

Lessons Learned or Strength in Solidarity



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In the aftermath of the outbreak of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the European Union (EU) has been facing the consequences of its misguided policy decisions from decades ago. Doing ‘business as usual’ with Russia, a country whose values are fundamentally different from those of the Western nations’, is always dangerous and may seem reckless.

Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, unprecedented in the 21st century, created a new reality and changed the rules of the game. Ukrainian citizens have already shown exceptional endurance, will, and courage in the confrontation with the military machine of the Russian Federation. Despite the high level of uncertainty, the economy and business quickly adapted to wartime conditions. Conducting economic activity under the constant crosshairs of Russian ballistic missiles made security an essential characteristic of the business climate, as observed in their article by Yevhen Anhel, Oleksandra Betliy, and Oksana Kuziakiv in this issue of the *4liberty.eu Review*. Still, it is security that calls for international support and solidarity.

Ukraine’s allied countries continue to play the key role in Ukraine’s economic stability as the state relies substantially on the financial support of international partners, which helps the country to keep going despite hardships. Even more financial support, as well as foreign direct investments, will be needed to finance recovery and reconstruction.

The war has also revealed how fragile and interconnected today’s world is, and how countries with open economies are dependent on world events. At the same time, the complete Russian invasion of Ukraine has repositioned the focal point of Europe toward the east, directing increased focus toward the nations of Central and Eastern

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Europe – as indicated by Natalia Matiaszczyk in her contribution. As we learn from most of the featured pieces, the war has already significantly changed both the structure of European security and economic activity. The European Union needs to rethink its foreign policy, and draw lessons from the previous experiences of pacifying the aggressor.

First of all, the war revealed the risks of being dependent on one energy resource supplier. Clearly, high dependency on Russian energy supplies impacted the economy of EU countries, as analyzed in his article by Igor Šlosar. Secondly, this issue has created a number of others – as, for instance, disrupting global commodity chains, raising worries about worldwide food security, and increasing world economic instability as a result of Russian militaristic policy, as pointed out by Parvin Guliyev in his contribution.

Nevertheless, this strife of both Ukrainians and EU citizens has prompted the fortification of the regional security framework, as nations in the vicinity united to uphold shared values and shield against external dangers. Furthermore, the Russian occupation has emphasized preserving democratic principles and regional stability.

Notably, different behavior patterns can already be observed in various European countries. Natalia Matiaszczyk implies that amid war in Ukraine, Poland has emerged as a pivotal player within both the NATO and the European Union, affirming its role in maintaining ideals of both these organizations. Meanwhile, Hungary is the polar opposite of Poland's stance. Here, we see the war showed that political players who look only at the past and feed on ideas of revanchism tend to act in their short-sighted political interests, despite the jointly declared European values. The example of Hungary reveals how neglecting the principles in favor of illusory economic benefits can force a country to fall into the trap of dependence and become a target of the Russian propaganda machine and disinformation.

In the 19th issue of the *4liberty.eu Review*, a group of Hungarian authors provide their perspectives on the phenomenon of Hungary's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, reflecting on the connections between domestic and foreign policy and their historical roots. According to Rebecca Papp, Hungary is like Russia's Trojan Horse in the EU, weakening the institution from the inside with its veto powers (which could, however, change in the foreseeable future). Moreover, Oliver Papp shows how the Russian propaganda and disinformation machine strengthens the Hungarian one. At the same time, as stated by Máté Hajba in his article, when European states redoubled in a *tour de force* of liberal val-



UKRAINE'S ALLIED COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO PLAY THE KEY ROLE IN UKRAINE'S ECONOMIC STABILITY

ues, the Hungarian government sunk even deeper into illiberalism, because the head of the government simply wants to stay in power.

We should remember that – according to Filip Blaha's conclusions – the Russian Federation, which has used disinformation to undermine confidence in the institutions of Western states, makes the latter more easily attacked by the politicians it has installed in office or bribed. This is why we need to make society more resilient through support for independent media, trust in institutions, a free and robust civil society, and economic growth. According to the author, the think tanks from the CEE region should participate in society-wide reforms, be credible carriers of information, and, if necessary, refute untrustworthy sources and arguments.

Needless to say, nations with historical wartime experiences provide invaluable insights into effectively addressing the adverse aftermath of conflict. Diplomatic initiatives and negotiations have been actively





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pursued to attain a peaceful resolution, but in this case, time was lost. Nevertheless, the war contributed to rethinking the EU's foreign policy. According to Anar Rzayev, in various forms, the EU community has demonstrated its unity with Ukraine by imposing sanctions on Russia to bring about the end to the hostilities and by upholding Ukraine's sovereignty.

The world is polarizing, but the values of freedom and self-determination were, are, and will be the cornerstones of democracy and development. The lessons of the war emphasize the need for constant vigilance and cooperation between the CEE countries, within NATO and the European Union, as well as with external partners. The role of collective defense, unity, solidarity, and cooperation has increased many times over. Of course, new challenges await us in

the future, but I personally hope that *our* war will teach everyone that the way to a safe and stable future lies in strengthening partnerships, solidarity, and cooperation.

As a citizen of Ukraine, I need to emphasize that we, Ukrainians, are grateful for all the assistance given by our friends and allies. We will fight, resist, and achieve victory. Together, we will make Europe safe and strong. *Slava Ukraini!*



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