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# On Ukraine: The Undesirable Power of Projects<sup>1</sup>

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

3 March 2022

Ref: The war in Ukraine and projects, the good and the bad

*Editor's note: This comments below were first published in the [Lead Successful Projects newsletter](#). They are republished here as a letter to the editor due to their relevance to the war in Ukraine that may now be highlighting shortcomings in the PM world, and certainly new and perhaps much greater risks.*

Dear all,

**I am a huge believer in the incredible power of projects for good and noble causes, but also conscious about their undesirable side. Unfortunately, most of our current leaders do not understand projects and ignore their overwhelming positive, and sometimes enormously negative, power.**

**Whenever there is a conflict of such magnitude, I analyze the situation from a project perspective. And to my desolation, I realize that the merciless leaders have always an incredibly well-defined project to implement their devastating views. In contrast, the other leaders have a very fragile project, if they have one at all.**

The world is looking with shock, despair, and sadness at the recent events in Ukraine. We never thought that war could be happening in Europe again. I try to imagine how my life would radically change if tomorrow we would see tanks in the street, we had to move to shelters or metro stations, live with the fear of being hit by a bomb 24/7, or leave everything that you have built and flee to a neighbor country.

I must admit that my views are a bit narrow and probably selfish. Unfortunately, wars with devastating consequences to millions of innocent people are happening in several places worldwide and we don't pay enough attention or support their victims.

I have seen this happening in recent wars and other controversial and damaging matters, such as the Brexit, where the leave.eu leaders had a much better-defined project; or in my home country, where smaller groups impose their radical ideas because they have a well-thought-out project, while the country leaders completely lack a project for the nation.

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When you scrutinize **these devastating projects, one thing comes clearly across: they are exceptionally well defined.** They have a clear purpose (unfortunately a very negative one), they promote fake benefits, they have a powerful and entirely dedicated sponsor, they have unlimited resources, they have a well-defined plan, their communication and propaganda are extraordinarily advanced, and they are ruthless in the implementation.

The scary part is that we don't know if the attempt to invade Ukraine is the end of the project or just a phase in a horrible grander project.

On the other hand, we are nowhere near having any project to counter the situation.

### **NATO**

It is appalling to see that NATO, the most powerful defense alliance in the world, lacks a peace project for its members and neighboring countries. We hear hopeful words and big statements, but their project is to support the impacted people and end the war as soon as possible. You kind of wonder what the value of NATO is and whether you can count on them in the near future if the situation deteriorates.

### **EU Leaders**

It is also alarming to see that the leading European Presidents, Prime Ministers, and EU officials cannot articulate a solid project we can all stand behind. They have been promoting many economic sanctions, many already applied since 2014, but with little or no immediate effect. This will not help the Ukrainian people; they are expecting much more from our leaders.

It sounds horrible when you look at such miserable initiatives through the lens of projects. Still, as professionals in this space, I think it is our duty to draw leaders' attention and highlight the urgency to develop a better and stronger project to stop the war.

### **We need a "Back to Peace Project"**

I am not an expert in wars or international conflicts, but I am afraid that individual actions and economic sanctions will not stop the war. Leaders need to get together to **urgently define a "back to peace project" to cease the invasion.** It needs a higher and engaging purpose, a strong vision about the future, a fully dedicated executive sponsor, countries leaders speaking with one voice, a clear and articulated plan, almost unlimited resources/funding, and be impeccable in the implementation.

My thoughts are with the Ukrainian people and those drawn into this war unwillingly. Truly hope that we see an end to this dramatic event as soon as possible.

**And please, if you or your family are being impacted by the war, please let me know how I or our network of experts can be of any help.**

Please keep well!

[Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez](#)  
Brussels, Belgium

Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez is author of the [Harvard Business Review Project Management Handbook](#), the featured HBR article [The Project Economy Has Arrived](#), and four other books, Antonio is the creator of concepts such as the Project Economy and the Project Manifesto. His research and global impact in modern management have been recognized by Thinkers50. Fellow and Former Chairman of the Project Management Institute, he is the founder of [Projects&Co](#) and the Strategy Implementation Institute, co-founder. You can follow Antonio through his [LinkedIn Newsletter - Lead Projects Successfully](#), his popular online course [Project Management Reinvented for Non-Project Managers](#), and his [website](#).