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Post-War Ukraine: A Kind of "Big Israel" in Europe?

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Abstract In April 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy argued that post-war Ukraine could resemble a "big Israel" in Europe regarding its security policy. But what implications would this have on the European security order? By comparing Kyiv's and Jerusalem's security circumstances, this paper shows that Ukraine cannot view itself as a "European Israel", although some parallels exist between both states. However, Israel's foreign policy could serve as a template for Kyiv.

Keywords Ukraine · Israel · European security order · Eastern Europe · Middle East

Die Nachkriegsukraine: Eine Art „Großes Israel" in Europa?

Zusammenfassung Im April 2022 sinnierte der ukrainische Präsident Wolodymyr Selenskyj, die Nachkriegsukraine könnte in ihrer Sicherheitspolitik einem „großen Israel" in Europa ähneln. Doch welche sicherheitspolitischen Auswirkungen hätte dies auf Europas Sicherheitsordnung? Der Vergleich der Sicherheitsumstände Kiews und Jerusalems zeigt, dass sich die Ukraine trotz gewisser Parallelen zu Israel nicht als „europäisches Israel" verstehen kann. Israels Außenpolitik könnte jedoch als Vorlage für Kiew dienen.

Schlüsselwörter Ukraine · Israel · Europäische Sicherheitsordnung · Osteuropa · Naher Osten

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1 Introduction

> I think all our people will be our great army. We cannot talk about "Switzerland of the future"—probably, our state will be able to be like this a long time after. But we will definitely become a "big Israel" with its own face. We will not be surprised that we will have representatives of the Armed Forces or the National Guard in all institutions, supermarkets, cinemas—there will be people with weapons (Volodymyr Zelenskyy as cited in Ofis Prezydenta Ukrainy 2022, own translation).

In April 2022, Zelenskyy spoke of post-war Ukraine as a "big Israel" in Europe, where security is the highest good the Ukrainian state will have to protect. But is Israel's security architecture an appropriate model for post-conflict Ukraine? And what would it mean for Europe to have a kind of Israel on its continent? This paper aims to discuss these questions. By comparing Ukraine's and Israel's security circumstances, this article will display that, although many similarities between Jerusalem's and Kyiv's security needs and views exist, there are still crucial differences that show that today's Ukraine cannot just see itself as the European copy of Israel in the future. Nevertheless, specific characteristics regarding how Israel deals with its neighbouring states and the international community have the potential to serve as templates for post-conflict Ukraine. These circumstances also make it necessary to portray succinctly what this could mean for Europe and how to prevent baneful effects on the whole European security order from such evolutionary processes in Eastern Europe.

In addition, such a comparison appears beneficial from two further perspectives: Firstly, the question arises as to whether (post-war) Ukraine's security demands could draw parallels with Israel's prioritization of security matters (including total defense when faced with existential threats). And secondly, does a similarity between Ukraine and Israel also imply the same geopolitical relevance and type of relationship (security guarantees) towards Ukraine as the Western states keep with the only democracy in the Middle East region (Israel)?

For experts like the former United States ambassador to Israel, Daniel B. Shapiro, Kyiv can indeed learn from Israel if it manifests such critical features from the Israeli experience into its security architecture like the prioritization of security, which does not run contrary to the democratic freedoms within its society, as well as the cooptation of all sectors of society into its national security system (Shapiro 2022).

Yet, this discussion has not sufficiently highlighted significant similarities and differences between both countries. The appliance of a comparative approach between both states' security features guided by three categories of examination (security-related, political, and socio-psychological issues) can accomplish this goal.

Thus, Shapiro's points, which have mainly a societal dimension, will be complemented by a paradigm that also focuses on embedding states in international norms, communities, conflict constellations, and the role of historical trauma for national and state identity.

2 The Security Layer

2.1 The Readiness to Commit Sabotage Acts Against Hostile Actors

> We all understand that oil depots and military bases in Russia have been blowing up over the last few months [...]. [...] but the Ukrainian official response is "someone was smoking in the wrong place and they must have done it themselves". They joke about it and make it clear that it's no one's business (Serhii Kuzan, as cited in Beaumont and Koshiw 2022).

An often-used approach by Israel to protect its national security is the targeted killing of individuals whom the country considers severe threats to its existence. Until 2018, Jerusalem drew approximately 2300 times on this method (Rubner 2018). The Supreme Court of Israel even ruled it as a legally conformable counter-terrorism method under specific circumstances in 2006 (Ganor 2021, pp. 356, 364–365). Yet, most of the time, Israel denies its involvement in such actions (Ganor 2021, p. 354).

According to the Moscow Times, from February to August 2022, Kyiv conducted approximately 19 such campaigns against individuals working for the Kremlin in its Russian-occupied territories (Tenisheva 2022). In October of 2023, the Washington Post also reported several assassination attempts by Ukrainian security forces against several leading Kremlin apologists on Russian soil (Greg and Khurshudyan 2023). Besides, many sabotage acts against Russian infrastructure objects near the Russian-Ukrainian border have been conducted. Similar to the Israeli tradition, Kyiv denies its involvement (Beaumont and Koshiw 2022).

It also seems that the Ukrainian leadership purposely plays with this new image, which undoubtedly creates a mysterious and deterrent aura around Ukraine's fighting skills. For instance, after an explosion in a building of the Federal Security Service of Russia in the Russian city Rostov-on-Don in March 2023, which is close to the Russian-Ukrainian border, speculations have been spurred again that Kyiv might be behind this renewed partisan warfare act (Ebel 2023). Although it remains unclear what caused the explosion there, Zelenskyy's advisor, Mykhailo Podolyak, seized the moment to tweet that "Ukraine doesn't interfere, but watches with pleasure" (Podolyak 2023), knowing that this would intensify the speculations around a possible Ukrainian involvement.

