

# WAR ON UKRAINE - Media Insights #7

Between 13-19 June, we monitored Russian state media to detect their main war & propaganda narratives, as well as the independent international media to assess their coverage of the Russian war in Ukraine and anti-war/peace protests.

Between May and October 2022, we will be issuing a weekly newsletter containing the results of our monitoring, looking at the main propaganda narratives detected on Russian media during the week. This will be complemented by news from independent international media sources to distribute these insights outside the country. The newsletter will include main spotlights from Russian and international news coverage focusing on relevant information, key propaganda and disinformation narratives, statistics, quotes, interviews, expert opinions, independent views, as well as other pertinent developments. This is the seventh issue of the newsletter covering the period 13-19 June. All previous issues (since the beginning of monitoring on 4 May) can be found on our [website](#).

You can subscribe to the public newsletter [Media Insights - War on Ukraine](#) [here](#).

## Main Events and Updates

From 13 to 19 June, the monitored **Russian media** reported on:

- Putin's statements at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum;
- The most powerful shelling of Donetsk since the beginning of the conflict, by the Ukrainian army on 13 June;
- Foreign mercenaries flee Ukraine, around 2,000 have already been killed;
- Ukrainian militants undermined the efforts to evacuate civilians and use prohibited cluster bombs;
- European leaders come to Kyiv to promote their agenda and put on a political show;
- The Russian visa system with Ukraine since 1 July 2022.

During the same period, **international media** coverage of the war focused on:

- The leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Romania arrived on 16 June in Kyiv, bringing a "message of unity";
- On 17 June, the European Commission officially recommended EU candidate status for Ukraine;
- The UK prime minister Boris Johnson visited Ukraine on the same day;
- The battle for Severodonetsk and thousands of civilians trapped at Azot plant;
- Russia bans entry for 29 UK journalists, including top journalists working for the *BBC* and *Guardian*;
- Ukraine cannot host Eurovision next week because of the ongoing war.

## Photos of the Week



*A forensic technician inspects an alleged mass grave near the village of Vorzel, Bucha district, Kyiv region. (13 June, Valentyn Ogirenko/Reuters)*



*The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, [appeared](#) in an outfit in the colors of the Ukrainian flag, announcing the EC's recommendation to grant Ukraine EU candidate status (17 June, Twitter of Jennifer Rankin)*

# Quotes of the Week

"The battle for the Donbas will, without doubt, be remembered in military history as one of the most violent battles in Europe", Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in his video [address](#). (14 June, Guardian)

"Germany is in favor of a positive decision," said German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, adding that "Ukraine belongs to the European family." (16 June, [Politico](#))

"European fans of frogs, liverwurst and spaghetti love visiting Kyiv. With zero use", said Dmitriy Medvedev, Russian ex-President. (16 June, [his](#) Twitter account)

"Russia has strategically lost the war. President Putin has used about 25% of his army's power to gain a tiny amount of territory, and 50,000 people are either dead or injured. Russia is failing", said Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, the head of the UK's armed forces (17 June, [Guardian](#))

## Media Insights

### ***What were the main narratives on Russian state media?***

#### **Main TV talk-shows**

**16 June, [Russia 1/Smotrim](#) - 60 minutes**

[NOTE: Less than 8 min of the 2 hour and 14 minutes program was devoted to the visit of EU leaders. The rest focused on "united troops" advances in Donbas, taking over Severodonetsk.]

Key remarks (quotations by Yevgenii Popov, the host of the program):

- The host opened by saying that European leaders arrived at the capital of still existing Ukraine and continued with mocking commentaries about each country's delegations;
- "Did you hear the air raid siren? And why did no one run into a bomb shelter? This is because it's all staged. It was prepared by the actor, president Zelensky, for European guests. No strike followed in Kyivor Ukraine. The siren is fake, as is the entire Ukrainian politics.";
- Europe is segregated: French, German and Italian leaders travelled in one train, while the Romanian leader travelled separately;
- Although the official agenda states that weapons shipment and Ukraine's candidacy status to the EU are to be discussed in Kyiv, on the sidelines of the visit, everyone speaks about territories concession to Russia. "Paris, Berlin and Rome are tired of the war. It's time to be realistic and finally capitulate [for Kyiv];"
- "The guests were taken to fake sights of atrocities in Irpin. They were accompanied by a large crowd of Ukrainian and Western propagandists. The same propagandists that stubbornly and consistently turn a blind eye on the shelling of Donetsk."
- "Macron just stated that Ukraine shall defeat Russia on the battlefield. So, it seems as if Putin won't pick up telephone calls from Macron anymore."
- "Panic took over the West, and Russia won. Ukrainian Nazis suffer heavy losses. Two American mercenaries were captured by Russians".

