

# **SURVIVE AND THRIVE: A EUROPEAN PLAN TO SUPPORT UKRAINE IN THE LONG WAR AGAINST RUSSIA**

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## **SUMMARY**

- Russia's war on Ukraine is likely to last many years, even if the violence may subside at times.
- To sustain Ukraine during this conflict, Europeans should draw up a four-part 'long-war plan'.
- This plan would comprise military assistance to Ukraine in the form of a 'security compact'; security assurances that respond to scenarios of Russian escalation; economic support, giving Ukraine access to the EU's single market; and help to secure Ukraine's energy supply.
- Besides its practical impact, this plan will signal Europeans' commitment to assisting Ukraine, showing Kyiv, Moscow, and the wider global community that the EU is in it for the long haul. The long-war plan will also provide clarity to anxious publics in member states.
- Together, these proposals would protect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and help create the long-term conditions for a resolution to the war – if and when a more constructive attitude emerges in the Kremlin.

# Introduction

As the war in Ukraine passes its six-month mark, the return of conflict to the European continent continues to shock. The bravery of Ukrainians, and the unity of their partners, have been the defining features of the war's first phase. Rather than collapsing, Ukraine and its supporters have shown an inspiring determination and solidarity in the face of aggression.

Unfortunately, the war shows little prospect of ending. The violence may subside at times, but the absence of any sort of resolution will mean that it could reignite at any moment. Ukrainians, and their supporters in Europe and elsewhere, have to embark on a long war.

To prevail in that war, the Russian regime must hope this Ukrainian spring will give way to a Russian winter. It wants to make progress on the ground by slowly capturing more territory. It counts on cold weather, soaring energy prices, and the burdens of hosting refugees to undermine public support in Europe. It believes that domestic politics in the United States will start to weaken transatlantic unity. And the Kremlin thinks it can win the battle of narratives, particularly in the global south.

But, even as the European Union and its member states push back on all these fronts, they should consider more holistically how they will support Ukraine in the long war. By laying out a comprehensive plan for the war's next phase, Europeans can send critical messages to key audiences. They can give a signal to Kyiv that they are in this for the long haul, but also encourage Ukraine to continue to avoid escalation. They can give a signal to Moscow about the costs of aggression and thereby encourage it to de-escalate. They can give a signal to the public at home by making clear the stakes involved and reassuring voters that the costs are limited and spread fairly. Europeans can give a signal to Washington that they are pulling their weight and not free-riding on American support. And they can give a signal that the punishment of Russia will not come at the expense of the rest of the world.

Ukrainians will and should make their own decisions about how they want to organise their resistance to Russia's invasion. But Europeans must similarly decide for themselves what can they offer to support those Ukrainian efforts and the conditions under which they will offer it. They should not wait for US leadership on these issues – Ukraine is in Europe's neighbourhood, not America's. Worse, the United States' political volatility and its other pressing global commitments mean that it is not a wholly reliable partner in this endeavour. Europeans must take up their responsibility to provide help to Ukraine in the long war, and

to contribute the lion's share. Effective European support for Ukraine that follows a strong strategic logic is, in fact, more likely to keep the US involved in the effort.

A comprehensive 'long-war plan' for Ukraine should contain four essential elements that Europeans commit to supporting:

**Military security** – The EU and its member states would provide long-term military assistance to Ukraine through a new security compact agreed by the EU and Ukraine. This would involve sending weapons and equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces and security services, and offering training and technical assistance in areas such as cyber.

**Security assurances** – The EU's member states would supplement the military assistance provided through the security compact with a comprehensive set of security assurances. These would set out the type of increased support they would give to Ukraine in the event of various conceivable Russian escalations.

**Economic security** – The EU would continue to provide financial assistance to stabilise the Ukrainian economy and begin the long reconstruction process. But, to provide a long-term vision of integration with Europe, the EU would also offer Ukraine a "partnership for enlargement". This would open up access to the European market, potentially allow Ukraine to receive cohesion funds, and help it prepare for EU membership over the long term.

**Energy security** – Finally, the EU and its member states would build on Ukraine's membership of the EU energy union to help the country more tightly integrate its energy infrastructure with that of the EU and meet its international climate obligations. To ease the societal impact of the energy transition, the EU would also provide a "Just Transition Fund to Ukraine" modelled on the EU cohesion policy's internal Just Transition Fund.

