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# Enemy At The Gate

AFP

## Russia is getting the world's attention for its military buildup around Ukraine. Will Ukraine get the world's help?



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Ukrainian soldiers guard a position against Kremlin-backed forces on the front line in Donetsk Oblast on Feb. 16, 2021. Ukraine has been fighting militants in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in eastern Ukraine since 2014, following Moscow's invasion of the Donbas and its seizure of the Crimean peninsula. Since then, 14,000 people have been killed and nearly 1.5 million others have been displaced. Russia has moved tens of thousands of soldiers near Ukraine's borders, along with sophisticated weaponry, and threatened a deeper invasion of Ukraine.



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A Ukrainian serviceman cleans his weapon at the Donbas front line near the town of Horlivka in Donetsk Oblast on April 15, 2021. Ukrainian troops are getting ready to repel a possible invasion by Russia.

# Ukraine seeks international action to help stop Russia

By Oleksiy Sorokin and Illia Ponomarenko  
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Since mid-March, Russia has been mounting pressure on Ukraine by expanding its military presence near the country's border and at Ukraine's occupied territories.

Over 80,000 Russian soldiers are now stationed within striking distance of Ukrainian positions. They are equipped with the latest Russian military hardware, such as Iskander ballistic missile systems capable of neutralizing Ukraine's anti-aircraft defenses.

This is Russia's largest military buildup since its invasion in 2014. Seven years into the war that killed up to 14,000 people, Russia is menacing Ukraine with the possibility of a new offensive.

In response, Ukraine has actively sought foreign assistance, trying to make all-out war too costly for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

However, despite President Volodymyr Zelensky's flurry of diplomacy, he doesn't appear to have much to show for it. So far, most of Ukraine's international partners offered words rather than actions.

"Zelensky is trying and he's doing

everything right," said Andreas Umland, a political analyst with the Ukrainian Institute for the Future. "The key problem is that Ukraine is politically isolated, it isn't part of any security treaty that could help Ukraine solve this issue."

In the span of one week, Zelensky has traveled to Turkey and is set to meet French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on April 16. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba has met with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

And after keeping Zelensky at arm's length for months, U.S. President Joe Biden finally called him to reaffirm his support.

Biden also spoke to Putin, calling him to de-escalate tensions and proposing to meet with him in a third country to discuss the confrontation and other US-Russia issues.

Umland said such a meeting would play to Putin's ego. The Russian president wants to turn military strength into political gain.

"Putin can present the bilateral meeting with Biden to the Russian public as sort of victory," says Umland. "Ideally, this will allow (Russia) to de-escalate without losing its face."

However, on April 15, tensions



between U.S. and Russia escalated. The Kremlin said a meeting with Biden can't be organized quickly. On the same day, the U.S. announced a new set of sanctions against Russian companies and individuals over interference in the U.S. presidential election.

## Russia's pressure

The active stage of Russia's war against Ukraine took place in 2014–2015, with the conflict being under a nominal cease-fire in the latest years.

But since mid-March, Russia has been preparing for a new escalation.

In March, Russia held military drills in Kremlin-occupied Crimea, increasing its military presence in the region. But after the drills were over, the forces didn't leave.

Instead, Russia has brought in additional troops to the occupied territories and to the areas near Ukraine's border, stretching

Ukraine's line of defense.

The Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT), a Russian-based investigative reporting group, has been tracking the Russian military movement towards Ukraine.

According to the organization, Russia has created a full-fledged military camp near the Russian city of Voronezh, 250 kilometers north of the Ukrainian border. Most military equipment there, including tanks, military trucks and rocket launchers, have license plates linking them to central Russia, meaning they were brought to Voronezh from afar.

According to CIT Head Ruslan Leviev, pictures taken by locals suggest that an area of over four square kilometers is covered with military equipment. The camp has a command center and a field hospital.

According to Zelensky's press sec-



# Ukraine wants action while the West mostly offers only words

page 2 →

retary Yulia Mendel, Ukraine's overall assessment is that around 40,000 Russian soldiers are stationed near the 2,000-kilometer border with Ukraine, while 40,000 more are stationed in occupied Crimea.

Taras Chmut, chief editor of the Ukrainian Military Portal website, is more careful in his assessment.

"No one actually knows the number of Russian troops on Ukraine's borders, because they are constantly moving, adding additional arms and so on," he says.

"Concerning the capability, it's definitely a large multifunctional army group capable of performing a wide range of duties. We're talking about ground forces, strategic missile forces, aviation, intelligence units, military engineering units."

## Preparing for war

Russia also stepped up its assaults in Donbas. Every week, starting in early March, Ukraine has lost soldiers to shelling and sharpshooters.

On March 26, four Ukrainian soldiers were killed, two were injured, in the deadliest incident since the latest ceasefire went into effect on July 27.

Days prior, Russia declined to prolong the ceasefire agreement.

Ukraine's Commander-in-Chief Ruslan Khomchak told parliament on March 30 that Russia's assets in Donbas include 28,000 militants and 2,000 Russian instructors.

"The militants' command is controlled by Russia's southern military district, meaning that it is part of the Russian military structure," says Chmut.

## Propaganda escalates

Meanwhile, Russian propaganda has been in full swing, preparing Russia's public opinion for a possible war — by inventing fake news about Ukrainian atrocities and denigrating Ukrainian people as a whole.

In late March, Russian state TV began spreading lies that Ukraine killed a 5-year-old boy with a drone strike.

Soon, propagandists on Russia's main TV channels began proposing a nuclear attack against Ukraine and intensified references to Ukraine as a "Nazi state."

One of Russia's most notorious state propagandists, Vladimir Soloviev, claimed Russia's offensive will be "the end of the Nazi Ukraine." Another one, head of Russia Today Margarita Simonyan, suggested that as a response to the latest U.S. sanctions Russia should "return the Donbas back home" — that is, make it part of Russia.

The lies don't end there.

Russian officials have been accusing Ukraine of military escalation and saying that the military build-up is part of Russia's defense against NATO. Ukraine isn't part of NATO, nor does it have NATO troops on its territory.

Furthermore, the Russian buildup violates the Vienna Document which obliges Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe member states, which Russia is, to provide information on their troops' movements.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov promised an offensive operation against Ukraine.

"Those who try to start a new war in Donbas will destroy Ukraine," said Lavrov.

"Russia is ready for a military intervention, the question is at what price, with what military resources and tasks," said Chmut. "If the task is to start a war, they are ready, if the task is to conquer Donbas, also yes, if the task is to conquer Ukraine's left bank, then obviously no."

## Zelensky turn to NATO

Contrary to Russian propaganda's talk of Ukrainian military escalation, Zelensky has remained calm in the face of a possible invasion and has sought a diplomatic solution.

"NATO (membership) is the only way to end the war in Donbas. The membership action plan will become a real signal for Russia," Zelensky said on April 6, in an attempt to secure foreign support for Ukraine.

Since Russia's escalation began, Zelensky has been trying to secure political support for Ukraine in its defense against Russia. He has met mixed results.

The U.S. and Turkey declared support for Ukraine. Germany and France delivered a tone-deaf response.

On April 2, Zelensky held his first official phone call with Biden, receiving a promise of "unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's ongoing aggression."

This was the first direct conversation between the two presidents.

A day prior, the U.S. Department of Defense stated its commitment "not to leave Ukraine alone" in case of a large-scale invasion by Russia.

On April 13, Kuleba toured Brussels, meeting Blinken and Stoltenberg.

"Strategically, Russia has to understand that Ukraine belongs to the world of democracies, to the Western world, and the West will not allow Russia to shatter Ukrainian democracy and sovereignty," said Kuleba during his meeting with Stoltenberg.

The NATO chief acknowledged the presence of "the largest massing of Russian troops since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014."

However, NATO has continued to talk big but do little.

Germany and France expressed "deep concern." On April 4, they issued a statement saying "we call on all sides to show restraint."

The French foreign office soon amended its response, writing that "France and Germany reiterate unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence within its internationally recognized borders."

Zelensky was also invited to Paris for a bilateral meeting with Macron on April 16.

Zelensky has been disappointed with the West's response, telling CNN that the U.S. "must do more" to deter Russia and help bring this conflict to an end.

"If they (the U.S.) see Ukraine in NATO, they have to say it directly



French President Emmanuel Macron (R) welcomes President Volodymyr Zelensky upon his arrival at the Elysee Palace in Paris to attend a summit on Ukraine on Dec. 9, 2019.

and do it. Not words," Zelensky told CNN.

## Turkish delight

Surprisingly, some of the strongest support for Ukraine so far came from Turkey, which has had good relations with Russia.

Zelensky's visit to Turkey on April 10 resulted in a 20-point declaration that included "support towards the perspective of Ukraine's NATO membership, including in terms of its intentions on a Membership Action Plan."

The document also supports Kyiv's desire to achieve full compatibility with the alliance's legal benchmarks for military forces and suggests that NATO should be involved in ensuring security in the Black Sea region.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during a joint press conference, said Turkey would never recognize the Russian annexation of Crimea and spoke in favor of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

"(Turkey) is ready to render any support to Ukraine to ease tensions, extend the state of ceasefire (in Donbas) and settle the conflict via a dialogue based on the Minsk accords," Erdogan said.

But then Turkish Foreign Minister

Mevlut Cavusoglu on April 15 softened his nation's stance. "We are making the same call to both countries for issues to be resolved peacefully," he said. "We are not picking sides between the countries. Our stance is clear: balanced and constructive."

During Zelensky's visit to Istanbul, Andriy Taran, Ukraine's defense minister, also met his Turkish counterpart Hulusi Akar to discuss contracts to provide Kyiv with new Bayraktar TB2 strike drone systems and the co-production of naval corvettes in Ukrainian dockyards.

Turkey, which has become one of Ukraine's top defense production partners in recent years, has already sold Kyiv six drones and 200 missiles for \$69 million.

According to foreign policy expert Iliya Kusa of the Ukrainian Institute for the Future, Turkey's primary concern is Crimea, the Crimean Tatar population and the Black Sea security.

Unsurprisingly, Turkey's actions angered Russia.

Lavrov on April 12 "warned" Ankara against selling new weapons to Kyiv. A day later, Russia banned regular and charter air travel with Turkey between April 15 and June 1.

Turkish Tourism Minister Mehmet

Nuri Ersoy said flight restrictions imposed by Russia until June could cost Turkey 500,000 tourists and millions of dollars in revenue.

## Cold War

Despite Ukraine's attempt to draw strong international support, it looks like Ukraine won't be the key player in its own peace talks.

Experts differ on what caused Russia's desire to escalate the conflict.

Some suggest that Biden's firm stand against Russian meddling in U.S. internal affairs could have prompted Russia to raise the stakes. The latest U.S. sanctions against Russian individuals and companies prompted pro-war comments from some of Russia's top state propagandists.