The number of such operations is far from that of the Israeli case. In addition, it should be kept in mind that Ukrainian sabotage acts and targeted killings are part of an ongoing war. It should be emphasized here that such tactics are a direct response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Kremlin's horrific acts against humanity on Ukrainian soil, like in Bucha and Mariupol, as well as the renewed illegal annexation of Ukrainian territories by the Kremlin, and the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia's mainland. In the case of Israel, sabotage acts and targeted killings are also carried out against threats to Israel's existence independently of a current ongoing military conflict.

2.2 The First Security-Related Difference: The Issue of Nuclear Capabilities

> Now, after all these events [Crimea annexation; war in Donbas], we can draw a conclusion that many will not like: nuclear disarmament was our historical mistake. The security guarantees given to us [in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994] are not even worth the paper they were written on (Oleksandr Turchynov as cited in Gordon 2018, own translation).

By signing the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, Ukraine (next to Belarus and Kazakhstan) became an official member of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It transferred its Soviet-inherited nuclear weapons to Russia, which in exchange (together with the United Kingdom and the United States of America) promised to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. As the quote above from 2018 shows, some (former) high-ranking Ukrainian officials (like Turchynov) consider this move a "historical mistake"—probably even more today. Additionally, another value of this quote lies in the fact that it is another expression of many points discussed below, namely the Ukrainian urge for deterrent capabilities and the Ukrainian officials' disbelief in international treaties.

On 19 February 2022—five days before the Kremlin invaded Ukraine—Zelenskyy spoke at the Munich Security Conference, referring again to the Budapest Memorandum and Russia's breach of it. He noted that Ukraine had not forgotten it had given up its nuclear weapons for the signatories' security assurances, including the ones from Russia. He then called for an extraordinary meeting of all Budapest Memorandum parties. Otherwise, Zelenskyy added, "Ukraine will have every right to believe that the Budapest Memorandum is not working and all the package decisions of 1994 are in doubt" (Zelenskyy 2022a).

It remains unclear whether Zelenskyy threatened to re-nuclearise Ukraine if the Budapest Memorandum signatories did not concur or whether this was just an unfortunate choice of words. Be this as it may, for the Kremlin's propaganda machine, that was just what it was waiting for. In the last pre-war days, it portrayed Zelenskyy's words as a direct threat to Russia and called for harsh responses by the Kremlin (Mikhailov 2022; Ivanin 2022; Koshechkina 2022). Eventually, Putin exploited Zelenskyy's words to justify his attack on Ukraine in his infamous TV speech to the Russian nation in the early morning of 24 February 2022 by stating: "Now they [Ukrainian leadership] also claim to get nuclear weapons. We will not allow this to be done" (Kremlin 2022, own translation).

In contrast to Ukraine, Israel is not an NPT member. However, it is well known that Israel has been a nuclear power since approximately 1967 or 1968. Israel's nuclear capabilities aim to deter its hostile regional environment and are a product of the fruitful and cooperative Israeli–French relationship in the 1950s and 1960s. So, when Zelenskyy envisions Ukraine becoming Europe's Israel, the most striking difference regarding military might is that Israel is a nuclear power, whereas Ukraine is not. However, the creation of the Israeli bomb would not have been possible without the cooperation of a former global power in the 1950s and 1960s: France. Here, Ukraine can learn from the Israelis if it wants to become a "big Israel" since one of Israel's primary foreign policy doctrines was always the establishment of "close

ties to a great power" (Alpher 2015, p. xxiv). Yet, assuming that the Americans or the European nuclear powers will subsidize Ukrainian nuclear aspirations is unrealistic. Still, looking at the military assistance from the United States towards Ukraine during the war, Kyiv can at least copy the Israeli experience in establishing a solid relationship with a global superpower. However, the decisive key for Kyiv will be to keep this close cooperation alive even after the armed conflict with Russia, as the Israelis have managed to do.

Nevertheless, any future attempts by Kyiv to threaten to leave the NPT might have a detrimental effect on its relationship with its western supporters. Simultaneously, western policymakers must acknowledge that an embryotic Ukrainian elite discourse about nuclear deterrence had already started before Russia's second invasion in 2022. In addition to that, Israel's defensive military tactics against its neighbouring Arab aggressors also comprise Israel's readiness to occupy its aggressors' territories to use them as bargaining chips in future peace negotiations. Ukraine's counteroffensive into the Russian Kursk Oblast since August 2024 might be the first sign of Kyiv's appliance of this defensive tool. According to the Pentagon Leaks of 2023, Zelenskyy thought about it already in early 2023 (Hudson and Khurshudyan 2023), as the following subchapter will display.

2.3 The Second Security-Related Difference: The Issue of Occupation

[Washington Post:] The Washington Post has obtained documents [the Pentagon/Discord leaks of April 2023] [...]. One of them says that on January 31 [2023], you suggested occupying parts of Russia along the border for future leverage in the negotiations. Is that true? [...] [Zelenskyy:] Let's not get into fantasies. Ukraine has every right to protect itself. And we are doing it. Ukraine did not occupy anyone, but vice versa. The war is about the occupation of Ukraine. Ukraine must win. What steps to take in order to win? That's another question. And don't be offended here, I'm not ready to share (The Washington Post 2023).