This paper details the four parts of a European long-war plan for Ukraine that could help sustain the country through the conflict. Few plans, of course, survive contact with reality. Military developments on the ground in Ukraine and political developments in the world beyond have frequently surprised and upset the most carefully made preparations of all sides. They probably will again. That reality, however, should not stymie the development of realistic plans to assist Ukraine. The proposals contained in this paper aim to stimulate thinking in the EU about what is likely to be Europe's greatest geopolitical challenge in the years to come.

## **Military security**

Foreign military assistance has become the lifeline of the Ukrainian war effort. In the long– war, it will be vital to strengthen Ukraine’s military capabilities and prevent any further escalation of the war once Russia has rested and refitted its forces. Ukraine’s partners, and particularly the EU and its member states, should assist Ukraine in achieving these goals. These efforts can proceed independently of any effort to promote NATO or EU candidacy for Ukraine. They are necessary to ensure that European militaries can effectively continue, over the course of a long war, to provide the sort of assistance they have been giving to Ukraine in recent months.

One way of accomplishing this is to provide Ukraine with a “security compact.” This would essentially be a set of EU and Ukrainian undertakings designed to increase cooperation between the security and defence sectors of the EU and Ukraine. Such a security compact would be a broad-based effort to improve the EU’s cooperation with its partners on intelligence reform, cyber-security, and military cooperation – enhancing the assistance the union gives to Ukraine to defend against foreign threats.

In the run-up to the all-out Russian invasion of Ukraine, many similar, individual efforts took place. But they were insufficient, and EU member states generally did not lead them – rather, the US and the United Kingdom did. In the next phase of the long war, the EU and its member states need to take the lead in promoting a security compact with Ukraine. They also need to more systematically assess Ukraine’s military assistance needs and make greater efforts to meet those needs.

### **Compact goals**

Despite the inherent uncertainties, it is possible to identify what steps the EU can take in pursuit of this effort – a meaningful security compact for Ukraine will ask a lot of member states. The requirements go beyond just the costs and point towards the overall development of European capabilities and extended long-term cooperation with Ukraine at multiple levels. The effort should address several immediate and strategic issues.

### ***Military size and funding***

The long war in Ukraine will primarily be a land war. Since 2021, Ukraine’s land forces have comprised two components, each playing an important role: the standing forces, made up of professional and contract soldiers; and the territorial defence forces and their conscript-training facilities. All told, the Ukrainian military in February mustered nearly 200,000

soldiers in the active force (organised into 29 brigades of manoeuvre forces) and another 900,000 in the reserve force (organised into four heavy and 23 light reserve brigades). This is a substantially larger force than the German or the French army, and it has accordingly high funding needs. Currently, considerable portions of Ukraine's foreign military assistance go towards paying soldiers' salaries and providing help for soldiers' families because the Ukrainian state lacks the funds.

### ***Transition to Western weapons and equipment systems***

An even more pressing issue, already demonstrated by the war thus far, is the need for Ukraine to transition to owning and using Western--designed equipment. Supply chains relying on Russian spare parts and ammunition are unreliable, and purchases of second-hand Soviet equipment or stocks from other countries are stop-gap measures at best. Europeans should therefore aim to make the Ukrainian military more interoperable overall with NATO militaries. As part of this, Ukraine will also be able to create a well-equipped rapid reaction force that would allow it to respond to a variety of escalation contingencies.

A Ukrainian armed force that is more interoperable with NATO militaries would allow Europeans to quickly upscale weapons deliveries in any given crisis; prepare stocks of supplies (such as ammunition and spare parts) for Ukraine, and pre-deploy them close to the border in case of escalation or a new crisis; and harmonise command and control and cyber-security standards, procedures, and data in order to allow for quick exchange of battlefield information and rapid response to cyber-attacks.

Of course, given the size of Ukraine's army, this is not an easy task. The table below provides a back-of-the-envelope estimate for the replacement of the Soviet-era systems Ukraine currently uses with Western-designed weapons and the acquisition of 12 days of ammunition supply for them. The numbers are based on high-readiness forces' pre-war stocks only, and suggest a cost of about €100 billion.

