



## Ukraine's Existential War: Dimensions of a Global Conflict

*Philipp Fluri*<sup>1</sup> and *Lada Roslycky*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Department of International Affairs, Wenzao Ursuline University (WZU), Kaohsiung, Taiwan, <https://c041.wzu.edu.tw/>*

<sup>2</sup> *Black Trident Defense and Security Consulting Group, <https://www.theblacktrident.com/>*

**Abstract:** This third special issue of *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, dedicated to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, expands the understanding of the roots and where Russia's aggression is headed. Kremlinism is presented as an attack on civilization, deeply rooted in fascist ideology, where hybrid attacks and information-psychological operations are used to advance the geopolitical goal of establishing the Russkiy Mir. The issue examines how the current rules-based legal order is positioned in such a manner that it actually abets Russia's impunity, including ongoing war crimes and crimes against humanity, and calls for the creation of a special tribunal. The role of women in the realm of war, victimhood, and peacemaking is analyzed through the lens of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, which advocates for the meaningful inclusion of women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The fate of Belarus, as a state and nation, usurped by Russia's expansionary policies, is examined, with a critique of poor Western policies toward it. Russia's cyber aggression against Europe and Europe's reactionary stance are discussed in detail. Additionally, the impact of the war on global food security, particularly through changes in fertilizer prices crucial to food production, is analyzed. The final article takes a deep look at the urgent need for modernizing Ukraine's personnel management system within the armed forces.

**Keywords:** Putin's war in Ukraine, new world order, women in conflict, human rights, war crimes, kremlinism, ruscism, hybrid warfare, Ruskiy mir, Belarus, Ukrainian Armed Forces, armed forces modernization, EU cyber-security, fertilizer prices.

With the war of aggression against Ukraine, the Kremlin endeavors to destroy the Ukrainian nation and territorial sovereignty. The consequences of the war are now felt far beyond the Ukrainian theater. Countries around the world are experiencing Russia's revitalized imperialism. "Post-truth" and "hybrid warfare" became buzzwords at the beginning of the 21st century. Since then, Russia has increasingly employed in its foreign policy disinformation and hybrid attacks, directly targeting the post-WWII World Order – particularly the values and principles upon which it was founded. This very World Order, which facilitated Russia's restructuring after the Soviet Union's collapse, its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and the rise of China, Russia's strategic ally, is now under direct threat.

This is the third special issue of *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* dedicated to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It is our intention to provide our readers with insights into how and why Russian aggression against Ukraine constitutes a war against humans, states, and institutions worldwide. This collection of articles offers such insights into the multifaceted and international aspects of the Kremlin's ongoing aggression and terror.

To start, in "Kremlinism: Russia's Malign Civilizational Force," Roslycky, Liubovets, and Korol present Russia's aggression as an attack on civilization deeply rooted in fascist ideology. They consider its imperial strategy, where corruption is used as statecraft and information warfare is employed to either polarize or subdue polarizations. Kremlinism, the Kremlin's cult-like political vertical, is identified as a combination of "Putinism" and "Ruscism," in which hybrid attacks and information-psychological operations are used to advance the geopolitical goal of establishing the *Ruskiy Mir*.

As the Kremlin's hybrid malign civilizational force continues to encroach upon new and old territories, understanding its methods and developing counterstrategies is crucial. In "State and Personal Responsibility: War Crimes, Crimes of Aggression and Genocide in Ukraine," Andrii Lapkin calls for accountability of those responsible for committing international crimes in Ukraine. Justice is not only about prosecuting the perpetrators but also ensuring reparations for the damage caused by Russia. Accountability and justice are paramount tasks. The article reveals that what should have been a neatly woven web of juridical and jurisdictional solutions is actually a legalistic quagmire. It is abetting impunity for Russia's ongoing war crimes and crimes against humanity—the juridical building blocks of genocide. The multitude of possible jurisdictions and sometimes incomplete legislation—on both national and international levels—necessitate the creation of a special tribunal where both state and personal responsibility can be realized. Lapkin argues that it is time to take inspiration from the architects of justice after World War II, who created the unprecedented Nuremberg Tribunal. With modern technology at hand, there is no need to wait for the war's end to pursue justice.

Men have effectively been separated from women and children, as essentially all men aged 18-60 are banned from leaving the country. Of the estimated

14 million Ukrainians displaced from their homes, a staggering 90 percent are women and children. Whether fighting on the frontlines, contributing to civil society, or becoming casualties of the Kremlin's war, women's roles demand attention. Their contributions are explored in "Women, Peace, and Security Dimensions of the War in Ukraine" by Iryna Lysyckina and Olha Lysyckina. While many women need support to simply survive, they also have the potential to play a key role in the peacemaking process. Their stories and the lessons they have learned must be shared to prevent others from falling victim to Russia's so-called liberation.

