monthly visits.

Although the Russian state is increasing pressure on civil society and forcing many independent voices to leave Russia, there is evidently an interest in independent content which is growing despite state bans and other limitations. It may be that Russia will eventually close some of the loopholes, ban YouTube and other websites, and restrict the use of VPNs (which are technically already banned). But a repeat of the Telegram ban, pursued

Journalists holding placards reading "You are afraid of the truth" and "We won't stop being journalists", near the headquarters of Russia's Federal Security Service, Moscow in August 2021. AFP/Scanpix

for over two years only to be dismissed, is a more likely scenario. The first two months of the war have shown that Russia is not ready to erect a 'Great Russian Firewall' even if that was technically possible.

As there is no hope for a quick ceasefire in Ukraine and the effects of sanctions will become more evident in the months to come, it is reasonable to predict an increased interest in independent content amongst those Russians who are sceptical, or even those who are in favour of the 'special military operation'. It thus makes sense to increase efforts to support Russian civil society by providing proper context and helping to dissolve the toxic constructs of state propaganda.

Editor in chief of Echo of Moscow, Aleksei Venediktov. AFP/Scanpix

Supporting civil society

Propaganda cannot be fought with propaganda. To increase the numbers of informed Russians – and in this case being informed raises the chances of becoming anti-war – it is crucial to support initiatives and platforms that produce news and reports, publish analyses, create documentaries, investigate war crimes, and provide open-source intelligence. With the help of donations and direct donor support there are many organisations that could effectively fight Russian propaganda in Russia, from the outside. As there are differences in taste with regard to style and methods of delivery, it makes no sense to focus support in one basket, but to invest in several organisations that were either forced to leave or have been established outside Russia from the beginning. With rare exceptions, this type of media organisation cannot survive on advertising or paywall income alone, especially if they are blocked in Russia or have been designated as foreign agents. To survive, let alone to thrive, they need direct core support as well as assistance with legal and visa issues.

Since the beginning of the war, between 200 000 and 300 000 Russians have left the country. Many stay close to Russia in states where Russians do not require visas or find otherwise favourable conditions. Hubs of Russians in exile are also emerging in Riga, Vilnius, Berlin, and Prague – often including highly educated professionals with experience of pro-democracy work in Russia. Many have had political ambitions and have participated in protests against the war and authoritarianism in Russia. Naturally, it is in the interest of the West to inject such Russians back into Russia once it becomes safe enough to do so – or at least to encourage their fight for a different future. But, given the current circumstances, it makes no sense to create more political prisoners now, when these people could be helpful in the near future.

The key question is whether that future will arrive in 2023 or 2030. I would argue that the Russian political system will experience challenges in multiple dimensions at the end of 2022 and well into 2023. For as long as it makes sense for pro-democratic forces to remain active and engage, it makes sense to continue supporting them and their communities in Europe, allowing them to gather strength, infrastructure and expertise to bring back as soon as Putin's regime shows signs of instability.

> Russia will not disappear once the war is over. The way it transforms and what it aspires to become are matters that should be on the agenda of every single neighbour.

The EU has been ready to accept huge costs in this war. To host a few thousand Russian activists and several thousand professionals who could in any case benefit the EU economies does not sound like a costly investment.

Given the complexity of Russia's political construct, its nuclear arsenal, and the potential value of its economic collaboration, it is essential to attempt to look past the horrors of the war towards a future when Russia is transitioning from Putinism. What will that Russia's place in Europe be? What role can it have? What kind of Russia would the EU like to live alongside? Russian civil society would like the EU to consider these questions now, so that once the changes in Russia begin, this complicated conversation does not start from nothing.

Russia will not disappear once the war is over. The way it transforms and what it aspires to become are matters that should be on the agenda of every single neighbour. The Russians who oppose the war understand that there is no future for Russia under Putin. To convince those who doubt this, they too need to be able to propose a better future. Clearly, this future would be full of challenges and hard choices. But having a beacon in sight would make things somewhat easier.

Energy Mixes and Policy Blends

Momentous events such the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have distracted states from dealing with what is perhaps the key global issue of our time – climate change. Radical solutions are needed, including major shifts towards greener energy solutions. Moving reluctant governments and societies in the right direction will require a mix of active policy interventions and a readiness to trust in market forces.

