

March 3rd, 2022

A brief overview of the situation in Ukraine

1. **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CONFLICT.** The **Ukrainian army is gaining tactical advantage** in light of the reported issues of weapons, fuel and provisions supply to the Russian forces. Ukrainian forces regained control over the towns of Makariv and Bucha. Fighting is now taking place around those locations in order to further repel Russian forces. The later pursue their efforts to cordon off Kyiv with the risk of creating a humanitarian crisis in the capital. Russian soldiers are trying to enter Kyiv from the left bank of the Dnieper River. **The Ukrainian air defence forces claim that they fully secure the sky over Kyiv.** In the Sumy direction, Ukrainian troops are gradually repelling Russian forces towards the border. **The Ukrainian border guards have regained control of the border in some previously lost areas**, while other areas remain under the RF's control or under heavy shelling. **Rocket and air shelling of Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Mariupol continue.** An attempted landing in Odesa or Odesa region is expected in the coming days, as the city is currently being shelled and Russian's landing ships are at sea. A military-civilian administration has been set up in Odesa to defend the city. There have been reports of **Russian troops beginning to mine settlements completely or partially in their control**, such as Kherson. This highlights the need for humanitarian mine clearing work, to start as soon as possible after the end of combat operations. **An Estonian civilian ship was shot and sunk** in the Black Sea. The day before, on March 2nd, **a Romanian plane and a rescue helicopter were shot down.** Both Estonia and Romania are NATO members. An emergency meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers, which will be attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, has been scheduled on March 4th.
2. **NEGOTIATIONS.** The **second round of negotiations** between Ukraine and Russia has taken place in Belarus. Russian President V. Putin continued to insist that Ukraine fulfils all the conditions of the ultimatum and warned that new conditions will be added if the negotiation process drags on. Those conditions are not acceptable to the Ukrainian side. The only point of progress has been **the creation of humanitarian corridors for the civilian population.** It remains unclear whether Russia will adhere to its obligations as cases of Russian shelling of humanitarian corridors has already been reported.
3. **INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE.** *Fitch and Moody's* have updated the RF's ratings today, which could indicate its imminent default. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution asking the United Nations, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Parliament, international organisations and their parliamentary assemblies, national parliaments and governments of the world **"to protect Ukraine's civilian population** from armed attacks by Russian invaders". It also calls for the immediately establishment of a **no-fly zone** over the territory of Ukraine, as well as the sending of **UN peacekeeping forces to Ukraine.** Ukraine's application for EU Membership is already being considered by the European Union. In the wake of Ukraine's application, Georgia also submitted its application on March 3rd. The President of Moldova M. Sandu expressed her country's intention to also submit an application. Some Turkish analysts hinted that the situation could also be conducive to Turkey's return to EU accession negotiations.
4. **DOMESTIC SITUATION IN RUSSIA.** **The President of France E. Macron held a phone conversation with V. Putin.** Putin asserted that he is not planning to make any concessions in the situation with Ukraine. **Russia may impose the state of emergency or martial law** to further intensify the internal repression against opponents to the war and to increase censorship, in particular in the military field, as the large number of casualties could be a mobilising factor. The overall official narrative in Russia is the **narrative of the "righteous war"** against those who threaten the RF. However, it **has been slightly changing** officials no longer talk about a special operation against Ukraine, but about a pre-emptive strike on the West. According to the new narrative, the West was planning to attack Russia the next day after the special operation begun. The Ukrainian military is referred to as militants. Official media repeats that leaders of public opinion support the war. Putin awarded one of the officers the title of Hero of Russia posthumously for his courage during the operation in Ukraine.
5. **ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION.** The Russian army took **control of the Zaporizhia nuclear power plant (Enerhodar)** after shooting at local protesters and destroying a Ukrainian checkpoint. This increases the risk of accident and subsequently of environmental disaster. **The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adopted a resolution calling on Russia to stop actions that could put at risk nuclear facilities in Ukraine.** The relevant Ukrainian Ministries and State agencies called on the IAEA to demand that NATO closes the

airspace over Ukraine, taking into account the locations of nuclear facilities, describing Russia's actions as "nuclear terrorism".

6. **HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION.** In the cities/towns captured by Russian troops, there is a shortage of food and medicine since supply chains are blocked. There are heating and electricity shortages due to accidents on the grids, in particular in the South (Melitopol) and North of Ukraine (Trostianets). **This may be a tactic by the Russian side to whip up panic and demoralise the Ukrainian population.** Over the past two days, there has been **significant movement in the religious sphere**: some voiced the need to stop the religious celebrations conducted by Patriarch Kirill within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (under the Moscow Patriarchate). This may lead to this Church – the largest one in terms of number of parishes, severing ties with the Moscow Patriarchate. Yet, this might not mean the automatic unification with the rival Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Against this backdrop, the holding of an interfaith prayer service at the Saint Sophia Cathedral of Kyiv served the objective of lifting the spirits of Kyivans. It is also a symbol illustrating "God's support to Ukraine and Ukrainians", giving the war a sacred dimension.