

EU perspectives

EU ^{and} Western Balkan states (WB6)

EU i zemlje Zapadnog Balkana (WB6) - europska gledišta



Institut za istraživanje hibridnih sukoba
Zaklada Konrad Adenauer

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– perspektive i izazovi u obrani demokracije**

Godina 4, br. 1.-2.

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of democracy**

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Sadržaj / Content:		
Viacheslav Semenenko, Andrii Ivashchenko:	CREATING UKRAINE'S NATIONAL RESILIENCE SYSTEM FOR RECOVERY AFTER RUSSIAN AGGRESSION	11
Maryna Bilynska:	BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE DURING AND AFTER THE WAR IN UKRAINE: THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION APPROACH	17
Iztok Podbregar, Marina Dežman	ENSURING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO FUTURE CHALLENGES	25
Nicolae-Alexandru Andronic	UKRAINE'S MEDIA POLICIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ONGOING WAR AND FUTURE RECONSTRUCTION – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE BALKANS	33
Dražen Barbarić	EXPERIENCES OF POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STATE AND SOCIETY: LESSONS LEARNED FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	45
Davor Ivo Stier	ENSURING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO FUTURE CHALLENGES	51
Martin Stoyanov	POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY AND UPHOLDING THE RULE OF LAW	57
Stefan Karaleev	EDUCATION FOR STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE AMID THE WAR IN UKRAINE	63
Natalia Albu	RESILIENCE AND CURRENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: PERSPECTIVES FOR REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	69

Jack Gill	BLACK SEA GEOPOLITICS AND UKRAINE'S FUTURE	87
Nenad Koprivica	DEVELOPING SOCIETY'S POST-WAR RESILIENCE IN UKRAINE – DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY	99
Katarina Durdovicova, Matej Kandrik	ENSURING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO THE FUTURE CHALLENGES MENA, CLIMATE CHANGE AND EU RISK MANAGEMENT	107
Daria Vilkova	POST-WAR DEMOCRACY IN UKRAINE AND WAR-BORN CHALLENGES	125

Conference: Developing society's post-war
resilience in Ukraine – Perspectives and
challenges - defence of democracy

5 – 7 June, 2023

**University of Zadar Ulica Mihovila Pavlinovića 1 HR-23 000 Zadar,
Croatia**

Monday, June 05th

until 18.00 h **Arrival of the participants**

Venue: „Hotel Kolovare“

Ul. Bože Peričića 14, 23000, Zadar

Home - Hotel Kolovare (hotel-kolovare.com)

18.30 h – **Working dinner**

Tuesday, June 06th

08.30 h **University of Zadar**

Venue: “Festive hall”

Ul. Mihovila Pavlinovića, 23000, Zadar

09.00 h **Words of Welcome and Introduction**

Holger Haibach

Head of the KAS Office for Croatia and Slovenia

Gordan Akrap Ph.D.

Head of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute (Croatia)

Prof. Dijana Vican Ph.D.

Rector of the University of Zadar

Jakob Bec

International Secretary of NSI, Head of (IJEK)

09.15 h **Guest of honour:**

Branko Dukić Ph.D.

The mayor of the city of Zadar

09.30 h **Key Note:**
Ognian Zlatev
Head of European Commission Representation in Croatia

PANEL 1. Post-war (re)construction of democratic society in Ukraine

10.00 h **Impulse**
Daria Vilkova Ph.D.,
Institute of International Relations
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

10.15 h **Panel Discussion:**
(max 5 min per each kick-off speaker the rest of the discussion guided by moderator)

Marko Balažic
President of the Slovenian People's Party (SLS)

Lucie Tungul Ph.D.
Head of Research, (TOPAZ)

Dražen Barbarić Ph.D.,
Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Mostar

Jack Gill
Institut for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM)
– Austria

Andrijana Lazarević
Programm Director
RESECO

Gordan Akrap Ph.D.
Head of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute (Croatia),
Head of the Zagreb Security Forum (ZSF)

Maryna Biynska Ph.D.,
South- Ukrainian State Pedagogical University

Moderation:
Ante Bralić Ph.D.,
University of Zadar

11.00 h **Coffee break**

13.00 h

Lunch

14.30 h

PANEL 2. Ensuring European societal resilience to future challenges

14.45 h

Impulse

Ptof.Dr. Ulrich Schlie,

University Bonn

Prof.Dr. Iztok Podbregar,

Universty Maribor

Panel Discussion:

(max 5 min per each kick-off speaker the rest of the discussion guided by moderator)

Martin Svárovský

Advisor of the Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs

Deputy Chairman of the Commission EU affairs of the KDU-ČSL

Mr. Christian GHIȚĂ

Head of Communications Department at EARC

Editor-in-Chief of "Euro-Atlantic Resilience Journal",

Ante Bralić Ph.D.,

Department of History, University of Zadar

Zoltán KISZELLY

Director of the Center for Political Analysis at Század-vég Foundation

Natalia Albu Ph.D.,

Director of the Platform Security and Defense

Security Commission in Parliament

Matej Kandrik.,

Chief Executive Director, Adapt Institute

Moderation:

Gordan Akrap Ph.D.

Head of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute (Croatia)

Coffee Break

15.45 h

Open Debate

16.00 h

17.00 h **PANEL 3. Implementing policies during this transition period as guided by the Lessons Identified and Lessons Learned - particularly regarding law and media**

17.15 h **Impulse**
Viacheslav Semenenko Ph.D.,
Military Academy "Evgeny Bereznyak"

Panel Discussion:
(max 5 min per each kick-off speaker the rest of the discussion guided by moderator)

Davor Ivo Stier
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Member of the Croatian Parliament

Nenad Koprivica Ph.D.,
International Republican Institute (IRI)

Alexandru Andronic
Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (E-ARC)

Daniel Sunter
Executive Director Balkan Security Network

Jure Zovko
President of Institut International de Philosophie (Paris-Nancy)

President of Académie Internationale de Philosophie des Sciences (Bruxelles)

Yevhen Mahda Ph.D.,
Associate Professor, Department of Publishing Studies, National Technical University "Igor Sikorsky Kiev Polytechnic Institute",
Executive Director of the Institute of World Policy

Moderation:
Pero Munivrana
Hybrid Warfare Research Institute

Coffee Break

18.00 h **Open Debate**

18.15 h **Dinner**

19.45 h - **„Hotel Kolovare“**
Ul. Bože Peričića 14, 23000, Zadar
Home - Hotel Kolovare (hotel-kolovare.com)

CREATING UKRAINE'S NATIONAL RESILIENCE SYSTEM FOR RECOVERY AFTER RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

Viacheslav Semenenko *
Andrii Ivaschenko **

Abstract: The article by Ukrainian authors provides their view on the unprovoked and illegal military aggression by Russia, which became a real crash test for national resilience. It has caused a rapidly growing refugee crisis, a blow to the world economy, and a test of the resilience of European solidarity. They examine the key principles for forming a successful strategy for the recovery of Ukraine's national resilience system after Russian aggression

Keywords: resilience, Ukraine's National Resilience System, strategy for ensuring national resilience, Russian-Ukrainian war, Russian aggression, Ukraine, hybrid warfare.

Introduction

In May, Russia launched 566 missiles and drones (185 missiles and 381 drones) at Ukraine. Most of them were launched in Kyiv. As a result, our powerful Air Defence destroyed 88 % of them (496 missiles and drones: 154 missiles and 342 drones).

* Colonel, Viacheslav Semenenko, PhD, Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

** col. (ret.) Andrii Ivaschenko, PhD, leading researcher of the Center for Military and Strategic Studies of the National Defence University of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

We remind you, the use of weapons of mass destruction against civilians is a crime against humanity and a violation of the four Geneva Conventions. But we would like to notify you of another thing: after these attacks on Kyiv, the city is operating as usual, public transport, supermarkets, and restaurants are open, and many people attended the Kyiv Day events. This is a **sign** of a **high level of real**, not theoretical, **resilience of our society**, and Ukraine!

Ukraine became the object of **unprovoked and illegal military aggression by russia** with the direct support of Belarus, which became the realization of the final phase of hybrid aggression. This aggression has been carried out without stopping all the time since the independence of Ukraine. Economic blackmail, gas wars, the Budapest memorandum, internal destabilization, the 5th column and Russian citizens in the Ukrainian government, the Russian church in Ukraine, the distribution of pro-Russian content in Ukraine's information field, etc. All of these events were elements of Russian "soft power" against Ukraine which created favorable conditions for the final blow by the so-called 2nd army of the world.

The **full-scale invasion of Ukraine** began on February 24, 2022. But Ukraine is stable and inspires the world. All Ukrainians stayed together to fight against russia. Our unity is the foundation of our resilience. This war led not only to human casualties and significant losses for the economy of Ukraine but also became a real **crash test for national resilience**. The infrastructure, especially the energy sector, is partially damaged, and attacks and destruction continue. Maintaining national resilience in wartime is becoming more and more difficult.

The war has caused a rapidly growing **refugee crisis**, with more than 4.5 million refugees and 11 million internally displaced people. The actual number is much higher. The longer and more persistent Ukrainian resistance is, the greater the probability of russia's use of a more aggressive strategy. It will take years to restore the national resilience system. The hardships caused by war are not limited to countries at war. The war was a serious

blow to the world economy, a test of the **resilience of European solidarity**. The President of the World Bank called the war in Ukraine “a catastrophe for the world”, emphasizing the fact that the impact of the war went beyond the borders of Ukraine.

Given the negative consequences of a full-scale war, early planning for the restoration of the national resilience system becomes especially important. Therefore, a prolonged war allows for the consolidation of the gains achieved through the aid of other nations. After the active phase, there are opportunities for implementing transformative reforms, conducting a thorough evaluation of the reasons and effects of war, and finding solutions to political, economic, military, and security issues. This challenging task requires considering multiple, at times conflicting, aspects of the national resilience system.

Ukraine faces several major challenges:

- 1) safeguarding national security and defence;
- 2) reintegrating former combatants and refugees into a peaceful society;
- 3) reconstructing critical infrastructure;
- 4) humanitarian demining;
- 5) restoring investor trust;
- 6) enhancing mechanisms for ensuring the rule of law and justice during the transitional period.

Due to the massive destruction, this task will require substantial resources and may take several years to complete, even with optimal conditions. Discussions about reconstruction are already underway. At the same time, many questions remain open, including the possibility of using confiscated Russian assets to ensure recovery. So far, **there is no detailed strategy for ensuring national resilience after the end of the active phase**, but Ukraine’s status as a member of the EU and NATO will significantly contribute to its effective realization.

By studying the recovery of other countries after a crisis, we can identify **key principles** for forming a **successful strategy**:

1. first of all, post-conflict recovery was largely managed by the host country or host countries, often funded by the US (*such as Western European countries after World War II*);
2. second, reconstruction and recovery contributed to economic liberalization (*such as in Sudan, Egypt, Mozambique, Latin America, and others*);
3. third, the impact of foreign aid on the growth of a war-torn economy can in some cases become negative: the country becomes dependent on aid and cannot implement an effective model of economic growth (*such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mozambique, Uganda*);
4. fourth, the strategy and practice of foreign aid hinder the creation of jobs necessary to raise the population's standard of living, which does not contribute to ensuring national resilience and long-term peace (*such as in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and Iraq*).

Other features of the strategy of forming a system for ensuring national resilience include:

- 1) the need for strict security guarantees similar to those of NATO members;
- 2) substantial economic load on both Ukraine and the international community;
- 3) a wide range of international actors that will participate in reconstruction: The United Nations, international financial institutions, development organizations, bilateral and regional donors, and non-governmental organizations;
- 4) disarmament, reduction of Armed Forces and reintegration of ex-servicemen, and various other aspects of security sector reform will become one of the key issues of ensuring national resilience;
- 5) post-conflict recovery and formation of the national resilience system must be started before the end of the active phase of the war;
- 6) economic recovery is a priority to support the national resilience system;

- 7) donors will not begin to support economic reconstruction if there is no national contribution to the creation of an environment that is conducive to ensuring the sustainability of such reconstruction;
- 8) the success of a national resilience system largely depends on the efforts of local governments, communities, individual activists, households, and businesses to boost economic activity after a war; although this approach puts local actors, institutions, and resources at the centre, it also recognizes the critical role of external assistance;
- 9) aid does not affect the growth of the population's standard of living, but contributes to the formation of a national resilience system;
- 10) the strength of a nation's resilience is dependent on factors such as budget surpluses, inflation rates, and trade openness. A well-balanced and efficient domestic policy can provide aid for growth, but simply increasing aid does not guarantee national resilience;
- 11) typically, when aid is distributed, countries with a significant level of resilience are given priority;
- 12) resilience is not just about physical or economic recovery; it can never be completely separated from politics. And the challenges ahead will rarely be driven by humanitarian or economic needs alone.

Conclusion

Consequently, the decisions made by the West during the war suggest that the EU will be given a significant role in the reconstruction process. The West's response is becoming more decisive and cohesive, with a focus on ensuring stability in Europe, reducing energy reliance on Russia, and strengthening the European defence system. So, the resolution of the Ukrainian issue in the near future will be crucial for the future of European security and a **test of the strength of European solidarity**.

Good intentions must have fists!

We know it one hundred per cent!

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE DURING AND AFTER THE WAR IN UKRAINE: THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION APPROACH

Maryna Bilynska, PhD

Abstract: This paper explores the concept of building national resilience during and after the war in Ukraine, with a particular focus on the role of public administration. The study aims to supplement the existing terminology of public administration by introducing the concept of "resilient public administration" and investigates the factors influencing the formation of individual resilience among top-level public servants. Furthermore, the article seeks to identify indicators of resilient public administration at the national level and develop a model to understand the impact of globalization challenges on public administration resilience. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of national resilience and provide insights into strategies for governance in post-war scenarios.

Key words: unprovoked war with Russian Federation, social and economic crisis, national resilience, resilient public administration, Ukrainian Resilience Centre

Introduction

The unprovoked war with the Russian Federation has inflicted profound and lasting consequences on Ukraine, affecting its political, economic, and social landscape. The war has disrupted the lives of millions of people, displaced populations, and resulted in the loss of lives and infrastructure. In the face of such devastation, Ukraine is confronted with the formidable task of recovery, rebuilding, and forging a path towards a more resilient future.

At present, Ukraine is undergoing different public reforms, in conditions of social and economic crisis, due to the unprovoked war with the Russian Federation. A. Ermolaev (2023) highlights the following consequences and negative trends associated with the war: new de-industrialization, de-urbanization, and social decapitalization. The war has led to serious economic and social disorganization across the territory of Ukraine. A significant number of people have become unemployed and have become internally displaced persons (IDPs) or migrated to other countries. Research conducted by the sociological group "Rating" indicates that as of September, only 61% of those who had jobs before the war were employed, and only 36% of them were working full-time. According to the World Bank, more than 817,000 residential buildings were damaged as a result of the war, of which 38% were permanently destroyed. As a result, millions of Ukrainians have found themselves in vulnerable situations, particularly those who were already disadvantaged before the full-scale war began. Part of the social infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, and the burden on institutions providing social services has significantly increased in regions where a large number of internally displaced persons have settled. The increased strain on social protection systems is further compounded by reduced budget revenues, posing additional challenges. Therefore, a systematic social support system is crucial both now and in the future.

Resilience of the society

The budget of Ukraine for 2023 is more defense-oriented, which is entirely logical given the ongoing war throughout the country. As a result, the majority of state expenditures are allocated to the defense sector - half of all planned expenditures. Despite significant budget allocations for social protection (UAH 447.6 billion), the magnitude and depth of the difficult life circumstances that almost all Ukrainian families have experienced far exceed the level of state aid allocated for the current year. Forced displacement to other regions of the country, loss of employment, loss of housing, and the mental health impact resulting from significant psychological trauma due to the war are just a few examples of the challenges faced by contemporary Ukrainian families.

I. Linkov, B. Trump (2019) understand resilience as the property of a system *and* a network, where *it is imperative for systems planners* to understand the complex and interconnected nature within which most individuals, organizations, and activities operate. They describe the National Resilience (NR) as the ability of a system to perform four functions with respect to adverse events: (1) planning and preparation (shocking), (2) absorption, (3) recovery, and (4) adaptation [2012 USA National Academy of Sciences report on “disaster resilience”, focus on management processes]. Studies prove that effective public administration (when government bodies are trusted) is a part of resilience formation on both personal and community levels. The issue of NR on state level is complex in many ways. Unfortunately, a collection of resilient individuals does not guarantee a resilient community; similarly, a set of resilient communities does not necessarily form a resilient nation and a resilient state.

Currently, after 1 year and 4 months of war, it can be determined that Ukrainian society has gone through stages of shocking impact of a catastrophic factor (first 2 months), absorption (end of winter 2023), and is now in the recovery

stage preceding adaptation. Thus, we identify the following characteristics of a resilient state: cooperation between military government administrations and local self-government bodies, complete trust in political leaders, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and security structures, a nationwide volunteer movement.

