

~ EDITORIAL ~

---

## PEACE IN UKRAINE – BETWEEN MEMORY, JUSTICE, AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

---

**Flavius Cristian MĂRCĂU**

**Lecturer PhD., “Constantin Brâncuși” din Târgu Jiu, Romania**

Few moments in recent history have shaken Europe and the international order as profoundly as the war in Ukraine. Since February 2022, the conflict has reshaped political agendas, tested solidarity among states, and triggered an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more than seven million people have been forced to abandon their homes. In such a context, invoking peace is no longer a ceremonial speech delivered at the UN podium, but a vital necessity, a moral and intellectual anchor without which we cannot imagine the future. To speak about peace in Ukraine does not mean taking refuge in diplomatic clichés, but rather facing reality with lucidity and admitting that a fairer world is not built with metaphors, but with painful, concrete reconstruction.

The social sciences have always been obsessed with conflict and peace - perhaps also because, in the absence of wars, professors of international relations would be left with little teaching material. As early as the 1960s, Johan Galtung drew the distinction between “negative peace” (the absence of violence) and “positive peace” (the presence of solid mechanisms of cooperation and social justice) (Galtung, 1964, 1969). Ukraine today confirms, in dramatic fashion, this theory: a ceasefire may bring temporary calm, but without political and social reconstruction, peace is likely to be as fragile as a sandcastle on the shore of the Black Sea - beautiful as long as the sun shines, but destined to vanish with the first wave.

The geopolitical dimension is, without doubt, the most visible (Raik, 2019). Ukraine has become the stage on which European security paradigms clash with Russia’s imperial ambitions (Kondratenko, 2020). The result? A Europe rediscovering its reflexes of solidarity, yet also its limits (Lutskyi & Push, 2022). And so the age-old question resurfaces: does the international system have the instruments to produce a genuine peace? Or will we once again add a “peace process” to the museum of diplomatic illusions?

Yet beyond maps and geopolitics lies the human dimension, the one that should matter most (Qaisrani et al., 2023). Millions of Ukrainians have become refugees, while those who remain live day after day under the wail of air raid sirens. Collective trauma does not show up in statistical reports, but it leaves scars as deep as those visible in the Balkans after the breakup of Yugoslavia (Ôze, 2020). Reconciliation is not signed at the negotiating table; it is about communities healing, people slowly regaining their trust, and children being able to play safely again. True peace is not



measured in square kilometers regained, but in a mother's ability to let her child walk to school without fear.

The economic dimension is equally impossible to ignore. The war has shaken energy, food, and financial markets, with effects felt not only in Brussels but also in the Middle East and Africa (Kolosov et al., 2022). In 2023, the World Bank estimated that Ukraine's GDP collapsed by more than 30% in the first year of conflict (Klymenko & Savostianenko, 2022). To speak about peace, therefore, is also to imagine rebuilt highways, newly created jobs, and strengthened food security. This is both a colossal challenge and an opportunity for Europe to demonstrate solidarity - and, perhaps, to test its much-acclaimed ability for political innovation (a field in which it usually excels declaratively, while practice often lags behind).

But peace is not only about economics and geopolitics. It also has a cultural and identity dimension. The war has reactivated Ukraine's collective memory and reignited debates on its multilingual and multicultural identity. The lesson of Central and Eastern Europe is clear: lasting peace is not built on uniformity, but on the recognition of diversity (Grieveson et al., 2024). Only an inclusive model, one that protects freedom of expression and pluralism, can ensure that the past will not repeat itself with the same violence.

Another front, quieter but no less dangerous, is the informational one. The invasion unleashed an avalanche of disinformation and a battle of narratives competing with the military front. In this regard, peace also means restoring truth, rebuilding trust in media institutions, and cultivating information literacy (Fedotenko, 2023; Mărcău et al., 2025; Mărcău et al., 2022). Manipulation of information can be more devastating than a tank, for it robs people of their bearings and sometimes even of their will to seek the truth. And so, how can we talk about peace if societies continue to be daily fed with illusions?