## 1 June, [Russia 1/Smotrim](#) - Evening with Vladimir Solovyov

[NOTE: The program was largely devoted to the "new world order" announced by Putin at St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on 17 June. Solovyov opened the program by wondering how popular Putin's speech about "one polar world" was among western media. He continued that, for a long-time, western media had nothing in common with independence. To understand the level of their objectivity, one shall read Lenin's work about the bourgeois press.]

Key remarks:

- Solovyov refuted a claim that Putin is sick, quoting Mark Twain: "*The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.*" Soloviev said that all these rumors disappeared after Putin's speech at the St. Petersburg forum. One of the program guests, the RT Editor-in-Chief Simonyan, was singing praises about Putin's outlook: "*He was expressing confidence and rightfulness. Physically he was very energetic. After four hours at the Forum, Putin had the rest of the day and night packed with meetings, and he attended all of them. He is in very good shape.*" Simonyan was moderating a main panel at the forum. Before the event, she has conducted a poll on what shall she ask Putin, with the most common questions being:
- When will Ukrainians stop bombing Donetsk?
- When will we finally target decision-maker centers in Ukraine?
- Solovyov noted that Russian people became more united because of Putin. At the same time, if Ukraine enters Europe, Europe will turn into absolute anti-Russian unity;
- Morozov (Head of State Duma Committee): "*The world order formed after the Cold War is not comfortable for the overwhelming majority of humanity.*"

### **Special operation**

#### ***Special operation against Russia: How the West pitted the post-Soviet media against Moscow***

Active hostilities in Ukraine have been going on for four months. Most of Russia's partners and allies in the post-Soviet space have chosen, for various reasons, to distance themselves as much as possible from the conflict. At the same time, the media in these countries either avoid assessments or echo Western propaganda, harshly criticizing Moscow. (16 June, [Ria Novosti](#))

#### ***The decision about the special operation in Ukraine was forced but necessary***

Speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russian President Putin said: "*The decision about the special operation in Ukraine was forced and difficult, but necessary*". He [added](#): "*That was a decision aimed at the protection of our citizens, residents of the Donbas People's republics who for eight years have been subject to the genocide by the Kyiv regime and neo-Nazis receiving the full protection of the West. The West has actively pumped Ukraine with weapons and military advisors.*" He concluded with a statement that all tasks of Russia's "special military operation" will be fulfilled. (17 June, *Russia 24*)

#### ***Anti-Russian sanctions will lead to losses of more than 400 billion dollars for Europe***

Putin [said](#) that European countries would suffer losses exceeding 400 billion dollars, and this is the price of "*reckless and insane*" sanctions. (17 June, *Ren TV*). He also [added](#) that the economic blitzkrieg against Russia has failed. (17 June, *Ren TV*)

#### ***Protection of DNR and LNR is the main goal of the special military operation***

Protection of the DNR and LNR is the main goal of the special military operation, [said](#) the press secretary of the Russian President Peskov. (13 June, *RBC*)

### ***Russia is tired of waiting for the West's reaction to the Kyiv regime's crimes***

Speaking to BBC, Lavrov [claimed](#) that the reason to start a special operation was that there were no more ways to explain the criminal nature of the Kyiv regime to the West: "*We declared a special military operation when we had no way left to explain to the West that it is engaged in criminal activity, dragging Ukraine into NATO, cherishing, patronizing and cradling the neo-Nazi regime, about which President Vladimir Zelensky said back in September 2021.*" (16 June, Ren TV)

### **Visit of European leaders to Kyiv**

#### ***What did the leaders of Italy, France and Germany come to Kyiv with?***

- Perhaps the most representative Western delegation in recent months arrived in Kyiv on Thursday - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi. And probably just to emphasize the urgency of the moment, immediately after the arrival of the delegation in Kyiv, an air-raid siren was activated; *[NOTE: The text downplayed the real Russian attack with missiles on the capital and other regions]*
- In the West, they are already saying almost openly that Ukraine has no chance of victory, and all of Vladimir Zelensky's bravura promises are nothing more than empty words. "*The Ukrainian armed forces are in defeat. They are far from regaining territories lost since the beginning of the conflict, not to mention Crimea,*" wrote the German FAZ on the eve of the visit, but similar views can now often be found in other European publications;
- Most opinions in European countries tended to believe that Scholz, Macron and Draghi might promise Kyiv some additional supplies, but the main topic would be a diplomatic settlement of the conflict. "*I think the topic of the visit will be exploring what can be done for a cease-fire and what Ukraine's position is in this respect,*" German expert Stefan Meister told Euractiv. (16 June, [RG.ru](#))

