

UKRAINE AGENDA

2025 March – 2025 April

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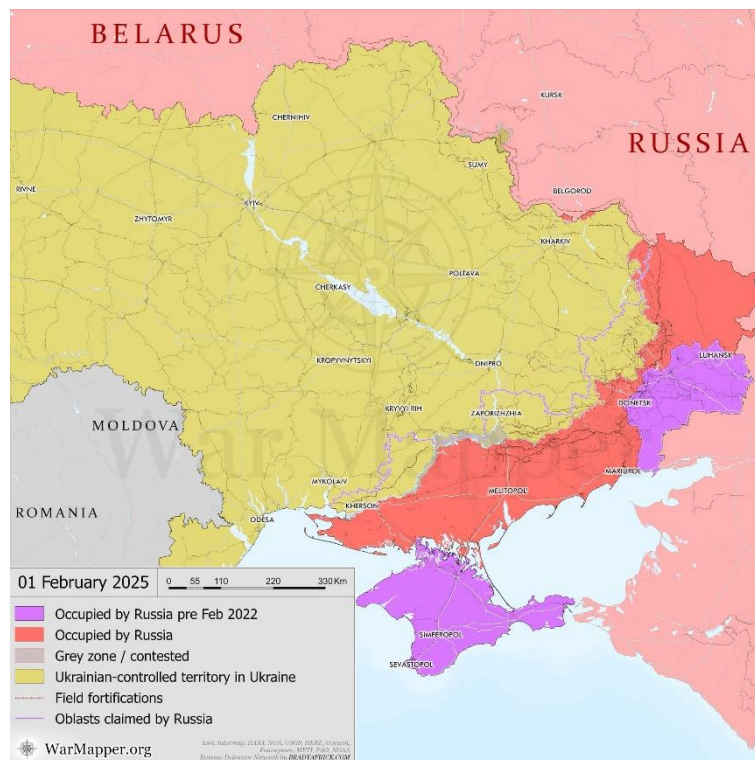
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1. CURRENT SITUATION ON THE FRONTLINE AND MILITARY DYNAMICS

The year 2025 marks an evolutionary phase in the Russia–Ukraine War. While the early years of the war were defined by dynamic frontlines, the conflict has now transitioned into an era dominated by high technology, strategic attrition, and hybrid warfare. In this context, understanding the current military balance along the frontline requires a multidimensional analysis of Russia’s offensive strategies, Ukraine’s defensive tactics, and the role of advanced weapon systems on the battlefield.

Eastern Front

As of the first quarter of 2025, the Eastern Ukrainian front has become the most intense and tactically vulnerable area of the war. Shaped along the Donetsk, Luhansk, and Bakhmut axis, this front has turned into a central battleground where Russia’s multi-pronged advancement strategies confront Ukraine’s resilient defense. The operational conduct of both sides in this zone stands out not only in terms of conventional warfare but also through the integration of hybrid and technological elements.



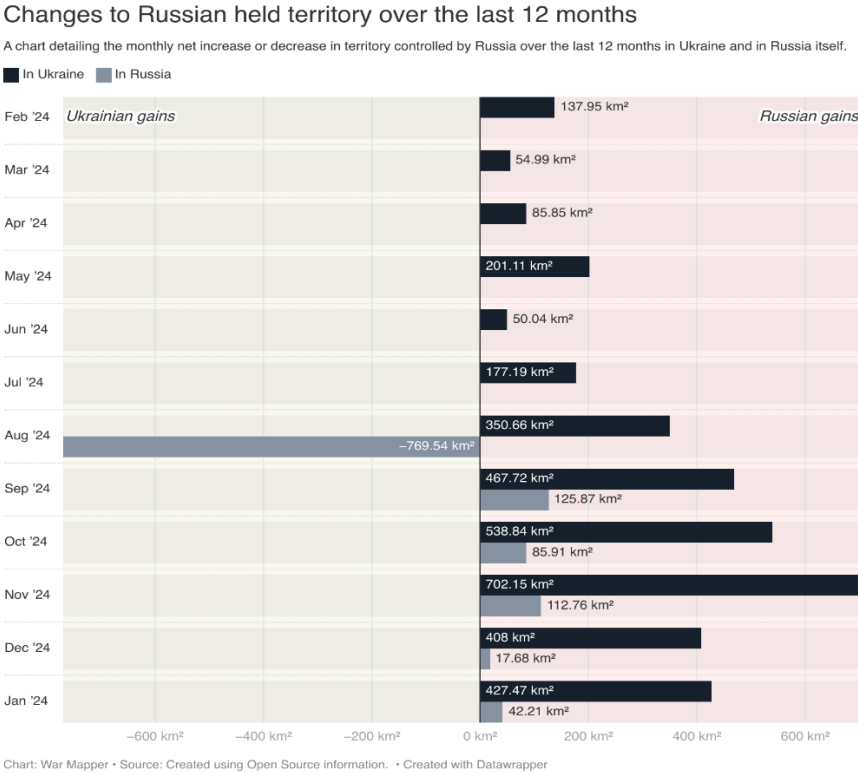
(Visual 1: Map dated February 1, 2025, showing the current line of conflict and territories under Russian control. Yellow areas represent Ukrainian-held regions; red and purple indicate Russian occupation.)

Bakhmut continues to be one of the conflict’s most symbolically and operationally critical zones. Having changed hands multiple times since 2022, the city is no longer merely a transit corridor but a strategic signaling space in terms of military capacity and public resistance. As of 2025, operations around Bakhmut are conducted through topographical advantages and entrenched positions; notable features include sniper lines, mini-UAV reconnaissance, and close-range mobile unit tactics. While Russian forces attempt to advance using intense artillery

and electronic suppression systems, Ukraine counters these offensives with drone-assisted surveillance systems, long-range artillery radars, and rapid position-shifting maneuvers. This dynamic indicates the consolidation of a defensive doctrine rooted in mobile resistance cells rather than fixed lines.

Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts have witnessed a consistent and gradual Russian advance strategy since early 2025. In particular, assaults concentrated around Pokrovsk reflect a war of attrition aimed at logistical lines, rather than direct assaults on the frontline itself. Instead of storming the trenches, Russian forces aim to disrupt Ukraine’s maneuverability by severing rear supply chains. According to assessments by ISW, Russia appears to be implementing a model focused on “disrupting operational continuity” — targeting not the frontline, but the paths leading to it through continuous small-scale raids and missile strikes. This strategy seeks not only territorial gains but also the gradual erosion of Ukraine’s resilience threshold.

Avdiivka has evolved into one of the most extreme examples of urban warfare. The fighting there occurs within multi-story buildings, narrow streets, and underground tunnels — characterized not by conventional frontlines but by control defined in meters. In this theater, Russia employs not only artillery and tanks but also Shahed-type loitering munitions, electronic warfare (EW) systems, GPS jammers, and cyberattack components, expanding the scope of the battlefield into a multidimensional domain. This structure forces Ukraine into a defensive posture not only physically but also in terms of communication, logistics, and psychological endurance.



(Visual 2: The graph illustrates monthly net changes in territories controlled by Russia inside Ukraine and along its own borders from January to December 2024.)

The military contest on this front goes beyond tactical dimensions, reflecting a broader institutional transformation of Ukraine’s Armed Forces. Since 2022, the Ukrainian military has

gradually abandoned traditional defense doctrines in favor of a modular, tech-intensive, and agile force structure. This shift, aligned with NATO doctrines, prioritizes horizontal coordination and local initiative at the frontline. Western-supplied weapon systems have become a cornerstone of this transformation. HIMARS rocket systems, NASAMS air defense batteries, Leopard 2 tanks, F-16 jets, and various mobile radar units have enhanced Ukraine's localized battlefield resilience.