## Estimated costs for the replacement of Soviet-era systems with Western-designed weapons and 12 days of ammunition supply

Type	Number in use	Replacement cost per unit (€)	Average daily consumption	12-day ammunition supply	Ammunition costs per round	Total costs (€)
Main battle tank	987	8,000,000	20	236,880	5,500	9,198,840,000
Misc armoured fighting vehicle	747	2,000,000	250	2,241,000	320	2,211,120,000
Infantry fighting vehicle	1,357	5,000,000	150	2,442,600	450	7,884,170,000
Armoured personnel carrier	831	4,000,000	1,200	11,966,400	5	3,383,832,000
Towed artillery	587	1,500,000	70	493,080	1,000	1,373,580,000
Self-propelled gun	655	10,000,000	70	550,200	1,000	7,100,200,000
Light multiple launch rocket system	209	0	80	200,640	1,000	200,640,000
Heavy multiple launch rocket system	150	3,500,000	12	21,600	150,000	3,765,000,000
Self-propelled anti-aircraft weapon	75	15,000,000	500	450,000	1,000	1,575,000,000
Heavy mortar	404	0	100	484,800	800	387,840,000
Fighter	80	80,000,000	2	1,920	3,000,000	12,160,000,000
Light surface-to-air missile	1,768	480,000	4	84,864	150,000	13,578,240,000
Heavy surface-to-air missile	332	25,000,000	2	7,968	3,500,000	36,188,000,000
Smart artillery round			20	240	150,000	36,000,000
Anti-tank guided weapon			500	6,000	240,000	1,440,000,000
Total						100,482,462,000

Note: 120mm mortars and light MLRS (BM-21 Grad family) do not need replacement, as NATO continues to use those calibres. Twelve days of combat supplies are the minimum standard in NATO to be kept at hand.

Source: Gustav Gressel

In the end, the cost might not be quite so high. The figures set out above are for new equipment, but, as is often noted, the transition to Western equipment should come first from stocks of existing equipment.

### ***Defence-industry capacity***

A major challenge in assisting Ukraine's transition to the use of Western equipment in support of a large-scale land war will be industrial output. In the past 30 years, NATO militaries have mostly fought counterinsurgency campaigns or limited wars against developing countries. None of these campaigns has demanded air-defence systems, or large numbers of tank and artillery rounds. The military support effort for Ukraine has revealed

numerous defence-industrial weaknesses in Europe that Europeans will need to quickly address. Europe is therefore currently unable to pursue an industrial war, in Ukraine or anywhere else.

As a first step towards being able to sustain such a war, NATO planners will have to reconsider the trade-offs between quantity and quality of military equipment and ammunition. They will need to recognise that, in sustained industrial warfare, quantity has a quality all its own. For example, the West (European states and the US) has been overly reliant on precision-guided munitions, all of which take a long time to produce and often cost more than €150,000 per munition. For most battlefield situations, however, ‘dumb’ munitions would do. Each year, the US produces 9,000 M-30-family GPS-guided rockets for the M-142 HIMARS system. This is what Ukraine is expected to use over 25 combat days. Cheaper alternatives are no longer in production.

Because a tank round is so much cheaper than a modern anti-tank guided weapon, even the high costs of purchasing the newest Leopard 2 tank would equal the initial cost after about 35 engagements. In a low-intensity combat situation – for example, Afghanistan – 35 engagements against targets such as armoured vehicles take a long time to accumulate. They hardly justify the logistical effort of fielding a vehicle like a Leopard 2. But in high-intensity combat such as Ukraine, 35 engagements may occur in a single day. The main battle tank is therefore a cost-effective mean to deliver the desired result.

Similarly, main battle tanks appear much more expensive for destroying enemy armoured vehicles than the Javelin anti-armour weapon system, as tanks cost much more per unit (€8m versus €200,000). But after 35 engagements, a new main battle tank is ‘cheaper’ than a Javelin because tank rounds cost only a fraction of the ultra-sophisticated Javelin smart missiles.

The Ramstein process initiated by the US in April 2022 to coordinate military assistance to Ukraine from all the various national donors has succeeded somewhat in creating a less chaotic assistance process and standardising the equipment delivered. However, the quantity of deliveries is still too low. Used US M-113 armoured personnel carriers, M-109 howitzers, and German Leopard 2 battle tanks will have to be the future backbone of the Ukrainian military because there is no alternative; nor is there capacity (or money) to produce brand-new equipment in the required quantities.

One way to lower the costs for Ukraine’s transition to Western standards is for major Western defence industrial firms to engage in production partnerships with Ukrainian enterprises so that they can learn how to produce equipment according to NATO standards.

This can be done for most classes of armoured fighting vehicles, munitions, artillery systems, and electronic warfare equipment. Spare-parts depots in Poland or Romania containing Ukrainian-produced vehicle parts should supplement this effort. Ukraine will have to work hard to protect its defence industrial assets from Russian attacks, and some enterprises may be relocated to Poland or Romania for the duration of the war to protect them and preserve knowledge and skilled labour.

