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War in Ukraine

Prepared as a neutral reference text for conference participants

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Purpose of the note

This background note provides a concise but systematic overview of the war in Ukraine for conference participants. It is intended as a factual orientation text, not as a political position paper. The aim is to establish a shared analytical context: when the conflict began, how it changed over time, who the principal parties are, which regions have been most affected, and why the war matters for discussions of soil, freshwater systems, public health, infrastructure and displacement.

For this conference, the most useful approach is to separate two questions. The first is the legal and political dispute over sovereignty, territory, security and responsibility for the war. The second is the practical impact of the conflict on people, landscapes, water systems, health services, agriculture, industrial sites and long-term recovery. This note focuses on the second question while using the dates and terms most commonly used in international monitoring and humanitarian reporting.

The starting point used here is spring 2014. This is important because the war did not begin only with the full-scale invasion of 24 February 2022. The earlier phase in Crimea and eastern Ukraine created front lines, displacement, humanitarian needs, mine contamination and institutional problems that shaped the later escalation.

When the war began

For the purposes of this note, the war in Ukraine is traced from spring 2014. In late February and March 2014, Russian forces took control of Crimea, and the Russian Federation subsequently declared the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. Ukraine and most UN member states did not recognize this change of status. On 21 March 2014, the OSCE decided to deploy a Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which became the main international civilian monitoring mission during the early phase of the conflict.

In April 2014, armed conflict began in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian government forces fought armed formations associated with the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk entities, which were supported by the Russian Federation in various military, political and logistical ways. The terminology used by the parties differed sharply. Ukrainian and most international reporting described the conflict as Russian-supported separatism and, later, as part of a broader Russian-Ukrainian war. Russian official narratives described the events differently. This note uses descriptive language rather than the vocabulary of either side.

The first Minsk agreement was signed in September 2014 and the Minsk II package of measures followed in February 2015. These arrangements reduced some periods of fighting but did not

produce a stable settlement. From 2015 to early 2022, the conflict was concentrated mainly along the line of contact in Donetsk and Luhansk, with recurring shelling, casualties, restrictions on movement, displacement and humanitarian access problems.

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This transformed an already existing conflict into a nationwide international war. Russian forces attacked from several directions, including from the north toward Kyiv and Chernihiv, from the northeast toward Sumy and Kharkiv, from the east in Donetsk and Luhansk, and from the south through Crimea and the Black Sea region. After Russian withdrawals from northern Ukraine in spring 2022, the main ground war became concentrated in the east and south, while missile and drone attacks continued to affect cities and infrastructure across the country.

Main actors

The principal state parties are Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

- Ukraine is the state whose internationally recognized territory is the main theatre of war. Its armed forces, territorial defence units, police, emergency services, local authorities and civilian institutions have been central to defence, evacuation, public services and recovery. Since 2014 and especially since 2022, Ukraine has received substantial military, financial and humanitarian support from other states and international organizations.
- The Russian Federation has been a direct party to the conflict. Since 2014 it has controlled Crimea, and since 2022 it has occupied or claimed to annex additional parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. Russian regular forces, security services, occupation administrations and affiliated armed structures have played major roles in military operations and governance of occupied areas.
- The self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk entities were important actors in the 2014-2022 phase. Their forces and administrations operated in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk outside Ukrainian government control. In 2022, Russia recognized these entities and later claimed to incorporate them, together with parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, into the Russian Federation. Ukraine and most other states did not recognize these claims.
- International actors include the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, which operated from 2014 until 2022; UN agencies and human rights monitors; the International Committee of the Red Cross; the International Atomic Energy Agency; humanitarian NGOs; and states providing assistance, sanctions, diplomatic mediation or security support. Their roles differ: monitoring, relief, legal documentation, nuclear safety, economic support, military assistance and negotiations.

The central problem

The central problem behind the war is the unresolved conflict over sovereignty, territorial control and the security order around Ukraine. At one level, the war concerns the status of Crimea and territories in eastern and southern Ukraine. At another level, it concerns the right of Ukraine to determine its own political and security orientation, and Russia's attempt to limit or reshape that orientation by military means.

