
Influencing and Promoting Global Peace and Security

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Making Sense of the Recent Unrest in Kazakhstan

Escalation over Ukraine in face of Russian Demands for an Uncontested Sphere of Influence in Former Soviet Space

EU-NATO and the Eastern Partnership countries against hybrid threats: From the EU Global Strategy till the war in Ukraine

Book Review: How Democracies Perish

Beyond the Horizon International Strategic Studies Group (BtH) is an independent next-generation think & do tank in Belgium.

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Horizon Insights Foreword (2021/4)

Dear Reader,

In this issue, Beyond the Horizon ISSG focuses on the crises around the world, notably the one on Kazakhstan and the perennial European crisis, Ukraine. Despite the pandemic and its socio-economic side effects, the crises amount.

The first paper is a policy brief of a geopolitics task force composing in-house and external experts on the recent unrest in Kazakhstan. The experts analysed the crisis in all aspects from historical perspective to economy and from geopolitics to energy. The article ends with a strategic foresight on the future of Kazakhstan and the region as well as its global repercussions.

The second paper is also a policy brief penned by Beyond the Horizon ISSG experts on the escalation of crisis and latest developments in and around Ukraine. The article provides an extensive analysis of the crisis and the approaches of the relevant actors. The foresight as well as recommendations provided at the end of the article prove to be very relevant and to the point following the launch of Russian military operation on February 24, 2022.

The third paper is a research article that elaborates on effective EU-NATO collaborative approaches against hybrid threats and presents a case study of the Eastern Partnership countries as they constitute a focal point for Russia's power projection spectrum in its hybrid activities against European countries. The author also provides recommendations on how to diminish the hybrid security risks in Europe through models of EU-NATO security cooperation and an enhancement of resilience against hybrid threats in the Eastern Partnership region.

In our book review corner, we have "How Democracies Perish" by Jean-Francois Revel. Even though the book is dated, it provides a good example of the struggle between the democracies and communist countries (totalitarian regimes) of its time and enables readers to make a comparison between now and then.

Sincerely yours,

Beyond the Horizon ISSG

Making Sense of the Recent Unrest in Kazakhstan

Geopolitics Task Force Brief

by Victoria Clement¹, Samet Coban², Robert M. Cutler³, Charles J. Sullivan⁴, Onur Sultan⁵, Hasan Suzen⁶, and Saban Yuksel⁷

Background

- On January 2 (Sunday), a spike in liquified petroleum gas (LPG) prices triggered protests in Zhanaozen⁸, a city located in oil-rich Western part of the country (Lillis, 2022). The protests quickly spilled over to other cities in the western oil region and then to the whole country to include the capital Nur-Sultan and Almaty. The protests about gas prices turned into venues to voice long-standing grievances regarding backwardness of the region, inequality in distribution of wealth, and inability of the leaders to resolve their problems.
- On January 5 (Wednesday), violent clashes began (Walker, 2022). The peaceful protests across the country were eclipsed by vexing scenes of unrest, featuring looting, vandalizing, and storming government buildings. Reportedly, violent organized groups overtook the movement even seizing the airport. The president declared a two-week state-of-emergency (Kazakhstan asks Russian-led alliance for help quelling protests, 2022). In the same day, the President stripped his predecessor, Nursultan Nazarbayev of his role as leader of the security council and accepted the government's resignation (Gotev, 2022).
- Early on January 6 (Thursday), President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said in a televised statement: "Today I appealed to the heads of CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation) states to assist Kazakhstan in overcoming this terrorist threat." The same day, Russian troops helped recapture of the airport from protesters. According to local media, as many as 3000 troops – approximately 100 Armenian (Mejlumyan, 2022)- were quickly deployed to Kazakhstan (Ilyushina, 2022).
- On January 7 (Friday), the President Tokayev said "Terrorists continue to damage public and private property and use weapons against citizens. I gave the order to law enforcement agencies and the army to shoot to kill without warning." (Auyezov, 2022).
- As of January 9 (Sunday), the situation was calm across the country (Heintz, 2022). The office of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said the order was restored. According to official statements of Kazakh

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⁸ The city of Zhanaozen had witnessed a similar protest ten years ago in December 2011 where security forces opened fire on protesters, killing 16.

authorities, 164 people were killed and 5800 people were detained during the unrest.

- On January 11 (Monday), Tokayev announced: “The main mission of the CSTO peacekeeping forces has been successfully completed” and they will be expected to leave within 2 days (Kazakhstan: Russia-led forces to withdraw; new PM appointed, 2022).

Analysis

1. Global Context of Russia – NATO Competition

While protests were wreaking havoc in major cities in Kazakhstan just after the new year began, Russian Diplomacy was busy with trying to keep NATO off the Russia's western borders whereas Russian Army was massing 100,000 to 175,000 troops in and around Ukraine allegedly in preparation to a massive military offensive against Kyiv, according to the intelligence reports (Harris & Sonne, 2021). Military analysts assessed that a military operation was imminent, given the size, composition, and deployment of the Russian forces (Schwartz & Reinhard, 2022). On the fourth day of the protests (6 January 2022) President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev appealed to the CSTO for assistance in dealing with “terrorist threat” and for the first time since its 1994 founding, the CSTO has agreed to deploy forces to a member state. (Putz, CSTO Deploys to Kazakhstan at Tokayev's Request, 2022). Russia responded Tokayev's request by redeploying some units (nearly 2,500 personnel) from Western Military District (Ukraine front) to Kazakhstan⁹. On 17 December 2021, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a draft treaty¹⁰ and a draft agreement¹¹ to be negotiated with the United States and NATO respectively. The draft documents aim to prevent NATO's eastward expansion and deny NATO membership of ex-Soviet states. They seek to limit deployment of strategic air, navy, and army assets as well as ground-based missiles around Russian “near abroad” including Baltic and Black Seas. Russia also wants to curb deploying nuclear weapons outside U.S., in other words, asking U.S. leaving its “extended nuclear deterrence” assurances that it provided for its Allies. Russia also demands a halt to NATO enlargement. To address these developments, NATO held an extraordinary meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 07 January 2022 and, had a NATO – Ukraine Commission meeting on 10 January 2022. On the very same day Russia and U.S. delegations met at Geneva. Today (12 January 2022) a NATO – Russia Council is scheduled, a rare gathering coincided with the first MC/CS (Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session) of 2022, both to be held at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. And finally, diplomatic blitzkrieg will continue with an OSCE meeting on Thursday in Vienna. At the end of the day, Kazakhstan, a valued PFP (Partnership for Peace) country and an important NATO partner in Central Asia found itself placed besides Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia that has Russian troop presence on its soil.

2. Local Context and Dynamics of the Unrest

In March 2019, Nursultan Nazarbayev relinquished his 29-year presidency, handing over the reins of power to his chosen successor Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Nazarbayev retained the title “Elbasy” (Leader of the Nation), remained Chairman of the Security Council, and continued to be active on the international scene. This quasi co-leadership resulted in an uneasy sharing of the spotlight, but the situation appeared manageable. Until recently, the Kazakh situation had been considered an example of a successful and peaceful transition of power in the region. Kazakhstan is now under a state of emergency with foreign troops in the country organized under the aegis of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Those CSTO troops are there at the request of President Tokayev, but CSTO notably denied similar requests for aid made by Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and Armenia in 2021—two countries that do not border Russia. The crisis began with protests over the Kazakh government's decision to deregulate gas prices by removing subsidies. Market forces rapidly doubled prices. These protests were the catalyst, but they soon evolved into demonstrations over political conditions more generally. Protestors around the country shouted “Shal ket,” “Old man, out” some as they tore down a statue of former president Nursultan Nazarbayev, set fire to official buildings,

⁹ <https://centralasia.liveuamap.com/en/2022/5-january-russia-put-regiment-at-orenburg-on-combat-alert>

¹⁰ https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en

¹¹ https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en

and engaged in looting (Pannier, 2022). The protests began in the western city of Zhanaozen, spreading quickly across the country and were especially intense in the country's largest city, Almaty. Law enforcement initially used tear gas and stun grenades on the crowds, but that escalated on January 7th when President Tokayev gave orders to "shoot to kill" (Putz, 2022). President Tokayev did attempt to quell the disquiet by accepting the government's resignation -- including sacking Karim Masimov, then head of the powerful National Security Committee, and detaining him on suspicion of treason, assuming control of the Security Council from Nazarbayev, and extending the price controls on gas for 180 days (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). However, Tokayev also restricted internet access presumably in an attempt to keep citizens from organizing and stoked stories of violence against police to include beheadings (Keegan, 2022). Approximately 8,000 citizens were arrested (U.S. Department of State, 2022) as Tokayev used television to communicate that the country was under attack by "international terrorist gangs, who trained abroad" (Duvanova, 2022). CSTO members, Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, immediately responded to Tokayev's request for security assistance, sending troops "to stabilize and normalize the situation" for a "limited" amount of time (Pashinyan, 2022). By January 10th, Tokayev was using the phrase "coup attempt" to describe the threat to his regime, which he described as representative of "the aggression of international terrorism" (Kazakhstan: Tokayev denounces 'attempted coup d'etat', 2022). Speaking at an online meeting of the CSTO, Vladimir Putin showed ostensible support for Tokayev by referring to the agitators in Kazakhstan as "destructive internal-external forces"—trained in foreign centers—who had taken advantage of the situation that broke out with the shift in gas prices ('We are observing the aggression of international terrorism' - Putin on Kazakhstan riots, 2022). As Tokayev and Putin conjure up images of a color revolution in the making, one outstanding matter is the whereabouts of former president Nazarbayev. Unconfirmed rumors have it that he is either dead or has escaped with his family. In fact, that very speculation sparked attacks on the airport, as protestors attempted to prevent Nazarbayev's fleeing the country. The situation with the Internet is still problematic, although it improved slightly since last week. Now there is sporadic internet access, but since January 2nd Kazakhstanis have not had a day when the connection was available for the entire day. On January 11, the Parliament approved Tokayev's new Prime Minister, Alikhan Smailov. It is yet to be seen whether the government will rise to the challenge and promote genuine reforms; at the same time, the President did outline some of the priorities that resonate with the public, such as fighting corruption at the Chinese border, dealing with corruption more generally, and addressing social inequalities. The new Prime Minister has three weeks to come up with a new strategy for the country. For now, due to the ongoing anti-terror operation, everything is heavily monitored so people are cautious about what they say and publish – the emergency situation gives the security services additional powers to detain people on accounts of "spreading falsified information". In September 2019, Kazakhstan's second president had announced his concept of the "Listening State" in order to respond to the needs of his people (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021). He also promised continuity with the Nazarbayev regime even as he vowed reform. None of that has satisfied the public. Tokayev announced on January 11th, "the main mission of the CSTO peacekeeping forces has been successfully completed" and they will be expected to begin leaving in 2 days (Kazakhstan: Russia-led forces to withdraw; new PM appointed, 2022). The question now is whether Tokayev can stay in power, and if he does, the degree to which he will rely on Moscow in the future.