We define NR as the ability of a social system to build a normal, full-fledged life in challenging conditions, the society's ability to withstand challenges and crises in various spheres of social life by making changes and adaptations without harming the fundamental values of society and institutions. National resilience is also an element of society's ability to strengthen national security and cannot be limited to military, economic, or medical-psychological aspects. In a democratic society, aspects such as trust in government and state institutions, patriotism, and tolerance play an important role in political participation and the acquisition of social capital, which, in turn, leads to higher levels of national resilience." [Bilynska M, Korolchuk O., 2018]

National resilience, defined as the ability of a social system to withstand and recover from shocks and challenges, is a vital concept that assumes paramount importance in post-war contexts. It encompasses not only the ability to rebound and rebuild physically but also the capacity to address the psychological, social, and institutional dimensions of the nation. National resilience is a holistic endeavor that requires the concerted efforts of various stakeholders, including public administrators, policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizens.

Our research endeavors to explore the role of public administration in building national resilience during and after the war in Ukraine. Public administration, as the key apparatus of governance, possesses the potential to shape policies, implement reforms, and mobilize resources to facilitate recovery and promote stability, progress, and societal well-being. By understanding the specific ways in which public administration can contribute to national

resilience, we can identify strategies and best practices that will enable Ukraine to navigate the challenging post-war environment. By exploring these aspects, this research contributes to the understanding of national resilience and provides insights into strategies for governance in post-war scenarios. It seeks to facilitate informed decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation by public administrators, ultimately guiding Ukraine towards a path of sustainable recovery, inclusive development, and societal well-being.

Analysing possible scenarios for the development of the global landscape, researchers argue that all the positive human capabilities can only be approached through the creation of resilient state, based on resilient public administration

Expected Results

- Supplementing the terminology of public administration scientific area by authorizing the definition of “resilient public administration” expected to be useful for researchers
- Research of top-level public servants' perception of the NR concept in order to identify basic factors influencing the formation of individual resilience of this category of citizens
- Identification of RPA indicators at the national level in order to determine the priority change strategies for governance
- Building the model of the globalization challenges impact on public administration resilience

I represent not only the scientific community of Ukraine but also serve as the head of the NGO 'Resilience Ukrainian Center' (www.the-urc.com). Over the course of 5 years, we have been studying the issue of Resilient Public Administration. During times of war, we carry out a mission as part of a volunteer movement, providing medicines and hygiene products to civilian hospitals. Our efforts are always aimed at obtaining any possible assistance and resources that save and sustain the livelihoods of both the civilian population

across all territories of Ukraine and the military. We recognize the numerous problems brought about by the war—devastation and impoverishment, disillusionment and disappointment. We understand the crucial importance of humanitarian aid and the need to provide it now, when it is most needed. However, the challenges still outweigh the available possibilities, further complicated and burdened by daily shelling and damage to critical infrastructure. The need for charitable donations to improve the well-being of the affected and support those who defend them remains acute. The initial flow of aid has gradually diminished due to war weariness felt by people worldwide, and we all understand that. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the Russians continue to shell Ukrainian cities, trying to erase us and our capacity to live and function, committing daily acts of military aggression. The war persists, and we continue to maintain the rear, providing the necessary resources for the needs of the military and affected citizens. We will endure. We will prevail. Because we are free, strong, and reliable.

Thank you for the support of Ukraine in this war. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this conference.

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ENSURING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO FUTURE CHALLENGES

Prof.Dr. Iztok Podbregar
Marina Dežman, mr.sci.

Introduction

In achieving Europe's fair green and digital transition, this path will certainly be affected by the long-term consequences of Russian military aggression against Ukraine. It will also affect energy, food, security, defence, economy, and geopolitics. However, these challenges will not divert the European Union from its long-term objectives. Making the right decisions will only speed up their achievement. Ultimately, this could foster our resilience and open strategic autonomy in various areas, from energy, food, security, and critical supplies (raw materials needed for the transitions) to cutting-edge technologies (STRATEGIC FORESIGHT REPORT, 2022).

With a renewed sense of urgency linked to the rapid evolution of the geopolitical situation, appropriate policies are needed to strengthen opportunities and minimise potential risks related to the interaction between the green and digital transitions (STRATEGIC FORESIGHT REPORT, 2022).

Strategic foresight report (2022)

Strategic foresight report (2022) identified ten key areas for action:

1. Strengthening *resilience and open strategic autonomy* in sectors critical for the twin transitions in an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment.

In the energy sector, intensified efforts are needed on green energy sources, replacing our reliance on fossil fuels, while diversifying sources during the transition period. The ‘energy efficiency first’ principle applied across society and all sectors of the economy would considerably reduce energy consumption. Building on ongoing modernisation efforts, the trade, customs, competition and State aid policy toolbox will also need to be kept up to date to respond to challenges resulting from the twin transitions and other market developments, resulting notably from the geopolitical situation. This would protect the EU against unsustainable products and processes from third countries, while cushioning the effects of the inevitable short-term costs both within and outside Europe (COM/713 final, 2021).

2. Strategically managing critical supplies to increase diversification and minimise risks of new dependencies, also stepping up action to ensure the availability of critical raw materials.

Developing domestic capacities and diversifying sources of supply along the value chain will be instrumental to significantly reduce the existing strategic dependencies and avert the risk of replacing them with new ones. This is of particular importance in the area of critical raw materials, which requires a long-term and systemic approach. Efforts are needed to promote the highest sustainability standards and innovation, minimise the environmental and social footprint of the raw materials value chain, as well as mobilise the network of trade and investment agreements and the Team Europe financial firepower to attract investment across the entire raw materials value chain assets in the EU and third countries.

3. Supporting the transition to new quality jobs, by adapting the *education and training systems*.

This entails both learning skills to adapt to a rapidly transforming technological reality and labour market, as well as green skills and climate awareness to support value creation in the green transition and responsible citizenship. Labour mobility across sectors and targeted legal migration need to increase.

4. Developing *monitoring frameworks* for measuring wellbeing beyond GDP and assessing the enabling effect and overall footprint of digitalisation.

The four dimensions of competitive sustainability, i.e., fairness, environmental sustainability, economic stability, and productivity require an ambitious and integrated policy design that pays attention to both synergies and tensions. To guide political decisions that deliver on its full sustainable potential and to benefit from sustainable finance, a new and sound EU-level framework is needed for measuring both the enabling effects of digitalisation and its overall footprint in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and energy and resource use, including minerals and rare earth.

5. Setting *standards for greening digitalisation* and ensuring the EU's first mover advantage in competitive sustainability.

Product design, based on the 'reduce, repair, reuse and recycle' principle should become mainstream. Current action to ensure the sustainability of physical goods in the EU needs to be matched with standards for all sectors, to reverse overconsumption and planned obsolescence. The recent Commission proposals (COM/143 final,

2022) to oblige traders to provide consumers with information on the durability and reparability of products could provide a solid basis for this. The EU must develop a more strategic approach to international standardisation activities in relevant global formats (COM/31 final, 2022).

6. Stepping up *green and digital diplomacy*, by leveraging regulatory and standardisation power, promoting EU values, and fostering partnerships.

Rules-based multilateralism and values-based international cooperation should be prioritised. Global cooperation, including through a proactive research and innovation agenda with like-minded partners, will be important to accelerate the development of twinning technologies and to address concerns related to digitalisation. This will require developing physical green and digital infrastructure (secure 5G and 6G, clean transport corridors, alternative energy sources, clean power transmission lines) and providing an enabling environment for projects.

7. Ensuring cohesion by strengthening *social protection and the welfare state*, including via compensating mechanisms.

Workers, companies, sectors, and regions in transition require tailored support and incentives to adapt. Social dialogue, investments for quality job creation, and timely development of partnerships between public employment services, trade unions, industry and educational institutions are key. Regional development strategies and investments, supported by cohesion policy, should underpin the twin transitions, while reducing economic, social, and technological disparities, including environmental injustice. Seamless and secure connectivity, including in rural and remote areas, in combination with capacity and skills

building, will be key to ensuring all citizens and businesses can benefit from twinning.

8. Mobilising *additional strategic investment*, in particular in R&I and new technologies, to accelerate the twin transitions.

To strengthen the EU's resilience and facilitate the twin transitions, targeted reforms and investments need to tackle vulnerabilities at national and EU levels. Relevant macroeconomic and sectoral policies need to be closely coordinated. A further shift in investments towards long-term, and sustainable assets is required. The EU will need to leverage additional private and public long-term investments in twinning, especially in R&I across critical technologies and sectors, uptake and synergies between technologies, human capital, and infrastructures. Fiscal policies and taxation need to be adapted to the twin transitions, spare additional investment towards projects promoting them, and provide the right price signals and incentives to producers, users, and consumers. The recent proposal to introduce a debt-equity reduction allowance and to limit the deductibility of interest for corporate tax purposes will have an important role in fostering the twin transitions (COM/216, 2022)).

9. Providing a *future-proof and conducive regulatory framework*, also by using more artificial intelligence for policymaking and citizens' engagement.

The single market and its various dimensions, e.g., on data or energy, need to continuously evolve to accompany the twin transitions. A better regulatory framework, with incentives for innovation, is needed to promote circularity, create enabling markets, strengthen industrial

ecosystems and ensure diversity of market players. EU policymaking should further exploit the use of digital solutions, such as digital twins, artificial intelligence for forecasting, or modelling in impact assessments. The twinning could be better analysed in evaluations of existing legislation, by looking at combined effects. Consumers should be protected against deceptive practices, such as greenwashing or planned obsolescence (Digitalisation in Europe 2022–2023, 2022).

10. Promoting strong *cybersecurity and data policies*, so that data fuelling the twinning are protected and shared.

Improved interoperability between different owners, generators, and data users in the EU, including national and subnational information systems, will facilitate data sharing by different actors: public authorities, businesses, civil society, and researchers. Common approaches to cybersecurity benchmarks for products and services, including comprehensive sets of rules, technical requirements, standards, and procedures will be important.

The presented areas of action respond to the need to increase synergy and address tensions within the twin transition. Consequently, a dynamic approach to anticipating change and adapting policy responses is required. Only in this way will digital technologies support the new, regenerative, and climate-neutral economy.

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UKRAINE'S MEDIA POLICIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ONGOING WAR AND FUTURE RECONSTRUCTION – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE BALKANS

Nicolae-Alexandru Andronic

Abstract: During the future post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, which is going to be guided by democratic principles and EU values, safeguarding and consolidating the pluralism and freedom of the media will be of great importance. This article will analyse Ukraine's current media policies and their effects, departing from the lessons learned from the post-war reconstruction of Western Balkan countries after the conflicts of the 1990s. This analysis highlights the fact that Kyiv has learned from the experience of the Balkan reconstruction (and other such cases), passing legislation that prevents oligarchic capture and covert ownership of media outlets. However, there are negative economic factors, largely triggered by Russia's illegal invasion, which hinder the goal of both maintaining a financially viable private media sector and preventing oligarchic and foreign malign influence. Therefore, Ukraine will need more funds to offset these issues and to keep its media outlets alive – and this is a dimension where the West, and especially the European Union, can play a crucial role.

Introduction

As Russia's illegal war against Ukraine continues, Kyiv and its Western partners have already begun discussing about reconstruction. While this might seem premature, it is actually a sign of strategic maturity, since the reconstruction that Ukraine wants and deserves, firmly rooted in democratic values, must be planned in advance to maximise its success. This process will also cover the media ecosystem, which has been severely impacted by the invasion. Post-war recovery of a country's media is tough to manage, and the way in which this was done in parts of the Western Balkans after the conflicts of the 1990s shows the cost of not getting it right. There are however reasons to be optimistic with regards to the situation in Ukraine, as there are factors working in favour of a free Ukrainian media which were not present in the post-war Balkans.

Balkan lessons on (un)free media

Theoretically, the media ecosystem in the Western Balkans could constitute a robust fourth estate, capable of acting as a check on politicians' power excesses, since local legislative frameworks tend to be largely synchronised with EU standards in this field (Stojarová, 2020, p.165). As Stojarová notes, "the accession process and subsequent Europeanization is pivotal in the shaping of countries' legislation" because "the EU's political commitment to media pluralism and freedom is generally high" (2020, p.165). Consequently, "media freedom and plurality is guaranteed and censorship prohibited by all of the constitutions in the region" (Stojarová, 2020, p.166). Moreover, the Balkan media ecosystem is highly fragmented (Southeast European Leadership for Development and Integrity, 2022, p.8), which should lead to a diversity of viewpoints covered by outlets. For example, the least fragmented media market when matching for population figures, Serbia,

still contains over 200 TV stations (Stojarová, 2020, p.164).

However, in many Balkan countries, the influence of these factors is overshadowed by other structural forces working against media freedom: dependency upon state advertisements/financing, ownership of outlets by politically connected oligarchs, and weak/politicised regulatory bodies (Stojarová, 2020, pp.163-166).

If the financial dependency upon governmental funds and consequent politicisation of public broadcasters is a relatively straightforward process, the mechanisms behind the capture of private media by political interest groups are a bit more complex. Advertising is the basis of revenue for private media, but it is a very limited resource, since “the advertising market has been consistently shrinking” (Stojarová, 2020, p.169). The impact of the 2008 financial crisis upon this industry has brought about a situation where Balkan governments constitute “the most important source of revenue for private companies, supporting media directly and indirectly in many different ways” (European Parliament Think Tank, 2016, p.3). The awarding of advertisement contracts is often linked to political loyalty (Stojarová, 2020, p.170), and a lack of transparent legislation has solidified clientelist practices (Kmezić, 2020, p.192).

An equally serious problem is the untransparent ownership of numerous Balkan media outlets by politically connected businessmen (European Parliament Think Tank, 2016, p.8; Stojarová, 2020, pp.167-170). This can endanger editorial independence, especially when said outlets are financed from the profits of their owners’ other businesses, which may very well be exposed to political favouritism or retaliation (Stojarová, 2020, pp.169-170). Privatisation, which should theoretically be a strong counterbalance to government influence in state media, has on several

occasions been marked by overt cronyism (Kmezić, 2020, pp.193-194). Unfortunately, such political influence mechanisms are not a new phenomenon, but rather an “original sin” of the first wave of post-war privatisation which has perpetuated itself throughout the following waves as well (Kmezić, 2020, p.186). An associated toxic trend is the high concentration of media ownership, also facilitated by obscure ownership structures and dubious public-private linkages (European Parliament Think Tank, 2016, p.8).

Therefore, it becomes apparent that the European-standard media regulations “are not necessarily observed” and that the fragmentation of the media landscape has not brought a diversity of views, but rather the saturation of a market characterised by reduced profits and financial unsustainability (Stojarová, 2020, pp.166-167). Counterintuitively, this fragmentation has not even stopped media concentration, which has increased to a worrying extent (European Parliament Think Tank, 2016, p.8). Therefore, one could say that the Balkan media ecosystem represents the “worst of both worlds”: it contains too many outlets, most of which are owned by a very limited number of people and present the same viewpoints.

To this already problematic image of the media landscape, one must also add the fact that “regulatory bodies are generally perceived as being weak, unprofessional, biased and dependent on the political powers” (Stojarová, 2020, p.166). Since members of these bodies are usually “elected with a simple parliamentary majority and are thus closely related to the ruling party”, while also being financially dependent upon government funds and not endowed with proper monitoring capabilities, the result is a politicised regulatory system (Stojarová, 2020, p.166).

A big factor in all of these processes has been the lack of foreign ownership in the media sector, “which could have also contributed to the lack of growth of media professionalization” (Stojarová, 2020, p.167). Western (and especially European) involvement and foreign direct investment (FDI) in Balkan media would have made an even greater difference on the issue of independence, as outlets belonging to global conglomerates are much harder to pressure politically without generating serious international backlash. This process should have been encouraged by Western governments, as pure local market considerations do not provide a strong enough incentive for such investment. By blindly trusting the “invisible hand” of the market during the privatisation process, the West has failed to notice the stacks of dirty cash that hand was often holding, with dramatic consequences.

Ukraine: European “economic firepower” will make the difference

There are reasons to be optimistic about the future of Ukrainian media, as Kyiv appears to have learned from the experience of the post-war Balkans and other similar cases.

The law “On Prevention of Threats to National Security Related to Excessive Influence of Persons Who Have Significant Economic and Political Weight in Public Life (Oligarchs)” addresses a lot of the ownership issues described in the previous section. Understanding how problematic the politics-business-media nexus is for media freedom, the de-oligarchization law defines an oligarch as a person who meets at least three of the criteria listed below:

“1) is involved in political life;

2) exerts significant influence on mass media;

3) is the ultimate beneficial owner of a business entity that, after the enactment of this Law, is a natural monopoly entity or occupies a monopoly (dominant) position in the market according to the Law of Ukraine on Protection of Economic Competition, and maintains or strengthens such position within one consecutive year;

4) the confirmed value of the person's assets (and those of the business entities in which he/she is a beneficiary) exceeds 1 million subsistence minimums established for able-bodied persons as of January 1 of the respective year.” (European Commission for Democracy Through Law, 2021, p.3)

Under the law, oligarchs are prohibited from making political donations and financing political campaigns, as well as from participating in the privatisation of large-scale assets (European Commission for Democracy Through Law, 2021, p.5). The persons identified as oligarchs are included in a state register, and public officials must declare contacts with them or their representatives (European Commission for Democracy Through Law, 2021, pp.4-7).

