

A United Front? Ukraine's Plea for EU Membership

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

Morgan Aikele- A long year of fighting between Russia and Ukraine has forced both countries to seek greater power in any way they can. For Russia, this has manifested through [purchasing weaponry from North Korea](#), weathering sanctions through a [trade relationship with China](#), [painting Ukraine as a terrorist machine](#), and [throwing untrained soldiers on to the front lines](#). On the other hand, Ukraine has focused on shoring up [support from Western allies](#), especially receiving arms. The country's [appeal to join the European Union](#) last week is a prime example of Ukraine's search for greater relational power.

When a country wants to do something, it depends not only on their material capability to do so, but also on the power relations at play. North Korea or Iran may have the technical capability for nuclear proliferation, but face difficulties in their ability to do so unchallenged, given that they are labeled "rogue" or "outlaw" states (Flint, 2022). This is [relational power](#)– not focusing on power as a "thing," or as a material good, but rather, as the way in which materials can be used as countries interact. Volodymyr Zelensky's [impassioned plea for Ukraine's membership in the European Union](#) is best understood in this context. Indeed, Ukrainian membership would more formally recast Russia's invasion into Ukraine as an encroachment into Europe as a whole. Zelensky appears to have understood this when stating his case, proclaiming that Ukraine's fate is intertwined with Europe's. Formal recognition of Ukraine as a European country would give greater legitimacy to Ukraine's use of western tanks, and would likely increase financial and military support from other member countries. Right before Zelensky's speech

to leaders of all 27 EU member states, the president campaigned for longer-range missiles and aircraft in both the UK and France. Coincidence? Perhaps. Regardless, Ukraine has much to gain from becoming part of the larger European alliance as it defends its homeland– which may result in Russia appearing ever more like a global pariah state.

[Scale](#) also shows us how the size of a conflict expands or contracts over time, on a local, national, regional, or global level. Now, the Russia-Ukraine war is largely seen as a conflict between the two states alone, with some outside assistance pouring in. However, formal EU membership would indubitably expand the scope of the conflict to a regional one, given that member states' common interests increasingly intersect.

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