



## Legal, Economic, and Regional Security Implications of the Russia-Ukraine War

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**Abstract:** At the threshold of its third year, Russia's large-scale and brutal war against Ukraine continues to kill thousands, terrorize millions of Ukrainians, and disrupt international supply chains, affecting global energy and food markets. This is the second journal issue dedicated to the ongoing war. It dwells on the issue of lustration – a problem Ukraine did not effectively address during its post-communist transition, which in turn led to the perpetuation of the Kremlin's ideology and, thus, its continuous influence on Ukrainian politics and society. Two articles explore the rationale for including Russia in the U.S. Department of State's list of state sponsors of terrorism. While some European countries and the European Parliament have already declared Russia a terrorist state, the debate in the United States is influenced by numerous additional considerations, and the decision is still pending. The link between military expenditures, defense industrial investments, and the general economic development and stability in wartime is also examined in detail. The final two articles analyze Moscow's interests and strategy towards the post-Soviet states and the strategically important Black Sea region.

**Keywords:** human rights, sanctions, terrorist state, state sponsor of terrorism, lustration, defense industrial complex, war economy, Central Asia, Black Sea.

Russia's so-called "Special Military Operation," initially projected to last about three weeks, has now entered its third brutal year. With no end in sight, the Kremlin's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to kill and terrorize tens of millions of Ukrainians, destroy energy, health,<sup>1</sup> and food export infrastructure, and pollute the environment.<sup>2</sup> Its impact goes beyond the states in war and aggravates global supply chains, trade,<sup>3</sup> energy markets,<sup>4,5</sup> and food security.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, autocratic and dictatorial regimes, including North Korea, China, Iran, Syria, and several corrupt African states, are strategically aligning, targeting democratic nations with unprecedented hybrid tactics and speed.

Given these developments, it is crucial to examine the realities enabling the Kremlin's imperial revivalism, explore potential mechanisms for holding the Russian Federation and its policymakers accountable, and understand the geopolitical dangers associated with inaction.

This is the second special issue of *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* dedicated to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Our aim is to provide insights into the new geopolitical realities shaped by Russia's actions and to explore potential foundations for achieving justice, preventing terrorism, and averting future genocidal wars.

Ironically, protecting democratic values and principles—despite national security threats—can sometimes undermine them. Lustration is an instrument designed to free states from individuals who served evil regimes. Its aim is to protect democratic institutions from unlawful encroachments, not to punish

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis G. Barten, Derrick Tin, Fredrik Granholm, Diana Rusnak, Frits van Osch, and Gregory Ciottone, "Attacks on Ukrainian Healthcare Facilities during the First Year of the Full-scale Russian Invasion of Ukraine," *Conflict and Health* 17, no. 1 (2023), 57, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-023-00557-2>.

<sup>2</sup> Viktor Vyshnevskiy, Serhii Shevchuk, Viktor Komorin, Yurii Oleynik, and Peter Gleick, "The Destruction of the Kakhovka Dam and Its Consequences," *Water International* 48, no. 5 (2023): 631-647, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2023.2247679>.

<sup>3</sup> Soojung Ahn, Dongin Kim, and Sandro Steinbach, "The Impact of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on Grain and Oilseed Trade," *Agribusiness* 39, no. 1 (2023): 291-299, <https://doi.org/10.1002/agr.21794>.

<sup>4</sup> Qi Zhang, Kun Yang, Yi Hu, Jianbin Jiao, and Shouyang Wang, "Unveiling the Impact of Geopolitical Conflict on Oil Prices: A Case Study of the Russia-Ukraine War and its Channels," *Energy Economics* 126 (2023), 106956, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eneco.2023.106956>.

<sup>5</sup> Shengming Chen, Ahmed Bouteska, Taimur Sharif, and 'Mohammad Zoynul Abedin, "The Russia-Ukraine War and Energy Market Volatility: A Novel Application of the Volatility Ratio in the Context of Natural Gas," *Resources Policy* 85 (2023), 103792, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2023.103792>.