Another essential difference between Ukraine and Israel is the issue of occupation. After its victory in the Six-Days War of 1967, in which Israel defended itself from a coalition attack by its Arab neighbour states, Israel occupied the Syrian Golan Heights, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, the Jordan-controlled West Bank, and the Gaza Strip administered by Cairo. Because of failed efforts to find a peace settlement in the 1990s between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, the West Bank's occupation continues until today. The occupation of the Gaza Strip ended with the withdrawal of Israeli forces in 2005. Even if the West Bank's occupation resulted from a war that Israel did not start, Israel remains the occupying force in its conflict with the Palestinians in the West Bank.

In contrast, Ukraine has been the object of Russian occupational efforts, as the Crimea Annexation of 2014 and the Kremlin's annexation of four Ukrainian regions in south-eastern Ukraine in September of 2022 have proven. Therefore, to resemble the Israeli situation to some extent, theoretically speaking, Ukraine would have to occupy some Russian territories and use them later, as in the case of the former Israeli-

occupied Sinai Peninsula in 1967, as bargaining chips for a "land for peace"-deal comparable to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in 1979. However, even if the latest Pentagon leaks reveal that Zelenskyy and his government contemplated such a move already in early 2023 (Hudson and Khurshudyan 2023), which might have found its realization in Ukraine's counteroffensive into the Russian Kursk region since August 2024, the question arises whether such a scenario seems to be as promising as in the Israeli-Egyptian conflict since, compared to Egypt, Russia possesses nuclear weapons. Additionally, compared to the Israeli-Palestinian occupational situation, the Russo-Ukrainian issue of occupation represents a dispute between two established United Nations (UN) members, whereas, in the Israeli-Palestinian case, the conflict has a more internal character. It is simultaneously a conflict between an official UN member state (Israel) and an UN non-member observer state (Palestine).

Some authors even go so far as stating that within the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, Russia resembles more the Israeli narrative than Ukraine does by arguing that:

> The first value [of Israel is] the justice of the existence of the Jewish state, based on the thousand-year connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. There are obvious parallels with the Kremlin's political myth about Kievan Rus as the 'cradle of fraternal peoples', the obvious propaganda privatization of Ukrainian history since the time of Kievan Rus. These and other propaganda narratives justify the denial of the very right to the existence of Ukrainian statehood and are indicators of the existential nature of the conflict (Analitychnyi Tsentr as cited in Observatoriya demokratii 2022, own translation).

However, such a comparison ignores the crucial historical difference in the occupational practices between Israel and Russia again: Russia occupied Ukraine's territories by launching an illegal, offensive war against its neighbouring state to erase Ukraine from the world map. Israel, on the other side, occupied territories of its aggressors during defensive wars after its neighbouring states attacked it with the possibility of exchanging these occupied territories for peace and security guarantees coming from its aggressors (as happened in the past Israeli-Egyptian animosity).

Nevertheless, this quote points to another significant difference: Putin's imperialist claim to the Ukrainian state comprises not only the territory of today's Ukraine as an allegedly ancient Russian territory. He also views the Ukrainians as an artificial nation and believes Ukrainians are Russians, as he argued in his infamous essay "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians" from July 2021 (Putin 2021). In the Israeli case, however, the narrative of a mighty aggressor arguing that the Israelis were Arabs who should be violently incorporated into its state population is missing. In the end, although Ukraine and Israel differ here, the different circumstances led to the same effect in both states: A closer attachment to their national identity and history.[1] Thus far, on the security level, it becomes clear that Ukraine and Israel

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[1] Consequently, one should be cautious about jumping to dangerous conclusions where Ukraine and the Palestinian cause are often compared with each other. Especially after the Hamas terrorist attack against Israel on the 7 October 2023, such dangerous comparisons are often made in the public and expert discourses (e.g., Kravik 2024; Tocci 2024). Here, it was shown that the origins of the occupation and the nature of the conflict between the occupier and the occupied are very different in both conflicts. Thus, the western state community should not be afraid of accusations of alleged double standards regarding the handling of

are not identical in their features. However, it seems that Israel's different deterrent abilities are something Ukraine sees as appealing.

3 The Political Layer

3.1 The Periphery Doctrine

> No one has to take part in a disgraceful war. Dagestanis do not have to die in Ukraine. Chechens, Ingush, Ossetians, Circassians, and any other peoples who came under the Russian flag [do not have to die either]. [...] You know who sends them to Ukraine. The one [Putin] who sends [them] wants to make them "cargo 200" [code word within Russian military for the transportation of dead bodies from the battlefield] (Volodymyr Zelenskyy 2022b).

On 29 September 2022, shortly after the Kremlin announced a "partial" mobilization campaign, Zelenskyy sent a direct message to all ethnic minorities in Russia, calling them to resist the Kremlin's order (Zelenskyy 2022b). A few weeks later, on 19 October 2022, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law acknowledging Russia's autonomous republic Chechnya, which fought two secessionist wars against the Kremlin (1994–1996, 1999–2009), as a de-facto independent state by labelling it an occupied territory by Russia (Kyiv Post 2022).