3. Russian Intervention Playbook

The timing and playbook of Russia's engagement in the nation reveal Moscow's geopolitical calculations as well as hints about what to anticipate in the area going forward. Unlike the former Russian interventions in Georgia and Ukraine, the unique aspect in this case is the involvement of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Accordingly, CSTO intervention was explicitly requested by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in contrast to Russia's actions in Georgia and Ukraine (Reuters, 2022). The international aspect of this action is noteworthy, since it is the first joint deployment of CSTO forces in the security bloc's 30-year existence (TASS, 2022). Yet, this unique aspect does not necessarily mean that the Russian-led deployment in Kazakhstan does not have striking similarities to Russia's military operations in Ukraine and Georgia. The main root causes of any Russian intervention in the post-Soviet region remain the same:

maintain internal political stability, protect itself from hostile neighbours or external forces, and consolidate its regional dominance while limiting rivals'. To address these issues, in some cases Russia intervenes to prevent former Soviet countries moving westward, in others Russia consolidates its power in sphere of influence by protecting or supporting pro-Russian governance. For instance, while Russia invaded Georgia and Ukraine to subvert pro-Western governments that were opposed to Russian interests, Moscow's CSTO action in Kazakhstan is the opposite: it is supporting a pro-Russian administration that is strategically aligned with Moscow. Further, Russia also wants to communicate a message that it is prepared to take action to prevent such violent turmoil and political chaos from erupting in other Moscow-friendly countries, as well as on Russian soil. From this point of view, Russian perception of Kazakhstan is better explained by a fear of regime change through what can be seen as street protests than by the fear of NATO's and the EU's expansion or moving westward. Without significant economic or political blowback from the West, following Tokayev's request, Russia moved quickly and firmly to bring in CSTO forces. The Russia-led CSTO intervention gives Russia the opportunity to reassure Kazakhstan's ethnic Russian majority and to extend its power grid across the country. Further, Russia has placed pressure on the post-Soviet governments not to strengthen connections with the West or China; and it has sent a clear message to the people of the countries in Russian interest areas.

4. Repercussions on the US Position and Policy Priorities in the Region

The American government's response to the political crisis in Kazakhstan in early January 2022 has the potential to set relations between Washington and Nur-Sultan back considerably. For three decades, the United States and Kazakhstan have maintained productive working relations. In addition to playing a leading role in raising awareness about the importance of nuclear security (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2016), Kazakhstan under the leadership of the First President Nursultan Nazarbayev assisted the United States in the Global War on Terror in various ways (most noticeably by accepting several (former) detainees from Guantanamo Bay (Ryan & Goldman, 2014) for resettlement, as well as by participating in the (defunct) Northern Distribution Network). Furthermore, existing "linkages" (Sullivan, *The Superpower and the "Stans": Why Central Asia is Not "Central" to the United States*, 2019) between the United States and the Central Asian republics have never been nearly as strong as the multiple ties which serve to bind the "Stans" to Russia, and the U.S. government has never made democracy promotion a top priority in Central Asia. Western powers also did not vociferously express displeasure with Kazakhstan's suppression of the mass protests that gripped the country in 2019 (Sullivan, 2021), but apparently the Biden administration has taken a hard stance against Tokayev's controversial "shoot to kill" order in furtherance of pacifying Almaty (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2022). Bearing all this in mind, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's recent comments about the Russian-led CSTO military intervention in Kazakhstan may well be construed by Nur-Sultan as insulting and offensive (The Times of Israel, 2022). Kazakhstan and Russia are military allies, and although the situation remains somewhat fluid, it appears that President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev requested that the CSTO intervene to help foil an attempted coup and restore order in Almaty and elsewhere (Vaal, 2022). Going forward, even if the CSTO military force departs from Kazakhstan within the coming weeks, it is obvious that Nur-Sultan is now facing an indefinite period of restricted sovereignty to some unknown degree. It is on this point that the United States should concentrate its diplomatic energies. Washington should make use of its diplomatic channels to express its resolute support for Kazakhstan's sustained sovereignty.

5. What Now for Europe?

Although the relations between the EU and the Central Asian countries were weak until recently, those of Kazakhstan are the most developed and the EU is by far Kazakhstan's main trading and investment partner. It might be useful to highlight the EU and Kazakhstan have signed Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) in 2015, the first and the only agreement of this kind between the EU and the Central Asian countries. Although there are other provisions within the agreement¹², EPCA mostly governs trade and economic relations between the EU and Kazakhstan. The EU has very few instruments, if any, to influence the developments in Kazakhstan. There were a handful of (written) statements from the EU as the

¹² EPCA was applied provisionally from 2016 until it was fully ratified and entered into force in 2020.

manifestations began in Kazakhstan and they were all conciliatory in form, mostly calling the demonstrators not to change the course and go violent. One can assume that the EU feared that violent protests might change the status quo and its economic interests in Kazakhstan. All in all, the EU has no instruments and willingness to intervene, yet, does not opt for a change in the status quo.

6. How will Energy Sector Be Affected from the Unrest?

The unrest in Kazakhstan will not significantly affect the geo-economics of the energy sector, although it is anticipated that high-level personnel changes will be instituted in response to popular discontent with fuel prices. Given the current geo-economics of the sector, it is unlikely that current investments from any party will be significantly affected. China has been already heavily invested in Kazakhstan's energy sector for many years. Russia and Kazakhstan already have very well institutionalized energy cooperation in the Caspian offshore, not to mention the transit of Tengiz crude across southern Russia to the Black Sea port of Novorossiisk for export to world markets. Kazakhstan also has other well established energy-sector cooperation with both Russia and China already, some of it even on a trilateral basis.

Strategic Foresight

The protests that shook Kazakhstan in the last 10 days will have a lasting legacy for the country and beyond in the region. Although various scenarios are being on what really happened in different circles, it is enough to look at who gained what from what happened. As it is clear now, Tokayev has eliminated Nursultan Nazarbayev, who had become a burden with his extensive control over state and extensions within state assets. The purge of officials close to Nazarbayev such as Karim Masimov will likely continue in the coming days if not months. Tokayev will likely start with security officials that he could not rely on during the unrest. It is yet to be seen whether the new Alikhan Smailov government will rise to the challenge of fighting corruption and addressing social inequalities, and promoting genuine reforms. Russia has been a “net winner” in the affair. We might assume that as of today Tokayev's future is not in the Kazak's people hands but is in the hands of Putin. Without the shadow of Nazarbayev but under Putin's control, Tokayev is likely to become a meta version of Putin in Kazakhstan who will make Kazakhstan more dependent on Russia. Without a significant economic or political blowback from the West, the CSTO intervention has given Russia the opportunity to reassure Kazakhstan's ethnic Russian majority and to extend its power across the country. Further, Russia has placed pressure on the post-Soviet governments not to strengthen connections with the West or China; and it has sent a clear message to the people of these countries about the Russian decisiveness in pursuing its interest in the post-Soviet regimes. The same message has been sent to NATO and the West that it is committed to consolidate its regional dominance while limiting rivals. Although Moscow has demonstrated a persistent willingness to employ military force to defend its position in former Soviet space, such actions are prone to have unanticipated and far-reaching repercussions. If Russian-led CSTO troops fail to calm the situation and restore order in Kazakhstan—and maybe other CSTO hotspots in the future—the Kremlin's own reputation, both at home and in the post-Soviet area, might suffer severely. Therefore, it is highly likely that CSTO troops and Tokayev's security forces will not hesitate to quell the situation violently. The Biden administration and the U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken have taken a hard stance against Tokayev's controversial actions during the unrest, to include “shoot to kill” order. When the dust settles, the US will likely make use of its diplomatic channels to express its resolute support for Kazakhstan's sustained sovereignty. Throughout the unrest, the EU has not shown a conspicuous stance. As long as its economic interests are not at stake, the EU will likely follow the same course of action.

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Escalation over Ukraine in face of Russian Demands for an Uncontested Sphere of Influence in Former Soviet Space

Geopolitics Task Force Brief

by Samet Coban¹, Hasan Suzen², Olena Snigyr³, Onur Sultan⁴, Saban Yuksel⁵

Background

- In late March and early April 2021, Russian massive military build-up along Ukrainian border was reported. This came after a military exercise on March 23 that did not result in departure of troops from the region. The US officials estimated 4000 additional Russian troops had been stationed alongside military vehicles and tanks (Blair, 2021).
- On April 20, 2021, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said during an online news conference: "Russian troops continue to arrive in close proximity to our borders in the northeast, in the east and in the south. In about a week, they are expected to reach a combined force of over 120,000 troops." (Williams & Emmott, 2021).
- In June 14, 2021, Brussels Summit Communiqué voicing decision of 30 NATO Ally Heads of State and Government read: "Russia's growing multi-domain military build-up, more assertive posture, novel military capabilities, and provocative activities, including near NATO borders, as well as its large-scale no-notice and snap exercises [...] increasingly threaten the security of the Euro-Atlantic area and contribute to instability along NATO borders and beyond. [...] We reiterate our support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova within their internationally recognised borders. [...] We strongly condemn and will not recognise Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea and denounce its temporary occupation." (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 2021).
- On July 12, 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin penned an essay titled: "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians," claiming the Ukrainian and Russians were same people diversified in time linguistically (Putin, 2021). In the article he openly said: "Apparently, and I am becoming more and more convinced of this: Kiev simply does not need Donbas." and threatened saying "I am confident that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia."
- On 17 December 2021, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a draft treaty⁶ and a draft agreement⁷ to be negotiated with the United States and NATO respectively. The draft documents aim to prevent NATO's eastward expansion and deny NATO membership of ex-Soviet states. They seek to limit deployment of strategic air, navy, and army assets as well as ground-based missiles around Russian "near abroad" including Baltic and Black Seas.

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⁶ https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en

⁷ https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en

- With the two treaties, Russia also wants to curb deployment of US nuclear weapons outside its soil, in other words, asks U.S. to withdraw its “extended nuclear deterrence” assurances that it provided for NATO Allies. Russia seems to have left its decision on Ukraine based on the answer it will get for its treaties to the US and NATO.
- On December 3, 2021, a leaked US intelligence report suggested Russian Army was massing a force up to 175,000 troop strength along east and north east borders of Ukraine allegedly in preparation for a massive military offensive as early as 2022 (Harris & Sonne, 2021). Military analysts assessed that a military operation was imminent, given the size, composition, and deployment of the Russian forces (Schwartz & Reinhard, 2022).
- On January 10, 2022, Russia and U.S. delegations met at Geneva. Russia reiterated its security concerns and demands to radically transform security structure in Europe. The meeting ended with no tangible results.
- On January 12, a NATO – Russia Council was held to discuss Russian military build-up (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 2022). Russia raised the proposals that were published in December. Secretary General Stoltenberg said Allies agreed “any use of force against Ukraine will be a severe and serious strategic mistake by Russia. And it will have severe consequences and Russia will have to pay a high price.”
- On January 17, Russia began moving units to Belarus, Ukraine's northern neighbour, joint military exercises, named United Resolve. In case Russia starts incursion, its forces in Belarus will need to move less than 100 km along Dnieper River to reach Kyiv.