One of the most notable elements of this new structure is the effective use of C-UAS (Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems) technologies. In response to Russia's intense UAV assaults, Ukraine has established a robust defense network using Western electronic jammers, laser-based interceptors, and radar-supported neutralization systems. These mobile air defense units are deployed along the front to mitigate the impact of Russian kamikaze drones. Instead of fixed placements, Ukraine employs rotational deployment and surprise defensive positions to enhance operational flexibility.

Another key pillar of Ukraine's defensive model is the incorporation of Western military advisory mechanisms. NATO-affiliated experts have provided direct on-the-ground consultancy, enabling more integrated and tech-driven operational planning. This external support also manifests in improved frontline coordination, ammunition system integration, and targeting algorithms. However, the sustainability of such support stands at a critical juncture — both in terms of Ukraine's internal military structuring and the political will of Western actors.

Technological Front

The ongoing Russia–Ukraine War has transcended conventional forms of warfare, evolving into a new conflict paradigm where technological superiority and digital dominance are decisive. Especially behind the intense clashes on the eastern front, one of the key determinants shaping the course of the war has been the operational integration of technological tools. In this new phase, the battles are no longer confined to the physical engagement of military units; instead, they are shaped by drone swarms flying overhead, invisible electromagnetic waves, and cyber intrusions targeting digital infrastructure.

The most notable technological component on the Ukrainian battlefield has been the use and impact of unmanned aerial systems (UAVs). Both sides employ drones not only for reconnaissance but also for direct strikes, target marking, psychological disruption, and logistical oversight. Russia continues to deploy Iranian-origin kamikaze drones, particularly the Shahed-136, on a large scale. These systems, characterized by low cost, long range, and precision targeting, are frequently directed at energy infrastructure, water networks, and transportation systems—ensuring that the war is not confined to the frontline alone.

While Ukraine has maintained its early-war advantage through tactical UAVs like the Bayraktar TB2, by 2025 it has increasingly shifted toward smaller, more agile, and rapidly producible FPV (First Person View) drones. Often repurposed from civilian models, these low-cost devices offer high precision and have been integrated into unit-level decision-making, allowing a battalion or small reconnaissance team to wield its own aerial strike capacity. Higher-altitude and endurance systems such as the U.S.-made MQ-9 Reaper are employed for strategic-level command and control operations. Both sides have started deploying drone swarm tactics, directing numerous small drones toward a single target simultaneously to bypass air defense systems and cause high-impact destruction. In response, counter-drone technologies have

become increasingly active on the battlefield. Ukraine attempts to neutralize this threat using Western-supplied C-UAS systems, but Russia's ability to adapt tactics at a faster pace continues to challenge these defenses.

Parallel to this, control over the electromagnetic spectrum has become as strategically important as territorial control. Electronic warfare (EW) is not limited to jamming communication systems; it also produces critical operational effects, such as disrupting drone navigation, jamming radar locks, interfering with GPS signals, and misleading missile guidance systems. Russia, with its extensive experience in this field, employs systems like Krasukha, Leer-3, and Murmansk-BN to disrupt Ukrainian communications along the frontlines. These systems use mobile antennas to jam and create interference, effectively disabling Ukraine's drone control systems. Additionally, spoofing technologies are used to misguide missile trajectories and confuse enemy sensors.



(Visual 3: A Ukrainian soldier operating a UAV on the frontline.)

Though Ukraine has more limited capacity in electronic warfare, it strives to level the playing field through jammer devices, interference towers, and specialized signal intelligence software provided by Western allies. Key tactics include creating radar blind zones to deflect or disrupt incoming Russian missiles. However, dominance in the EW domain remains largely with Russia, leading to significant asymmetrical outcomes on the ground.

The cyber dimension of the technological front, while the least visible, is among the most impactful. As of 2025, Russia has launched multi-layered cyberattacks targeting Ukraine's critical digital infrastructure—including the national energy grid, railway control systems, communications infrastructure, water purification centers, and air traffic control networks. These operations go beyond temporary disruption, involving data theft, system sabotage, disinformation injection, and public panic inducement. Notably, Red October-style attacks have aimed to exfiltrate data related to command chains and delay decision-making processes.

Ukraine's cyber defense is conducted in coordination with Western institutions. U.S. and EU-backed cybersecurity agencies provide real-time threat intelligence, security software, data encryption frameworks, and backup protocols. Additionally, regional segmentation of digital

infrastructure and the development of redundant network protocols help mitigate the risk of large-scale systemic collapse. The cyber war is not merely technical—it also has a strong cognitive warfare component. Russia seeks to manipulate Ukrainian public opinion, undermine Western support, and erode morale through disinformation campaigns on social media. Tactics include deepfake content, forged documents, digital provocations, and targeted information bombardment, all of which illustrate the psychological dimension of modern digital warfare.

Russia's Strategic Objectives

As of 2025, Russia's military strategy in Ukraine has undergone a notable transformation. According to current battlefield developments and various open-source analyses, Russia has moved beyond the traditional eastern frontline approach, increasing operational pressure along the northeastern axis—particularly in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions. This concentration suggests that Russia is not solely pursuing geographical gains but also aims to fragment Ukraine's defense lines and stretch its military resources. The deployment of tens of thousands of personnel around Sumy Oblast appears to be part of a broader strategy of multidirectional pressure, rather than simply opening a new front.

Recent assessments indicate that by 2025, Russia has shifted away from a strategy of territorial acquisition toward a more attritional, time-distributed approach. The primary objective under this framework is to strain Ukraine's logistical infrastructure, divide its defense capabilities, and test the sustainability of Western support mechanisms. Within this strategy, critical infrastructure located behind the frontlines is being systematically targeted, while persistent, low-intensity operations aim to exhaust Ukraine's resources over time.

One of the most significant complements to this strategy has been the increased use of hybrid warfare capabilities. Cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and psychological operations have extended the battlefield beyond physical confrontation, targeting public sentiment, decision-making bodies, and international supporters. Especially on social media platforms, information manipulation efforts are designed to deepen war fatigue among civilians and undermine global support for Ukraine.

Advancements in electronic warfare have also become an integral part of this multi-layered strategy. Signal-jamming and radar-disruption systems deployed around Sumy and Kharkiv complicate coordination among Ukrainian air and ground units, degrading the effectiveness of unmanned systems. The use of such tools has evolved from a mere tactical asset into a strategic instrument of coercion.

Some analyses also highlight Russia's tendency to synchronize military operations with key diplomatic calendars. Notably, waves of missile and UAV attacks have intensified during periods when critical decisions concerning Ukraine are being made at European or NATO summits. This timing reveals Russia's intention to leverage the battlefield not only as a military arena, but also as a tool for political and perceptual dominance.

Notes on Frontline Dynamics

As of the first quarter of 2025, frontline dynamics in Ukraine reveal that the conflict has evolved beyond the classical notion of a single, linear frontline and has instead become a multi-theater battlefield with varying intensities. While intense clashes remain concentrated along the eastern front, the opening of new assault lines in the northeast forces Ukraine to deploy its military

resources in multiple directions—testing the flexibility and resilience of its defense posture. Although neither side appears to hold absolute superiority on the battlefield during this period, the shifting character and objectives of the fronts have highlighted each party’s adaptive capacity to the evolving conditions.

The observed military and technological trends suggest that both the nature of the war and the strategic priorities of the belligerents are being redefined. In particular, the increasing prominence of unmanned systems, electronic warfare techniques, and cyber operations has not only reshaped the conduct of engagements but also their outcomes. Moving forward, developments along the frontlines are expected to produce consequences not only in the military domain, but also across the political and societal spheres.

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2. DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES AND MILITARY INNOVATIONS

The war in Ukraine is shaped not only by classical military strategies but also by a race in technological capabilities. In this regard, the conflict has become a laboratory for the evolution of modern warfare doctrines. During this phase, where next-generation weapon systems are being extensively tested, a wide spectrum of military innovations—from unmanned systems to cyber operations—have demonstrated direct and observable effects. The performance of these technologies on the Ukrainian battlefield offers valuable insights into how future asymmetric warfare scenarios may unfold.

