

Learning from the Past and Present: Impacts of the Russian War in Ukraine on CEE

Most people may believe that we tend to learn from past mistakes. On the other hand, some may prefer to subscribe to the approach of ‘let the bygones be bygones’ (or, in Latin terms, *quod periiit, periiit*¹), and focus on looking toward the future. However, when the past catches up with us, we must pay close attention to it and figure out what we want our next steps to be.

The future relies heavily on both *the past* and *the present* – especially in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Here, throughout centuries, many states have paid a heavy price for being in close proximity to Russia – just as Ukraine now does.

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine came as a surprise to many. However, those who understood well the imperialistic ambitions of President Vladimir Putin had been heeding warning signs already since 2014. Still, there is no point in rehashing past faults and pointing fingers – the European member states seem to have learnt their lesson and granted support to their neighbor in a relatively unanimous voice. Yes, the actions taken could have happened faster, but given the complexity of certain bureaucratic processes, it could have also been much worse. Still, there is a lot to improve on in the future, thus the recent painful lesson is one to be remembered.

¹ In Latin, ‘What is gone is gone’.



One thing is certain: the Russian war has impacted not only Ukraine, but the whole European community – especially CEE, where the Russian threat has been looming for over three decades ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Now, having revisited their aggressive policies of the past, Russia's actions have detrimental effects on the regions not only by means of active warfare in Ukraine, but also due to ongoing propaganda and disinformation in many EU states, and energy blackmail. Meanwhile, Ukraine is fighting a war that should not have happened in the first place, in a day and age that was supposed to be a time of peace and prosperity.

This is the reason why, in this issue of the *4liberty.eu Review*, we examine the lessons of the past and the present to ensure that the future of Central and Eastern Europe is not ravaged by wars. By analyzing the perspectives and experiences of various countries from the region, we take stock of events that happened since February 24, 2022, all of the painful or promising developments, and attempt to provide the Reader with a set of thought-provoking ideas for ensuring that the future meets our expectations – including those of the Ukrainians.

Therefore, *memores acti prudentes futuri*², we present you the 19th issue and trust that it will serve as the basis for further exploration of the challenges, opportunities, and risks that we all face. The future has already begun. We better be smart about what we do next, as – to quote Ralph Waldo Emerson – “*Wise men put their trust in ideas and not in circumstances*”. Thus, even though the current situation may seem dire, our common ideas and beliefs will help us move forward.

Enjoy your reading,



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² In Latin, 'mindful of things done, aware of things to come'.