### ***Training***

Ukrainian forces will need training from NATO countries to be able to use Western weapons and to effectively integrate new recruits. The UK has already started such an effort, and Poland and the EU have announced their intention to do so.

But, in the long war, the security compact will need to include a broader commitment to train Ukrainian troops on new weapons systems. Training and manoeuvres should increase to allow for the transfer of knowledge, not only in the conventional military realm, but also in EU or NATO training for Ukrainian forces on electronic warfare and cyber-capabilities. This is not a one-way street, as Ukraine now has first-hand experience fighting Russia in all realms. Embedding European military advisers with the Ukrainian armed forces for training and advisory purposes would facilitate long-war assessments on needs and shortfalls.

Training outside Ukraine is particularly needed for forces other than the regular Ukrainian forces. As noted, Ukraine's territorial defence forces comprise 23 brigades of light infantry. Those brigades were formed only shortly before the war began and have played an important role in backing up the regular forces. However, they had insufficient time to train and lacked some necessary equipment. There was no officer training programme before these brigades were formed. This gap has now partially been filled by training in NATO countries and will need to continue.

### ***Intelligence***

There is a large gap between US and UK capabilities to follow and forecast Russian military moves and those of continental European states. Europeans need to improve their own electronic intelligence capabilities and help Ukrainians improve theirs to trace individual Russian systems. Both Europeans and Ukrainians also need to expand their military cyber capabilities in the offensive and defensive realms. Russia's digital command and control systems have proven to be much weaker and unsophisticated than anticipated.



## ***Air force and navy***

The war so far has demonstrated the critical importance of Ukraine's air force. Without the Ukrainian air force, Russia would have used the air space over Ukraine at will and would have crushed the Ukrainian land forces, particularly its mechanised reserves. Although the primary focus of a European security compact would be the land forces, it will also need an important air component.

The needs are similarly great. During the war, Ukraine has operated 70 fighter aircraft (Mig-29, Su-27), 45 attack aircraft, six air defence brigades, and four air defence regiments with Buk-M1 and S-300 systems, which together include about 322 heavy surface-to-air missile launchers. The surface-to-air missiles protect key infrastructure and cities, while the fighter aircraft act as a mobile reserve in the gaps in between. Given the size of the country, reductions in numbers due to losses or ammunition shortages would open significant holes in Ukraine's air defences. All six air-defence brigades and four regiments need to transition to Western-supplied systems to keep up the supply of munitions.

Ukraine's military situation also has implications for the combat aircraft it needs. To operate successfully against a superior enemy, Ukraine needs to keep its fighter forces mobile and dispersed. They have to operate not only from small airfields, but also auxiliary airstrips such as straight roads and highways. Few aircraft in the West are designed to do this in terms of ease of maintenance and short take-off, but the US F-18 and the Swedish Gripen are designed for dispersed operations from improvised fields. In the future, fighters originally designed for carrier-based operations will usually be better suited for such deployments.

As the Ukrainian air force must fight in this dispersed way, there are limits to the maximum number of forces one can operate in this mode. Large airbases cluttered with fighters would only provide targets for Russian missiles. Even if Western multi-role aircraft are better and more versatile than Russian ones, Ukraine will only be able to operate around 80 to 100, including some redundancies in case of war losses.

Ukraine's navy also retains an important role. However, given the priority of land and air forces in its long-war armament plans, Ukraine's navy will likely remain a littoral one. The navy's primary assets are coastal defence missiles and advanced mines (as well as mine-laying vessels), along with coastal surveillance radars and electronic reconnaissance efforts. They would then be supplemented by small missile craft, particularly submarines. Given the backwardness of Russian anti-submarine warfare assets, even a few coastal defence submarines would tie down many Russian vessels and restrict Russia's freedom of action in

the Black Sea. But Ukraine has never operated submarines on its own. Creating such a capability would require outside assistance from an experienced navy – and should be part of any long-term European security compact.

### ***Europe-Ukraine council of defence ministers***

Finally, a council of defence ministers and intelligence chiefs from Ukraine and the most important donor nations should begin to meet on a regular basis to assess the situation with Russia, the state of Ukraine’s military and its needs, and whether the EU and its member states are living up to the spirit of the security compact. The Russian military will be similarly adapting its forces and plans to address its shortcomings in the initial phases of the war. The interaction between opposing forces that adapt quickly means that this war, as with those in the past, will remain dynamic even if there are long periods of relative quiet. Supporting Ukraine in such a contest will require continuous adjustments to policies and force postures.