Jyrki Katainen, President of Sitra and former European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness talks about the key issues with Tomas Jermalavičius, Head of Studies at ICDS.

Tomas Jermalavičius (TJ): I would like to begin our conversation with a picture of the international commitment to net-zero carbon emissions.

Over the last couple of years, humanity's attention has been primarily focused on more immediate issues – such as the coronavirus pandemic and now the outbreak of war in Europe. They distract all of us from one major threat – a truly existential one for us as a species – the catastrophic effects of runaway climate change. However, there is now a clear understanding in the scientific world and most of the policy world that maintaining a rise in temperature well below two degrees Celsius, and preferably no more than 1.5C which was the goal of the Paris Agreement, and thus preventing the most catastrophic scenarios requires radical action that will fundamentally transform not only our energy systems, but our entire economies and societies.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow created an expectation that nations would rise to the challenge, and it did achieve a range of climate goals that offer a glimmer of hope. Yet, one can hardly disagree with the climate activists, NGOs and many scientists who say that it might be too little and too late. The nations that emit the largest quantities of CO_2 committed to achieving net-zero targets over timelines stretching into 2060 and 2070, and those commitments are often vague. Absent any concrete plans and with such long transitional periods, the world will probably hit so many climate tipping points that there will be no way to avoid the most risky scenarios.

Estimates still take us over the two-degree threshold. To quote one of the latest reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Any further delay in concerted anticipatory global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all."

Your experience is grounded in the hard policy-making realities of bargaining between nations and with society in order

to establish social compacts. It would be interesting to hear how optimistic or pessimistic you are concerning the likelihood of global transition to a net-zero carbon world within that narrow window of opportunity we may still have.

Jyrki Katainen (JK): Some countries have adopted the right measures, but we are not there yet. We are moving in the right direction but not necessarily fast enough, at least with regard to commitments made and delivered. To be completely honest, I am not sure if we will manage to achieve the 1.5C target, despite moving in the right direction. If we fail, the consequences to our society will be grave, and this is why we must move faster.

My source of hope is that market forces can be extremely helpful. Market reactions can be more influential, compared to the public sector. Industries have already been significantly reducing their carbon emissions. When either businesses or consumers start to demand cleaner solutions and net-zero or minus-emission production, they accelerate the transition even faster than we might expect.

I have to introduce the circular economy into this, because even though the world might not yet be circular today, there is a clear trend: industries and enterprises are moving more towards circular business models. This is an untested and uncharted opportunity. If I remember the figure correctly, only 9% of natural resources consumed will end up recycled, which means there is a huge potential in this area. And this is just one good example.

Unfortunately, if we only look at the commitments and how we have delivered on them, then we are not there yet – we are actually quite badly behind.

TJ: This is very interesting. I do share your sentiment about the importance of free market forces. However, the developments at the end of last year and in the beginning of this year – meaning the volatility in energy prices – impact society's perception of what drives that volatility. Of course, a lot of blame can be put on Russia – what it has done to the European energy markets with its gas supplies - but at the same time, there are populist forces that are quick to jump on the issue and say, "The EU Green Deal and transition to clean energy are to blame for these troubles."

JYRKI KATAINEN

Jyrki Katainen is President of Sitra. His main objective is to lead the future-oriented work at Sitra in such a way that Sitra will be able to generate new ideas to aid decision-makers in society and private companies, and to try and test new operating models. Jyrki wants Sitra's ideas to reach a wider international audience since many of the phenomena that Sitra studies are not national but global. He has a special interest in transforming the market economy so that it complies with the principles of circular economy and sustainability. Katainen also wants Sitra to stimulate debate concerning the forces that will shape our future.

Katainen's career has focused on analysing change in society, searching for solutions and making decisions. Before his appointment as President of Sitra, Katainen was European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness. Prior to that, he has held the positions of Prime Minister of Finland and Finance Minister. During his 15 years as a Member of the Finnish Parliament he was Chair of the Committee for the Future, among other appointments.