Unmanned Systems and Targeting Technologies

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and kamikaze drones have emerged as some of the most decisive elements in the Ukraine war. Ukraine's early success with platforms like the Bayraktar TB2 provided an effective defense model against Russian armored units. However, following 2023, Russia's widespread deployment of Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones has established a persistent threat on the battlefield. These drones often evade conventional radar detection due to their low radar signature and diver-like flight profiles, thereby penetrating traditional air defense lines.



(Visual 4: A Ukrainian soldier from the 1st Independent Tank Brigade holds a grenade-equipped drone near the Vuhledar frontline in Ukraine's Donetsk region, March 4, 2023.)

Currently, both Ukraine and Russia have begun deploying next-generation drone systems equipped with AI-assisted target recognition, route optimization, and autonomous decision-making capabilities. Swarm drone technology enables dozens of small UAVs to move in coordinated patterns guided by a central algorithm, allowing for simultaneous raids on large military convoys, air defense batteries, and supply depots.

In addition, low-cost FPV (first-person view) kamikaze drones are now being directly steered toward frontline targets by tactical units, achieving particularly high success rates against armored vehicles. These technological developments are redefining not only offensive capabilities but also operational functions in reconnaissance, surveillance, and battle damage assessment.

Electronic and Cyber Fronts

Electronic warfare (EW) systems and cyber warfare capabilities constitute the unseen front of the conflict, playing a decisive role particularly in communication, reconnaissance, and command-and-control systems. This domain emerges not only as a tactical tool but as a strategic battlespace, where digital confrontations occurring beyond the physical frontline directly influence the outcome of kinetic engagements.

By the end of 2024, Russia had carried out electromagnetic attacks aimed at disrupting Ukraine's civilian and military communications infrastructure, including temporary disruptions of the Starlink satellite network. These assaults led to delays in data transmission and, in some areas, temporary interruptions in command-and-control mechanisms. In response, Ukraine integrated advanced jamming solutions to protect communication networks that coordinate Western-supplied weapons such as HIMARS and NASAMS. Techniques such as frequency-hopping protocols and directional signal shielding were employed to mitigate the impact of these attacks.

Both sides have actively employed advanced EW tactics such as GPS spoofing, satellite signal denial, radar blinding, and electromagnetic spectrum control. Russia has implemented large-scale EW doctrines particularly in operations around the Black Sea and the eastern front, while Ukraine, through mobile EW stations procured from Western partners, has sought to protect its unmanned systems operating along the frontlines.



(Visual 5: An aerial view of a residential area in Bakhmut under Russian military assault, February 22, 2023.)

These technological developments extend beyond the physical battlefield into cyber warfare strategies. Russia has launched ransomware attacks, infiltrations into public databases, and DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) operations against Ukrainian information systems, creating digital chaos that contributes to psychological attrition among the population. In response, since 2024 Ukraine has strengthened its cybersecurity capacity through NATO-aligned digital defense programs and technical support from countries like Estonia. Public infrastructure has been restructured with segmentation, two-factor authentication, and encryption protocols.

Information warfare and psychological operations have also taken center stage in the cyber domain. Disinformation campaigns disseminated through social media platforms and news portals are designed to target civilian psychology and shape foreign perceptions of support for Ukraine. The Strategic Communications Office under Ukraine's Ministry of Defense has developed content verification tools, real-time debunking mechanisms, and counter-propaganda systems to combat such assaults. In addition, AI-powered bot network analysis software is employed to detect and dismantle coordinated information operations on social media platforms.

This multi-layered electronic and cyber front has irreversibly transformed the nature of warfare. Conventional military engagements are now carried out in full integration with control of the electromagnetic spectrum, data security, and digital infrastructure integrity—making the war in Ukraine one of the most advanced examples of 21st-century hybrid warfare paradigms.

Western Military Technology Support

The military assistance provided to Ukraine by the United States and European countries encompasses not only arms deliveries but also technology transfers, training programs, software integration, and tactical data sharing. This multifaceted support illustrates that the war is being fought not merely through physical force, but through technology-driven superiority. The United States has supplied Ukraine with autonomous drone systems such as the Phoenix Ghost and Switchblade, which are equipped with AI-guided target acquisition algorithms capable of delivering precision tactical strikes. Additionally, high-altitude reconnaissance and strike UAVs such as the Grey Eagle and MQ-9 Reaper have granted Ukraine enhanced ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) dominance at the frontlines through direct data-sharing mechanisms with the U.S.

The United Kingdom has bolstered Ukraine's targeting capabilities under adverse weather and nighttime conditions by providing Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)-supported satellite systems, enabling high-resolution image transmission. These systems also support multi-spectrum analysis, offering a robust countermeasure against electronic warfare threats. Germany's IRIS-T SLM air defense systems have been integrated to provide 360-degree protection against multilayered threats, while France's Caesar howitzers, equipped with satellite-linked artillery coordination systems, have enabled dynamic and rapid fire support capabilities on the battlefield.

In addition, Norway's NASAMS systems, Sweden's Archer howitzers, Italy's Skyguard air defense modules, and modern tank protection systems supplied via Poland have further enhanced Ukraine's combat infrastructure. Western support extends beyond physical platforms to include the software frameworks that facilitate integration—such as command-and-control (C2) systems, digitally assisted battlefield management software, and tactical data links like Link-16 and Blue Force Tracking.

One of the most significant battlefields impacts of this support has been the reduction in Ukraine's decision-making cycles and a noticeable increase in operational agility. Coordination through NATO-compatible systems has boosted Ukraine's integration capacity, and interoperability among diverse systems has contributed to the evolution of a more modular and flexible defense doctrine. These developments clearly demonstrate that Western technology has played not merely a supportive but a transformative role in the trajectory of the war.

The New Normal of Technological Warfare

As of 2025, the war in Ukraine has become not only a reflection of conventional conflict dynamics but also a stark illustration of the destructive potential of technology-driven warfare. The widespread use of unmanned systems, the decisive impact of electronic and cyber capabilities, and the integration of Western technology into battlefield operations have collectively established an axis that has fundamentally reshaped the nature of war. Advancements such as AI-assisted targeting systems, swarm drone algorithms, hypersonic missile platforms, and electromagnetic attack capabilities have redefined not only operational efficiency but also reignited debates around the ethical boundaries of warfare and the human–machine relationship.

The danger of technological warfare lies in its extension of destruction beyond the physical realm into cognitive and digital domains. Risks such as communication breakdowns caused by electronic warfare systems, civilian harm resulting from AI targeting errors, and cyberattacks disabling public services underscore the increasing unpredictability of future conflicts. Moreover, the proliferation of low-cost, easily accessible autonomous systems raises the likelihood that non-state actors will gain access to such technologies—further blurring the boundaries of war.

In this context, the Ukrainian battlefield serves not merely as a testing ground for current technologies, but as a multidimensional security laboratory in which future hybrid warfare scenarios are being constructed. This reality compels not only military strategists, but also legal scholars, ethicists, and policymakers to rethink the frameworks through which conflict, governance, and security are approached in the 21st century.

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3. UKRAINE'S DOMESTIC POLITICS AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

As Ukraine's political structure undergoes transformation under the direct impact of war, it is evident that this change extends far beyond the frontlines. The country is currently navigating a broad process that spans from internal decision-making mechanisms to public responses, from the recalibration of relations with international actors to a redefined search for legitimacy at home. The actions of the Zelensky government are being tested not only by external support but also by the balance of domestic politics. According to recent public confidence surveys, all these developments suggest the emergence of a new political order shaped in the shadow of war.

Zelensky Government

The ongoing war in Ukraine has triggered profound transformations not only along the frontlines but also within the internal functioning of the state, the relationships among political institutions, and the evolving bond between society and the state. During this period, the Zelensky government has attempted to balance political pressure and societal expectations brought on by wartime conditions, aiming both to preserve governing capacity and maintain a foundation for national unity. However, this effort is not limited to domestic challenges alone. Ukraine's political future has become deeply entangled with both the direct and indirect interventions of external actors—particularly Western Europe, the United States, and Russia. As a result, the Zelensky government's domestic strategies occupy the center of a multi-layered equation shaped by internal dynamics and external influences.

