

ATHENA

FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH

MSc Course

"The EU and the Post-Soviet Space"

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Journalist, author and
winner of the Nobel Prize
for Literature



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Context

This speech is taking place on Friday May 9th 2025, which happens to be Europe Day. This special occasion marks eighty years since the end of the Second World War. However, it also marks eight months since Putin's death and thereby the end of Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Whereas Europe Day is usually commemorated in cities of EU institutions, an exception has been made and the memorial is held on the Independence Square in Kyiv.

Svetlana Alexievich, journalist, author and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature has been asked to give a speech on this occasion.

Many world leaders expectingly attend this memorial, however the speech was specifically written for Ukrainian citizens, who are also in the audience. Besides, many fellow Europeans are likely watching this service through a livestream.

Speech

Dear people of Ukraine, dear politicians, dear Europe,

I have the honour of standing here in front of you all, on the Independence Square in Kyiv. While I am a better listener, than I am a speaker, I wish to share a few words with you.

Today marks eighty years since the end of World War Two, and exactly eight months since the end of Russian aggression in Ukraine. Russia's invasion has shown that peace is not a given. Freedom must not be taken for granted. However, after almost three years of brutality, peace seems to finally have returned to our continent.

I have dedicated my life to sharing the stories of individuals. War is not always a shared experience, it is a personal trauma. It is a living memory of our pasts. Every trauma is different. One single consciousness cannot tell all stories. Despite my best efforts, I can not tell the stories of all people. I wrote my books, or as I prefer to call them: novels of voices, with the intention of sharing the stories of those who could not. However, I no longer think that this is enough.

In times of war, when the world is dominated by chaos and uncertainty, one of the most potent weapons is often overlooked – the power of voice. When nations are torn apart and communities are fractured, it is the power of voice that can bridge divides and build connections. It is the power of voice that can speak up against Soviet socialism. It is the power of voice that can give us hope, resonating with the shared aspirations of humanity. It is the power of voice that gives us courage and resilience.

We shall no longer be silent.

Look around you. As we stand on the Independence Square, a place of Ukrainian resilience, unity and our commitment to freedom. Let us imagine for a moment the stories that linger in the air around us. With every person, on every street corner, there are untold stories waiting to be unveiled.

Today marks a crossroad. 80 years of peace, 8 months of peace. Do we choose to share our stories or leave them behind us? Do we let go of the past, or let it shape our future?

We shall no longer be scared to share our stories. Our stories shape our history. Our stories shape our future. The Ukrainian story is part of the European story. Let the European Union become the next part of Ukraine's story.

We shall no longer be silent.