## **Security assurances**

Military assistance, while vital, will not be enough to sustain the long war in Ukraine. The country will also need a deeper sense of solidarity from Europe – a sense that Europeans will provide deep and extensive support in the coming period. To achieve this, Ukraine needs security assurances that set out what sort of support Europe will provide under which circumstances, including various forms of escalation by Russia. Ideally, such assurances would follow a settlement and all parties, including the Russians, would participate in them. Russian aggression and intransigence mean this is not yet possible. But that does not prevent Ukraine’s partners from making bilateral security assurances.

Such assurances would have a double function. Firstly, they would seek to reassure Ukraine that it would not be left alone in the face of aggression by Russia. Moreover, they should eventually make Ukraine feel comfortable enough about future support to negotiate a settlement with Russia from a position of strength. Secondly, security assurances would seek to deter Russia from launching new acts of aggression by reducing uncertainty around future Western support. Russia needs to understand – in no uncertain terms – that further escalation or aggression will be met by increased Western support for Ukraine.

For all these reasons, Europeans should provide security assurances as part of its long-war plan to support Ukraine. Those assurances take the form of bilateral political agreements between the EU and Ukraine, as well as between Ukraine and key EU member states.

Various Ukrainian officials, including Andriy Yermak, President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, have explicitly called for legally binding security guarantees from Ukraine's allies that would immediately commit them to "the provision of weapons, exchange of intelligence, the support of our defence and the protection of our economy." Given the amount of assistance Ukraine is currently receiving in all those categories, Yermak is fundamentally asking for a sense of future solidarity.

Yermak's call reflects the way in which the Ukrainian understanding of security assurances has been deeply shaped by the experience with the 1994 Budapest memorandum. In this document, the US, the UK, and Russia committed to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in exchange for which Ukraine agreed to give up the nuclear weapons left on its territory after the collapse of the Soviet Union. That document notably did not stop Russia from annexing Crimea and destabilising Donbas in 2014, or from undertaking a further invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Kyiv regards the absence of a legally binding commitment by other signatories to respond to such a scenario as the main reason for their failure to effectively preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity. However, the Budapest memorandum entailed only negative commitments (i.e., to abstain from certain actions) and no positive commitments (i.e., to respond to certain actions). In this sense, the US and UK honoured their commitments under the memorandum. Indeed, given the sanctions imposed on Russia and military assistance delivered to Ukraine after both 2014 and 2022, they far exceeded the promises made at Budapest. The lesson to be learned from the experience with the Budapest memorandum is therefore less about the legal nature of the security guarantees Ukraine needs than about their substance. Future assurances should include positive commitments to respond to Russian aggression, and there should be no doubt about the readiness of the guarantors to act.

In fact, a legally binding document may be less substantial than a general political commitment. Assurances, legally binding or otherwise, will only function effectively if they promote the political interests of those that provide them. NATO members, and in particular the United States, have for this reason always resisted tying their hands too tightly in matters of war and peace. Even NATO's Article 5 does not provide for automatic action, but rather preserves the capacity of allies to assess the advisability of various options before taking decisions by consensus. Governments do not want to be dragged into military action without taking a political decision to do so based on their own political interests. This means that, in the case of security guarantees for Ukraine, a legally binding document would end up entailing only vague principles.

These security assurances Europe gives Ukraine will need to avoid providing any guarantee of NATO membership and should not prejudice the possibility of some form of Ukrainian neutrality. Security assurances are usually provided by outside powers to preserve a certain balance of their interests or a certain status quo. And, unless Ukraine becomes a member of NATO, the security guarantees it receives will have to be explicitly distinguished from Article 5. Blurring the distinction would be detrimental both to the security of NATO (whose deterrent posture could be targeted directly if it was seen as in any way supporting or being prepared to support Ukraine) and to the security of Ukraine (through Russia attempting to test the extent to which NATO members are ready to extend solidarity to Ukraine).

In addition, the political needs of those providing the guarantees are such that Ukraine would also need to give assurances of its own. With a legally binding document, Ukraine could suffer a form of geopolitical moral hazard in which excessive certainty about allied support would lead future Ukrainian leaders to take reckless actions. But, regardless of the legal character of a particular security assurance, no country will honour it if it feels Ukraine has not acted responsibly. In this light, a non-legally binding agreement could actually prove a more powerful document than something ostensibly containing hard-and-fast guarantees.