Could we bungle this transition if we simply leave it to market forces? Then extremely polarised domestic politics, climate change denialism, and EU-scepticism, which means that whatever is underwritten by the EU must be torpedoed, intervene.

Circling back to the market, the entrenched fossil fuel industries remain a major financial magnet. Fossil fuel subsidies in 2020 amounted to 6 trillion dollars, according to the IMF. As the International Energy Agency states, "Momentum from net-zero pledges and sustainable finance is yet to translate into large increases in actual spending on clean energy projects". Are we really confident that if we leave it entirely to the markets and customer pressure, then the momentum and traction that the new business models gain will simply sort themselves out? Or do we need more forceful, top-down policy instruments to guide and accelerate the transition?

JK: I think we need both. We certainly cannot leave all to the market and customer demand. However, they are equally important in the sense that we could successfully combine economic growth and decrease CO_2 emissions.

Therefore, this market mechanism is badly needed, otherwise the top-down measures will be detrimental to economic growth. The biggest challenge at this moment is upward inflation and the economic downturn stemming from instability and the war in Ukraine. In fact, it is quite easy to say that due to high inflation and an uncertain economy, we have to take some temporary steps back – we already see it happening now. Such populistic political pressure may challenge climate policies quite significantly.

There are many other examples. For instance, Finland has a big wind energy project waiting for an environmental impact analysis to be completed. Public sector procedures are usually very slow. The government has facilitated these investment projects by hiring additional personnel to conduct environmental assessments, so wind energy investments are expected to boom.

This is a countermeasure to inflationary economic recession. The more investments we have, the better the economy is doing. Even in times of crisis, we have to consider what is right in the medium and long-term, instead of focusing on short-termism.

For example, when the Fukushima nuclear power plant shut down, Japan managed to replace 50% of its nuclear energy consumption through savings and energy efficiency. Initially, the measures were top-down: the government regulated how much energy a household could consume. However, this was then followed by significant investments in energy efficiency. And today, Japan consumes less energy than it used to before the Fukushima incident.

Even absent any crises, the Netherlands – in two years' time between 2019 and 2021 – managed to stimulate wind and solar power production by 10%. The Netherlands now produces more solar power than Greece, for instance.

Let us look at Estonia. Between 2019 and 2021, the solar power share in energy production rose from below 1% to close to 4%, which means that things can happen. It is up to politics and also up to market players.

TJ: You've identified one clear bottleneck in our crisis response – the public sector's regulatory framework and the speed with which it moves to enact the necessary changes to allow market players to scale up and deliver more renewables.

As to the societal aspect, there is a lot of activism. And the policy world responds to popular demand by sending the right impulses to the markets. However, one can hardly see much drive and sense of urgency to make changes in our daily lives. Our comfortable and affluent western society is reluctant to reduce consumption, including energy, unless the government tells us to – as Japan did. People rarely change the wasteful habits that pump even more CO_2 into the atmosphere.

In the US, driving a gas-guzzling monster 200 yards to the mall is still the norm rather than the exception, while Europeans still hop onto cheap flights for unnecessary travel. Beyond the West, people aspire to these lifestyles, even though they are achieved at great cost to the environment and climate. This all drives up energy consumption in industries, services, and households, most of which is still satisfied by fossil fuels.

Beyond market forces and top-down policies, what more should be done to generate a bottom-up, mass-scale societal movement to propel us into a carbon-free, net-zero future?

TOMAS JERMALAVIČIUS

Prior to joining the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) in the end of 2008, Tomas Jermalavičius worked at the Baltic Defence College, first as Deputy Director of the College's Institute of Defence Studies in 2001–2004, and later as Dean of the College in 2005–2008.

At the ICDS, Jermalavičius deals with various aspects of defence policy and strategy, regional security and defence cooperation in the Baltic area, the impact of emerging disruptive technologies on security and defence, energy security and societal resilience. Articles written or co-authored by him have appeared in Defence Studies, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review, Austrian Security Strategic Review, Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook, RUSI Whitehall Papers and Riga Conference Papers as well as in the publications of John Hopkins University, Joint Special Operations University, American Academy in Berlin, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, ARES-Armament Industry European Research Group and NATO Science and Technology Organisation (STO). Since 2017, he also has been a Visiting Professor at the Natolin Campus of the College of Europe in Warsaw, teaching a course on terrorism and hybrid warfare to postgraduate students.