Other experts suggest that Putin is trying to move focus away from domestic issues, such as the imprisonment of opposition leader Alexey Navalny, and help the president's falling approval ratings.

But even though Ukraine risks becoming a battlefield for U.S. and Russia, Umland is optimistic that the country shouldn't fear a sell-out.

"I think that Ukraine shouldn't fear that the U.S. will make concessions to Putin concerning Ukraine," says Umland. "They would rather push for Russia to leave Ukraine alone." ❄️

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EDITORIAL

# Too little, very late

"I sure hope to hell you know what you're doing."

This is what U.S. President Joe Biden told Hunter Biden when his son told him in 2015 that he will join the board of directors of the corruption-stained Burisma energy company in Ukraine, run by ex-Ecology Minister Mykola Zlochevsky.

The same could be said to Biden and all European leaders today when it comes to Russian policy. Biden imposed some tougher sanctions on April 15 and declared Russia's actions against the US — including hacking and election interference — a "national emergency," a step that gives the president a freer hand to impose more sanctions in the future.

Biden declared on April 15: "I hereby report that I have issued an executive order declaring a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States posed by specified harmful foreign activities of the government of the Russian Federation."

Strong words, but stronger actions are still needed. The US and the European Union's attempts to stop the Kremlin are still too weak.

Perhaps the best sanction announced on April 15 was the prohibition on U.S. institutions from buying Russian sovereign bonds on the primary market, an attempt to cripple Russia's ability to borrow. But as London-based analyst Timothy Ash pointed out, the ban didn't apply to the secondary market, where debt is re-traded. He made this analogy: "It would be like a 16-year-old getting an adult to buy alcohol from the liquor store and giving it to the teen around the back."

In any case, fortress Russia is not likely to buckle because it can't borrow.

Swedish economist Anders Aslund pointed out missing elements: sanctions against oligarchs and big Russian state companies in finance or energy.

Western leaders still don't understand that Vladimir Putin is a rogue dictator guilty of war crimes and untrustworthy. He deserves the most crushing sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Until then, he will continue his destructive ways. Western weakness is why, seven years after Russia invaded Ukraine and took Crimea and a chunk of the Donbas, we're at an impasse.

We'll say this about Putin: He plays a weak hand well. The Kremlin kleptocracy has a small economy, represses its citizens, muzzles its press, kills its opponents and is a malevolent influence globally. Its twin aims are to destroy democracies and reassemble as much of the Soviet Union as it can.

Putin, a tiny man with a big inferiority complex, has been threatening Ukraine by amassing nearly 100,000 troops and advanced weapons near the borders. The Kremlin propaganda machine has also set the stage for more war by dehumanizing Ukrainians as Nazis whose state should be destroyed, by handing out Russian citizenship to residents in the eastern Donbas and even by threatening the U.S. if it sent warships to the Black Sea. (The U.S. announced on April 15 that it wouldn't.)

Instead of shunning Putin and pushing for harder sanctions — a SWIFT ban on Russia on financial transactions, sanctions against oligarchs, an end to most trade relationships, the expansion of Congress-approved sanctions to stop Nord Stream 2 and a push to oust Russia from international institutions for violating its democratic commitments — the Biden administration gave Putin the legitimacy he doesn't deserve.

The US president responded to Putin's belligerence by calling him and inviting him to a personal summit in a few months. Kremlin media gleefully portrayed this as American weakness. Meanwhile, President Volodymyr Zelensky does not get his calls answered by Putin.

Another perversion is the Kremlin's ability to turn the victim into the aggressor. Russian officials threaten to destroy Ukraine if it does not stop its "provocations." Keep in mind: these are Ukrainians on Ukrainian soil. How is defending the homeland a provocation? Russia, get out.

Those who call the shots in the West still have no backbone, with the exceptions of the Baltics, Scandinavians and Poles. Germany and France seem to want to do as little as possible, besides issue tiresome statements of "deep concern." They respond with annoyance to Ukraine's urgent calls for action and NATO membership. Even Turkey, whose President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on April 10 called for the return of Crimea and Donbas to Ukraine and for Ukrainian membership in NATO, softened on April 15, with its foreign minister saying the nation is not taking any side in the conflict.

"Why is America pussyfooting around this megalomaniac who openly wants to destroy Ukraine, the European Union and democracy everywhere?" asks Atlantic Council fellow Diane Francis. "The West's reticence is bizarre given that NATO's 30 countries have five times the population and 10 times the economy of Russia."

To respond to Putin, Francis writes, the West has to start thinking like Putin: Give NATO membership to Ukraine, place American and NATO troops there to protect it; shut down the gas pipeline to Germany, slap punitive tariffs on all Russian exports.

Ukrainian leaders are not going to complain too loudly about Western inaction because they need all the friends they can get. Zelensky has gamely been putting on a diplomatic offensive that will include a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron on April 16 in Paris.

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba got meetings on April 13 with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. But he appeared to come away empty-handed, despite his eloquent pleas: "At the operational level, we need measures which will deter Russia, and which will contain its aggressive intentions. This could be, as the secretary-general mentioned, a new round of sanctions, which would raise the price of Russian aggression. This could be direct support, aimed at strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities, because we do know that Russia spares no effort to prevent third countries from cooperating with Ukraine, in the defense sector. Russia is working hard to undermine our defense capabilities."

Kuleba went on: "There is only one thing that I really would like to highlight here. The price, some measures, which we are talking about, may look costly, but the price of prevention, will still be lower than the price of stopping the war and mitigating its consequences. So it's better to act now to prevent Russia from further escalating the situation."

### NEWS ITEM:

In what some have called a PR stunt, the Cabinet of Ministers published a decree on April 12 that makes it possible for foreign universities to open branches in Ukraine. According to the decision, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education can only grant a license to foreign universities ranked among the top 3,000 in the world. Russian universities cannot open their branches in Ukraine. Foreign universities can work in any Ukrainian city except for the biggest — Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Dnipro and Odesa.



### NEWS ITEM:

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on April 13 to discuss the security situation in and around Ukraine amid the Kremlin's escalation of its war. "Russia's considerable military build-up is unjustified, unexplained, and deeply concerning," said Stoltenberg. At the same time, Stoltenberg dodged the question from a journalist whether the war in the Donbas can affect the NATO's decision to give Ukraine its membership in the future.



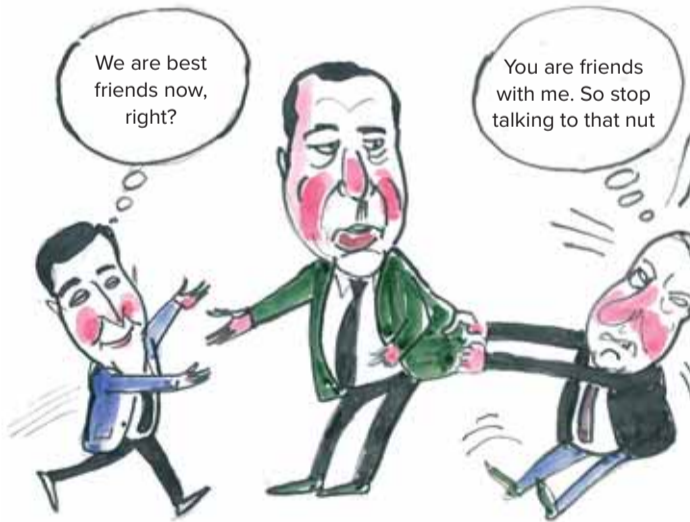
### NEWS ITEM:

Ex-President Petro Poroshenko has declared 1.8 billion, or \$64 million, in cash. Poroshenko, who's now the leader of the European Solidarity party, keeps the biggest amount of cash among the members of the Ukrainian parliament. According to his press service, he refuses to keep the money in banks "because of political repressions and attempts to freeze his assets." In 2020, Poroshenko made \$8 million, according to his declaration.



### NEWS ITEM:

Russia has suspended flights to Turkey until early June. According to the official version, Russia did that due to the worsening epidemiological situation in Turkey. Coincidentally, this happened on April 15 after President Volodymyr Zelensky met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for a one-on-one meeting in Istanbul on April 10. Over the course of three hours, the leaders discussed Ukraine's NATO membership, the de-occupation of Crimea, Turkey's support of Crimean Tatars and the rising tension in the Russian-occupied Donbas.



See these features online at [Kyivpost.com](http://Kyivpost.com)

### Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



**Carl Bildt**  
Former Swedish Prime Minister Bildt has called the West to stand up for Ukraine amid the Kremlin's escalation of its war in the Donbas in a recent op-ed for the Washington Post.



**Dmitri Tenin**  
Tenin, the head of the Carnegie Moscow Center think tank, has justified a potential full-scale aggression from Russia in the Donbas, blaming the escalation of the war on Ukraine's anti-Russian policy.

### Feel strongly about an issue? Agree or disagree with editorial positions in this newspaper?

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# The time is now for Ukraine to ratify the Istanbul Convention



Iryna Venediktova

*"Free from fear, free from violence."*

We must make sure that the slogan of the Istanbul Convention becomes a reality for Ukraine. Last week, I signed the official position of the Prosecutor General's Office on the absence of any obstacles to the launch of the ratification process of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The purpose of the Istanbul Convention is zero tolerance for domestic violence. Its provisions impose an obligation on the state to prevent this shameful phenomenon, to deal with stereotypes in society about it, as well as to provide adequate protection and support to victims of domestic violence.

Here it is important to emphasize once again that the convention in no way forces the state to change its approach to understanding the institution of marriage or adoption and to grant such rights to LGBT couples. The convention only enshrines the obligation to prevent violence against representatives of this vulnerable group.

We have expressed and agreed on the necessary reservations to the ratification law, which will remove acute obstacles to its adoption. Therefore, this time the manipulations that have so far hampered the ratification of the Istanbul Convention will not work.

Criminal liability for domestic violence has brought Ukraine much closer to the norms of the convention. It has been in force in our legislation for a little more than two years.

Recently, footage of domestic violence, where a man pulls a woman by the hair across the room in front

of young children, has spread across the network. A resident of Poltava Oblast has stated about repeated facts of abuse on his part. The regional prosecutor's office intervened into the situation and the perpetrator was notified of suspicion over domestic violence. He faces up to five years of restriction of liberty and additional measures, including a ban on staying in a place of common residence and approaching a certain distance, restrictions on communication with children, as well as an obligation to undergo a program for perpetrators.

Counteraction to criminal offenses related to domestic violence against women, men and children has been identified by me as a priority for the work of the prosecutor's office for 2021.

Last year, law enforcement officers registered about 3 thousand of such offences, almost 2000 of which were submitted to court with indictments. During the first three months of 2021, more than 1000 of such criminal offences have already been registered, and more than 650 have been submitted to court.