#### ***The visit of the European leaders to Kyiv is just a political show***

According to Zakharova, the official [representative](#) of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the visit of the European leaders to Kyiv was just a political show, that could be done by video call. Also, she claimed that the "US guys" are behind the Kyiv regime, so EU leaders should have visited the USA instead to reach their goals. The USA is also to blame for the failure of the Russia-Ukraine negotiations, according to her. (17 June, KP)

#### ***European leaders come to Kyiv in order to promote their own agenda and to convince Zelensky to resume negotiations with Putin***

According to the NTV [report](#), leaders of France, Germany, Italy and Romania went to Kyiv to promote their own agenda and to strengthen their position in the EU, which could be easily captured by Eastern European countries, especially Poland. The report also referred to the information of the Welt newspaper that Western leaders behind the doors were trying to persuade Zelensky to resume negotiations with Putin. (18 June, NTV)

### **Russia as a "liberator." Russification and annexation of the "liberated territories"**

#### ***Peaceful life in the liberated territories is being gradually restored***

Berdiansk in the Zaporizhzhia region offers free cinema visits for a week. Melitopol sells cherries to Russia, and more than 11,000 socially vulnerable residents have received financial aid of 10,000 RUB, [says](#) Danilchenko, head of the Melitopol military administration. Mariupol drama theatre has resumed its rehearsals. (14 June, Russia 24) A similar [report](#) shows the visit of foreign journalists to Berdiansk and Melitopol, where they can see the "peaceful life". Saulenko, the head of the military

administration of Berdiansk, shows a future monument to a Russian soldier and liberator and says that local residents prefer rubles to hryvnias. (15 June, Russia 24)

### ***Residents of Berdiansk started to receive Russian citizenship***

A passport institution has opened in the Berdiansk, Zaporizhzhia region and has already processed 25 applications. A woman featured in the reports [says](#): "We have been waiting for eight years. We wanted and waited, and now we are happy to be a part of Russia." (13 June, Ren TV)

### ***Kherson region was always a truly Russian land***

The Kherson region was always a truly Russian land, [according](#) to Stremousov, the deputy head of the military-civilian administration of the Kherson region. He also said it would never return to Ukraine. (14 June, Russia 24)

### **Accusations of Ukrainian army**

#### ***The shelling of Donetsk on 13 June was the most powerful since the beginning of the conflict***

The shelling of Donetsk by Ukrainian armed forces on 13 June was the most powerful since the beginning of the conflict, [claims](#) the DNR representative office. In two hours, nearly 300 MLRS rockets and artillery shells were fired at the city. The Ukrainian Armed Forces used NATO caliber 155 mm artillery (13 June, Ren TV). Five people were allegedly [killed](#), and 33 were injured as a result of the shelling (13 June, Ren TV). A maternity hospital was also [destroyed](#). (13 June, Ren TV). Russia 24 [called](#) this attack on Donetsk a "terrorist attack". (13 June, Russia 24)

#### ***Ukrainian military uses banned French cluster munitions and NATO weapons to attack Donetsk, Russian Investigative Committee***

Ukrainian army [uses](#) the banned cluster bombs supplied by France, claims the Russian investigative Committee (14 June, NTV). However, the foreign ministry of France [denies](#) supplying the forbidden weapons to Ukraine. (15 June, NTV)

#### ***Ukrainian Armed Forces have gone over the edge, so additional armed forces will be engaged***

Head of Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Pushilin said that Ukrainian Armed Forces have "gone over the edge", using prohibited methods of warfare and shelling Donetsk's residential and central districts. Therefore, "all necessary additional forces of the allied forces, first of all, those of the Russian Federation, will be involved", he [added](#). (13 June, Russia 24)

#### ***Ukrainian militants use civilians and doctors as living targets and have no mercy, while Russian medical doctors save lives***

Ukrainian militants have no mercy for civilians and use them as targets. The [report](#) features a woman from Kharkiv who was heavily injured by a cluster bomb fragment and saw her house on the outskirts of Izyum destroyed by Ukrainians. According to the report, Russian military doctors saved the lives of the civilians injured by cluster bombs used by the Ukrainian army. (15 June, Ren TV). The same injured woman, Svitlana Kotova, was also shown in the NTV [report](#) dedicated to Russian military doctors. She said the Ukrainian army shells Izyum indiscriminately. (15 June, NTV) Another [report](#) says that "nationalists" target the military doctors in the first turn, shell and kill them, thus, they remove all signs from their vehicles, such as crosses. (18 June, Russia 24)

