

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT
Online Event

The View from Ukraine on War and Recovery

DATE

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. ET

FEATURING

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Member of Parliament, Ukraine

Sevgil Musaieva

Editor-in-Chief, Ukrainska Pravda

Knut Dethlefsen

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CSIS EXPERTS

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Transcript By

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Max Bergmann: Good afternoon and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I am Max Bergmann, the director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program here at CSIS, and it is our privilege to welcome you here today.

Less than three months ago, as Russia invaded Ukraine, we all feared that Ukrainian democracy would not survive. But while war is raging in Ukraine as we speak, we can now say that Ukraine and its democracy will survive this war. They have won a great battle for their capital, and in doing so have shown the true strength and character of Ukraine and of a free and democratic people. They have done nothing short of inspire the world.

And so it is a tremendous privilege for me, for CSIS to be here today host two extraordinary leaders of Ukrainian democracy to talk about the present and future of Ukraine. We also hope to hear from all of you, the virtual audience for today's hybrid event. You can submit a question by using the, quote, "ask here" button on the CSIS event page. So, we hope to hear from you, and so, we can ask some of your questions to our speakers today.

But first, let me turn it over to my good friend Knut Dethlefsen, the head of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in the United States and Canada, who is sponsoring the visit to Washington of the Ukrainian delegation and this event today. Thank you. Knut?

Knut Dethlefsen: Thank you, Max.

Hi, everybody. We are live from Washington. My name is Knut Dethlefsen, and I represent the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in North America. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation is a German political foundation close to the Social Democratic Party, close to the Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz. We are very grateful to be at CSIS that we can host this event together.

The Russian war on Ukraine changed all our lives, but mainly it changed the lives of the Ukrainian people, and I think it's very important that we have the opportunity to hear and discuss the perspective of the Ukrainian people today in this event.

Germany and the United States are working hard together to help Ukraine to win that war and that is – our efforts will hopefully lead to victory. But we will hear the perspectives today of the Honorable Galyna Mykhailiuk, and she is a member of the Ukrainian Parliament. She is a member of the president's party and is here on an advocacy visit, sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Together with Sevgil Musaieva, she's the editor-in-chief of the biggest online newspaper in Ukraine, the Ukrainska Pravda, and we are very grateful that

they agreed today to speak with us. And I turn it over without further ado to Max Bergmann, who will lead this conversation. Thank you very much for being with us today.

Mr. Bergmann: Well, thank you Knut, and I think let's just get into the conversation because we'd love to hear from you – from both of you about what's the situation like on the ground in Ukraine? How have your lives changed? Are things starting to return back to normal? Halyna, maybe we start with you.

Galyna Mykhailiuk: Thank you for invitation for this event. Thank you for paying so much attention to our tragedy. Actually, this is the 83rd day of full-scale war in Ukraine, and the life of Ukrainians it changed completely.

Myself, this is my first time when I cross the border and I left my country. This is my first time visit abroad, and I should say that 83 days myself and my family we live under missiles, spent a lot of time in the bomb shelter.

I had an opportunity to address European Parliament from the bomb shelter while the walls of my house were shaking because it was the moment when the bombings from Russia came. Unfortunately, a number of deaths, a number of civilians have lost their lives because of this invasion.

The current situation is that every day – every single day Russia doesn't stop. The plan is to have full occupation of Ukraine in 2022. Yeah, this year. Actually, a recent couple of weeks I spent in Odesa, and Putin officially announced that by 9th of May he wants to have occupation of Odesa and to cut the south of Ukraine and the sea. And this is the only one city that Putin named during his speech on the 9th of May at the parade in Moscow.

So, that actually on the 8th of May here we had seven missiles come into my city. The next day 10 missiles. And it doesn't stop because we have open sky, and well, every day might be your last day. Their target is civilian houses, infrastructure.

So, they bomb railway stations. They bomb food storages, hospitals, bus houses. So, it's not that they attack only military objects. No, they want to have panic among civilians, among Ukrainians. Their target is basically to destroy Ukraine as a country and Ukrainian nation. That's why we cannot say this is purely military issue. No, their goal is also civilians, Ukrainian civilians.