Indeed, Kyiv's move can be interpreted as a way to put a new wedge between the Kremlin and Grozny. Moreover, the propinquity of the law's passing to Russia's illegal annexation of four Ukrainian regions in September 2022 is also a possible reason for this decision (Krasno 2022). Simultaneously, it could also be a quid pro quo towards parts of the Chechen diaspora fighting on Ukraine's side. In any event, these actions probably aimed at boosting a nationalistic mood among Russia's ethnic minorities and, thus, destabilizing Russia from within. Kyiv's declaration in October 2022 to view the Southern Kuriles as Japanese territory (Zelenskiy 2022) is another example of this strategy similar to an Israeli foreign policy approach called the "Periphery Doctrine" (PD).

> [The PD represents] the relationship that Israel has attempted to build with states (and minority groups) located in and outside of the Arab world or in a strategic location (for example, along a rival's borders). Beyond that, ties with such peripheral states have the potential to produce security and intelligence dividends for Israel through, for instance, joint intelligence sharing and operations along the partner nations' shared borders with Israel's enemies (Guzansky 2014, p. 100).

In the mid-1950s, the Israeli leadership developed this strategy to break the isolation of Israel within the Middle East region and the Muslim world (Alpher 2015, p. 3). Jerusalem realized the PD's first phase by establishing secret security part-

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the Russo-Ukrainian war and the current Hamas-Israel conflict because they are fundamentally dissimilar (in reality, every conflict in this world is inherently unique and, thus, not comparable to other conflicts).

nerships with Turkey and Iran under the Shah (Alpher 2015, p. 11). The most current version of Israel's PD can be seen in its strategic partnership with Azerbaijan (Guzansky 2014, pp. 99–100), which shares a common border with the Iranian state, and Israel's antagonism towards the mullah regime in Teheran (Göksel 2015, p. 663; Lindenstrauss 2015, p. 71).

Furthermore, the PD was not only directed toward internationally recognized states but also towards religious and ethnic minorities oppressed within Arab and Muslim states hostile to Israel (e.g., the Kurds in northern Iraq or the Christians in southern Sudan (now South Sudan)) (Alpher 2015, pp. 33–37, 51–59; Guzansky 2014, p. 101). The recent Pentagon leaks showcased how Kyiv's periphery outreach also touched on the Kurdish issue. In order to coerce the Kremlin to relocate some of its armed forces from Ukraine to Syria, Kyiv's military intelligence service allegedly planned in the fall of 2022 to conduct military strikes against the Russian military presence in Syria via Kurdish armed groups in the country's north-east. However, in December 2022, Zelenskyy put these plans aside (Hill and Horton 2023).

Nevertheless, the Israeli PD differs from Ukraine's PD in two major features: First, Israel conducted this strategy from (and because of) a position of isolation within the Middle East region. As subchapter 3.2. will show later, it would be exaggerated to say that Ukraine is comparably as isolated in Eastern Europe as Israel in the Middle East. And second, Jerusalem's relationships with its PD partners were always held on a minimal public level (Alpher 2015, p. 8). WikiLeaks published a secret cable sent to the Central Intelligence Agency from 2009, in which Azerbaijan's President, Ilham Aliyev, is quoted portraying the Israeli–Azerbaijani relationship "as being […] like an iceberg, nine-tenths of it is below the surface" (WikiLeaks 2009).

In comparison, it seems Kyiv tries to engage with its "kind-of-PD" partners openly, for the most part at least. Additionally, it remains unclear whether Kyiv is consciously copying this particular Israeli strategy or whether Kyiv's outreach towards Russia's (possible) antagonists is just the materialization of the realism's preaching: "The (possible) enemy of my enemy is my friend!" Notwithstanding, a certain level of a "pre-Periphery Doctrine" within the Ukrainian case is observable. By increasing the approach's clandestine feature and offering to its partners something that only Ukraine could offer them (in the Israeli case, it is technology and intelligence), post-conflict Ukraine could indeed develop its type of this Israeli foreign policy approach.

Kyiv's progress in this direction can already be observed. In September 2023, CNN reported on the involvement of Ukrainian security services in the Sudanese civil war on the side of the Sudanese military government. Allegedly, Ukraine conducted drone attacks against the Sudanese paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which the Kremlin supports. The Sudanese military government and Ukraine are silent on this cooperation (Butenko et al. 2023). This incident is another example of Ukraine's "pre-periphery doctrine"—but now with a more clandestine trait. Yet, as already said, one must remember that Israel's PD is a political reflection of its isolated location among its regional neighbors, which cannot be observed in the Ukrainian case.

3.2 The First Political Difference: A Politically Hostile State Neighbourhood

So, Israel is a country that is surrounded by an unfriendly Arab world, so to speak. A country that heroically fights for its existence every day. I would say more: we need to adopt the experience of Israel today in Ukraine. There is nothing more important than the Israeli experience, which lives in such conditions [like Ukraine] and fights for survival every day because we will have the same thing for many years to come (Dmitry Gordon 2023, own translation).

Since its founding in 1948, Israel has been surrounded by a hostile environment of four direct Arab neighbour states (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt) and other Muslim states in the Middle East. Several times, Israel's neighbours attempted to annihilate Israel via military means. Eventually, Israel concluded peace treaties with two of these direct neighbours (Egypt and Jordan). In sum, Israel fought six wars against its neighbours (the *Intifadas* and armed conflicts against Hamas are omitted), making it clear why the security issue was always an overwhelming topic in Israel's society.

