

ATHENA

FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH

MSc Course

"The EU and the Post-Soviet Space"

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Context

This foreign policy speech assignment was written by a Ukrainian-American graduate student at the University of Amsterdam. The speech takes the perspective of a Ukrainian activist invited to give a speech to the European Parliament to mark one year of Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine.

Speech

When you hear "Ukraine," what do you think of? War? Destruction? Nuclear threat? When I hear "Ukraine," I think of beautiful summers, kind neighbors, and lots of dogs. I think of my favorite chocolate called chervony mak, with a photo of a red poppy on the front. I also think of my least favorite food, kutia, and trying to get the smallest amount of grain on my spoon so I could still participate in the tradition.

I think of my family, my friends, my home.

I can tell you how Ukraine had the third-largest supply of nuclear weapons until 1994, when Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum. How Ukraine was promised "security assurances" for following the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I can tell you how Ukraine not only gave up nuclear weapons but also dismantled 44 heavy bombers and 1,068 cruise missiles. I can tell you how Ukraine was a great team player, how we gave away our weapons to make a safer world. But look who continues to pay.

Ukraine not only signed the Budapest Memorandum but also showed continual support for joining the European Union. We went to the streets to recall the election during the 2004 Orange Revolution to bring in a president who supports our European aspirations. We went to the streets when Yanukovich refused to sign the Association Agreement during the 2013 Euromaidan. Ukrainians died in order to join this union. And now, we are still left dying on the outside.

Back in March, when Zelensky traveled from government to government, he described scenes of your countries being attacked. He asked you to imagine what it would feel like. But we, Ukrainians, do not have the luxury to imagine. On Twitter this weekend, I saw photos of executed civilians in Luhansk. They had bags over their heads and signs attached to their necks. Written in Russian, one sign read, "He gave information to the enemy. Death." The other sign read, "Traitor of the Luhansk people." Underneath the photo was a post of a politician calling for security guarantees for Russia. The two posts felt as if they came from completely different worlds.

After Ukrainian forces moved the Russian army out of Bucha, I remember the news interviewing a woman whose mother was killed during the siege. She stated, "Today, I have lost this war." How many of us have already lost this war? How much more pain, how much more suffering until this ends? I hope you will never know this type of horror. I hope you will never feel the sorrow and pain we feel constantly.

Ukraine is so much more than a borderland. We are so much more than your shield. We are our own place, our own people, but right now, we are in danger, and we need your help. Like

Ukraine, I am also a sort of borderland. I exist between two worlds: one of Ukraine and one of “the West.” I have spent my life grateful for the opportunities I have received here but have not forgotten where I come from. I still struggle to string together sentences that could even describe what we have gone through this past year.

You have called us brave, you have called us heroes, you have called us European. Now is your time to act. Please, do not forget us. Do not let any more of us lose this war.
Slava Ukraini.