

Inaugural workshop of the Ukrainian Politics Network, 27 February 2025

Agenda

1. Introduction to the Network

Dr Kasia Kaczmarek, Senior Lecturer, University of Edinburgh

2. Ukraine's Foreign Policy – Key Current Directions

Dr Mykola Kapitonenko, Associate Professor, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

3. Energy Matters in Ukrainian Politics

Dr James Henderson, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

4. Research Results: Wartime Diplomacy

Urania Chan, PhD Researcher, University of Edinburgh

5. Teaching and Learning Resources on Ukrainian Politics

Amir Hosny, Postgraduate student, University of Edinburgh

6. Brainstorming Session: How members would like to be involved

- Student engagement beyond essay competition
- Researchers' engagement
- Public engagement and policy impact

Summary of the proceedings

Introduction to the Network

The idea for the Network stems from a partnership between the University of Edinburgh and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The two institutions started cooperating in early 2023. We were subsequently able to apply for additional funding, and with support from the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy, started building the Network to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, including scholars, student associations, think-tank experts, public organisations, and media professionals with an interest in Ukraine.

We want to:

- facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge building on Ukraine's politics
- support and undertake teaching and research initiatives
 - inspire greater interest in Ukrainian politics among the student community
 - shift the focus in post-Soviet studies away from Russia to highlight historically marginalised perspectives
- strengthen Scotland-Ukraine ties
- explore pathways for postwar reconstruction and reconciliation

- create a space for engagement with public organisations and student societies to amplify Ukraine's story
- create volunteering opportunities for UoE and KNU students to engage with academic, advocacy, and policy practitioners, fostering an environment of learning and impactful participation

Ukraine's Foreign Policy – Key Current Directions

The Trump administration has underappreciated the level of disagreement between Ukraine and Russia. A combination of factors makes implementing a “quick peace deal” difficult. Chief among them is the absence of a possible agreement zone and the fact that this war is part of a larger conflict over the future of international order, its rules and values. Ukraine needs allies and pragmatic arguments to support its cause. The war will likely become a frozen conflict with a potential to stifle Ukraine's development.

Energy Matters in Ukrainian Politics

The presentation tackled three significant prospective developments:

- Once the existing gas system is reconstructed, Ukraine can become an essential interconnection between the North and South.
- Regarding nuclear energy, Ukraine has already demonstrated how to diversify away from Rosatom. Ukraine has a strong potential to become a hub for nuclear supply chain. It can also export its nuclear expertise.
- Ukraine has a significant renewables potential. Once a surplus of renewable energy is achieved, Ukraine could become a producer and exporter of green hydrogen. Given the difficulties of transporting hydrogen, it could be used in Ukraine as a foundation for building a green regeneration of the country's industrial base.

Research Results: Wartime Diplomacy

The current Network's core team joint research aims to characterise Ukraine's wartime foreign policy narratives and understand how these narratives evolved over time. We have analysed presidential speeches delivered between Feb 2022 – Feb 2024 and directed at state officials and/or representatives in intergovernmental organisations (e.g. UN meetings, EU and NATO summits). Key themes we have identified so far:

- emphasis on shared values between Ukraine and Europe
 - Ukraine as the defender of Europe and European values
 - Ukraine's 'Europeanness' vs Russia's 'Otherness'
- more than a regional conflict:
 - 'ideological confrontation' with anti-European Russia
 - Russia's attempt to 'provoke chaos in the entire democratic world'

- inconsistency in the positioning of Ukraine: Ukraine as a guarantor of stability, and in need of security guarantees from others
- change of rationale when soliciting support – from negative to positive arguments.

We also noted a change in tone when soliciting support – from restrained towards more assertive.

Teaching and Learning Resources on Ukrainian Politics

There are excellent resources already available out there. Some of the most prominent are: [Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute](#) (+ [Ukrainica](#)); New York Times' '[Teaching Resources to Help Students Make Sense of the War in Ukraine](#)'; CFR Education's '[Resources on the War in Ukraine](#)'; Brown University Choices Programme's '[The Ukraine Crisis](#)'; University of Tartu's MOOC '[Ukraine: The European Frontier](#)'; and Timothy Snyder's '[The Making of Modern Ukraine](#)' lectures. The majority, however, focuses on the war. Here lies potential for this Network to develop resources that would foreground Ukrainian culture and society beyond the context of war. The emphasis should be less on didactical material and more on sparking students' interest through fascinating interconnections, for example, the Dingwall Trident, [Hallmuir Ukrainian Chapel](#), or the founding of Donetsk by the Welshman John Hughes. The little-known Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk connects Ukrainian political history with the Western tradition. The story of Taras Shevchenko's treatment by Tsarist Russia has interesting parallels to modern Russian attempts to suppress Ukrainian identity. The British Council's [UK-Ukraine School Partnerships](#) also offer potential linkages. Cultural production stemming from Ukraine or on Ukraine can be mobilised to generate students' curiosity. A few examples of film and music production are described below.

Brainstorming Session – ideas for the Network

1. The Network could pull together sources of expertise, e.g. in energy recovery/potential/security.
2. Open a platform for publishing students' research papers.
3. Open a small grants fund for research, teaching and learning initiatives.
4. Prepare short online courses, e.g. on wartime diplomacy.
5. Set up a more extensive cross-disciplinary, inter-institutional course on Ukrainian politics and society that should seek to centralise the Ukrainian perspective.

Possible teaching resources:

- academic articles: Alfred Stepan's '[Ukraine: Improbable Democratic "Nation-State", but Possible Democratic "State-Nation"?](#)'
- media production includes films such as *Chernobyl* and *Mr Jones* on the eponymous disaster and the Holodomor, respectively. *Winter on Fire* and *Ukraine on Fire* look at the events of 2014 from different perspectives, offering an opportunity for comparative analysis.

- academic books: Serhii Plokhy's book *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* is an authoritative and thorough treatment
- music by Khrystyna Soloviy is modern but inspired by the Ukrainian folk tradition of artists such as Nina Matvienko.
- Ukraine's [official website](#).