#### ***Ukrainian tycoons supporting Ukrainian armed forces are sponsors of death***

The Ukrainian tycoons supporting Ukrainian armed forces, namely Akhmetov, Pinchuk, Kosyuk, Gerega and Firtash, are, in fact, sponsors of death funding "Nazi criminals" and participating in the

"genocide". The center of Donetsk is being now destroyed "on the order of Akhmetov", according to the featured expert. A famous Ukrainian soccer player allegedly records fake videos about Russian soldiers. (14 June, Russia 24)

## **Nazis in Ukraine**

### ***Confessions of neo-Nazi members of the "Medvedi SS" unit***

Members of the neo-Nazi "Medvedi SS" unit [confess](#) their crimes. One of them has Nazi tattoos, another said that he shot five captured DNR soldiers under the order. Another interviewed "Nazi" confessed to killing 60 people. According to the DNR laws, all these militants may face the death penalty, while Ukraine did not even inquire about them. (15 June, NTV)

### ***The LNR reported seizing command of the Ukrainian national battalion "Aidar"***

The LNR ambassador to Russia, Rodion Miroshnyk, [confirmed](#) the surrender of Aidar fighters near Sievierodonetsk. According to him, among those who laid down arms were the "ringleaders" of the nationalists. (19 June, Ren TV)

## **Foreign mercenaries in Ukraine**

### ***Two US mercenaries were captured in Ukraine***

Two US mercenaries have been captured by DNR, [reports](#) Russia 24, and they are the first Americans to be captured during the special operation. (16 June, Russia 24)

### ***Mercenaries are trying to flee Ukraine as soon as possible, around 2,000 already killed***

The report claims, based on the Ministry of Defense data, that there are around 7,000 such fighters, while Ukraine speaks about 20,000. According to the Ministry representative Konashenkov, since the start of the special operation, 6,956 foreign mercenaries have arrived in Ukraine, of whom 1,956 have been eliminated, and another 1,779 have returned home. Russia monitors every mercenary, he emphasized. (17 June, [NTV](#)) Foreign mercenaries are trying to flee Ukraine as soon as possible because of the military defeats and heavy losses of the Ukrainian army. A [report](#) shows a captured US "mercenary" Aleksandr Drueke saying: "Ukrainians wanted to send us to the frontline as soon as possible. I was very disappointed in other recruits who were not properly trained and did not have proper experience and training". (18 June, NTV)

СМОТРИМ Новости Обмануть не получится: опровержения пленных наёмников

РОССИЯ 24

Смотреть еще

## Численность иностранных наёмников на Украине

Страна	Прибыло с 24.02.22	Уничтожено	Убыло	Всего осталось на 17.06.22
Польша	1831	378	272	1181
Канада	601	162	169	270
США	530	214	227	89
Румыния	504	102	98	304
Великобритания	422	101	95	226

Министерство обороны РФ

*Numbers of foreign mercenaries by countries - Poland, Canada, USA, Romania, Great Britain (18 June, [Russia 24](#))*

### **Fatigue from Ukrainian refugees**

#### ***Switzerland speaks about the fatigue from hosting Ukrainian refugees***

Swiss families, which hosted Ukrainians who left their homeland, began to get tired of cohabitation with them, [said](#) the director of the Swiss Refugee Service (SFH), Miriam Behrens, reports TV channel SRF. According to the head of SFH, about 30 thousand Swiss families expressed willingness to accept the Ukrainians, but some of them eventually began to get tired of strangers staying in their apartments all the time and noticed cultural differences. (16 June, RBC)

### **Other topics**

#### ***Representatives of the UK defense lobby and unfriendly media added to non-grata persons***

Forty-nine citizens of the UK, including the UK defense lobby and representatives of the "unfriendly" media, have been banned from entering Russia. The representatives of the defense lobby are "involved in delivering the weapons to Ukraine that are used by Nazi units for killing civilians and destroying civil infrastructure", [according](#) to the Russian Foreign Ministry. (14 June, Russia 24)

#### ***US mentors ordered Ukrainian authorities to freeze negotiations with Russia, Zakharova***

An official representative of the Russian foreign ministry, Zakharova, [claims](#) that US mentors ordered Ukrainian authorities to freeze negotiations with Russia. (15 June, Ren TV). Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolay Patrushev also reiterated this narrative, having [said](#) that the negotiations were frozen by the Ukrainian side under the influence of the destructive actions of the USA, UK and their allies. (15 June, RBC)

#### ***Kadyrov called "ridiculous nonsense" the Ukrainian media reports on Putin's illness***

The Head of Chechnia has [called](#) the Ukrainian media reports on Putin's illness called "ridiculous nonsense". He added: "I have recently talked to the President. He has a cheerful, commanding voice." (15 June, RBC)