Analysis

1. NATO Strategic Solidarity with Ukraine: Testing Waters

Relations between NATO and Ukraine go back to the early 1990s, right after Ukraine gained its independence in 1991. Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994. NATO – Ukraine Commission was established in 2007. Since then, Ukraine became NATO's valued partner. NATO supported westward looking Ukraine with a number of mechanisms (some of which can be found on NATO portal⁸). In return, Ukraine actively participated in almost all NATO missions and operations (KFOR, ISAF, RSM, NTM-I, Active Endeavour, Ocean Shield and Sea Guardian) conducted after Cold War. In line with NATO's three-decade-long enlargement strategy, 2008 Bucharest Summit Declaration⁹ explicitly stated that Ukraine will (eventually) become a NATO member alongside Georgia (Article 23). Russia's immediate response was to invade Abkhazia and South Ossetia after 2008 Russo – Georgian War. Ukraine waited its turn since some sort of balance of power was struck between Russia and the West after Orange Revolution under the rule of Viktor Yanukovich and Yulia Tymoshenko. However, Euromaidan protests, leaning Ukraine more towards Europe removed Yanukovich from power. Russia, once again, intervened by annexing Crimea, and invading Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk regions). Russian intervention was a pivotal moment in modern European history. This was the first time after WWII that a European country's territorial integrity was lost by force. Russia ended Fukuyama's end of history illusion by making clear where its red line crossed. Having invested in Ukraine for decades both economically and politically, West and NATO in particular accepted the Russian challenge. From the outset of the crisis NATO took this crisis as an Article 5 (collective defence) issue because NATO's eastern flank countries were aware that once Ukraine falls under Russia's control, the next battlefield would be their territory. After 2014, NATO in general, and U.S. and UK in particular fully supported Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders in every way that they can. Immediately after the annexation of Crimea, NATO suspended all cooperation with Russia, increased its deterrence posture and endorsed a Comprehensive Assistance Package to help Ukraine in accordance with decisions taken at the

⁸ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm

⁹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm

Warsaw Summit in 2016. Military advisors were deployed to the country for providing support on key issues. Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4), Logistics and Standardisation, Cyber Defence, Medical Rehabilitation, Military Career Transition, Demilitarisation, Radioactive Waste Disposal and Explosive Ordnance Disposal, and Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices were some of the key cooperation areas. Besides, Trust Funds were founded and led by Allies to support Ukraine. The country benefitted from well-known NATO programmes such as Defence Education Enhancement (DEEP) and Science for Peace and Security Programmes (SPS).¹⁰ Till March 2021 Russia was rotating its units permanently deployed around Ukraine and maintaining the force posture. Yet in March, it began to deploy additional forces to the region (Gorenburg & Kofman, 2022). Currently, it is assessed that Russia massed around 60 battalion tactical groups (BTGs, there are 168 BTGs available in the Krasnaya Armiya - Red Army), along with support elements around Ukraine (Roblin, 2021). A force at this size corresponds to roughly 85,000 troops, excluding reinforcements deployed in the rear area and pro-Russian militias from Donbas region, which is believed to be nearly 15,000 persons. These numbers don't include Navy (Black Sea fleet), Air Force, Special Forces and other strategic assets to be used in the Ukrainian theatre (or in Western Military District in general) in a possible military operation. Since Ukraine is not a NATO member, it is not covered by the guarantees enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. However, Allies such as U.S. and UK actively support Ukrainian military by sending equipment and personnel to Ukraine. NATO, on the other hand, intensified its political support to Ukraine during the last month. At NATO Foreign Ministerial held in Riga on December 1, 2021, NATO Secretary General reiterated that NATO's support for Ukraine's and Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty remains "unwavering"¹¹. On 16 December 2021, North Atlantic Council issued a statement¹² calling Russia to immediately de-escalate, pursue diplomatic channels, and abide by its international commitments on transparency of military activities. Same day Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited NATO Secretary General at the NATO Headquarters. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a draft treaty¹³ and a draft agreement¹⁴ on 17 December 2021, to be negotiated with the United States and NATO respectively. The draft documents aim to prevent NATO's eastward expansion and deny NATO membership of ex-Soviet states. Russia also demands a halt to NATO enlargement. Russia seems to have left its decision on Ukraine based on the answer it will get for its treaties to the US and NATO. An extraordinary NATO Foreign Ministerial convened¹⁵ on 07 January 2022 addressed Russia's continued military build-up in and around Ukraine, and the implications for European security. On 10 January 2022, NATO-Ukraine Commission met¹⁶ where Stoltenberg reiterated NATO's support to Ukraine. On 12 January 2022 both NATO's Chiefs of Defence met¹⁷ virtually and had a session with their Ukrainian and Georgian counterparts. On the very same day NATO-Russia Council met¹⁸ without any tangible results.

2. What Exactly Does Russia Want? De-Constructing Russian Demands and Their Repercussions

Putin is cited to have described Ukraine to George Bush at a NATO meeting in Bucharest, saying: "You don't understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territories is Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us." Russia has long considered Ukraine, literally meaning borderland, to be parts of itself, a status that was lost with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. To Russia, Ukraine is never simply a foreign state, as Henry Kissinger put it (2014). But it is a guarantor of Russia's territorial integrity, alongside Belarus and Moldova. Therefore, the more Moscow perceives a significant danger of former Soviet countries like Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, or Moldova moving westward, the more determined it is to undermine, split, and keep the West busy in its efforts for greater integration. From the

¹⁰ For more details, please refer to NATO's Support to Ukraine Factsheet.

¹¹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_189154.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹² https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190373.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹³ https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en

¹⁴ https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en

¹⁵ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190516.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹⁶ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190540.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹⁷ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190648.htm?selectedLocale=en

¹⁸ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190643.htm?selectedLocale=en

superpower image perception of Russia, the breakup with Ukraine is a historical blunder and a danger to Russia's status as a great power and its interests. Especially NATO and US involvement in military development of Ukraine is a no go and great offense. This is true even though Ukrainian Armed Forces to be a match for Russian Armed Forces impossible in the foreseeable future. Further, Russian historical experiences suggest that having some control over its western periphery is a smart option (Kuhn, 2018). As seen from Moscow, NATO has been creeping closer and closer to Russia's area of influence, manifesting themselves in the colour revolutions and following events. The reason of Russian fear is not merely about the security risk emanating from proximity of the Western influence, but it is a matter of a fact that such democratic change or as Putin has described "managed democracy" could spread easily to the homeland, Russia, and be resulted in a regime change (Snegovaya, 2014). From economic or interdependency perspective, for decades, Russia has relied on Ukrainian pipelines to transport its gas to Central and Eastern European clients, and it continues to pay Kyiv billions of dollars in transit costs. It should be noted that one of the terms agreed by Putin in North Stream 2 was that a certain amount of gas from Russia to Europe would flow through Ukrainian pipelines to help Ukrainian economy with transit fees. On 20 December 2019, Russia agreed five years of volumes of natural gas to flow to Europe through Ukraine (Yergin, 2021, p. 107). For a long time, Russia was Ukraine's major commercial partner, even though the relationship has deteriorated considerably in recent years (Ukraine, 2015). Further, to explain interdependency, it is worth to mention that some Ukrainian businessmen and politicians have formed an unofficial economic web with Russia, which is counterproductive to Ukraine's efforts to build an independent judicial system and a free market, fight corruption, reform its energy structure and industrial base, attract foreign investors (Liuhto, 2020). Considering all these issues, Moscow has come to view Ukraine's general political direction of critical interest (Suzen, 2018). Today, once again, European security is being severely tested as Putin masses Russian troops on Ukraine's border. Day by day we are witnessing a rhythm of war louder rather than a path of de-escalation and diplomacy. This picture is exactly what Moscow wants to see until it receives an assurance that Ukraine will never be admitted to NATO and that the alliance's growth in Eastern Europe would be halted. Russia displays that, unlike the Western camp, Russia is ready to take any required action including waging a total war. As Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, the OSCE chairman, warned, the "risk of war in the OSCE area is now greater than ever before in the last 30 years." (Herb, Hansler, Marquardt, & Atwood, 2022). Russia will never hesitate to exploit the Western geopolitical inertia because Moscow knows very well that neither of the Western states will deploy their own troops, yet they only provide military aid and diplomatic support.

3. What Does Ukraine Want?

Ukraine wants security and the Ukrainian people wish to preserve freedom of choice and their own identity. Ukrainians have taken necessary lessons from history, and clearly see by experience from the ongoing war with Russia the existential threat approaching to themselves.

It would not be realistic to expect West to fight alongside Ukraine against Russia. Yet, Ukrainians ask for more support to prepare for the potential Russian incursion by increasing resilience thanks to additional security and military assistance — specifically, air and naval defence.

Since 2014, Ukraine has managed to develop its own military capabilities based on Western assistance. Still, it is not comparable to Russian military forces. This more developed armed forces mean higher level of attrition in case of confrontation with Russian Armed Forces. Yet, the authoritarian leadership of the Russian Federation does not feel bound by the potential loss of Russian soldiers' lives, and the by disapproval of the Russian society. Putin blackmails the US and the other Western countries with the threat of a full-scale conventional conflict in Ukraine - which doesn't mean that there are no aggressive plans of invasion for other countries. Apparent aim is to change the approaches to European and world security. Moscow has succeeded partly in its blackmail which has not only force the US and the Allies to deliberate and respond to Russian promoted doctrines of "spheres of influence" of great powers and the idea of "limited sovereignty" for the neighbours of those great powers, but it has also opened door to negotiations on very important and sensitive issues of the Strategic Stability. Ukraine's security is directly dependent on the intention of the West to defend its doctrines and values and its unity in this intention. That includes "no spheres of influence"

principle and NATO's "open door" policy. These two principles are not about Ukraine's joining NATO but about the sovereign right for any country to choose its destiny.

Ukraine needs close cooperation with its allies and partners to choose its own path. Their support and partnership will remind Russia that Ukraine is not alone. Another guiding principle in partnership between the West and Ukraine worth mentioning is "Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine". Time and history have shown that Ukraine's warnings about Russian policy were not alarmist manifestations but rational and evidence-based positions.