We cannot say about the life is back. I should say that unfortunately it might never be again the same, because a number of people have lost their lives. A number of people have injuries like, you know, cut hand or they don't have, like, feet, et cetera. Some civilians, they're coming back. More than a million

of Ukrainian refugees, they are back to Ukraine now because they miss their families. They want to be next to their fathers and husbands. Others decided to be back because they want to get back to their offices. And it's not possible anymore to be – to work online.

But we as parliament, we were there. We didn't leave our country. Regularly, every single week, we have meetings and votings in the parliament. Yes, it's different now, because let's say we gather under the glass roof, and one missile will be enough basically for us. That's why it's not livestreamed, the parliamentary meetings, as it used to be, and we do not announce when it will convene. So that's why, especially in March, when Kyiv Oblast was partly occupied and it was 30 kilometers away from Kyiv where occupied areas were, that's why, let's say, we do it in different way. But we are regularly on track. And all important decisions was constitutional majority in the parliament, adopted with 300-plus votes.

So I should say that all political parties, they are united now. They were united from the very first day. And we do our best to win this war as soon as possible, and we're indeed very grateful for our international partners, that you help us a lot. And we count on you. And we will win this war together.

Mr. Bergmann: Well, the unity of Ukraine, I think, has really been on display. And I'm curious, as a journalist covering the war as a Ukrainian, how – you know, how has life changed for you? How has it been covering this war? What's your sort of take, read, on the situation in Ukraine and Ukrainian politics right now?

Sevgil Musaieva: Thank you for this question, and good afternoon.

So for me personally, this war started eight years ago, because I am Crimean. And during the annexation of Crimea in 2014, we created with our friend organization Crimea SOS, which started together all war crimes and human-rights violations on occupied Crimea.

So during the last – for the last eight years, we controlled everything – what's going on with human rights. We also are trying to inform world about people replacement, which took place in occupied Crimea; also, militarization of peninsula; a lot of things – also captured people, imprisoned people, et cetera.

But what we faced with after 21st of February, it was kind of something unpredictable and horrifying. Of course, because of – because we work in information field, we were prepared a little bit more. We had our security plan. And for this security plan, I decided to stay, for example, in Kyiv. And part my team already worked from different places.

But then, when invasion has started, day 21st, I received a call from British diplomat that probably you will be on the list of these people who will be target if Russia will come to Kyiv. If Russian forces will occupy Kyiv, probably they will capture some famous people, journalists, activists, civil rights – civil human-right defenders. So you to leave, and as soon as possible. You have 48 hours. And of course I started to cry. It was too emotional. And I first leave. And it was like that. So what I want to say –

Mr. Bergmann: Was this before the war had officially started, or?

Ms. Musaieva: No, no, no. It was 21st of – day 21st, like five hours after – five hours after when it was, so.

I am often asked what is the war about, actually. So and I want to describe but I want to try to answer this question and make three important points. For example, my favorite and one of the most famous historians in Ukraine, Yaroslav Hrytsak, called this war about the future of the world and I can agree with this because now we are dealing with this – with something that we'll recognize what will be the future model of this world, if it will be democratic world or if it will be authoritarian – kind of authoritarian regime will force a lot of countries how to change their political system.

You know that after the collapse of Soviet Union, Francis Fukuyama, for example, he predicted the end of history, but, unfortunately, now we're faced with this challenge here, challenging times for American democracy and European democracy. And if we will, please God, not fail this situation it will mean that someday Russia will probably occupy another states because I think that the goal of Putin is to restore kind of his empire and to gather more states under occupation of Soviet Union.

So this is also a pre-colonization war. What I mean? So for the centuries, for the, you know, hundred years, Ukrainians fought for the right to be independent and they paid by their lives and, actually, you know, that what I want to mention as a journalist, of course, from history of Ukraine we knew a lot of tragic pages. I mean Holodomor. I mean deposition of Crimean Tatars, and for me as a Crimean Tatar it's a big, big tragedy. And this is so sad that in 21st century we are already faced with even more difficult things for us. For example, tomorrow, we will have this memory day for Crimean Tatar deportation and I can believe that now we face this deportation of a lot of Ukrainian people in Russia they forced to leave and we can count that it's already 1 million people who were deported by Russian forces from these occupied territories.

We knew about filtration camps, which is something kind of – I can't believe that it's possible. So and already in these filtration camps they captured 1 million people as well. So 200,000 kids separated from their parents, some of

them were also, firstly, deported to Russia to become – we have even no idea where they are.