The Kremlin's aggression toward Ukraine in 2014, as well as the subsequent full-fledged invasion by Russia's armed forces in February 2022—with logistical assistance from Ukraine's northern neighbour Belarus—have proven that Ukraine also has the right to view at least two of its seven neighbours (the other five are Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova) as an existential threat to its national security. Nevertheless, asserting that this is comparable to Israel's international security environment would be exaggerated. Moreover, the ongoing war in Ukraine has shown how Ukraine's other neighbouring states (with the exemption of Hungary) can be considered strong supporters of Kyiv in its fight against the Kremlin's aggression. Still, assuming that Ukraine's well-disposed direct neighbours are solely or collectively strong enough to change the military imbalance between Kyiv and Moscow toward Ukraine's favour would remain naive.

However, international politics is a notoriously volatile field. Especially three of Ukraine's neighbours, namely Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova, should be kept in mind. In Slovakia, the pro-Kremlin and nationalistic Smer-SD party won the parliamentary elections in September 2023 and announced reducing arm assistance to Ukraine (Hovet 2023). Orban's Hungary showed on several occasions that Budapest is not reluctant to go against Ukrainian interests. Orban's continuous attempts to soften the EU sanctions against the Kremlin, his refusal to deliver weapons to Kyiv, and even prohibiting third countries from using Hungarian territory for such transfers prove that the Ukrainian-Hungarian relationship is more than tense (Verseck 2022). Therefore, it seems unsurprising that, as the Washington Post writes, Zelenskyy considered commanding the destruction of the Druzhba oil pipeline system in February 2023, which supplies Hungary with Russian oil (Hudson and Khurshudyan 2023).

Last, Moldova could also pose a highly sensitive security challenge for Kyiv. Although Chișinău is a public and massive supporter of the Ukrainian cause, its territorial dispute with its breakaway territory Transnistria (with Russian involvement) should be considered by the West and Kyiv as serious instability factors that

could change the political circumstances on the ground to the detriment of Kyiv. Moreover, Transnistria's geostrategic value for the Kremlin, namely its proximity to the Ukrainian port of Odesa, shows again that the tensions on the south-western flank of Ukraine should not be downplayed. According to the Pentagon Leaks of 2023, the Kremlin allegedly planned back in February 2023 to destabilize Moldova by using former mercenaries of the Russian private military organization Wagner Group (The Washington Post 2023). To some extent, the Moldovan factor within the Ukrainian conundrum resembles the case of Israel's northern neighbour Lebanon. Lebanon, a politically labile state with high corruption practices, houses political actors like the Shia terror organization and Lebanese political party Hezbollah, which is actively supported by third countries like Syria and especially Iran in its fight against Israel.

Notwithstanding its hostile environment and its need to prioritize security issues, Israel has, since its existence, remained a functional democracy (Shapiro 2022). The Israeli society's democratic spirit is also shown by the latest protests against the highly disputed judicial reform in Israel, which ultimately forced the new-old-Netanyahu government to postpone its reform plans (Rose and Scheer 2023). However, it is not easy to draw a similar conclusion in the Ukrainian case, as the following subchapter will portray.

3.3 The Second Political Difference: The Issue of Democracy

> Ukraine will definitely not be what we initially wanted it to be. It is impossible. [...] Absolutely liberal, European—it [Ukraine] will not be like that (Volodymyr Zelenskyy as cited in Ofis Prezydenta Ukrainy 2022, own translation).

Indeed, the Ukrainian people have shown in two protest movements (2004–2005 and 2013–2014) that they can stand for their democratic rights, too. Still, even democracy indices like the Freedom House Index, considered in the academic literature as very friendly towards United States allies (Steiner 2016, p. 346), locate Ukraine since 2010 among the "partly free" states in the world—thus, as a dysfunctional democracy or semi-authoritarian state (Freedom House 2022). In all fairness, however, it must be said that, firstly, Ukraine has been experiencing an armed conflict in its south-eastern territory since 2014, and secondly, the Ukrainian state has been under martial law since the Kremlin's second invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Logically, such circumstances go hand in hand with certain limitations on core democratic principles.

Nevertheless, when asked about Ukraine's post-war political contour during an interview for Ukrainian media stations in April 2022, Zelenskyy gave an inconclusive prognosis: On the one hand, he stated Ukraine would be "absolutely democratic" (Ofis Prezydenta Ukrainy 2022, own translation). Furthermore, he added that "an authoritarian state is impossible in Ukraine. An authoritarian state would lose to Russia" (Ofis Prezydenta Ukrainy 2022, own translation) But, on the other hand, he argued in the same interview that post-war Ukraine would not be "absolutely liberal, European" (Ofis Prezydenta Ukrainy 2022, own translation). Yet, Zelenskyy still made his notorious claim in this interview that Ukraine will be like a "big

Israel with its own face" (Ofis Prezydenta Ukrainy 2022, own translation), not acknowledging, however, the fact that this would mean for Ukraine to be a liberal democracy with a political system of a very European type (Westminster system).

The real meaning behind Zelenskyy's words ("absolutely liberal"; "with its own face") in this matter remains unclear, and one can only speculate about it. Yet, this vagueness in terms of terminology should be taken seriously by the expert community. Future research endeavors should, for example, shed more light on the exact political contour of (post-war) Ukraine. Until then, Ukraine's western allies should make a solid effort to ensure that Ukraine takes the liberal path by integrating Kyiv into the European institutional design and rule-based order. Such efforts could further diminish the seeming unclarity in Zelenskyy's choice of words. Therefore, granting Ukraine the EU candidacy status in June 2022 and signalling to Ukraine that a clear political "home" is available for the Ukrainian state could be the correct procedures. However, more might be needed (see later in the conclusion). Consequently, since Ukraine and Israel differ in almost every political aspect, the political handling of Ukraine by its Western allies should also follow a different logic than towards Israel (see also later in the conclusion).