4. US and Western Position on the Russian Demands

Current Biden Administration, in close cooperation with Allies, has been leveraging a clear language in showing diplomacy as the optimal way out while exploiting ambiguity on how they will respond to the Russian "propaganda by deed". The White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on January 18: "We believe we're now at a stage where Russia could at any point launch an attack on Ukraine (2022). It is the choice of President Putin and the Russians to make whether they are going to suffer severe economic consequences or not." Then she said, "No option is off the table." In his call with President Putin, President Biden also leveraged the threat of sanctions "like none Putin's ever seen" (Sadana, 2022). From European side, on January 19, UK Defence Journal reported British C-17 transport aircrafts were in their third day of delivering "thousands" of defensive "Next Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapons" or NLAWs to Ukraine (Allison, 2022). The NLAWs that are produced by Saab single soldier missile systems that rapidly knock out any Main Battle Tank in just one shot by striking it from above, where the armour is the weakest. On January 17, the Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace stated in the House of Commons: "We have taken the decision to supply Ukraine with light, anti-armour, defensive weapon systems. A small number of UK personnel will also provide early-stage training for a short period of time, within the framework of Operation ORBITAL, before then returning to the United Kingdom. This security assistance package complements the training and capabilities that Ukraine already has, and those that are also being provided by the UK and other Allies in Europe and the United States. Ukraine has every right to defend its borders, and this new package of aid further enhances its ability to do so. Let me be clear: this support is for short-range, and clearly defensive weapons capabilities; they are not strategic weapons and pose no threat to Russia. They are to use in self-defence and the UK personnel providing the early-stage training will return to the United Kingdom after completing it."

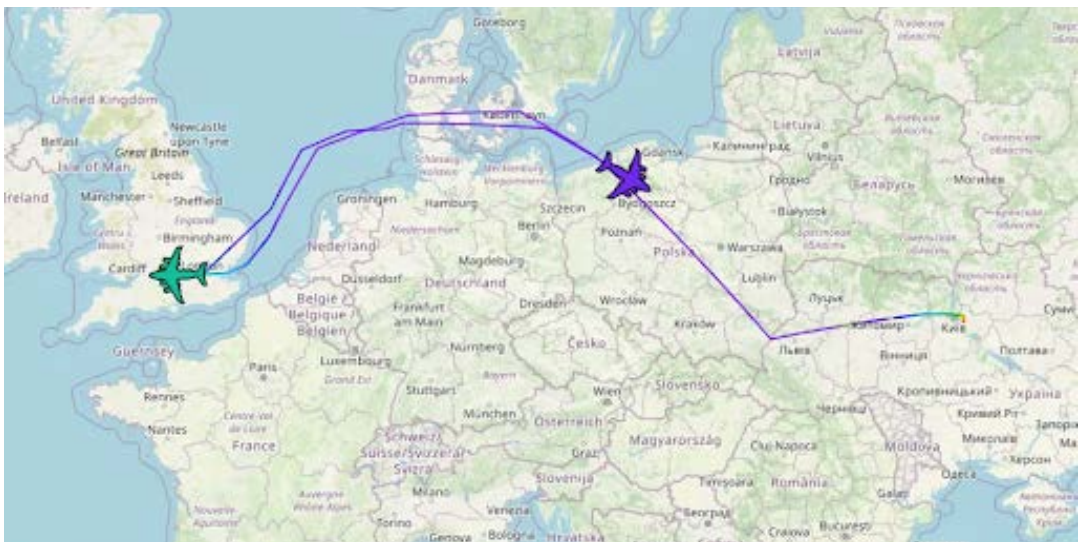


Figure 1. Screenshot of flight tracking software showing two British C-17s in flight at various part of their journeys to and from Ukraine (Allison, 2022).

On January 18, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, during a joint press conference with her counterpart Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said: “The Russian troops’ build-up near Ukraine had “no understandable reason” and it was “hard not to take as threat.” Referring to Europe’s fundamental values, she said “Those common rules are the foundation of our common European house. For Germany, they are our basis of existence. Therefore, we have no other option but to defend those common rules, even if this means paying a high economic price.” (Ridgwell, 2022). She said even the Nord Stream 2 pipeline was on the table. On 19 January, one day after return home from Ukraine, a bipartisan Senate delegation briefed President Biden on their impressions (Ward, Desiderio, & Forgey, 2022). The Committee informed that the Ukrainians were glad for the President sent them more defensive weapons. President Biden said he cautioned President Putin that “a ground war in Ukraine would cost the Kremlin dearly in blood and treasure.” On the same day Secretary of State Anthony Blinken arrived Kyiv where he spoke with Ukrainian President Zelensky, the latter thanking him for the US decision to deliver an additional \$200 million in defensive military aid. On 20 January, Blinken will move to Berlin to meet his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock and representatives of the Transatlantic Quad, including France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. The next day on 21 January, Blinken will meet his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov in Geneva. There is need for a strong US leadership in orchestrating Western response to the Russian demands and dissipating concerns in various European capitals against consequences in case diplomacy fails. The Biden Administration has so far seems well positioned to bring together major European powers in this regard. Still, the result is to be seen.

5. Europe’s Position

It is not a secret that Ukraine has a very special place for the EU among other neighbouring countries and the EU wants to develop deep and comprehensive relations with Ukraine. The relations started as early as 1998, when the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement entered into force. This agreement is succeeded by an Association Agreement and a complementary Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement for further economic integration and political association. However, the absence of political will and unity in the EU on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in general, hinders EU to defend its external interests (like those in Ukraine) in a bunch of policy areas other than trade & economy. Despite the rhetoric that the EU, contrary to NATO, has a wide range of instruments, it is not supported with evidence.

To illustrate, the EU has vigorously and decidedly launched a set of restrictive measures and sanctions as soon as Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Apart from adding a few more entity and person, the EU has only been extending the restrictive measures regularly¹⁹. Moreover, the extensions became more and more difficult with several member states reluctant to continue with the sanctions regime against Russia, prioritising mostly their national economic (Netherlands), energy (Germany-NordStream2), cultural/religious (Hungary/Greece) or other interests with Russia (Shagina, 2017).

This political disunity weakens EU’s hands in its claim to be a global actor. Russia manipulates the absence of unity & one voice and opt engaging with the Member States instead of the EU institutionally. In a striking example, Russia exploited EU HR/VP Joseph Borell’s controversial visit to Moscow with harsh and undiplomatic rhetoric in the press brief, to further weaken the EU as an institution (Herszenhorn & Barigazzi, 2021).

Despite the fact that Ukraine’s territorial unity and security is very much intertwined with that of Europe, the EU seems to have been already delegated European security to NATO, contrary to the discussions around “Strategic Autonomy”. Delegating it to NATO (read it as the U.S.) might be understandable following the WWII and during Cold War, nevertheless, the EU should pursue a more nuanced and independent role for its security. To sum up, the EU has to make full use of its instruments (other than trade and economy) to de-escalate the situation or it will have to follow the U.S. actions not to face the consequences on its own.

6. Energy Card

Russia is one of the Big Three -the others being the US and Saudi Arabia- in petroleum production globally. In terms of natural gas, it is the largest exporter and the second largest producer, following the US. The en-

¹⁹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/>

ergy giant answers to 41.1 percent of the European gas needs (Eurostat, n.d.). 16.2 percent of the remaining is exported from Norway, and 7.6 and 5.2 percent from Algeria and Qatar respectively, in LNG form. Natural gas makes up 27 percent of European energy consumption and as such Russia's share in overall European energy production is around 12 percent. So, the question of “what happens in case Russia shuts gas flows to Europe in case the latter takes a hard stance in the eventuality of incursion into Ukraine?” makes European leaders think twice before calibrating their response.

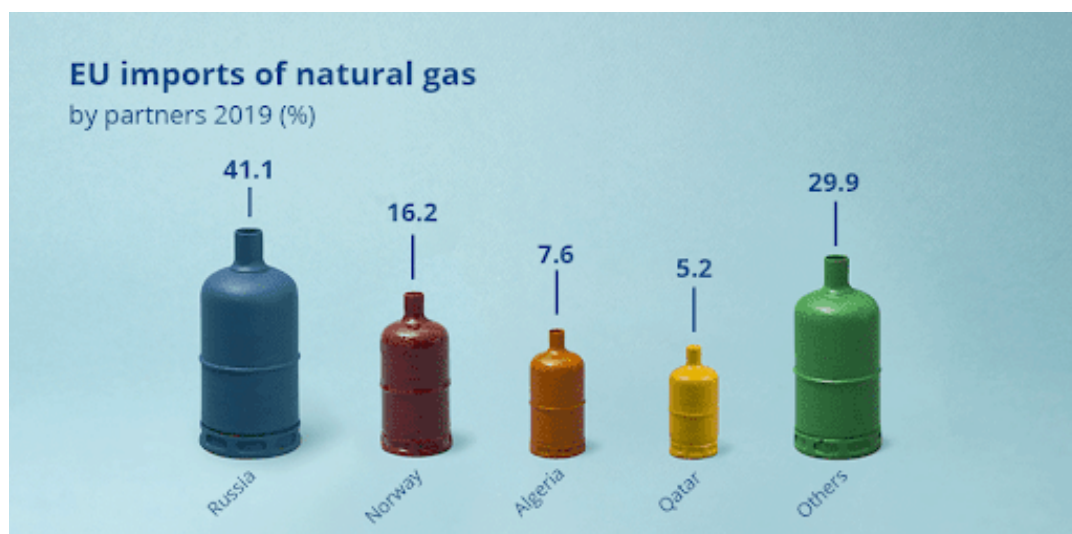


Figure 2. EU Imports of Natural Gas (Eurostat, n.d.)

In the past decade, EU smartly implemented some principles that turned Europe a single gas market where sellers and buyers meet as opposed to the previous regime of long-term energy commitments coming with building up pipelines that increased dependency on one energy supplier. With the annulation of destination clauses and linking of pipelines, shifting of gas from one buyer to another has contributed to this (Yergin, 2021, p. 86).

Other elements of EU strategies include diversification of suppliers that includes building up the Southern Gas Corridor which is planned to carry Azeri gas to Europe (The Economist, 2021). Its European leg, Trans Adriatic Pipeline became operational with annual transport capacity of 10 bcm of gas in 2020. Other projects include a 1900 km pipeline connecting 20 bcm of Israeli gas to Europe.

LNG has been an option. EU has promoted building up of LNG terminals. Addition of new terminals across Europe totalling to more than 30 has contributed to lessening energy dependency. Construction of more terminals is under way. The US has been keen to present itself as an alternative supplier of LNG to decrease European dependency on Russian gas. Former President Trump is cited to have boasted of supplying allies with “molecules of US freedom.” As more European states build new LNG terminals, LNG becomes an option that more policymakers revert to. This replacement for Russian gas though contributing to lesser dependence is costly.

