



The War in Ukraine and the Way Forward

Short, medium and long-term recommendations for the EPP

Introduction

On 24 February 2022, conventional interstate conflict returned to Europe after Russia launched an unprovoked war against Ukraine. Although some predicted at the time that Kyiv would fall in a matter of days, the Ukrainian people continue to fight to defend their homeland and push Russia out. Their bravery and determination should be saluted, and the international community should continue to show solidarity towards Ukraine.

Russia's invasion is a major breach of international law, specifically the principle that the borders of recognised states should not be changed by the force of arms. Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and the USSR's successor state, the Russian Federation, recognised Ukrainian independence in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. Allowing Russia's aggression to stand would weaken this principle and provide a precedent for other aggressive states to extend their frontiers by force.

It is unclear how much longer the war will last. Russia has remained committed to waging war against Ukraine, and Ukraine has ruled out any peace that does not involve the return of all its occupied provinces, including the province of Crimea. Furthermore, the land that Ukraine is seeking to free from Russian occupation is perceived by both sides as part of their national identity, but it remains Ukrainian under international law. This means that the chances for a sustainable peace deal are currently rather slim. The EU must therefore prepare for a protracted Russo-Ukrainian war, characterised by intermittent periods of escalation and de-escalation.

To deal with such a conflict, the EU needs an action plan. The objectives of this action plan should be to (1) push Russia to cease all hostilities towards Ukraine and withdraw its forces as a first step beyond the 24 February 2022 borders, (2) assist Ukraine in recovering and rebuilding itself, (3) facilitate Ukraine's accession to the EU, and (4) enhance the EU's strategic sovereignty, i.e., its capacity to react and deal with external shocks. To reach these goals, a set of short, medium, and long-term options are presented below.



Short-term

Capabilities and Equipment: The Ukrainian armed forces need additional military capabilities and equipment to be able to defend themselves against Russia's aggression. The delivery of already promised capabilities should be sped up and additional ones should be provided based on Ukraine's battlefield needs. Most urgently, European countries should provide Ukraine with modern fighter aircraft to enhance the country's ability to defend its airspace, as Kyiv has requested. The provision of such aircraft to Ukraine could be coordinated by the EU Military Staff (EUMS) at the European level.

Financial Assistance: Since the beginning of the war, the EU has approved EUR 3.6 billion of Ukraine-related European Peace Facility (EPF) assistance to help Kyiv acquire lethal arms and other equipment that it needs to defend itself. However, the total value of the reimbursement claims that EU countries have submitted to the EPF for the capabilities that they have delivered to Kyiv significantly outweighs the total value of the approved EPF assistance packages. The EU, therefore, needs to urgently agree on an additional EPF assistance package to Ukraine. Furthermore, Kyiv faces a forecasted budget deficit of over 20% of GDP in 2023 with inflation currently running at 26%. To ensure essential public services can continue to function in Ukraine, the (already approved) EUR 18 billion in EU financial assistance must be disbursed on a regular and timely basis.

Sanctions: Sanctions are an important element of the EU's overall approach to the war in Ukraine. The Union has approved multiple sanctions packages since the beginning of the war to put maximum pressure on the Kremlin. These sanctions should be maintained until the war ends and until Moscow withdraws its forces from Ukraine and commits—at the very least—to respecting the country's pre-24 February 2022 borders. In the meantime, the EU should identify additional areas in which it could sanction Russia if Moscow chooses to intensify its war against Kyiv. The Union should also boost the monitoring of its existing sanctions, and help member states build capacity as necessary, to identify and punish those companies and actors who violate them.

Military Mobility: The Ukraine war has highlighted the urgent need for the EU to boost its activities in the field of military mobility, a key priority in EU-NATO cooperation that is crucial



for NATO's ability to provide credible deterrence in Europe. However, the EU's military mobility efforts are currently hampered by insufficient funding. The Union should therefore agree to a substantial increase to the existing military mobility budget through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) in the context of the mid-term review of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). This budget should be increased from its current level of EUR 1.5 billion (in 2018 prices) to EUR 5.767 billion, which is what the European Commission proposed ahead of the 2021-2027 MFF negotiations.