So I'm not a human right defender but I have to be a human right defender because I need to fix all this human rights violations, all this atrocities, and, of course, I went to these places. After all the small cities were freed by Ukrainian army, I went to Borodyanka. I went to Bucha. I saw these places totally destroyed by Russians and, believe me, it's something I've never seen before. And, of course, I am not kind of a war reporter. But I had a – I have a friend war reporter and he said that, I've never seen something like that in Afghanistan, in Iraq. It's a large-scale war and even people with experience, even people who went through, they don't believe that it's possible, and it's going on and this is online war as well.

And I want to mention the third angle of this war. It's the war between truth and propaganda, and Russian propaganda is fueling this war so much. And, of course, we were faced with this for the last eight years because of Russia Today existence, because of different fake news about Ukrainian army and you know that for the last eight years or so, Russia lied a lot of that about the presence in Donbas. They told us probably they were not in Crimea – you know, that it was kind of unnamed, green people for the beginning. But then we know what happened.

And, you know, and it's not our challenge. It's challenge for all Western media as well and Western democracy. And here I want – you know, of old people so photos from Bucha, from Borodyanka, from Irpin, and I want to mention the quote made by – today, actually. It was early morning today made by Peskov, who is press officer of Vladimir Putin. What he said, that Ukraine has an army of PR companies and advisers who create streams of lies and – (inaudible)– fakes. Kyiv could hardly have made such masterful bloody staging in Bucha on its own.

So, and I want to give you truth that, for example, I want to mention Bucha, where my employee's father, of Ukrainska Pravda journalist, Yevgeny Kizilov was murdered. And do we want – how it happened: Just soldiers came to his garden and he was unarmed and he was killed by a Russian soldier, and his body for the last – for 10 days lay there and they even don't have a chance to bury it, and we still have no idea where it is.

The second story connected to Irpin were the friend of mine, my colleague, my classmate at Harvard, he's U.S. citizen Brent Renaud, Time reporter. He came to Ukraine to cover our refugee crisis. He also was killed by Russian army. And then you can see how Peskov is still lying about what's going on.

So – and that's why, you know, propaganda helps Russia, propaganda fuels Russia and Russian society as well, because, for example, for Russian

soldiers, they have a license just to kill people because all of them believe that they are fascists. Also Russian population and Russian people inside Russia believe that this is a war for liberty, that they have no idea that it will be different, et cetera, so more than 73 percent of Russian population still support Putin there and – but even they saw all these war crimes already Russian army did in our country.

Mr. Bergmann: One of the – it's sort of unfortunate – unfortunately commonplace – a humiliated army – is that armies that have been defeated then sometimes resort to this sort of butchery, and I think one of the things that's been so astonishing was both the war crimes that were committed but also the heroism of Ukrainians in being able to fight back the Russians that were coming down toward Kyiv.

One question I want to just turn to you, Halyna, is to talk about Odesa and the Russian-speaking populations of Ukraine, where a lot of the assumption that Vladimir Putin, I think the Russians had – that they would march into the Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine, Ukraine has historically been somewhat divided between Russian-speaking east and the Ukrainian-speaking west, and that they would have the support of the population, and in particular in Odesa. And I'm curious your take on why that wasn't the case and why he was so wrong about that.

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Again, that was one of the points of Russian propaganda. Myself, I started – well, I went to school in Crimea in Yalta, and it was Russian school. Then I continued my education in Odesa; I lived there for 18 years and it was again Russian school, Russian class, most – the gymnasium and then two universities. But my family is Ukrainian-speaking, so my parents always address me in Ukrainian, my grandparents always addressed me in Ukrainian, but when I was three years old I suddenly came from the kindergarten speaking Russian and that's why till 2014 I was a Russian-speaking person because I grew up in Russian-speaking society. But it doesn't mean that I'm in favor of Russia. No. So this is just – we can speak both Ukrainian and Russian. And after 2014 I completely switched into Ukrainian, only because this is a matter of, like, personal, you know, attitude to this war. And I should say that we have a number of friends even in Kharkiv that they were Russian-speaking till February 23rd of this year. So a number of people now just, although they were Russian-speaking for 40, 50 years of their life, but they told that they will never continue to speak Russian on an everyday basis because they don't want this be used against us.