According to Enerdata, 2020 saw a 24 percent surge in US LNG exports and 9.7 percent in Australian (Enerdata, n.d.). The year also witnessed a 4.4% growth in Asian LNG imports due to rise in LNG imports in China and India (+12% and +8.6%) offsetting lower imports by Japan and South Korea (-3.7% and -1.9% respectively), due to increased share of nuclear and renewable in their respective energy mix. The latter trend was observed in EU with a 7.6% decline due to decline by -16% in France and -6% in Spain. This decline was possible due to increased share of renewables, reducing gas-fired power generation. This continuing increase in LNG production clearly shows a new potential for Europe to exploit. The US, by incentivizing its LNG with advantageous price for European Allies, can help reduce European dependency on Russian gas, a fact that it

has been warning for long now. In the petroleum, the market is already flexible and allows for manoeuvre and as such does not require mentioning here. Russian dominant share with 26.9 percent of European oil imports can be overcome by reverting to other suppliers.

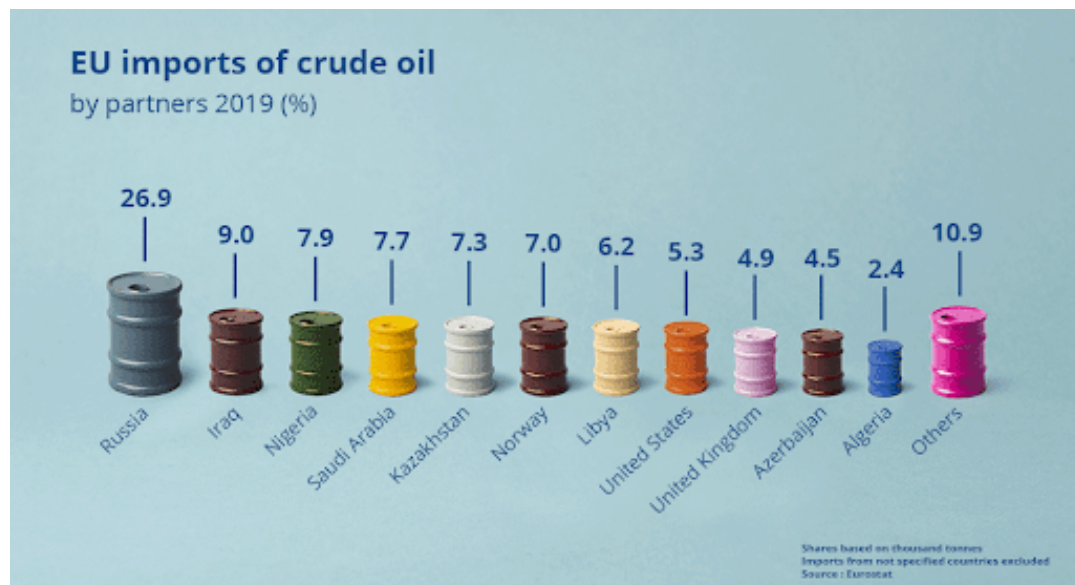


Figure 3. EU Imports of Crude Oil (Eurostat, n.d.)

All in all, the overall European trends in regulation of the energy market, diversification of suppliers and supply routes, increase of share of renewables in national energy mix, and increased role for LNG have been steps in the right direction to alleviate dependency on Russian gas. Yet, as we observed in the case of Russian decreasing level of gas to Europe after the rise in energy prices last winter, Europe is still dependent on Russian gas and it cannot find direct alternatives immediately. An agreement with the US especially that exported 56.8 bcm of LNG in 2020 can be the first step until renewables catch up with the need in optimal prices (Enerdata, n.d.).

Strategic Foresight

In any eventuality, this latest escalation will have far reaching repercussions, extending Ukraine. Europe and the US, although having been on constant watch, have felt closely heard and felt Russian worldview and concerted efforts to fundamentally reshape global security landscape, yearning for the Cold War era. In this troubled time, NATO has proven its value for especially Eastern European Allies and need for greater military spending for secure Europe has become clear. The Europe is now cognizant of its limitations in speaking in one voice. It is likewise aware of the cost of dependency on Russian gas, an issue that has been time and again repeated by each US Administration.

As for the issue at hand, President Putin does not seem willing to back down his demands. Hence ill decisions and their repercussions might lie ahead through the coldest and darkest days of the Cold War, as Denmark's Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod said (Robertson, 2022). Russia will highly likely continue to exploit the Western camp inertia and fear of losing comfort zone, and accordingly insist on taking a guarantee on the paper. It seems that Russia do not want to pursue diplomacy at all, instead, with hard balancing, it is preparing for every eventuality which ensures Russian psychological and decision superiority against the West. It won't be a surprise if this path is ended up with Ukrainian neutrality in the most probable scenario, or a new limited war and frozen conflict in the most dangerous scenario. In case the diplomacy or deterrence fails or if one side intentionally escalates the crisis, we might face a new way of Russian invasion employing distinct features from the first invasion. Instead of protracted hybrid warfare as Russia launched

between 2013-2016, in this last initiative Russia would highly likely conduct limited but disruptive military operations while shaping geopolitical landscape in its favour. Russia would most likely use vast cyber and electronic warfare equipment, as well as long-range hypersonic missiles, if it invaded Ukraine. The goal would be to instil “shock and awe” on Ukraine, leading its defences or will to fight to crumble. This new Russian approach does not necessarily mean that Russians will not use non-kinetic political warfare ways and means. Russia would likely continue to export corruption, use of illicit money flows and finance pro-Russian groups in Ukraine, use blackmail, launch covert activities of political connected gangs, NGOs, conduct psychological warfare, spread disinformation, and fake news. On the other hand, with the help of external support such as the US Stingers, Iron Dome, Mi-17s (which were being readied for Afghanistan by the US), counter-artillery radars, Javelin anti-tank missiles or NLAWs, or Turkish drones, better command and control, electronic warfare, and reconnaissance capabilities might help Ukraine (Courtney & Wilson, 2021). Moreover, a military hardened by seven years of fighting in eastern Ukraine might cause high costs than Russian leaders expected, or a prolonged Ukraine resistance. Thus, if ground troops fail, Russia may raise the stakes by carpet bombing, as it did in Chechnya and Aleppo. The US and Europe should prepare for the worst to come. This preparation should, inter alia, include efforts to:

- Create strongest deterrence to make Russia back down from an incursion,
- Provide strong support to Ukraine to define its own future in face of a probable incursion,
- Be prepared for future similar provocative actions of Russia and re-evaluate its toolbox to deter them,
- Consider sanctions and their side effects on Western investors, and think innovatively on probable alternatives,
- Cooperate and seek favourable pricing for EU members with alternative LNG suppliers to include US, Qatar, and Australia to alleviate dependency on Russian gas.

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EU-NATO and the Eastern Partnership countries against hybrid threats: From the EU Global Strategy till the war in Ukraine

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In a period of geopolitical shocks, intensifying competition, regional shifts, external pressures, and rapid changes in the security environment, it is important to pay attention to instability drivers and threats that can affect the EU and NATO and their partners.

The existence of hybrid threats is recognized by the EU, NATO, and their partners. These threats undermine governance, leverage indirect forms of power, erode trust in government institutions, create systemic vulnerabilities and societal polarization and affect decision-making processes.

The EU Security Union Strategy adopted in July 2020 and the NATO reflection report “NATO 2030: United for a New Era” published in November 2020 acknowledge the destabilizing nature of hybrid threats and their evolving nature. The EU and NATO also recognize the importance of further cooperation and coalitions between nations and partners in countering hybrid threats and they stress the need for a reinforcement of links between Allies and partners to make further progress on common collaborative approaches and policy toolkits against hybrid threats.

From the EU and NATO perspective, shared resilience, the identification of key vulnerabilities and a shared risk assessment demand a synchronization of efforts between partners, member states, civil and private sectors, and the EU-NATO institutions to contribute towards the deterrence against hybrid threats. As a first line of defence, shared resilience requires a shared understanding of security threats as well as a shared awareness and assessment of joint vulnerabilities and security risks. It also demands flexibility, institutional adaptability, responsiveness, strong leadership and cooperation, knowledge transfer and a rapid, agile, and efficient decision-making process.

Considering that hybrid threats may be directed at an adversary's vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of diplomatic, informational, military, economic and financial, intelligence and legal dimensions, the tripartite EU-NATO-partners cooperation itself would help to reinforce political legitimacy within state boundaries and to create resilience against malign influence.

This paper will elaborate on effective EU-NATO collaborative approaches against hybrid threats and will present a case study of the Eastern Partnership countries. The Eastern Partnership countries (EaP)² constitute a focal point for Russia's power projection spectrum as grey areas that the Kremlin will use in its hybrid activities against European countries.³ The Eastern Partnership region as a whole can be considered by the defence community as a contested area of influence between Russia and the West which requires thorough attention from the different international players, in particular the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

One of the EU-NATO objectives or the strategy to counter hybrid threats in wider Europe and the Eastern Partnership region itself can be resilience. The research work presented here includes recommendations on how to diminish the hybrid security risks in Europe through models of EU-NATO security cooperation and an enhancement of resilience against hybrid threats in the Eastern Partnership region. Particular attention should be devoted to a strategy of minimizing security risks from Russia's hybrid threats to Europe itself; to the strengthening of Euro-Atlantic cooperation and to developing the EU-EaP-NATO cooperation focusing on strengthening the region's societal resistance and operational resilience against Russia's

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² The Eastern Partnership program is the EU's initiative to improve its political and economic relations with the post-Soviet states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. EU-Eastern Partnership countries relations were to be promoted through trade and economic agreements such as the Association agreement, but also through democratic institution-building and multilevel cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries.

³ Research paper is limited to Russia's hybrid activities in the Eastern neighborhood, no reference to Chinese hybrid activities in the Eastern neighborhood.

hybrid warfare tactics and on facilitating peace solutions. To better counter Russia's hybrid threats and to achieve greater stability of the Eastern Partnership region, an optimal balance of military deterrence, non-military measures, and cooperative tools is required.

