

A b s t r a c t s

Arndt Freytag von Loringhoven

Rethinking Accession

Ukraine's Path into the EU

Ukraine's security is of crucial importance to Europe. Therefore, Ukraine should join the European Union as quickly as possible. EU membership would contribute to a peace agreement with Russia, provide Kyiv a security guarantee, and strengthen the EU's defense capabilities. However, significant hurdles must be overcome for accession to take place. To date, Ukraine has not yet fulfilled all of the conditions for membership and the has EU to commit itself to the reforms that are necessary so that it remains capable of action following further enlargement. There is a conflict of objectives between the urgency of security policy and the solidity of the integration process. This can be resolved by offering Ukraine an associate membership immediately and a stage-by-stage integration process later on.

Dmitry Durnev, Andreas Heinemann-Grüder

War and Cooperation

The Ukrainian Arms Industry and Europe

The Ukrainian arms industry adapted quickly to the war. It is producing an increasing share of the military equipment required by Ukraine's armed forces, partly in cooperation with Western companies. The development and production of new military equipment in Ukraine is faster, cheaper, and more efficient than in other European countries. The war has forced the Ukrainian arms industry to innovate and improvise. European armed forces can learn from this, arms manufacturers stand to profit from it, and EU states will boost their security.

Nikolay Mitrokhin

Z-niks and Military Bloggers

Russia's Uncivil Online Society

In the spring of 2026, a wave of criticism directed at the Kremlin swept through Russia's uncivil online society. Many of the so-called Z-bloggers — previously seen as staunchly loyal to the Kremlin and commanding audiences ranging from over a hundred thousand to, in some cases, more than a million subscribers —

distinguished themselves by voicing sharp criticism of the situation in Russia. While they had once served to amplify every statement from the political leadership, many now demanded that the war against Ukraine not be continued in its current form. The regime initially responded with concessions, only to then proceed in the usual fashion with repressions against some of the leading voices of this online uprising. For the time being, this has significantly curtailed the anti-Putin activities within this milieu. Yet the conflict continues to simmer.

Nikolay Mitrokhin**Russia's War against Ukraine: May and June 2026**

In the fifth year of the war, the strategic initiative has shifted to Ukraine. It has gained a technological edge in drone development and has systematically weakened Russia's air defense. Ukrainian forces are now striking oil-refining facilities and defense manufacturers across the European part of Russia. In large parts of the occupied territories, freight transport has ground to a halt as a result of Ukrainian drone attacks. A state of emergency has been declared in Crimea, and the peninsula may have to be evacuated. On the ground, however, the occupation forces' summer offensive continues, while the overall situation remains one of fragile parity.

War Footage Visual Politics and Representation

Photojournalism at War**Friedrich Bungert on Ethics, Dignity, and Responsibility**

Photographer and picture editor Friedrich Bungert offers insights into his work in Ukraine, describes how the mortal danger posed by drones prevents him from going to the front lines anymore, and explains that upholding human dignity and personal rights has the highest priority in the publication of images of war that show the dead or maimed. He also ponders the conditions under which the publication of shocking photographs might nonetheless be ethically and journalistically justified.

Evelyn Runge
Irpın, March 2022

Reconstruction of an Iconic Photograph

In early March 2022, shortly after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, a photograph was taken in Irpin that stands as an example of the occupiers' war crimes. It shows four people killed by shellfire, as they attempted to flee the combat zone. The New York Times featured the image on its front page, sparking a global debate about whether its publication was journalistically warranted and ethically permissible. Photographer Lynsey Addario released bodycam footage and interviews with the victims' relatives, which were recorded at the same time as well. This supplementary material also serves the verification of digital images.

Eva Binder

Empathy through Suffering?

Documentary Films About the War against Ukraine

Alongside press photos, news reports, and television documentaries, documentary films rank among the widely viewed means of reporting Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. They seize on images and video footage and distill them into narratives. These films portray the reality of war, suffering, and death in vastly different ways. Some rely on maintaining a sense of detachment, others on evoking emotion and intensity. Prime examples of this include Oksana Karpovych's "Intercepted", Anastasia Trofimova's "Russians at War", Mstyslav Chernov's "20 Days in Mariupol", and Vitaly Mansky "Eastern Front".

Muriel Fischer

The Aesthetics of "Credibility"

Russia's Visual Disinformation in the War Against Ukraine

Since 2014, Russia has relied not only on military force, but also on propaganda and disinformation in its war against Ukraine. Photographs and videos play a central role in this. The techniques of disinformation have clearly evolved since 2014. Deepfakes have taken the place of manipulating authentic images. Instead of a polished look, the raw aesthetic of combat footage is now used to suggest authenticity. At the same time, Russia is pursuing a strategy of undermining trust in images altogether. Artistic documentation can counter this process of delegitimization most effectively.

Anja Burghardt
Narrating the War
Photo Projects and Forms of Visualization

Many artists and writers are responding to Russia's war against Ukraine with their own work. One such genre consists of photo projects that are characterized by the interplay of image and text — such as the diaries of Yevgenia Belorusets and Mila Teshaieva, the “photo columns” by Katja Petrowskaja, and Julia Kochetova's multimedia project “War Is Personal”. These works offer snapshots that go beyond the daily news coverage of the war, opening up ways for viewers to develop empathy for a people forced to live under wartime conditions.

Constructions and Repressions

Andreas Renner
Russia's Invention of the Arctic
From the Soviet “Sector” to Putin's “Aquatorium”

For a century, there's been a good deal of talk in Soviet and Russian public opinion about a “sector” in the Arctic Ocean. The term may have remained undefined under international law, but the idea of a supposedly natural zone of influence in the far north has left a mark on Russia's politics to this today and shapes portrayals of how the Arctic is to be developed. The core area of the symbolically charged Arctic is the Northern Sea Route. It is not only a trans-Arctic connection between the Atlantic and the Pacific, but also a screen for projecting the extension of the Russian state's power and national greatness into the ocean.

Viacheslav Krechetov, Olga Guliaieva
Taking My People as an Example
The Effects of Gold Mining on the Shores in Southern Siberia

In Southern Siberia, mining companies are destroying the habitat of several indigenous peoples. This habitat is protected by law in Russia, but the gold mining companies and the authorities systematically flout it. The principle of free, prior, and informed consent, as set out by the United Nations, is being ignored. Harsh repression nips any dissent in the bud.

Amina Akhpasheva
How Russia Is Destroying Nature and People
A Report on Coal Mining in Khakassia

In Russia, as in many areas of the world, mining is taking place on the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples. In southern Siberia, among others, the Turkic-speaking Khakass are affected by coal mining in the Minusinsk Basin. In no way can one speak of free, prior, and informed consent for these open-pit mining projects. Environmental assessments are a farce. Anyone who advocates for the protection of this area and thus the survival of the indigenous peoples is put on a state terror list.

Oliver Reisner, Zviad Koridze
The Case of Mzia Amaghlobeli
Protest, Media Freedom, and the Politicized Judiciary in Georgia

In Georgia, numerous people were arrested during protests against a repressive NGO law and the government's change of course in foreign policy in 2024 and 2025. Several dozen are facing criminal proceedings or have already been sentenced to prison terms. The most prominent among them is the journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli. The protest movement considers her a political prisoner, views the judiciary as an instrument of the regime, and accuses the increasingly authoritarian government of protecting the brutal police, while prosecuting demonstrators for trivial offenses.