Furthermore, while it has attracted some controversy (Nilsson-Julien & Federico, 2023), the more recent law titled “On Media” should also help prevent the unhealthy covert ownership practices that can be encountered throughout much of the Balkan region. The law compels media outlets to either obtain a license or register themselves with the relevant state authorities, depending upon the type of media concerned (Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law, 2023, p.16). The registration and licensing processes force outlets, including online ones, to “disclose clear information on their stakeholders and owners”, thus making it much harder for pro-Russian actors to covertly own publications and TV stations (Nilsson-

Julien & Federico, 2023). This should also prevent the paradox of media ecosystem fragmentation and concentration occurring simultaneously: with outlets forced to disclose information about owners and stakeholders, tycoons can only accumulate a limited amount of media market share before falling under the incidence of the de-oligarchization law, the obligations of which diminish their power to influence politics. Therefore, it becomes apparent that “On Prevention of Threats to National Security Related to Excessive Influence of Persons Who Have Significant Economic and Political Weight in Public Life (Oligarchs)” and “On Media” are two pieces of legislation which reinforce each other.

Besides, “On Media” also establishes a more transparent procedure for the selection of members for the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting, Ukraine’s media regulatory body, as it “requires the President to select new members from a shortlist that has been proposed by media NGOs and unions, and vetted by an appointed five-person Commission which organises the application process and considers the nominations” (Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law, 2023, p.7). Appointment powers are shared between the President and the Parliament, each nominating half of the National Council’s members (Nilsson-Julien & Federico, 2023).

This is not to say that Ukraine’s media policies or their effects are flawless; due to multiple factors, creating perfect policies would be an impossible task for Kyiv under the present circumstances. For example, the de-oligarchization law compelled persons identified as oligarchs to sell their media assets quickly, which was impossible in the context of Russia’s invasion and generalised investor weariness (Grămadă, 2022). In response, some tycoons simply handed their media licenses to the state, to the point where some experts

claim that “the state is turning into a media mogul” (Grămadă, 2022). This is not an ideal situation, and the fair and transparent re-privatisation of these assets after the war will be a challenge for the Ukrainian authorities. On the other hand, any de-oligarchization effort was bound to encounter such problems given investors’ reluctance and the current risk levels associated with the Ukrainian market.

The aforementioned example leads to the identification of the key threat to Ukrainian media freedom and diversity: lack of funding. Despite the authorities’ Europeanisation drive, Ukraine cannot fight unfavourable economic conditions alone. The impact of Russia’s invasion upon the Ukrainian media sector has been massive, as “local media have seen a 40 to 80% drop in their income and many of their offices and equipment were occupied, destroyed, or looted” (Ukrainian Media Fund, 2022/23, p.3). Advertising spending, which is a core source of money for Central and Eastern European media companies, fell across the region by at least 22.8% in 2022 compared to 2021 (Zaiceva, 2022). Forced to devote significant coverage to the war, outlets are finding themselves in a situation where a large part of their content cannot be monetised, as advertisers concerned about brand image just “filter out news and stories of Ukraine or Russia” (Zaiceva, 2022).

Absent foreign help, these economic realities and their impact will make the re-privatisation of media licenses and assets recently transferred from oligarchs to the state a thorny issue. If everything is left to the “invisible hand of the market”, many financially challenged Ukrainian outlets risk attracting dubious would-be investors or buyers, driven primarily by motivations other than profit or civic spirit. This could leave Ukrainian authorities with a lose-lose choice: they could either allow dubious investors and buyers to acquire outlets and licenses, leading to a regress

towards the oligarchic model that was meant to be replaced, or they could block such acquisitions under the de-oligarchization and media laws, unintentionally maintaining the state's unwanted media monopoly in the absence of legitimate investors and buyers.

This is where the West, and especially the European Union, can make a decisive contribution in favour of Ukrainian media. By providing financial aid to struggling outlets, the EU and its partners can help remove or at least partially mitigate some of the negative economic factors that Kyiv is facing in its attempts to both maintain an economically functional private media sector and keep that sector free of oligarchic and malign foreign influences. If guarantees of EU support are provided, Ukrainian outlets will become more attractive for legitimate investors both inside and outside Ukraine, whose acquisition of said outlets would increase and consolidate media pluralism and freedom.

Furthermore, if major Western media trusts and conglomerates were to develop a presence on the Ukrainian media market, either through acquisitions of existing outlets or through the opening of local branches, this would not only solidify pluralism, but it would also help provide Ukrainian journalists with better international visibility, which in time would also bring more funds and opportunities, thus leading to second-degree mitigation effects of unfavourable economic factors.

While posing a significant challenge, the democratic reconstruction of the Ukrainian media sector can be achieved, and Kyiv has shown the will and the capacity to enact the necessary reforms. The decisive element will be the amount of "economic firepower" that the EU provides Ukraine with.

Conclusion

Overall, it is safe to conclude that the main threat towards the pluralism and freedom of Ukrainian media stems from the tough economic circumstances that the country is facing. In terms of government policies, Kyiv is taking the right steps to prevent oligarchic influences and to foster ownership transparency, as demonstrated by its media legislation. The current government has embarked upon a strong Europeanisation campaign and is thus a reliable partner in promoting the EU's vision of a democratic and pluralistic media ecosystem.

However, Ukraine's leaders have to face not just Russia's illegal invasion, but also the negative economic forces it unleashed, and the unavoidable problems brought by the legacy of oligarchic media control during the previous decades. These issues cannot be mitigated by the Ukrainian government alone, and the help of its Western partners is vital.

Therefore, the policy recommendation of this article will be directed not towards Ukraine, but towards the West and the European Union in particular: in its efforts to rebuild the post-war media sector upon democratic principles, Ukraine will need more "economic firepower" in order to maintain both market functionality and pluralism. In this regard, the EU is best positioned to make a difference, and the returns on this investment will be significant, because it is an investment in democracy that will make an impact for decades.

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EXPERIENCES OF POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STATE AND SOCIETY: LESSONS LEARNED FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Assist. Prof. Dražen Barbarić

Every war brings with it the difficulty of the present moment and problems that will burden the future with the current outbreak. The special burden of post-war reconstruction is visible in societies whose war conflicts also have the dimension of inter-ethnic conflict. The latter can become a permanent flywheel of new conflicts within society and a constant source of social division and potential instability of the state. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) presents the most glaring example of the aforementioned theses. The post-war reconstruction did not deal with social division between different national segments, but focused on the transitional process of creating a functional state. However, if the process of building a post-conflict statehood does not respect the differences between national communities, and if it does not simultaneously build a framework for the coexistence of the aforementioned, there are great chances that the situation of war conflicts will spill over into a political conflict with constant crises.

If we dare to forecast the potential post-war future of Ukraine and its reconstruction in terms of statehood, and compare it with the situation in BiH, then several important conclusions emerge. First of all, the very purpose of the Dayton BiH is essentially the restoration of modern statehood and its first historical democratic construction, which Ukraine already possesses. Regardless, a huge difference is that the post-war

political and territorial structure of BiH was and still is a reflection of the overlapping consensus of key geopolitical actors of that time, including the USA and Russia. With the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) USA achieved the most important peace achievement in its modern history and confirmed *Pax Americana* in the middle of the nineties. On the other side, Russia has retained a political actor in the form of Republic of Srpska (RS) through which it has a permanent presence in the western Balkans.

In the comparison with Ukraine, the situation is completely different. First of all, one of the geopolitical actors is included into the conflict (Russia) and any sort of outcome simply cannot be the external consensus of two powers. I will use two ideal type models to prove my thesis. In the first scenario Ukraine will free its territory and return the territorial sovereignty which implies excluding Russia from the Ukrainian soil and discrediting its geopolitical capacity and reputation for a long time. In the second scenario, Ukraine will be forced to stop the war and made peace arrangements with Russia through potential forms of territorial autonomy of some parts of the occupied territory and compromise different aspects of political guarantees. USA will be the key factor of geopolitical guarantee for that new arrangement. That situation will make Kyiv a permanently dissatisfied political subject and not even joining the EU, or even NATO, will be able to compensate for that dissatisfaction. In both scenarios, the ultimate premise form in BiH in which two powers remained satisfied with the existing power-sharing and the federal model of state will not be present.

Another big difference in the comparison can be derived from the above. Post-war order in BiH created an unstable state with the constant presence of the military and civilian international agencies, making it a permanent international (semi)protectorate. Not a single key political decision is possible without the influence of the

international community, especially the OHR, and many decisions made by international actors have never been democratically confirmed in the BiH parliaments. This will not happen to Ukraine in both mentioned scenarios, because it will remain a sovereign state, without any need to integrate civilian institutions of international community as some sort of a guarantee for preventing a dissolution of a state. Only potential international presence can be achieved by joining the NATO alliance or in the compromise scenario with the peace missions of the European Union (EU).

The only threat to Ukraine will be the creation of federal/confederal relations which will be creating „Republic of Srpska“ within Ukraine. The experiences of BiH show that if there is no fundamental desire for common statehood, then federalism becomes a permanent grumbling and a constant threat for the disintegration of the state. Political actors in the „pro-Russian part“ of the state will become permanent provokers of the state stability. On the other hand, the experiences of BiH show that the long-term presence of the international community without a clear exit strategy creates incompetent and passive internal actors, and international entities become a constant compensation and bridge in maintaining state sovereignty. Any decision that can be influenced by "regional pro-Russian authorities" will require constant compromise, and any attempt by Kyiv to end and reduce autonomy will cause resistance. The mediation of the international community will be inevitable, but the experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown that without honest dialogue and necessary compromises, without the mentoring of the international community, no sustainable model is possible.

The long-term practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown that each national community creates its own frame of memory for war events. Usually these narratives are mutually exclusive, and create emotional attachment and bias in people. A great danger for the Ukrainian

people is the inevitable creation of a public narrative about the war and the constant appeal to war narratives with the constant expectation of international aid. BiH has shown that such narratives contaminate society and create an electorate with high tolerance for corruption and institutional inefficiency. Identity gaps between national communities are further deepened, history is reinterpreted and walls of separation are raised.

Without sincere appreciation of all identities, the post-war multicultural society can fall into a long process of regression - this implies national minorities as well. This is especially important if the Ukrainians succeed in liberating the entire territory, their consideration for the Russian minority and their integration into the new social and state framework will be of decisive importance for the long-term development of Ukraine. The war leaves deep cuts and traumas, but without serious work on overcoming them, reconciliation is not possible, and the two nations are condemned to live permanently next to each other in perpetuated hostility and frozen conflict. At one point, the situation becomes unsustainable and the citizens become really bigoted, BiH unfortunately taught us all that.

When it comes to the impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine on the internal political situation in BiH, an extremely rare and unexpected thing happened. Mostar and Sarajevo, as toponyms of political power and the centre of the two constituent peoples of Croats and Bosniaks, have symbolically united in unreserved support for Ukraine in this war. Not only that, but the political elites of both nations, without exception, expressed their permanent commitment to membership not only in the EU but also in the NATO alliance as soon as possible.

It is extremely important that international actors recognize this momentum and take advantage of it in order to avoid a similar situation in 2010, when the opportunity and the political will of all three nations for

BiH to become a member of the NATO alliance was missed. This missed opportunity and the passivity of the international community has shown how much one should not hesitate in specific historical moments, because in the future such failures can be irreversibly fatal. On the other hand, political actors in the RS show their support for Russia and find themselves in the unenviable situation of proving that they are a sincerer partner to Russia than the official Belgrade. This led to the constant collapse of the narrative about the pro-European future and permanently cemented the rejection of any discussion about the potential membership in the NATO alliance. I repeat, these same politicians from the RS were ready for BiH to join NATO until 2010.

EU must not miss a moment like NATO did! My thesis is that momentarily EU has extremely small reform potential in BiH and huge geopolitical potential which is not aware of. EU cannot influence internal processes because European issues are not part of the political dynamics in BiH. Plus, we are facing at the moment a complete absence of the honest desire towards the enlargement of the Union. Brussels will become a real factor of political change with huge reform potential only in the advanced phase of negotiations. Only when the EU path becomes an internal issue, when EU questions become election issues, then we are on the trail of creating a plural, democratic, multinational state. Then there will be no declarative support or bluffing, citizens will punish any departure from EU policy because membership will be close. Such a situation will lead key actors to a situation of excellence where the EU will have strong levers of pressure, and domestic politicians must necessarily give in and approach a compromise.

EU can resolve long-term geopolitical confusion in the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans, especially BiH, is a battlefield on which the EU should build or give up its geopolitical subjectivity! Smart moves by the EU would be granting candidate status and open negotiations

with all WB countries. This process should not be accelerated, but really serious, precise, long-term and sometimes really rough. BiH in that scenario should go through a difficult negotiation process (reforming) through which European issues would become internal and the EU official would create strong mechanism of reforms and influence. Otherwise we will remain tied to two autocratic regimes - Turkey and Russia. Political elites from Banja Luka will stay as a expositure of Russian influence in the WB, and *vice versa* political Sarajevo will remain Balkans expository for the Turkish imperial influence. BiH does not have any chance to remain a functional democratic state. In this situation, the EU remains an irrelevant geopolitical entity in whose backyard the two most dangerous imperial regimes on the very edge of the continent are nesting. The big question is whether Brussels can afford it. Allowing it, Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain a (semi)protectorate of the International Community and the expository of two imperial authoritarian regimes (Turkey and Russia).

ENSURING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO FUTURE CHALLENGES

Davor Ivo Stier

Dear colleagues,

It is always a pleasure to participate at the conferences organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. This time, in particular, due to the fact that the main topic of today's conference, the defense of democracy, is at the very core of the foundation's activities. Moreover, democracy is the cornerstone of the European integration project and the European international order, currently challenged by the Russian aggression to Ukraine.

Unfortunately, after February 24, 2022, it has become clear that Putin's Russia cannot be treated as a partner, not even as a competitor, but only as a geopolitical and ideological rival, a threat to our security, freedom and democracy. Moscow's decision to launch a full-fledged attack on Ukraine, from Russia and Belorussia, was a shocking awakening for Europe, as the High Representative Josep Borrell wrote in his foreword to the EU's Strategic Compass document. A shock, at least, to those who still wanted to harbor illusions of a peaceful, post-modern world, driven mainly by trade interests and free of conventional wars in Europe. A shock to those who bet on Europe's development, and even on the regional and global advancement of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, through a paradigm of energy integration with Russia and a trade integration with China.

Such an illusion was destroyed on February 24, 2022. And a more clear vision of the real world re-emerged in Europe, taking into account more seriously geopolitical risks, security threats, as well as the resilience of our societies to cope with a brave new world.

Having these recent developments in mind, we can now reflect on how to ensure European societal resilience to current and future challenges. I am sure that our panelists will later on elaborate on the multiple challenges presented in front of us, from security threats, financial and economic crisis, possible new pandemics, to energy transition and the growing challenge of mitigating the effects of climate change. I am confident that they will assess the relevant strategies and policies the European Union is, or should be, developing as an answer to these questions.

While all these topics are very important, I believe that, in order to ensure societal resilience, we need to address first the issue of social integration and cohesion as an enabler of resilience.

The process of integration in a national community or at the European level, starts with a commonality of purpose based on shared values and interests. On the contrary, a process of fragmentation begins with the lack or erosion of common values. We can deepen EU's defense cooperation and develop new capabilities through PESCO, allocate more than 700 billion euros in the Resilience and Reconstruction Facility, invest in our energy transition and independence through RE-POWER EU, empower the European Commission to negotiate the best possible terms with the pharmaceutical industry in times of pandemics, but without common values, and consequently a commonality of purpose, our policies will not be sustainable and our societies will not be able to endure the hurdles of certain necessary measures throughout an extended period of time.

Furthermore, in a world of renewed geopolitical competition and confrontation, we cannot only assess our resilience without reflecting on the resilience of our rivals and their ability to pose a long-term threat to our security. In this sense, in this international context of increased security and ideological competition, and even confrontation, we should not underestimate the resilience of Europe's geopolitical rivals; the readiness of their societies to endure protracted wars, decreasing living standards, Western sanctions and, basically, their readiness to sacrifice the well-being of the individual citizens in the altar of the proclaimed greatness and glory of the Nation, the Homeland, the "Empire".

Now, in my view, it would be unrealistic and wrong for Europe to embark upon a geopolitical competition requesting our societies to do the same. As a Christian Democrat, I cannot advocate societal resilience based on a nationalistic discourse, although I am fully aware of the mobilizing and homogenizing power of such narrative. Pursuing a nationalistic path will amount to the ideological defeat of Europe, a return to great-power competition within the old continent, and consequently its fragmentation and the victory of the geopolitical rivals of the European Union.

