Addendum: Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

By Paul D'Anieri

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine with over 150,000 troops, turning the limited incursion which began in 2014 into the largest military conflict in Europe since World War II. In this addendum, I briefly survey the causes and consequences of Russia's invasion.

Causes

In contrast to the seizure of Crimea and invasion of Donbas in 2014, the invasion of 2022 was not a response to an event that could be seen either as a provocation or an opportunity. This was a "war of choice," based apparently on the beliefs that Ukraine was slipping away and that delay would only make taking it back harder. Understanding why Russian leaders believed they could not live without Ukraine and how they came to their decision will occupy scholars for years.

While many analysts have pointed to Vladimir Putin's mental state, arguing that he must have been delusional, the opposite argument is in some ways more compelling. It is true that Russia underestimated Ukraine's will and ability to resist but so did nearly every Western intelligence agency and Ukraine's own government.

Rather, it was likely the *end* of a delusion on the part of Putin and Russia that convinced them to attack. Russians had long assumed that Ukrainians' affinity for Russia, combined with positive and negative incentives provided by Russia (such as offering cheap gas or cutting off shipments altogether), would bring Ukraine back under Russia's control. The Minsk agreements

that were forced on Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 were intended by Russia to extend its control over Ukraine. By 2021, however, it had become abundantly clear that this strategy had backfired.

After Russia's 2014 invasion, Ukraine completed an Association Agreement and free trade agreement with the European Union (EU), pursued military reform in collaboration with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and conducted free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections. Ukraine resisted implementing the Minsk agreements on Russian terms, understanding they were intended to bring Ukraine back under Russian control. Far from making Ukraine more compliant, Russia's 2014 aggression had turned many Ukrainians against Russia. In 2021, Ukraine closed Russia-controlled media outlets and arrested Putin's leading Ukrainian ally. It became clear that Russia could regain Ukraine only by conquering it. The surprise was that given this reality, Putin chose a massive invasion rather than accepting Ukraine's independence.

Consequences

Ukraine's resistance surprised and inspired the world. When the United States offered to help President Zelenskyy flee Kyiv to evade capture, he replied "I need ammunition, not a ride." Three of the Russian lines of assault (on Kyiv in the north, on Kharkiv in the northeast, and on Donbas in the East) stalled quickly with significant Russian losses. In the south, Russia had more success, seizing Ukraine's northern Black Sea coast stretching from the Russian border in the east to the city of Kherson, west of Crimea. Odesa, important for historic, economic, and strategic reasons, remained beyond Russia's reach.

Ukrainians pulled together in a way they never had before. President Zelenskyy and former President Petro Poroshenko put their bitter rivalry on hold, and the parliament met in a bunker,

passing laws needed to prosecute the war. In contrast to the idea that Ukrainians and Russians were "brothers," the invasion convinced even previously pro-Russia Ukrainians that Russia was Ukraine's sworn enemy. In that respect, the invasion backfired spectacularly.

Russia deliberately bombed civilian areas and committed atrocities in several of the places it occupied. After Russia was pushed out of the cities of Irpin and Bucha, north of Kyiv, it became apparent that civilians had been systematically tortured and killed there. In combination with Russian rhetoric stating the desire of ending Ukrainian nationhood, these acts raised the likelihood that Russia was guilty of genocide.

Even as Ukraine pulled together and achieved significant success on the battlefield, the human consequences of the war were and continue to be massive. By May, the United Nations reported that 6.6 million Ukrainians had left the country, becoming refugees. Several million more had relocated inside the country, becoming internally displaced persons (IDPs). While some people returned home over the summer months, Ukraine faces a demographic crisis. Many families have been separated and many individuals have been traumatized by injury, destruction, death of loved ones, and constant fear. Homes and infrastructure are being destroyed, the economy has been disrupted, and the deployment of landmines portends years of danger. The cost of reconstruction was estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars and continues to rise as the war goes on.

Ukraine's western neighbors, especially Poland but also poor states like Moldova, took in millions of refugees at immense cost, while also serving as conduits for military and humanitarian aid flowing into Ukraine. Across the democratic world, Russia's invasion brought national security in the traditional sense to the top of the agenda at the expense of other priorities. For all of the problems among the world's liberal democracies, Russia's invasion highlighted a

sense of threat to all of them. Recommendations that Russia should be appeased with concessions, previously seen as "realist," were suddenly seen as naive. The belief that the lucrative energy trade would moderate Russian policy was a significant casualty of Russia's attack.

Among the most important, long-term consequences of the invasion was the EU's decision to grant Ukraine candidate status. While Ukrainian membership would require far-reaching reforms without any guarantee of eventual success, candidacy was a goal that Ukraine had sought almost since independence, and the EU's vote of confidence was of enormous symbolic significance to the embattled country. In a post-war future, the prospect of EU membership will transform the prospects for reform in Ukraine.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was also reinvigorated, another way in which the invasion backfired. Germany ended its long resistance to increasing military spending. The alliance committed to deploying more forces to front-line states, including the Baltic states and Poland. Sweden and Finland, previously neutral, applied for admission to the alliance and were conditionally admitted, expanding the NATO's military potential and extending its land border with Russia.

The war induced turmoil in European and global energy markets. The EU and others imposed far-reaching economic sanctions on Russia, but they failed to induce the intended financial collapse in Russia. Instead, increases in global energy prices more than offset the decrease in sales, and Russia's energy revenues actually increased. The EU sought to exempt the energy trade sanctions, recognizing its dependence on Russian gas, but Russia curtailed supplies, seeking to undermine the West's support for Ukraine. The states of Central and East Europe were particularly dependent on Russian gas. The winter of 2022–23 loomed crucial—would

Europe have enough energy to heat homes and keep factories operating? If not, would it pressure Ukraine to end the war on Russian terms? This appeared to be Russia's strategy. Meanwhile, European governments strived collectively and separately to secure alternate supplies of energy.

For Central and East Europe, the immediate consequences, depending on the exact location, concerned refugee flows and energy supplies. All of the states in the region also had to rethink their security in light of Russia's aggression and hostility. What did the invasion of Ukraine say about Russia's intentions elsewhere, and what did Russia's heightened hostility toward the West imply for those on the frontline? While Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland saw themselves as potential next targets for Russia after Ukraine, states like Italy and France still regarded Russia as a more distant. Whether European unity would endure remained a central question.

While important differences emerged, the states of Central and East Europe responded in four broad ways. First, in different ways, they aided Ukraine. Some provided weaponry from their arsenals. Lithuanian citizens organized a "Legion of Boom" that raised €1 million to buy 37 drones for Ukraine. Second, they sought to bolster their own ability to resist a Russian invasion. Third, they advocated for a strengthening of NATO and for increased deployments in NATO's "eastern flank."

Fourth, they sought to diminish the power of Russia-centric memory politics in the region, a legacy of World War II and the following decades of occupation. The more Russia sought to use its victory in World War II to bolster its legitimacy, the more other states sought to emphasize that the Soviet victory led to decades of occupation and repression for non-Russian peoples. Latvia demolished a 79-meter (260 feet) tall memorial to Red Army soldiers that the Soviet Union had erected in Riga in 1985. A broad international reaction against Russian culture, entertainment figures, and sports went much further than anything seen during the Cold War.

Summary

The ultimate consequences of the war are impossible to foresee in the fall of 2022. Whether the war ends soon or drags on for years, and what on terms it eventually ends, will depend on developments on the battlefield which, as Putin has found, are notoriously hard to predict. Some consequences already seem clear, however. Whether we call it a "cold war" or something else, a new, enduring rivalry between the West and Russia is underway, and Ukraine is the main front in that conflict.