

WAR ON UKRAINE - Media Insights #11

In this week's issue (18-24 July), we focus on the Kremlin's efforts to get out of its international isolation (visits by Putin and Lavrov to Iran and Egypt), the grain deal, the Russian attack on Odesa, and Russia's gas supplies to EU.

Welcome to the 11th edition of our regular weekly newsletter, where you will find an overview of pro-Kremlin narratives about the war in Ukraine. Our newsletters offer a unique insight into two different worlds – the world of Russian state media and how they interpret the ongoing “special military operation” in Ukraine and the world of facts as reported by independent media. If you like our newsletter, *Media Insights - War on Ukraine*, and wish to be regularly updated, please subscribe [here](#). You can find all the previous issues on our [website](#). The current edition offers these narratives, topics, and events.

Main Events and Updates

From 18 to 24 July, the monitored media reported on:

- The grain deal between Russia and Ukraine that should allow safe passage of grain from Ukraine signed in Turkey.
- A Russian attack on Odesa port just hours after the grain deal was signed.
- Vladimir Putin's visit to Iran, Iran's endorsement of Ukraine's invasion, and the geopolitical implication of the trilateral meeting between heads of Russia, Iran, and Turkey.
- Sergey Lavrov's visit to Egypt.
- Russia's gas supplies to Europe.

Photos of The Week



Vladimir Putin met Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi (centre), and the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (left), in Tehran. Photograph: Mustafa Kamaci/Turkish presidential press service/AFP/Getty Images

Quotes of The Week

"Post-Soviet states are fictitious, and the quality of their elites is low, and they will always be anti-Russian, as opposed to Iran," Sergei Mikheyev, Russian political scientist, 20 July, [Russia 24](#)

"The United States strongly condemns Russia's attack on the port of Odesa today. It undermines the effort to bring food to the hungry and the credibility of Russia's commitments to the deal finalized yesterday to allow Ukrainian exports," - U.S. State [Secretary](#) Antony Blinken

"Russia is blackmailing us. Russia is using energy as a weapon. And therefore, in any event, whether it's a partial, major cut-off of Russian gas or a total cut-off of Russian gas, Europe needs to be ready," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. (20 July, [Forbes](#))

Media Insights

The grain deal between Russia and Ukraine

Russian media reported on the agreement to export grain from Ukrainian ports between Russia and Ukraine which was facilitated by the United Nations (UN) and Turkey. According to the agreement, ships heading for grain to Ukrainian ports will be inspected for the presence of weapons. Inspections will be carried out by representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN. According to a UN representative, the full movement of ships may begin in the next two weeks, which, as the international organization expects, will allow the export of five million tons of grain per month from Ukraine. (22 July, [RG.ru](#)) The [report](#) on Russia 24 mentioned the grain deal and, in this context, reported additional financial assistance of 175 million USD that the U.S. will send to Ukraine. However, according to the report, the U.S. refused to send far-range missiles in fear of starting a third world war. Foreign media [stressed](#) the importance of the agreement, which will allow millions of tons of grain, currently trapped in Ukraine by the war, to be exported. They also noted that Kyiv refused to sign a direct deal with Moscow and warned "provocations" would be met with "an immediate military response." Both sides attended the signing ceremony in Istanbul but did not sit at the same table. The deal - which took two months to reach - is set to last for 120 days, with a coordination and monitoring center to be established in Istanbul, staffed by UN, Turkish, Russian, and Ukrainian officials (22 July, [BBC](#)).

The Russian attack on the Odesa port

A day after the grain deal was signed, Russia attacked the Odesa port, hitting its infrastructure but not the grain silos. As reported by Russian media, *Russia targeted the US-supplied Harpoon missiles in Odesa. A docked Ukrainian warship and a warehouse with U.S.-supplied Harpoon anti-ship missiles were destroyed by long-range precision-guided naval missiles in Odesa seaport on the territory of a ship repair plant.* [said](#) Ihor Konashenkov, an official representative of the Russian defense ministry. He added that the capacities of the plant were also destroyed (24 July, [NTV](#)). The official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova [reiterated](#) this statement, claiming that the Kalibr missiles destroyed the military infrastructure (24 July, [NTV](#)).

Foreign media focused on the fact that a key compromise of the grain deal was Russia's promise not to attack Odesa and two other ports involved in the shipments. The deal includes security assurances for both Ukraine and Russia, which agreed not to "undertake any attacks against merchant vessels and other civilian vessels and port facilities" tied to the initiative. "This attack casts serious doubt on the credibility of Russia's commitment to yesterday's deal and undermines the work of the UN, Turkey, and Ukraine to get critical food to world markets," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement (23 July, [The Washington Post](#)). Barely 12 hours after Moscow signed a deal with Kyiv to allow [monitored grain exports](#) from Ukraine's southern ports, [Russia targeted Odesa](#) - where shipments would take place - with cruise missile strikes. Ukrainian president [Volodymyr Zelensky accused](#) Russia of "barbarism" after missiles hit the southern port of Odesa, threatening a deal signed just a day earlier to unblock grain exports from Black Sea ports and ease global food shortages caused by the war (24 July, [Guardian](#)).