#### ***Matviyenko calls the introduction of a visa regime with Russia "savagery"***

Speaker of the Federation Council Matviyenko [called](#) the introduction of a visa regime with Russia



by Ukraine a "savagery". The visa system will be introduced on July 1, 2022. (19 June, RBC)

## ***What did independent media say about the main topics?***

### ***The leaders of France, Germany and Italy arrived in Kyiv for talks with a message of unity***

Emmanuel Macron, Olaf Scholz and Mario Draghi arrived in Kyiv after taking a night train from Poland. The French leader has [said](#) that he was coming with "a message of unity" and added that the three had come "to talk both about the present and the future because we know the coming weeks are going to be very hard." (16 June, Guardian) On Thursday, they are visiting Irpin, a town near Kyiv which Russian troops brutally occupied at the beginning of the war. "It's a heroic city, marked by the stigmata of barbarism," Macron [told](#) reporters. Reportedly, air sirens are going off in the city. (16 June, BBC)

### ***[Draghi, Scholtz and Macron face varying challenges on their Ukraine visit, while Europeans want Ukraine to make peace with Russia immediately](#)***

Emmanuel Macron has positioned himself as the world's chief negotiator with the Kremlin, but his earlier comments that Russia should not be humiliated were met with discontent in Ukraine, [writes](#) NYT. Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany [faced criticism](#) that Germany has been slow in supplying weapons to Ukraine. Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy said economic pressure was important to bring Moscow to the negotiating table. (16 June, NYT)

### ***Putin lambasts the West and declares the end of 'the era of the unipolar world'***

[Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) has declared the end of "the era of the unipolar world" in a combative speech that lambasted Western countries at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on Friday. "When they won the Cold War, the US declared themselves God's own representatives on earth, people who have no responsibilities - only interests. They have declared those interests sacred. Now it's one-way traffic, which makes the world unstable," Putin told the audience. The speech was delayed by more than 90 minutes because of a "massive" cyberattack. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told journalists in an impromptu conference call that the speech was postponed due to distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks on the conference's systems. (18 June, CNN)

## **Ukraine's European integration**

### ***European leaders are supportive of the Ukrainian immediate candidate status***

At the press conference in Kyiv, Emmanuel Macron [said](#) he and his counterparts back Ukraine for "immediate" candidate status to join the European Union. Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi also said that Italy wants Ukraine to have EU candidate status and will support this position at next week's European Council meeting. "The Ukrainian people defend every day the values of democracy and freedom that underpin the European project, our project," he adds. "We cannot delay this process." (16 June, BBC). Germany's chancellor Olaf Scholz also [said](#) that the government in Berlin backed Kyiv's bid for EU candidate status. (16 June, DW) Ukrainian President Zelensky [reassured](#) at the press conference: "We are ready to work for our state to become a full member of the EU. Ukrainians have already earned the right to go down this road and obtain this candidate status." (16 June, DW).

### ***The European Commission has officially recommended EU candidate status for Ukraine***

On Friday, 17 June, the European Commission officially recommended EU candidate status for Ukraine. The announcement by the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen,

came a day after the EU's [most powerful leaders visited Kyiv](#) in a show of support. She said: "In the view of the Commission, Ukraine has clearly demonstrated the country's aspiration and determination to live up to European standards". The Commission's President has also added that this is, of course, on the understanding that the country will carry out a number of further reforms. (17 June, Guardian) Ukraine's president, [Volodymyr Zelensky](#), has responded to the European Commission's recommendation, [tweeting](#) that the move marks "the first step on the EU membership path that'll certainly bring our Victory closer".



Володимир Зеленський ✓

@ZelenskyyUa

🇺🇦 Ukraine government official

...

I commend the positive [@EU\\_Commission](#) Conclusion on 🇺🇦's candidate status. It's the 1st step on the EU membership path that'll certainly bring our Victory closer. Grateful to [@vonderleyen](#) & each EC member for a historic decision. I expect the positive result from [#EUCO](#) next week.

12:32 PM · 17 июн. 2022 г. · Twitter Web App

## **News from the battlefield**

### ***Battle for Severodonetsk is terrifying***

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been speaking about Severodonetsk, the strategically important city in the east that Russian forces are close to fully occupying. "The human cost of this battle is very high for us. It is simply terrifying," Zelensky [says](#) on Telegram in his daily address to the Ukrainian people. (13 June, BBC)

### ***Thousands of civilians are trapped in Severodonetsk with a lack of water and sanitation***

Thousands of civilians are trapped in the Ukrainian city of Severodonetsk with essential supplies running out, the United Nations is warning. Many of them are sheltering in bunkers beneath the city's Azot chemical plant. "The lack of water and sanitation is a big worry. It's a huge concern for us because people cannot survive for long without water," a spokesperson for the UN's Humanitarian Affairs office, Saviano Abreu, [told](#) the BBC. (16 June, BBC)

On Wednesday, a pro-Russian separatist official accused Ukrainian forces of "completely thwarting" the evacuation of civilians trapped in the chemical plant. "At Azot, militants are trying to disrupt the evacuation! From the territory of the plant, the militants have begun firing from a mortar and a tank," Rodion Miroshnik, the "ambassador" to Moscow of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, said on Telegram. (16 June, BBC)

[NOTE: While it was reported broadly in Russian media, the BBC writes that the claim cannot be verified].