From the outset of the war, the Zelensky government has employed a range of extraordinary governance tools not commonly seen in traditional democracies in order to preserve national unity. Martial law remains in effect, elections have been postponed, and control over political parties and media has expanded. Digital platforms and social media, in particular, have become central instruments for narrative construction and direct communication with the public. Zelensky's image as a "wartime leader" has consolidated domestic support while also symbolizing Ukraine's resistance abroad. However, this reality has also sparked debate regarding Ukraine's democratic standards. Ukrainian constitutional scholars and several civil society organizations have warned that the increased power of the executive is not adequately balanced by oversight mechanisms, raising concerns about the potential normalization of "crisis democracy." Analyses published in *Kyiv Independent* and *Ukrainska Pravda* have pointed out that the repeated postponement of elections and uncertainty surrounding media freedom have raised questions about the government's post-war reconstruction vision.

Western European countries—key providers of military, financial, and logistical support—remain vital to Ukraine's ability to sustain the war effort. However, this support is not monolithic. Public war fatigue is visibly growing in countries such as Germany, France, and Italy, leading political leaders to adopt a more cautious stance toward Kyiv. These public opinion shifts directly affect the Zelensky government's domestic legitimacy, as prolonged conflict and declining Western aid spark public criticism over the government's effectiveness. Moreover, support from Europe is often conditioned on reform requirements, with recurring demands for judicial reform, anti-corruption measures, and decentralization. This dual pressure forces the Ukrainian government to adopt a reformist posture at home, while also navigating a difficult balance between domestic expectations under wartime conditions and the technical demands of European institutions.



(Visual 6: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressing the European Union's energy policy during the wartime period.)

From the Russian perspective, Ukraine's domestic politics have become a primary field of manipulation. The Kremlin has intensified its information operations especially in eastern Ukraine and near the conflict zones, systematically promoting narratives portraying the Zelensky administration as a "puppet regime serving Western interests." In response, the Ukrainian government has had to formulate not only military but also information security and public opinion management strategies. However, this process has also placed pressure on domestic opposition elements. Media outlets and political parties that suspended or limited their activities due to wartime conditions have at times been curtailed not only for security reasons, but also to preserve the ideological coherence of the administration. This raises structural concerns over whether Ukraine's commitment to post-war democratic expansion will be implemented in a consistent and credible manner.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the Zelensky administration has pursued a relatively consistent and mobilizing political strategy—sustaining societal resilience at home and securing significant external support. However, as the war enters its third year, the focus is no longer solely on victory, but increasingly on the question of how the post-war regime will take shape. Issues such as enhancing state capacity, strengthening democratic institutions, and rebuilding a war-weary society will be shaped not only by internal political will, but also by the evolving stance of Europe, the orientation of the United States, and the persistent pressure from Russia.

The Opposition

As of 2025, the transformations brought about by the war in Ukraine's domestic politics are particularly evident in the position of the opposition and the reorganization of civil society. During the first year of the war, the *European Solidarity Party* led by Petro Poroshenko adopted a stance of "critical alignment" with the government. However, since late 2023, the party has taken on a more defined oppositional posture, especially in light of corruption allegations and crises in energy management. Nevertheless, the national unity reflex fostered by wartime conditions has limited the resonance of such criticisms in the public sphere. In many instances, opposition discourse has been marginalized and accused of "undermining the home front."

The *Fatherland Party*, led by Yulia Tymoshenko, has remained more distant from central power and operates primarily through regional demands and the concerns of the rural electorate. The party has focused on issues such as housing for displaced populations and agricultural support policies, yet the national focus on war-related issues has reduced the visibility and political traction of such locally oriented initiatives.

Simultaneously, the war has created the conditions for a resurgence of civil society in Ukraine. Many civil society organizations, which had institutionalized in the aftermath of Euromaidan but lost momentum in the early 2020s, have re-emerged. These groups have assumed critical roles in areas such as refugee assistance, women's protection, media freedom, and combating disinformation. Among the most prominent initiatives are media monitoring platforms and emergency relief networks supported by Western funding. International donors like USAID and NED have provided essential financial and technical support, helped these initiatives shape wartime narratives and informed the public. However, the Western origin of this support has sometimes raised questions about the legitimacy and local representativeness of these organizations. Civil society actors—particularly those with weak grassroots ties—are occasionally criticized for being “externally driven” and disconnected from Ukrainian realities.

These developments are interpreted through a different lens by Russia. The Kremlin has developed a systematic narrative suggesting that Ukrainian opposition parties and civil society organizations are manipulated by the West to influence Ukraine's internal politics. Russian media often depict figures like Poroshenko and Tymoshenko as Western proxies, and portray U.S.-backed NGOs as tools threatening Ukraine's sovereignty. Moscow further claims that NGOs active in the information space are part of a psychological operations network designed to polarize Ukrainian society. Themes such as media freedom and women's rights are dismissed as Western propaganda, detached from the “realities of war.” This discourse forms part of both Russia's information operations and its external pressure to undermine internal dissent.

Overall, this process indicates a multi-layered political transformation in which not only the government but also opposition parties and civil society organizations are being redefined. While the opposition struggles to maintain legitimacy within a constrained political space, civil society seeks to adapt to wartime realities while balancing external support with domestic legitimacy.

Sources of Societal Resilience

The resilience of Ukrainian society throughout the war cannot be explained solely by state capacity or international support—it is a deeply complex and multi-layered phenomenon. At the core of this societal endurance lies a post-2014 transformation often referred to as a “culture of resilience.” This concept represents not only resistance to military aggression, but also a collective immunization effort against political, economic, and psychological breakdown. What began during the Euromaidan movement evolved—especially after the full-scale invasion of 2022—into a widespread mobilization of the population, giving rise to numerous grassroots initiatives across both urban centers and rural areas. According to field reports published by *Ukrainska Pravda*, more than 20,000 volunteer organizations operated within the first two years of the war, delivering neighborhood-level logistical support, refugee shelter, access to healthcare, and psychosocial assistance. Many of these initiatives emerged independently of the central government, shaped directly by local needs, and gradually developed into semi-institutional structures. This rapid and effective societal mobilization allowed civilian

mechanisms to fulfill numerous essential functions that the state could not fully provide during wartime.

Resilience has been constructed not only structurally, but also culturally. As noted by *Suspilne Media*, religious communities and ethnic minority groups have played active roles—particularly behind the frontlines—in organizing trauma support, shelter, and spiritual rehabilitation. In Western Ukraine, Orthodox Church factions and Protestant congregations have built networks of moral and emotional support, emerging as crucial components in sustaining not only religious identity but also broader social morale. This dynamic illustrates how, even within Ukraine’s secular-democratic framework, religion has become a tool of collective resistance.



(Visual 7: A Ukrainian soldier plants the national flag atop a captured Russian tank.)

Yet behind this image of resilience lies a growing reservoir of psychological fatigue. A 2024 study by *VoxUkraine* identified rising post-traumatic stress symptoms among individuals aged 18–35 and widespread feelings of uncertainty and helplessness across the general population. Similarly, a Gallup Ukraine survey from the same year reported that 63% of respondents experienced direct psychological effects of the war, while 42% expressed hopelessness about the future. These figures point to the war as not only a threat to the present, but a structural challenge for long-term social health and reintegration.

Ukraine’s societal resistance practices have been shaped by a combination of historical memory and civic innovation. However, the sustainability of this structure depends on what kind of post-war societal reconstruction strategy is pursued. The challenge ahead is not only to remain resilient, but to institutionalize healing—a task that now stands as one of the most pressing trials for Ukrainian society.