JK: This is an important point. Just lately, I was wondering to myself when was the last time we had a nationwide discussion about energy saving or efficiency. Every once in a while, there is some news telling us that if we go to the sauna three times a week instead of every day, we will save significant amounts of energy. Yet, the motivation factor is not there, since energy prices are pretty low, and the issue has not been high on the agenda for ordinary citizens.

Now, however, especially with inflation spiking, might be a good moment to start talking about energy savings: if you want to save some money – save energy, too. These are the little things that each one of us can do.

My organisation, Sitra, has been encouraging the Finnish government and some big city authorities to launch public energy-saving projects so that the public sector will lead by example. Lowering heating by one degree Celsius saves 5% of energy. The effort is minimal, but the outcome is remarkable.

What the public sector can do is provide more subsidies – or other incentives – to households or real estate owners to invest in energy efficiency. Europe still has much work to do: many houses are not well insulated, so their energy consumption remains high. There are many good examples where countries and regions have made substantial investments, and ordinary citizens have benefited financially from them. There is a lot we can do without compromising our standard of living.

TJ: Looking at the housing stock in the Baltic states, one can see how much is still not renovated and leaks heat. We do, indeed, have much homework to do.

It comes down to the availability of affordable technology and financing. Technology is not a silver bullet, but it does play an outsized role during energy

transition. Ever cheaper and more efficient technology for developing clean renewable resources, electricity generation (wind, solar, thermal), smart grids, transport electrification, and energy storage gives us the hope that the rapid wider diffusion of such tech will alter the energy landscape faster than we would probably recognise. Some countries may even seize the opportunity to leapfrog the legacy solutions, which we have been struggling with in the developed world.

In this context, nuclear energy is one of our legacy solutions but, at least outside the West, it has been experiencing a renaissance. There are new-generation reactors already available as well as the enthusiasm of innovators for small modular reactors; improvements to nuclear waste storage, and even novel solutions for the re-use of nuclear waste. They have created a momentum behind nuclear energy – to back up and supplement renewables in the future.

The societal inhibitions created by first the Chornobyl and then the Fukushima disasters have proved to be very powerful. Even the looming energy crisis, which is a result of the geopolitical confrontation with Russia, does not seem to be sufficient to convince anyone to halt or slow down the decommissioning of the last remaining nuclear power plants.

> *When either businesses or consumers start to demand cleaner solutions and net-zero or minus-emission production, they accelerate the transition even faster than we might expect.*
>
> **JYRKI KATAINEN**

Finland, on the other hand, seems very comfortable with nuclear energy as part of the overall energy mix and adroit at integrating it with renewable sources. Will nuclear energy remain the preserve of the most daring and most resourceful, a niche almost? Or will it regain a central role in the net-zero world?

JK: It is always good to have a wide-ranging energy mix so that a country is never too dependent on one single source.

With that in mind, nuclear energy will continue to play a significant role in the future – especially with the smaller-scale, modular reactors. They can replace

A man tries to chase away a swarm of desert locusts away from a farm, near the town of Rumuruti, Kenya. Anthropogenic climate change makes locust plagues more likely. Reuters/Scanpix

municipal or regional coal or wood burning energy. They can become a meaningful part of any country's energy mix.

When considering such ambitious technology, investments in renewable energy, such as hydrogen and small modular nuclear reactors, appear quite promising indeed. However, energy should not be produced with the constant support of public subsidies but should rather be market-based. This is also beneficial for the public sector, because less bureaucracy enables the energy sector to invest in new resources.

TJ: Looking farther ahead into the future of circular economy models, will clean technology produce a hunger for various mineral resources: from so-called rare-earth elements to more conventional ones like aluminium, copper and, especially, lithium. An exponential growth in demand for them is anticipated, with some estimates of fourfold increases by 2040.

The next problem is that much of the disruptive, toxic waste generating activity is concentrated in countries with poor environmental standards and loose enforcement, with weak governance and struggling with corruption. Many developing nations prioritise economic development over sustainability. We risk causing damage to local ecosystems tantamount to that inflicted by the extraction of hydrocarbons.