From 2014 to early 2022, the most immediate unresolved issues were the status of Crimea, the control of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk, the line of contact, the sequencing of security and political provisions under the Minsk arrangements, and control of the Ukraine-Russia border in the conflict area. The parties disagreed not only about implementation, but also about the meaning of the conflict itself.

Since February 2022, the central issues have expanded. They include withdrawal or continuation of Russian forces on Ukrainian territory, the status of occupied and claimed territories, security guarantees, military aid, sanctions, accountability for major crimes, return of displaced people, exchange of prisoners and detainees, reconstruction, and the future European security architecture. These issues make the war difficult to reduce to a single cause or a single negotiation track.

For analytical purposes, the war is best understood as a long-running interstate armed conflict with an earlier regional phase and a later full-scale phase. It is not only a battlefield conflict. It is also a conflict over territorial status, state security, civilian protection, infrastructure, resources, environmental damage and the conditions under which people can return to normal life.

Geographic development of the war

The first geographic centre of the conflict in 2014 was Crimea. Russian control over Crimea changed the security geography of the Black Sea and created a territorial dispute that remains unresolved. Crimea also became a military base for later operations in southern Ukraine.

The second major centre was Donbas, especially Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Between 2014 and early 2022, the line of contact divided government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas. Cities, villages, mines, industrial sites, agricultural land, water infrastructure and transport networks were affected by shelling, movement restrictions and mine contamination. The Siverskyi Donets basin and connected water systems were particularly important because they supplied water to communities and industries on both sides of the line of contact.

In 2022, the war expanded to almost every region of Ukraine. The Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy regions experienced early ground offensives and later withdrawals. Kharkiv region became a major front-line and bombardment area. Southern Ukraine, including Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia and Odesa, became strategically important because of the Dnipro River, the Black Sea, ports, grain exports, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and access routes between Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

The front line has shifted over time but has remained broadly concentrated in eastern and southern Ukraine. Major battles and prolonged fighting have affected areas such as Mariupol, Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, Kupiansk, Pokrovsk, Vuhledar, Chasiv Yar, Robotyne, Kherson and many smaller communities. Long-range missile and drone attacks have also affected cities far from the front, including Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipro, Odesa and other urban centres.

The war therefore has a fragmented geography. There are front-line zones, occupied areas, border regions, cities targeted by long-range strikes, industrial regions with environmental hazards, agricultural areas affected by mines or irrigation loss, and host communities receiving displaced people.

Regions and populations most affected

The areas most affected by the war include:

- Donetsk and Luhansk regions, because they have experienced continuous conflict since 2014, severe destruction of towns and industrial infrastructure, displacement, mine contamination, water-system damage and changing front lines.

- Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv regions, because of cross-border attacks, early ground fighting in 2022, recurring bombardment and the proximity of parts of these regions to the Russian border.
- Kyiv and its surrounding region, because of the early 2022 offensive, urban and suburban destruction, civilian casualties, occupation-related abuses documented in several localities, and the later pattern of long-range strikes on the capital.
- Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia and Odesa regions, because of fighting along the Dnipro River and Black Sea coast, occupation and liberation in some areas, attacks on ports and energy infrastructure, the Kakhovka Dam disaster, and risks around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.
- Crimea, because it has been under Russian control since 2014, remains central to the territorial dispute, and has served as a military and logistical base in the wider war.
- Agricultural regions in the south and east, because mines, unexploded ordnance, damaged irrigation, fuel contamination, destroyed machinery and disrupted export routes affect food production and rural livelihoods.
- Occupied territories, because civilians there face restrictions on movement, documentation problems, changes in administration, limited access for independent monitors, and risks linked to detention, conscription, filtration practices, property loss and family separation.
- Displaced people, older persons, children, persons with disabilities, women-headed households, medical patients and people living close to the front line, because they are often exposed to repeated evacuation, loss of income, reduced access to health care, education interruption, trauma, and high dependence on humanitarian support.