We have set a task for prosecutors to effectively represent public prosecutions in courts, so that punishment for suffering at the hands of the loved ones is inevitable. Last year, 778 persons were convicted under Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

Some days ago in Ivano-Frankivsk, the district prosecutor's office proved in court the guilt of a local resident in committing domestic violence and grievous bodily harm. The 63-year-old man had previously been convicted of beating his cohabiting partner, however he continued to abuse her. The court sentenced him to 5 years of imprisonment.



Some 2,000 people participate in a rally for equal rights and ratification of the Istanbul Convention on International Women's Day in Kyiv on March 8, 2021.

In order to improve approaches to such proceedings, we have planned to introduce a specialization of prosecutors in the categories of cases involving domestic violence. We are now developing standards of work with a focus on the world's best practices in law enforcement.

I also urge Ukrainians not to remain silent – prosecutors will stand up for your rights. At the slightest manifestations of this nature, you should immediately call the police, contact social services and public organizations, as well as free legal aid centers.

We must work together to address psychological, physical, economic and sexual violence. It is important that many steps are taken at the state level. This is the adoption last year of the Decree of the President of Ukraine on urgent measures to prevent and combat domestic violence, gender-based violence, to protect the rights of victims of such violence. To implement it, the gov-

ernment's state social program has been introduced.

In addition, the impetus for global change was Ukraine's accession in September 2020 to the Biarritz Partnership for the equal rights and opportunities for women and men, founded by the G7, at the initiative of First Lady Olena Zelenska. The state is already fulfilling its obligations – a government hotline to combat domestic violence was launched last year – 1547. This is another channel for rescue.

Nine shelters were also created for the victims. This year, the amount of expenditures for the expansion of the network of support services for victims is UAH 275 million.

The statistics are impressive – every third family in Ukraine is experiencing violence. Between 1 and 3 million children witness or fall victim to violence each year. The consequence of this, in addition to physical, is a deep emotional trauma that will never heal.

We need to do everything we can, as the situation is exacerbated by quarantine – the number of complaints about violence has grown more than by half over the past year.

UN officials have already called this phenomenon a pandemic of violence during a pandemic. The task of law enforcement officers, with their principled response to any manifestations of cruelty and abuse, is to vaccinate society against aggression at home – place where a person should be the most protected.

There is no excuse for violence, especially domestic violence. This is not a family affair, not a way of upbringing, not a specific expression of love. This is a crime, it must be reported, because it may be too late.

*Iryna Venediktova is the prosecutor general of Ukraine. She took office in March 2020. She is a former acting head of the State Investigation Bureau and ex-chair of the Committee on Legal Policy of the Verkhovna Rada.*

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# Infrastructure

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## ‘Everything is wrong’ at state Ukrzaliznytsia rail monopoly

By Mark Rachkevych  
ghousemark@gmail.com

State railway monopoly Ukrzaliznytsia, or UZ, employs 250,000 people who were recently threatening to strike for better working conditions and higher wages. The labor stoppage would have paralyzed movement along 22,000 kilometers of rail track.

While that crisis was averted, UZ is in big trouble. It has a bloated but poorly paid work force, making an average of \$410 a month.

Experts say UZ's tariff structure makes no financial sense and favors several oligarchs, especially Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest billionaire. His heavy cargo accounts for a third of UZ's daily load and much of those shipments are subsidized — transported by the railway way at below-cost rates, according to reliable calculations.

Besides challenged by powerful vested interests, UZ is riddled with corruption and poor management. It has had nine CEOs in five months and is looking for a new one to replace the recently fired Volodymyr Zhmak.

No wonder it lost \$500 million last year.

A current UZ supervisory board member, a former infrastructure minister, two former UZ management board members, an investment banker, and an agricultural company executive were interviewed for this story on what ails the railway giant and how to fix the problems.

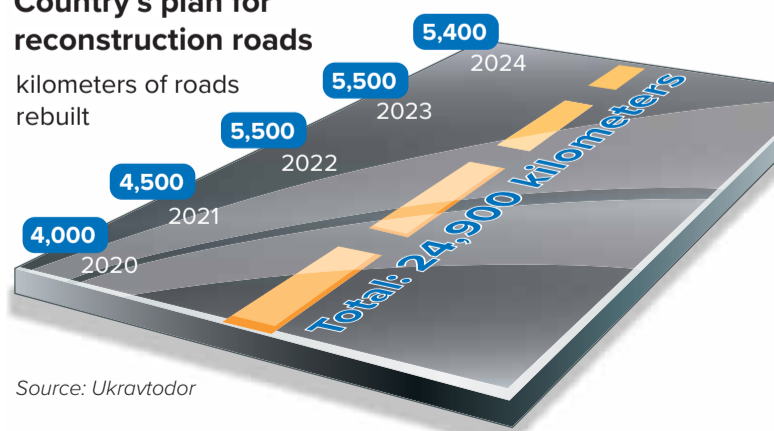
But nobody put it more succinctly than former supervisory board member Anders Aslund: “Everything is wrong there.”

### Rebuilding system

For most of the three decades since Ukraine has been an independent country, the monopoly has lost money. Hard currency loans constitute the bulk of its debt burden.

### Country's plan for reconstruction roads

kilometers of roads rebuilt



Source: Ukravtodor

As part of his large-scale national project Big Construction, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has promised to rebuild 25,000 kilometers of roads by 2024. Between 2015 and 2019, only 5,500 kilometers were rebuilt by Ukraine's state road agency, Ukravtodor.



An aerial view of trains parked near Kyiv's central railway station on April 5. Ukraine's railroad monopoly Ukrzaliznytsia lost \$500 million in 2020, according to its former chief executive Volodymyr Zhmak. The state company is riddled with corruption and poor management, despite being one of the pillars of Ukraine's infrastructure.

Much of its fleet is at least 40 years old due to inadequate capital expenditures.

At the management level, UZ's Soviet-style company structure has 21 “directorates” at six regional branches, according to Irakli Ezugbaia, who resigned as the commercial and logistics director on March 11.

While in charge of the only real profitable segment of UZ, Ezugbaia said the supervisory board had in February rejected his proposal to restructure the company into four business units under the umbrella of one legal entity.

One of the units would be cargo, the cash cow of UZ, which accounts for approximately 80% of revenue. Two others would be the passenger and production units, both of which are losing money and cross-subsidized by the profitable cargo unit.

The fourth would be infrastructure.

The split would make it easier to manage UZ, streamline revenue and make costs and assets more visible than the current structure, according to him. After getting rejected and without receiving a reason for an identical proposal, Ezugbaia left UZ, citing “pressure, corruption and slow reforms.”

Former CEO Wojciech Balczun, who ran UZ in 2016–2017, told the Kyiv Post that “it's impossible to reform such a big company in a very short time without political support,” while adding that Poland and Germany have long reformed their railway companies into vertically managed business units.

The current architecture is like having “regional branch CEOs who are like local tsars and run the property they manage as a kingdom on their own,” said Volodymyr Omelyan, who served as infrastructure minister in 2016–2019. “There is a lot of internal resistance.”

In its current state, there is “substantial bureaucracy” at UZ and the “best way of surviving is doing as little as possible,” said Aslund, who was a supervisory board member from June 2018 until the end of September 2020.

Aslund also blamed an unwillingness for change at UZ, among other reasons, for resigning.

UZ didn't respond to a list of questions that were emailed for this article.

stitute the real tariff for moving one ton of cargo one kilometer — they cannot justify a single figure of tariff... that's where the real mess starts,” Omelyan said.

### Bureaucratic mess

To change tariffs and classification of freight is to get entangled in the web of the country's bureaucracy.

First the supervisory board must give approval. Then, according to Omelyan, UZ must submit its “proposals and justification,” usually based on inflation, electricity routing and other causes to a special Infrastructure Ministry commission.

Next, the proposal would go to the Economy Ministry and the State Regulatory Service, which would send it to the finance and justice ministries “and relevant central government bodies for a final approval” before the new price change is set.

And business groups have their fingers in all or some of each stage in the process either directly or through industry and other lobbying groups, Leshchenko said.

### Akhmetov benefits

A main beneficiary of this dysfunctionality is Akhmetov. His Metinvest and DTEK energy, mining and metals companies, provide one-third of UZ's daily load, according to Ezugbaia.

Metinvest didn't respond to emailed questions sent by the Kyiv Post.

About 40% of all loads get transported below cost. The cheapest of the four cargo classes transport iron and manganese ore, coal, fertilizer, timber and crushed stone for road construction.

Other beneficiaries include Kostyantyn Zhevago, owner of Ferrexpo mining company, oligarch Dmytro Firtash who is heavily invested in fertilizer and billionaire Ihor Kolomoisky.

Ezugbaia, Aslund, Omelyan, Leshchenko and others have pushed for unifying cargo transport prices to meet the principle of “one ton is one ton, no matter what is transported.”

“Currently, there is no clear national model of tariff formation for rail freight,” the European Business Association stated in August. “The current tariff system is opaque and economically unreasonable, in addition, there is no reference to the type of costs which makes it impossible to clearly target the use of tariffs: traction, car, infrastructure, investment.”

The other more expensive classes of freight within this sub-unit end up subsidizing for the first class of cargo.

### Cargo transportation

Five days before he was unexpectedly fired, Zhmak announced that he would in April propose to the supervisory board to have “a single logistical tariff for cargo transportation” instead of four different classes or freight.

This aspect of operations has been holding back robust financial performance.

Prices for moving freight have been divided into four classes since the Soviet times and the policy is considered to be economically unjustified, according to both Aslund and current supervisory board member Sergii Leshchenko, who is also a Kyiv Post columnist.

With little help from the government to upgrade its fleet and cover losses for passenger travel, UZ has had to rely on cargo and expensive loans to stay afloat, according to Dragon Capital's head of research Andriy Bespyatov.

Bespyatov said UZ's total debt, excluding leasing agreements, is about \$1.4 billion. The vast majority of it is in hard currency and includes outstanding Eurobonds. Its debt portfolio still has loans from Russian banks like state-owned Sberbank, which had lent \$200 million at a 12% yearly rate.

The chronic cash shortage is mostly attributed to UZ's opaque and unjustified pricing system for all sorts of services — but mostly cargo hauling.

At the core is that UZ “cannot calculate the components that con-



# Powerful interests resist paying their fair share for use of Ukrzaliznytsia

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## Grain haulers complain

In particular, the second class that moves grain and seed oils from fields and silos to ports for shipping get charged more.

Oleksiy Lyssytsia, president of the Ukrainian Agribusiness Club and CEO of the Industrial Milk Company, said the farming industry avoids using UZ whenever it can.

"We tried many times to get the tariffs changed and put into one group but the agricultural lobby is not strong enough like Mr. Akhmetov is," he said.

