

Two years since the beginning of the war in Ukraine: a decade long war that has been fought for centuries



*Fully destroyed apartment building in Borodyanka, Kyiv region.
People used to live their happy lives before Russian troops invaded.*

On the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion, we look at our country with eyes that have aged a century. It doesn't matter how old Ukrainians are — they all have a terrible experience of war with a fierce enemy. Our children ask us if the soldier who lost his eyes will ever see something, and dream of growing up faster to defend the country. We forgot what fear about our lives is, but almost every day, during missile attacks parents are forced to be terrified about their children's lives. It is the reality that we live in.

Today, our streets are full of men and women on crutches and wheelchairs. Ukrainians have turned into a nation of people with disabilities. No country in the civilized world is facing such problems, but each of them should already think how they will behave and survive in a similar situation, and most importantly, how to prevent such situations. One of the authors of this text took the liberty of writing one of the parts of this article in the first person, but at the same time, this is not just my personal story. It is partly the story of every Ukrainian who fights, suffers, survives, and wins.

It is strange, but I cannot call February 24, 2022, the most terrible day of my life, even though it began in Kyiv, early in the morning, almost at night, with the explosion of a Russian rocket on a nearby street. Behind the house opposite, a fire was burning, and my neighbours calmly came out of their porches with suitcases, dragging sleepy children to their cars. Meanwhile, my relatives in the West of the country watched the local airport burn after the bombing. In the South of the country, near my parents' house, Russian rockets destroyed a Ukrainian military unit, and a few hours later, Russian tanks were already driving through the streets of the city.

A few days before, we naively believed that we would be able to take our parents in time if the war started. In reality, it turned out that the traffic jam on the way out of Kyiv stretched for dozens of hours, and the Russians occupied Nova Kakhovka, where my parents lived, until noon on the same day. When my father called me and said that the Russians had raised their flag over Kakhovka HPP, I screamed and cried in my kitchen like never before. I was in pain, but I still was not afraid. But after that, for a year I forgot what tears are, as well as the taste of food and smells. I lost these senses and closed some of my emotions for a long time.

I immediately got involved in helping the Ukrainian military on a frontline around Kyiv and providing abandoned elderly people and bomb shelters. Volunteers in Kyiv forgot what sleep is, because shops and pharmacies were closed, and the number of people who needed help grew every hour. Wounded people began to arrive at the hospitals, requests from the military personnel multiplied, and people suffered. That's why no one thought about themselves, squeezing in one day as many things as you usually do during a week or even several weeks. I worried that my parents could be captured by the Russians. Mom slept fully clothed in case the invaders came for them, but yet she complained all the time that she was cold — so probably the deep stress on her body was reflected.

On March 11, communication with my parents was interrupted — their mobile phones were out of range. That's when I got scared. It was the most terrible day of my life. No amount of mortar or rocket fire can compare to the feeling of helplessness and uncertainty when you don't know if your closest people are even alive. Later, it turned out that the network had disappeared for all city residents. But a day and a half without contact with my relatives, cut off by the invaders from the whole world, turned into hell and a strand of gray hair on my head. In another month, my parents, who had run out of vital medicines, managed to get out of the occupation. However, not all Ukrainians can leave the occupied territories. Millions continue to be forced to live in fear, in terrible conditions, deprived of access to decent medicine, education, and justice.

Already in the first days of the full-scale invasion, we learned that the Russians shot a family with a newborn baby on the bridge at the dam of the Kakhovka HPP because they were trying to leave the war zone. But no one of us could believe it. We thought humans couldn't do it to humans. Then we began to receive information that the Russians shot with heavy machine guns the residents of Kherson, who came out to defend their city almost bare-handed. Their bodies were torn apart by the invaders' horrible volley of fire.



The destroyed Russian tank on the Kyiv-Lviv highway near the city of Zhytomyr.

But no one of us could believe it. We thought humans couldn't do it to humans. And then we found out about Bucha. We saw with our own eyes the corpses of our friends and relatives with their hands tied behind their backs, lying in heaps. And we realized that someone who looks outwardly similar to a human can do this to humans. All evidence of violence against children, women, elderly people, and prisoners of war turned out to be true. The story of the death of a family from Nova Kakhovka on the Kakhovka HPP dam turned out to be the entire truth. The death of the Kherson people in Lilac Grove, shot by the occupiers with heavy machine guns, turned out to be the entire truth.

This truth is inconvenient. It requires deep knowledge. It requires not to succumb to propaganda that simplifies everything. It requires you to open your eyes to terrible events and realize that this can happen to you too. And it's frankly scary. However, as it turned out, war can bring back something lost but extremely valuable. We are now talking about historical memory. When I write that we thought humans couldn't do to humans some terrible things, I can't answer the question: "Why, actually, did we think that?" Especially considering the fact that the nature of our northeastern neighbor has been known to us for centuries.