At the ethical level, uncomfortable questions abound. How far can solidarity go? What is the acceptable price for defending freedom and democracy? And, above all, how can security imperatives be reconciled with humanitarian ones? Thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and John Rawls warned long ago about the fragility of the balance between individual rights and state interests (Chilufya & Ngandu, 2024; Maboloc, 2023; Nartey, 2024). In Ukraine, this balance is tested every day. And if our responses remain limited to pompous declarations, then the future of the continent will once again be written not by those who hold arguments, but by those who hold weapons.

Justice cannot be absent from this equation. The war crimes documented by the International Criminal Court cannot be swept under the carpet of diplomacy. Without genuine accountability, peace risks becoming nothing more than a pause between two rounds of violence. The lessons of Nuremberg and The Hague are clear: there can be no authentic reconciliation without justice and without recognizing the suffering of the victims (Shcherbak, 2023; Fuley, 2023). However uncomfortable for diplomats, without justice peace is nothing but a parenthesis.

On a global scale, the conflict in Ukraine has accelerated debates about the future of world order. Multipolarity, the fragility of international institutions, and the rivalries of great powers show that twentieth-century mechanisms are no longer sufficient. We need new paradigms - more flexible, more inclusive (Alam et al., 2022). And perhaps, ironically, the war in Ukraine could become the laboratory in which we test whether humanity still knows how to rewrite its own rules of the game.

The younger generations must not be forgotten. For Ukrainian youth - and not only them - the war is a formative experience (Hvozdetzka et al., 2025). Their identities are forged under conditions of crisis and will mark their entire lives. True peace does not mean only rebuilt schools, but also a civic culture based on solidarity, resilience, and mutual respect (Ivanec, 2023). If we manage to



1/2025

cultivate these values, we stand a chance of breaking the vicious circle of conflicts. If not, we risk bequeathing to future generations a fragile world and, perhaps, yet another war in waiting.

Seen globally, peace in Ukraine becomes the ultimate test of contemporary civilization's maturity. We already live under the pressure of climate crises, pandemics, and political polarization. Our ability to stop violence and rebuild communities may paradoxically be the only serious exam humanity still has left to pass.

This editorial does not offer magical solutions. But it reminds us that peace is not a moment, it is a process. It is built through dialogue, through responsible political decisions, and through the courage to learn from past mistakes. It is not an elegant formula, nor does it sound festive, but it is the only realistic path forward.

And finally, my appeal can only be simple, and perhaps personal: to keep alive the reflection on peace. Not as an abstract ideal, but as a daily responsibility. Because, whether we want it or not, the war in Ukraine concerns us all. And the direction it will take will shape not only the future of Europe, but that of the entire world. If we forget this, we risk allowing history to be written, once again, by the noise of weapons and not by the strength of arguments.