Having said that, again as a Christian Democrat, I also know that we will not be able to develop resilient societies in Europe if we do nothing, keep the status quo and continue to base our efforts on the currently prevailing individualistic paradigm. It seems that today only Pope Francis speaks loudly and clearly about this risk, reminding us of the Social Doctrine. from Leo XIII. to our days, which has consistently denounced the structural shortcomings and dangers of individualism.

Few days ago, the new Archbishop of Zagreb, mons. Dražen Kutleša, invited us to reflect on effects of individualism. I believe that such a reflection is needed also for the consideration of societal resilience in Europe.

In this sense, let me note that individualism, which dominated the ideological discourse in the 19th century, was thought to be overcome by social policies applied after WWII, mainly by the Christian Democratic leaders that rebuilt Europe and launched its integration process. On the ashes of a continent destroyed by national-socialism and facing the threat of the Soviet internationalist socialism, they understood that Europe cannot be rebuilt and made more resilient by going back to the weak basis of individualistic ideologies (which proved to be unable to stop the advance of autocratic and totalitarian forces), but only by going forward with the practical implementation of the Christian Social Doctrine. This approach was successful in confronting the challenges of the Cold War, but, after its end, it was gradually marginalized. Today, individualism is again at the center of the political discourse, both on the left and the right.

Anthropological individualism is at the base of the policies advocated today by the European progressives and leftists in their pursue to constantly redefine human rights and social institutions, distancing them from Maritain's Integral Humanism and getting closer to Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony.

Individualism is also at the base of today's conservatives, also known as neoconservatives, since they would like to "conserve", or rather restore, the classical individualistic model of laissez-faire to the detriment of Europe's social state and social market economy.

Regardless of their electoral competition, left and right forces in today's Europe seem to be united in their acceptance of the individualistic paradigm as an ordering concept on social and economic issues. In such social order, the concepts of community and common good are weakened, or sidelined, and societies become more fragmented and less able to develop its resilience to threats and challenges.

As a logical consequence of the transposition of the individualistic approach from the domestic to the international arena, governments increasingly pursue an egoistic and nationalistic policy disregarding the common good of the EU or even denying the existence of such a European community as a whole, replicating Thatcher's notorious remark that "there is no such a thing as society". According to this view, society is nothing but the sum of individuals, and consequently Europe is nothing but the sum of national states. There is no common good, but only the pursuit of individual rights and interests. There is no European commonality of purpose, but only the pursuit of national interests.

I believe that the Russian aggression should be for us a wake-up call also for us - politicians, academics, foundations of Christian Democratic orientation. We have let individualistic ideologies, left and right, to dominate the public debate, the narrative, eroding the sense of community (beginning with family as the basic and more resilient community), forgetting about the pursuit of the common good. As a consequence, we got a process of fragmentation, in our national societies and at the European level.

That is not an optimal situation, especially in the current geopolitical circumstances. Niall Fergusson has already baptized the time after February 24th, 2022 as Cold War II. Without going now into that debate, let me just say that it is quite possible that we will have to face a protracted geopolitical and ideological confrontation with global and regional autocracies.

We have the material resources to face these challenges, but do our societies have the moral and readiness to endure the sacrifices needed to defend our values? We can proudly say that Europe stands for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. However, the dominant individualistic ideologies have emptied these concepts of

their social value. They have reduced them to instruments for the advancement of individual and particular interests. Therefore, at the very moment when these interests are not served (at times of economic crisis for example) confidence in the democratic institutions erodes. Our geopolitical and ideological rivals exploit this weakness.

Therefore, in addition to all the financial and policy instruments, from RRF to the regular MFF, Europe needs a new political and social concept able to mobilize popular support and legitimacy for a longer period of confrontation with its geopolitical and ideological rivals. I believe that Christian Democrats should make a new effort to develop an updated political and social concept for Europe, encompassing some positive elements and contributions of liberalism to democracy and human rights, but renouncing to a purely individualistic view and reinstalling the value of communities, the importance of the intermediate bodies in society, not expecting everything from the State or leaving everything to the market.

Family, faith-based organizations, professional associations should be reinforced and allowed to play a more pivotal role as enablers of social cohesion and, consequently, societal resilience. Christian Democrats have a crucial task to bring these issues to the center of the political narrative in Europe with the clear aim to replace the current process of social and political fragmentation with a process of inclusion, integration and solidarity, thus making Europe more resilient to face current and future challenges.

Thank you.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY AND UPHOLDING THE RULE OF LAW

Martin Stoyanov

Abstract: The war in Ukraine has led to the devastation of communities and infrastructure throughout various regions of the country. The biggest difficulty in the post-war reconstruction period is going to be the distribution of funding in order to physically rebuild the once flourishing cities of Ukraine. Tackling the endemic corruption in the country, which has plagued it for decades, will ensure a fair transition in the post-war period as well as give Ukrainians a chance to lead normal lives as members of the European Union and NATO.

Keywords: reconstruction, corruption, rule of law, judicial system

Ukraine is fighting a war on two fronts: one against the aggressor Russia, the other against corruption. Corruption runs deep in the country's administration, authorities and courts similar to other countries from the Eastern Bloc due to the destabilization tactics employed by Russia throughout the years. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index puts Ukraine at place 116 out of a total 180 with a score of 33/100 – the second-lowest in Europe with only Russia having a worse score. The estimated costs of reconstruction and recovery from the start of the war on February 24th until a year later are close to 400 billion euros for Ukraine according to the World Bank, which will need to go towards the people

and infrastructure of Ukraine and not line up the pockets of the oligarchy.

It is imperative that corruption is limited by implementing serious reforms in the judiciary and anti-corruption systems in order for the reconstruction to be effective and bring Ukraine closer to the EU. Ukraine has shown serious progress regarding the seven recommendations of the European Commission, yet there is still a lot to be desired, namely in regards to the first recommendation about the selection procedure for judges of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. The six-member model of the Advisory Group of Experts, which is tasked with determining the eligibility of candidates for constitutional judges, could become an instrument for concentration of power and disregarding the principles of the separations of powers. The politicization of Ukraine's Constitutional Court could make it dependant on the government in such a way, that politically motivated constitutional judges could pave the way for unseen levels of corruption, finance misuse and endangering the rights of citizens on a national level. The recommendations of the Venice Commission seem to have fallen on deaf ears – just as it often happens in my native country of Bulgaria.

The ability of politicians in power to elect constitutional judges who are not morally or professionally suited for one of the most important and prestigious positions in the judiciary system of the country poses a great threat to the Rule of Law in Ukraine. The MPs who are tasked with drafting the legislature about the procedures of vetting candidates for the positions of constitutional judges stand at a crossroad which could be the downfall of the independence of the judicial system if the recommendations of the Venice Commission are not taken into account by allowing the candidates to be politically appointed figures and not exemplary jurists.

The arrest of the President of Ukraine's Supreme Court in May on the suspicion of accepting a bribe of nearly 3 million euros is just as worrying. Ukraine's anti-corruption authorities claim to be clamping down on corruption at the highest levels, yet it would be naïve to think that arresting several officials would be the end of the endemic corruption in the country. If the former President of the Supreme Court is indeed found guilty of running a back-office in the Supreme Court which collected bribes in order to gain favorable rulings for bad faith actors, it would be imperative to tackle the corruption on smaller, local levels as well – the 74 district courts of Ukraine which are the heart of the judicial system outside of the courts on the second and third levels of the pyramid, will be the ones deciding on cases where the material interest for corruption practices and damages is lower than 31000 USD.

The resolution of the process against Vsevolod Kniazev, the former President of the Supreme Court, will be a keystone of Ukraine's battle against corruption. The High Anti-Corruption Court of Ukraine decided to keep him in custody for 2 more months at the start of July with the final decision to be taken before the end of the present year. It is important to recognize the amount of effort that the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office have put in since the start of the war to keep the oligarchy in check, as well as undertake concrete steps to tackle corrupt politicians and officials, yet the question remains if isolated efforts will be enough to stop the endemic corruption, or if Ukraine will be overrun by it once again after the end of the war.

The key part of building a sustainable, fair, and transparent judicial system, is ensuring that the Rule of Law shall be upheld by every single judge, prosecutor and official, as well as that nobody should receive preferential treatment because of his wealth or connections. These values need to be instilled and upheld

in every single young trainee with hopes to become a part of the judiciary system, as the shift in values and priorities away from corruption is a process which could last longer than some generations, and Ukraine has no time to spare. Ensuring that candidates have suitable moral and ethical qualities and standards first and foremost is a fast-track to an efficient and effective judiciary system. The quality and intentions of laws and strategies tackling corruption will have no effect if there is no one to actually enforce them.

The biggest unknown in the equation of post-war reconstruction is what the Ukrainian oligarchy will do in order to keep its wealth and power with Ukraine pushing for EU and NATO membership. A peculiar case is the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, which was completely destroyed during and after the siege of the city. The steel rolling plant, which had more than 12000 employees back in 2015, has been reduced to rubble much like other factories and businesses owned by Ukraine's oligarchy throughout the war. It remains to be seen to what extent the demands of the oligarchy will go to, as well as whether if they will pledge their own money for the reconstruction of Ukraine or funnel funds via corruption for themselves.

Although some of Ukraine's richest oligarchs have lost power and wealth with the government cracking down on them in the recent years, they should not be underestimated as the roots of the deep state are often intertwined far too deep in the earth. It is imperative for Ukraine to be able to continue fighting against disinformation campaigns carried out by oligarchy-owned media, as well as tackle any sort of Russophile propaganda campaigns created by those with close ties to Russia within the country.

The reforms in the judicial system that Ukraine needs to adopt should guarantee the stability, sustainability and fairness of the courts and their rulings. The restoration and reconstruction of the destroyed cities, factories, homes and equipment of Ukraine will depend on the fair

distribution of reparation funds and funds pledged by the international community. Undertaking a systematic approach to the resolution of conflicts and the once in a lifetime opportunity to create a working and fair judicial system should not be oversighted with the ongoing war, but it should be a priority for Ukraine as the key element in post-war reconstruction.

To summarize, I believe that the reconstruction of Ukraine depends on ensuring the independence of the judicial branch, the fight against corruption and oligarchy, and the need for a long-term vision of the judicial system and its effectiveness. Jeopardizing the independence of the Constitutional Court in favor of the politicians in power could be a massive step backwards in the long-term and threaten the Rule of Law.

EDUCATION FOR STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE AMID THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Stefan Karaleev

Abstract: This policy brief explores how investing in education can foster societal resilience to future challenges in Europe, with an emphasis on the situation in Ukraine. It also outlines key strategies and actions on enhancing education systems addressing the current situation and future uncertainties.

Keywords: EU, Ukraine, civic education, media literacy, societal resilience

Introduction

In recent times, European societies have witnessed numerous challenges, ranging from economic instability to geopolitical tensions. Notably, the ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine poses a significant threat to regional stability and security, affecting security, political and social cohesion, especially in the eastern part of the continent. In the face of such difficulties, it is crucial for European societies to cultivate resilience and preparedness to foster a well-informed, engaged, and adaptable population. Education emerges as a potent and effective tool in this pursuit.

Understanding Education's Role in Enhancing Societal Resilience

Education is the foundation upon which resilient societies are built. A well-rounded education equips individuals with critical thinking skills, adaptability, and the ability to analyse complex information. By fostering innovation, education enables societies to respond to evolving challenges effectively. To enhance resilience, European nations must prioritize comprehensive and inclusive education systems that promote values, such as freedom, human dignity, democracy, the rule of law, and intercultural understanding.

Investing in Education and Research for Future Preparedness

Investments in education and research are key to ensuring European societies are prepared for future challenges. Governments must allocate adequate funding to improve educational infrastructure, enhance the quality of teaching, and encourage research and development in emerging fields.

Nurturing Social Cohesion through Education

Education can play a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion and reducing divisions within societies. By promoting inclusive programmes that acknowledge diverse cultural, religious, and social backgrounds, education can build bridges and create a sense of shared identity among European citizens. Emphasizing global citizenship and human rights in educational programs can contribute to a more empathetic and harmonious society, better equipped to face challenges collectively. These goals can be achieved by enhancing civic education, digital and media literacy.

a. Strengthening Civic Education.

Promoting civic education programs is essential for strengthening democratic values, human rights, and critical thinking. By instilling a strong understanding of democratic principles, the rule of law, respect for diversity, and fostering active citizenship, European societies can better resist the rise of extremist ideologies and support stability in the face of geopolitical tensions.

b: Enhancing Digital Literacy:

Investing in comprehensive digital literacy programs ensures that citizens can critically analyse and respond to information and misinformation, especially in the online sphere. By equipping individuals with the skills to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, European societies can counter disinformation campaigns and build societal resilience against external influence.

Engaging with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Supporting cooperation and initiatives between the formal education system, NGOs and civil society organizations that focus on education, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. By supporting these initiatives, the EU and its member states can leverage grassroots efforts to strengthen societal resilience and foster sustainable peace.

Addressing societal resilience and the war in Ukraine

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine poses a significant threat to European security and stability. Education can contribute to the resolution of this crisis in several ways: a. History Education for Prevention: Europe's history is a tapestry of conflicts and cooperation. By teaching history objectively and transparently, European societies can learn from past mistakes, cultivate a deeper understanding of the consequences of war, and work toward preventing future conflicts. b. Supporting Trauma-Informed Education: Recognize the impact of conflict-related trauma on students and

educators in regions affected by the war in Ukraine. Allocate resources to provide trauma-informed education and psychosocial support to affected individuals, enabling them to cope with challenges, recover, and contribute positively to society. c. Supporting Educational Infrastructure in Ukraine: In addition to addressing challenges within Europe, supporting Ukraine's educational infrastructure is vital for its long-term stability, prosperity and ultimately its societal resilience. The EU and its member states should provide financial assistance, exchange programs, and educational resources to aid the Ukrainian education system's recovery and development. Further integration into the Erasmus+ program is also crucial for supporting Ukraine's education system. e. Empowering Educators: Invest in continuous professional development for educators to equip them with the skills to address complex geopolitical issues in the classroom effectively. Well-prepared educators can facilitate informed discussions, nurture critical thinking, and provide a safe space for students to process global events constructively.

Conclusion

Education is a powerful tool to enhance European societal resilience amidst the challenges posed by the war in Ukraine. By prioritizing civic education, digital literacy, trauma-informed support, cross-cultural understanding, and professional development for educators, European nations can build a more resilient, informed, and united society capable of navigating future uncertainties. Collaboration, investment, and partnerships with NGOs will play crucial roles in implementing these strategies effectively.

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RESILIENCE AND CURRENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: PERSPECTIVES FOR REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Dr. Natalia Albu*

Abstract: The notion of *resilience* has become a buzzword for various areas of activity. Different stakeholders such as states, communities, civil society, international organisations, etc. interpret resilience in a broad spectrum of contexts, thus generating debates on what *resilience* is and how it can be used. The approach to resilience from the viewpoint of a system's functionality is relevant to security studies. In the context of the current security environment, security decisions are adopted from *an adaptive* and *emergent* perspective, demanding the effort of the entire government and, increasingly, of the whole society. Such an approach contributes to resilience in face of the influence of external factors of foreign powers, which shifted from the perspective of economic and energy influence to successfully using both a new and an old perspective, such as the spread of fake news and disinformation as a means of information warfare that is one of the hybrid

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threats. *Resilience* shall not be considered an alternative to security. On the contrary, it is an innovative way of ensuring it.

Keywords: resilience, security strategy, security environment, human security, resilience index.

Introduction

In times of multiple crises *resilience* has become a popular term for describing one of the preconditions for countering all possible challenges from the individual to the societal level, from state to regional and international organizations. Following this logic, *reinforcing resilience* was made a guiding principle of the European Union and its Partnership policies regarding Eastern neighbours. Alongside the global pandemic, the Europe experienced large-scale political violence from the brutal crackdown on the Belarusian Revolution to renewed war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, which has marked a turning point in European politics (Mussning, 2023).

However, is resilience really a universal solution to this set of complex challenges? The answer to this question is based on concrete situations and on the specificity of the state and of the organisations. However, the need for resilience strengthening is visible in times of crisis. Lesson learned from the pandemic period – the response to crises needed to establish cross-border cooperation and solidarity mechanisms to effectively manage crises and protect people. This has contributed to the understanding that any state or organization must be ready to face acute crises of a different nature, which could be multi-faceted or hybrid, have cascading effects or occur simultaneously (European Council, 2022).

It is also important to find an answer to the question: what does it mean to be a resilient state? Because the states are different and the internal and external security environments for them are different, respectively the understanding of resilience seems to be different. But one thing is certain: resilience is the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges, but also to undergo transitions in a sustainable and democratic manner (European Council, 2022).

In the context of war in Ukraine, the terms resilience and security started to be more and more discussed together, as war or armed conflict is one of the most severe human-made adversities. Nevertheless, if speaking about the current war, the security environment becomes more and more complex and interdependent. This leads to a series of associated crises, like the energy or food crises. At the same time, the war in Ukraine has shown how poorly prepared Europe is for an unpredictable event, but also that two major responses (distress and resilience) may simultaneously characterize the Ukrainian population, who face a war that threatens their independence and survivability as a nation. Accordingly, as long as hope to survive and successfully overcome adversity still exists in such stressful situations, feelings of resilience and identification with the individual's country will likely prevail, despite the perceived threat, distress symptoms, and destruction caused to individuals and communities (Kimhi et al., 2023).