He added that businesses across all industries have the same complaint that there are transport delays when using UZ, "no guarantee of on-time delivery, theft of products like grains, oil seeds and soy beans happen... and UZ doesn't cover damages."

Unfortunately, he said, big or small farmers "have no one to talk to about our problems" at UZ, Lyssytsia said.

## Metinvest wins

Another observation that Leshchenko made was how a business unit of Metinvest won a huge tender as the sole bidder on the electronic ProZorro procurement system in mid-January to lease about half

of UZ's operational fleet of open wagons.

Three-year leases were issued for about 9,000 open wagons at the minimum bidding price of approximately \$17.5 whereas the starting price was \$29.

Leshchenko noted that the huge auction lot "only suited" Metinvest, because no other player on the market needs that many open wagons.

Several days afterward, UZ conducted another auction for 85,000 railcar shipments, 47% of which Akhmetov's DTEK won at the same daily price for leasing the open wagons, State-Owned Enterprises Weekly reported.

"Historically, there has been significant pressure from the business lobby on tariffs," said Bespyatov.

## Reforming state firms

Since the 2014 EuroMaidan Revolution, which ended the presidency of Kremlin-backed Viktor Yanukovich, Ukraine jumpstarted sweeping reforms to achieve macroeconomic stability and wean itself off money-sucking state-owned enterprises and banks.

Efforts were made to improve corporate governance and hiring practices that included installing supervisory boards with international experts and people with established business pedigrees.

Still, UZ continued to report losses



Railway workers protest in front of the Cabinet of Ministers on Feb. 17, 2021. State railway company Ukrzaliznytsia employs 250,000 people who were recently threatening to strike for better working conditions and higher wages, but the company-wide strike was averted.

in 2014–2016 and slowly began to climb uphill before finally achieving a semblance of boastful financial performance in 2019 with a profit of \$116 million, according to the average currency rate of that year. The previous year's net income was only 7% of it in comparison.

Despite recording a decent profit in years, UZ's problems still lingered as its audited report said it had \$780 million worth of "fully depreciated property, plant and equipment which remain in use."

Approximately 50% of its oper-

ating expenses are personnel costs, Bespyatov of Dragon Capital said, adding to Aslund's complaints of overstaffing.

## Theft & corruption

Theft and corruption have led up to \$700 million being lost yearly at UZ, Omelyan said. The company ends up paying up to double the market price at times when using the online ProZorro public procurement system.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal recently instructed four

ministries to assess the work performance of UZ since 2015, including how the management and supervisory boards performed in 2017–2020.

His move followed the creation in January for similar reasons of an ad hoc parliamentary committee to investigate improprieties for the same period.

As recent as March 26, the nation's SBU domestic intelligence agency reported exposing the "heads of structural subdivisions of the Uzhhorod directorate of railway transportation for corruption during the transit transportation of foreign goods."

Losses to the company were estimated at more than \$18,000.

## Old fleet

Passengers still can expect to travel at an "average speed of 60 kilometers" of track, he said, "if the Ukrainian government would allocate \$1 billion a year to upgrade (UZ's fleet), it would dramatically change the picture and move Ukraine into the 21st century."

Trains in some countries travel as fast as 250 kilometers per hour; trains must travel at least 200 kilometers per hour to be considered high-speed.

Summing up the situation at UZ, Aslund said that "there are so many vested interests that nobody wants to change anything." ❄

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## Ukreximbank – an exclusive partner in large-scale infrastructure projects



Ievgen Metsger, Chairman of the Management Board of JSC "Ukreximbank"

Rebuilding its internal infrastructure in order to finance and develop the infrastructure of the state was almost the main task of Ukreximbank in 2020, which became a new starting point for all of us. The start of the bank's systemic transformation with a new management team, and its support for existing customers experiencing falling revenues and interruptions in supply and production cycles during the lockdown coincided with the launch of a number of new ambitious projects and innovative solutions.

The list of financed industries is also as broad as possible. These are industry and construction, transport and logistics, agriculture and food processing, energy, and the military and industrial complex. In addition to working in the public and commercial sectors, the Bank has formed a separate business vertical for servicing medium-sized businesses, municipalities and utilities.

Today Ukreximbank has the financial capabilities and the full range of tools to structure transactions according to the needs of the clients. If necessary, it can even develop a separate case from scratch. For example, a transaction of almost UAH 3 billion was implemented, where for the first time on the market, three instruments were combined — a refinancing loan from the NBU, an interest rate swap and investments in Ukravtodor's securities. Such an advantageous configuration for all its participants made it possible to ensure a closed cycle of long-term turnover of public finances.

Under the Big Construction Program, we did not confine ourselves solely to financing Ukravtodor. Our goal is to quickly respond to market developments and tailor our product offer accordingly. In this case, our goal is to create a whole added value chain for the entire road industry in the process of construction and reconstruction of road infrastructure. Road services in the regions involve design and engineering companies, material production and service sector enterprises in the performance of work. All of them need to carry out calculations, replenish working capital to pay for labor and purchase materials, and get a variety of bank guarantees to secure bids and fulfill contractual obligations. In 2020, the Bank issued about two hundred guarantees for more than a billion hryvnias for the road business.

The guarantee recipients include the largest domestic contractors who have been working with Ukravtodor for a long time and are serviced by our Bank, as well as foreign companies. For example, we recently issued a bid bond bank guarantee for a road organization with experience in the construction of a Formula 1 race track and guaranteed the construction of a new cable-stayed bridge across the Dnieper by the Doğuş Group, with a total project cost of over UAH 11 billion. If earlier transnational corporations were focused on servicing in banks with western capital, now we find more and more points of interaction with non-residents and representative offices, providing services taking into account the policies of their parent companies.

In some cases, when construction work is subcontracted, the contractor may need specialized equipment, the acquisition of which can be financed or provided for leasing by the Bank. The Bank also provides flexible conditions for the acquisition of fixed assets on competitive terms with a number of significant advantages, for example, the establishment of a lower rate in the indexed hryvnia, when the payment under the contract is adjusted in the event of a change in the hryvnia exchange rate against foreign currencies. In addition, existing compensation programs and special supplier promotions may apply. At the request of the customer, the subsidiary leasing company of the Bank imports the necessary machinery and equipment on a turnkey basis - with a full range of related services for registration, insurance, maintenance, etc.

Depending on the client's profile and specific case, the Bank selects the necessary instruments or sources of financing, as well as the optimal decisions in terms of speed, cost and risk appetite. These can be government and interstate business support programs, trade finance instruments, access to bulk lending for joint projects with IFIs or other foreign counterparties. The Bank's unique expertise in export-import operations, a wide range of transaction currencies and the largest network of correspondent partners also contribute to the successful processing of client requests.

This year, Ukreximbank aims to expand the loan portfolio of corporate clients with a focus on supporting strategic state-owned enterprises, commercial exporting and importing companies, large-scale infrastructure investments initiated by the Government, and territorial communities. We are involved in a variety of projects — from the repair of city streets and improvement of public places to the renewal of the passenger and public transport fleet to the reconstruction of airports and the construction of aircraft. Improving logistics and transport flows will contribute to the development of many other areas and create a multiplier for economic growth, as well as open up new business opportunities for foreign investors.



# Road agency fights corruption, tries to rebuild Ukraine's roads

By Liliane Bivings  
bivings@kyivpost.com

President Volodymyr Zelensky might actually get his wish to be remembered as the president who built good roads.

As part of the president's large-scale infrastructure program, Big Construction, state road agency Ukravtodor rebuilt 4,000 kilometers of roads in 2020. Only 5,500 kilometers were rebuilt between 2015 and 2019.

Construction on another 4,500 kilometers of roads this year is under way.

Even that total — 14,000 kilometers of rebuilt roads — represents only 8% of the 170,000-kilometer network of roads in Ukraine.

To finance this year's improvements, Ukravtodor has to attract additional foreign investment and eliminate corruption that costs the budget hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

But in a country where corruption in road construction is entrenched, it remains to be seen whether the road agency can both rebuild Ukraine's crumbling roads and fight corruption in the industry.

## More roads in 2021

Ukravtodor's plan for 2021 includes launching several large projects: 250 kilometers along the borders, a 150-kilometer beltway around Kyiv, a 1,400-kilometer highway connecting Lviv in the west and Luhansk in the east, and a highway to the Polish border.

The beltway around Kyiv would link three highways west and south of Kyiv and cut the flow of trucks into the capital.

The Turkish company Ozaltun Holding recently won a \$100 million tender to connect two international highways and to relieve the beltway of traffic. The beltway would be completed in four years.

Another priority is the front-line Luhansk Oblast. From 2010 to 2019, a mere 133 kilometers were repaired in the region. This year Ukravtodor plans to rebuild 381 kilometers.

Ukravtodor also plans to connect the eastern Luhansk Oblast and the western Lviv Oblast with



Workers begin reconstruction of a 10-kilometer section of a road in Zaporizhia Oblast on March 11. As part of President Volodymyr Zelensky's large-scale infrastructure program known as Big Construction, state road agency Ukravtodor plans to repair all 255 kilometers of the Kropyvnytsky–Kryvyi Rih–Zaporizhia N-23 highway in 2021.

a single, 1,400-kilometer highway. The project will repair and connect two existing highways that meet in Kirovograd Oblast in central Ukraine.

The agency hopes to finish construction by Aug. 24 — the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence.

Electric vehicles are also on the docket. Along with the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the state agency is working to develop a plan that will facilitate mass electric vehicle deployment in the country, such as building charging stations.

The National Transport Strategy is targeting an increase of electric transport share in domestic traffic to 75% by 2030.

## Bringing transparency

Corruption in the road industry in Ukraine is no secret, especially during the bidding and contract procurement process.

Ukravtodor estimates that some 10–15% of road construction funds get stolen through corrupt schemes. It amounted to \$300–500 million

in 2019.

But it may be even higher than that. Nashi Groshi (Our Money), an organization that analyzes corrupt practices in public procurement, estimates that the corruption margin in the road sector is 20%.

Just last year, the Competition and Consumers Protection Council accused a top Ukravtodor contractor, Rostdorstroy, of colluding with other companies by submitting coordinated price offers in the same tenders.

Oleksandr Kubrakov, head of Ukravtodor, told the Kyiv Post that while they took some steps in 2020 to make the agency more transparent, the changes they made weren't "sustainable."

"You can reassign staff as a way of turning things around, but within a few weeks' time, we found everything was as before, decision making is opaque, contractors aren't paid, there's extortion," Kubrakov said.

To receive the three tranches of a \$300 million loan from the EBRD and European Investment Bank (EIB), Ukravtodor has to implement an Anti-Corruption Action Plan to increase transparency in the industry.