3.4 The Third Political Difference: The (Non-)Presence of a Political Diaspora Channel in the World

Our people are now scattered around the world. They are looking for security. They are looking for a way to stay in peace. As you [Israelis; Jewish people] once searched (Zelenskyy 2022c).

Another central strategic pillar of Israeli foreign policy was to enable further *aliyahs* (the influx of people with Jewish origins from around the world to Israel). Israel even has its own "Ministry of Aliyah and Integration", which is responsible for this matter (Ministry of Aliyah and Integration of Israel 2023). This strategy aims to keep a Jewish majority in Israel (Alpher 2015, p. 61).

Of approximately 15.3 million Jews in the world (a number for the year 2022), approximately 7 million people live in Israel and over 8 million across the globe (The Jewish Agency 2023), of whom the largest part lives in the United States of America (approximately 6 million people) (World Population Review 2023). Due to this, it is often falsely considered that the American Jews have an extraordinary influence on US politics in the form of the "American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)". However, looking more closely, there are many instances where, for example, the US government went contrary to the interests of Israel or AIPAC by conducting several arms deals with Israel's Arab neighbors. Many cases in which observers concluded to see the so-called "Israel lobby" in action were, in reality, the epitome of overlaps of interests between the US administration and Jerusalem. However, organizations like the AIPAC were essential in highlighting such overlaps (Aridan 2019, pp. 139–140).

In the context of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, the issue of "aliyah" also plays a crucial role: Israel's reluctance to supply Ukraine with weapons is based partly on the fear that the Kremlin could block future immigration waves from Russia to

Israel. In addition, the Kremlin's efforts to close the Jewish Agency (also responsible for the "aliyahs") in Russia (Borshchevskaya 2022), as well as Lawrov's last year's provocative and anti-Semitic comments about Hitler's alleged Jewish origins, can be seen as threatening signals towards Israel in this matter (Likhachev 2022a).

Contrary to Israel, it is difficult to speak of a similar diaspora channel in the Ukrainian case, which is comparable to the Israeli one—at least not yet. Except for the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada (approximately 1.4 million people) (Cecco 2022), the current Ukrainian diaspora in Western states is a very "fresh" one, which is for now not fully politically and economically integrated into its host societies to accumulate enough political or economic pressure on its host governments (as, for instance, the AIPAC)—even if its current number is impressive: almost six million people of Ukraine's total population of approximately 44 million people (in the year 2021) have fled from Ukraine to Europe after Russia's recent invasion (Operational Data Portal 2024; The World Bank Group 2023).

For now, the Ukrainian diaspora in the West mainly focuses (only) on humanitarian and protest activities (Hincu 2022, pp. 2–3). Perhaps the diaspora factor could become politically more capable after many years and generations have passed. This development depends, however, on, first, that a solid number of Ukrainian refugees remain in their host countries even after the end of the war. And second, it depends on whether the diaspora members integrate themselves effectively into their host countries' political and economical spheres. From the perspective of future Ukrainian governments, this could indeed be something in which it makes sense to invest, as the Israeli case shows, or other cases like the Armenian-American or Irish-American cases.

Yet, simultaneously, the expert communities should be careful what they wish for. Research on the roles of diasporas during war times in their home countries shows that influential diaspora groups often act as political "hardliners […] because of the fact that the adverse consequences of conflict are too remote for diasporas to face directly, as they have established exile identities" (Beyene 2015, p. 149). This reality makes successful conflict resolution efforts difficult (Lyons 2006, p. 116; Collier and Hoeffler 2004, p. 589; Roth 2015, p. 295). Moreover, back in 1992, Anderson (1992) already labeled such "hawkish" diaspora members as "long-distance nationalists" (Anderson 1992, p. 13). As a result, the absence of an influential political Ukrainian diaspora could be, paradoxically, even politically beneficial to the Ukrainian government and its Western supporters since possible future peace negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow will inevitably force both conflict sides to make painful compromises.

4 The Socio-Psychological Layer

4.1 A Sceptical View On Peace Treaties

No documents, no signatories, no memorandums protect. This is what we, Ukrainians, tell you by our own example. They do not protect. That is why

I do not believe in any papers. And honestly [...] to all countries, a suggestion based on our experience: You cannot believe, you all should not believe in any documents (Volodymyr Zelenskyy as cited in DW na russkom 2020, own translation).

In the Guidelines for Israel's National Security Strategy from 2019, Gadi Eisenkot and Gabi Siboni (2019) outline a national security concept adapted to Israel's current security challenges. The authors call for continuing Israel's realistic view of peace treaties as something that can easily fall apart due to changing political circumstances in international politics (Eisenkot and Siboni 2019, pp. 3–4, 48).[2] They add that this reality is the reason why self-reliance on military capabilities and security issues remains an existential value to Israel (Eisenkot and Siboni 2019, p. 48).

In this context, Israel's approach might be something in which Ukraine sees its experiences reflected. Whether peace treaties or international security guarantees—such arrangements can easily be put aside by a former signatory and future aggressor. One example is the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, in which Kyiv (next to Belarus and Kazakhstan) transferred its nuclear weapons to Moscow, which (together with the United Kingdom and the United States of America) promised in exchange to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. The other example is the Minsk process, which officially failed after the Kremlin invaded Ukraine in 2022. Both instances showed Ukraine plainly that "peace treaties could [indeed] collapse" (Eisenkot and Siboni 2019, p. 48) and that self-reliance within the security sphere—as in the Israeli case—might have a crucial value for Ukraine's post-conflict version.

