

Preventing "Ukraine Fatigue"



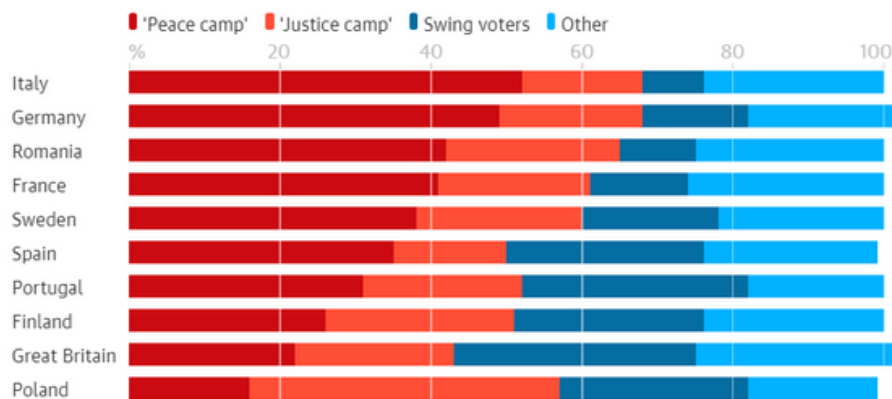
CONCERNS OVER "UKRAINE FATIGUE"

- "War Fatigue" (see right) is a natural risk of any conflict. As Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters its fourth month and enters a more grinding phase of incremental gains, there is a risk of the public losing interest, which will decrease pressure on states reluctant to invest in the conflict's outcome and increase pressure on those actively supporting Ukraine to disengage.
- The War Fatigue effect is exacerbated in the Ukraine Conflict by the significant impacts it is having on the [Cost of Living Crisis](#).
- This idea of 'Ukraine Fatigue' is [already becoming visible](#). A [survey in nine EU member states](#) – Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden – plus the UK found support for [Ukraine](#) remains high, but that concerns had shifted from 'justice' for Ukraine to mitigating the conflict's wider impacts through immediate peace.
- This fatigue poses a serious risk to Ukraine and the wider International Community. Evidence suggests the Kremlin is [banking on it](#) in order for the West to disengage from the conflict; weakening Ukraine and contributing to a Russian victory.
- Beyond an immediate detriment to Ukraine's defensive capabilities, it will demonstrate to autocratic actors that the West lacks the capability to seriously resist in event of a long-term conflict (hybrid or regular); encouraging future belligerence and undermining international stability that will inevitably lead to repeated crises that will exacerbate current problems like cost of living. It is critical that this is countered, but how?

WAR FATIGUE

As wars become drawn out into grinding campaigns of attrition, successes become less perceptible, while 'wall to wall' coverage of suffering in the conflict unintentionally desensitizes the public and decreases their sympathy for the affected populace. At the same time, the public questions their government's support for the conflict and/or those affected, particularly in light of growing domestic issues.

Voters in European countries mainly favour either immediate peace in Ukraine or 'justice' in the form of defeat for Russia



Guardian graphic. Source: Datapraxix and YouGov, May 2022. ECFR. Note: Some lines do not add up to 100 due to rounding

A STRATEGY FOR PREVENTING UKRAINE FATIGUE

- **MOVE BEYOND 'IF IT BLEEDS IT LEADS' - Story Diversity**
 - Focus on the suffering caused by conflict is a natural and important part of media coverage, but risks desensitizing the public to the violence and creates misconceptions of Ukraine as a state to be pitied rather than supported.
 - Media support for Ukraine must highlight Ukraine's unique culture and identity, the impacts on current crises that are unlikely to be resolved by peace with the Kremlin and the humorous situations they have found within the conflict (which has been an important part of Ukraine's strategic communications).
 - This will create a more three dimensional image in the public eye and cultivate support.

• GET INSIDE THE BUBBLE - Tech and Partnerships

- The Kremlin's tight control of media within Russia and Belarus means these audiences are fed disinformation that fuels general support for the war. But [increased use of VPNs](#) suggests the public are keen to know the truth about the conflict. Getting information into this sphere must be a top priority.
- Media spaces in the Global South have been filled by [CCP investment](#) and [Russian covert information operations](#); presenting a skewed narrative of the conflict and its impacts that has in part motivated their non-alignment. The West must proactively engage and compete in these spaces.
- Cultivating local partnerships with governments, NGOs, diasporas and businesses (especially tech) is key to ensuring facts enter these media spaces in a legitimate manner; isolating the Kremlin from support without compromising the moral high ground and present those suffering Ukraine fatigue with tangible results.

• KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE - Engagement and Research

- The message cannot be a catch-all approach. Different populations will have different concerns and different processes for receiving and interpreting information. The message must be tailored to accommodate this.
- This will require on the ground research and engagement; utilising local partnerships and diasporas to create a strong and legitimate network that will reinforce the facts across a range of mediums.