Finding out the truth is easy, realizing it — is a veritable task. Sometimes, for this, the pages of history should come alive before your eyes. But that's the only way you get the chance to change everything and go the right way — the way of truth. For the first time, Kyiv was attacked in 1169 by a knyaz from the lands that are currently near Moscow. His name was Andrii Bogolyubskiy, and he headed a colony that belonged to the Kyiv state — the Principality of Vladimir. Having looted and burned the temples and estates of the brilliant medieval Kyiv, the invading prince, who killed many Kyivans at the time, aimed to transfer Kyiv's cultural heritage to his lands. Since then, the inhabitants of those lands, who later called themselves Russians, did not give rest to Ukrainians, destroying them physically, distorting history, and spreading their propaganda around the world. Ukrainians were persecuted, and their own language and culture were banned.



*One of the first Russian missile attack on Bakhmut city.
Now it is completely destroyed by Russian army.*

These are tens of millions of physically destroyed Ukrainians, including millions of little children — this is more than the population of many modern countries. The question arises, why so? Why does this terrible story not stop in the 21st century, but has its continuation and perspective of development? The answer is very simple — because evil still goes unpunished. And unpunished evil always returns with greater force and impulse. But there is a way out. To punish this evil, we must first overcome it. This is the most difficult task that requires a smart and systematic approach, changes, and making uncomfortable decisions.

In 1708, Tsar Peter I sent his troops to Hetman's Ukraine to destroy the capital of that time — Baturyn. During the punitive operation, thousands of citizens, regardless of gender and age, were tortured to death by Russian troops. The last 105 years have been probably the most terrible for the Ukrainian people, and the source of this horror was once again Russia. It committed wars, famines, repressions, deportations, concentration labor camps, tortured intellectuals and artists, rewrote history, destroyed and depreciated culture, and forced us to renounce native traditions on pain of death.



*Destroyed by Russian aviation apartment buildings in
Borodyanka, Kyiv region.*

In order to overpower the enemy, we must first identify them — who this enemy really is, and why they existed for centuries, producing evil and multiplying. Where do they draw strength? It is this identification that will allow us to plan further actions and deliver effective blows.

Russia is our existential enemy. But it would be wrong to assume that this applies only to Ukraine. Russia opposes the entire democratic world. What exactly should be understood by the term "Russia is the enemy"? Who exactly poses a danger? The leader of Russia, Putin, or maybe the entire Russian people? In fact, the enemy is a terrible totalitarian imperial system, of which Putin is only a part, one that skillfully manipulates the masses for its own purposes. Historically, the absolute majority of the Russian people are part of the system. The Russian people never fought for their own freedom but only elected a new leader of the old system. This system skillfully adapts to the challenges of the modern world and camouflages itself, but never changes and does not change its goals.



*Borodyanka village in Kyiv region.
Letters in mailbox, that were never delivered.*

A clear confirmation of this is the collapse of the Soviet Union, which many still remember and can clearly analyze the sequence of events, the consequences of the transformation of the system, its adaptation to the modern world, and the insidiousness of further actions. Therefore, the collapse of the Soviet Union turned out to be only a stage of transformation of the system to meet the challenges of the modern world, which is based on market relations.

Resource-rich Russia very quickly integrated into the world economy and international democratic institutions, which was not the case during the Soviet Union.

And the world, for its part, took it for granted. The totalitarian system was also infinitely happy about this fact — it got what it wanted: money, recognition, and more opportunities to influence world processes, undermining trust in stable institutions to change the world order. The game of democracy did not last long — first Ichkeria and Transnistria, then Georgia and Ukraine, unchanged power.

For some reason, the civilized world believed that Russia could be different, democratic. But it was a big mistake. The numerous red lines crossed by already independent "democratic" Russia in 30 years did not confuse the world for some reason — the priority was something else. Indeed, such a course of events will lead to the moment of truth — you or them. This moment has come, and it will no longer be possible to avoid it. So, what is this unique Russian system that has resisted the entire civilized world for so long and so effectively? Perhaps no one in the world has experienced this system better than Ukrainians. To overcome the Russian system, it should be understood that it is based exclusively on force, fear, betrayal, lies, and big money.

This system is able to be negotiable only as long as it is beneficial to it. The power of the Russian system, which terrifies and frightens the whole world, can only be opposed by another power. This force must be intelligent, systematic, and prevailing! We must distinctly realize that the enemy acts systematically in all directions without exception.

Military aggression is only an external manifestation of brute force, which finally convinced us of the danger of Russia. Ukrainians, after ten years of war and centuries of occupation, want to reach every citizen of the democratic world, every politician, to finally form the image of the enemy in the person of the Russian system. Most Ukrainians realized this through their own bitter experience.



Locals gang the Ukrainian flag out of the window in fully destroyed apartment building in Hostomel, Kyiv region.