Last year, the EIB and EBRD co-financed the

reconstruction of the 480-kilometer-long Kyiv-Odesa highway.

As part of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan, the EBRD has contracted a Swiss consultancy, the Basel Institute of Governance, and a Ukrainian law firm to supervise the project and help identify corruption risks.

Ukravtodor, along with Swiss consultants, plans to finalize the action plan by July 2021. The consultants

## Ukrainian infrastructure in numbers

- 20,000 kilometers of railway
- 170,000 kilometers of roads
- 2,240 kilometers of inland waterways
- 9 river ports and 13 merchant seaports

will oversee the reforms within Ukravtodor and its divisions until 2023.

Kubrakov said that this plan gives Ukravtodor the chance to make these reforms "irreversible."

Yuriy Nikolov, an editor at Nashi Groshi, doubts these reforms will create fundamental changes in the road industry.

Nikolov says that during the procurement process last year for the reconstruction of the Kyiv-Odesa highway, Ukravtodor shared competitor proposals with the Turkish construction company Onur Group. Onur Group then changed their proposal and won the bid for the EBRD-financed project.

He suspects this scandal may be a reason why the anti-corruption plan arrived this year.

He also cited the arrest of Slawomir Novak, a Polish citizen who served as head of Ukrainian state road agency Ukravtodor from 2016 to 2019, for corruption connected to procurement tenders held by Ukravtodor.

Onur Group and its Ukrainian branch, Onur Group Ukraine, are suspected of colluding with Novak in large-scale corruption schemes at tenders for road repairs.

What worries Nikolov is that the same players accused of wrongdoing are still in the game.

"Why should I think something has changed if they're working with the same companies?" he says.

But Oleksandra Azarkhina, director of the Reform Support Team at Ukravtodor, told the Kyiv Post that this project is different from others, because "Ukravtodor itself initiated the inclusion of the Anti-Corruption Pilot Project in the loan agreement."

If Ukravtodor is successful, its experience can be a blueprint for how other government agencies can partner with the EBRD and EIB.

"Ukravtodor is the experiment, we are the ones who are tasked with learning how this partnership could become a working model for the rest of the country," Azarkhina says.

## Attracting investment

Tymofiy Mylovanov, a former economy minister and currently a top aide to Zelensky's chief of staff, says that it's too easy to focus on corruption in Ukraine.

Instead, he says, attention should be paid to how efficiently the money allocated to road projects is spent.

This year the government allocated \$5.4 billion from the state budget to the State Road Fund, a \$718 million increase from the previous year. In contrast, it allocated just \$790 million for the fight against the coronavirus.

In 2018, the government created the State Road Fund for road construction, accumulating funds with taxes generated from fuel and vehicle sales.

According to Kubrakov, Ukravtodor is also looking to attract an additional \$1.5 billion to pay for its road projects.

"Since last year, Ukravtodor began to attract funds under state guarantees, but big infrastructure projects require cheap long-term loans that are still missing in Ukraine," Kubrakov said.

To attract more financing, Ukravtodor plans on working with the EBRD to create a joint stock company that will issue infrastructure bonds in order to generate capital to pay for roads.

Last year, the Cabinet of Ministers extended \$840 million in state guarantees to Ukravtodor. In turn, the state road agency sold \$500 million worth of bonds to three state banks: Ukreximbank, Ukrgasbank and Oschadbank.

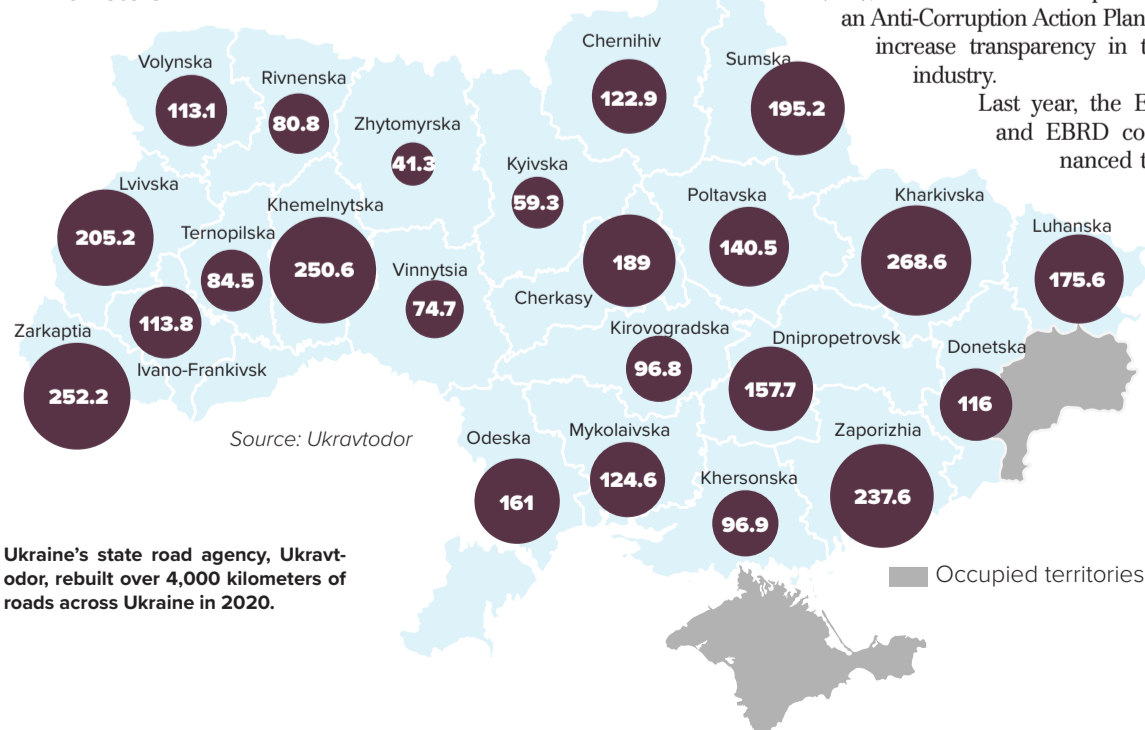
Ukravtodor also hopes to generate additional funds through public-private partnership (PPP) projects, or concessions.

Concession projects at Port Olvia and Port Kherson in southern Ukraine last year were the first PPP-style initiatives in Ukraine — both ports were bought by foreign companies for generous sums, generating millions of dollars in investments for the country.

A study by the International Finance Corporation says that concessions could help Ukraine attract

## Roads reconstructed by oblast, 2020

in kilometers

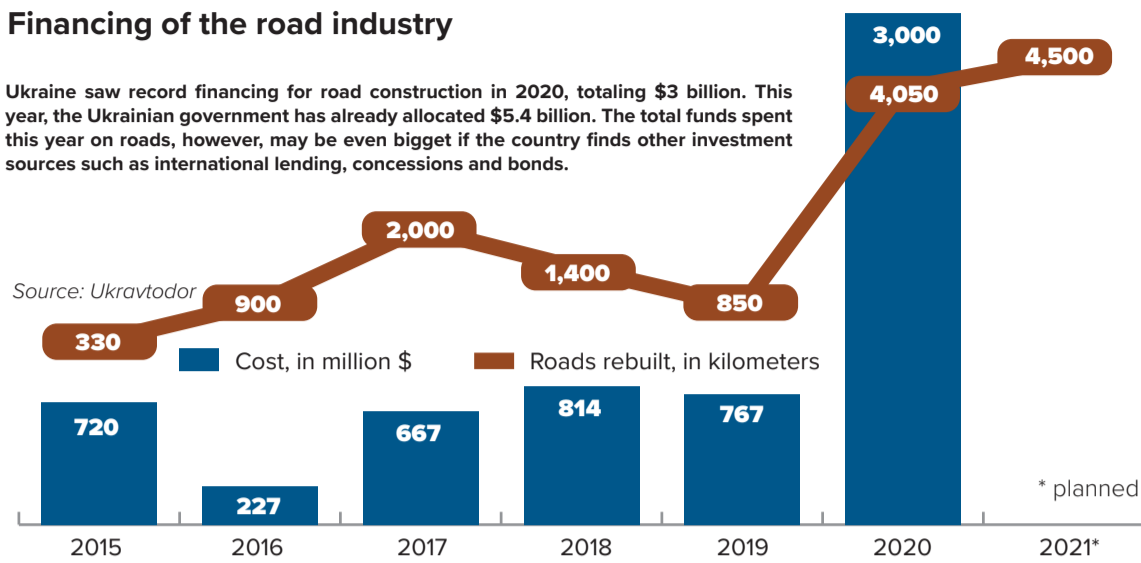


Ukraine's state road agency, Ukravtodor, rebuilt over 4,000 kilometers of roads across Ukraine in 2020.



## Financing of the road industry

Ukraine saw record financing for road construction in 2020, totaling \$3 billion. This year, the Ukrainian government has already allocated \$5.4 billion. The total funds spent this year on roads, however, may be even bigger if the country finds other investment sources such as international lending, concessions and bonds.



# Can Ukravtodor beat corruption in the road industry?

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potential investments worth around \$2 billion in the roads sector through 2023.

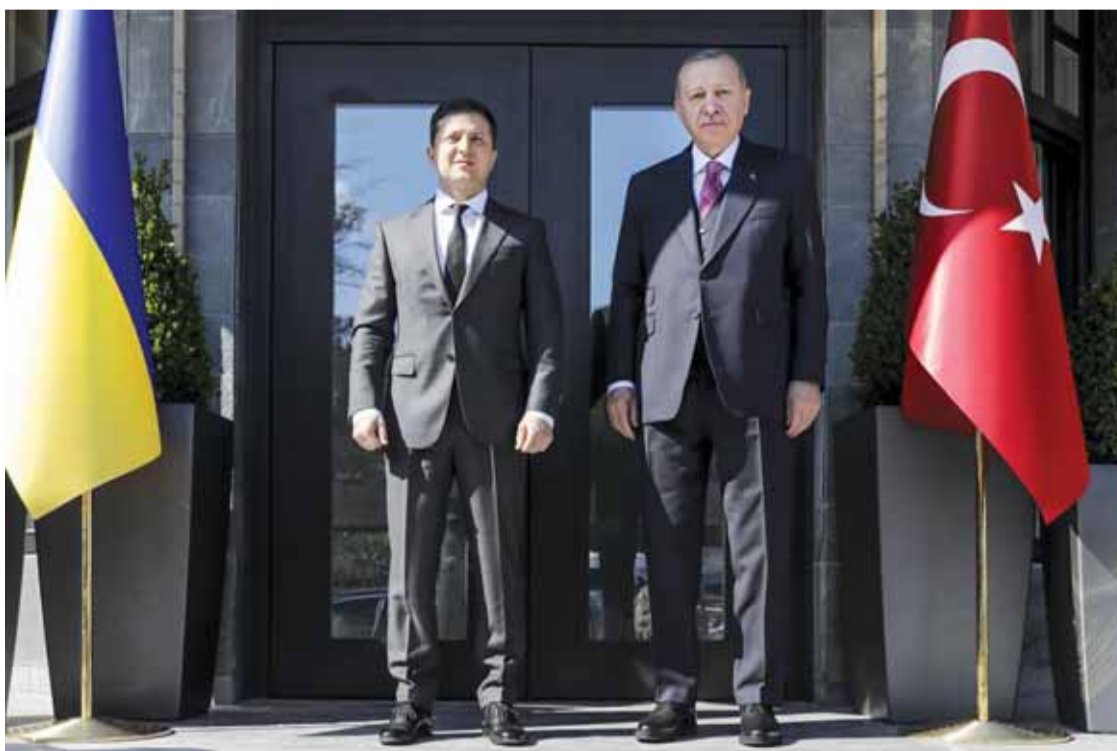
Ukravtodor wants to fund the construction of a 280-kilometer highway between Rivne and Krakovets on the border with Poland through this type of partnership.