More broadly, the security assurances should not diminish the possibility of reaching a more permanent settlement with Russia. Russia's aggression and its avowed determination to destroy (or take over) the Ukrainian state currently make such a settlement impossible. But the point of European sanctions and support for Ukraine, as well as the security assurances proposed here, is to eventually force Russia away from that position, not to solidify a permanent divide between the West and Russia.

The security assurances should:

- **include a headline commitment by guarantors similar to article 42.7 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty**; that is, to provide "aid and assistance by all means in their power, in accordance with article 51 of the UN Charter". They would commit to do this if further Russian armed aggression takes place. This would allow both Ukraine's EU and non-EU partners to have a similar level of commitment to Ukraine's security, thus maintaining a strong transatlantic dimension even as Ukraine progresses towards full EU membership. The commitment is broad enough to allow for wide-ranging options, from financial and humanitarian assistance to the provision of weapons and equipment, up to direct military action if needed. The ambiguity would

have a deterrent effect, as it would rule nothing out, while at the same time allowing Ukraine's partners to pursue calibrated and gradual responses.

- **commit to continued security assistance and cooperation with Ukraine**, as described in the first part of this paper. Continuous military cooperation is a core element of the credibility of security assurances, as the established practices of communication and interaction will enable a rapid and effective response in the event of a crisis. In this regard, the security compact would act as an important element of the wider set of security guarantees. For its part, Ukraine would commit to continue to maintain and develop its capacities in order to ensure its own security.
- **commit both Ukraine and its allies to establish a regular consultation channel for joint threat assessments and contingency planning.** Ukraine and its partners would also use this to assess what the Ukrainian military needs to defend against further Russian aggression or escalation. This would in turn allow Ukraine's partners to plan their own stocks of hardware and decide what to provide to Ukraine in such a situation. This is a critical supplement to prepositioning equipment in Ukraine's vicinity, as otherwise that equipment might not meet actual Ukrainian needs.
- **commit Ukraine and its allies to convene an emergency consultation mechanism within 24 hours of an attack** or at the request of Ukraine or any of the parties to the assurances. The mechanism would jointly decide on assistance measures and possible further actions, including through diplomatic means, such as convening an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council and developing a draft resolution to submit to the UN General Assembly.
- **explicitly provide for further sanctions against Russia**, although parties to the assurances would retain sufficient flexibility to allow a proportionate response. In the event that some of the current sanctions are lifted in the framework of a settlement, a snap-back mechanism, which would reimpose those sanctions in the event of renewed Russian aggression, may be established as part of the security assurances. Such a snap-back mechanism would serve to deter future Russian adventurism and to allow Ukraine's partners to react quickly to any future aggression.
- **explicitly pertain to certain parts of Ukrainian territory.** As some parts of Ukrainian territory will likely remain beyond the control of the Ukrainian government, international partners will be reluctant to provide assurances to these territories, even while holding fast to the idea that they remain part of Ukraine. The

wording should exclude these territories from the assurances and commit Ukraine to settling those disputes through peaceful means – if possible – without of course recognising Russian sovereignty over these territories.

Such security assurances are realistic and would function as a deterrent to Russia. They would foster a sense of solidarity in Ukraine while avoiding geopolitical moral hazard. A set of security assurances agreed along these lines could create a more stable situation, even in a long-war scenario, and generate at least some momentum for all sides to find a settlement.

## **Economic security**

In a long war, it will not be possible to wait for a peace settlement before taking measures to secure Ukraine's future economic development. To sustain its capacity to fight that long war, Ukraine will require international assistance to finance the war effort, to maintain macroeconomic stability, and, even before the war ends, to begin the reconstruction needed following the more intense phases of the war. The European Investment Bank (EIB) has already pledged €1.59 billion in immediate reconstruction assistance for Ukraine. Even more urgently, the European Commission pledged emergency loans of up to €10.2 billion in macro-financial assistance. By early August 2022 it had disbursed €2.2 billion of this sum. The EU will need to continue to provide this backup assistance to sustain the functioning of the Ukrainian economy during the long war.

But, as necessary as this assistance is, it amounts to a very expensive Band-Aid. To heal Ukraine and to sustain its will to fight the long war, the country will require a degree of economic security: that is, the sense that its economy can function sufficiently to provide for its people even during the long war, and that it can develop. Of course, Ukraine's economy will not be 'normal' under long-war conditions. At the moment, for example, it is mostly unable to export grain or other products by sea. But even under such trying conditions, Ukrainians will need to, and can, achieve a degree of economic security.