Ukrainian cities like both Odesa and Kharkiv, they do not want to be part of Russia, of Russian empire. Even though we have a number of people in already occupied territories like in Kherson region, in Zaporizhzhia region, they already occupied, unfortunately, but they go on their squares and they

tell Russian soldiers that go away, we don't want to be part of Russia; we are part of Ukraine. They go there on the – in front of the state buildings with Ukrainian flags. Of course, afterwards they are beaten or they are killed, unfortunately, because of this action.

But Ukrainians in Russian-speaking regions, they are not afraid to stop tanks with their bodies because they were telling we will not give you possibility to go further into Ukrainian territories. So they do it – so they risked their lives, but we have a number of videos/photos how basically Ukrainians who are occupied what they tell to Russians, that we were not welcoming you, you know. We were not waiting for you. It was Russian propaganda and this brainwashing that was probably for the last maybe at least 10 years in Russian.

And that's why we have a number of telephone calls that were taped by our state security services where Russian soldiers, they have calls to their family in Russian Federation and they said, we are surprised; they are not welcoming us. And we are surprised their, let's say, way of life, and you know, that they have pavements in the villages. Can you imagine, they have TVs in all the houses? They live much, much better than – it's much more prosperous country than Russian Federation. But actually, what we did you cannot imagine. Like, we destroy everything here. We have an order to kill everyone – even kids, even women. I don't remember how many people I've killed already; maybe 20, maybe 30. I don't care. So this is actually the conversation between the husband soldier calling home.

And you know what the reply of the wife is? Yeah, like, can you please steal somewhere, like, iPhone, MacBook? And I need a washing machine. And this is what Russian soldiers do: They came, they make invasion just to rob our houses. And they – we have also this information, it was on the news how they transport washing machines with their tanks. So they don't have space to collect corpse, bodies of soldiers because they need to move all the robbed, you know, shopping list from their family what they don't have. So that's why the reality is dramatic.

But all Russian-speaking population, they are Ukrainians. They want to be part in – they want to live in Ukraine and they don't want to have any kind of connection to Russian Federation whatsoever.

Mr. Bergmann: Yeah. I think the challenge of Russian disinformation and Russian propaganda, it's an issue that we here in the United States and elsewhere in Europe have struggle with throughout the past eight years but particularly since 2016. I'm curious, Ukraine has I think in some ways figured out a way to insulate itself to a degree from a lot of the Russian disinformation and propaganda. I'm curious if the role of the media in Ukraine right now in providing legitimate information, in getting word out, how do you see the

role of Russian disinformation and propaganda within Ukraine, Sevgil, and also the role as a journalist in being the target of some of that Russian disinformation?

Ms. Musaieva:

Yeah. Already I was trying to get some light on this topic, I mean, Russian disinformation and truth. And of course, if we will talk about, first, like, invasion of Crimea or Donbas, I think that it was a big – a big, big challenge for Ukraine. But because we have already this experience, this war for Ukrainian journalists and for Ukrainian society, was more – was more – you know, we already have knowledge. We already have an experience. We have already have – because when you face such brutal things before, you already kind of prepared that you can fight with all the disinformation things now.

And it helped us a lot. It helped us to cover – to cover stories. And of course, during – for the last – for the last kind of six years, Russia tried her best just to implement kind of some Russian channels, Russian propaganda. So we – you know, we may be that, for example, there are kind of big media holding created by Viktor Medvedchuk, who was close to Putin. And he – they invested, like, billions, billions of dollars for this particular issue, just to polarize Ukrainian society, just to make all these narratives of work for Ukrainian society.

But it didn't help them. Last year our security council decided just to sanction all these channels. And it was the right decision. Of course, we had a discussion about freedom of speech, but it was right decision from my point of view because I know and I experienced, experience every day, and every day challenge by Russian propaganda, and how they work. You know, I want to mention here that Russian propaganda, Russian disinformation is a big challenge for not only Ukraine – because we already have experience and we know how to fight – but, please, you need to think about it. It's a big challenge for your democracy.

For example, two weeks or three weeks ago CNN published investigation about troll army, which was based in Ghana. And they spread a lot of disinformation about Black Lives Matter. And their investigation showed that it was Russian troll army. So, kind of, they spent thousands and thousands of dollars just to create this troll army, just to kind of fight against truth. And during this war, well, I already mentioned that they still lie about Bucha massacre. They still say that it's not true. It's all this fake news, et cetera. You maybe heard about kind of bio laboratories – biological laboratories that they kind of created.