Ukraine’s Post-War Domestic Political Planning

Post-war planning in Ukraine encompasses a broad set of political and economic reforms. The Ukrainian government has outlined key objectives aligned with the country’s EU accession process, including anti-corruption efforts, judicial reform, empowerment of local governments, and the decentralization of state authority. However, the success of these reforms depends not

only on technical capacity, but also on whether trust can be reestablished in the post-war period. A crucial determinant of Ukraine's democratic reconstruction will be whether the public is actively included in the rebuilding process.

The European Commission has noted that Ukraine has made substantial progress in recent reforms related to EU integration and has recommended the launch of full membership negotiations. Nevertheless, former Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stated that Ukraine remains unfit for accession in its current state, citing corruption, a weak economy, and institutional deficiencies.

In this context, the success of Ukraine's post-war domestic planning will rely not only on the implementation of technical reforms but also on the restoration of public confidence and the active involvement of civil society in shaping the reconstruction agenda.

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4. ECONOMY AND ENERGY CRISIS: UKRAINE'S WAR ECONOMY MANAGEMENT

Ukraine is engaged in a battle not only on the military front but also on the economic front, where it strives to resist collapse and initiate reconstruction. The ongoing war has profoundly altered the country's economic structure, replacing classical growth dynamics with the principles of a war economy. Ukraine's capacity for economic recovery is shaped by a combination of complex and interrelated factors, including the sustainability of public finances, energy supply security, and dependence on external aid mechanisms.

Macroeconomy Under Wartime Conditions

Ukraine's economy contracted by a dramatic 29% during 2022–2023 due to the direct impact of the war. This downturn was accelerated by ongoing battles in the eastern and southern regions, destruction of infrastructure, waves of internal displacement, and the halt in private sector activity. By 2024, international aid contributed to a modest recovery, with an annual GDP growth rate of 5.3%. However, this growth is largely driven by reconstruction and publicly funded projects, making it structurally fragile. For the first quarter of 2025, growth stood at 4.8%, a relatively positive signal within a war economy framework, though sectoral imbalances persist. While defense industry, infrastructure construction, and certain segments of agriculture have shown relative recovery, the services sector, domestic consumption, and manufacturing remain under pressure. Moreover, this growth has had limited effects on job creation: the real unemployment rate remains around 20%, and informal employment is on the rise.

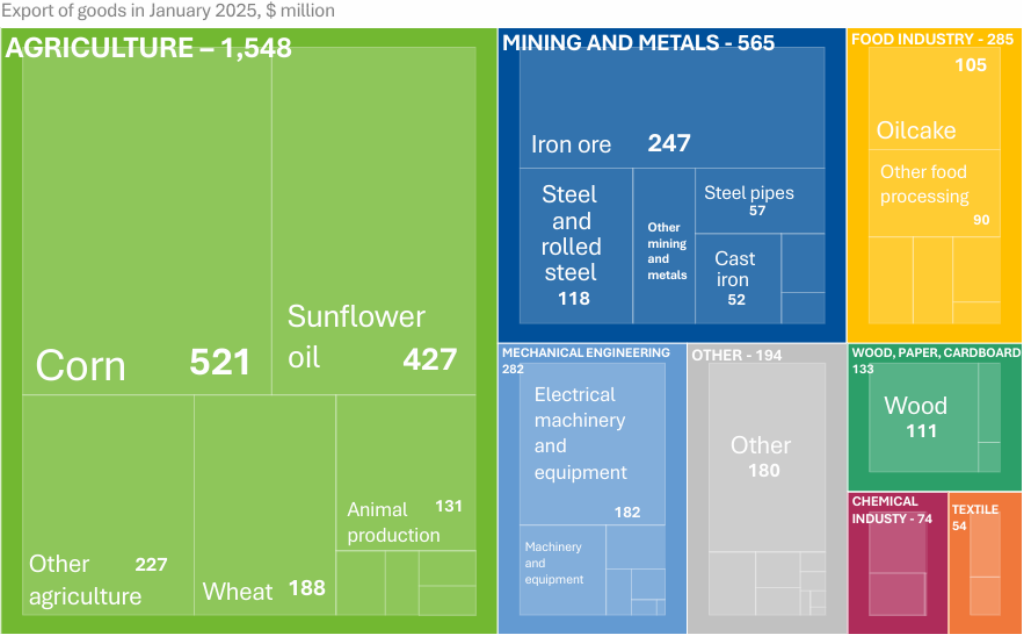
Defense expenditures account for approximately 22% of the national budget, while budget allocations for healthcare and education have declined compared to pre-war levels—posing risks to the sustainability of social welfare. As of 2025, the inflation rate hovers around 17% annually, placing significant strain on fixed-income households. The National Bank of Ukraine has implemented a tight monetary policy, maintaining the interest rate at 19% to protect foreign exchange reserves and stabilize the hryvnia. In parallel, the bank has expanded foreign exchange controls and imposed import restrictions to contain the current account deficit. By 2025, Ukraine's foreign exchange reserves stand at approximately \$27 billion, representing roughly 70% of pre-war levels. Fiscal authorities are trying to balance high inflation with dependence on external financing—a process that necessitates difficult structural decisions by policymakers.

From a fiscal discipline standpoint, Ukraine is compelled to bridge structural budget gaps through external sources. In the 2025 budget, approximately 48% of total public expenditures are financed through international loans, grant programs, and foreign borrowing. Direct budget support from actors such as the United States, European Union, IMF, and World Bank has enabled the continuation of essential public services. However, this financial dependency has reached a level that may constrain Ukraine's sovereign decision-making capacity.

Sectoral Contraction and Adaptation

Prior to the war, agriculture accounted for approximately 10% of Ukraine's GDP; by 2025, this share had declined to 6%. In particular, agricultural land in the southern regions of Zaporizhzhia and Mykolaiv has become unusable due to conflict, leading to significant reductions in both domestic production and exports. Russian attacks on grain export corridors have disrupted logistics through Black Sea ports, triggering volatility in global grain markets. Additionally,

soil fertility in eastern regions—responsible for over 40% of Ukraine’s grain output—has deteriorated due to both ongoing combat and landmine contamination. Farmers are unable to maintain production planning due to energy shortages and fertilizer supply disruptions, creating a structural threat to national food security. Alternative export routes have been established via Romania and Bulgaria, but these channels remain costlier and limited in capacity.



(Visual 8: Sectoral distribution of Ukraine’s exports as of January 2025.)

Industrial production has contracted by 20% due to the damage sustained by facilities in the eastern regions. In place of traditional heavy industry, smaller-scale and modular manufacturing initiatives have begun to emerge. In contrast, military production and defense industry investments have increased by 35%, signaling a reorientation of industrial capacity. Trade volume has gained momentum particularly with EU countries due to Ukraine’s deepening economic integration with the West. Trade with Poland, Germany, and Lithuania has increased by 18% compared to pre-war levels. However, this increase remains insufficient to offset the overall economic losses.

The Energy Crisis

Russia’s systematic attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure have caused severe damage to the national power grid since 2022. These assaults on critical infrastructure have been interpreted not only as physical destruction, but also as a strategic campaign to induce moral and logistical collapse. In the first three months of 2025 alone, 17 separate missile strikes targeted thermal power plants, while hydropower stations, natural gas distribution hubs, high-voltage substations, and transmission lines were also affected. As a result, 32% of the country’s electricity generation capacity was temporarily taken offline. During the winter months, major cities such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Dnipro experienced both industrial power shortages and residential energy rationing, with daily blackouts averaging between 6 and 12 hours.

The energy crisis has not only impacted households but also critical public services including hospitals and water treatment facilities. In response, the Ukrainian government has initiated the development of localized micro-grid systems powered by backup generators and implemented

phased consumption restriction plans and regional prioritization strategies to manage distribution.