In Israel, such a realistic view on peace treaties and truces went hand in hand with the bolstered belief that in the case of reemerging existential threats, the security policy should follow the logic of self-preservation under its own (Israeli) terms—even if this means to partially circumvent interests from its allies.

4.2 The Resistance to Advice Coming from Allied States

We must learn from them [Israel] how to create high-tech armed forces, a military-industrial complex that will be under constant threat of strikes. And how society, government, and every citizen work together to ensure security. Because Israelis are taught from a young age what security is and how to act. And Ukraine will have to completely rebuild the entire system because we are a state that will live, unfortunately, in conditions of constant military or non-military danger for several decades (Oleksii Arestovych as cited in Freedom/ UATV 2022, own translation).

Besides the military threat posed by some of its regional neighbours, Israeli strategists acknowledge the fact that a second front against Israel is opened in many international organizations where anti-Israel powers can easily outvote Jerusalem (for example, in the United Nations). In those cases, Israel's opponents often use

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[2] The events in Egypt during and after the Arab Spring revolts, for instance, were examples where Israel assumed that this old view could again become a reality. However, it did not (Magen 2015, p. 119).

the United Nations platforms to delegitimize Israel's approaches to safeguard its security interests (Eisenkot and Siboni 2019, pp. 13–14). Jerusalem tackles such efforts with simple non-compliance (Likhachev 2022b).

In the Ukrainian case, a similar stance could emerge towards international demands, leading to resistance to advice from its western allies after the war. The war's run of events might have shown this to Ukraine: On the one hand, Ukraine could defend itself alone on the battlefield against a mighty aggressor who outnumbered Ukraine in all military aspects. Moreover, on the other hand, Ukraine's resolve to fight its enemy proved all Western politicians and experts wrong who predicted a kind of *Blitzkrieg* victory over Ukraine by Russia.

Grävingholt et al. (2023) come to the same conclusion. According to the authors, Kyiv's western supporters will have to deal with a "very self-confident Ukraine" (Grävingholt et al. 2023, p. 5) in the future, likely leading to a Ukranian attitude of resistance to reform demands by the West. Nevertheless, the authors argue that a conditionality approach by the EU and Ukraine's EU candidacy status might effectively counter such anti-reform resistance in Kyiv (Grävingholt et al. 2023, pp. 1, 5–6). This article agrees with the argument of a possible Ukranian advice resistance. However, it argues that a sole EU conditionality approach might fall short of countering it—especially when future disagreements about security interests emerge between the West and Kyiv.

Such non-compliance instances by Kyiv towards demands from its biggest military supporter, the United States of America (Trebesch et al. 2024), could already be observed in two cases of targeted killing operations conducted by Kyiv: In April 2022, the Russian chief of general staff, General Valery Gerasimov, visited the Russian troops in Ukraine. After the White House got the information that Kyiv knew about Gerasimov's whereabouts and was planning to kill the general by air strikes, Washington urged Kyiv to put such plans aside in the fear that assassinations of such prominent Russian political figures could worsen the conflict situation on the ground. Kyiv, however, ignored these demands and continued with its plans. Gerasimov, yet, survived (Schwirtz et al. 2022). Four months later, in August 2022, Kyiv allegedly conducted an additional targeted killing operation on Russian soil when an assassination attempt via a car bomb was executed in Moscow against the nationalist pro-Kremlin theorist Alexandr Dugin, which killed Dugin's daughter (Dugin himself was not in the car during the explosion). According to the New York Times, the American intelligence services discovered that Kyiv ordered this operation, which Kyiv still denies. Furthermore, White House sources told the newspaper that the Oval Office was neither happy that Ukraine (again) conducted such an operation nor that Kyiv did not inform Washington about it. Additionally, regarding Ukraine's further battle intentions, Washington complained about Kyiv's constant secrecy towards its American ally (Barnes et al. 2022).

These examples might give insight into how a future post-conflict Ukraine might behave when disagreements in the security sphere between Ukraine and its donor states arise. Kyiv seems not reluctant to go from time to time against the demands of its most significant military and second biggest economic supporter (the United States of America) (Trebesch et al. 2024). In that case, it will probably not be afraid

to ignore the demands of its European supporters after the war when it will see its security interests negatively affected by European demands.

5 Conclusion and Political Recommendations

> So, on Israel, look, I don't believe our security realities are comparable. So, there is a very famous concept of giving Ukraine a sort of a sense of deterrence, so a kind of "porcupine strategy" [...]. But, it's a kind of different strategy. And, I believe we need to discuss different strategies of deterrence towards Russia and [...] different strategies of strategic weakening. But, they can't be comparable to Israel (Pavlo Klimkin as cited in Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e. V. 2023).

In a morning briefing organized by the German Council on Foreign Relations in April 2023, the author of this article had the opportunity to ask the former foreign minister of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin, whether he agrees with Zelenskyy's thoughts of Ukraine becoming a "big Israel" in Europe. Klimkin disagreed with Zelenskyy's view. According to him, the security circumstances between Kyiv and Jerusalem do not resemble each other, as seen in the quote above. It shows that not all Ukrainian elite members agree with President Zelenskyy's view.