Putin's visit to Iran

Putin's visit to Iran was covered extensively by Russian media in an effort to indicate that Russia is not isolated as a result of its invasion of Ukraine. The Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, endorsed the Russian invasion. On Russia's 60 minutes TV show on 20 July, the talk show host Olga Skabeyeva [said](#) that Putin's visit to Iran has demonstrated that "the more there are countries sanctioned by the West, the more they will cooperate, and the effect of sanctions will be brought down to zero."

Deutsche Welle wrote that the Russia-Iran-Turkey talks were strong on symbolism, but short on substance and lacked major breakthroughs. However, they achieved their aim of drawing attention to Russia's continued reach and influence within the multipolar politics in the Middle East. Attention was also drawn to the fact that Putin has probably raised the thorny issue of Turkish combat drone sales to Ukraine that have exacted a cost on Russian forces and have become a major irritant in ties between Russia and Turkey (20 July, [Deutsche Welle](#)). BBC also [emphasizes](#) that the Tehran summit was for the Kremlin an opportunity to try to show that, despite attempts to isolate Russia, it retains powerful allies and geo-political influence. There aren't many places in the world President Putin can go to get public statements of support for his "special military operation" in Ukraine. Tehran is one of them (20 July, [BBC](#)).

Lavrov's visit to Egypt

Another widely covered event by Russian media was Sergey Lavrov's trip to Egypt (part of his trip to Africa) where he met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri for talks focusing on efforts to end the Ukraine crisis, moves to resume grain exports from Russia and Ukraine, joint trade agreements, regional conflicts and a nuclear power plant which Russia has begun to build on Egypt's north coast. Russian media also reported on Lavrov's [remarks](#) that "Russia will help Ukrainians to get rid of the anti-people regime." He emphasized: "We feel sorry for Ukrainian history, which is crumbling before our eyes. We feel sorry for those who have succumbed to the state propaganda of the Kyiv regime and those who support it, aimed at making Ukraine an eternal enemy of Russia." He stressed that all these attempts would not succeed. "The Russian and Ukrainian people will continue to live together. We will definitely help the Ukrainian people to get rid of a regime that is absolutely anti-people and anti-historical," Lavrov added (24 July, [NTV](#)).

Deutsche Welle also considered his trip as an attempt to break Russia's diplomatic isolation and mentioned that Lavrov is also due to travel to Ethiopia, Uganda, and the Republic of Congo, all countries which have recently seen strained relations with the West. The Russian minister also [brought up the western sanctions imposed on his country](#), calling on the West to "refrain from its actions in the face of the food crisis," the DPA news agency reported. Lavrov said that Ukraine was to blame for the failure of earlier peace talks. He accused Ukrainian authorities, including President Volodymyr Zelensky, of stressing that "there will be no negotiations until Ukraine defeats Russia on the battlefield." (24 July, [DW](#))

Russia's supplies of gas to Europe

The issue of Russia's gas supplies was among other important topics discussed during the last week by Russian media. On Russia's 60 minutes TV show on 20 July, the talk show host Olga Skabeyeva [said](#) the energy crisis in Europe was worsening, the gas flow had decreased by more than three times compared to last year's indicators, and Canada should be "thanked" for it because it delayed sending back turbines for Nordstream after repairs. She went on, saying, "As Putin said, Canada's motive for not giving back the turbine was that it is planning to take over European markets for itself, as it also extracts oil and gas." Another talk show host Vladimir Solovyov on Russia 1 (20 July, Evening with Vladimir Solovyov), [commented](#) that the West is threatening Russia with new sanctions if more Ukrainian territory is annexed, but these sanctions have already resulted in the energy crisis. The crazy Brussels policy on limiting the consumption of gas dictated from over the ocean has led to a split in the EU [Hungary's stance on limiting the powers of the EU Parliament]. He repeated threats that Russia would completely cut off the gas supply to Europe.

Foreign media [reported](#) that Russia restored critical gas supplies to Europe through Germany via the Nord Stream pipeline after ten days of maintenance, but suspicion lingered that the Kremlin would trigger an energy crisis on the continent this winter (21 July, [France 24](#)). "Russia is blackmailing us. [Russia](#) is using energy as a weapon," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen [said](#) at a news conference. "And therefore, in any event, whether it's a partial, major cut-off of Russian gas or a total cut-off of Russian gas, Europe needs to be ready." The European Union has set out emergency plans to reduce its gas use amid fears Russia could cut off its supply in winter. It has proposed a voluntary target for countries to restrict its usage by 15% from August until March, accusing the Kremlin of weaponizing gas exports (20 July, [Guardian](#)).

