

March 5th

A brief overview of the situation in Ukraine

- 1. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CONFLICT.** Russian troops are currently unable to reach Kyiv, that is already heavily fortified. Main fighting is taking place around Bucha and Irpin. Located near Kyiv, both towns periodically come under the control of the Russian forces, repelled by the Ukrainian army. Residential buildings are being targeted and destroyed in Irpin. **In the Mykolayiv region the armed forces of Ukraine have counterattacked** and pushed out Russian troops towards Kherson. There are also counteroffensives by the Ukrainian army in some areas in the direction of Kharkiv. **Kherson is currently under Russian control, but large-scale rallies of the local population against the occupation continue there.** Vodafone has restored communication in part of the Kherson region. **Constant battles continue around Mariupol, Kharkiv, Sumy; remaining under heavy shelling. The shelling of Mariupol has not allowed the opening of a “green” corridor for civilians.** A partial evacuation of the civilian population from neighbouring Volnovakha was carried out. Zaporizhzhia is preparing for its defence: the territorial defence reserve of the city has been armed on March 5. **Foreign anti-aircraft weapons are actively used.** On March 5, Russian planes and helicopters were shot down in Chernihiv, Odesa, Mykolayiv, Donetsk and other regions, leading to a number of pilots captured.
- 2. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION.** On March 5, **the authorities of the self-proclaimed Transdnistria demanded that Moldova recognise its independence** as a result of Moldova’s application for EU membership. **This represents risks for a possible escalation in this region as well. This may also represent a step towards further encirclement of Odesa, if the armed units of from Transdnistrie region enter the territory of Ukraine.** On March 5, Ukrainian-Russian confrontation was discussed by representatives of the United States (A. Blinken) and China (Wang Yi). **China supports the resolution of this issue in the format of negotiations and calls for respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty.** At the same time China insists on the need to recognise the sovereignty of the PRC over Taiwan. A large-scale anti-war rally is expected in Moscow tomorrow.
- 3. NEGOTIATIONS. The date of the third round of negotiations remains unconfirmed.** The Russian side has stated on March 5 that it does not see Zelenskyy’s readiness for compromises, while Russian representatives also stated that they will not make compromises from their side. On March 5, pro-Russian media are actively disseminating information that a member of the Ukrainian delegation, Denys Kyreyev, has been killed in Kyiv. This is being presenting as a punitive operation by the Ukrainian special services.
- 4. ENVIRONMENT.** The Zaporizhzhia NPP and the city of Enerhodar remain under the control of the Russian military. On the other hand, despite control over the town of Voznesensk in the Mykolayiv region, there are no reports of attempts to seize the South Ukrainian NPP which is located nearby.
- 5. HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION.** The humanitarian crisis continues in the cities/towns that are on the front lines or under the control of the Russian army. **Despite preliminary agreements, it has not been possible to organise humanitarian “green” corridors from Mariupol and Kharkiv.** There are no guarantees for cease of hostilities in the direction from Mariupol to outside the Donetsk region. The corridor has to pass by Zaporizhzhia, which makes the safety of the corridor impossible to guarantee. The city itself is still under fire; in particular, volunteers delivering food to the local population have been fired upon. More and more civilians are leaving Kyiv, and it is likely that in the event of a breakthrough by the Russian troops, the capital may follow the same path as Kharkiv. The humanitarian situation in Melitopol remains extremely difficult due to the issue of food provision. In the north of Ukraine, a difficult humanitarian situation can be noted in Okhtyrka and Trostianets, with issues for the provision of food and heat.
- 6. INFORMATION DIMENSION.** The spread of fake news and misinformation by the RF is worth noting. Information is being disseminated, specifically to foreign media, that Ukrainian soldiers are beating and maiming foreigners, and “humiliating hungry Ukrainians”. There are approximately 1500 links reporting these in the Russian information space. Social networks are being blocked in the RF. In Russia, citizens are discussing the ability to adapt to sanctions, including access to goods and services, food, cafes and restaurants. There is ground to believe that representatives of the Russian middle class and Russian elites, do not have information about the course of the war and do not realise the real scale of the destruction of Ukrainian cities by the Russian army. At the same time, there is social passivity and apathy about options for ending the war. Various conspiracy theories are popular regarding the course of the war and potential negotiations between the Russian political leadership and the united West.