<sup>6</sup> Marta Marson and Donatella Saccone, "Fed with Import and Starved by War: Estimating the Consequences of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on Cereals Trade and Global Hunger," *International Economics and Economic Policy* 20, no. 3 (2023): 413-442, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10368-023-00564-x>.

politicians and officials who have failed to justify citizens' trust.<sup>7</sup> Beginning with the denazification of Germany, lustration was implemented to prevent individuals associated with Hitler's genocidal regime from holding office. Most former communist states in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Poland and the German Democratic Republic, passed legislation and received substantial support to cleanse their governments of leaders tied to the communist party or its intelligence and security services. In contrast, Ukraine never had adequate popular support to clean its house. Its first presidents and many so-called civil servants were high-ranking members of the communist party, with many of their networks still subservient to the Kremlin-centered post-Soviet political criminal nexus.

Even modest attempts in that regard have been hindered by existing international norms and rulings. Polivanova and coauthors provide an in-depth review of a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights and its approach to balancing the guarantee of the "right to respect for private life" with a state's right to protect itself from being governed by individuals who pose a threat to the state and its population. They present Ukraine's lustration law as pursuing two different aims: protecting society from individuals who, due to their past behavior, pose a threat to democracy in the country and cleansing public administration of individuals who engaged in large-scale corruption. Democratic support for lustration in Ukraine has always been unsubstantial. Meanwhile, Russia's so-called "denazification of Ukraine" is effectively purging pro-democratic forces, both institutional and human, from the country. Many of those who supported Ukraine's independence from Moscow's rule have become casualties of war. Conversely, many of those who should have been lustrated are now aligning with Russia's anti-Western foreign policy.

As the consequences of Russia's ongoing large-scale war against Ukraine clearly demonstrate, legal mechanisms must be established to punish perpetrators and prevent further atrocities. In the following two articles, Olena Davlikanova focuses on the case of designating the Russian Federation as a terrorist state or a state sponsor of terrorism. The author begins with a review of the criteria the U.S. State Department has used in the past for such a designation in the cases of Iran, Cuba, North Korea, and Syria. The examination suggests that Moscow is increasingly aligning with these states and exerting its influence on a global scale. This alignment involves providing support to terrorist groups, which has resulted in numerous deadly attacks or terrorist acts both domestically and internationally, as well as human rights abuses that extend beyond the borders of Ukraine. Hence, the author posits that, based on its actions prior to and during

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<sup>7</sup> Olena Polivanova, Kateryna Nykolyna, Kyrylo Stepanenko, Serhii Myroslavskiy, and Alla Puktetska, "Polyakh and Others v. Ukraine: The Latest Standards of Applicability of Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights in Lustration Cases," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2022): 11-27, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.21.4.42>.

its large-scale aggression, the Russian Federation fully deserves to join the “Club of Villains.”

Already in 2022, some EU member states and the European Parliament declared Russia to be a state sponsor of terrorism.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the impact on Russia’s capacity to achieve its geopolitical objectives through violence would be much higher if the U.S. State Department designates it as a state sponsor of terrorism. Therefore, Davlikanova dedicated another study to the broader policy rationale for designating, or not, the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism.<sup>9</sup> Enhanced deterrence, heightened international pressure, further loss of reputation, discouraging further aggression, disrupting Russia’s strategies, constraining Russia’s economic capacity for military investments, and warning of rising autocracies are among the anticipated positive impacts of such a designation. Among the adverse effects, Davlikanova lists the potential escalation of tensions, repercussions on U.S. allies, unpredictability in severing diplomatic relations with a major nuclear power, complications in nuclear non-proliferation efforts, and impacts on global food and energy security. Nevertheless, the author remains hopeful that Russia will be included in the “Club of Villains.”