Disinformation and False Narratives: Disinformation and false narratives have become weapons of warfare. In recent years, the EU has been increasing its efforts in detecting and countering fake news. In this regard, the establishment of the Information Sharing and Analysis Centre, a platform to counter disinformation campaigns by Russia and China, is highly welcome. The EU, however, must continue to treat disinformation as a threat, considering that Russian hate speech and false narratives are not only mobilised against Ukraine but against the West, NATO and the broader democratic world in general. The EU must not only step up its efforts to expose myths and conduct fact-checking, but also invest in proactive strategic communication and equip citizens with tools to be able to detect fake news and apply critical thinking. Social media companies have also a bigger role to play when it comes to the removal of harmful content, improved collaboration with the research community, and content moderation in Ukrainian and Eastern European languages. The successful implementation of the novel Digital Services Act (DSA) will be key in this regard.

The Global South: Russian narratives targeting countries in the Global South are focusing predominantly on the West, rather than Ukraine. For many in the Global South, especially in Africa, Latin America, and Southern and Western Asia, there is little difference in perceptions of Russia and Ukraine. In the Kremlin's messaging, Ukraine is "bad" not because it is presumably anti-Russian, but because of its ties to the often-demonised Western world. The West should re-engage with the Global South and change the narrative, while avoiding any "lecturing". The EU should follow in the footsteps of Ukraine, which has been stepping up its diplomatic presence and efforts in the Global South. Ukrainian diplomats are sending a message that to stand with Ukraine is to stand with the UN Charter rather than with the West.



Medium-term

Security Assurances: In the immediate post-war period, EU member states should provide Ukraine with security assurances to protect the country against any additional Russian acts of aggression. This could be done at the EU level if the member states agreed to a commitment to act if Russia would violate the terms of a future Russo-Ukrainian peace agreement. This could take the form of providing additional military capabilities and equipment to Ukraine or deploying a large European force to Ukraine. EU countries could also consider deploying a large European force to Ukraine for monitoring purposes after a Russo-Ukrainian peace agreement has been signed. Such a force could deter Russia from violating the terms of that agreement.

Investment Stimulation: In addition to security guarantees, Ukraine will need significant amounts of foreign investment in the post-war period to recover and reignite its economy. In September 2022, the World Bank estimated these costs at EUR 349 billion; an estimate which is likely to have risen significantly in the intervening period. The EU must develop ways to stimulate such investment in Ukraine, both from the public and private sectors. This must be done in partnership with the government in Kyiv and international allies. The objective is to help Ukraine rebuild itself. One such way would be to give Ukrainian producers and manufacturers preferential access to the EU's single market. The EU could also work with international corporate insurance providers to develop "war insurance" schemes for private sector companies so that they would have peace of mind when investing in Ukraine. Eventually, Ukraine could become an international "testing lab" for new digital services and clean technologies because the country will have to rebuild much of its existing infrastructure, which has been destroyed by Russia during the war. This will be both a medium-term and long-term process.

European Defence Industrial Cooperation: Following the war, the EU must take further steps to boost the overall competitiveness of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) and fill the capability shortfalls that supporting Ukraine has caused in the weapons stockpiles of EU countries. This could be done by increasing the financial budget ceilings of the EDF and EDIRPA, for example. The EU should also consider incentives for



enhanced regional defence industrial cooperation in Europe to alleviate countries' security of supply concerns. Ukraine, which has a large and experienced defence sector, should be brought into this cooperation, perhaps by extending the Association Agreement, even before accession negotiations have been completed.

Common Defence Market: The EU must also move forward with the creation of a genuine common European defence market to reduce existing inefficiencies and boost the overall competitiveness of EDTIB. In particular, the EU must find ways to increase demand for military capabilities made in Europe, both globally and from Europe itself. With this in mind, the EU needs to create a common arms export policy to harmonise the member states' national arms export rules and regulations. In addition, the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European Commission should produce a study to determine in which defence capability/technology areas there would be a need for new common capability/equipment standards.

Updated Structures: EU defence cooperation has taken significant leaps forward since the publication of the 2016 EU Global Strategy. The Ukraine war has pushed the Union to make further progress, as demonstrated by the EU's decision to use the EPF to help Ukraine acquire lethal arms and other equipment. Due to these major developments, the overall institutional structure of EU defence cooperation should also evolve. In particular, the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) should be upgraded to a full committee and a separate Defence Council should be created for EU defence ministers within the Council of the EU.