One way that a long-war plan could promote that economic security is to provide a vision of Ukraine's European future and at least a taste of what that future will mean. As part of this effort, Ukraine became a candidate for EU membership in June 2022, but the membership process is long and uncertain. It could well take decades to complete and be years before Ukrainians feel any tangible benefit. Without interim efforts, this process could lead to disillusionment in Ukraine, as it has in parts of the Western Balkans.

At the same time, from an EU perspective, it is not possible to short-circuit the membership process. Arguably, the lack of rigour in that process to date has already weakened solidarity and cohesion within an EU that has experienced successive waves of enlargement in the last 30 years. Ukraine needs a vision of integration with Europe that can provide benefits in the near term, but neither promise nor rule out membership in the long term.

For these reasons, writing for ECFR, Piotr Buras and Kai-Olaf Lang proposed a “partnership for enlargement” that would seek to enable integration before formal enlargement for Ukraine and similarly situated countries. In the special case of Ukraine, locked in a long war with Russia, such a partnership will be essential to meeting the geopolitical challenge posed by Russia, and to channelling European support for Ukraine.

The central aspect of this partnership is to grant Ukraine negotiated access to the single European market. Under this arrangement, Ukraine would not have the ability to participate in EU decisions on shaping the common market and other policy areas, as EU members do. In this way, Ukrainian access to the single market would not upset the various delicate institutional balances within the EU that are the source of much of the opposition to further EU enlargement. At the same time, it in no way precludes eventual EU membership through the normal accession process.

This “everything but the institutions” approach goes well beyond the current framework of the EU-Ukraine association agreement, which only contemplates integration in 14 specific areas. Symbolically, it would provide Ukraine with the “four freedoms”: the movement of people, goods, services, and capital that are the central promise of the single market. Practically, it would create enormous development opportunities for Ukraine within a few years. Indeed, the very promise of rapid access to the European single market could increase private investment into Ukraine almost immediately, particularly in those areas less affected by the war.

Access to the single market will need to be calibrated in a “more for more” (more support for more reforms) approach, as embodied in the EU-Ukraine association agreement. Achieving this intermediate level of integration will still require difficult reforms and systems of accountability on the Ukrainian side to ensure that European funds are well-spent, and that Ukraine is adhering to the applicable European standards.

Unlike the association agreement, the partnership would include Ukrainian access to EU cohesion funds. This could be critical for financing Ukraine’s reconstruction of the economic damage inflicted by the Russian invasion. But, because EU cohesion funds would

not start flowing for several years. In the interim Ukraine would need a special EU liquidity and reconstruction fund. This could build on European Commission and EIB efforts and be financed by common borrowing, helping meet Ukraine's immediate needs and preparing Ukraine for cohesion funds. This effort should complement and integrate with efforts by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to finance Ukrainian reconstruction and support Ukrainian government liquidity. It should not come at the expense of aid to other parts of the world. In all this, marking out a clear path for Ukraine to join the single market would help to mobilise funding and support its most effective use.

## Energy security

Alongside the military, security, and economic aspects of Europe's comprehensive long-war plan, Ukrainian success in the long war will depend on safeguarding its energy system. Indeed, a secure energy system will strengthen activity in support of the other aspects, enabling effective military action, minimising security threats to Ukraine, and supporting economic development.

To achieve this, Ukraine should begin to integrate and align its energy and climate policies with those of the EU, and Europeans should provide support for it to do so. In the energy realm, integration is necessary because Russia has often sought to use its control over energy resources to dominate its neighbours. In Ukraine's case, the Russian presence in Ukrainian energy companies and transit infrastructure has in the past encouraged corruption and limited its sovereignty. Russia's occupation of parts of Ukraine gives the Kremlin de facto control over some of the country's critical energy infrastructure, including the largest nuclear power in Europe at Zaporizhzhia, which produces 20 per cent of Ukraine's electricity.

Ukraine connected its electrical grid to the EU grid in the opening days of the war, but much remains to be done in this domain. The country will require additional assistance to adjust its energy system in the wake of Russia's invasion and to continue its modernisation. It will need to rebuild and improve its energy infrastructure, linking it more tightly to European energy systems. Kyiv will also need to develop more indigenous sources of energy, increase domestic energy efficiency, diversify its energy imports, and undertake domestic reforms to root out corruption and liberalise its energy markets.