The military invasion of the Russian Federation (RF) in Ukraine has multiple implications for the national security of the republic of Moldova, both in terms of having a war at the border, and of facing the consequences of the domestic vulnerabilities. In this context, the Republic of Moldova should seriously consider the need to strengthen the national resilience, especially from the point of view of hybrid threats from the side of the RF.

Resilience and Security: theoretical account

Lately, the notion of *resilience* has become a buzzword for various areas of activity. Different stakeholders such as states, communities, groups of interest, civil society, international organisations, etc. interpret resilience in a broad spectrum of contexts, thus generating debates on what *resilience* is and how it can be used. Moreover, the degree of understanding of this concept is contextual and differs from one field to another. Thus, experts borrowed the term *resilience* from psychology to define *a person's capacity to adapt rapidly, through learning and with less stress, to a tragedy, problem, or failure*. Then, the concept migrated from ecology and engineering to *disaster* research – an interdisciplinary domain that implies the contribution of engineers and scientists to the social sphere. Therefore, *the focus was put on resilience from the perspective of human communities*, including from the point of view of the infrastructure systems allowing these to function. Thus, the approach to resilience from the viewpoint of a system's functionality is relevant to security studies as well.

Aside the fact that there are several approaches on *resilience*, but for the security sector, it is believed that *resilience* is important from the point of view of systems' capacity (-) *to face /stand up to* the challenges of the outside world (resistance/persistence of systems' functionality – close attention shall be paid to critical infrastructure elements); (-) *to adapt* to the growing changes of a system or of an evolving situation related to the security environment; (-) *to change or transform*, meaning, to become stronger when new security challenges emerge.

At the same time, it is recognised that resilience is about the *survival of society, government, key attributes*

and services to the population under conditions of major crisis, disruptive events and catastrophic civil emergencies. The approach is by no means trivial and does not simply involve *limiting existing vulnerabilities* of institutions and society or *mitigating the effects of threats and risks* or the normal capacity to *absorb the impact of crises* (Chifu, 2021).

From this perspective, resilience tends to relate to two broad topics, which are relevant to the field of security and defence:

The **first** refers to the capacity/ability of a country to respond immediately and under pressure to a disaster or emergency. This is often a top-down approach, focusing primarily on the government's ability to respond to and recover from civil emergencies (accidents, natural hazards or man-made threats) through warning and informing the public, communicating before and during emergencies, and working with the media.

The **second topic** is particularly relevant to security threats and highlights how communities or civil society can build resilience to disasters or terrorist incidents, for example, and encourage the participation of other citizens in emergency management systems and processes.

Both top-down and bottom-up approaches can be used here, proposing a definition of resilience that focuses both on governmental abilities to prepare for and respond to threats, and also on the resilience of the broader society after upheaval, suffering, or adversity (Malik; Ehsan, 2020, p. 8). As a relevant example might be the Canadian government, which has integrated the concept of *community resilience* into emergency management strategies, where resilience is defined as being built *through a process of empowering citizens, responders, organizations, communities, governments, systems, and society to share responsibility for*

preventing hazards from becoming disasters (Public Safety Canada, 2019). Thus, some states, given the diversity, complexity and unpredictability of contemporary hazards and that complete security is impossible to guarantee, are increasingly shifting their emphasis in security policy to mitigation rather than prevention.

Some countries within the European Union have already integrated the concept of resilience into their security policies, for example, Estonia has developed the National Security Concept (2017) by integrating two approaches - the comprehensive paradigm and the idea of resilience. This helped to reinforce the idea that *national defence should be a common task of the whole society* (Veebel, 2018). Such an approach contributes to resilience in face of the influence of external factors, in particular, of foreign powers, which shifted from the perspective of economic and energy influence to successfully using both a new and an old perspective, such as the spread of fake news and disinformation as a means of information warfare that is one of the hybrid threats. However, *resilience* shall not be considered an alternative to national security. On the contrary, it is an innovative way of ensuring it. This potential new perspective on security should be much more flexible and allow deterring and countering hybrid adversaries with a wide range of tools, resulting from the interconnection between the civilian (public and private) and military sectors (Frunzeti; Bărbulescu, 2018).

The Republic of Moldova is drafting a new National Security Strategy, which will presumably be approached through the lens of *human security* and *resilience*. There is currently a common understanding at the institutional level on the need to adapt the National Security Policy to the challenges of the current security environment, as well as the need to review from a practical perspective the national programmes in

relation to the state's risk management capabilities, and national defence capabilities, ranging from the military to the civilian component.

Thus, resilience from a security perspective may have different meanings and the challenges to it may be different. In the national security arena, Fjäder argues that resilience challenges the traditional role of the state as a security provider. A broad range of other actors on different levels come into play, reflecting the variety of domains covered by resilience. Resilience can incorporate issues from public health and social cohesion to industrial disasters and terrorism. In terms of its scope and objectives, it far overreaches a government or military authority. Resilience also aims to go beyond the material dimension of security by highlighting the interconnectedness of the natural, environmental, demographic and social domains (Svitková, 2017, p. 26). In addition, there is a need to structure resilience in several intermediate levels or dimensions, such as at the household, regional (or ethnic) or organisational level. With this logic in mind, resilience can have a different nature, depending on the set of issues.

Also, from a security perspective, depending on vulnerabilities, risks and threats, *resilience* can be an effective tool in mitigating the impact of hazards and threats to national security in general and to sectoral components such as *cyber security*, *economic security* or *energy security* in particular. It can also be used in a more complex context of human security by empowering individuals to cope with problematic or catastrophic situations generated by global hazards. From Moldova's perspective, the capacity to ensure national security is significantly influencing the country's image, which is particularly relevant both in the context of the neutral status declared in the country's Constitution and in the context of global threats (e.g., the aftermath of the pandemic), regional threats (extension of the war in Ukraine) and local and internal

threats (the presence of Russian troops in the country or attempts to destabilise public order). These threats require coordination and cooperation at all levels of activities within the national security system.

In addition, Moldova is extremely vulnerable in terms of energy security, which shows not only a lack of capacity to manage this sector, but also a lack of interest in using *resilience* as an impact mitigation measure. Resilience can be seen as an alternative to challenges that generate major crises and require innovative approaches. Having examined the use of *resilience* by international organisations, as part of their security agenda and as part of policymaking, we have revealed the following trends. The UN approach to resilience focuses on risk mitigation and disaster management and aims to provide an analytical framework of indicators to measure sustainability in this context. The OECD highlights the need for cooperation between various communities in relation to risk management under the development strategies.

The European Union Global Strategy (2016) defines *resilience as the capacity of states and societies to be reformed, thus being resilient and recovering after internal and external crises*. The 2020 Strategic Foresight Report puts forward resilience as a new compass for EU policies. Resilience is defined as *the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges but also to undergo transitions, in a sustainable, fair, and democratic manner*. This narrative takes a multidisciplinary perspective and adopts a wide, 360-degrees approach. Building a more resilient society calls for strengthening the mechanisms of shock absorption and enhancing the capacity for adaptation and transformation (European Commission, 2020).

As regards NATO's perspective on resilience in defence and security, it evolves towards the inclusion of a multidimensional set of vulnerabilities and mitigation strategies as part of the military and non-military

response mechanisms. Bearing in mind the intensification of terrorist and hybrid threats, the strong point of NATO's resilience agenda concerns civil preparedness. Cyber security is one of the areas where NATO could use its collective power to approach critical vulnerabilities of its allies and individual partners to build their resilience.

Resilience from the perspective of Republic of Moldova in the context of the current security environment

During the 2023 World Economic Forum on security in Europe, held in Davos (Switzerland), in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, took part in a discussion focused on the effects of the war in Ukraine on European states and on solutions to strengthen the resilience of countries in the region. One of these consequences is the energy crisis, which Moldova is addressing, including by reducing dependence on Russian gas, but there are other problems amplified by the war waged by Russia. One such problem is *propaganda and disinformation, which is a problem for many countries, and we need to learn together how to be more effective in countering them*. The same Wednesday, during the panel dedicated to Europe's leadership in a fragmented, war-torn world, the President Maia Sandu stressed that the solidarity shown by the European Union in the context of the crisis exacerbated by the war in Ukraine has enabled Europe to resist, strengthen its resilience and demonstrate that the values of democracy and freedom can be defended.

Actually, we cannot ignore the fact that states must improve crisis communication and step up the fight against disinformation. And the Republic of Moldova is vulnerable to this aspect. One of the key problems inherited from the Soviet period is an education system that does not prioritize the development of critical and independent thinking skills. The information space of

the Republic of Moldova (info-media) is exposed to external and internal disinformation activities. Traditionally, the Russian Federation promotes various manipulative narratives, and the key vulnerabilities of the Moldova are related to the significant exposure to and popularity of Russian television channels among wide spheres of the Moldovan society, as well as the absolute dominance of the Russian media in the Transnistrian region, in the Gagauzia autonomous region, and among ethnic minorities. An important role is also played by the high levels of trust of the population in the Orthodox Church of Moldova, which is extremely conservative and is part of the Russian Orthodox Patriarchy (Pistrinciuc et al., 2021).

From geopolitical perspective, the Russian Federation uses some history-based 'messianic' projects in order to adopt an expansionist and neo-imperial policy promoted by the geopolitician Dughin A. He was the one advocating for approximating particular cultures and ideologies that were totally opposed to maintain the tradition of a great power for Russia. At the same time, the geopolitical laboratory of Dughin A. takes the role of geopolitical laboratory of the Church and of a special historical mission that the Russian state has planned to realise. This is actually encompassed in their expansionist actions in Ukraine. Thus, A. Dughin (CAIRN International, 2022) or A. Podberezkin (Подберезкин, 2019). speak about Moscow as a successor of the Byzantine Empire and of the status of the Third Rome. The selfishness of Russian Orthodox culture, the status of a state in the *near abroad* (the Russian Federation's area of interest) and the demonization of Europe lead us to claim that Moscow behaves like a contemporary Tatar-Mongol empire. And the project of a Byzantine core-state and Russia's expansionist role are expressed not only in its films, media, literature, but also in its security and defence strategies, including military.

At the same time, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has tragically shown that a soft power approach is insufficient to counter military aggression and it may also have given a new dimension to the notion of resilience. Until the beginning of 2020, people who focused on societal resilience kept talking about the need for a better preparedness and especially for more education of the public. And it's crucial to bear in mind that societal resilience is not just a government activity. Resilience is the responsibility of the whole of society, and fortunately a great deal is happening there (Demsey, (2022)). For example, recent experience has demonstrated how a sense of solidarity and trust as elements of social cohesion enhanced efficiency in addressing the refugee crises in Moldova (approximately 3.5% of the country's population is represented by refugees).

In this context, we cannot overlook indicators allowing us to measure the resilience of the states, as, for example, the *Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index* (SCORE) which is an innovative tool designed to measure the sustainability of peace in societies around the world. SCORE examines two main components of peace - *reconciliation* and *social cohesion* - and the complex relationship between them. In 2018, it found that overall social cohesion in the country was fragile when oligarchs and a socialist president, *proxy actors* of the Russian Federation, with negative attitudes towards women and poor social tolerance, were at the helm (ONU, 2020). Social cohesion is also affected by the Transnistrian problem. In addition, the impossibility of controlling the districts on the left bank of the Dniester affects the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the region (e.g., access to justice, freedom of movement, freedom of expression) and limits the possibility of ensuring human security for all Moldovan citizens in situations of cross-border or asymmetric threats.

Thus, there is a correlation between democracy, human security and resilience. When we refer to democracy, we look at the quality of the regime, as the Russian Federation also considers itself a democratic state, but according to the democracy score developed by Freedom House, in 2023 Russia has been assessed as a state with Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (Freedom House, 2023). Previously, under the pro-Russian regime, the Democracy Score for 2015, according to *Freedom House*, was 4.86, on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represented the highest democratic progress and 7 the lowest, and the regime's rating being *transitional government* or *hybrid regime* (Freedom House, 2016). Moldova's low democracy index was driven by fraud in the banking system, corruption and the enormous influence of businessmen in politics and governance, including the issue of lack of control over the territory on the left bank of Nistru river where political rights in 2015 score 10 out of 40 and civil rights 14 out of 60.

At the same time, the approach from the *perspective of small states* is still relevant. According to author Barry Buzan, a small state's security is determined by external factors, by global or continental processes, dominant relations between certain major powers or policies promoted by certain major powers towards small states (Buzan, 2007). Hence the geopolitical perspective of small states, as for the Republic of Moldova the strategic choice of the development vector, such as European integration, is vital. As regards the Republic of Moldova, a candidate country to the EU in the summer of 2022, it is already assumed that it is going through a serious process of accession to European values and implementation of reforms. Thus, recently, on 14 October 2021, the Moldovan Parliament has approved the ratification of the *Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* (Istanbul Convention). Moldova signed the Istanbul Convention on 6 February 2017, but did not hasten to ratify it.

There were many excuses, but even more scaremongers were present that different parties banked on. The Istanbul Treaty was signed by 45 countries and subsequently ratified by 34.

Currently, women represent at least 40% of the country's parliament and all local and municipal councils. Moldova has achieved significant milestones in recent years in its efforts towards democracy, transparency, and sustainable growth. For example, The Economist's Democracy Index has upgraded Moldova from *hybrid regimes* to *flawed democracies* in 2021, with further improvements in 2022. Moldova places the fight against corruption among its top priorities. Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2022) ranked the country as one of the five most significant movers, achieving its best score in a decade. Despite a global decline in the rule of law for the fifth consecutive year, Moldova managed to move up five places on the 2022 Rule of Law Index of the World Justice Project (World Justice Project, 2022).

Conclusion

Unfortunately, war contributes to resilience, but we need to build resilience systematically building clear leadership and cooperation mechanisms to foster unity of effort. In this context, the European Assembly organised at the national level in 2023 on May 21 could be a part of the resilience toolkit of the entire society in Moldova. In this context, I would like to emphasize that for resolving or at least mitigating the vulnerabilities that undermine Moldova's resilience, it requires to increase the public trust in state institutions and decision-makers. One way to improve the preparedness of institutions in the face of a crisis, in the context of Russian Federation interest to keep power in the region, from the local authorities to the national law

enforcement sector and to counter corruption through zero tolerance policies, capacity-building and the empowerment of the integrity agency. A reliable general prosecutor and court system are also of the essence. The state's response capacity requires a solid mechanism of early warning systems and crisis management in the field of hybrid or conventional threats.

If we refer to practical aspects, we cannot neglect that on March 24 the EU Council established the EU Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova under the Common Security and Defence Policy. The objective of this civilian mission is to enhance the resilience of the security sector of the country in the areas of *crisis management* and *hybrid threats*, including *cybersecurity*, and countering foreign information manipulation and interference. We could see that the linkages between societal resilience and cybersecurity are only going to grow closer.

The resilience agenda also covers aspects related to *civil protection*, which is a complex phenomenon, from *food security to resilience against physical and digital risks*, and the protection of critical infrastructure is becoming a common topic at the European level. But for Moldova, it continues to be more complicated to be resilient in the context of the *weaponization of energy* for political purposes of Russian Federation.

At the same time, various dimensions of resilience must be considered when planning action to support states in this complex geopolitical environment: promoting resilience in the Republic of Moldova requires more proactive and effective policies, but also more political commitment and smart resource allocation. The ability of societies to withstand and adapt to crises and emergencies is an essential element of national security and defence. The definitions of resilience often posit three phases: preparation, response, and recovery. This

implies that resilience is not the result of a single effort or initiative, but rather of a long-term, ongoing effort and investment that changes over time.

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BLACK SEA GEOPOLITICS AND UKRAINE'S FUTURE

Jack Gill

Abstract: This paper analyses the motives of the Kremlin's ongoing war in Ukraine, the Russian Federation's significant geopolitical pivot away from Europe and the consequences thereof for Ukraine and the rest of Europe. In particular, the strategic importance of the Sea of Azov for the Kremlin's access to the oceans is considered. After providing this context, the paper explores some possible ways in which Ukraine could join the European political-economic and security structures, and under what conditions, including by achieving security guarantees from the United States, similar to South Korea and Israel, as well as by declaring military neutrality. Thereafter, the paper examines the potential challenges to Ukraine's redevelopment given the geopolitical circumstances and provides some conclusions.

Keywords: Ukraine; Russia; security; geopolitics; redevelopment.

