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Supporting Ukraine's Victory, Success and European Integration as a Safeguard to Europe's Future Security, Prosperity and Resilience

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Current support for Ukraine must be guided by an informed recognition of Ukraine's prospects, a united and coherent vision of what a victory for Ukraine would look like and a long-term plan for what the European Union, its member states and international partners can and should do in the coming years to help Ukraine fulfil its potential and enact its vision. Misguided assumptions about Russia and short-sighted 'appeasement' proposals must be abandoned in favour of a more ambitious strategy: ensuring continued and comprehensive support for Ukraine is now a long-term investment in and not a threat to Europe's economic growth, security and resilience.

For many years, there has been a widespread misconception in a number of EU member states that 'too much' support for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations could 'provoke' the Kremlin. Kowtowing to Russia's coercive diplomacy and maintaining energy dependence on its authoritarian regime paradoxically became synonymous with preserving European security and economic stability. Warnings from Eastern European governments about Russia's expansionist ambitions were routinely dismissed as alarmist. Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 came as a wake-up call. It turned out that it was the lack of Western resolve in the face of Russia's repeated attempts to blur the red lines of international law that emboldened the Kremlin to resort to a full-scale war in order to subjugate Ukraine.

The Russian leadership was certainly not prepared for the extraordinary unity of the West's response in imposing crippling sanctions and supporting Ukraine's war effort. EU member states should learn from the mistakes of the past and capitalise on this renewed sense of unity to commit to a more ambitious strategy: saving Ukraine, not caving in to Moscow's demands, will make Europe safer, more resilient and more prosperous in the future. The steps Europe can take to turn this idea into reality fall under five mutually reinforcing policy areas: (1) defence and security; (2) economic and humanitarian assistance; (3) renewable energy and green technology; (4) diplomacy and reparative justice; and (5) strategic communications.

1. Coordinate international efforts to help Ukraine defend itself, increase Ukraine's interoperability with NATO militaries and provide Ukraine with legally binding security guarantees

- *Why? Ukrainians have proved themselves remarkably motivated, inventive and effective at repelling Russia's invasion. Strengthening Ukraine's defence capabilities would allow Ukraine to negotiate with Russia from a position of strength and deter Russian aggression in the future. In turn, this will make Europe safer and reduce the risk of renewed global economic disruption.*

The return of war to Europe has pushed the EU to take an unprecedented step: the delivery of lethal weapons to a third country. This was made possible through the European Peace Facility (EPF), an off-budget instrument created in July 2021 to facilitate member states' sharing of the costs of EU military operations. This strategic reversal provides an opportunity for the EU to assert itself as a credible international security actor in Eastern Europe, and even Central Asia, at a time when Russia's reputation as a regional security provider is in tatters. Faced with this prospect, the EU should raise the EPF's financial ceiling for 2021–2027.

The launch of an EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) to train 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers over the next two years is a welcome step. It can serve as an important coordinating role for member states that are already offering training to Ukrainian soldiers on a bilateral basis. Critically, the EUMAM sends a message to Russia that the EU is in it for the long haul. The Ukrainian Army has already immensely benefited from enhanced security cooperation with NATO since 2014. Now, the experience of Ukraine's battle-tested soldiers will be a unique asset for future training and strategic planning within NATO and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

Although security guarantees to Ukraine will fall short of a NATO-style mutual defence pact, these should create unambiguous mechanisms that would trigger snap-back measures, including sanctions and arms transfers, in case of a renewed attack on Ukraine's territorial integrity. Using the Kyiv Security Compact [1] as a blueprint, these guarantees should be extended independent of discussions around EU/NATO accession.

2. Ensure that thwarting corruption and promoting technological modernisation are cornerstones of reconstruction plans for Ukraine

- *Why? The principle of 'build back better' is intended to help Ukraine cut ties with its Soviet past, pave the way for its European integration and become an attractive model for other post-Soviet countries. Ukraine's economic revival will also help finance Ukraine's defence, which will deter Russian aggression.*

Ukrainian civil society is united around the idea that the country must eradicate endemic corruption in order to make a clean break with its Soviet past. Reconstruction plans should capitalise on this strong demand for anti-corruption reform, ensuring robust mechanisms on transparency and oversight to minimise the risk of fraud by predatory elites.

Prioritising Ukraine's immediate infrastructure needs – adequate housing, healthcare infrastructure, electricity and transport networks, and educational facilities – will incentivise the return of skilled labour that left because of the war. At the same time, Ukraine's tech, public and private sectors have been vital to the ability of the Ukrainian state to withstand the invasion and continue to function. International donors should actively involve Ukraine's digital savvy citizens in reconstruction projects, as they will be a marvellous resource to help promote digitalisation and economic stability, thereby accelerating the country's integration into the European single market.