### ***Russia has strategically lost the war, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, head of UK armed forces***

According to Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, [Russia](#) was suffering heavy losses, running out of troops and advanced missiles and would never be able to take over all of Ukraine. "President Putin has used about 25% of his army's power to gain a tiny amount of territory and 50,000 people either dead or injured. Russia is failing," [said](#) Radakin. (17 June, Guardian)

### ***Zelensky visited frontline cities Mykolaiv and Odesa and pledged not to give away the south***

The president of Ukraine made a rare trip outside of the capital Kyiv to visit the southern cities of Mykolaiv and Odesa. Volodymyr Zelensky inspected damaged buildings and met soldiers, officials and health workers, his office [said](#). Both cities are key targets for Russian forces trying to secure the Black Sea coast. (18 June, BBC) "We will not give away the south to anyone, we will return everything that's ours, and the sea will be Ukrainian and safe," he [said](#) in a video posted on Telegram after the visit. (19 June, France 24)

### ***Russian forces tighten noose around Severodonetsk and Lysychansk***

By the end of the week, the area around important Donbas cities Severodonetsk and Lysychansk are about three-quarters encircled by Russians, leaving only a slender gap there for Ukrainian troops to maneuver, [reports](#) the New York Times. If Moscow's forces succeed in eventually surrounding them, however, thousands of Ukrainian fighters defending the two cities could be stranded. Russia's Defense Ministry said Russian soldiers and Moscow-backed separatists had also claimed control of Metiolkine, just southeast of Severodonetsk. The Russian state news agency Tass said that many Ukrainian fighters had surrendered there, although it was not possible to verify the assertions independently. (19 June, NYT)

### **Support for Ukraine and challenges in the face of economic hardship**

While the Russian media promote the narratives of the lack of international support for Ukraine, the international media last week provided many stories of the military and political support for the country, covering the visit of three European leaders to Ukraine. However, there have also been reports focusing on the growing discontent with prolonged war and its economic toll.

### ***Pope slams 'cruelty' of Russian troops but hints NATO is partly to blame for the war***

Pope Francis argued last month that the public debate about the war in Ukraine lacks nuance, and he appeared to place at least part of the blame for the war on NATO expansion — echoing Russian President Vladimir Putin's rationale for invading Ukraine. However, the Pope said he was not "pro-Putin" and argued it would be "simplistic and wrong" to label him that way. "I am simply against reducing complexity to the distinction between good guys and bad guys without reasoning about roots and interests, which are very complex," he reportedly said in mid-May, at the start of a meeting of editors of European Jesuit journals. (14 June, [WP](#))