We all must clearly understand that the enemy has been operating at the cultural level for centuries, convincing the world of the greatness of Russian culture and the exceptional depth of the Russian soul. It is a purposely created myth for the external consumer to emphasize its uniqueness and greatness. The truth is that Russian culture was stolen, and then presented to the whole world under the guise of its own. And for the domestic consumer, Russian culture is nothing more than an element of propaganda. Actually, the face of Russian culture corresponds to the ruins left behind by the aggressor country. Russian culture is precisely displayed on the disfigured face of any Ukrainian city destroyed by Russia, where no stone was left unturned.

Russia has rewritten history in a way that benefits it — Putin's latest statements during his latest high-profile interview perfectly confirm this. It is how Russia tries to plant "its history" to the entire world. Russia defiantly tries to interfere and influence the political processes of democratic countries — its system is looking for partners all over the world. These are people and organizations for whom money, power, and populism are higher than basic values. The Russian system skillfully uses social networks to manipulate the opinions of citizens of countries, creating networks of so-called "bot farms", because they clearly understand the importance of a person and their choice in a democratic world. The Russian system is actively trying to win the favor of the "Third World" countries to unbalance stable relations and create planetary chaos. The Russian system undermines trust in international institutions, trying to use them to justify its own crimes. The Russian system looks around the world for people of their kind and successfully cooperates with them.

We have only listed what lies on the surface, but it already should change the attitude of the entire world towards Russia. Therefore, for our final and undeniable Victory, we must oppose Russian power with our own power, to their desire to spread fear — our love for freedom, our families, and our native land, to their lies — truth, to betrayal — our unity, to their money — adherence to principles, readiness to give up profits for the sake of principles. Only in this way can we overpower this existential enemy and punish evil!

The war against Russia opened the eyes of many Ukrainians to this "brotherly" people and reminded us of the true history, not the one rewritten by Russia. On the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion, we want the whole world to open its eyes and take action! The support of our friends over these two years helped Ukraine to stand up and gave us hope for the Victory that we have been expecting for centuries. We are truly grateful for this! The heroism of our soldiers knows no bounds. This heroism is currently defending Europe and the entire democratic world. The price that Ukraine pays is the highest, and we will always remember this! We want the people of the whole world to know and remember this. Not only for us but also for themselves. Because the goal of the enemy is the subjugation of the entire civilized world and the overthrow of democracy.

After two years of full-scale invasion, the occupiers have by no means changed their plans. On the contrary, they are expanding them to NATO countries. The enemy is gaining military experience, has a significant human resource, and continues to earn financial profits, which are spent on the implementation of military goals. This makes them more dangerous than they were two years ago. Therefore, now, more than ever, the entire democratic world must unite to help Ukraine prevent more terrible consequences and overthrow the totalitarian Russian system forever. This war will change Ukraine and Ukrainians forever. This war will change the whole world. Our joint task is to make sure that these are changes for the better and that they happen as soon as possible!



Ukrainian military servicemen on wheelchairs near the hospital where they are undergoing treatment and rehabilitation

Today, the events that happened two years ago seem infinitely distant, because in these two years, each of us has experienced as much as a person may not experience in a lifetime. During the years of the war, you can change your professional occupation many times, but we put our lives on pause. Many of us forgot about studies and careers, joining the army, or devoting our whole lives to volunteering.

During the war years, we learned to plan nothing, but still to organize everything as best as possible. Today, new heroes and new stories appear before us. It is the story of the heroic defense of Avdiivka city. And this is the terrible truth about its defenders who were captured and shot by the Russians. It is the story of our invincible resistance in the occupied territories. And this is the terrible truth about how the enemy torments those who are waiting for deliverance from occupation. It is the story of the liberated Kherson and the indomitable Kharkiv, which are subject to devastating shelling by the Russians, but whose invincible inhabitants continue to buy flowers and drink coffee in coffee shops, not forgetting to help the army. And this is the terrible truth about a woman with children who died from a Russian drone, holding her sons to her chest with all her might.

It is the heroic story of priest Stepan Podolchak from the occupied southern village Kalanchak, who preached in Ukrainian despite the threats and prohibitions of the invaders. And this is the terrible truth about his death at the hands of the Russians, who subjected him to torture on his native but occupied land.

The world has seen what our primordial enemy is and must draw its conclusions. We live in a time of publicity, but this fact has its pros and cons. Yes, we can tell the entire world about what the occupiers are doing on our land, with our people. But the Russians also use their propaganda machine on a large scale. We know that no negotiations with a terrorist country are worth the time spent on them. Wherever Russia comes, there will be another Bucha, Mariupol, or destroyed Maryinka, and the findings in the territories that we have yet to liberate will again terrify us, like those we discovered during the exhumations in Izyum. Therefore, we have only one way — Victory.

Difficult tests fell into our destiny. But we accepted the challenge with dignity and will continue to fight. We are not afraid to make changes. With gratitude and respect for the world community, we hope that civilized countries will continue to walk alongside us in this struggle along the path of Truth, Light, and Justice.



Destroyed by Russian aviation apartment buildings in Borodyanka, Kyiv region.



Moschun village. Once upon a time, a delicious dinner was prepared in these pots. Now the house where the owners of these pots once lived has been completely destroyed by Russian troops