Introduction

The course of Ukrainian history changed fundamentally in 2022. After Russia's invasion of large parts of the country, Ukrainians' steadfast resistance to Russian brutality and unmatched commitment to Western integration has made it beyond doubt that Ukraine's future lies politically in Europe and not in Russia's sphere of influence. The damage – not only physical but also psychological and sociological – wrought by the

Russian military in Ukraine will make it difficult to reconcile the two sides in the years to come. Nevertheless, the Ukraine question – in other words, its future geopolitical and security status – is the primary issue of international relations of our time, and when viewed from a geopolitical perspective, taking into account great power interests and strategies and the historical outcomes of countries that faced and continue to face similar challenges to Ukraine, a wider picture begins to emerge in which Ukraine does not appear entirely unique. Many clever solutions have been devised for such countries with difficult (and larger) neighbours that challenge their sovereignty. As such, only by viewing Ukraine – and, indeed, its smaller but like-minded neighbours Moldova and Georgia – through such a wider lens can we understand the interests of all parties and develop inspired solutions to this geopolitical crisis. But in order to understand Ukraine’s difficulties, we must first examine Russia’s new “grand strategy”.

Putin’s Grand Strategy

The current conflict we are witnessing in Ukraine can be seen through a much broader global geopolitical lens. With Russia’s invasion and the imposition of crippling sanctions by most Western countries, the Kremlin is conducting a great pivot away from Europe towards Asia and the Middle East. As Europe no longer holds the strategic importance for today’s Russian Federation that it once did for the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Kremlin is diversifying its economic and political partnerships with other global players, most notably by coupling with the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

As the next step in President Putin’s grand plan for global power projection, like for any other empire in history, ensuring year-round secure access to the world’s oceans is of critical importance. Although

Russia has vast coastlines, its coasts along the Arctic Ocean are frozen for too much of the year to be relied upon for primary ports, while Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan is so far by land from the Russian heartlands in Eastern Europe that it also can only play a smaller role in Russian logistics.

This leaves the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, which historically have provided Russia with its most important sea access. With the pivot away from Europe (and therefore also the North Atlantic), we have seen a significant decline in the strategic importance Russia places on the Baltic Sea, which, with the accession of Finland and (soon) Sweden to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), will soon become a largely internal NATO sea. A global power projection strategy is thus no longer feasible if the Baltic Sea were to be the main hub of the Russian navy and shipping. As a result, Russia's invasion of Ukraine (both in 2014 and 2022) could be viewed as the Kremlin putting all of Russia's resources into securing – permanently – Russia's unrestricted access to the world's oceans through the Black Sea. And while Russia invaded Crimea in 2014 to secure Sevastopol and the peninsula as a whole, capturing these territories was not enough.

Although Russia already has a coastline along the Black Sea, it has only one large port with direct access – Novorossiysk, Russia's largest cargo port.¹ But equally weighty for Russia is control of the Sea of Azov – a smaller sea, on the western half of which lie the Ukrainian regions (oblasts) of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. As the Sea of Azov is the shallowest in the world with a maximum depth of just 14m,² all shipping through the sea to the Russian port at Rostov-

¹ Volume of cargo handled in Russia in 2022, by largest port (in million metric tons). Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1023550/russia-cargo-throughput-by-port/#:~:text=The%20Russian%20seaport%20Novorossiysk%2C%20located,million%20metric%20tons%20of%20cargo>. Accessed 25/07/2023.

² "Sea of Azov. Britannica.com. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sea-of-Azov>. Accessed 24/07/2023.

on-Don and onwards to the Volga River and Caspian Sea must sail through Ukrainian territorial waters, close to the Ukrainian city of Mariupol. Moreover, to access the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov, a ship would need to sail through the tight Kerch Strait, which separates Crimea from southern Russia. If Ukraine had kept control over Crimea and joined NATO, then, like in the Baltic Sea, Russian ships would have to tiptoe along the Russia/NATO maritime border and would undermine Putin's strategy.

Additionally, because Turkey controls the straits of the Bosphorous – the only entrance or exit to the Black Sea – maintaining close relations with Turkey must also remain a very high priority for the Kremlin, and Turkish President Recep Erdoğan has courted the Kremlin on a number of strategic issues, including increasing economic ties in contrast to most European countries, as well as positioning Turkey as a neutral party in the conflict despite the country's membership in NATO.³

By taking control over much of the Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, the Kremlin has likely achieved the main strategic goal of its war in Ukraine. It must now hold on to them. Whether the Ukrainian military can launch a successful counteroffensive to reconquer these territories in addition to Crimea and Donbas remains to be seen. In any case, by invading the Ukrainian territories around the Sea of Azov, Russia is attempting to secure this vital ocean access for the years to come. Ukraine and especially Crimea joining NATO would, so to speak, be checkmate to NATO, as Russia would have only the remote port of Vladivostok and the frozen port of Murmansk as its primary ocean ports that are not in extreme proximity to NATO.

³ “Erdoğan: I have a ‘special relationship’ with Putin — and it's only growing”. Politico. 19 May 2023. <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-special-relationship-russia-grow-recep-tayyip-erdogan-valdimir-putin/>. Accessed 25/07/2023.

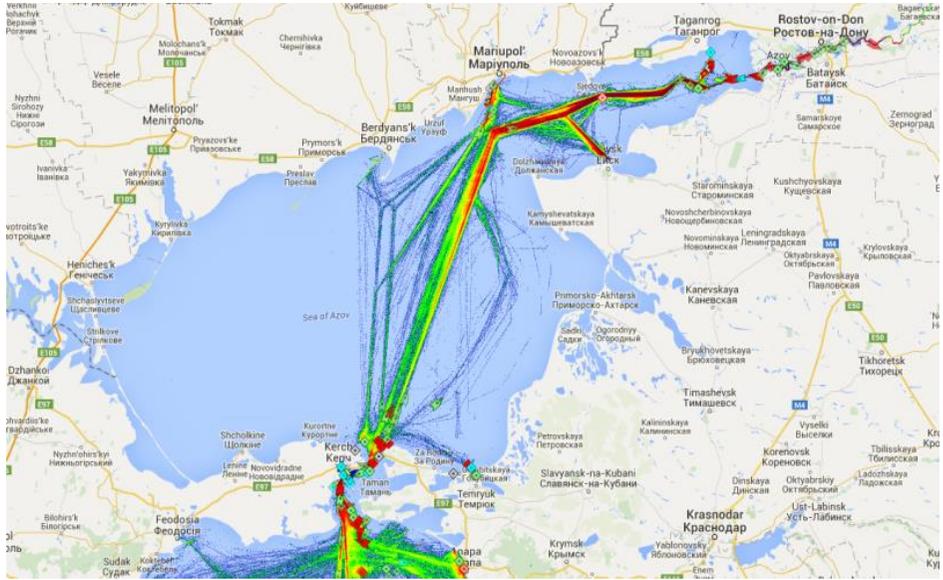


Figure 1: Sea of Azov Traffic Density Map (23/07/2023). Source: Shiptraffic.net <http://www.shiptraffic.net/2001/04/sea-of-azov-ship-traffic.html>

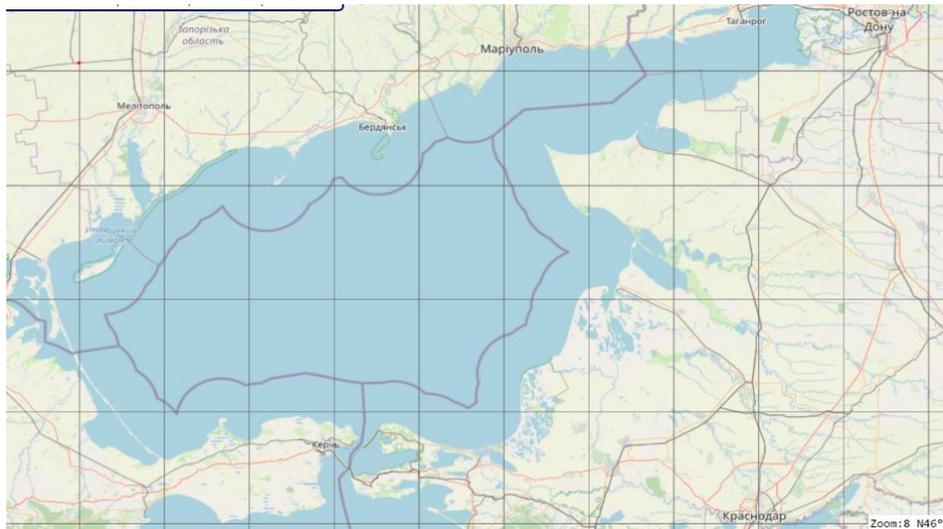


Figure 2: Sea of Azov Maritime Border Map. Source: <http://opennauticalchart.org/>

Security Guarantees for Ukraine

As it cannot be assured that Ukraine will defeat Russia on the battlefield, let alone reconquer all of its lost territories, foreseeing Ukraine's redevelopment in the context of current Russian aggression and likely future Russian malevolence, Ukraine will certainly need powerful security guarantees at the end of the conflict to ensure its stable reconstruction. In this regard, we need not necessarily look to Europe to provide us with examples of successful security guarantees for countries in difficult geopolitical situations. Indeed, other countries around the world, most notably Israel and South Korea, serve as far more relevant examples of the geopolitical environment wherein Ukraine finds itself. With hostile and threatening neighbours, Israel's and South Korea's external security is guaranteed primarily through extensive bilateral military agreements with the United States.

Israel, for example, has extensive foundational agreements on defence and security with the United States, including an "Agreement relating to mutual defense assistance" (1952).⁴ In the case of South Korea, the Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, signed on 1 October 1953, stipulates that the two countries:

"will consult together whenever, in the opinion of either of them, the political independence or security of either of the Parties is threatened by external armed attack. Separately and jointly, by self help and mutual aid, the Parties will maintain and develop appropriate means to deter armed attack and will take suitable measures in

⁴ Agreement relating to mutual defense assistance. Exchange of notes at Tel Aviv July 1 and 23, 1952. Entered into force July 23, 1952. 3 UST 4985; TIAS 2675; 179 UNTS 139. U.S. Department of State. Treaties in Force. (p.218). <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/TIF-2020-Full-website-view.pdf>

consultation and agreement to implement this Treaty and to further its purposes.”⁵

Given the economic and developmental success of South Korea since the 1950s, it is clear that the protection offered by the US played a key role in deterring its neighbours from launching full-scale invasions, allowing for stable economic and democratic development. For Ukraine, the post-war settlement will certainly involve the US, and significant security guarantees on the part of the US would be a major gain for Ukraine.

Military Neutrality

Key to the settlement of the Second World War in Europe was the status of two countries in particular – Austria and Finland – which occupied strategic areas and decided to become neutral. For Finland, which had a significant land border with the USSR, neutrality was the only option given its strategic location at the side of the Gulf of Finland, a key entry for the Soviet navy to the open seas and the mouth of Russia’s second-largest city, St Petersburg. In 1948, Finland signed the “Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance” with the Soviet Union, which allowed Finland to maintain its liberal democratic system while guaranteeing that “no third party would exploit Finland’s territory against the Soviet Union”. This was known as the Paasikivi Policy.⁶ Preventing Finland from joining NATO was a major success for Soviet foreign policy. By contrast, Austria occupied a very different but equally important location in Central Europe. On the border between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Austria broke the NATO front between West Germany and Italy. After being reconstituted as a

⁵ Article II, Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea; October 1, 1953. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kor001.asp

⁶ “The Paasikivi Policy and Foreign-Policy Thinking”. <https://web.archive.org/web/20040613052725/http://www.paasikivi-seura.fi/society/paasikivipolicy.htm>. Accessed 25 July 2023.

neutral country in 1955, the country also became a key meeting point for Eastern and Western officials and home to many international organisations, including some United Nations (UN) institutions and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). For nearly half a century during the Cold War, neutrality allowed Austria and Finland to develop nonetheless in a Western direction. Both countries became highly economically successful and free democracies. Where countries like Austria differ from Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia is that although they are not inside NATO, their security is guaranteed by their internationally recognised military neutrality, which has allowed them to join the European political-economic framework, i.e. either the European Union itself or the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). However the ongoing war in Ukraine ends, by declaring its own military neutrality, Ukraine (as well as Georgia and Moldova) could make a large step into the western structures, outside of which they are currently located. Neutrality could offer these countries a geopolitical stability unlike anything they have had previously, allowing for increased foreign investment and stabler democratic development, while also demonstrating that they will not become a threat to the Kremlin by joining NATO.

European Political-Economic and Security Framework

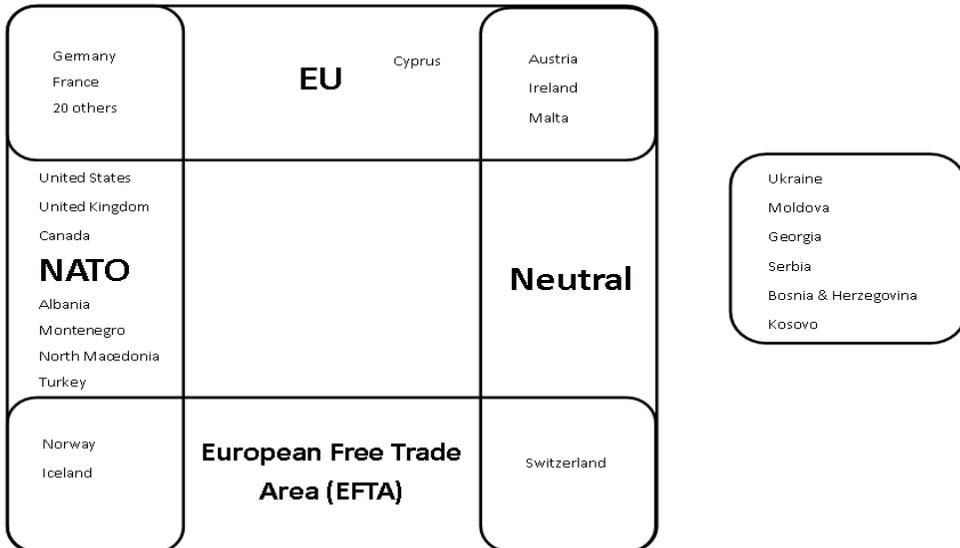


Figure 3: European Political-Economic and Security Framework. Credit: Author.

Another Way into Europe

Given the similarities in the challenges Ukraine faces with its fellow post-Soviet states of Moldova and Georgia, namely their post-communist transition and democratisation, as well as their internal breakaway territories, proximity to Russia (in the case of Ukraine and Georgia) and efforts to join the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are sometimes referred to as the Association Trio (A3) thanks to their signing association agreements with the EU. As a collective, the A3 represent an altogether different challenge to European integration than other groupings of former communist countries, such as the Baltic States, the Visegrad 4 or the Western Balkans 6. Because of the A3's – and especially Ukraine's – geostrategic location and their historical importance to Russia, as well as their ongoing issues with breakaway territories, their future is a geopolitical challenge unlike any other in Europe. Joining NATO is not an option for

the A3 in the short or medium term due to their lack of territorial integrity and the perceived risk that this would pose to the Kremlin. Instead, their first step to join the European political-economic and security framework could be to become neutral and, upon satisfying the EU's Copenhagen Criteria, thereafter join the EU or the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). The latter could only happen when the former is complete. To aid in this process, the creation of a "European Grouping of Neutral States", including Switzerland, Austria, Ireland and Malta could offer encouragement and support to prospective neutral states in Europe, representing a real alternative path to European integration than the traditional goal of both EU and NATO membership.

Conclusion

Turning to Europe today, we see a similar need to find a status quo that suits all sides, and just like in the aftermath of the Second World War, military neutrality may again provide the best solution. On the other hand, with credible and far-reaching security guarantees from the US and the EU, Ukraine, like Israel and South Korea, would be in a much better position to develop economically and politically, without necessarily becoming explicitly neutral. Though many believe the Western alliance should arm Ukraine until it somehow achieves victory over the Russian war machine, the final settlement of the conflict will have to take into account Russian as well as Ukrainian interests. When we look at history, the post-war settlement in Europe after 1945 reflected the geopolitical interests of two great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Similarly, the outcome of this war will be a compromise unlikely to thrill anyone, central to which will be the military status of Ukraine as well as the Sea of Azov and the Ukrainian lands on the western side thereof. Nevertheless, based on the arguments laid out in this paper, some useful conclusions may be drawn.

1. Russia's pivot away from Europe towards other parts of the world means that we are entering a new period of geopolitics with regard to Russia. Central to the Kremlin's new strategy is security in the Black Sea and especially the lands on the other side of the Sea of Azov, namely the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. Whatever the outcome of the conflict, the new security arrangement of Ukraine will have to consider Russian interests in this area.

2. There are a number of ways to guarantee Ukraine's security in the aftermath of the ongoing war with Russia. This paper explored two possible situations regarding Ukraine's future military status: far-reaching security guarantees offered especially by the United States (similar to South Korea) as well as the European Union, and/or a military neutrality arrangement that does not preclude Ukraine from joining the European Union. Due to the sheer size of Ukraine, its complex history and enormously strategic location, solving the Ukraine question is *the* geopolitical challenge of our time in Europe. Its path into the European political-economic and security framework could be unique to Ukraine, but solving it as soon as possible is the best guarantee of European security for the foreseeable future.