With the transfer of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons to its territory, Belarus is a prime example of a state that has fallen as a direct result of Russia's revived imperialism. In "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and the Modern History of Belarusian Statehood" by Pavlo Troian, Belarus serves as an example of how poor and inadequate policies led to the loss of a potential ally. The article argues that preserving Belarusian statehood and promoting democratization is contingent on ensuring Ukraine's victory. Despite the significant role Belarus could have played in enhancing European stability and security, it now continues actively supporting Russia's war of aggression.

The Kremlin's aggression is far-reaching and has global effects. In "The Impact of the Russian-Ukrainian Hybrid War on the European Union's Cybersecurity Policies and Regulations," Roland Kelemen explores the Kremlin's effective pursuit of domination through cyber-terror. Its army of hackers and trolls is directly impacting European Union cybersecurity policies and regulations by attacking critical infrastructure, enforcing strict censorship and monitoring, committing cybercrime, and utilizing AI-generated deep fakes and doppelgangers. Civilized nations and institutions must shift from reactionary measures to proactive strategies to safeguard themselves and prevent future cyberattacks. The Kremlin's cyber aggression is expected to continue destabilizing systems and terrorizing hearts and minds.

From advanced cyber operations to the weaponization of one of humankind's oldest vulnerabilities—food security—the Kremlin's seemingly abstract imperial ambitions have tangible, far-reaching effects. In "The Change in Fertilizer Prices Due to the Russo-Ukraine War," Tamás Kun and István Takács clearly illustrate how Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered global market disruptions for key food crops and fertilizers, endangering food security worldwide. The Kremlin's destruction of Ukraine's agricultural industry and its seizure of grains, oils, and natural resources have bolstered Russia's influence. By exploiting Ukraine's looted resources to create new dependencies among some of the world's most vulnerable populations, particularly in the Global South, Moscow secures new allies and followers.

At the end of the day, Russia's aggression is teaching states how their defense complex must be improved. Ukraine is at the front of this war, where cutting-edge innovation and modernization are requisite for its survival. In "Modernizing Personnel Management in the Armed Forces of Ukraine During Military Conflict:

Training New Officers,” Oleh Semenenko, Liliia Semenenko, Roman Sirchenko, Mariia Yarmolchyk, and Vitalii Kostrach utilize statistical analysis and argue that the Ukrainian Armed Forces’ existing personnel management system requires significant modifications to effectively address the challenges of modern military operations. While Ukraine’s personnel management framework has strong foundations and a willingness to cooperate with partners, focus on staff development, and integrate modern technologies, it currently lacks the necessary levels of capability to secure national strategic interests and protect lives. Comprehensive training—ranging from practical skills to simulation exercises, hands-on experience with specialized equipment, and medical training—is urgently needed for Ukraine’s armed forces.

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In the third year of the Russo-Ukraine war, the journal remains committed to providing its readership of scholars and practitioners with insightful analyses of the war’s complexity and its broader implications for defense and security. We welcome original contributions that explore lessons for better organizing, equipping, and training armed forces, innovations in strategy and tactics, and maintaining resilience in the face of a dreadful enemy. Additionally, we are interested in examining the war’s impact on international relations and European and global security.

The horrors of Russia’s new-generation warfare against Ukraine provide Ukraine’s allies with access to knowledge and insight into never-seen-before battlefield realities. Only through effective cooperation and mutual support for democratic values and freedoms can we hope to overcome the anti-civilizational forces that Russia unleashed against Ukraine in 2014 and against the world in 2022.

## **Disclaimer**

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## About the Authors

Dr. **Philipp H. Fluri** was a co-founder and long-time deputy director of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF; earlier Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces) and the founder and executive director of DCAF Brussels. He was subsequently an Executive-in-Residence at the Geneva Centre of Security Policy and the Sergio de Mello Chair at the Seton Hall University School of Diplomacy and International Relations. He is currently a professor in the Department of International Affairs at the Wenzao Ursuline University (WZU) in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. *E-mail:* drphilippfluri@gmail.com

Dr. **Lada Roslycky** is the founder and Managing Partner of Black Trident Defense and Security Consulting Group. An American-Canadian-Ukrainian international security expert, she is the lead author of the national security section of the 2019 Toronto Principles, the 5-year Roadmap for Ukrainian Reforms. Lada holds a Master's degree in International & European Law (University of Amsterdam) and a PhD degree (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen). She is a co-founder and former Head of Content of the independent Defence Anti-Corruption Commission (NAKO) in Kyiv. *E-mail:* lada@theblacktrident.com