This paper comes to the same conclusion. The article has shown that significant differences between both states remain, especially on the security-related and political levels. Only the socio-psychological category presents some similar elements between Kyiv and Jerusalem (resistance to advice; skeptical view on peace treaties). These circumstances imply that Western-led contemplated constructs for the future relationship between post-war Ukraine and its western allies—like the one presented by the former NATO general secretary Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in which the military cooperation between NATO and Ukraine should resemble the one between the United States of America and Israel (N-tv Nachrichten 2023)—do not fit in tackling this challenge. As the article has shown, the political and security components of Israel are fundamentally different from those of Ukraine. This conclusion rests mainly upon the emerging security-ideological profile of Ukraine derived from the article's comparison between Ukraine and Israel. Hence, the following insights should be the basis for an upcoming approach by Kyiv's Western allies towards post-war Ukraine: Ukraine seems to be(come) 1) a state that strives for deterrent capabilities that 2) are (additionally) embedded within the framework of clearly enforceable and already successfully tested security arrangements by its allies (as already happened among the NATO members after 9/11) that 3) do not comprise promise-like agreements that have already been tested—and failed—in the past (like the Budapest Memorandum). Ukraine's past experiences (traumas) have lowered its belief in such "guarantees".

If its allies do not answer these desires appropriately, the probability rises that Ukraine might go (as already happened in individual cases; see Sect. 4.2) against its allies' demands when fundamental security interests of Ukraine are touched. Thus, also out of self-interest, the Western states should ask themselves: Will it be possible to influence such a "new" Ukraine in a way that will not produce contrary

views on the European security order between Ukraine and its western allies in the future? This article sees the solution for this challenge in the following three terms: *security integration, security synchronisation,* and *the blockage of norm diffusion from external security orders.*

First, *security integration*: Ukraine has to become a fully integrated NATO member state. Not only would this solve Ukraine's quest of searching for security guarantees outside of an official military alliance in which Kyiv would probably still have little faith (like the already mentioned Rasmussen-proposal or the discussions about giving Ukraine a "kind of robust armed neutrality [status]" (Allison 2022, p. 1871). A Ukrainian NATO membership would also dampen the abovementioned socio-psychological causes of Zelenskyy's thoughts to (un)consciously implement security approaches on the European continent of a foreign country (Israel), which, from a regional point of view, has no natural allies in the Middle East, forcing it to count mostly only on itself (Inbar and Sandler 1995, p. 45). Additionally, it might be in the interest of NATO—especially its European members—to have a European state with proven battlefield experience in its club. Moreover, the above-described Ukrainian resistance to advice could result from NATO's refusal to allow Ukraine to join the alliance. It could probably be reduced when Ukraine becomes a NATO member.

Second, *security synchronisation*: By integrating Ukraine into NATO and granting it Article 5 privileges, the common denominator of NATO's security interests would also become Ukraine's security interests. A possible divergence on security matters between the West and Ukraine may not disappear completely. Yet, it would indeed be firmly minimised. Such a synchronisation would give the West at least more control over its sub-regional security order in the east of Europe than in the case of a non-NATO member Ukraine managing its security mainly by itself as Israel does.

And third, *the blockage of norm diffusion from external security orders*: In addition, it is in the interest of the western European states to obstruct any seepage of elements of external security orders not based on cooperative, multilateral, and rule-based principles. In the Ukrainian case, it can be best done by admitting Ukraine into the NATO club. The West, and especially Ukraine, should keep in mind that Israel and its policies are a reflection of the Middle East security order where "the countries are linked through interactions within a clearly demarcated system that are primarily about security, such as threats and military activities" (Perthes and Maull 2018, p. 143). Unlike Europe, the Middle East order lacks supranational cooperation tools (Perthes and Maull 2018, p. 155). Therefore, attempts to become an Israeli-type state in Europe come with the risk of (un)consciously implementing policies and norms from a different regional security order that do not fit into the European one and Ukraine's primary goals of becoming an EU and NATO member state.

Indeed, critical voices could argue that NATO membership does not prevent NATO members from conducting solo runs in its military and foreign policies (e.g. the United States of America and Turkey). However, the United States is still geographically divided from its European allies by an ocean. Thus, the effects of its foreign policy endeavours outside its own and the European security order could and should not be equated to the impacts of a possible independent foreign policy adventure of a "core" European state on its direct neighbours. Turkey, on the other

side, shares the largest part of its state borders with the very fragile South Caucasus region and the more fragile Middle East region—two regional orders highly incomparable to the European one. Unlike Turkey, Ukraine is not alone in its geographical destiny. Other European NATO states, like the Baltic states, Poland, and now Finland, share a common border with revanchist Russia and the historical experience of being targeted by the Kremlin's aggression. None of them was involved in solo military approaches against Russia or attacked by Moscow again since their NATO membership.

It seems unlikely that the West will have much influence on the politics of postwar Russia, which, on the one hand, evolves more and more into a closed authoritarian system and, on the other hand, will probably have many years ahead of internal power struggles in the post-war period paralysing any further expansionist endeavours. Accordingly, stabilizing at least one of the warring parties, namely Ukraine, is even more critical. This task can be accomplished by integrating it into Western security procedures, thus safeguarding the Western influence on the Eastern European security order. Otherwise, however, as this policy paper has shown, a post-war Ukraine, which would be left in a status of abeyance regarding its security affiliation, could go through a security evolution that mimics strategic trains of thought from other regional security orders (Middle East) that are not compatible with the order its western neighbours (want to) live in. Such a scenario could sooner or later lead to discrepancies between Kyiv and its allies about Europe's future security order. Consequently, the collective West should firmly avoid leaving Ukraine in a security order limbo as soon as the guns fall silent in the Russo–Ukrainian war.

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