Humanitarian consequences

The war has produced one of Europe's largest humanitarian and displacement crises since the Second World War. By early 2026, reporting by UNHCR and humanitarian agencies indicated that millions of Ukrainians remained internally displaced and nearly six million were living as refugees abroad. UNHCR projected that 10.8 million people would need humanitarian assistance in Ukraine in 2026. These figures should be treated as changing estimates rather than fixed totals, because people move repeatedly, front lines change and some areas are inaccessible to independent monitoring.

Civilian casualties have continued throughout the war. In 2025, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine reported 2,514 civilian deaths and 12,142 injuries, a sharp increase compared with the previous year. Most recorded civilian casualties occurred in Ukrainian government-controlled areas and were attributed by the UN monitoring mission to attacks by Russian armed forces. Russia also reported civilian casualties from Ukrainian attacks on Russian-held or Russian territory, but the UN could not independently verify all such figures. The patterns, scale and documentation differ significantly by area and actor.

Civilian harm is not limited to deaths and injuries. It includes displacement, loss of housing, family separation, trauma, reduced access to schools and hospitals, interruption of livelihoods, electricity and heating shortages, water-system damage, and the long-term presence of mines and unexploded ordnance. For people near the front line, the war often means repeated evacuation, return, renewed evacuation and prolonged uncertainty.

Health services have been affected by damaged facilities, staff displacement, ambulance risks, power outages, supply-chain disruption and increased demand for trauma, rehabilitation,

mental health, maternal health and chronic disease care. The impact is especially severe where hospitals must operate under attack risk or with unstable electricity and water supply.

The war has also damaged housing, transport, energy, education, health, irrigation, water supply and industrial infrastructure. The 2026 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment by the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Commission and the United Nations estimated Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction needs at about USD 588 billion over the following decade, with direct war-related damage estimated at about USD 195 billion. Housing, transport and energy were among the most severely affected sectors.

Infrastructure, environment and public health

For a conference on soil, freshwater systems, pollution and disease, Ukraine is a particularly important case because the environmental consequences of war are geographically widespread and technically complex. The war affects the environment through direct explosions, fires, damaged industrial facilities, destroyed fuel depots, damaged wastewater systems, disrupted mines, flooded or abandoned industrial sites, debris from buildings, military vehicles and munitions, and the long-term contamination caused by mines and unexploded ordnance.

Soil systems are affected by shell craters, trenches, destroyed buildings, metal fragments, fuel spills, burned vehicles, ammunition residues, heavy metals and reduced access to ordinary agricultural management. In agricultural areas, mines and unexploded ordnance can make land unusable even after front lines move. This creates a long-term public safety problem as well as an economic and food-system problem.

Freshwater systems are affected by damaged water-treatment plants, pumping stations, wastewater systems, irrigation canals, reservoirs, dams, industrial sites and energy infrastructure. The Siverskyi Donets basin, the Dnipro River system, the Kakhovka Reservoir area and water networks serving Donbas and southern Ukraine are central examples. Damage to electricity systems can also interrupt water treatment and pumping, so energy attacks may produce water and sanitation consequences far from the strike site.

The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam on 6 June 2023 became one of the most important environmental and water-system events of the war. It caused flooding downstream, loss of reservoir water, disruption of irrigation and water supply, ecological change, sediment exposure and long-term uncertainty about contamination and recovery. Because the dam and the affected territories were within or near active military zones, independent assessment and remediation have been difficult.

The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is another central infrastructure concern. It is Europe's largest nuclear power plant and has been under Russian control since 2022 while located near the front line. The International Atomic Energy Agency has maintained a monitoring role and has repeatedly warned about risks linked to shelling, mines, loss of external power, staffing conditions and the need for reliable cooling and safety systems. Even without a major radiological release, the situation has long-term implications for emergency planning, trust, technical regulation and regional risk perception.