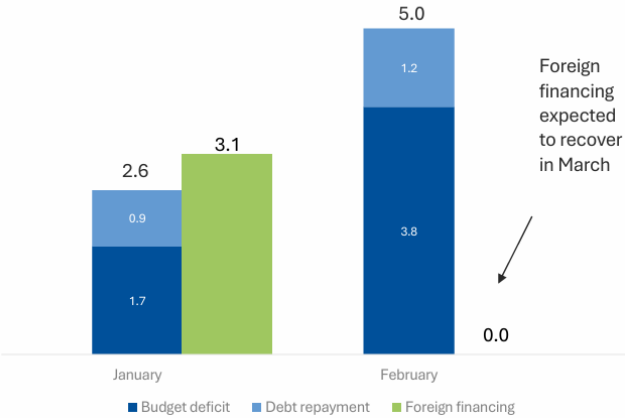
At the same time, Ukraine has been working on alternative solutions to ensure energy supply security. Electric interconnection lines with Norway and Slovakia have been reinforced, allowing for more stable synchronization with the Western European grid. In Western Ukraine, solar energy plants have come online, increasing total installed solar capacity by 22%. With support from the Energy Community of the European Union, domestic energy transmission networks have been fortified—particularly through the installation of underground and land-based cables, which offer greater resilience against attacks. Additionally, emergency energy exchange agreements have been signed with Lithuania and Romania, enhancing regional cooperation to mitigate short-term supply crises.

According to data from the Ministry of Energy, 18% of Ukraine’s total energy demand in the first quarter of 2025 was met through imports—a figure that rose to 27% during the winter. During the same period, the government launched energy efficiency audits targeting industrial facilities and large public buildings, and introduced hybrid conversion projects for centralized heating systems in an effort to reduce energy waste.

International Aid Mechanisms

Ukraine’s ability to maintain economic stability amid wartime conditions is largely dependent on the support mechanisms provided by international financial actors. Given the fragility of macroeconomic indicators and imbalances in public finances, foreign aid has become not merely a temporary relief measure but a structural necessity. In this context, Ukraine’s partnerships with institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and the European Union have become central to its post-war development strategy. Ukraine’s financial sustainability relies heavily on comprehensive assistance programs implemented in cooperation with the IMF, World Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). In March 2025, the IMF approved the second tranche of a \$15.6 billion loan package for Ukraine. These funds have been allocated to cover the budget deficit, sustain social welfare programs, and repair public infrastructure.

Foreign financing, state budget deficit and debt repayment in 2025, \$bn



(Visual 9: Chart showing Ukraine’s budget deficit, debt repayments, and external financing sources.)

In parallel with this financial support, the Ukrainian government has pledged to strengthen transparency and oversight mechanisms, committing to Western-aligned policy frameworks—particularly in the areas of anti-corruption and public procurement reform.

Resilience, Reform, and Recovery

As of March 2025, the Ukrainian economy presents an example of adaptive resilience despite wartime conditions. However, this resilience is being sustained largely through external assistance and temporary policies. The attacks targeting energy infrastructure have made reconstruction a constant objective, while challenges such as the budget deficit that threatens fiscal discipline and import-dependent energy reliance reveal the structural vulnerabilities of economic recovery. For Ukraine, long-term economic recovery depends not only on Western support, but also on the deepening of institutional reforms and economic diversification.

Recent analyses show that Ukraine’s economic structure has transformed into a model capable of rapid adaptation to crisis conditions as a result of the war. However, the sustainability of this flexibility is tightly linked to fluctuations in external financing conditions and the strategic resolve of the West. The International Monetary Fund’s March 2025 assessment report highlights that despite progress in structural reforms, Ukraine’s public debt has reached 92% of GDP, which could increase fiscal risks in the medium term. At the same time, the continuation of hybrid threats targeting energy infrastructure increases domestic production costs, thereby deepening inflationary pressure on low-income groups. The European Commission’s latest economic outlook report also highlights three key pillars for Ukraine’s long-term recovery: integrating foreign aid with institutional transparency, increasing domestic production capacity, and designing fiscal reforms in a way that reduces social inequality. In this context, economic resilience is not merely a survival reflex, but a strategic necessity intertwined with structural transformation.

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5. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL DIPLOMACY

The war in Ukraine has extended beyond military confrontations on the ground, creating a multilayered fracture zone within the realm of global diplomacy. Emerging alliances in interstate relations, the evolution of diplomatic support mechanisms, and the positioning strategies of regional powers have all deepened the geopolitical impact of the war. In this context, Ukraine's foreign policy strategies are shaped not only by security concerns, but also by efforts to generate international legitimacy, maintain integration with Western institutions, and strike a balance through multilateral diplomatic engagements. This process—spanning from support relations with the United States and European countries to limited contact with Russia, from the stances of regional actors to alternative paths of global diplomacy—has become one of the key parameters that will define the future of the war.

Western Support

As of 2025, the Ukraine crisis represents a critical threshold in terms of international relations and diplomatic initiatives. Ukraine's relations with the West are shaped by global power dynamics and the policies of regional actors. Throughout this process, the diplomatic and military support provided by the United States and European countries has been one of the most decisive factors in shaping the trajectory of the conflict with Russia.

Since the beginning of the war, the U.S. government has provided approximately \$113 billion in assistance to Ukraine. Of this amount, \$75 billion has been allocated to military aid, while the remainder has supported humanitarian relief and macroeconomic assistance packages. In 2024 alone, the U.S. Congress approved an additional \$24 billion aid package for Ukraine. This aid includes high-tech weapon systems such as HIMARS, Patriot air defense systems, Abrams tanks, and precision-guided munitions. Furthermore, intelligence support provided by the U.S. Department of Defense has significantly enhanced Ukraine's operational capabilities.

On the European Union side, support has reached nearly €85 billion. Around €25 billion of this consists of military assistance, while the rest includes financial aid packages, reconstruction funds, and refugee assistance programs provided by the European Commission and EU member states. Germany, Poland, and the Baltic states are among the most active countries supplying direct military equipment to Ukraine. Germany, in particular, has stood out by supplying Leopard 2 tanks, IRIS-T air defense systems, and long-range missiles. In addition, through the European Peace Facility (EPF), the EU has been directly financing arms deliveries to Ukraine since 2023, with contributions exceeding €12 billion by 2025.

This multi-layered support from the West is not only crucial for the frontline, but also for Ukraine's ability to maintain economic and institutional stability. Alongside the programs provided by the IMF and World Bank, the Western bloc has begun formulating concrete strategies for Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, shaped through diplomatic negotiations centered in Brussels, London, and Washington.

While the U.S. administration has provided substantial military and economic support since the outbreak of the war, European Union countries have expanded both their diplomatic solidarity and economic support mechanisms. In particular, the delivery of advanced weapon systems and intelligence aid by the United States has significantly altered the balance of power on the battlefield. Europe's continuation of economic sanctions and financial support for the Ukrainian economy remains critical for Kyiv's ability to endure the war.

Meeting of Zelensky and Trump

On February 28, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump's meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, during which he criticized Ukraine's current military strategy and warned that the country "should not expect further aid," created a diplomatically challenging situation for the Kyiv administration.



(Visual 10: U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during their meeting in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington on February 28.)

Trump's remarks further politicized the approval process for Ukraine aid packages in the U.S. Congress, leading to an increase in anti-aid rhetoric in the House of Representatives. Notably, Representative J.D. Vance of Ohio and Senator Marco Rubio of Florida voiced that the "blank check" policy toward Ukraine should come to an end. On the other hand, the Democratic Party and some centrist Republicans issued counterstatements, warning that Trump's comments would strengthen Putin's hand and undermine the unity of the Western alliance.

Prominent U.S. think tank Brookings Institution characterized Trump's remarks as "a reflection of the new isolationist wave", while the Council on Foreign Relations emphasized that such discourse could embolden right-wing populist governments in Europe. In its own analysis, the Atlantic Council warned that Trump's statements might undermine international confidence in Ukraine's reform process and weaken Zelensky's domestic political position.