Special Crimes Tribunal: There is currently no international court or tribunal which could try Russia's political and military leadership for the country's criminal war against Ukraine. Establishing such a tribunal would fill the legal vacuum in international criminal justice by prosecuting the decision-makers and not just the executors. The proposal to set up a special tribunal has already been endorsed by the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and NATO. It should therefore be a collective effort. Prosecuting Russia's crime of aggression would be an important landmark for the maintenance of the rules-based international order. It would send a strong signal to the Kremlin and Russian society and would respond to Ukraine's plea for 'no peace without justice'.



Long-term

Raw Materials Partnership: Ukraine is known as Europe's "breadbasket" due to its large agricultural sector. However, the country is also an important producer of primary raw materials such as titanium and iron ore, lithium, coal, and uranium. The EU and Ukraine should therefore eventually form a raw materials partnership to increase the EU's strategic sovereignty and help Ukraine grow economically. Such a partnership would enable the EU to decrease its dependence on raw materials produced by authoritarian countries, which continues to be a fundamental vulnerability for the Union's resilience and security of supply.

Energy Policy: The EU needs to continue with its efforts to stabilise Ukraine's energy sector. European member states such as Slovakia have been instrumental in guaranteeing the reverse flow of natural gas to Ukraine through the currently existing pipeline infrastructure. The overall interconnection between Ukraine and CEE countries like Poland and Hungary needs to be further improved in the years to come. The emergency synchronisation of the Ukrainian electricity grid with the European Continental Grid was an essential move in 2022. The expansion of electricity trade between Ukraine and the EU should be encouraged given the commercial and energy security benefits for both parties. In the long term, the EU should work towards the integration of Ukraine within its initiatives for improved security of energy supply, grid resilience and decarbonisation efforts. Ukraine has an important role to play in the successful implementation of the European Green Deal and within the framework of the European Energy Union. The EU needs to continue to diversify its network of energy suppliers to enhance its strategic sovereignty – Ukraine would be a formidable partner in accomplishing such future goals.

Decreasing EDTIB fragmentation: The EU needs to decrease the fragmentation of the EDTIB. Europe's armed forces operate 29 different types of destroyers, 17 types of MBTs,



and 20 types of fighter planes, compared to four, one, and six for the US respectively. The EU needs to take further steps to decrease the number of weapons platforms used in Europe. This is vital to create economies of scale, bolster the overall competitiveness of EDTIB, and boost European security of supply in a crisis. The fewer competing weapons platforms Europe's armed forces operate, the easier it will be to maintain, operate, and upgrade them.

Experience Dissemination: After the war, the battlefield knowledge and fighting experience of the Ukrainian Armed Forces should be disseminated to the armed forces of EU member states. This knowledge and experience would help EU member states train their military personnel, develop military strategies, and make the right capability/procurement choices. This experience and knowledge dissemination could take place via staff-to-staff exchanges or military exchange programmes between the national defence universities of EU member states and Ukraine. In addition, Ukraine could be invited to participate in the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity with the carrot that the costs of its participation would be covered in their entirety by the EPF.

Ukraine's EU Accession: Ukraine is currently fighting not only for its survival as an independent nation but also for fundamental European values such as democracy, sovereignty, and the rule of law. The prospect of a brighter future within the EU has helped Ukraine get through the difficult past few months. Kyiv will need long-term development and pre-accession financial aid to help it modernise its economy and increase its competitiveness. After the war is over, the EU should therefore open formal accession negotiations with Ukraine to signal to the country that its future lies firmly within the EU. Once accession negotiations begin, they should follow a speedy timetable. The aim should be to enable Ukraine to become an EU member state one year after the start of its accession negotiations.



Conclusion

Russia's war against Ukraine has already lasted for more than a year. During this difficult period, the EU has stood steadfast by Ukraine and its people. Although we do not yet know how much longer the war will last, the EU and its member states must prepare for the possibility that it could be protracted. In the meantime, the EU must also take additional steps to protect Ukraine and its people. The long-term aim should be Ukraine's EU membership, for which formal accession negotiations should be launched quickly after the war is over.

In addition, the war in Ukraine has highlighted the need for the EU to take additional steps in security and defence cooperation. The EPP must remain committed to the overall goal of transforming the EU into a genuine 'Defence Union', which should also be one of the EPP's main campaign themes ahead of the 2024 European elections. This should also imply giving Ukraine credible EU security assurances in the immediate post-war situation and deploying a large European force to the country to monitor the implementation of a future Russo-Ukrainian peace agreement and to deter Russia from violating it.