Even when it comes to hydrogen, the plan for global production and distribution will bring industry to countries and regions with abundant solar power potential but who, nonetheless, may already struggle with the availability of fresh water. For instance, countries like Estonia and Ukraine, which offer significant green hydrogen production capacity, are anticipated to experience increased water stress levels by 2040 according to World Resources Institute estimates. Absent innovative technological solutions, such as hydrogen production from sea water without energy-intensive desalinisation, hydrogen may fuel the 'water wars' of the future.

How do we avoid the traps we stepped into in the age of hydrocarbons? Does the circular economy offer a solution?

JK: This is a tricky question. Obviously, since we do need more rare-earth metals,

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the issue of biodiversity comes into the picture. We have not solved it yet, primarily because there are no market mechanisms to value biodiversity. This will hardly happen any time soon, even though market mechanisms to protect biodiversity are badly needed now.

Basically, we could start by looking into the opportunities of the circular economy. Only 9% of resources consumed globally are circular, so the potential is there to unlock. Given the scarcity, industry will have to apply new circular business models. However, this is only a partial solution, since there is not enough data to indicate to what degree the circular economy can replace the need for raw materials.

Furthermore, there is another angle to sustainable mining: there are good and bad mining practices. And this is a topical issue in Finland. Lapland has plenty

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of the raw materials utilised for batteries and wind turbines, but many natural treasures are located in the same area. Those who are in favour of issuing licenses to new mining businesses in this particular region say that the alternative option would be to purchase the same raw materials from China, where mining practices are not as sustainable as in Finland.

This is not a black-and-white issue, and we will have to deal with it at some point. This is why the emphasis should be on the circular economy and sustainable mining practices.

TJ: We should also assist countries to improve their governance and introduce environmental management standards.

Let us now pivot to the topic of geopolitics. Energy transition and economic transformation will undoubtedly lead to significant reconfigurations in global supply chains. For instance, the world depends on China for rare-earth minerals, and we seem to lack the wisdom and foresight to avoid such geopolitically toxic entanglements. The outcome of Europe's dependence on Russia's oil and gas is another vivid example: we have repeatedly said we should diversify, yet we now struggle, in very extreme circumstances, to surrender that critical energy dependence and increase pressure on Russia to stop its war in Ukraine.

Moreover, the West relies on the Gulf nations for hydrocarbons. Just recently, the Wall Street Journal alleged that the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia rebuffed a US request to increase oil production as soon as the White House National Security Advisor brought up journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder – a human rights issue.

Is there a way to avoid such dangerous entanglements when establishing the supply chains of the future? As a former EU Commissioner, do you believe the EU should play a greater role in steering these supply chain policies? For instance, there is a French-proposed anti-coercion instrument already in the pipeline. What concrete tools can the EU apply to prevent a situation like the one we have ended up in vis-à-vis Russia?

JK: First and foremost, the Russian attack on Ukraine has once again divided the world into democratic and autocratic

camps. It will require a miracle to avoid repeating such scenarios in the future.

Even though Russia's economy is only slightly bigger than Spain's and smaller than Italy's, Russia is, nonetheless, capable of inflicting significant harm on the rest of the world: the African continent suffers from food shortages, whereas Europe feels the war's impact on its economic prosperity. These developments and the new "camping" (the division of the world into democratic and autocratic camps – Editor) will inevitably force the EU to reassess our resilience, not only in terms of energy but also in other segments of our economy.

For instance, semiconductors: 90% of high-quality semiconductors are produced in Taiwan. And while Taiwan is not a problem itself, it is common knowledge that its relationship with China may well trigger some uncertainties in the foreseeable future.

We must carefully evaluate our vulnerabilities and strategise how to reduce our dependency on raw materials and energy,

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in particular. Even though energy policy is in the hands of the national governments of EU member states, the current crisis has revealed that we must consider collective resilience and collective efforts to strengthen it – it is, without a doubt, an EU-wide problem. The EU economies are so interlinked that troubles in one country may easily spill over to others.