DEVELOPING SOCIETY'S POST-WAR RESILIENCE IN UKRAINE – DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY

Nenad Koprivica, PhD⁷

Abstract: While bearing some similarities with regime changes of the 20th century, the new process of democratic backsliding is distinct in two major aspects. First, it is primarily within a state process led by elected officials abusing the existing democratic institutions. Second, it is an incremental process rather than an abrupt regime change that witnesses the weakening or elimination of the institutions that sustain an existing democracy. From the other side, there is an obvious lack of leadership – strong leader(s) in the EU.

Keywords: democracy, EU, post-war resilience, lessons learned, transition.

Defense of democracy

How and why democracies break down emerged as a central issue of comparative politics in the last ten years. And a general conclusion is that a type of

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democratic erosion is unfolding. The main trends in the world are regressive trends in the state of democracy⁸. Socio-political practice, and consequently political theory, indicate that negative trends are recording when it comes to democratic standards. Populism, the strengthening of right-wing movements, the rise of authoritarian political leaders, the immigration crisis that intensified animosities based on racial criteria, are all factors that political theory recognizes as key, and which have conditioned overall decline of democratic standards and democratic practices. In other words, the democracy that we recognize in the traditional democracies is facing serious tests, and new terms have emerged in political theory, such as, for example, 'illiberal democracy', a concept that denotes a society that is nominally democratically organized, but in which authoritarian leaders and their oligarchic political and economic proponents manage to deny the work of democratic institutions and to strengthen their personal power by disregarding democratic standards. These trends are particularly recognized in Southeast Europe and can certainly potentially affect the still unconsolidated democracies in that region.

While bearing some similarities with regime changes of the 20th century, the new process of democratic backsliding is distinct in two major aspects. First, it is primarily within a state process led by elected officials abusing the existing democratic institutions. Second, it is an incremental process rather than an abrupt regime change that witnesses the weakening or elimination of the institutions that sustain an existing democracy⁹.

As the processes that result in democratic backsliding are state-led and are unfolding within the democratic institutions themselves, it is important to explore the role external actors play in facilitating these processes.

⁸ <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>

⁹ Bermeo 2016; <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/607612>

The role of the EU/case of Western Balkans and Montenegro

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has changed the circumstances and behavior of the EU. For the first time, apart from the pandemic, in more recent years, we saw a determined and energetic performance, we saw again a European value on the scene that, in the previous period, was fading more - European solidarity was again at work. EU has provided great financial support (67 billion of euro); however, could more have been done before the Russian aggression, could the EU perspective have been more visible?

The block polarization over identity and statehood issues in Montenegro, between the proponents of independence and joint state with Serbia, politically and socially follows the division between pro-Western and pro-Eastern forces. Russia builds on this societal division, supporting pro-Russian organizations through various channels, whose political actions shape the face of Montenegrin democracy.

From the Western Balkan experience, the EU lacks credible strategy for this region and the best example is 2003 Thessaloniki Process – SAP (stabilization and association process). After 20 years it is still an unfulfilled promise, and the focus is still on the stabilization and less on the association process. Also, neglecting of the hybrid threats coming from Russia and malign influence on the region. It is important not to speak only about consequences but more on the causes of the crisis and to better understand lessons learned from the past. On the other side, there is an obvious lack of leadership – strong leader(s) in the EU. To limit the malign influence of authoritarian external actors, it is crucial that the EU takes a more direct approach to the exercise of its political influence. A more active EU role requires work towards fostering a

unified approach to the democratic development of Western Balkans between the EU and the USA, and devise of a regionwide strategy to combat anti-Western sentiments. EU should prove that the Western Balkans represents an EU sphere of influence in a highly geopolitically tense atmosphere that the war has created and thus accelerate of the European integration of the Western Balkan countries and relaunch its enlargement policy towards the region.

Importance of the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice

The role of the rule of law in fostering stability, protecting human rights, and preventing the reemergence of conflict is of the significant importance as well as transitional justice mechanisms in post-war societies, such as truth commissions, criminal prosecutions, reparations, and institutional reforms. These measures can help address human rights abuses, provide justice to victims, promote reconciliation, and strengthen the rule of law. Few main pillars are:

Media Freedom and Democracy: The critical role of a free and independent media in building a resilient post-war society is crucial. There are many challenges faced by the media during the transition period, including disinformation, censorship, and political interference. The need for safeguarding media freedom, promoting media literacy to counter misinformation, and supporting investigative journalism to ensure a well-informed citizenry is necessary to obtain stability and democracy. That is why the importance of establishing effective media regulations and ethical standards during the transition period should be address, as well as the need for transparent media ownership, accountability mechanisms, and self-regulatory bodies. The balance between freedom of expression and responsible journalism to prevent the spread of hate speech, incitement, and misinformation is also very important. In that regard, recommended measures should relate to

protecting journalists' safety, promoting media self-regulation, fostering media diversity, and providing support for quality journalism through training programs and financial assistance.

Building Trust and Civic Engagement: The significance of fostering trust between the government, civil society, and the media in the transition period is well known fact. the importance of civil society organizations, grassroots initiatives, and community engagement in rebuilding trust, promoting social cohesion, and fostering democracy should be highlighted in the transition period. The importance of promoting dialogue, transparency, and inclusive decision-making processes are all issues to be further discussed and explore ways to enhance civic engagement and citizen participation in policy development and implementation to ensure the legitimacy of post-war reforms. One of the examples is the role of civil society organizations in Ukraine, such as the Euromaidan movement or human rights groups, in mobilizing citizens and advocating for democratic reforms during the transition period.

International Support and Cooperation: Specific part is the importance of international support and cooperation in building post-war resilience in Ukraine, such as coordinated efforts in aiding, capacity building, and technical expertise to strengthen institutions, promote good governance, and protect human rights in areas such as legal reform, media development, and democratic governance. One of the examples is the partnership between Ukraine and the European Union, which has provided financial support and technical assistance for implementing reforms in various sectors, including the justice system and media. However, the challenges of balancing international assistance with maintaining national sovereignty and ensuring local ownership of the transition process should also be addressed. In that regard, continued collaboration with international partners, such as the European Union, the

United Nations, and other relevant organizations, to secure financial resources, expertise, and technical support for policy implementation, capacity building, and knowledge sharing has to be encouraged.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Lessons learned from other post-war societies and transitional contexts, sharing best practices in law and media reforms, case studies and successful examples from other countries would inspire and inform policy implementation in Ukraine's transition period. Few main recommendations on implementing policies during the transition period in Ukraine, with a focus on law and media relates to:

1. Ensuring an Independent and Transparent Judiciary:

The establishment of an independent Judicial Council in Ukraine that ensures transparency in the selection and evaluation of judges, as well as the adoption of clear criteria for judicial appointments based on merit, integrity, and expertise.

2. Combating Corruption and Promoting Accountability:

The success of Estonia in combating corruption by implementing electronic governance systems that reduce opportunities for bribery and improve transparency in public administration could be one of the examples. The adoption of digital solutions and e-governance tools in Ukraine to minimize corruption risks, streamline administrative processes, and increase public trust by ensuring transparency and accountability should be encouraged.

3. Promoting Media Pluralism and Countering Disinformation:

The case of Lithuania, which established an independent public broadcaster to ensure balanced and unbiased news coverage, promoting media pluralism and reducing the influence of state-controlled media could help in advocating for the establishment of an independent public broadcasting system in Ukraine, with transparent funding mechanisms and editorial independence, to provide objective and diverse information to the public.

4. Strengthening Access to Justice and Legal Aid:

The development of a comprehensive legal aid system in Ukraine that offers free or affordable legal assistance to marginalized and vulnerable groups, along with the establishment of legal aid clinics and partnerships with civil society organizations to provide legal support is needed. Example could be the successful legal aid program in the United Kingdom, where free legal assistance is provided to individuals who cannot afford legal representation, ensuring access to justice for all.

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ENSURING EUROPEAN SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO THE FUTURE CHALLENGES MENA, CLIMATE CHANGE AND EU RISK MANAGEMENT

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Keywords: Middle East, North Africa, Climate Change, European Union, Common Security and Defence Policy, Risk Management, Crisis Management

Introduction

On February 24th, 2022, Russia launched its illegal invasion against Ukraine. This conflict rapidly escalated, becoming the biggest inter-state war since WWII in terms of size of committed fighting force, battle intensity, casualties, refugees waves and scope of destruction inflicted on essential civilian infrastructure in Europe. Russia's aggression against Ukraine substantially redefined threat-perception across Europe, to some degree also in the US and the rest of the world. Hard security considerations, military power preeminence, national defence planning and deterrence returned to the heart of discussion of policy-makers, military planners, diplomats but also the broad public.

This development represents a strategic U-turn in many ways. Since the tragic events of 9/11, the transatlantic

community spent two decades both in blood and treasure on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations, nation-building efforts, stability and capacity building missions predominantly in the Middle East, North Africa but also other parts of the world. Post 9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Arab Spring and consequent armed conflicts in Libya, Yemen and Syria, which still are not resolved, significantly reshaped the MENA region but also Europe. Now, after arguably chaotic, mismanaged and in opinion of some shameful withdrawal of Allies from Afghanistan in summer 2021, the transatlantic community reached a point of symbolic closure, disengagement from the region and refocus on a set of challenges represented by authoritarian revisionism be it Chinese great power ambitions or Russian aggression.

While described shift may be a viable strategy for the United States, we argue that for Europe retreat from the MENA region would be unwise, risky and likely leading to emergence of substantial threats directly affecting Europe's security environment. Nexus of climate change impacts, demographic pressures, changing patterns of energy consumption, and great powers competition over critical resources in the region will generate high potential for conflict and instability in coming years. Geographical proximity, presence of large communities from MENA countries in EU, importance of regional energy exports for European energy security are just a few examples, why EU and its member states have to stay vested and engaged in the MENA.

In the following text we would concentrate on the climate change dimension of the emerging challenge and EU risk management strategies and policies towards the region. We see impacts of climate change as both crisis catalyst and multiplier due to its cross-dimensional consequences and truly environment shaping quality.

MENA and the Climate Change Impacts

Climate change is changing our everyday lives day by day, and redefining the world's crisis management toolkits to deal with something that is coming way sooner than we feared. If we do not slow global emissions, temperatures could rise to above three degrees Celsius by 2100, causing further irreversible damage to our ecosystems, causing wide-range displacement and the disruption of supply chains, and that water scarcity will increase with droughts costing €65 billion (EU, 2021 and IPCC, 2018). Thus, it is not surprising to say that conflict is also an inevitable consequence of climate change (Livingstone 2015), of which the challenges represent one of the biggest “threats to international stability” (Barnett, 2000). Thus, the social and economic effects of climate change are bound to hit the MENA region the hardest, directly affecting Europe.

One of the most affected and most at risk from climate change is the MENA region. MENA countries are very vulnerable to climate change impacts as they are naturally affected by harsh climate conditions, extremely high temperatures, limited groundwater and rainfall and scarce agricultural and arable land. Due to the combination of water and precipitation scarcity, high population growth and geographic concentration of the population, this is the most water-stressed area in the world (Borghesi & Ticci, 2019). Between 1980 and 2022, temperatures across MENA increased 0.46°C per decade, well above the world average of 0.18°C (Lim et al. 2023). On top of that, sustained droughts continued to diminish water resources from river systems and crippling heatwaves persisted over long durations of this summer season (Židuliaková, 2022). This has aggravated the MENA region with droughts in Morocco in 2022 and Tunisia in 2023, while causing intense

floods in 2022 in the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and Yemen (Lim et al. 2023). The MENA countries are also particularly vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change which could be extremely disruptive for climate-sensitive activities, from tourism to agriculture and fishing, especially in the Mediterranean and Red Sea sub-regions. A study on 84 coastal developing countries found that about 24 percent of MENA's coastal GDP and 20 percent of its coastal urban extent is exposed to sea level rise and storm surges, which is around twice as much compared to the same indicators measured worldwide (Borghesi & Ticci, 2019). The World Bank estimates that the sea level rise could affect 43 port cities in the region, including Alexandria which could experience devastating effects, with more than 2 million people displaced in the case of a 0.5-metre rise (Verner et. al., 2013). Therefore, an early and concerted climate and development action is needed to avert the emerging crisis associated with the current climate crisis.

EU Risk and Crisis Management in CDSP Context

The European Union has recognized the increasing importance of risk and crisis management in the face of climate change and has developed policies and practices to address these challenges. The EU's current approach to risk and crisis management encompasses various frameworks and strategies aimed at managing climate-related risks and crises. Both at international and European level, due to much higher climate risks, there is a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive and integrated approaches to climate-risk management. Such approaches acknowledge the significant role of climate change as a risk factor while including prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery (IPCC, 2019). However, many new descriptors are emerging to convey the complexity of risks from climate change.

Climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) offer complementary approaches to managing the risks associated with extreme weather and climate-related events (European Environment Agency, 2017). Addressing CCA and DRR requires the collaboration of policy experts, scientists, and practitioners. As the current and future problems we are facing are highly complex and intertwined in many different areas, it is important for all collaborators to build resilient societies and controlling climate hazards are among their shared goals (European Environment Agency, 2017).

Many EU member states often voice their opinions at many climate events and their security implications. While accepting the influence of climate change on conflict situations in poor countries and not opposing additional action, certain nations are more worried with urgent national security risks in the present geopolitical scenario (Bunse et al., 2022). Many politicians have found themselves diverting their attention on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, meaning many investments in climate mitigation and adaptation are put on hold, as they had to take care of more pressing issues regarding humanitarian aid and military. On the other side, countries such as Ireland, Sweden, and Germany appear to be the doers. They want to refocus the discourse on climate security towards more practical or technical talks, as well as actual initiatives that help mitigate climate-related security issues (Bunse et al., 2022). Both in Europe and neighbourhood regions, MENA especially, the need for CCA and DRR is rising as the severity of climatic events are starting to cause

negative effects on broad populations, economy, wildlife and overall ecosystem stability¹⁰.

The EU seems to be trying to find ways to include military capacities into the fight against climate change. By proposing the *Climate Change and Defence Roadmap*, it aims to implement more than 30 specific initiatives in the fields of multilateral partnerships, capability development, and operations within the climate security-defence nexus. The proposal is to improve early warning, to integrate environmental factors into the planning and implementation of CSDP missions (civilian and military), to increase the energy efficiency of CSDP missions, and to work more closely with the UN and NATO in the areas of climate change and defence to take into account national policies (EEAS, 2020).

As a result, systems to measure the environmental footprint of missions have been tested and environmental advisors have already been deployed in several CSDP operations. The roadmap also aims to align with the objectives of the European Green Deal, reduce emissions in the defence sector, and protect biodiversity, while monitoring and reviewing the implementation of its actions. In general, the roadmap seeks to contribute to a broader and long-term EU agenda on climate change while also highly contributing to addressing the climate-security nexus and promoting partnerships in addressing climate-related challenges.

However, any recent advancements to even get to a reasonable strategy has taken decades, which already could prove negative effects due to hesitations. It remains to be seen if the new framework will tackle the problems that the previous ones neglected, but

¹⁰ It is significant to highlight that these phenomena' regional manifestations vary across Europe, and that future climate change may cause their severity and frequency to increase even more.

hopefully we will not reach a point where there is no turning back. By understanding that this roadmap still holds gaps, it allows for further improved transformation that provide a foundation in addressing climate change impact, not only in Europe but also its neighbouring regions. These strengths provide a foundation for addressing climate change impacts, however, challenges remain. While efforts have been made to fully integrate climate considerations into decision-making processes, there is room for improvement in ensuring that climate considerations are at the forefront of risk and crisis management strategies, not only in the EU, but probably even more importantly in its neighbouring regions.

Middle East and North Africa in Spotlight

Since the EU has geographic, cultural, political, and economic ties with its neighbouring MENA countries, the EU has a vested interest in developing adaptive climate strategies and mitigating climate challenges and spill-over effects, such as migration, security, and economic stability (Lienard, 2022). The MENA region faces several challenges and issues that impact its socio-economic development and stability; from natural disasters, water scarcity and food insecurity and climate change impacts. Additionally, deeply rooted problems of governance, corruption, and societal divisions further exacerbate these challenges. The MENA region also carries a lot of economic disparities among its countries. Despite this, all MENA nations face a shared and significant threat: high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change which poses massive strains on agricultural productivity and food security throughout the entire region. Therefore, countries respond to these challenges in distinct ways, largely influenced by their income levels. Countries, particularly those in the Gulf, have managed to establish relative stability and functionality, while having the financial means to engage in self-protective measures, which often involve

energy-intensive activities that may inadvertently contribute to further environmental degradation (Borghesi & Ticci, 2019).

In contrast, lower- and middle-income, like Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, countries within the MENA region are predominantly compelled to rely on strategies such as migration and the unsustainable overexploitation of water and land resources to cope with climate-related pressures, exhibiting a mix of stability and vulnerability (Borghesi & Ticci, 2019). However, countries such as Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and others serve as prime examples of how internal conflicts hinder effective management and response to these challenges. These conflicts not only impede development and exacerbate vulnerabilities but also hinder regional cooperation and coordination.