Azarkhina from Ukravtodor describes this highway on the Polish side as a "beautiful" two-sided, three-lane road that disappears once you enter Ukraine, with one lane in both directions and of a completely different quality.

"It's a literal image of how Europe ends at the Polish border," Azarkhina said. "We want to rebuild this corridor between Poland and Ukraine so that Europe extends into Ukraine."



Road workers lay asphalt in Zaporizhia Oblast on March 11. Ukraine's road industry is riddled with corrupt schemes to steal money. Sometimes contractors bidding for tenders claim they will purchase high-quality asphalt at a certain price, only to lay a cheaper alternative on the road.



## Zelensky, Erdogan discuss Donbas, Crimea, infrastructure

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R) and President Volodymyr Zelensky pose for a picture at the Huber Mansion presidential residence in Istanbul on April 10, 2021. The leaders discussed Ukraine's NATO membership, the de-occupation of Crimea, Turkey's support of Crimean Tatars, and the rising tension in Russian-occupied Donbas. They also talked about joint infrastructure projects. As part of the president's large-scale infrastructure program, Big Construction, Ukraine rebuilt 4,000 kilometers of roads in 2020. Construction on another 4,500 kilometers of roads this year is under way. Turkish firms have given the largest support for the program among foreign construction companies.

## BUSINESS ADVISER

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### Four different ways to invest in Ukrainian infrastructure



Maksym Maksymenko,  
partner, AVELLUM

Lately, one of the government's key messages to the public, especially investors, has been that Ukraine should be the next manufacturing and logistics hub. However, this idea is always followed by another recurring note – Ukraine's infrastructure is in bad shape and desperately needs renovation.

While promoting large-scale development projects like "Big Construction", Ukraine has also improved its legislative basis for large investments in infrastructure development. In this article, we delve into specifics of four legal frameworks the investors wish they knew before investing in the development of Ukrainian infrastructure.

#### Concession

One of the most promoted frameworks for foreign investors is concession. The new law adopted in 2019 overhauled the PPP legislation in Ukraine and:

1. made it compliant with the best EU industry standards;
2. introduced a transparent and competitive concessionaire selection system;
3. provided investors and lenders with new guarantees (e.g., direct agreements with step-in rights, free choice of applicable law and dispute resolution mechanism).

An investor may get a concession going by submitting a proposal with a feasibility study to the respective authority. In addition to the time needed to prepare the feasibility study, the concession tender takes nearly 1.7 years under the law (from the decision on concession feasibility until the signing of concession agreement).



Rostyslav Mushka,  
associate, AVELLUM

The State has extensive plans for concessions. Expected upcoming projects include the concession of a railway-ferry complex in Chornomorsk and six pilot segments of highways with a total length of 1,500 km with availability payment rewards.

#### Privatization of state and municipal property

Ukraine has over 3,000 state-owned enterprises. Unfortunately, their economic potential, which stems from their assets, is undermined by poor management. To solve this issue, the privatization framework was reworked aiming to attract new investors by electronic auctions and transparent procedure.

Despite the coronavirus crisis, privatization was successful in 2020, with more than 1,900 objects auctioned for a total value of approx. \$110 mln. The landmark privatization project was the sale of the "Dnipro" hotel in the downtown of Kyiv, whose starting price increased tenfold – up to \$40 million.

On March 30, parliament adopted a bill unblocking "large privatization" – the sale of assets whose value is equal to or exceeds \$9 million. Plans for 2021 are grand – the State Property Fund of Ukraine ("SPFU") expects to sell JSC "United Mining and Chemical Company" (one of the world's largest titanium ore producers), JSC "First Kyiv Machine-building Plant", and JSC "President Hotel" among many other state assets.

And to top it off, the SPFU has prepared a bill introducing various amendments to privatization laws, including application of English law to the sale and purchase agreements for large privatization assets.

#### "Investment nannies" law

It has been over a year since President Zelensky announced the "investment nanny" program at the World Economic Forum in Davos. The Law "On State Assistance to Investment Projects with Significant Investments in Ukraine" has finally been adopted and now we can see how "investment nannies" may tip the scales in favor of investing in Ukraine.

First, to be eligible for the state support programme, the investor must meet the following criteria:

1. total investment exceeds EUR20 mln;
2. the term of investment is less than 5 years;
3. the investment will create more than 80 new jobs with above-average salaries; and
4. the investment is carried out through a Ukrainian SPV.

Secondly, the investor should enter into an agreement with the Government which determines the investor's commitments and the form and scope of the state support. The state support is capped at 30% of the investment value and may take the form of:

1. tax (VAT, CIT, land tax) and customs duties exemptions;
2. preemptive land lease rights;
3. construction of infrastructure at the state's/municipal's expense; and
4. assignment of the "nanny" – a state authority to facilitate the investment project implementation.

However, the "investment nanny" does not apply to the investments made under the PPP framework, PSAs or privatization procedures.

The "investment nanny" law still requires several bylaws to be adopted by the Government by August 2021. In any case, we will see this program in action not earlier than 2022.

#### Industrial parks

Industrial parks are in a strange spot right now. There are 47 registered industrial parks but only 8 of them have actual members. It is not surprising that the Government is trying to improve the industrial parks' regulations.

There are 5 bills registered in the Parliament that aim to simplify the creation of industrial parks, introduce additional incentives, and foresee mechanisms for tax and customs duties exemptions.

As of now, the benefits that the industrial park may provide to the investor are:

1. co-financing of investment projects;
2. interest-free loans;
3. no import duties on equipment;
4. reduction in local tax rates (land, real estate).

In its current wording, the industrial park regulation does not contain a clear mechanism of how such benefits are provided. This should change as soon as the aforementioned bills are passed.

#### Wrapping it up

Implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects is one of the key priorities of the Government in the upcoming years. The prospects of the infrastructure development look promising, and the sheer number of investment opportunities that Ukraine can offer is rising steadily.

The improvement of legislation is the key to having more success stories of large investments in Ukrainian infrastructure. We have already seen the success of concession and privatization frameworks, and now we can expect great results from the "investment nannies" programme and industrial parks rework.

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# Big Restoration project paves the way to heritage awareness

By Alexander Query  
query@kyivpost.com

Decades of neglect have left Ukraine's historical monuments in ruins.

In a bid to preserve the country's decaying cultural heritage and attract more tourists, the government has allocated \$72 million to restore 150 historical monuments within the next three years.

President Volodymyr Zelensky announced the launch of the so-called Big Restoration in February within the framework of his Big Construction program to fix infrastructure in the country.

It's an ambitious program for Ukraine's rich history, which counts over 15,500 registered monuments in major need of restoration. But the sum allocated might not be enough because monuments are expensive to restore.

The country also lacks the preservation experts to do the job thoroughly, which raises doubts over the announced deadline.

The state is considering different funding sources, including private-public partnerships with private companies to focus on the most attractive assets for tourists. But so far, there are no companies involved in the project.

Overall, it's a positive first step to preserve Ukraine's history, Kateryna Goncharova, an expert in architectural heritage preservation, told the Kyiv Post.

"It is the first time in many years a program defines cultural heritage as a resource for further growth, and not as a burden," she said.

## Expensive restoration

The Big Restoration will be funded from the national budget and is important for the future of historical



Oleg Petrasjuk

The National Art Museum of Ukraine in central Kyiv is currently undergoing renovations under the Big Restoration program initiated by President Volodymyr Zelensky. It is one of the 150 monuments listed as cultural heritage that needs to be renovated over the next three years.

restoration in Ukraine, according to Goncharova. The \$72 million might not be much, but it's still a positive sign.

"It goes further than simple promises," she said.

Still, renovating objects might cost more than expected.

For example, the Pidhirtsi castle

in Lviv Oblast in western Ukraine might cost up to \$17 million despite its good appearance, Oleksandr Tkachenko, culture minister, said during an interview with TV channel TSN on April 14.

It's already a quarter of the program's budget – just for one monument.

Cultural heritage takes a broad range of resources to develop. It demands a lot of stakeholders and public-private partnerships, according to Goncharova. "The government itself can't preserve what we have with its own funds," she said.

And funds for culture are scarce. Ukraine's draft budget for 2021 provides the Ministry of Culture with less than \$1 billion to take care of cultural development.

From this budget, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation taking care of building's preservation will only receive \$25 million.

For reference, in France, the Center of National Monument received 3 billion euros just to take care of national monuments across the country.

## Competition

This is the first time that the government has defined historical monuments as a resource for economic growth, a move Goncharova described as a major shift in cultural policy.

The renovation work on some monuments already started, Tkachenko said in an interview to news agency Interfax-Ukraine in

March. Renovations of the Oleskiv Castle in Lviv Oblast and the National Art Museum in Kyiv, as well as the second phase of the Holodomor memorial, are already in full swing, he said.

The full list of the 150 monuments to be restored will be announced at the end of April, after a selection conducted by a special committee composed of officials from the Ministry of Regional Development, the Economy Ministry and leading cultural preservation experts.

Starting March 3, local authorities had one month to submit the monuments they wanted to add to the list. Over the month, the committee received hundreds of applications from all the regions, including Lviv Oblast where no less than 31 monuments await approval.

Goncharova praised the idea of competition, because it engages local communities.

Such an initiative creates a proactive "bottom-up" approach where regions have to defend the right for their heritage to be protected, rather than be passive and complain about the government not giving them enough money to take care of their local historical sites.

"It shakes up the victim-like behavior of local cultural department and makes them fight for what they want to preserve," she said.

## Criteria

While the application is now closed, the jury will face a tough choice among hundreds of proposals, but

the first monuments to undergo renovation will be chosen according to a few crucial requirements.

Among other criteria, they must be in an emergency condition, considered of national importance and have to be easily accessed by road to attract tourists.