The public-health consequences of environmental damage are often delayed. They may include unsafe water, interrupted sanitation, disease outbreaks, reduced vaccination coverage, exposure to smoke and chemicals, trauma, disability, mental health problems, and chronic disease treatment gaps. In heavily damaged areas, environmental recovery and health-system recovery cannot be separated.

Violence against civilians and legal documentation

International organizations, Ukrainian authorities, Russian authorities, journalists and human rights groups have documented many allegations of violations during the war. These include unlawful attacks, indiscriminate shelling, detention, torture, enforced disappearance, sexual violence, attacks on medical and civilian infrastructure, mistreatment of prisoners of war, forced displacement, filtration practices, deportation or transfer of children, and restrictions on humanitarian access.

The largest body of international reporting has documented extensive violations attributed to Russian forces and Russian occupation authorities. International monitors have also reported individual incidents and concerns involving Ukrainian forces, including treatment of prisoners, use of some weapons in populated areas, and attacks affecting civilians in Russian-held or Russian territory. Patterns, scale, command responsibility and available evidence differ by actor, place and period. A neutral academic note should avoid false equivalence while also stating that all parties are bound by international humanitarian law.

For conference purposes, the legal details are not the main focus, but they matter because civilian protection, environmental harm, health access, water systems and demining all depend on compliance with international humanitarian law. The most useful formulation is that serious violations have been widely documented, accountability processes are ongoing, and evidence continues to be collected by national and international bodies.

Regional and international dimensions

Although the fighting takes place primarily in Ukraine, the war has major regional and international dimensions. It has reshaped European security, NATO and EU policy, sanctions regimes, energy systems, refugee policy, defence production and diplomatic alignments. It has also affected global food markets because Ukraine is a major agricultural producer and exporter.

The Black Sea has been central to grain exports, maritime security, ports, naval operations and attacks on coastal infrastructure. Disruption of ports and shipping routes has had consequences beyond Ukraine, especially for countries dependent on grain imports. Energy infrastructure attacks have affected electricity supply, heating, water pumping and industrial production, with wider implications for economic recovery.

The war has also created cross-border effects through refugee movements, military aid, sanctions, cyber operations, disinformation, drone and missile technology, nuclear safety concerns and the risk of escalation involving other states. These international dimensions make the war more than a bilateral dispute, even though the immediate territory of destruction is primarily Ukrainian.

Why peace efforts have not succeeded

Peace efforts have faced different problems in different phases of the war. The Minsk arrangements after 2014 were not fully implemented and the parties disagreed over sequencing, security guarantees, border control, elections, local status and the meaning of autonomy in Donetsk and Luhansk. The line of contact remained militarized, and ceasefire violations continued.

After February 2022, the scale of the war changed. Negotiations became more difficult because the issues now included withdrawal of Russian forces, the status of several occupied or claimed territories, security guarantees for Ukraine, sanctions, prisoner exchanges, accountability,

reparations, return of civilians and children, and the future military balance. Each side has at different moments believed that continued fighting could improve its negotiating position.

Ceasefire discussions are also complicated by distrust. A ceasefire without monitoring, security arrangements and agreement on occupied territories could freeze front lines without resolving the conflict. A settlement without credible security guarantees could be seen as temporary. A settlement without accountability and humanitarian access would leave major civilian protection problems unresolved. These difficulties help explain why diplomatic initiatives have repeatedly stalled or remained limited.

Why the war matters for academic discussion

For academic and conference purposes, the war in Ukraine is important because it shows how a modern armed conflict can damage environmental systems, infrastructure and health long after specific battles end. It is relevant to the study of:

- soil contamination from munitions, destroyed vehicles, fuel, metals and industrial debris;
- freshwater disruption caused by damaged dams, reservoirs, canals, pumping stations, treatment plants and wastewater systems;
- public-health risks associated with damaged hospitals, interrupted vaccination, poor sanitation, displacement and mental trauma;
- explosive remnants of war, demining and the long-term safety of agricultural and urban land;
- industrial and mining hazards in active or former conflict zones;
- energy infrastructure as a condition for water supply, heating, health services and disease prevention;
- food systems under war conditions, including agricultural land loss, irrigation damage, labour shortages and export disruption;
- nuclear safety and emergency planning during active conflict;
- urban destruction, debris management and reconstruction;
- data collection under conditions of occupation, insecurity, propaganda, limited access and rapidly changing front lines.