## REFERENCES

- Alam, J., Chowdhury, A., & Chowdhury, S. (2022). 2022 Russian intervention of Ukraine: Impact and implications under the international human rights law. *Journal of International Affairs*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.58710/jiav24n1y2022a03>
- Chilufya, L., & Ngandu, P. (2024). The Russia-Ukraine war: An intractable challenge to the concept of a global society and liberal ethics. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 12(4), 18667. <https://doi.org/10.21474/ijar01/18667>
- Fedotenko, K. (2023). Cyber warfare as part of information warfare of Russia against Ukraine since the beginning of the 2022 Russian invasion. *Věda a perspektivy*, 8(27), 351–357. [https://doi.org/10.52058/2695-1592-2023-8\(27\)-351-357](https://doi.org/10.52058/2695-1592-2023-8(27)-351-357)
- Fuley, T. (2023). Justice in war crimes cases in Ukraine: The first challenges. *Slovo of the National School of Judges of Ukraine*, 3(4), 1–15. [https://doi.org/10.37566/2707-6849-2022-3-4\(40-41\)-1](https://doi.org/10.37566/2707-6849-2022-3-4(40-41)-1)
- Galtung, J. (1964). An editorial. *Journal of Peace Research*, 1(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336400100101>
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>
- Grievesson, R., Landesmann, M., Pindyuk, O., & Tverdostup, M. (2024). Ukraine's reconstruction in the context of EU accession. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 50(2), 239–260. <https://doi.org/10.59288/wug502.239>
- Hvozdetzka, B., Varha, N., Bartosh, O., Tokar, M., & Ivats, O. (2025). Civic identity and migration decisions of university students in wartime borderlands of Ukraine. *Eduweb*, 19(1), 176–189. <https://doi.org/10.46502/issn.1856-7576/2025.19.01.14>
- Ivanec, N. (2023). The concept of patriotism and its role in civic education in Ukraine during war. *Paradigm of Knowledge*, 55(1), 14–22. [https://doi.org/10.26886/2520-7474.1\(55\)2023.3](https://doi.org/10.26886/2520-7474.1(55)2023.3)
- Klymenko, K., & Savostianenko, M. (2022). Assessment of the consequences of the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine and prospects for economic recovery. *Naukovi pratsi NDFI*, 2(110), 110–123. <https://doi.org/10.33763/npndfi2022.02.110>
- Kolosov, A., Dugin, A., & Chebotaryov, V. (2022). Economic circumstances of the formation of the International Marshall Plan for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. *Economic Herald of the Donbas*, 3(69), 131–140. [https://doi.org/10.12958/1817-3772-2022-3\(69\)-131-140](https://doi.org/10.12958/1817-3772-2022-3(69)-131-140)
- Kondratenko, O. (2020). Ukraine–Russia: Format of geoeconomic and geopolitical confrontation. *Acta Politologica*, 14(4), 4–22. <https://doi.org/10.17721/APMV.2020.144.1.4-22>
- Lutskyi, R., & Push, O. (2022). The existence of Putin's Russia is a threat to international law and order (On the example of aggressive actions in Ukraine). *Kwartalnik Prawa Międzynarodowego*, 1(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0015.9873>
- Maboloc, C. (2023). The imperial ambitions of the great powers: Explaining the war in Ukraine from the perspective of global justice. *Indonesian Journal of Political Studies*, 3(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.15642/ijps.2023.3.1.1-16>
- Mărcău, F. C., Peptan, C., Gorun, H. T., Baleanu, V. D., & Gheorman, V. (2022). Analysis of the impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine on the population of Romania. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 964576. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.964576>
- Mărcău, F. C., Peptan, C., Iliuta, F. P., Cojoaca, M. E., Musetescu, A. M., Holt, A. G., Tomescu, I. R., Căruntu, G. A., & Gheorman, V. (2025). The impact of the Ukraine conflict on the quality of life of the young population in Romania from a societal security perspective. *Healthcare*, 13(2), 156. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13020156>
- Nartey, E. (2024). The ethics of law: How US/UK intervention in Iraq and Russia's invasion of Ukraine breach the principle of virtue and international law. *Athens Journal of Law*, 10(1), 85–100. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajl.10-1-5>
- Öze, Z. (2020). Special features of the Russian–Ukrainian armed conflict. *Hadmérnök*, 15(1), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.32567/hm.2020.1.14>
- Qaisrani, I., Qazi, B., Abbas, H., & Qazi, H. (2023). A geopolitical war in Europe: Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its implications. *Journal of European Studies*, 39(1), 85–102. <https://doi.org/10.56384/jes.v39i1.285>
- Raik, K. (2019). The Ukraine crisis as a conflict over Europe's political, economic and security order. *Geopolitics*, 24(1), 51–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1414046>
- Shcherbak, S. (2023). War crimes in the international criminal and humanitarian law and in the criminal law of Ukraine: Theoretical and practical aspects. *Bulletin of Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs*, 3(45), 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.32631/v.2023.3.45>