For Goncharova, some of the selection criteria are problematic, because Ukraine's poor road quality doesn't allow access to most of the country's historical sites.

"The quality of the roads leading to some sites excludes them from the list," she said.

It also excludes underwater archaeological sites, which could be a good tourist attraction, archaeological and historical natural sites. This means that the 2,500-year-old sunken Ancient Greek ship discovered in 2018 on the coast of southern Mykolaiv Oblast, which is believed to be the oldest one of its kind found in the Black Sea, won't be on the list.

For Goncharova, the 3-year deadline is unrealistic. Preservation takes a lot of time and effort, including researching the plans of the original monuments and designing them to last for years to come while fitting the original design.

This list of monuments and the deadline of the project will probably be extended to preserve Ukraine's history, as Zelensky acknowledged when announcing the project.

"We have many historical monuments – it is simply impossible to restore all this in three, five or 10 years," he said. ☺

## ON THE MOVE

Advertisement



Bogdan Yarmolenko

EY, a Big4 audit and consulting firm, announces its upcoming country leadership change. Bogdan Yarmolenko, a Partner and Head of the Strategy and Transactions practice, has been appointed EY's Country Managing Partner in Ukraine, effective 1 July 2021.

Bogdan Yarmolenko became an EY partner in 2008 and has more than 20 years of experience in providing audit and consulting services. He has been working closely with the C-suite executives of large national monopolies, international financial institutions as well as with the Government of Ukraine. In his new position, Bogdan will lead EY practice in Ukraine and will continue to provide services to clients as a Strategy and Transactions partner.

Bogdan Yarmolenko will succeed Alexei Kredisov, who has been successfully heading the Ukrainian office of EY since 2005.





# Will Ukraine be able to survive Russian attack?

By Illia Ponomarenko  
ponomarenko@kyivpost.com

**W**hat if Russia, defying reason, launches a larger-scale invasion of Ukraine?

If Russian mechanized convoys rush toward Kharkiv, their marine forces lay siege to the coastline between Odesa and Mykolaiv, and their special forces destroy missile defense radar stations deep in the rear?

This darkest hour would be the ultimate test for the nation's seven-year drive to defend itself from the Kremlin.

Would Ukraine's 250,000-strong armed forces and paramilitaries have a chance to survive the massive strike?

Many experts believe that despite all the unresolved problems that have haunted the Ukrainian military for years, the answer is still yes.

But this would be a David-versus-Goliath battle, in which Ukraine's military can succeed only if it sheds its old Soviet doctrines and acts like a truly mobile and flexible force, making use of its homeland's terrain and ensuring swift coordination among its elements.

If it doesn't, Ukrainian defenses can be destroyed within a few days.

But if it succeeds, the Ukrainian military could foil Russian hopes for a blitzkrieg takeover, dragging the invaders into a war they can't win and exposing the Kremlin to devastating global sanctions.

## Plans for war

According to the latest figures from Ukraine's military intelligence directorate, Russia has deployed 89,000 troops in areas bordering eastern Ukraine and in Kremlin-occupied Crimea.

This is the largest concentration of Russian military power in the region since July 2014, when the Donbas war was in full swing, the directorate's head, Colonel Kyrylo Budanov, reported to the Verkhovna Rada on April 14.

Ukrainian intelligence expects the continuing buildup to reach an estimated 110,000 troops before it ends on April 20.

It sees three possible options in the near future.

Russia may continue to saber-rattle for political gain without going on the offensive. It may invade and seize Ukraine's southern regions to re-establish water supply to Crimea. And it may incite a major escalation of hostilities in Donbas to set up a casus belli.

Experts and former battlefield leaders polled by the Kyiv Post predicted three of the most dangerous and probable axes of Russian assault.

Russian forces can rush through Kharkiv Oblast, block the city of Kharkiv and continue all the way to Dnipro. Simultaneously, they can strike in Donbas, driving towards Mariupol and on to Zaporizhia.

If successful, these two advances

could cut off supplies to the 40,000 Ukrainian troops defending Donbas as well as other pockets of Ukrainian resistance, allowing them to be split and surrounded.

There's also a possibility of an assault from Crimea towards Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odesa, aimed at seizing key coastal infrastructure and cutting Ukraine off from the sea.

If this operation is to succeed, it must take no longer than one week. But if it works, it may bring Ukraine to its knees, forcing it into a devastating new reality, with the Kremlin dictating its future.

## Rough chances

Ukraine's chances don't look great.

According to the Military Balance 2020 database, Ukraine can count on nearly 145,000 army troops, 8,000 airborne troops, 2,000 marines, and 102,000 paramilitary personnel (such as the National Guard and the Border Guard Service). According to Ukrainian authorities, the country has up to 200,000 experienced former combatants enlisted in its rapid response reserves.

It can also count on over 800 main battle tanks, over 1,100 infantry fighting vehicles and nearly 1,800 artillery pieces.

While the invaders would be weaker in terms of raw manpower, Russia may enjoy air and sea superiority. Ukraine's air force of nearly 125 combat-capable aircraft (including at least 30-year-old Mikoyan MiG-29 and Sukhoi Su-27 fighters) are no match for the air power of Russia's Western and Southern Military Districts.

The Ukrainian navy consists of a handful of aging warships and patrol boats that aren't expected to make much of a difference. Coastal defense depends on a number of 152-millimeter D-20 howitzers and heavy 220-millimeter Uranagan missiles. The Ukrainian program to deploy new coastal defense Neptune cruise missiles is still in its early stages.

The Ukrainian skies are also defended by over 300 surface-to-air missile systems, which include 250 aging S-300P/PS/PT systems (NATO reporting name SA-10 Grumble).

The standing army would require assistance from organized civilian militia in the rear. As of now, Ukraine formally deploys 25 weekend warrior brigades across the country. But its territorial defense grid is still embryonic, and it is often criticized for being chaotic and only there for show.

The 89,000 Russian troops near eastern Ukraine and in Crimea include two motorized infantry divisions, two rifle brigades, a marine, and an airborne brigade.

While this is a formidable force, some experts, such as defense journalist Yuriy Butusov, believe that the Russian group falls short of having sufficient operative reserves for a major offensive on Ukraine's mainland.

Therefore, Butusov believes that



Russian Iskander ballistic missiles systems en route to the city of Voronezh on April 13, 2021. With a range of 500 kilometers, the missiles are designed to destroy other missile systems and vital infrastructure. Russia is believed to have about 150 Iskanders deployed to the Western Military District closest to Ukraine.

this is a display of power rather than a real preparation for war.

## Mobile warfare

On the bright side, Ukrainians would have home-ground advantage. They would be more motivated than their enemies, who were brought in from somewhere in central Russia to fight a clearly unjust war away from home.

Besides, experts believe the invasion would trigger a massive self-mobilization of combat-hardened Donbas veterans and new volunteers from among the civilian population. Given the potential scale of hostilities, the surge of volunteers would definitely outshine that of the early days of Russia's war in 2014.

The key to victory would depend on the Ukrainian forces' ability to move and react quickly.

"Relying on static defense, erecting borderline anti-invasion barriers, painting 'not-a-step-back' lines on maps would be a fatal error," says Viktor Vertsner, a Ukrainian-born Israel Army reserve officer and former volunteer firearms instructor for Ukraine's National Guards.

"The assailant always enjoys the element of surprise, it would choose the place, the time, and the direction of its main and auxiliary strike. A defense barrier will be overwhelmed, and we'd get new death traps."

Instead, Ukrainian forces should embrace mobile defense, making use of terrain, constantly harassing the Russians, coordinating their actions with air defense, artillery and militias, and constantly trying to lure the enemy into killing zones.

"The goal behind such a campaign must be to make the enemy pay an unacceptable price," Vertsner said. "Hostilities will be halted as soon as this aim is accomplished."

Glen Grant, a retired British Army colonel and former advisor for Ukraine's Defense Ministry, also suggested putting an emphasis on mobility – and on greater freedom of action of combat units instead of the ineffective and slow Soviet-style highly-centralized command.

"This war, if it happens, will be won by maneuver, quick defense, flexible thinking of commanders, and stubborn resistance by soldiers of every level," the retired officer said. "Senior commanders who are control freaks must be removed before the invasion starts. They will never accept the loss of control or think quickly enough."

Despite years of NATO-style reforms and record-high budgets, Ukraine's armed forces still suffer from poor service conditions, overwhelming bureaucracy and Soviet-style mismanagement that has

already forced tens of thousands of motivated career personnel to leave the ranks and return to civilian life.

Still, even in its current condition, the Ukrainian military is in better shape compared to 2014. If everything is done right, there is hope of defeating a new Russian invasion.

"The armed forces of (Ukraine) today are much better prepared and more experienced at most levels," said retired Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, the U.S. Army Europe commanding officer from 2014–2017.

"If Russian forces were to in fact invade further, it would be extremely costly for them. There are, however, still problems that must be addressed: air and missile defense, electronic warfare capabilities, and secure communications are at the top of the list."

Ukraine's armed forces would have to fight as they are now, Grant added.

"There are no magic potions to make them better. But some practical things can be done," he said.

"First of these is to give clear political direction that this war must be won. This must come from both the commander-in-chief and parliament. There must be no doubt in the mind of any officer or soldier or society, that if Putin decides to invade – he must lose." 🇺🇦

## Ukrainian family needs \$2.3 million to treat newborn's rare disorder



The family of Maria Svichynska and Vitaliy Svichynskiy hold their newborn son Dmytro, who was diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). The parents are raising \$2.3 million for their son's disease treatment with Zolgensma, known as the world's most expensive drug.

The family of Vitaliy Svichynskiy and Maria Svichynska are raising \$2.3 million to save their four months old son Dmytro. The baby boy was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) Type 1, the most severe type of the rare genetic disorder that gets worse over time without treatment often leading to death.

Dmytro needs a single dose of Zolgensma, the world's most expensive drug, which costs \$2.3 million. For the treatment to be effective, the boy needs to get treatment before he turns six months. **The family has so far raised over Hr 23 million (\$844,941), or 36% of the needed money.**

### How to donate to Dmytro's treatment:

Gofundme



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Kyiv Post



# Lifestyle

Support Zhovten, one of Kyiv's oldest cinemas with rare and artsy selection, by buying an Hr 130 certificate that will be up for exchange for tickets after the lockdown is over and film screenings resume. Buy at [www.zhovten-kino.kiev.ua](http://www.zhovten-kino.kiev.ua)



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## Ukrainians who live abroad rediscover home in pandemic

By **Toma Istomina**  
[istomina@kyivpost.com](mailto:istomina@kyivpost.com)

Throughout Ukraine's thorny history, millions of residents left the country in search of a better life.