Ukraine should therefore not be described only as a diplomatic or military crisis. It is a long-running armed conflict with humanitarian, legal, environmental, public-health, infrastructural, economic and regional dimensions. These dimensions are directly relevant to discussions of pollution, disease, soils and freshwater systems.

Neutral formulation for use in presentations

The war in Ukraine can be introduced as an armed conflict that began in spring 2014 with the seizure and declared annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, which Ukraine and most UN member states did not recognize, and with the outbreak of fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk. From 2014 to early 2022, the conflict was concentrated mainly in eastern Ukraine along a line of contact, while Crimea remained under Russian control.

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion, expanding the conflict into a nationwide international war. The war has caused large-scale civilian harm, displacement, destruction of housing, health, energy, water and transport infrastructure, and long-term environmental risks for soils, rivers, groundwater, agricultural land, industrial sites and explosive-contaminated areas.

For this conference, the conflict is most usefully discussed not as a political argument but as a long-running armed conflict with major humanitarian, environmental, public-health, infrastructural and regional consequences. The key analytical questions are how war damages land and water systems, how infrastructure destruction affects disease and public health, how contamination is measured during active conflict, and how recovery can be planned when front lines, displacement and political status remain unresolved.

Key terms

- Crimea - Peninsula controlled by Russia since 2014 after a disputed referendum and declared annexation. Ukraine and most UN member states do not recognize the annexation.
- Donbas - A region of eastern Ukraine usually referring to Donetsk and Luhansk, the main centre of the 2014-2022 phase of the conflict and still central to the war.
- Donetsk and Luhansk entities - Self-declared authorities that operated in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk outside Ukrainian government control. Russia recognized them in February 2022 and later claimed to incorporate them.
- Line of contact - The de facto separation line in eastern Ukraine before February 2022. It was monitored by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and was a major zone of shelling, restrictions and humanitarian need.
- Full-scale invasion - The Russian military attack launched on 24 February 2022, which expanded the conflict from a regional war and occupation dispute into a nationwide international war.
- Occupied territories - Areas of Ukraine under Russian military control or Russian-installed administration. Access for independent monitors varies and is often restricted.
- Minsk agreements - Diplomatic arrangements from 2014 and 2015 intended to reduce fighting and provide a path toward settlement in eastern Ukraine. They were not fully implemented.
- OSCE Special Monitoring Mission - International civilian monitoring mission deployed in March 2014 and ended in 2022. It documented ceasefire violations, weapons, civilian impact and restrictions on access.
- Explosive remnants of war - Unexploded shells, rockets, bombs, mines and other explosive items that remain dangerous after fighting has moved on.
- Humanitarian demining - Survey, marking, clearance and disposal of mines and unexploded ordnance so that civilians can return safely and land can be used again.
- Kakhovka Dam - Major dam on the Dnipro River destroyed in June 2023, causing flooding, reservoir loss, irrigation disruption and long-term environmental concerns.
- Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant - Europe's largest nuclear power plant, under Russian control since 2022 and a continuing focus of international nuclear safety concern.
- Dnipro River - Ukraine's major river system, central to water supply, hydropower, agriculture, transport, ecosystems and the geography of the war in southern Ukraine.
- Siverskyi Donets - Important river basin in eastern Ukraine, linked to water supply for communities and industries affected by the war in Donbas.

Selected bibliography and sources for further orientation

General background and chronology

- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Permanent Council Decision No. 1117: Deployment of an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. 21 March 2014.
- OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Daily and thematic reports, 2014-2022.