Resilience from the EU's and NATO's perspectives: From declaration to action

Resilience has become a central concept of EU and NATO security policies since 2016. Such important strategic documents as the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (2016), the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats (2016), the Joint Warsaw Summit communiqué (2016), the Joint Communication on increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats (2018) as well as the NATO 2030 Expert Group's Report "United for a New Era" from 2020 refer extensively to the concept of resilience. Resilience is defined by the EU as "the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, cope, adapt, and quickly recover from stresses and shocks such as violence, conflict, drought and other natural disasters without compromising long-term development".⁴ In many NATO documents, resilience refers to a "combination of civil preparedness and military capacity" where civil preparedness is described as "all measures and means taken in peacetime, by national and Allied agencies, to enable a nation to survive an enemy attack and to contribute more effectively to the common war effort".⁵ NATO documents also state that resilience "can be measured by the ability to retain credible forces and conduct successful operations in spite of surprise or strategic shock".⁶

In 2016 the Heads of State and Government of NATO countries at the Warsaw Summit made an explicit commitment to enhance resilience. The members of the Alliance agreed on commitments for seven so-called baseline requirements that reflect the nations' view on resilience. The seven baseline requirements are the "assured continuity of government and critical government services; resilient energy supplies; ability to deal effectively with uncontrolled movement of people; resilient food and water resources; ability to deal with mass casualties; resilient civil communications systems and resilient civil transportation systems".⁷ The progress achieved in meeting these resilience commitments is supported by NATO's Resilience Advisory Support Teams that help the countries in building this requirement.⁸

Furthermore, a principle of resilience is embedded in article 3 of the Washington Treaty that requires all NATO Member States to "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack".⁹ According to the reflection report "NATO 2030: United for a New Era", "building resilience across Allied populations is the primary responsibility of Allies themselves" and NATO plays a supportive role and "could offer a surge capacity to individual countries whose capabilities may be overwhelmed by e.g. a terrorist attack involving non-conventional means including chemical, biological, or radiological substances".¹⁰ The NATO Allies are maintaining civilian preparedness as a blueprint for collective defence. Nations are constantly intensifying civil-military cooperation which is essential for addressing any crisis and are adapting their deterrence and defence posture to ensure readiness and to respond to security challenges. Within collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security (NATO's three core tasks) resilience is an underlying condition 'for a robust defensive posture'. Resilience is an enabler "for an appropriate engagement of multiple challenges" before any crisis occurs (crisis management) and a "support development of partners'

⁴ European Commission. (2016). Building resilience: The EU's approach. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/EU_building_resilience_en.pdf

⁵ Civil-military cooperation center of excellence. (2017). Resilience through civil preparedness. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from <https://www.cimic-coe.org/resources/fact-sheets/resilience-through-civil-preparedness.pdf>

⁶ NATO SACT. (2015). Framework for Future Alliance Operations. Norfolk, USA. Retrieved from <https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/doclibrary/ffao-2015.pdf>

⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (2016). Commitment to enhance resilience issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw. Warsaw, Poland. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133180.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁸ Allied Command Transformation. (2017). Building resilience. Collaborative proposals to help nations and partners.

⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (1949). The North Atlantic Treaty. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm

¹⁰ NATO 2030: United for a new era. Analysis and recommendations of the reflection group appointed by the NATO Secretary General. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf

resilience” (cooperative security).¹¹

Looking at resilience and the common EU-NATO approaches to resilience and countering hybrid threats, resilience requires “preparation, prevention, protection, promotion and transformation policies”, as well as involvement of institutions and citizens.¹²

After the EU and NATO have analysed an institutional imperative to build up resilience against hybrid threats, at the Warsaw Summit in 2016 they agreed on the Joint Declaration. This included the identification of more than forty proposals in seven areas of cooperation such as hybrid threats, operational cooperation including maritime issues, cyber security, defence capabilities, industry and research, capacity building and exercises.¹³ The 2018 EU-NATO Joint Declaration then stated that the EU and NATO had “increased[.]ability to respond to hybrid threats” and common institutional work was conducted on reinforcement of preparedness for crisis and resilience, disinformation and cyber security.¹⁴ Parallel and coordinated exercises (PACE) between the two organizations with the participation of NATO and EU Member States have been taking place every two years since 2016.¹⁵ The exercises also identify lessons to support partners in security and defence capacity-building.¹⁶ Based on the outcome of these exercises, a methodological revision of the EU operational protocol for countering hybrid threats (EU Playbook) was conducted.¹⁷

Since 2016 the Member States have agreed to monitor security risks related to hybrid threats and “identify indicators of hybrid threats, incorporate these into early warning and existing risk assessment mechanisms, and share them as appropriate”.¹⁸ Special emphasis was given to the improvement of situational awareness and enhancement of a comprehensive approach on hybrid threats between the different organizations and bodies. The “EU playbooks” have outlined cooperation with partner organizations as necessary to improve information sharing and enhance situational awareness. A Joint staff document from 2019 has reported on progress achieved in countering hybrid threats and resiliency aspects. These aspects include an allocation of additional funds to a network of practitioners handling hybrid threats, the development of hybrid threat-related indicators and vulnerability indicators for the resilience and protection of critical infrastructure, the work in progress for identifying new mechanisms on the EU Foreign Direct Investments Screening Regulation, a further development of the Rapid Alert System to fight against disinformation and election interference.¹⁹

Some tangible progress has been achieved by the EEAS Task Forces (East, Western Balkans, South) who are working on the monitoring of disinformation, the enhancement of citizens’ awareness and media literacy campaigns etc.²⁰

¹¹ NATO. (2016). Building resilience across the Alliance. Brussels, Belgium.

¹² European Commission. (2017). Building a scientific narrative towards a more resilient EU society. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC106265/jrc106265_100417_resilience_scienceforpolicyreport.pdf

¹³ Council of the European Union. (2016). EU-NATO Joint Declaration. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/07/08/eu-nato-joint-declaration/>

And Council of the European Union, Infographic-EU-NATO Joint Declaration. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/eu-nato-joint-declaration/>

¹⁴ Council of the European Union. (2018). EU-NATO Joint Declaration. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/07/10/eu-nato-joint-declaration/>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ EU and NATO. (2020). Fifth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/nato-static_files/2014/assets/pdf/2020/6/pdf/200615-progress-report-nr5-EU-NATO-eng.pdf

¹⁷ European Commission. (2019). Report on the implementation of the 2016 Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats and the 2018 Joint Communication on increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats. Brussels, Belgium.

¹⁸ European Commission. (2016). Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016JC0018>

¹⁹ European Commission. (2019). Report on the implementation of the 2016 Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats and the 2018 Joint Communication on increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from [report_on_the_implementation_of_the_2016_joint_framework_on_countering_hybrid_threats_and_the_2018_joint_communication_on_increasing_resilience.pdf](https://publications.ec.europa.eu/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444444/report_on_the_implementation_of_the_2016_joint_framework_on_countering_hybrid_threats_and_the_2018_joint_communication_on_increasing_resilience.pdf) (europa.eu)

²⁰ Ibid.

The EU is also building up societal resilience against disinformation through the EU's strategic communication campaigns "InvestEU" (a Europe that delivers), "EUandME" (a Europe that empowers) and "EU Protects" (a Europe that protects).²¹ The EU is also in process of implementing new initiatives that were incorporated in July 2020 EU Security Union Strategy. Such initiatives include a "set up of the EU resilience baselines to improve the preparedness, protection and recovery of critical sectors from hybrid attacks".²² This initiative is important as the EU resilience baselines can provide a model for strengthening national resilience of the Member States.²³

Reflecting upon the future of NATO in 2030, the reflection group appointed by the NATO Sec Gen has advanced a proposal for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Democratic Resilience dedicated to providing support to individual Allies, upon their request, for strengthening societal resilience to resist interference from hostile external actors in the functioning of their democratic institutions and processes".²⁴

In terms of energy security and vulnerabilities in the energy sector, a diversification of energy supplies and an engagement of the Member States on the development of the Southern Gas Corridor, East Med Gas and US's LNG imports to Europe constitute a top priority for the EU and NATO communities. The EU institutions are also investing in the protection of critical infrastructure and have funded different projects through Horizon 2020 such as DEFENDER and SECUREGAS.²⁵ Furthermore, the "European Program for Critical Infrastructure Protection" also covers the protection of civilian infrastructure like airports and ports. The EU Space Programme as Copernicus "provides situational awareness through satellite images" which contributes to the situational awareness of the Member States with regard to the protection and monitoring of critical infrastructure.²⁶ NATO is focusing on the operational side of energy risk identification and assessment, the enhancement of the protection of critical energy infrastructures and the reduction of energy vulnerabilities.²⁷

In cyber security there is an ongoing cooperation of the Computer Emergency Response Team for the EU (CERT-EU) that shares threat assessment memos on the topics of the cyber, energy or digital domains with the national Computer Security Incidents Response Teams and the Computer Incident Response Capability of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NCIRC). The EU institutions are massively investing into different pilot projects on cyber security under Horizon 2020 and are also addressing cyber defence education through the Cyber Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation platform. Cyber Europe 2018 and Cyber Coalition 2019 events between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's staff and EU staff also have largely contributed to strengthening the capacity of Member States to deal with hybrid threats in the cyber domain.

Moreover, an ongoing close cooperation between the European Centre of Excellence for countering hybrid threats and NATO Centres of Excellence, the Hybrid Fusion Cell of the EU intelligence and situation centre and the NATO Hybrid Analysis branch provide Member States with additional platforms for sharing best practices and enhancing shared efforts in dealing with hybrid activities. The countries are constantly addressing hybrid threats through DIMEFIL²⁸ and are paying attention to the identification of "areas of interests or critical functions that a state should ensure are resilient against hybrid threat activity".²⁹

²¹ Ibid.

²² European Parliament. (2021). SEDE-INGE Joint meeting. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/sede-inge-joint-meeting_20210225-1030-COMMITTEE-SEDE-INGE_vd

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ NATO. (2020). NATO 2030: United for a new era, Analysis and recommendations of the reflection group appointed by the NATO Secretary General. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf

²⁵ Ibid, p.7.

²⁶ Ibid, p.10

²⁷ Ratsiborynska, V. (2018). Russia's hybrid warfare in the form of its energy maneuvers against Europe: how the EU and NATO can respond together? Rome: NATO Defense College.

²⁸ Spectrum of specific powers such as Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Finance, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement.

²⁹ European Commission. Hybrid CoE. (2020). The Landscape of hybrid threats: A conceptual model public version. Retrieved

This constant work in progress and the success of the EU and NATO in achieving resilience to and capacities to deal with hybrid threats rely not only on the resilience of their Member States but also on their partners, i.e., the Eastern Partnership countries, who deal with a wide spectrum of hybrid threats on a daily basis.³⁰

Case study on the Eastern Partnership region and the evolution of hybrid threats

As recent events in the Eastern Partnership region demonstrate, Russia's hybrid warfare is constantly evolving and adapting. These events include the evolution of Russia's cyber security activities against Europe and the Eastern Partnership countries, the build-up of military bastions inside the territories of the Eastern Partnership countries, the development of anti-access area denial capabilities and information warfare with increasingly influential content. Russia is also intensifying its military presence in the Eastern neighbourhood while exerting external pressure on the EU and the international community.