Since the region faces such challenges and vulnerabilities arising from climate change, examining the impact underscores the need for enhanced risk and crisis management measures. Water scarcity is a pressing issue, exacerbated by rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns. With limited freshwater resources and high reliance on water-intensive sectors like agriculture, the MENA region requires tailored approaches to address water scarcity and promote sustainable water management. The EU has been involved in supporting the MENA region in water management for decades providing assistance to *African Union* and *Nile Basin Initiative* and offered plans for negotiations related to the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam (Lienard, 2022). In this aspect, the EU recognises that these challenges need to be addressed head on to promote sustainable development, crop resilience, but most importantly general stability (Lienard, 2022). So far, the EU has collaborated with the MENA countries to bring diplomatic outreach, financing, and technical assistance to tackle these challenges.

The EU is already engaged in supporting the renewed agenda to allocate €7 billion in aid to the MENA region, with 42% dedicated to the mitigation of climate change (Lienard, 2022). However, this aid alone is not sufficient to support all the countries to reach their *Nationally Determined Contributions* (NDC) targets. As a result, while the EU is giving financial aid, it is equally critical to evaluate the need for extra international financing and assistance in order to successfully address climate change in the MENA area.

The region's grappling significant challenges cannot be overlooked. On one hand, the population is growing rapidly, while on the other, Gulf Cooperation Council states are responsible for some of the highest per capita carbon emissions globally and continue to export vast amounts of fossil fuels (Ahmad, 2023). Despite concerns over sluggish economic growth, particularly concerning the aspirations of the young population, it is worth noting that Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE have made pledges to achieve net-zero emissions by at least 2060. However, these commitments alone may not address the massive problems still faced by the MENA region.

By evaluating the current adequacy of EU's risk and crisis management measures, there are significant gaps and limitations in regards to dealing with climate change in the MENA region. Inadequate consideration of MENA-specific vulnerabilities, insufficient financial resources, coordination challenges, and limited capacity-building efforts hinder the EU's ability to effectively address the impacts of climate change. Addressing these gaps is crucial as they have significant implications for both the EU and the MENA region. Insufficient risk and crisis management measures in the MENA region can lead to increased vulnerability, economic losses, and social unrest. The consequences of climate change in the MENA region can have

spillover effects, including security concerns, migration pressures, and economic ramifications, which directly affect the EU.

Recommendations

Although the EU's existing risk and crisis management policies are excellent, they may not sufficiently handle the MENA region's special difficulties. According to the study, the EU's present initiatives may fail to take into account the MENA region's specific vulnerabilities and complexity in terms of climate change implications. Water scarcity, intense heat waves, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events necessitate specific methods that take into consideration the MENA region's socioeconomic, political, and geographical unique characteristics. With the persistent and growing threat of climate change is challenging the current (in)action towards ensuring nation-wide and international peace and security. Building resilience and preparedness of society to crisis situations involves a combination of individual, community, and institutional efforts. By adopting new approaches, the EU can aim to build a comprehensive and integrated crisis response system that effectively utilises both military and civilian capacities, ensuring the resilience and preparedness of society to various crisis situations.

1. Individual and Community Level of Building Resilience

To assist alleviate the negative consequences of climate change, the EU may contribute to a variety of projects targeted at boosting local capacity to adapt to and respond to climate risks, therefore promoting sustainable development even before any disasters struck. For starters, it may support initiatives that encourage sustainable and ecologically friendly behaviours, allowing communities to create economic resilience while reducing their ecological imprint.

These initiatives can offer financial aid, training, and technical assistance to help build dynamic, resilient local economies that are less exposed to climate-related shocks. For example, the United Arab Emirates is already seeking to become a global hub and a successful model of the new green economy under the Green Economy initiative. The strategy aims to promote sustainable development across various sectors, especially focusing on diversifying the economy, investing in renewable energy, enhancing energy efficiency, and encouraging sustainable agriculture and water management practices (UEA Government Portal, 2023)¹¹.

Second, by developing its monitoring and forecasting capabilities and collaborating with regional meteorological agencies and research organisations, the EU can improve preparation and reduce vulnerability to disasters related to climate change in the MENA region.

Finally, the EU can organise environmental programs to raise awareness among individuals and groups in the region. Government to government dialogue should go hand in hand with direct engagement with populations via development programs and projects implemented via local and international NGOs. By raising knowledge and understanding of climate change, its causes, and its consequences, the EU can empower individuals to make informed decisions and take proactive efforts to adapt to climate change. The EU can enable MENA communities to become active agents of change by promoting local sustainability initiatives and pressing for climate action via education.

2. Climate Intelligence and Early Warning Systems

¹¹ More information about the current UAE Green initiative can be found here: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/economy/green-economy-for-sustainable-development>

To successfully handle the unpredictability of changing weather in the MENA area, the EU can develop climate monitoring, early warning systems, and data analysis methods. These initiatives have the potential to improve the region's readiness and response to climate-related challenges. Such a system might involve additional advancements in research on the link between climate and war, as well as the use of artificial intelligence (AI) systems capable of modelling the future and anticipating the most susceptible places in need.

Additionally, precise data analysis may be utilised to analyse and deliver accurate predictions and warnings for extreme weather phenomena such as sandstorms, floods, or heat waves - this may incorporate satellite technology to anticipate temperature and precipitation. Using these advances and artificial intelligence, the EU may advise and support the national government in MENA on focused reaction plans, resource allocation, and evacuation as preventative steps to limit the consequences of climate-related hazards. The combination of climate monitoring, early warning systems, and data analysis enables proactive decision-making, such as resource allocation, evacuation planning, and preventative actions.

3. Climate-Conflict Prevention and Resolution Measures

Climate change impact concerns have to be included into foreign policy and security conversations with all relevant stakeholders. It is critical for effective mediation and sustainable peace-making initiatives as climate stress is emerging as a key conflict factor. To lower the danger of conflict and enhance stability, the EU may push for sustainable climate-resilient development routes, particularly in vulnerable nations. The EU may help peaceful conflict settlement and long-term solutions by strengthening multilateral frameworks

and boosting discussion and collaboration among MENA nations.

The crisis has grown in the region over recent years, to the point that average water coverage has fallen by 25%, and by the year 2025 it is likely that the availability will barely be above 500 cubic metres per person (Selim, 2020). Previously, the MENA countries invested in infrastructure, tapped into groundwater resources, and increased virtual water imports to boost agricultural production and access to water supply. However, this expansionist approach to water development now faces limits, necessitating difficult tradeoffs for countries that can lead to conflict within that region (The World Bank, 2023 and Selim, 2020). Thus, incorporating climate change concerns into MENA foreign policy and security discussions is crucial, especially regarding water management and resource sharing.

Recognizing climate stress as a key factor in conflicts, effective mediation and sustainable peace-building are imperative. Prioritising climate-conflict prevention and resolution is critical given the region's vulnerability. Diplomatic efforts and influence should be intensified to achieve bold climate action and resolve climate-related conflicts. The EU can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable, climate-resilient development, particularly in water-vulnerable countries. By strengthening multilateral frameworks and fostering dialogue among MENA nations, the EU can contribute to peaceful conflict resolution and long-term solutions.

4. Creating European Security and Crisis Response Corps

There has been a rising argument in recent years that the national security danger posed by the climate catastrophe necessitates military spending (McCarthy, 2022). However, incorporating the military into the

situation could prove to be an expensive endeavour and an inefficient allocation of resources. Yet growing periodicity, scale and intensity of extreme weather incidents with severe negative impacts on lives, public health and economy dictates the need for robust, well-equipped and trained manpower as a response force. The EU might consider the creation of a professional standing force, *European Security and Crisis Response Corps*, combining military, law enforcement and crisis-management capabilities. Such force can be developed into the EU's primary tool not only for crisis management and response but also conflict prevention and peace building, CSDP missions or development programmes implementation.

Undoubtedly ambitious proposition can be seen as the cornerstone of creating the EU's own security capabilities and capacities for crisis prevention and management, while complementing NATO's growing focus on defence and deterrence. Moreover, it would be a meaningful step towards strategic autonomy and EU geopolitical ambitions. Such a force would need to be highly mobile, easy to deploy and with a reasonably light logistic footprint, yet able to provide security for itself and for populations in area of operations.

Conclusion and Discussion

Furthermore, climate change impacts in the MENA region will have broader implications for global security, migration patterns, and socio-economic stability, underscoring the urgency of finding sustainable solutions. These circumstances are required to be addressed head on. By focusing on the transformation of risk and crisis management practices within the EU, it would be easier to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change in the MENA region, fostering resilience, ensuring the well-being of affected communities, and contributing to regional stability. Therefore, it is important to look into how EU risk and crisis management can be transformed in order to

address the ever-growing challenges that the MENA region is suffering.

Addressing climate-related risks and crises in the MENA region is of utmost significance for several reasons. Firstly, these regions are experiencing the direct consequences of climate change, including extreme heat waves, droughts, and water scarcity, leading to environmental degradation, displacement, and socio-economic disruptions. Secondly, the EU and MENA region share geographical proximity, cultural ties, and interconnected economies, making collaboration and coordinated action essential for effective risk and crisis management. This paper aims to contribute to the development of effective and sustainable risk and crisis management practices that can withstand the growing demands posed by climate change, particularly in the MENA region.

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POST-WAR DEMOCRACY IN UKRAINE AND WAR-BORN CHALLENGES

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Abstract: The importance of studying the stabilizing and rebuilding of a democratic society in a post-war context of Ukraine cannot be overstated. Ukraine provides an essential case study in this regard due to the ongoing war waged by the Russian Federation in 2014 with the full-scale invasion phase starting on February 24, 2022.

The study of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction relies on recognizing the existing challenges and transforming them into the opportunities in the post-war period. The objective of this paper is to investigate and analyze the process of democratic reconstruction in Ukraine, taking into account war-born challenges.

Keywords: post-war Ukraine, democracy, resilience, volunteer networks

Introduction

This paper serves as the continuation of the discussion that took place on June 6, 2023 under the main title “Developing society’s post-war resilience in Ukraine – Perspectives and challenges - defence of democracy.”

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Such a multi-folded approach gave way to covering a broad set of issues connected with the growing number of challenges that the world faces at this point in time.

Another significant and grim event that took place the same day was the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant in the Kherson region of Ukraine by Russian forces. As per the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine issued on June 6, "the Russian Federation's detonation of the dam of the KHPP is a terrorist act against Ukrainian critical infrastructure, which aims to cause as many civilian casualties and destruction as possible. The terrorist attack on the Kakhovka HPP was previously intensely discussed at the level of the occupation forces in the Kherson region and propagandists on Russian television, which indicates that it was planned in advance." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2023)

This level of technological and ecological disaster has not been witnessed in Europe in recent decades and is only one in the chain of events that comprise a definite, premeditated, and decisive approach of the Russian Federation towards a neighboring sovereign country. This approach can be labeled as the genocide against Ukrainians, aiming at making the most prolific territories in Ukraine uninhabited and devastated. Citing the same statement of Ukrainian MFA, this was the Kremlin's response to countries calling for peace talks with the Russian Federation.

This particular example alone serves as a supporting argument for the destructive actions that aggressor Russia takes. The Russian Federation is a perturbator of the existing world order and international security system. There hardly is a better time for discussing resilience, society during and post-war as well as the growing need to defend democracy - the basis and the

value of all free societies under non-authoritarian regimes in the EU and the world.

Resilient democracy under attack

The first issue deserving attention is the very fact of how the question of the future of Ukraine's democracy is seen from the external perspective. There still are some who consider that Ukraine is not a democracy as is, and that this aspect of society's development when the war is over needs an in-depth analysis. Addressing this point from the Ukrainian perspective is crucial for the sake of both objective reality, facts and transparency.

Ukraine is in its 32nd year of independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A third of a century might serve as enough time to acknowledge both the accomplishments and the drawbacks that society faces.

There is a widely supported uncompromising conclusion to which many scholars like Åslund (2009), Minakov and Rojansky (2015) and more recent assessments such as one presented in the report of 2022 by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance have come in their research. Not a direct quote from any of the mentioned resources, but this conclusion reads as follows: Ukrainian democracy has traversed an extensive journey since its earliest manifestations in the post-1991 era. Even today, in the middle of aggressive and unjustified war, it stands proudly with a thriving civil society. Yet, the country itself, the people and the democracy can be called hostages to the war waged by Russia.

This war is an ongoing socio-economic, humanitarian and demographic crisis that has been felt not only in Ukraine but in many corners of the world. Despite the considerable strides made, Ukraine's democracy

continues to face complexities arising from these persistent issues.

Any war as the period of extremes causes an unknown before level of violence and grievances in society and can be called a crash test for democracy. Considering that Russia first attacked Ukraine as early as in 2014 with the annexation of Crimean Peninsula and subsequent sparking of violent conflict in the eastern Donbas region, the past nine years with two different presidencies might have been enough for the world to recognize the resiliency of democratic society of Ukraine. However, it was the response of both the people and the government to the unprovoked, unjustified - and ultimately unsuccessful - full-scale invasion started by Russia on 24th February of 2022 that continues to serve as the proof of both resiliency and democracy being upheld in Ukraine.

War born challenges for post-war Ukraine

As IDEA (2022) puts it, democracies are loosely defined as regimes that hold elections that meet minimal standards of meaningfulness, competitiveness, and suffrage. In today's Ukraine martial law is the only impediment to realizing the mentioned definition in practice.

This is part and parcel of the war that in the Ukrainian case has been waged by the aggressive power. For the purposes of our research and being guided by the framework of the conference, the war-born issues and challenges will be diminished from a broad humanitarian and demographic perspective to the constituents of democratic development of Ukraine's civic society post-war.

In order not to limit ourselves to the growing number of ways of how Russia continues to try to destroy Ukraine as a country, society and a sovereign member of the

international community, the focus is on the three aspects of democratic development Ukraine should concentrate on in the post-war period. These are:

1. Transformation of war-time societal mobilization aimed at defying the aggression towards mobilizing the people for grassroots politics and more autonomous local self-governance once the period of post-war reconstruction commences. This involves saving and preserving both vertical and horizontal connections and networks that were created at the time of extremes into civil society building.

In the aftermath of war, grassroots politics can bridge societal divides, channel collective efforts towards reconstruction, and foster a sense of ownership over the democratic process. Similarly, local governance forms a fundamental pillar of democratic transition. By decentralizing power and enhancing local governance capacities, Ukraine can ensure that decision-making processes are closely tied to the people's needs and aspirations. This can enhance transparency, improve service delivery, and promote responsiveness within the political system.

2. Veteran and volunteer movements are to be considered in high regard and serve as a strong institution in society. The challenge will be not letting it disperse into plural political parties that may bring about reputational risks. Ukraine cannot afford losing such a strong entity to political rivalry.

Volunteers serve as catalysts for positive social change, contributing significantly to the rebuilding of democratic institutions, the promotion of social cohesion, and the provision of vital public services. They enhance community resilience, build social capital, and facilitate the participatory processes critical to a thriving democracy.

Moreover, volunteer networks can act as valuable conduits for communication between local communities and higher governmental levels, helping to ensure that policy interventions align with ground realities. An illustrative case study of the significance of volunteer networks in Ukraine is the 'Come Back Alive Foundation'.

3. Integration of the NGO sector into transnational structures with a particular focus on building cooperation with EU countries. This is in line with the euro-atlantic aspirations of Ukraine, enshrined in its Constitution as well as numerous government-issued documents and doctrines such as National Security Strategy of Ukraine aptly subtitled "Security of the country equals human security."

Reaching this goal will entail facilitating partnerships between Ukrainian NGOs and their EU counterparts, enabling knowledge sharing, joint projects, and capacity building initiatives, streamlining administrative procedures for EU funding access, ensuring that Ukrainian NGOs can tap into these resources effectively.

Another aspect that is already in motion is twinning arrangements between Ukrainian and EU cities, enhancing direct cooperation at the local level and involving NGOs in these initiatives. (Smętkowski et al., 2023) Strengthening the legal and institutional framework for NGO operation in Ukraine, aligning it with EU standards and best practices will be of crucial importance on the road from candidacy to membership.

The National Security Strategy (2020) envisions the following building blocks that will enable democratic development of Ukraine's society. These are deterrence (development of defence and security capabilities), resilience (serving as antonym to fragility, ability of each element of the society to adapt and sustainably function facing all types of risks), cooperation (the

development of strategic cooperation with EU, NATO, USA.)

Conclusion

The international community continues to brace itself with the fact that humanity is entering times of conflict and wars with unexpected players changing their security doctrines, military budgets, and worldview in general.

Ukraine serves as a battleground - literally and metaphorically - as a democracy under attack of aggressive autocracy. The ability of Ukraine to emerge from this phase of Russian-Ukrainian war as a resilient sovereign democracy is of utmost importance not only for Ukrainians, but the whole world that considers itself free and democratic at the core.

Post-war reconstruction should entail preserving volunteer organizations, and safeguarding the veteran movement incorporating it into a resilient and vibrant civil society. Safeguarding these societal institutions is crucial to maintain the momentum of democratization, and to prevent their absorption into party politics where their impact will be diminished. Equally, the integration of Ukraine's NGO sector into transnational structures, particularly those in the EU states, presents a unique opportunity for capacity-building.

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