- United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 68/262: Territorial Integrity of Ukraine. 27 March 2014.
- United Nations General Assembly. Resolution ES-11/1: Aggression against Ukraine. 2 March 2022.
- Reuters, Associated Press, BBC, Financial Times, Le Monde and other major international reporting on key phases of the war.

Humanitarian situation and displacement

- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 and Ukraine situation updates.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Ukraine Refugee Situation and Ukraine operational data portal.
- International Organization for Migration. Ukraine Displacement Tracking Matrix.
- ReliefWeb. Ukraine country page and humanitarian updates.

Civilian casualties, human rights and international law

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine casualty updates and thematic reports.
- Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. Reports to the UN Human Rights Council.
- International Criminal Court. Ukraine-related statements, warrants and procedural materials.
- Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Ukraine reports on civilian harm, detention, occupation, attacks on infrastructure and accountability.

Health system and medical consequences

- World Health Organization. Ukraine health emergency updates and Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care.
- Médecins Sans Frontières. Ukraine operational and medical reports.
- Ukrainian public-health and emergency-response data, where available and cross-checked with international reporting.

Infrastructure, reconstruction and economic damage

- World Bank, Government of Ukraine, European Commission and United Nations. Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, including RDNA5, 2026.
- Kyiv School of Economics. Russia Will Pay / Ukraine damage assessments.
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Commission and Ukrainian government recovery and reconstruction materials.

Environment, soil, water and pollution

- United Nations Environment Programme. Ukraine environmental impact assessments and conflict pollution materials.
- OECD. Environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine and recovery policy notes.
- Conflict and Environment Observatory. Ukraine conflict-environment monitoring.
- PAX for Peace. Environment and Conflict Alert Ukraine publications.
- Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group. Environmental monitoring and analysis.
- International Atomic Energy Agency. Ukraine nuclear safety and security updates, especially on Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

Maps and data sources

- ACLED - conflict events, violence patterns and maps.
- OCHA Humanitarian Data Exchange - humanitarian datasets and administrative boundaries.
- UNOSAT / UN Satellite Centre - satellite-based damage and flood assessments.
- IOM DTM and UNHCR operational data - population movement and displacement tracking.
- State Emergency Service of Ukraine and mine-action datasets - explosive ordnance risk, where accessible and verified.

Minimum recommended reading set

For a participant with limited time, the following sources are sufficient for a basic but reliable understanding of the war:

- OSCE Permanent Council Decision No. 1117 and a short overview of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.
- UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 and Resolution ES-11/1.
- OCHA Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026.
- UNHCR Ukraine Refugee Situation and IOM Ukraine displacement updates.
- OHCHR / Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine casualty and human rights updates.
- World Bank / Government of Ukraine / European Commission / United Nations Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, RDNA5, 2026.

For a participant preparing a paper or presentation, the following should be added:

- Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine reports.
- WHO and MSF reports on health-care access and attacks on health services.
- UNEP, OECD, CEOBS, PAX and Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group materials on environmental damage.
- IAEA updates on Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and broader nuclear safety issues.
- ACLED, UNOSAT and OCHA HDX datasets for maps and event data.

Concluding summary

The war in Ukraine began in spring 2014 with the seizure and declared annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the outbreak of armed conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk. For several years the conflict remained concentrated mainly in eastern Ukraine, although its political and security consequences were much wider. The full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 transformed the conflict into a nationwide international war.

The war has produced large-scale civilian harm, displacement, destruction of housing and infrastructure, damage to health services, repeated attacks on energy and water systems, disruption of agriculture and major long-term environmental risks. Its consequences extend from the front line to cities far from the fighting, from Ukrainian households to European refugee policy, from local water systems to global food markets, and from immediate casualties to long-term contamination and reconstruction needs.

For conference discussion, the most neutral and analytically useful framing is this: the war in Ukraine is a long-running armed conflict that began in 2014, escalated dramatically in 2022, and now combines military, humanitarian, legal, environmental, public-health, infrastructural and regional dimensions. It should be discussed in this setting not as a political slogan, but as a case of how modern war damages people, land, water, health systems and the conditions for recovery.