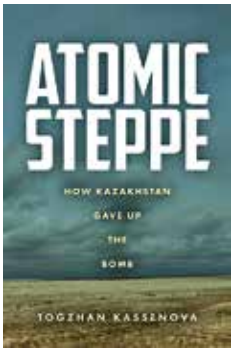
TJ: Nevertheless, we will have to deal with large authoritarian powers, because we need their cooperation. We will have to persuade them to meet global climate targets, since we share the same Earth with them. Despite our differences, we still need to keep moving towards common objectives if we want to ensure the very survival of our species.

JK: Exactly. Although previously, many used to believe that interdependency would increase security, we now know that this was not necessarily the case. This is one lesson to learn: even though the whole idea of the EU was about increasing interdependency, that interdependency involved only democratic nations. Globalisation, on the other hand, has increased interdependency between polar opposite ideological blocs, and the picture is different – this is why the resilience question is critical.

A Karbi tribal woman whose land was used to build a solar power plant grazes her cow near the plant in Mikir Bamuni village, northeastern Assam state, India. Reuters/Scanpix

A Glimpse back at the Lennart Meri Conference 2021

Photos by Annika Haas and Arno Mikkor.



Atomic Steppe: How Kazakhstan Gave Up the Bomb
Togzhan Kassenova (Stanford University Press, 2022)

Atomic Steppe tells the untold true story of how Kazakhstan said no to the most powerful weapons in human history. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the marginalised Central Asian republic suddenly found itself with the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal on its territory.

Operation Z: The Death Throes of an Imperial Delusion
Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), 2022

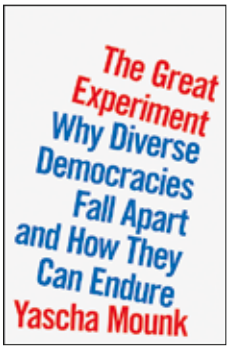
This special report seeks to examine how the interconnected challenges confronting Moscow are reshaping Russian policy, and the risks Moscow's potential courses of action pose as the war enters a new phase. Russia is now preparing, diplomatically, militarily and economically, for a protracted conflict.

NATO's Hypersonic Challenge
International Centre for Defence and Security, 2022

Richard Weitz describes the challenges that Russia's investment in hypersonic systems pose to NATO and outlines a range of possible responses. These include passive defence measures and focused exercises, missile defence technologies, and export controls.

EU Crisis Management
Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, 2022

From the sovereign debt crisis to the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU has taken a leading role in the management of crises. The essays in this anthology analyse the EU's performance and suggest how it could improve as a crisis manager.



The Great Experiment: Why Diverse Democracies Fall Apart and How They Can Endure
Yascha Mounk (Penguin Press, 2022)

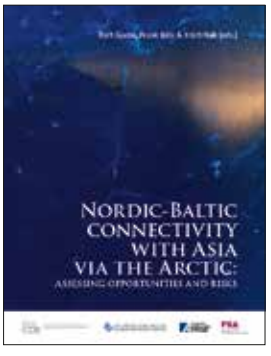
A brilliant big-picture vision of the greatest challenge of our time – how to bridge the bitter divides within diverse democracies enough for them to remain stable and functional. The book offers both a profound understanding of an urgent problem and genuine hope for our human capacity to solve it.

Resilient Ukraine – a Delicate Mosaic? Society, Media, Security, and Future Prospects
International Centre for Defence and Security, 2021

An overview of key legal documents that address the topic of resilience in Ukraine; a description of the socio-political features of the south and east of the country; and the results of an empirical study based on data from focus groups and in-depth expert interviews.

China-Russia Alliance – Lessons from Japan's Failed "Detachment" Strategy
Estonian Foreign Policy Institute at the ICDS, 2021

Is a "China-Russia alliance" a nightmare for the European Union and the United States and should there be an attempt to detach Russia from China?



Nordic-Baltic Connectivity with Asia via the Arctic: Assessing Opportunities and Risks
Estonian Foreign Policy Institute at the ICDS and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2021

This book pays particular attention to the use of economic statecraft i.e., the use of economic resources and connections in power projection and, as the other side of the coin, the vulnerabilities created by the weaponisation of interdependencies.