As the war experience demonstrates once again, having a solid defense industrial and technological base is crucial for preparing for the outcome of a conflict. In the article “Military-Economic Capabilities of Ukraine During the Transformation,” Koval and coauthors analyze the defense industrial policies of Ukraine and the links to the national economic potential and cooperation since 1991. After gaining independence, Ukraine has been significantly disarmed, whether through immense arms trafficking post-USSR collapse, the Budapest Memorandum, NATO-mandated munitions destruction, or Russia’s strategic dismantling of Ukraine’s state-owned military enterprises, exemplified by the creation of UKROBORONPROM under Russian agents Yanukovich and Salamatin. However, amidst the current dire conditions, particularly on the front lines, Ukraine is witnessing remarkable innovations within its defense industry. The military-economic potential in Ukraine, especially in collaboration with allied states, could transform the country into a keystone of security and defense technology innovation.

The evolution of weapon systems and warfare has increased the demand for advanced armaments, innovation, and military spending. According to Koval and colleagues, the influx of allied-state business and investment in Ukraine’s defense industry could provide stronger protection guarantees for cooperating states. On the background of massive financial expenditures, military equipment losses, and irretrievable human casualties, the authors argue that developing a

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Byman, “How to Think About State Sponsorship of Terrorism,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 65, no. 4 (2023): 101-121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2023.2239060>.

<sup>9</sup> Olena Davlikanova, “Declaration of the Russian State as a State Sponsor of Terrorism: Pros, Cons, and Realities,” *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2022): 47-66, <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.21.4.40>.

sophisticated international security system requires a clear understanding of the military power of Ukraine, its allies, and its adversaries.

In its bid to empower itself and strengthen its fight, the Kremlin is not only tightening its power vertical but also leveraging information warfare to attract naïve followers and actively engaging those who remain loyal to Communist and Soviet ideologies. In the article “Growing Apart: The Impact of the Russian War in Ukraine on the Former Soviet Space,” Dr. Pal Dunay assesses the impact as significant. As the West has largely turned a blind eye to Moscow’s strategic separatism, especially in the Black Sea region (i.e., Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova), Russia continues to enhance its geographical and political influence by forming and financing global pro-Kremlin networks.

When any state takes a (semi-)democratic turn, Russia perceives it as a loss of control because corruption, rather than the rule of law, is the hallmark of Moscow’s statecraft. Dunay emphasizes that it is essential to understand Russia’s strong preference for regime similarity in the former Soviet space. As Moscow seeks to gain support from CIS and CSTO states, it is also sending citizens from Central Asian countries to populate the Ukrainian territories it has illegally occupied. However, despite numerous international law violations, the fear of Russia leads to its relative impunity. Consequently, we witness the return of the need for 1960s-style Kremlinology and the onset of a new, Twenty-first-century arms race.

The Black Sea Region serves as a critical zone through which the Russian Federation continues to assert its corrupt and authoritarian power on a global scale, particularly by manipulating military, energy, and food security dynamics. In his article “The Critical Black Sea Zone,” Dr. Stephen Blank argues that the annexation of Ukraine and the domination of the Black Sea have been key priorities for Russia since Putin came to power in 1999-2000, remaining central to its aggressive expansionism. However, there is no guarantee that the Kremlin’s policies will change even after Putin’s departure. Characterized by its complexity, the Black Sea region, serves as a focal point for Moscow’s imperial foreign policies. It may also serve as the battleground where a well-conceived, courageous, and comprehensive international strategy could signal the beginning of the end for the Kremlin’s atrocities. These include the arguably genocidal mistreatment of its own population, the systematic dismantling of Ukraine, and the erosion of the rule of law – challenges that, if left unaddressed, threaten to plunge us all into chaos.

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As the war enters its third year, *Connections* remains committed to providing its wide audience of defense and security scholars and professionals with insightful studies on the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine war and its broader implications for global and regional security. We are particularly interested in lessons drawn from organizing, fighting, and supporting the war efforts while preserving

the rule of law, maintaining societal cohesion, and enhancing the resilience of the Ukrainian economy and society.

The journal will dedicate further issues to the Russia-Ukraine war. We welcome original contributions on the war's impact on the European and global security environment, international relations, defense posture, technological advances, and military innovation.

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## Disclaimer

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