As of the end of 2020, a Russian presence has been identified in all six Eastern Partnership countries.³¹ In 2020 Russia demonstrated its ability to assert its military posture in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and presented itself as one of the successful and credible security guarantors and mediators in the conflict between these parties.³² Russia has also deepened its military ties with Belarus by conducting several military exercises with Belarus in 2020 and also re-emphasized its discourse towards a bigger integration in the military domain.³³ All these moves are accompanied with an economic and political acceleration towards a completion of the Union State integration.³⁴



Figure 1: Territorial conflicts in the Eastern periphery of the European

strategic security objectives in the energy domain which are aimed at controlling energy export routes to the EU. Moscow is seeking to finalize its vital energy project Nord Stream 2 that undermines national interests

In the Eastern part of Ukraine Russia pursues its low-cost asymmetrical approaches and at the same time devotes a significant attention to the militarization and nuclearization of the occupied Crimean Peninsula and to the modernization of the Black Sea Fleet.³⁵ Furthermore, the Kremlin focuses on the Black Sea region as a maritime logistics, trade and energy hub that connects Russia's Southern and Western areas of interest. The littoral states that belong to the Eastern Partnership regional framework i.e., Ukraine and Georgia as well as those that are located nearby i.e., Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Belarus are of vital importance for Russia's security, energy, and trade interests. Russia is also striving to achieve its national strategic

³⁰ NATO, (2016). Building resilience across the Alliance. Brussels, Belgium.

³¹ Ratsiborynska, V. (2016). When Hybrid Warfare supports ideology: Russia Today. Rome: NATO Defense College

³² Melvin, N. (2020). When the chips are down: Russia's stance in the current Azeri-Armenian confrontation. RUSI. Retrieved from: https://rusi.org/commentary/when-chips-are-down-russias-stance-current-azeri-armenian-confrontation?utm_source=RUSI+Newsletter&utm_campaign=b605f43c71-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_09_10_09_43_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0c9bbb5ef0-b605f43c71-47838786

³³ The unification of Russia and Belarus will begin with the creation of a single army. (September 2020). Voenno Promuhlin-nuj Kurjer. Retrieved from https://www.ng.ru/armies/2020-09-13/2_7962_army.html

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Foreign intelligence service of Ukraine. (2021). White Book 2021. Kyiv, Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://szru.gov.ua/download/white-book/WB-2021.pdf>

Russia deploys Bastion coastal defense missile system in Crimea. (2021). UNIAN. Retrieved from <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/unian-russia-deploys-bastion-coastal-defense-missile-system-in-crimea.html?cn-reloaded=1>

of Ukraine and also puts Europe at a security risk.

All these Russian actions demonstrate to the international community that the Eastern Partnership region represents one of Russia's regional areas of interest where it executes its power projection role and where a high spectrum of military and non-military means as well as new capabilities across multiple domains are simultaneously applied. Russia's actions and its creation of grey zones in the Eastern neighbourhood prevent the Eastern Partnership countries from accession to NATO and significantly minimize their ability to absorb European norms and values.

Evolution of Russian future strategic thinking and hybrid threats

In different publications the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia Valery Gerasimov has stated that the successful execution of hybrid warfare requires modernized and upgraded military capabilities combined with non-military means. General Gerasimov writes that "work on the question of preparation of information and conduct of actions of information character is the most important task of military science".³⁶ In the current military discourse Moscow prioritizes principles of interconnectivity between military and non-military methods while paying attention to "traditional environments as land, sea, air, space and cyberspace, but also to new ones such as social, digital, energy and others".³⁷ Moreover, Russia's strategy of limited actions in the execution of hybrid activities abroad is directed towards a more inclusive approach which aims at integrating non-military tools with C4ISR³⁸, digital technologies, robotics, unmanned systems, and electronic warfare under the control of the Russian National Defence Management Centre.³⁹ Moscow is continuously improving its military capabilities by shaping its forces into expeditionary forces based on a coalition of partners. Expeditionary warfare and coalition-based hybrid warfare have become a part of the military adaptation of Russian forces in its future strategic thinking.

Domestically, the Russian Federation has begun making changes in its defence organization and the National Guard has been created to counter "the trend of military dangers and threats shifting into the informational space and domestic sphere of Russia".⁴⁰ President Vladimir Putin has stated numerous times that Russia will take all necessary actions to improve the potential of its strategic nuclear forces, to consolidate its military forces, to strengthen its abilities to "adequately respond" to a potential technologically advanced state-level adversary.

As demonstrated, Russia's strategy and its policymaking regarding the use of its hybrid warfare tools and methods are progressing towards a more deterrent approach that successfully combines different hybrid warfare tactics causing uncertainty and unpredictability in an international security environment. A synergy between conventional and unconventional means as well as Russia's strategy of limited actions that "defend and promote national interests" outside of Moscow's borders also provides a sophisticated basis for a modern development of Russia's current and future paradigm of modern warfare.⁴¹ Since uncertainty, unpredictability and strategic surprises prevail in Russia's actions in the Eastern Partnership region, security challenges and risks remain critical points of the EaP-EU-NATO cooperation.

The Kremlin's hybrid warfare and its dynamic character represent a serious challenge to the international order and are undermining the EU's security. Russia's bastion strategy and the cyber security and military trends that Moscow is developing in its hybrid warfare strategy against the Eastern Partnership region show that these questions urgently need to be studied and analysed to be able to elaborate an efficient counterstrategy and to develop possible prospects of conflict resolution in the region.

³⁶ Gerasimov, V. (2019). Vektory Razvitiya Voennoi Strategii. Krasnaja Zvezda. Retrieved from <http://redstar.ru/vektory-razvitiya-voennoj-strategii/>

³⁷ Arms expo. (2021). Alexander Smolov: "Generator of breakthrough ideas and proposals. Moscow, Russia. Retrieved from https://www.arms-expo.ru/news/novye-razrabotki/aleksandr-smolovoy-generator-proryvnykh-idey-i-predlozheniy/?mc_cid=d7f9ed37f6&mc_eid=fed21c605f

³⁸ C4ISR, acronym stands for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance.

³⁹ Monaghan, A. (2019). Dealing with the Russians. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴⁰ RSInsights, Moscow's Strategy of limited actions", 28 January 2021

⁴¹ Gerasimov, V. (2019). Vektory Razvitiya Voennoi Strategii. Krasnaja Zvezda. Moscow, Russia. Retrieved from <http://redstar.ru/vektory-razvitiya-voennoj-strategii/>

Resilience has become one of the means to address hybrid threats and to strengthen the institutional capacities of the Eastern Partnership region's governments to deal with a wide range of hybrid threats. Moreover, resilience can become a driving force for an adaptation towards security risk reduction and one of the comprehensive mechanisms for a strong institutional cooperation or for sharing best practices on questions of hybrid threats and security risk assessment between the Eastern Partnership countries, the EU, NATO, and their Member States. Shared resilience is the core element of a first line of defence.

Shared resilience is a driving force for adaptation and a base of defence that helps to identify a threat, allows to come out with a proactive approach and limits the impacts of hybrid threats in such a way that the EU, NATO and the Eastern Partnership countries become powerful enough to respond in a coordinated and comprehensive way. In the best case, resilience is already preventing such attacks and forms part of the deterrence by denial which intends to convince the adversary "that an attack will not achieve its intended objectives".⁴² The main components of operational resilience should include agile and adaptable military forces reinforced by all other capabilities for countering hybrid threats and should be combined with soft power elements such as institutions, strategy-making, training, and exercises etc.

As an essential base of credible defence, resilience also requires a strong military and civilian connectivity and synchronization to deter hybrid threats. Since hybrid warfare exploits vulnerabilities of governance and targets civil society, a permanent interaction between governments, people and the civil-military interface is needed to ensure that all stakeholders are engaged at a state and individual level to counter threats and to respond to future security challenges.

EU and NATO combined approaches: The European Neighbourhood Policy and NATO's 'Projecting stability' to the Eastern neighbourhood through different means with resilience as a core.

The Warsaw Summit communiqué from 2016 makes a reference to partner countries and states that "NATO's resilience can be enhanced [...] by strengthening the resilience of partner countries in the Alliance's neighbourhood" and that "if NATO's neighbours are more stable, NATO is more secure".⁴³ The EU has similar objectives in its European Neighbourhood Policy launched in 2004 and focuses on stabilizing its neighbourhood in political, economic and security terms, "promoting key EU interests of good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights, and facilitating cooperation at regional level".⁴⁴ Creating synergies with partner countries regarding risk reduction, fostering stability, security and prosperity in the neighbourhood are important priorities for the EU's European Neighbourhood policy and NATO's 'Projecting stability'.

Formalized at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO's 'Projecting stability' is recognized as a set of activities "coherently articulated and comprehensively developed, which influence and shape the strategic environment to make it more secure and less threatening".⁴⁵ NATO's "Projecting Stability" toolkit in the Eastern neighbourhood revolves around the reduction of security threats, promoting internal stability, the anticipation of crises in the immediate neighbourhood and ensuring that the Eastern Partnership neighbours become security providers for themselves.⁴⁶

It includes building security capacity and improving capabilities through education, training, exercises, providing advice on institutional reforms in the defence sector, strengthening interoperability and institutional capacity and developing partnership programs in the defence and security sectors to enhance the

⁴² Roepke, W. Thankey, H. (2019). Resilience: the first line of defense. NATO review. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/02/27/resilience-the-first-line-of-defence/index.html>

⁴³ Meyer-Minnemann, L. Resilience and Alliance Security: The Warsaw Commitment to enhance resilience. In *Forward Resilience: Protecting Society in an interconnected world*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved from <https://archive.transatlanticrelations.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/resilience-forward-book-meyer-minnemann-final.pdf>

And NATO Heads of State and Government. (2016). The Warsaw Declaration on Transatlantic Security. Warsaw, Poland. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133168.htm

⁴⁴ European Commission. (2004). European neighborhood policy. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/european-neighbourhood-policy_en

⁴⁵ Hope, I. (2018). *Projecting Stability: Elixir or Snake Oil*. Rome: NATO Defense College

⁴⁶ NATO. (2020). *Partnerships: projecting stability through cooperation*. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84336.htm

quality of governance and resilience of neighbouring states.⁴⁷ The EU and NATO's well-developed policies provide the Eastern Partnership countries with a set of tools and instruments that enhance the partners' own national capabilities and make them more agile, adaptive, and resilient.

With regard to countering hybrid threats in the Eastern Partnership region, the EU-NATO tools and instruments combine situational awareness and information sharing, training and exercises, confidence-building measures, building interoperability for operational purposes, security capacity-building and reassurance instruments, and reinforcement of common institutional cooperation. The EU and NATO are devoting resources and expanding the partnership toolkits on resilience questions. This leads to a better synchronization of common efforts in the detection, prevention, and response to hybrid activities in the EaP region. Common work on shared resilience with the Eastern Partnership countries contributes to a better stability in Europe and leads to a better understanding of the common operational picture between the Eastern Partnership countries. Hybrid risk surveys with Georgia and Moldova are identifying key vulnerabilities and contributing to a better development of indicators for improving the resilience of different sectors.