Other news

Other important topics discussed in Russian media included [accusations](#) that the West further fuels the conflict in Ukraine by providing the high precision weapons (HIMARS) (20 July, [Evening with Vladimir Solovyov](#)) as well as during an interview on RT and Russia Today media group, where Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that "if Ukraine receives long-range weapons from Western countries, the geographic objectives of the Russian troops' special operations will change (20 July, [RIA Novosti](#)). Russian media continue to push the narrative that the West is tired of Ukraine's problems (22 July, [AiF](#)) and that support in the UK is already decreasing (22 July, [AiF](#)). They also focused on the achievements of the Russian army in Ukraine and on "returning the peace to the "liberated territories" (July 20, [Ren TV](#)). According to Hungarian PM Viktor Orban, the sanctions against Russia have not worked. In his opinion, the EU needs a new strategy for the conflict in Ukraine, and it should focus on peace, not on winning the military action, the politician [said](#) (23 July, [RBC](#)).

Independent foreign media wrote about the agreement to impose further sanctions against Russia, paving the way for a ban on Russian gold while introducing exceptions for sanctioned banks for wheat and fertilizers (20 July, [Politico](#)). Politico also reported on how Russian state media tried to flout EU sanctions by establishing scores of new websites in German, Spanish, French, and English, that remain accessible across the EU, raising questions about how effective Brussels' clampdown on Kremlin disinformation has been given the RT's ability to easily sidestep a ban that was supposed to throttle Moscow's ability to sow distrust and dissent about the war in Eastern Europe (21 July, [Politico](#)). Another widely covered topic included the visit by the Ukrainian First lady to the US, during which Olena Zelenska delivered an emotional speech to US lawmakers, emphasizing the human toll of Russia's war on her country and pleading with Congress for more weapons (20 July, [Politico](#)).

Russia individuals / organizations against the war

France 24's [report](#) "Dissidents of Russian culture face dilemma between silence and exile" focuses on Russian artists who oppose the current regime, such as the band Little Big and singers Zemfira and Grebenchtchikov. The Kremlin has effectively taken over Russia's culture industry as the invasion of Ukraine prompted intensifying repression - with canceled concerts, theatre directors sacked, and artists arrested. The report mentions the punk-rave band Little Big which is among the latest figures in [Russian culture](#) to have to flee the country last month. The lyrics to the new song they released upon their exile say it all: "I've got no, I've got no / I've got no voice / Die or leave, die or leave / I've got no choice," goes one verse in this tune, "Generation Cancellation." "We condemn the Russian government's actions, and we are so disgusted by the Kremlin's military propaganda that we've decided to drop everything and leave the country," the band wrote in a statement quoted by independent news site Meduza.

This previously apolitical band formed in St Petersburg in 2013 is the latest in a stream of cultural figures who have left Russia after opposing the invasion of [Ukraine](#) - including the rock star Zemfira, who recently fled to [France](#), and Boris Grebenchtchikov, the leader of the band Aquarium, who has described Vladimir Putin's war as "pure madness." The singer recently released two songs about the horrors of the war in Ukraine, "Obdidaba" and "Vorozhba." In the latter, Grebenchtchikov sings about dark magic spells that make "coffins grow in our hearts."

The famous US musical band "Imagine Dragons" became an ambassador of the platform to gather donations for Ukraine - [United 24](#). Musicians will promote medical assistance for Ukraine ([Telegram channel No to War](#)).

American actor Dwayne Johnson received the award on behalf of Klitschko, who is in Kyiv and could not attend the ceremony

The mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, became a laureate of the prestigious Arthur Ashe Award for Courage, presented annually by the ESPY (Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly) Awards committee. The award ceremony took place at the Dolby Theater in Los Angeles, USA (21 July, [Save Ukraine Now](#)).



Interesting social media post



Timothy Snyder ✓
@TimothyDSnyder

Putin's rule is weakening. 0/

6:44 PM · Jul 23, 2022 · Twitter Web App

4,667 Retweets 908 Quote Tweets 20.8K Likes

[The link to the tweet](#)

Timothy Snyder is an American historian specializing in the modern history of [Central](#) and [Eastern Europe](#), who is the [Richard C. Levin](#) Professor of History at [Yale University](#) and a permanent fellow at the [Institute for Human Sciences](#) in [Vienna](#).

Relevant podcast

[The Power Vertical](#)

THE DIASPORA AND THE WAR



As the war continues to rage in Ukraine's east and south, another quieter and more subtle battle is playing out in the West: the struggle in North American and European capitals against so-called "Ukraine fatigue." On The Power Vertical Podcast this week, host [Brian Whitmore](#) speaks with [Michael Sawikiw](#), Executive Vice President and Director of the Ukrainian National Information Service, Vice President of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, and President of the US Holodomor Committee; and [Marta Dyczok](#), an Associate Professor of History and Political Science at the University of Western Ontario and CERES Fellow at the University of Toronto.

A series of podcasts under the title '**Another Russia**' has been launched as of 25 July 2022, co-hosted by Ben Rhodes and [Zhanna Nemtsova](#), starting with Boris Nemtsov's assassination, then going back to cover Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, the fall of the Soviet Union.

Thank you for reading our weekly newsletter. As we would like to continue improving its content, we welcome any feedback. You can write us at kuzel@memo98.sk or ivang@memo98.sk.



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