At the same time, Ukraine, like every other country in the world, faces the challenge of adapting its energy system and indeed its economy to the global imperative of decarbonisation. Ukraine's commitments under the Paris agreement, the financial markets'



increasing reluctance to fund energy projects that contribute to greenhouse gas emission, and the EU's own commitments under the European Green Deal all mean that any effort to transform Ukraine's energy system must have climate goals built-in from the very beginning.

In sum, energy and climate are core policy issues that will critically affect Ukraine's ability to integrate economically and politically with the EU. In the first instance, this is because the European Green Deal means the type of integration proposed in the previous section will not be possible without Ukrainian progress on climate issues. But, more positively, effective energy and climate policies contain the potential to encourage economic development and technological innovation and drive reforms in the economy and in governance. They offer the opportunity to refocus Ukraine's economy away from fossil fuels, often a source of corruption, and to move Ukrainian industry towards the new climate-friendly technologies that will be important sources of future innovation and growth

The EU offer to Ukraine must rise to this challenge and this opportunity. Buras and Lang recommend three ways it can do so. Firstly, it can build on Ukraine's recent membership of the EU energy union. This would start with an EU-Ukraine dialogue that would set reform objectives and tie the amount and disbursement of aid to progress towards those objectives. The dialogue would also focus on integrating Ukraine's energy systems with those of the EU, improving the security and resilience of its energy infrastructure against cyber-attacks and other aggression, and reforming the Ukrainian energy market.

Secondly, in addition to investments in modernisation, the EU should create a "Just Transition Fund to Ukraine" to enable targeted mitigation for Ukrainian social groups adversely affected by the energy transition, such as workers in carbon-intensive industries. This would be on a smaller scale than the EU cohesion policy's internal Just Transition Fund but with a similar purpose.

Thirdly, the EU should set up a multilateral climate community, with Ukraine as a founding member. The purpose of this community would be to define the climate standards that Ukraine and others need to meet in order to access EU energy adjustment assistance funds and to avoid having to submit to the European Green Deal's proposed carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM). Given the urgency of the EU's own climate policies, Ukraine will be unable to achieve the necessary economic integration with the EU without such predefined standards and assistance to meet them. Submitting to the CBAM, for example, would render much of Ukraine's remaining industry deeply uncompetitive in the

EU. Of course, the reality of the economic stresses that long-war Ukraine will be under may require some relaxation of these standards. But, even then, it will be important to know what the standards are and how Ukraine intends to eventually achieve them.

## **Conclusion: Towards a resolution**

Conditions of protracted war obviously make it difficult to drive forward Ukraine's economic development and integration with the EU. Unfortunately, the nature of today's geopolitical competition does not allow the drawing of such a bright line between conditions of war and peace. There is likely to be no definitive end to hostilities between Russia and Ukraine in the coming years, even if the violence may plateau. This means that neither Ukraine nor the EU can afford to wait for a settlement with Russia. In these circumstances, the only way to sustain Ukraine in a long war – and to create incentives for Russia to eventually accept a just settlement – is to demonstrate that the country can develop, and even thrive, through this type of comprehensive European plan.

The coming weeks will be important in that regard: as winter approaches, Ukrainians will need an understanding of what type of support, and how much of it, they can expect from their partners to continue their fight and preserve their sovereignty. At the same time, the European public will expect more clarity and visibility on what the EU is doing for Ukraine and why; this is also necessary to consolidate European unity despite the war fatigue. It would also allow the EU to take a leading role on supporting Ukraine, at a time when the US administration will be focusing on domestic issues and the approaching mid-term elections.

The next informal meeting of EU heads of state and governments, on 7-8 October, offers a good opportunity to launch this discussion. It takes place after the UN General Assembly, which Russia and Ukraine will try to use to strengthen their standing on the international stage, and before the G20 summit in November – during which Russia will play on the mixed feelings about the war in many emerging countries. The EU should devise a clear vision and message about its commitment to Ukraine's security, now and over the long term, to assert its confidence in the country and to counter Russian narratives about a shifting world order.

This plan to support Ukraine aims primarily to ensure the country's long-term sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of continued Russian aggression. Alongside it, the EU and its member states, in close partnership with Ukraine, should also remain open to the idea of a resolution of the war. Each of these assistance efforts is consistent with that possibility.

They will, therefore, offer opportunities for a more constructive Russia to contribute to European efforts in a manner that the Russian government would find consistent with its own security interests. But, as such an attitude in the Kremlin seems highly unlikely at present, the EU should move ahead with all these efforts – regardless of whether Russia constructively contributes or not.

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