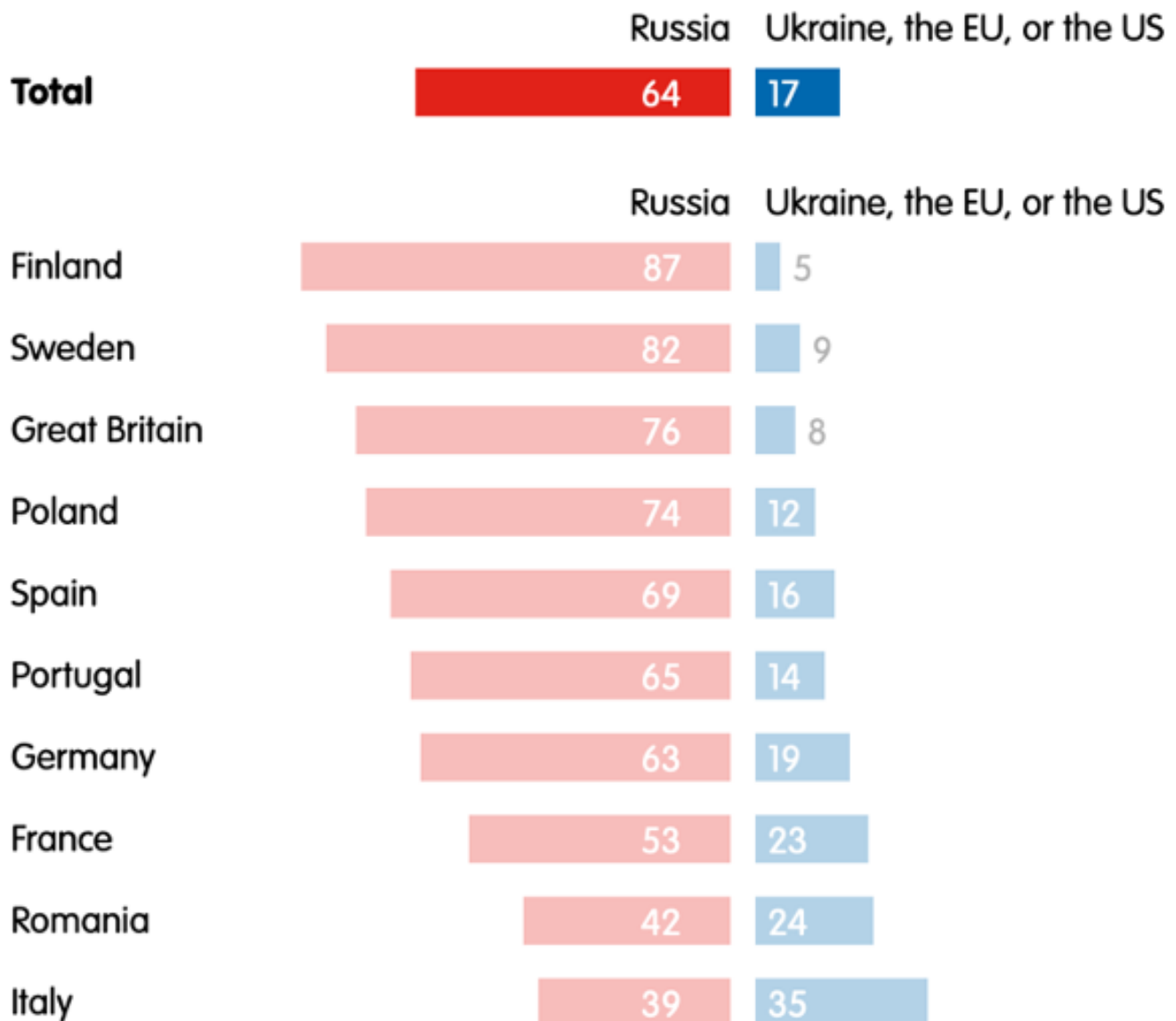
### ***NATO secretary-general pledges more weapons to Ukraine***

Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO secretary-general, [said](#) the alliance would continue sending heavy weapons and long-range systems to Ukraine that Ukraine needs to prevail over Russia. He added that allies were expected to soon approve a new package of military aid. (15 June, NYT)

### ***Peace versus Justice: The coming European split over the war in Ukraine***

A broad [poll](#) in 10 European countries by the European Council on Foreign Relations (see chart below), published Wednesday, showed that a majority of Europeans wanted Ukraine to make peace with Russia immediately, even if that meant losing territory. (15 June, ECFR)

## Which country constitutes the biggest obstacle to peace between Russia and Ukraine? In per cent



**US President Joe Biden announced an additional \$1 billion in weapons and aid for Ukraine**  
 US President Biden on Wednesday [announced](#) an additional \$1 billion in weapons and aid for Ukraine fighting the Russian aggression. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III said that the aid would include more long-range artillery, anti-ship missile launchers, more ammunition for howitzers and for a sophisticated American rocket system on which Ukrainians are currently being trained. (16 June, NYT)

**Insiders report a growing sense of irritation over Mr. Zelensky's rejection of calls to find a diplomatic pause to the fighting, while most Europeans want immediate peace with Russia**  
 The New York Times [writes](#) that several senior officials and diplomats from the EU, the NATO and European countries said that, in meetings on Ukraine, there was a growing sense of irritation over Mr. Zelensky's rejection of calls to find a diplomatic pause to the fighting, as well as his relentless demands for more help. (16 June, NYT)

## ***UK prime minister promises to give Ukraine 'strategic endurance' to prevail against Russia***

UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, has made a surprise visit to Kyiv to meet Ukraine's president, [Volodymyr Zelensky](#), on June 17. He [pledged](#) that Britain will give [Ukraine](#) the "strategic endurance" to prevail against Russia's invasion and that it would continue to intensify sanctions on Putin's regime. He also said that the UK would continue to provide military equipment. (17 June, *Guardian*)

## ***The war in Ukraine [could last for years](#) and will require long-term military support, according to NATO and other western leaders***

"We must prepare for the fact that it could take years," NATO's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, [said](#) in an [interview with the German newspaper Bild](#) on Sunday. British prime minister, Boris Johnson, added: "I am afraid that we need to steel ourselves for a long war." (19 June, *Guardian*)

## **Realities at the occupied territories, Russian war crimes**

While Russian media writes about local residents cheering on Russian soldiers, international media reports about tortures against civilians and humanitarian catastrophes on the occupied territories. There is also a lot of evidence of the war crimes committed by the Russian army.

