



Solidarity Ukraine –issue 42- Silver bullet

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) has been associated since February 24, 2022 with international solidarity in favor of Ukraine attacked by Russia. The Covid pandemic has weakened democratic countries. Conspiracy theories and hate speech have exploded on social networks. This new war in Europe is no longer peripheral, it has become existential for the European Union which plays its future in the world. This Newsletter is the 7th published in 2025 and the 42nd since the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Gray is the intermediate color between black and white. With a caricatural, binary, black or white approach, gray has infinite shades. But at night, all cats are gray; we no longer know the true from the false, the good

from the evil. The Russian population has been mistreated during its history – freed from the tsarist feudal yoke, it has been manipulated by the apparatchiks of the Soviet era, of gray souls. They welcomed Vladimir Putin like a saviour in 2000. Gray matter and courage are the two characteristics of Ukrainians who have been resisting for more than ten years against the repeated attacks of the Russian regime. There is no shortage of grey eminences in Europe. Faced with the announced withdrawal of their first ally, the United States, the Europeans are rearming and taking back their destiny in hand. They are caught between a direct war (led by Russia in Ukraine) and an indirect one (trade war). This double strategy of coercion is not a "silver bullet". The European Union is not made up of robots but of human beings with strong emotions sometimes difficult to master. To the «replicants» of Blade Runner (1), grey souls, we will always oppose the European spirit, with all its shades of grey. The silver bullet is in our camp.

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* le logo a été dessiné par Caritas Canada en février 2022

Grey colour

Grey is a color between white and black, between dog and wolf. It can be disturbing or uncertain; at night, all cats are grey. It conceals a whole facet of shades, from light gray to dark grey. Pearl grey is light; it refers to jewelry, associated with delicacy and fragility. The dark grey pearls (almost black) are among the most sought after. The anthracite grey evokes concrete, robustness and reliability; it embodied modernity in the 1970s (airports of Roissy Charles de Gaulle, constructions of the Pompei era) without ever being abandoned by visionary architects (2). A grey weather is gloomy and cloudy (3). The dappled grey denotes the elegant coat of a horse, a mix of white, black and other hairs. A grey life is dull and monotonous. But the shiny grey, silvery, evokes the refinement of silverwork. Ambergris is a fragrant substance originating from the intestinal concretions of sperm whales, whose extracts are used in perfumery for very precious elixirs. Dust is grey like cobwebs that evoke places or objects left abandoned. A “grisette” is a cloth of grey hue that was worn by "girls" of small condition, "fashionistas" with easy and bold manners (term attested from 1660). Traditional monks, the “Petits-Gris” refer to the 'soldier-monks' of John Paul II. They belong to the community of the Brothers of Saint-Jean, in Saône-et-Loire, so called because of their young age (twenty-seven years on average), their monastic habit, and their closely shaven head, which contributed to the reputation of austerity of their community.

The “eminences grises” (backroom boys) are ambivalent. They intervened in the antechambers of sovereigns and monarchs, in ancient times, with leaders and heads of state at the present time. One of the most well-known in European history is Machiavelli, for the Republic of Florence. At the death of the preacher Savonarola on 23 May 1498, hanged then burned, he was chosen by the Great Council or Council of the Eighty (5), as secretary of the second chancery of Florence, one of the most important positions in the city. Original and revolutionary thinker, he broke with the medieval vision of politics by secularizing and desacralizing political power. If he wrote an art of war, and not an art of negotiation, it is not absent from his thought. It is related to cunning, with the metaphor of the lion and the fox. Machiavelli assiduously practices it, during his diplomatic missions to foreign courts, at a time when Italy invents the system of permanent embassies. For international negotiation, the Renaissance was a founding moment. Machiavelli wrote multiple instructions for Florentine ambassadors, where he explicitly developed a reflection on the profession of ambassador, including in his function as a negotiator. Machiavelli’s thought forms an essential matrix in political science, a fruitful entry point for negotiation with the constant concern of secrecy, his own – which one must strive to preserve – or that of others – one must strive to pierce. Intelligence, and the secret services, played an essential role in the war in Ukraine.