And it's more for – of course, it's more about their audience, I mean, Russian population inside country. So in Russia today, for example, I do remember that 35 percent of people, of audience of Russia today, is internal audience of Russia. So they consume those fake news already inside their society. So it is

challenging. And I think that it's a huge, huge challenge for your national security too. It's my personal opinion.

Mr. Bergmann: One of the things that we're seeing is that – I think in this crisis, because what's happened in Ukraine has been so vividly portrayed and covered by news media here and in Europe, there's a lot of attention and focus being paid. But the Russia disinformation's having a much greater impact actually on the rest of the world than it is right now, at least when it comes to Ukraine, in shaping perceptions in favor of Russia elsewhere in the global south. And I think that's something that we're really going to have to look at.

I want to sort of turn in our roughly last 10 to 15 minutes to the future of Ukraine, and where you sort of see Ukraine going. One of the major concerns that we've had here in the United States – this is a concern Vice President Biden had and now, I think, is still shared by his administration – is about corruption in Ukraine and how Ukraine will be able to rebuild itself and address some of the issues of corruption. I'm curious, Halyna, what your take is on kind of the future of Ukraine reconstruction, the challenges of corruption, and how you sort of see Ukraine rebuilding after this war and strengthening its democracy.

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Well, I do hope that we will win the war as soon as possible, because the longer it will take the more expensive it will be for us, because every day civilian infrastructure is bombed and we have more and more destructions all over Ukraine every day. Well, actually, we understand that we should change our lives the way we used to be, in a more military state. I mean, we might be the second Israel, because previously we were very much peaceful. We had good economic results after COVID. So our government managed to succeed and to overcome this COVID period better than other countries. So we had good economic results.

But unfortunately, because of this 83 days of war, we already realize that the GDP drop will be around 45 percent at least this year, so, you know, compared to 11 in Russia – only 11, with all the sanctions. And actually, we realize that we will need to have military, like, at schools, universities, maybe shopping malls, at least at the beginning. We understand that, of course, we need international assistance. But we have also negotiated with some countries or some cities voluntary would like to be in charge of restoration of some regions. For example, Estonia would like to be in charge of Zhitomir region; cities of Bergamo, they would like also to take care of Mariupol, especially drama theater that was bombed.

We have a number of already requests, if you can say it, in this war, like, offers from countries that they would like to take care of particular regions and to help us to rebuild as soon as possible. And I firmly believe that this kind of assistance from all over the world will help us to start from, of

course, infrastructure main objects, because currently, unfortunately, at least 2 million of people, they do not have access to the drinking water. And we have every day, in 21st century, kids dying from dehydration because they don't have. In the occupied territories, unfortunately, we have hunger and people dying from the lack of water.

That's why we already have with the Ukrainian parliament, together with the government special expert groups in different sectors, built plans of how it will go to be ready as soon as we will win the war, to start restoration and to think about future economic prospects. Of course, we will welcome international investors. And we have already made tax reform. Currently it's, like – you can call it tax haven in Ukraine, because we just removed taxes in a number of branches. And we hope that it will help us to have more and more foreign investors.

You have asked also about corruption. Well, as you know, let's say, all the financial support that comes, for example, from U.S., it comes in the form of weapons or humanitarian assistance. We do not deal with money. It's you who buy the gifts, and your companies then transfer. So it just – there is not even a hint to have any kind of corruption.

And I think everyone knows that recent five, 10 years we had corruption reforms. We have the new anti-corruption court in place. We have a number of anti-corruption agencies. And, like, I should say that all international partners were happy with the way Ukraine develops, and, yes, developed lots of money into the prosperity of Ukraine and building this institution that we're functioning, actually.

That's why I should say that Ukraine was and hopefully will be developed independent state. And there is no way other to succeed for us, because it's existential for us to win and then to develop.

Mr. Bergmann: And I want to ask you quickly about – you've covered corruption –

Ms. Musaieva: Yes.

Mr. Bergmann: – the oligarch class in Ukraine. How do you see that evolving as Ukraine moves forward?