Some escaped the authoritarian regimes of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Some were labor migrants leaving behind the economic instability of newly-independent Ukraine. Others moved in pursuit of a better education.

Numbering nearly 5 million people, the Ukrainian diaspora is the eighth largest in the world, according to the 2019 migration report by the United Nations.

Ukraine and its emigrants have historically had a strong bond. Despite leaving, the diaspora has been of great help to Ukraine, advocating for international support for the country and aiding educational programs for Ukrainians abroad.

Very recently, President Volodymyr Zelensky encouraged Ukrainians around the world to return home and initiated the process of legalizing dual citizenships in Ukraine.

While that process is still underway, another development made Ukrainians abroad turn their eyes to home: the pandemic, which prompted the world to move online.

Some migrants used this chance to stay home longer and rediscover Ukraine.

The Kyiv Post talked to four Ukrainians who reconnected with their home in the past year.



Kirill Panduro, a Ukrainian-Peruvian financial analyst based in London, sits on a swing in his native neighborhood in Kyiv's Solomianskyi district on April 1, 2021. During his visits to the capital during the pandemic, Panduro has stayed in the same area where he grew up before relocating to Peru with his family at the age of 13.

**Tetyana Borshch, 39**  
Designer, DJ based in Munich

Before coming to Ukraine in the fall of 2020, Tetyana Borshch felt extremely anxious. It was her sec-

ond visit home since she moved to Germany more than 20 years ago.

She had "an irrational fear" of what she might find.

She was born in the tiny village

of Daleke in northern Crimea. In a small rural community where everyone knew each other and depended on each other, the introverted and nerdy Borshch felt like an outsider.

"There must be a place where I could feel like myself," she thought back then.

After studying literature in Crimea, Borshch craved more knowledge and opportunities, so she moved to Germany. In Munich, she started as an au pair, learning German all along, until she resumed studying literature and later pursued publishing.

Over the years, Borshch changed a number of occupations, shifting from publishing to interface design, while also DJing on the side.

Though Germany quickly became her home, the immigrant life wasn't serene. Dealing with countless visa applications and facing legal limitations as a foreigner, she couldn't wait to get German citizenship.

In 2019, her request was finally considered, requiring her to drop the Ukrainian passport. For that, Borshch had to come to Kyiv.

Since she hasn't traveled around Ukraine much before leaving it and her memories were of the village life, modern Kyiv surprised her a great deal with its "capital vibe," exactly what she was used to in Europe.

She soon got familiar with the electronic music community, occasionally giving gigs and taking DJ classes.

But most importantly, she connected with "friendly and caring" locals.

"People take care of you, as soon as you know someone, even not close friends, and especially in groups," Borshch says. "In Germany, people are very individualistic."

Since that first trip in September, Borshch came back several times in 2020, only to return again in February to stay here for half a year, continuing to work online. Having not maintained the connection to Ukraine for two decades, now she's eager to rediscover its culture. And though she carries on with her German citizenship paperwork, Borshch says that it will not change her Ukrainian identity.

She says she feels grateful to the people who stayed in Ukraine building the country it became. Now Borshch would like to make her own contribution or at least spread the word about her home country abroad. She started by promoting Ukrainian DJs on her two radio shows airing in Germany.

"There is a feeling that I could have done more," she says.



Ukrainian designer and DJ Tetiana Borshch, who has been living in Germany for more than 20 years, poses for a photograph in Kyiv's historic center, the area where she stayed during her recent visit to the capital, on March 30, 2021.

Volodymyr Petrov

Volodymyr Petrov



# Kyiv puts a spell on Ukrainians based in Europe

page 12 →

## Kirill Panduro, 25

Financial analyst based in London

It was supposed to be just another one of his many once-a-year trips to Ukraine.

Ever since his family relocated abroad 12 years ago, Kirill Panduro would come to visit his elder brother for several weeks in Kyiv, his hometown.

But his recent February trip was different. He stayed in Kyiv longer than planned, and when the time to hit the airport arrived, he didn't really want to return to his current home, London.

"I felt a bit down," Panduro says. "I was like 'Why would I go there? It's so cool here.'"

The eventful life in relatively quarantine-free Kyiv at the time beat London with its strict lockdown. But it wasn't just that. Moving back to the Ukrainian capital has always been on Panduro's mind, and after rediscovering the city in all its vibrancy, the idea grew stronger.

Half Ukrainian and half Peruvian, Panduro spent most of his childhood in Kyiv and most of his adulthood in Lima. Despite all the benefits of living in two completely different corners of the world, like learning several languages, in the end, Panduro says, he has cultural gaps in both countries.

"I still feel like I don't belong anywhere," he says.

When he moved to London several years ago to pursue a master's in finance, the international city gave him that multicultural environment where he perfectly fit in. Still, he says he's sometimes tired of being a foreigner. Just a month after coming back to London from Kyiv, Panduro packed again and returned, working remotely from Ukraine.

He observed how the country has changed gradually through the years, experiencing a revival in every sphere including the zesty electronic music scene Panduro very much enjoys. But it wasn't until now that he could appreciate that shift to the fullest.

"After living in London, I grew personally," he says. "I came back with different eyes."

With that new look at his native city, Panduro rediscovered its architectural diversity and rich food culture. He also made multiple new connections with locals, finding them "extremely interesting, down-to-earth and very genuine."

Even now, when Kyiv went into lockdown, while London is opening up, Panduro doesn't want to go back to the U.K. Though he will have to return for work, his story with Kyiv will resume at some point, he says, and it has more to do with his self-exploration beyond everything else. One long-lasting *idée fixe* is relearning Ukrainian, which he understands but can't speak since he

hasn't practiced it in years.

"I know that Ukrainian is in some part of my brain," he says. "I just need to unlock it somehow."

Panduro says that learning the language will be the first step in "putting together the puzzle of who Kirill is" in terms of identity.

## Diana Turchak, 27

Digital clothing designer and DJ based in Paris

Diana Turchak changed five professions and three countries in quest of opportunities.

Born in Odesa Oblast, she studied acting in Kyiv but soon realized she was unlikely to make a living from it in Ukraine. The country was going through a turbulent time, dealing with the consequences of the 2013–2014 EuroMaidan Revolution and the start of Russian aggression. Many were looking for ways to escape the crisis, Turchak remembers, and she was no exception.

After briefly doing some acting in Russia, she went on a series of short-term contract jobs in China, dancing, DJing and modeling. Many youths from post-Soviet countries go to China for creative labor, making better income but often working pretty much non-stop. Performing in hotels, Turchak would do shows till late every night, with several rehearsals during the week on top of that.

In between the Chinese trips, she lived in Paris, DJing and enjoying the chic lifestyle of the French capital. But her last stay coincided with the start of the pandemic, putting the entertainment on hold and pushing Turchak to requalify into a digital clothing designer through online courses.

She came to Kyiv in early 2021 to prolong her visa, but as the process was taking longer than expected, Turchak started to engage with the local life, impressed by how much the cultural scene has grown.

She also found fertile ground for career development, following her recent passion for fashion by joining the Ksenia Schneider brand and 3D-modelling clothing for various labels on the side. Turchak decided to stay at least till the end of summer.

Used to relocating often, she knows that the allure of architecture or nightlife only lasts a month or two.

"What makes you happy is people," she says.

After years of mingling with strangers of different cultures and backgrounds, she says she is finally staying in a like-minded circle, and the contrast is striking.

"It gives you the sense of home," she says.

## Agatha Gorski, 20

Student based in Paris

Agatha Gorski never had much hope for Ukraine. Seeing the country as a highly corrupt state with ignorant authorities, even as a school kid, she was looking forward to moving west.



Ukrainian designer and DJ Diana Turchak crosses the street in central Kyiv on April 7, 2021. She has been abroad for years, living between several countries and juggling jobs, before she returned to the Ukrainian capital during the pandemic.

"I didn't see a potential for a change," Gorski says.

She was born in the United States to a Ukrainian-Russian family and spent her early years in Moscow and California. After graduating from a high school in Kyiv, Gorski happily moved to Paris to study political science.

By the end of her first year at Sciences Po, the pandemic pushed all classes online, as France went into harsh lockdown. Gorski first relocated to Moscow to study remotely and stay with her then-boyfriend who lived there.

She has always had warm feelings towards the Russian capital. But after studies deepened her understand-

ing of democracy and civil society, Gorski's view of Moscow and the local circle she used to consider progressive has changed drastically.

"I started to notice how ignorant everyone was," she says.

She soon ended up in Kyiv with her parents. During a summer break, she made use of time by interning at the local branch of the United Nations. Later, she also was an intern for the progressive Voice party that has 20 seats in parliament.

Through work and social life, Gorski met civic activists, new-generation officials, startup founders and creative leaders, whose daily efforts are pushing Ukraine to a better tomorrow.

"There are many young up-and-coming people who not simply aim to make money, but bring a change in the country," she says.

Gorski is now back in France to enjoy a bit of normal student life. In the future, she wants to gain some work experience abroad, bring it back to Ukraine, and get a job in the public sector to help the country tackle domestic issues.

Though she has never had a Ukrainian passport, Gorski is now considering dropping her both American and Russian citizenship in favor of the place she now calls home.

"I've developed love for this country," she says. ☺

## TOP 10 KYIV POST exclusives online this week

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5. Ambassador gets ready for Zelensky, Macron visit in Paris
6. Women in Ukraine give birth alone during the pandemic
7. American journalist, filmmaker presents Crimea as part of Russia
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# Kyiv Post Digital

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## UKRAINE



**Biden to Putin: US commitment to Ukraine is 'unwavering'**



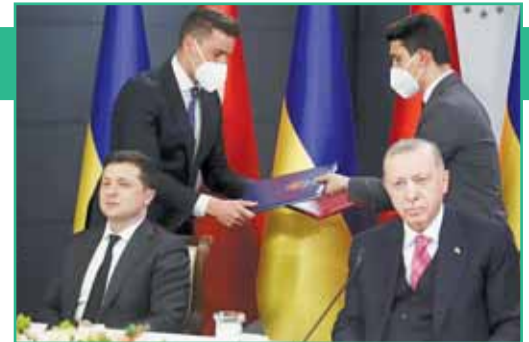
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Ambasciata d'Italia  
Kiev

### Job vacancy for the post of administrative assistant at the Italian Cultural Institute in Ukraine

The Embassy of Italy to Ukraine is currently seeking a suitable candidate for the post of administrative assistant to be engaged in Secretary and Archive for the Italian Cultural Institute in Ukraine.

The application deadline is **May 3, 2021**.

All the details are available at [https://iickiev.esteri.it/iic\\_kiev/it/avvisi/trasparenza-e-merito/bandi-di-concorso.html](https://iickiev.esteri.it/iic_kiev/it/avvisi/trasparenza-e-merito/bandi-di-concorso.html)

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