

Will Russia Invade More of Europe?

written by Oksana Dutchak and Szymon Martys | October 4, 2026

Thoughts from a Ukrainian and a Polish Socialist

Oksana Dutchak:

Yes, Russia will go further.

My arguments are very simple, and – since I am a leftist – they are based on an analysis of material reality. They rest on three facts:

- 1) The Russian economy has been placed on a war footing; the scale of the military-industrial complex has expanded manifold in recent years and continues to grow
- 2) As Russian researcher Sasha T. explains, the entire social contract in Russia has been rewritten for the war, centering on military service and employment within that very same military-industrial complex
- 3) As Sasha T. also explains, the entire educational process has been largely reconfigured around the war. the scale of “indoctrination” in the spirit of imperial patriotism and the glorification of war is immense (a side note: nothing of the sort is happening in Ukraine, where the only consistent, institutionalized practice in schools is the minute of silence – a telling fact in itself)

A military-industrial machine running at full capacity and accelerating, and a society centered on war constitute a force that cannot be halted by any “truce” or “negotiations.” the output of this military-industrial machine must be deployed, used, and destroyed so that new equipment can be produced and subsequently deployed. ultimately, classical Marxists explained all of this long ago.

Why do I constantly run this line of reasoning through my mind, inevitably concluding that Russia will go further, only to stop believing it once again? for one very simple reason. **Russia will proceed with a conventional war in only one scenario: if Ukraine is subjugated.** this piece of the puzzle makes this single correct answer impossible for me. and so, I am forced to start the internal debate all over again

Szymon Martys:

I don't know if any of us really know the answer to that question, but personally I see plenty of cause for concern. In fact, I have similar thoughts regarding the Russian economy and the fact that it has been almost entirely militarized, but I would like to draw attention to something else.

First and foremost, the patterns of behaviour are very similar (though obviously not identical) to those seen before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. So we have the CIA report on a possible escalation of Russian activities, and we have Putin's remarks about the ‘persecution of Russian-speaking people in the Baltic states’ (this was a remark made in passing at a press conference, not a pre-prepared and carefully staged speech about ‘persecution in the Donbas’ – but to me, the associations are nonetheless quite similar), and finally, we have an increasing number of military exercises in Belarus and around Kaliningrad.

Perhaps this is merely a Russian bluff, a ploy to stoke tension and frighten Western societies with

the consequences should they continue to support Ukraine (which, unfortunately, in various forms, is at least partially effective), or perhaps it is something more.

However, the a priori rejection in many left-wing (and not only left-wing) circles of the idea that Putin might decide to launch an attack extending beyond Ukraine strikes me as strange, to say the least – Trump is creating space for a new ‘concert of powers’ and the establishment of spheres of influence by various imperial and sub-imperial forces; the Kremlin’s nationalist policy may not be as predictable as many believe, and instead of geopolitical realism, it may opt for the restoration of the ‘Russian world’, and finally, hybrid operations (which Russia has intensified not only in the CEE region but across almost the whole of Europe) may spiral out of control (ranging from an aeroplane remaining in a NATO country’s airspace for too long to a missile that kills several people), etc. There really are so many variables here that simply saying whether something is in Putin’s interests or not does not solve the problem.

I notice that a large section of the left (including those defending Ukraine’s right to self-determination) has little to say about Russia’s hybrid activities, and general slogans about anti-militarism stand in clear contradiction to what the countries bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine are grappling with.

Living in a region bordering Ukraine, where a new security protocol has been introduced (in the Lubelskie and Podkarpackie Voivodeships, we receive text messages from the Government Security Centre every time the western regions of Ukraine come under attack; in the event of such an attack, operations at the airports in Lublin and Rzeszów are suspended, whenever there is a risk of a real air attack, air-raid sirens are sounded, the border crossings are closed in the event of an alarm, fighter jets are scrambled, and on one occasion, with quite varying results in different places, it was already necessary to practice the evacuation of educational establishments and government offices; a warning system similar to Ukraine’s – involving telephone alerts – is only just being developed) .

We also have an interesting situation, because whilst in everyday conversations I tend to hear anxiety and fear (though of course there are other voices too), on social media there is a veritable avalanche of ‘reassuring’ voices, ranging from pacifism (‘this isn’t our war’), love for Russia (“Putin will deal with the Banderites”) and calls to block official announcements (“they’re just trying to scare us”).

Oksana Dutchak is a Ukrainian sociologist and researcher in the fields of labor issues and gender inequality and an editor at *Commons*.

Szymon Martys is a Polish member of the International Network in Solidarity with Ukraine.