Ms. Musaieva: Yes. And I want to say that I investigated corruption. I was, of course, reporter and I covered corruption issues during Yanukovich period, and I can say that for the last eight years I can compare the level of corruption how it was. And of course, after revolution of dignity we our created anti-corruption platform, so we have already a lot of anti-corruption members, anti-corruption units, and it helped us move forward and do our – what is – what is important is judicial reform. Without judicial reform, of course, our

country will not succeed – successful; I mean, if we will win tomorrow. So judicial reform is number-one reform that useful and make life necessarily for Ukrainian future. It's my personal opinion, but I do know that civil society and journalists will agree with me.

So, of course, our goal is become a member of European Union in the future. And of course, we do understand that we had a plan how to transform our country. Of course, I cannot – probably, I predict that it will be challenging times, but we have strong civil society. We have independent journalism. And for the last eight years, you help us to move our country forward. So I think I have a big hope for this.

And my last point, we don't trade our territorial integrity. We don't trade our sovereignty. And for us, victory will mean, of course, that we will have our country and I will be able, for example, to travel to Crimea. Yes, I have a big dream to be back home. And without it, I think that victory will be not full, unfortunately. So we have a hope that it will happen.

Mr. Bergmann: Can I ask, there's questions from the audience about – could you maybe describe the importance of Ukraine – of EU membership and, also, thoughts about NATO membership for Ukraine? How important is EU membership? Where does potential NATO membership – is that a focus? What is the priority here? What –

Ms. Musaieva: No nations who pay such a big price for become part of European Union and for European family. It's already eight years and it has started during, you know, first revolution, I mean Orange Revolution, then during revolution in dignity when more than 100 people were killed by police. And every single day, our soldiers also pay life for being – for democratic values. And I think it's important to know.

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Well, we do hope that the voting on the candidates will take place in June. We have – we have already by early May submitted our home task that was a questionnaire that was presented by European Union. And we do hope for a positive decision because a long time ago it was introduced into constitution our European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Myself, I am also a representative of Ukrainian parliament in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. And, like, today NATO Parliamentary Assembly comes to Lviv to discuss further plans, and next week I'm going to Vilnius on the spring session that was supposed to take place in Kyiv. Unfortunately, because of obvious reasons, it was moved to Vilnius. But the main agenda will be Ukraine and Ukrainian status and further steps of Ukrainian development towards this area.

I mean, I should say that regularly we do legislative reforms, we adopt legislation that should help us on our way to NATO. And, like, at least once half a year we have visit to the NATO Headquarters, where we show what was done, what are the results. And I should say that all the times our partners in NATO, they were happy with what have been done.

Of course, now we cannot say, well, the last – the recent three months is different. You know, we need to fulfill the tasks that we face every day in terms of military invasion, yeah. That's why some reforms, they were just stopped/paused for this war period because, unfortunately, we have everyday challenges that are unpredictable. But I think everyone understand this. But I think that – and a number of people agree – that back to 2008 it was a mistake that Ukraine, by some countries' decision, was not considered seriously to be a candidate to –

Mr. Bergmann: Well, I think there's sort of no doubt now the military strength that Ukraine would bring to the NATO alliance. The last question that we have, and this is a very sort of specific question, about what are the prospects for Ukraine's ports? So the Port of Odesa? How is the food situation, the ability to get out agriculture, the grains? The world, in many ways, is dependent on Ukraine as not just the breadbasket of Europe, but of the entire world. What is the prospect of getting goods out of Ukraine if the ports are shut down? What is the likelihood of them being reopened?

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Yeah. So currently all the ports they're closed, obviously, because, as I told you, I've spent a couple of recent weeks in Odesa. And you just see Russian Navy, you know, in the sea. And they are monitoring this field. So there is not any possibility that Ukrainian ship can go out, because they already bombed some international ships with some cargo. And additionally, on the top, they put around 400 mines that can move around, just to prevent any kind of ships moving to Ukraine and out of Ukraine. And these mines were already found in Turkey, in Bulgaria, in Romania, and I think that yesterday morning even in Odesa beaches. So they do their best to block the Odesa seaport.

It was also attacked by missiles but, thanks God, not so heavily. But we have – so currently when we talk about functioning of Odesa port after our victory, we should think about demining the sea, because we need to have a safe, let's say, way of this crops, of this wheat out of Ukrainian territory. But currently, because of difficulties with Odesa port and Mykolaiv and Kherson have been – they cannot be used as ports anymore, unfortunately. But we have some small ports in Odesa region, like Izmail, this is just on the border with Romania, that can be also used. But it's small and the amount of supplies cannot compare to the Odesa port.