Grey souls in Russia

In a novel awarded by the French Academy, «Le mage du Kremlin» (6), in 2022, year of the outbreak of the war against Russia, the Italian-Swiss author Giuliano da Empoli described the arrival to power, or rather its brutal and unrelenting takeover, by Vladimir Putin, then head of the FSB, the Russian intelligence services, freshly arrived from the city hall of Saint Petersburg. The story is told by an enigmatic political advisor, Baranov, who uncovers the ins and outs of the Putin era from the war in Chechnya to the Ukrainian crisis. He mentions the «*vertushkas*», the secure land lines of the FSB to communicate with the leader, the new «tsar», Boris Yeltsin at the fall of the USSR from 1991. The handset is grey, not red, "Like everything else," says Baranov. His surprised western interlocutor told him: «If you think that Moscow is grey, you should come to Europe for a few days. Or go to Washington. ». Baranov answers "God forbid! Over there they are not grey, they are dead".

The "mage" continues his description of the context that allowed the advent of Vladimir Putin and his men, grey souls, destined to blend into the background to better leap on their prey. In the late 1990s, the only type of business allowed in the Soviet Union was the student cooperative, the "business school" of Russian capitalism for Baranov. Where the majority of oligarchs were formed. "The unexpected has always been one of the great qualities of Russian life, but at that time it reached a climax." Men and women "young, full of life, often bright, sometimes brilliant, who thought they were condemned to a life of grisaille and who now, unexpectedly, saw the paths of the world open before them." The level of violence in Russian society was maximal. Everything was allowed, total corruption. Television, and the first recently privatized Russian channel, ORT, "experimented with forms of life that would later be adopted by all new Russians." The men in power wanted to use the "proverbial mimetic capacity of the Russians" to build the new "collective imagination" of the country. As men of communication, they selected the most typical examples of the Russian population "the alcoholic father, the provincial babushka, the ambitious little whore, the nihilistic student" to bring them into their new world that was taking them out of the "cloak of heavy boredom" created by the Soviet era to put the population to sleep. «They had grown up in a homeland and found themselves in a supermarket.»

The mistake of the most influential oligarch, Boris Berezovsky, a trusted advisor to Boris Yeltsin, at the end of his life, is to have called upon a character he thought grey, without personality, that he could use as a man of straw, a man from the seraglio, used to obeying, Vladimir Putin. The mage of the Kremlin quickly realized that an infernal gear was turning against the two Boris. Vladimir Putin spoke the language of the father, of vertical authority, to Russians who had never been accustomed to a horizontal approach, the language of the mother.

Grey mater in Ukraine

In Ukraine, the secret services (intelligence service) have regained all their nobility. Since the beginning of the first annexations in 2014, they have worked closely with US and Western intelligence. A "spider web" operation, struck minds in June 2025 (7). Conduct in the heart of Russian territory, it was an unquestionable psychological and tactical victory. On Sunday, June 1, 2025, Ukrainian drones attacked several airfields housing Russian strategic aviation, throughout the territory of the Russian Federation, from Murmansk (Far North) to Amur (Far East) passing through the central regions of Ivanovo and Ryazan, as well as Siberia (Irkutsk). Coordinated by the Ukrainian security service, it surprised Russian intelligence. The offensive reportedly destroyed or damaged 41 Russian military aircraft according to Kiev, including eleven strategic bombers of the Tu-95 and Tu-22 types. The Ukrainian attack was carried out using trucks registered in Russia, equipped with false ceilings, containing drones carrying explosive charges.

