

ANU REPORTER

How the war in Ukraine will change the world

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louder as they face threats from nuclear-armed Russia, North Korea and China. The new Scholz government in Berlin comprises three parties that have all in the past called for the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Germany, yet within days of Russia's invasion it decided to acquire US Joint Strike Fighters to enable continued 'sharing' of US nuclear bombs with the German air force. Even former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd, whose government sponsored the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament in 2008, joined calls in 2021 to bring Australia, Japan and South Korea into the US nuclear planning processes.

Another casualty of Russia's Ukraine invasion is the idea that countries — in particular North Korea, but perhaps also Iran — might be persuaded to give up their nuclear arsenals in return for international guarantees. For Ukraine was once a nuclear power, having inherited Soviet warheads, which it gave up in 1994 in return for Russian, US and British pledges to "refrain from the threat or use of force against [its] territorial integrity or political independence".

In hindsight, this was probably a tragic mistake. Ukraine was never given NATO membership, and US and British supplies of weapons now are inevitably too little, too late, after Washington and London failed to respond with more than symbolic sanctions to Russia's attack and occupation of parts of Ukraine since 2014. Regimes in Pyongyang and Tehran now know what any guarantees in return for giving up nuclear weapons will be worth. They also know full well they could never hope for the Western sympathy now extended to Ukraine.

Finally, while President Biden has reaffirmed the "sacred obligation" to defend NATO territory and deployed US troops to NATO allies in Eastern Europe, prominent members of the US national security establishment are warning against direct US involvement in support of Ukraine, due to the risk of nuclear conflict with Russia.

While no one wants a war with Russia, this American risk aversion must still concern the US's allies — especially in the Indo-Pacific. Allies in our region can only hope that what today may seem like prudent statesmanship in the face of nuclear dangers, will not turn out to be a crucial element in Beijing's calculus that the US would also stand by if it did invade Taiwan — a 'partner' not an ally, as is Ukraine.

Thus, the main lesson that adversaries and allies alike will draw from the invasion of Ukraine is that the world remains one where the strong do as they

will, and the weak do as they must. It is a world where the case for nuclear weapons has become a lot more persuasive, to the detriment of all. |

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United in opposition

The war on Ukraine has been an unexpected catalyst for the unification of a unique, progressive and politically engaged Russian-Australian community, Dr Elena Govor writes.

The war on Ukraine was met with shock by many members of the Russian-Australian community because the mantra of Soviet, and later Russian, propaganda had historically been one of peace. It's also common for self-defined Russians to have Ukrainian heritage, as well as relatives and friends in Ukraine. Born in Minsk, Belarus, I emigrated to Australia, the country of my childhood dreams, in 1990 and consider myself part of this community, as well as a scholar in the history of Russian-Australian contact.

While the first weeks of war had an enormously unifying effect on the Ukrainian nation, the situation for Russians was not so simple. The 'Russian World' doctrine promulgated by the Russian Embassy and official cultural organisations offers a stultifyingly stereotypical cultural identity of *Maslenitsa* (pancake) events, *matreshka* (wooden dolls) and celebrations of the Russian Great Patriotic War with children dressed in military uniform. Feeling increasingly alienated from this cultural doctrine, hundreds of critically minded Russian immigrants have begun to develop a new identity. However strange this sounds, it was the war on Ukraine that served as a catalyst for this unification and a rapid shift from safe liberal values and small bubbles of close friends to a unique ethnopolitical community. This community is united not only by language, but by an expanding political position.

Within a few days of the invasion, President Vladimir Putin's propaganda machine imposed a total ban on independent information, which affected the reactions of people in Russia. These reactions merit a special study, but from the vantage point of the Russian community in Australia, we have some insight into how those with access to information reacted and adapted to news of the war.

Early expressions of support on Facebook were apolitical, such as a poster with two joined hands painted in the colours of the Russian and Ukrainian flags and the inscription 'I do not need war'. But the

words of Dmitry Muratov, Nobel Prize winner and editor of *Novaya Gazeta*, the last independent Russian newspaper, struck a chord with many politically engaged Russian immigrants: “Only the anti-war movement of the Russians can save life on this planet.”

In present-day Australia, online, often transnational communities provide a place for cultural and social cohesion among younger, liberally minded, socially engaged Russian immigrants. In previous generations, this role was played by diaspora organisations, such as clubs and churches. Among these online communities, a Facebook group named (with a sense of irony) ‘Adequate Australia and New Zealand’ provided a platform for critical political discussions and helped Russian-speaking people of different ethnic backgrounds to feel that they were not alone in their discontent with the toughening Russian political regime. When the war started, activists from the ‘Svoboda Alliance’, an expatriate community organisation committed to defending human rights in the Russian Federation, were quick to encourage Russians to join Ukrainians’ rallies in major Australian cities.

Starting from a sense of collective responsibility, Russians sought out visual symbols of their position. A few days after the first protests, a Russian activist wrote in the group that he felt “uncomfortable standing next to the Russian tricolour flag” at protests. The group consensus



Dr Elena Govor
Photo: Tracey Nearmy

was that while we needed to be visible as Russians at the protests, the flag under which Russia committed atrocities in Ukraine was no longer an appropriate symbol. An alternative flag was proposed — a white-blue-white tricolour, based on the medieval flag of the republic of Russian Novgorod. It was quickly imbued with powerful symbolism, encapsulated by an illustration of a girl painting the bloody red stripe out of the Russian tricolour.

With the revelations of Russian war crimes perpetrated in Ukraine, and in the face of complicity and silence from the Russian state, the responsibility now falls on these activist communities to become the new face of a responsible and pro-democratic Russia around the world. |

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Three transformative changes

Significant economic and international security shifts are under way following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Dr William A. Stoltz unpacks a trio of changes that will transform our world.

While the outcome of Russia’s war on the people of Ukraine is unpredictable, the invasion has already generated three transformative shifts that will fundamentally alter our world well into the 21st century. These shifts include the decisive end of the post-Cold War ‘peace dividend’, the acceleration of economic de-globalisation, and the war’s destitution of both Russia and Ukraine.

Firstly, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, Western countries have capitalised on a so-called ‘peace dividend’. NATO members reduced the portion of GDP they spent on developing new military technologies and maintaining large forces in readiness for war. The United States (US) and its allies were more selective about when and where they deployed military force and Western nations directed more national wealth to key social services, infrastructure and tax reductions.

The possibility of maintaining this peace dividend has well and truly ended with the war in Ukraine. Russia’s brazen invasion of a free European country has forced NATO members, long reluctant to increase military spending, to face the reality that they will need to bolster their conventional military forces and invest with the US in new strategic deterrence, such as nuclear and hypersonic weaponry.