But we also consider transportation to Constanta in Bulgaria. But again, logistics a big complicated. But a number of ways are now considered how

it's possible, because we have storages that can be today transferred. And they are waiting for their export. But that is not possible because of Russians, you know, doing their best either to send a missile there and destroy it, if they know the location of food storages, or just to block it within the sea side.

Mr. Bergmann: Yeah. It's a major global crisis being caused by Russia's blockade. And I hope – I think it's an area where we can hopefully rally the world to put additional diplomatic pressure on Russia to ease that blockade, to allow ships to come out –

Ms. Musaieva: Yeah. Just want to add that I had an interview with the head of a big agricultural company last week. And he said probably that Ukraine will gather around 80 percent of last year harvest. So it's not a problem of our country. So it's kind of we have – we will – we did everything possible, just to gather this. We will do everything possible to gather this harvest. But the main problem is delivery. And he explained the situation that they have full elevators, full storages of these grains. And it's impossible just to deliver them. And if, for example, usually Ukraine can deliver around 6 to 8 million tons of this grain every month. Now last month they delivered only 200,000 tons. Which is nothing. So for our internal use, of course, we will have enough grain. But it's more about global challenge for food security in the world.

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Actually, Ukrainians, we do understand that we have some responsibility in terms of food security towards the world. And that's true that we will have 80 percent of the harvest, but it's not so easy to make it because, well, current situation is that all the territories that were de-occupied, they are full of mines. So, first, we need to have de-mining procedures. We have farmers in helmets, like, doing all the procedures with the crops because every moment missile can come. So, despite all these facts of real threats to the life of farmers, they do their best to deliver. And then, of course, the government will do our best to try to have the experts to –

Ms. Musaieva: So it's also about courage of our people, and even farmers and agriculture holdings.

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Yeah. That's true.

Mr. Bergmann: Yeah. You know, it can't be overstated that one of the – that when a war ends it actually doesn't end with the munitions that don't go off, that the – the unexploded ordnance, and that the clearing that is needed in farms and in cities and villages will go on for years because it's fundamental to reconstruction.

We have one last question and we're over time. This conversation could go on for a long time, but I know you're very busy and have other obligations

around town. But we have one more question from some of our viewers, asking: Is there is a dialogue right now going on between civil society and government – and government officials and parliament about postwar reconstruction? So is there a shared vision? Is that sort of – is there currently underway a kind of thinking about what comes next, or is the war the focus right now? (Laughter.) Because it in some ways has to be, and we're not yet – you're not yet at the stage where you're actually thinking too deeply about the – about the future.

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Of course, the war is our priority number one, to win the war. But I have shared with you that we have already decided and we, like, developed these expert groups, together with MPs in certain fields, yeah, together with presidential office, to think about reconstruction, economic development, infrastructure, human rights. Sevgil mentioned about how to get our people back and what to do with those ones who lost their houses. So all these working groups, they started to function already in May. But of course, the main focus is to win the war, but we also think about future. And we really do hope that, with help of international society and partners and everyone, we will – we will win it. We don't have any other option.

Ms. Musaieva: It's my personal opinion, but I think that the succeed of recovery after war depends from this formula, how we will do that. And for my personal opinion, we should divide responsibility between international organization, between government of Ukraine, and civil society. If we will implement this formula, it will work.

Mr. Bergmann: Well, I want to thank you both so much for being here, for speaking with me. But more importantly thank you and Ukraine for standing up for democracy, for freedom, and I think really setting an example for all of us, reminding all of us that democracy is worth fighting for. Sometimes, you know, the success of Russian propaganda has been sort of convincing many in democratic societies that democracy doesn't really matter and that it's not something that – you know, democratic systems aren't necessarily better than other systems. But I think what you're demonstrating is the strength and resilience and pride shown by democratic societies. So thank you. Thank you for all that you're doing. I think our hearts here in Washington and the United States are very much with the Ukrainian people, and hopefully our money as well if Congress passes the Ukraine supplemental bill, which we hope will happen very soon. And our support will be then not just for this year, but for the coming years. So thank you so much.

Ms. Musaieva: Thank you.

Hon. Mykhailiuk: Thank you.

(END)