The psychological impact is real. Ukraine has regained morale and regained its image. It showed the whole world the flaws of Russia's security service. When they try to convince the Westerners, led by the United States, that they are winning the war, they lie. Russian disinformation has however contaminated the minds on both sides of the Atlantic. The remote destruction of Russian strategic bombers, thousands of kilometers from the front line, reveals the extreme effectiveness and coordination of Ukrainian intelligence and its exceptional ability for strategic planning. The slap is brutal for Vladimir Putin and his intelligence services. Perfect guidance was needed for the drones of which the Ukrainian military are masters. It confirms the continued strong support of the United States - the operation required a powerful satellite communication system. If the operation "spider's web" does not change the tactical balance on the ground nor the course of the war, it has revealed the extreme vulnerability of Russia. By infiltrating into Russian territory and destroying strategic air forces capable of carrying nuclear weapons, the Ukrainians have discredited Russia's nuclear deterrent which is not so well protected. The Ukrainian military analysis center, Frontintelligence Insight, notes a significant weakening of Russia's strategic assets. Many of the aircraft were inherited from the Soviet era and cannot be replaced. Their destruction should reduce Russian raids on Ukrainian cities and energy infrastructure. New drone attacks against Moscow were carried out in July 2025.

Inspired by this successful operation, Ukraine hit on Tuesday, June 3, 2025 (8) the Kerch bridge, connecting the Russian Federation to Crimea. For the third time, the building inaugurated by Vladimir Putin in 2018, consecrating illegal Russian annexation, is affected. The message is addressed to Westerners "Ukraine manages to surprise its partners to show them that we are creative in military operations and that we can influence the course of the war" asserted MP Merejko, head of the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs. Vladimir Putin is also called upon to conduct real negotiations.

« Silver bullet » – fortunes and misfortunes of coercion

In an article dedicated to the theory of coercion, Tami Davis Biddle (9) explains the strategy that a complex administration can develop to prevent any escalation in an explosive geopolitical context. The European Union does not have a common defense policy, but it can influence the international scene by acting as a bloc in the face of indirect (trade war) or direct (hot war) attacks from unfriendly countries (Russia in Ukraine). The theory of coercion refers to the work of Thomas Crombie Schelling (10). This strategy combines threats, violence and war. Paradoxically, it requires the enemy's cooperation. It includes blackmail and manipulation. It is considered with caution by the military who are reluctant to consider offensives and deaths as a form of communication. According to Schelling, there would be two uses of force – annihilation (destroying the enemy) or brute force on the one hand; and erosion (undermining the opponent's morale) or coercion on the other. This second form tends to make the enemy understand that accepting the offers of the attacker would be less costly and painful (in human lives) than continuing to resist.

Coercion is not a "silver bullet" (11). Metaphorically, the expression refers to a 'miracle solution' capable of solving multiple problems. The idea for Schelling is to use military force to "wound" the enemy, inflict pain and punishment on him, with the power of blackmail that this brutalization confers. Even vicious and disloyal, it is a form of diplomacy. 'Terrorize the terrorists' according to the formula, full of promises, of a French interior minister (12). This strategy of brutalization and coercion has been used by Vladimir Putin's Russia since it came to power in all the wars he has fought (Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine, Syria...). He received an unexpected help from the new elected team in Washington blackmailing President Zelensky live on television in February 2025. He had to submit or resign. Since then, President Trump has issued several ultimatums to Vladimir Putin for Russia to agree to a ceasefire. Ukraine received strong and unanimous support from the countries of the European Union, subjected to a similar blackmail by the Trump administration which declared a trade war against Europeans. New prohibitive tariffs are applied from 7th of August 2025 (13). The threat of Russian attacks in Europe is real. Finland, Poland or the Baltic States are preparing for attacks deemed imminent. There is a weak link in Europe - the Suwalki corridor in the north-east of Poland, surrounded by the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus where the NATO member countries are intensifying maneuvers (14). According to several European sources, supported by former US General David Petraeus during a roundtable organized on May 29, 2025 by the Conservative Think Tank Policy Exchange. Lithuania is a potential goal of Vladimir Putin in Europe..