In Europe, leaders such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán embraced Trump's rhetoric and argued that the EU's Ukraine support policies should be reconsidered. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, in its commentary on these developments, stated that "support for Ukraine should be seen not as a moral issue, but as a strategic one," while *The Guardian* suggested that Trump's comments could create a new fault line in U.S.–EU relations.

This situation is expected to create difficulties for the Zelensky government in both its relations with the West and domestic political balance. Following Trump's statements, criticism within Ukrainian public opinion also intensified, particularly with growing demands for transparency in military reforms and expenditures. All these developments have made it necessary for Kyiv to adopt a more cautious and multidimensional approach in its diplomatic efforts.

Negotiation Process with Russia

Under the current framework, direct peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine continue at a limited level. While no clear progress has been made in launching formal peace talks, the existing conditions suggest that both sides occasionally attempt to reshape the process through diplomatic channels. In particular, the economic crisis Russia faces due to Western sanctions constitutes a potential pressure point that may push the Kremlin toward a more flexible position.

According to data from March 2025, sanctions imposed by Western countries have resulted in an estimated 6% contraction in Russia's GDP. An 18% decrease in energy revenues, a 24% drop in export volume, and a 45% decline in technology imports indicate structural pressures that could compel Moscow to adopt a more pragmatic foreign policy. In this context, Russia appears to be seeking new diplomatic openings.

One of the most notable developments in this process was the U.S.–Russia meeting held in Istanbul on April 10, 2025. This meeting, which took place at the Russian Consulate General in Istanbul, lasted approximately 5.5 hours. While the main agenda centered on issues related to diplomatic missions, the meeting held symbolic importance in terms of re-establishing communication between the two sides. Technical issues such as banking transactions, diplomatic properties, and visa procedures were discussed; however, it is assessed that the war in Ukraine was also addressed indirectly behind closed doors.



(Visual 11: A minivan believed to be transporting Russian diplomats leaves the U.S. Consulate residence in Istanbul following the meeting.)

The Istanbul contact represents a strategic step not only for bilateral relations but also for global peace efforts. U.S. State Department officials, in statements following the meeting, emphasized that keeping communication channels open is essential for global stability. On the other hand, Kremlin officials described such contacts as an opportunity to reduce bilateral tensions, but reiterated their view that Western support for Ukraine is not sustainable.

Meanwhile, Turkey continues to position itself at the center of peace diplomacy. Ankara has maintained diplomatic relations with both the West and Moscow, and since the Istanbul talks in 2022, it has continued efforts to facilitate dialogue between the parties. In a statement at the end

of March, President Erdoğan declared that Turkey is ready to play an active role in building trust between the sides, indicating that this position will be maintained.

However, a significant gap still exists between the Kremlin's demands and Kyiv's red lines regarding territorial integrity and sovereignty. Russia continues to treat its control over Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea as non-negotiable, whereas Ukraine maintains a firm stance on reintegrating these territories and prosecuting war crimes. As a result, despite limited contacts, peace efforts have yet to evolve into a structural solution.

Within this framework, the current diplomatic landscape is marked by efforts to maintain indirect communication on one hand, and by fragilities that complicate the resolution of structural contradictions on the other. Throughout 2025, the negotiation processes continue to represent a multilayered diplomatic arena, shaped by both regional powers and global actors.

Multilayered Tensions and Future Perspectives

The Ukraine crisis is not merely a conventional conflict between two states; it also functions as a multilayered diplomatic laboratory that reveals the fragilities of the contemporary international system. The developments unfolding describe a period in which global alliance systems are being redefined, the role of regional actors is sharpening, and great power competition continues not only on the battlefield but also at the negotiating table.

As seen in the Trump–Zelensky meeting, differences in discourse among Western leaders test not only the external support Ukraine receives, but also the strategic cohesion within the West itself. It is clearly evident that NATO solidarity and policy consistency within the EU framework are being tested by such incidents. Following Trump's remarks, the division within American public opinion has become one of the main obstacles to forming a long-term consensus on Ukraine.

On the other hand, efforts to reopen diplomatic channels with Russia show that the possibility of peace has not been entirely eliminated, yet this process is based on multidimensional and fragile balances. The U.S.–Russia meeting held in Istanbul, although technical in nature, indicates that a platform still exists for the parties to engage in contact. This suggests that the conflict is continuing in a state of “controlled uncertainty” both militarily and diplomatically.

In addition, Turkey's active diplomatic initiatives, multilateral talks in Saudi Arabia, and the EU's reform-oriented approach demonstrate that Ukraine's negotiation capacity may be shaped not only by the will of major powers, but also through the coordination of regional actors.

Within this framework, Ukraine's future diplomatic orientation points to a multi-component process that will be shaped by domestic political developments in Washington and Brussels, Russia's economic and strategic calculations, and the messages Kyiv delivers to its domestic public. This represents a critical turning point not only for Ukraine, but also for the diplomatic architecture of the 21st century. Ukraine's future diplomatic orientation points to a multi-component process that will be shaped by domestic political developments in Washington and Brussels, Russia's economic and strategic calculations, and the messages Kyiv delivers to its domestic public.

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6. THE “UKRAINE WAR” IN RUSSIAN MEDIA

As of 2025, the war in Ukraine has evolved into an intense informational battleground, not only on military and diplomatic fronts, but also in the domain of information. Russian media plays a central role in shaping the narrative of the war and directing public perception. Particularly through state-controlled media outlets, the discourse production has become a strategic tool of the Kremlin to maintain domestic stability, consolidate nationalist sentiments, and influence international opinion. This section analyzes how Russia manages the war in the information domain through disinformation campaigns, propaganda tactics, and discursive construction.

Media Framing and Official Discourse

Since the beginning of the war, Russian state media has consistently referred to the conflict in Ukraine as a “special military operation.” This term has been systematically employed to blur the legal status of the conflict and to prevent the perception of a full-scale war among the public. It represents not only a terminological choice, but also an effort to create a legal framework that limits the domestic legal implications of the war and helps to control the level of societal mobilization. To date, the term remains valid across both media content and bureaucratic documents, rendering military losses, civilian harm, and the scope of the war largely invisible through this discourse.

State-controlled media channels—particularly Russia-1, Channel One, RT, and Sputnik—center an anti-Western narrative while constructing the war’s overall frame. These outlets portray NATO’s eastward expansion as a direct threat to Russia and frame Ukraine as an outpost of that threat. The Ukrainian government is frequently labeled as a carrier of Nazi ideology or as a puppet of the West, and these narratives serve as central rhetorical tools in legitimizing the war. According to this framing, Russia is positioned as an actor defending “its people and historical territories.”

Since 2023, historical revisionism has become increasingly prominent in content production by pro-Kremlin media outlets. Notably, the 2014 Maidan events and the annexation of Crimea are being reinterpreted as examples of the West’s hybrid warfare and a regime change operation in Ukraine. Historical ties inherited from the Soviet era are reframed as part of a “civilizational mission” narrative. In parallel, the views of ideologues like Aleksandr Dugin have been incorporated into media discourse; the frequently mentioned concept of the “Russian World” (Russkiy Mir) in media narratives produces a symbolic threat against Ukrainian independence.

Moreover, the daily effects of the war are presented in a filtered manner across media broadcasts; rather than focusing on the difficulties at the frontlines, themes of victory, resistance against the West, and national unity are highlighted. Information about the daily cost of the war and human losses is either censored or presented solely through a “patriotic” lens. Platforms like RT International, targeting international audiences, present these narratives in a more refined format, illustrating how Russian media functions as a dual-layered propaganda tool—both domestically and internationally.

Public Mobilization and Propaganda Tactics

In Russia, campaigns conducted through media to consolidate public support for the war rely heavily on emotionally charged content, dramatic narratives, and militarist heroism. Documentary-style war diaries aired on television channels portray the “heroic deeds” of

soldiers on the frontlines, turning these figures into symbols within the public imagination. The special program series “Zov”, broadcast by Channel One, focuses on the emotional interactions between soldiers stationed in the Donbas region and their families, reinforcing public identification with the war through dramatic storytelling. Interviews frequently aired on state television feature wounded soldiers declaring their readiness to “die for the homeland,” encouraging the social acceptance of militarist sentiments.