No 'Marshall Plan' for Ukraine will be sustainable, however, without ensuring Ukraine's defence capabilities and providing strong security guarantees, as foreign investors will be wary of making major commitments and new infrastructure will remain vulnerable to Russian attack. Moreover, the Ukrainian government estimates that 160,000 square kilometres of land may have been 'contaminated' by landmines and other explosive devices. To restore Ukraine's agricultural export capacity, industrial sector and transport network, reconstruction plans must therefore contain demining training and assistance [2].

3. Incorporate the development of Ukraine's renewable energy generation and export capacity into reconstruction plans

- *Why? By renouncing energy dependence on Russia and turning Ukraine into a green energy hub, the EU will be better equipped to counter Russia's use of energy as a weapon, ensure reliable and renewable energy supply and facilitate Ukraine's European integration.*

After years of using gas supplies as an instrument of political coercion, Russia's systematic attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure are now exposing Europe's need to ensure resilient energy infrastructure and reliable energy supply.

Ukraine's reconstruction represents a unique opportunity for the country to transition towards a more sustainable economy and become a hub for green electricity and hydrogen exports to Europe [3]. Through projects such as the Ukraine Green Growth Initiative, the country's leadership is seeking to replace Soviet-era coal-fired and nuclear power stations with innovative infrastructure that will expand its renewable energy sector.

Russia's warfare is causing massive environmental damage that could affect Ukraine for generations. Weapon systems and mass burials have contaminated Ukraine's fertile soil and groundwater, shellfire near nuclear power plants is increasing the risk of radiation leaks and underwater explosions are endangering wildlife in the Black Sea. Critically, most of the areas with high potential for wind and solar power projects are occupied or dangerously close to the frontline. Helping Ukraine to liberate these territories will put a stop to Russia's 'ecocide' and support Ukraine's aspiration to become a major producer and supplier of green energy to Europe, ultimately making the EU more resilient to energy security threats and climate change.

4. Reiterate that only Ukraine can decide on the terms of peace negotiations. Lead international efforts on the establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute the Russian leadership for the crime of aggression and call on the Russian government to pay reparations for war damage in exchange for lifting sanctions

- *Why? Only a peace settlement on Ukrainian terms can establish long-lasting peace and restore stability to food and energy markets. Bringing Russian war criminals to justice will strengthen the credibility of the EU as a champion of international law and promote international security by sending the message to Russia and other would-be aggressors that any blatant violations of the principle of territorial integrity will not go unpunished.*

Before the war, Ukraine produced 12.8% and 10.5% of the world's corn and grain exports respectively and over 40% of global exports of sunflower oil [4]. Russia's blockade of Ukrainian Black Sea ports has created shortages that put millions at risk of famine in an attempt to spark a migrant crisis and increase the risk of societal unrest in Europe. While the UN-brokered grain deal has allowed safe passage for ships, Russia could resume its blockade at any point in order to gain political leverage. Helping Ukraine to regain control of the Black Sea coast (including Crimea) would stop Russia's weaponisation of food and restore stability to global supply chains.

Critically, it will also prevent the perpetuation of human rights abuses witnessed in Russian-occupied territories. The EU has announced plans to set up a UN-backed specialised court to investigate and prosecute Russia's crime of aggression. It has also stepped up its efforts to confiscate sanctioned assets with a view to ensuring that Russia makes reparation payments which will sustain Ukraine's reconstruction plans directly. Born out of the ashes of World War 2, the European project is a peace project at its core. Failure to hold the senior leadership of Russia to account for its crimes would irreversibly compromise that legacy.

5. Coordinate domestic communications campaigns that unrelentingly repeat the disastrous consequences of the ‘Russia first’ policies conducted before 2022 and articulate how helping Ukraine to win the war, defend itself from future attack and succeed as a vibrant, environmentally conscious and technologically advanced democracy are instrumental to making Europe more stable, prosperous and resilient; be transparent about the measures taken to mitigate the effects of the war and the sacrifices that this ambitious strategy will entail

➤ *Why? War fatigue and the growing cost-of-living crisis could undermine Western public support for Ukraine, derailing this vision.*

A key challenge to newly acquired European unity is coming from voices that insist on the need to kickstart peace talks. These voices denounce ‘excessive’ Western support for Kyiv as the main cause of the continuation of hostilities and the resulting upheaval in global markets. Based on this profound misconception, they claim that peace and stability can only be restored if Ukraine makes political and territorial concessions to Russia. In reality, yielding to Moscow's pressure would only set a dangerous precedent for other authoritarian regimes and create a launchpad for renewed attacks, causing more human and infrastructure losses to Ukraine, disrupting trade flows with global ripple effects, pushing food and energy prices ever higher and further exacerbating inflationary trends.



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