The European Union is warmed. The Russian president is about to make "an offer it cannot refuse" using the words of Don Corleone in "The Godfather", a masterpiece for psychological war (15). The coercion did not work with Ukraine, which is still valiantly resisting with the Europeans by its side. The Union is strength - the only credible "silver bullet" for Europe **.Slava Ukraini !**

- (1) Ridley Scott, « Blade Runner » , Etats Unis, 1982
- (2) Rudy Ricciotti (associé à Roland Carta) architecte du MUCEN - Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, inaugurated in 2013, chose ultra-high performance fiber-reinforced concrete (UHPC)
- (3) Dictionnaire "Le Robert", édition 1989
- (4) « Au séminaire traditionnel des Petits-Gris Les "moines-soldats" de Jean-Paul II », Le Monde, publié le 29 avril 1988
- (5) Colson, A. (2013). Machiavel, Le Prince et la négociation. *Négociations*, 20(2), 147-157. <https://doi.org/10.3917/neg.020.0147>.
- (6) Giuliano da Empoli « Le mage du Kremlin », Paris : Gallimard , 2022
- (7) Thomas d'Istria, Marie Jego, Jean-Philippe Lefief et Faustine Vincent « L'opération ukrainienne a révélé les failles russes », Le Monde, mercredi 4 juin 2025
- (8) Thomas d'Istria « L'attaque du pont de Crimée, un message à Poutine », Le Monde 5 juin 2025
- (9) Tami Davis Biddle, professeure d'histoire et de défense nationale à l'Université américaine de l'armée à Carlisle (Pennsylvanie), « Coercion theory: a basic introduction for practitioners », *The strategist*, Texas national Security Review: Volume 3, Issue 2 (Spring 2020)
- (10) Thomas C; Schelling "Arms and influence", New Haven : Yale University Press, 2008 reprint of the original 1966 edition
- (11) Magical and mythical bullet, the only one capable of killing a werewolf, a witch, and some monsters
- (12) Charles Pasqua, then Minister of the Interior in the government of Jacques Chirac (1986-1988), faced with the series of terrorist attacks against France in 1986 - February 1986 and the Iranian track; March 1986 and the Abdallah track; September 1986 and the Syrian/Abdalian track; Didier Bigo, winter 1991- <https://journals.openedition.org/conflicts/129>
- (13) the deadline set for August 1, 2025, for all US trading partners has been postponed to August 7 by the White House except for Canada which did not comply
- (14) Isabelle Mandraud « Pologne, un corridor sous étroite surveillance », Le Monde , 8 & 9, juin 2025
- (15) Francis Ford Coppola « Le parrain 1 » , Etats Unis, 1972

Newsletter written on Friday, June 20, 2025 and updated on August 1, 2025

Plan International, en Pologne, Roumanie et Moldavie, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don) pour ce faire.- <https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don>

L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - HelloAsso - <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/aide%20medicale%20caritative%20france%20ukraine/collectes/aider-ukraine-amurgence-help-ukraine/don>

Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS. - <http://www.cam-z.org/en/news/121/>

JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine .- <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

Les Banques alimentaires - une aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine, dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés - <https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-ukraine>

La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

L'Association des maires de France a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#) . De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité - <https://www.amf.asso.fr/documents-les-maires-france-appellent-la-solidarite-avec-lukraine/41122>

La plateforme officielle « *Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine* » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France.- <https://parrainage.refugies.info/>

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.- <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF) - Depuis le début de l'offensive russe en Ukraine, BSF se mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. « Bonjour France » est une application pour smartphone innovante et totalement gratuite, qui propose un apprentissage accéléré du français depuis l'ukrainien, disponible depuis le 19 octobre 2022.

<https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>

La mission catholique de l'Eglise polonaise en France suggère également le lien suivant : <https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/> - **Source** : conférence des évêques de France