In pro-Kremlin media content, criticism of the West is constructed not only through a political lens but also through a cultural demonization process. Statements made by Western leaders are portrayed as threats to public values, reinforcing the idea that Russia is a bastion protecting its “moral values.” Content published on RT and Sputnik associates NATO and the EU not only with security threats but also with “moral decay.” Another key component in reinforcing this narrative is the discursive support of the Orthodox Church. In statements made by Patriarch Kirill, the war is described as a “spiritual duty,” showing how the propaganda apparatus is supported through religious references.

Propaganda activities conducted through social media are driven primarily by state-supported influencers and semi-official Telegram accounts. Channels like “Военкор Котенок Z” and “Grey Zone” dramatize developments behind the frontlines and operational successes, while content creators targeting younger generations publish short heroism-themed videos on TikTok and VK. The aesthetic codes used in these videos—such as dancing in military uniforms or clips accompanied by the national anthem—help popularize the war, blurring the line between propaganda and entertainment. In this sense, the state's media strategy is built not only on information dissemination, but also on emotional resonance and visual impact.

Disinformation Campaigns on Social Media

Disinformation campaigns disseminated through Russian social media platforms (VK, Telegram, RuTube) aim to shape perceptions of the war both within Russia and internationally. In particular, Telegram plays a strategic role in spreading disinformation. High-follower channels such as “Rybar,” “Voennyi Osvedomitel,” “WarGonzo,” “Readovka,” and “KremlBot” operate almost like semi-official media outlets, presenting daily operational updates in line with the Kremlin’s information strategy. Content distributed through these channels revolves around recurring themes such as the weakness of the Ukrainian army, the ineffectiveness of Western weapons, and the technical superiority of Russian forces. These narratives are continuously reproduced through videos, visuals, and short texts emphasizing tactical victories.

A significant portion of the content is based on decontextualized war footage, military speeches manipulated with deepfake technology, or fabricated “witness” videos. Visual materials falsely attributing attacks on civilians to Ukrainian forces often involve manipulated timestamps and location data, resulting in emotionally powerful content that cannot be verified through digital archives. These materials are rapidly amplified through bot account networks and circulated across multiple platforms (Twitter/X, Facebook, Reddit) using automated translation algorithms in various languages. As a result, Russia’s capacity for global perception management is enhanced far beyond its own borders.

One prominent tactic within these campaigns is the aesthetic masking of misinformation, differing from classical propaganda techniques. For example, edited content is shared in news-

style graphics that mimic the visual identity of outlets like BBC or CNN, increasing the perceived credibility of false news. To undermine trust in Western media, past editorial mistakes are removed from their original context and recirculated with headlines such as “CNN again lied” or “BBC exposed,” reinforcing anti-Western narratives.

Another frequently used method involves initiating seemingly ‘organic’ discussions on user-generated platforms like Reddit and then steering them with high-engagement bots. In doing so, disinformation spreads not only vertically (top-down), but also horizontally, creating the illusion of authentic user interaction.

Additionally, pseudo-academic reports produced by Kremlin-affiliated think tanks are circulated via fake analysis accounts on social media. These materials, which adopt the language and format of scholarly discourse, aim to create an epistemic legitimacy within the information war. Furthermore, video platforms like YouTube and RuTube host “analysis programs” with English subtitles, in which so-called experts spread conspiracy theories intended to expose Western politics.

This multilayered structure of disinformation campaigns does more than distort developments on the ground. It also aims to divert global attention, induce information fatigue, and ultimately blur the line between fiction and reality. For this reason, Russia’s disinformation efforts on social media should be understood not merely as an information operation, but as a broad psychological warfare doctrine targeting the cognitive domain.

Official Discourses and Systematic Misrepresentation Practices

The discourse of Russian state officials is framed as a narrative that is continuously reproduced to consolidate the legitimacy of the war. In nearly every speech, Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov emphasize themes such as “protecting civilians,” “freedom for the people of Donbas,” “global threats to Russia’s sovereignty,” and “NATO’s eastward expansion strategy,” thus sustaining the perception that the war is a defensive intervention. These statements frequently highlight notions such as “rewriting history” and threats to Russia’s cultural identity, reinforcing sentiments of national unity and mobilization.

These official narratives are not limited to political leaders alone. Figures closely affiliated with the Kremlin—such as Nikolai Patrushev (Secretary of the Security Council), Margarita Simonyan (Editor-in-Chief of RT), and Maria Zakharova (Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)—assert in public speeches and media appearances that the war is a result of Western “geopolitical engineering.” As a prominent member of the media elite, Simonyan also assumes a cultural role in the propaganda mission, claiming that the war is a “civilizational conflict,” and that Russia is defending not only its security but also its very existence.

Experts and think tanks close to the Kremlin support this discourse by presenting the public with distorted statistics and pseudo-academic analyses. Institutions such as the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS) and the Valdai Club produce reports that construct themes like NATO’s “encirclement strategy” and the West’s “neo-colonial aggression” at a theoretical level. These materials are directed both toward domestic public opinion and external propaganda efforts.

In discourse targeting international organizations, actors such as the United Nations, European Union, and Council of Europe are portrayed as “puppets of the West” or as structures that apply

double standards. The war is framed as a struggle for a multipolar world order. Statements made within this framework serve not only political diplomacy but also aim to generate psychological mobilization via the media. The rhetoric describing the conflict as a “war for truth” (pravda protiv lji) reveals that this multilayered manipulation possesses both semantic and cultural depth.

The New Dominance of Global Warfare: Epistemic Armament

Russia’s disinformation strategies aim not only to influence domestic public opinion, but also to shape international perceptions. Particularly in non-Western regions such as Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, the Russian narrative has found resonance on certain platforms. By emphasizing themes such as Western double standards, colonial legacies, and the hypocrisy of the Global North, efforts are made to construct an anti-Western axis of solidarity. In this process, international media outlets like RT Arabic and Sputnik Brasil play a critical role, as Kremlin-backed digital networks move the information war beyond classical propaganda, framing it as a form of cultural narrative engineering.

This strategy operates not only at the discursive level, but also systematically through digital infrastructures and platform economies. As of 2024, interaction levels for Russian-owned media outlets in Africa increased by 43%; Sputnik’s French, Arabic, and Portuguese social media pages have reached large audiences, especially in countries such as the Sahel region, the Central African Republic, and Angola. In Latin America, RT Español’s YouTube channel has reached viewership numbers comparable to CNN Español at various times, indicating that the Russian narrative has found a localized foothold in media consumption.

This media strategy not only reinforces anti-Western discourse, but also seeks to construct a new geopolitical imagination based on a vision of multipolarity. Frequently repeated concepts in Russian media such as “sovereign media,” “information colonialism,” and “the West’s digital tyranny” reflect an effort to build an alternative epistemic world order. Media projects like Russia Today Africa and Sputnik Global South aim to align regional sensitivities against the West, reinforcing cultural solidarity through media.

Moreover, the most striking aspect of Russia’s epistemic armament strategy lies in its masterful use of post-truth tools. In this framework, content production is not merely about transmitting information, but also about invoking cultural symbols, historical traumas, and identity politics. For example, Sputnik Brasil’s content with anti-colonial headlines resonates with both the Afro-Brazilian movement and governments like that of Venezuela, which are sensitive to anti-Western narratives. Similarly, RT Arabic attempts to generate emotional resonance in Arab public opinion by focusing its broadcasts on the Palestinian issue.

In conclusion, Russia’s international disinformation and narrative engineering strategy is based not only on classical propaganda mechanisms, but also on cultural resonance, digital infrastructure, and local political sensitivities. When combined with its challenge to Western information hegemony, this strategy creates new fractures in the global epistemic order and redraws the geopolitical map of information warfare.

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