### ***Russians using torture in filtration process, Mariupol residents say***

Residents trying to leave the Russian-occupied city of Mariupol are being forced to go through a process called filtration, which involves harsh questioning and even strip searches. Many end up forcibly sent to Russia, according to the BBC [report](#). Andriy, a 28-year-old marketing officer, says he was beaten because of his social media posts in support of Zelensky. Dmytro, a 34-year-old history teacher, said the soldiers came across the word "ruscist", a play on "Russia" and "fascist", in a message to a friend. The soldiers, Dmytro tells, slapped and kicked him, and "everything [happened] because I used that word." (16 June, *BBC*)

## **Other topics**

### ***Russia bans entry for 29 UK journalists, including Guardian correspondents***

Russia has banned 29 members of the British media, including five *Guardian* journalists, from entering the country, the Foreign Ministry. "The British journalists included in the list are involved in the deliberate dissemination of false and one-sided information about Russia and events in Ukraine and Donbas," the ministry [said](#). British journalists working for the *BBC*, *Sunday Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Independent*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sky News* and a number of other outlets have also been banned. (14 June, *Guardian*) *BBC* informs that four journalists who have reported from Ukraine, and its Director-General are on the list, but the *BBC* "will continue to report independently and fairly", a spokesperson [said](#). (14 June, *BBC*)

### ***OPINION: Ukraine: Time for the West to make up its mind***

The indecision of its allies could doom the country to a long war of attrition that's to Russia's advantage. There's a sense that Russia is managing a significant military turnaround. The conflict has evolved into a war of attrition being fought with easier supply lines for Russian forces; Moscow's making steady gains on the frontline — albeit slowly; and Western sanctions have little effect in boosting domestic dissent against the war in Russia. (14 June, [Politico](#))

### ***Amnesty International accuses Russia of war crimes in Kharkiv***

Amnesty International has accused Russia of war crimes during its efforts to capture the northeastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. In a new [40-page report](#), Amnesty International has documented the alleged use of cluster munitions and other indiscriminate means of attack. (13 June,

## Anti-war / Peace protests

### ***The former vice-president of Gazprombank Igor Volobuyev has joined the Ukrainian armed forces, a special legion comprised of Russian nationals***

The former vice-president of Gazprombank Igor Volobuyev [joined](#) the Ukrainian armed forces - in particular, the "*Freedom for Russia*" legion, a special military unit that is part of the Ukrainian armed forces and is made up entirely of Russian nationals. His public defection had already caused shockwaves given his senior role in a company that is at the heart of the Russian establishment and is chaired by Alexei Miller, the CEO of Gazprom, who is close to Vladimir Putin. "I *made compromises with myself for a long time ... But on the [24 February](#) [the day Russia launched its invasion], any talk of compromise became impossible,*" he said. "I could not be part of this crime."

### ***Ex-Russian football captain Igor Denisov condemns the Invasion of Ukraine***

Igor Denisov, the former captain of Russia's national football team, has said he feared he could be "jailed or killed" as he spoke out to condemn his country's war against [Ukraine](#). The 38-year-old has become the most senior former or current athlete who still lives in [Russia](#) to publicly condemn the conflict. Denisov, who captained the Russian national team from 2012 to 2016, [said](#) in an interview with a sports journalist: "*These events are catastrophic. It's horrific. I am not sure if I will be jailed or killed for this, but I am saying it as it is.*" (15 June, Guardian)

## Celebrities against the war

### ***US actor Ben Stiller arrives at the Ukrainian border to meet refugees***

Actor and UN Goodwill Ambassador Ben Stiller [arrived](#) in Poland at the border with Ukraine to meet Ukrainian families. This was reported by the UN refugee agency on Twitter. The actor himself wrote that on the eve of World Refugee Day, he wanted to meet with people whose lives have been affected by the hostilities. (19 June, RBC)



**Ben Stiller** ✓  
@BenStiller



At the Medyka border in Poland I met families who fled the war in Ukraine, leaving loved ones behind, with no idea when they will be able to return home. I'm so impressed w/ [@refugees](#) representatives & how committed they are to supporting people on their journeys.

[#WithRefugees](#) ❤️



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[Here](#) is the Russian version of the newsletter #7.