Looking at the diverse instruments that the EU and NATO are applying to counter hybrid threats, it is important to stress the complementary nature of the EU-NATO means. In the domain of information, NATO and the EU are working closely with the EaP countries to share best practices on how to identify fake news and disinformation. Media literacy campaigns, twinning⁴⁸ and exchange programs on these questions are available to the EaP countries through the European Neighbourhood Policy instruments. The European External Action Service's East StratCom Task Force established in 2015 to counter Russian disinformation campaigns is helping the Eastern Partnership countries' citizens to "develop resistance to digital information and media manipulation".⁴⁹ Monitoring of the information environment, exposing facts and countering disinformation, support of free independent media, situation awareness, sharing best practices, and credible public communications are the most common EU-NATO instruments to deal with hybrid threats in the domain of information. Diverse public diplomacy campaigns that engage different audiences in the Eastern Partnership countries, especially media professionals, the young population, opinion makers, and civil society can strengthen the EU-NATO approaches in dealing with disinformation in the EaP countries.⁵⁰ Recognizing disinformation and improving mental preparedness against disinformation in the EaP countries combined with media literacy and risk management culture are the key factors that are needed to foster resilience in the domain of information and where further support from the EU and NATO is required.

In the cyber domain the EU provides numerous financial resources to the EaP countries such as the 'Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)', the 'European Neighbourhood Instrument', and 'Capacity Building and Cooperation to enhance Cyber Resilience' that help to create a cyber-resilient environment in the EaP countries. The EU4Digital program is aimed at enhancing the cyber-resilience and criminal justice capacities of the Eastern Partnership countries and at combating cybercrime. Through this program the EU is intending to improve the EaP's critical information infrastructure resilience and to "decrease the risk of disruption or failure of network information systems".⁵¹ Through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace and under the EU4Digital initiative, the EU institutions are reinforcing the cybersecurity of elections in the EaP countries by providing different types of training and exchanges between cyber experts of the EU Member States and representatives of the EaP countries.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Twinning is a European Union instrument for institutional cooperation between Public Administrations of EU Member States and of beneficiary or partner countries.

⁴⁹ EUvsDisinfo, available here: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/about/>

⁵⁰ Interview with EU official, Chatham House rule, February 2021

⁵¹ EU4Digital. (2020). Cybersecurity guidelines for the Eastern Partner countries. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from <https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2020-12/Cybersecurity-guidelines-for-the-Eastern-Partner-countries.pdf>
https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/c_2018_8184_f1_annex_en_v1_p1_1000418.pdf

⁵² EU institutions. (2022). EU4Digital: Cybersecurity East. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from : <https://eufordigital.eu/discover-eu/eu4digital-improving-cyber-resilience-in-the-eastern-partnership-countries/>

There are different pilot projects under development that aim at amplifying the cyber capacity building and security sector reform of the EaP countries.

NATO's Communication and Information Agency (NCIA) and the NATO Industry Cyber Partnership are collaborating on the further development of technical cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries. For example, Ukraine's signature of the Memorandum of agreement with the NCIA in 2015 has facilitated the process of the implementation of the NATO-Ukraine Trust Fund on Consultation, Command, Control and Communication.⁵³ The NCIA is strengthening its cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia to help modernize their Command, Control, Communication and Computer capabilities. Building robust and resilient CIS capabilities is important for these Eastern Partnership nations who aspire to join NATO and need to meet NATO's standards. Furthermore, the NCIA provides technical advice in the domain of cyber security and enhances the national capabilities of the EaP countries. At the end of January 2021 for example a new Cyber Incident Response Capability for the Moldovan Armed Forces was established to increase cyber defence capabilities and Moldova's capacity to respond to cyber threats.⁵⁴ Different workshops and conferences on cyber security and defence with a participation of the EaP countries, NCIA and NATO's Cyber Incident Response Centre and NATO-Industry Cyber partnership contribute to operational awareness on cyber security and foster knowledge transfer on cyber threats and information security. Further development of the network of relevant institutions dealing with cyber domain and the incorporation of the Eastern partners into threat information-sharing platforms can promote information sharing further, mitigate security risks, and enhance cyber resilience to better respond to cyber-attacks.

With respect to energy security, the EU regulatory framework provides further diversification, market liberalization, energy efficiency, the integration of European energy networks. Through the EU's strategy of diversifying suppliers, the Union is becoming less dependent on Russia's gas and is creating an interconnected and transparent gas market. The EU ensures compliance with the EU's internal market rules according to the principles set up in the Energy Union package and "A framework strategy for a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy".⁵⁵ The EU's focus in the Eastern Partnership countries is on diversification, the development of unconventional sources of energy, on the promotion of alternative energy projects and on the modernization of energy infrastructure.⁵⁶ NATO pays special attention to the protection of critical energy infrastructure in the EaP countries, energy risk assessment, situational awareness and identification of lessons learnt from energy supply disruptions. A better energy risk identification and a transfer of NATO's resilience guidelines knowledge from NATO member states to the Eastern Partnership countries will improve synergies between institutions and the EaP partners and maximize resilience efforts in energy security matters.⁵⁷

Exercises and training with the EaP countries as well as the EU's Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) and twinning programs lead to a better transfer of knowledge, an enhancement of institutional capacity and to a better analysis of weaknesses in certain operational areas. NATO incorporates hybrid elements in its trainings with the EaP countries and lessons learnt from exercises improve strategic thinking on how to deal with the new spectrum of hybrid threats that has become the new normal in today's security environment.⁵⁸ Different types of exercises with the participation of the Eastern Partnership countries enhance the effectiveness of these countries' decision-making capacity to deal and to respond to the complexity of hybrid threats and contribute to the efficiency of crisis management response procedures.

⁵³ NCIA webpage, <https://www.ncia.nato.int/about-us/newsroom/natoukraine-agreement-paves-the-way-for-further-technical-cooperation.html>

⁵⁴ NATO, Cyber Incident Response Capability established in the Republic of Moldova with NATO support, January 2021, available here: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180758.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁵⁵ Ratsiborynska, V. (2018). Russia's hybrid warfare in the form of its energy manoeuvres against Europe: how the EU and NATO can respond together? Rome: NATO Defense College.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Interview with NATO official, February 2021

⁵⁸ NATO. (2019). London Declaration. London, UK. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm

“Civil-military education, training for hybrid warfare [...] with a focus on [rehearsing hybrid style attacks and how to match them, including the full integration of cyber and information warfare], joint conferences, joint working groups, and a maintaining of a balanced force for multiple responses” are essential to successfully deal with hybrid tactics.⁵⁹

The knowledge hubs such as the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, the NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence, or the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence, the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence provide a venue for the EaP countries to increase their awareness of hybrid threats, to share, inform and further engage on resilience and hybrid threats. Further outreach to the like-minded community of partners can lead to innovation and to better preparedness to face a wide array of hybrid threats. Creation of synergies between different organizations can increase national capacities of partner states. Fostering cooperation with like-minded organizations engaged in the questions of rule of law and democratization in the Eastern Partnership countries such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, UN and others can ensure better complementarity with the EU-NATO approaches and can support local governance's efforts in achieving a better level of institutional readiness and preparedness to deal with hybrid threats.

On policy the EU's sanction-based policy towards Moscow is further increasing costs for Russia's actions in the EaP countries. In its messages towards Russia the EU calls for the cessation of violations in the Eastern part of Ukraine and for restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.⁶⁰ At the same time the EU is pursuing its policies of dialogue, mediation and conflict prevention and is engaged in multi-lateralism and regional cooperation with the Eastern partners. The EU is supporting the EaP's reform processes that include anti-corruption measures, energy sector reforms, strengthening of the rule of law and efficient local governance etc. The EU's solid macro-financial assistance programs to the EaP countries and increase of trade deals constitute a basis for a further intensification of economic and political relations with the Eastern Partnership countries. The EU's framework for the screening of investments from non-EU countries focuses its efforts on the protection of critical infrastructure against foreign investments that can be used as part of a hybrid campaign in Europe. Nowadays growing emphasis is given to areas such as cyber security, the strengthening of institutional governance and institutional capacity, the fight against disinformation and the protection of critical infrastructure in the EaP countries. Furthermore, according to the 2020 policy guidance 'The Eastern Partnership beyond 2020: Reinforcing resilience-an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all', the EU institutions continue working with the Eastern Partnership countries for more resilient, sustainable, and integrated economies; for the rule of law and accountable institutions; toward environmental and climate change resilience; digital transformation; and for fair and inclusive societies.⁶¹ From NATO's side a dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue towards Russia and a continuous capacity-building of the EaP countries provide a set of means to empower the EaP partners and to ensure persistent NATO support to them.

Further actions and work in progress for the Eastern Partnership region

As indicated by numerous security experts from the EU and NATO, the EaP governments should increase their efforts to better include civil society into resolving resilience issues and countering hybrid threats and to incorporate them into civil preparedness planning. Fostering societal resilience puts a strong emphasis on the capacity building of civil society and on a shared understanding of risks amongst different stakeholders, including the private sector.⁶² The private sector plays an important role in identifying different external threats and should be included in a list of priority stakeholders when dealing with hybrid threats, especially in the cyber and energy domains which requires public-private cooperation and effec-

⁵⁹ Written interview with Prof. Dr. Robert Johnson, Director of the Oxford Changing Character of War Centre, University of Oxford.

⁶⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/president/news/2021/03/03/20210301-pec-visit-georgia-moldova-ukraine/>

⁶¹ EEAS. (2020). Joint Communication: Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing resilience- an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all. Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-home-page/76166/joint-communication-eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-reinforcing-resilience-%E2%80%93-eastern_en

⁶² Interview with security experts, March 2021

tive counter strategies. Local authorities from the Eastern Partnership countries are other stakeholders that need to be integrated into a list of priority in capacity building as they deal with the hybrid spectrum of risks and vulnerabilities on a regular basis and often form the basis for building up resilience at a state and community levels.⁶³

A development of complementary and cross-cutting cooperation between civilian and military actors, between national and local governments, EU and NATO institutions, public and private sectors, academia, and civil society will provide a broader spectrum of tools to use against hybrid threats.

A tailored communication and outreach campaigns to these audiences on hybrid threats and security risks associated with them is highly necessary and can help to form a better public awareness of hybrid threats. Effective operational cooperation and communication between the EU, NATO institutions and the Eastern Partnership countries will further raise public awareness and readiness to face external pressure. A regularly updated risk assessment process, analysis, and monitoring of indicators of hybrid actions should improve communication and address gaps in understanding the nature of hybrid threats and their evolving character amongst different stakeholders.

Improving institutional governance and the rule of law, capacity building of local communities, intelligence services and anti-corruption authorities are crucial in the EaP countries to enhance social resilience and to create a climate of public trust of democratic norms, values, and key democratic institutions. Building on local demands from these groups and empowering them, further investing in institutional capacity-building as well as providing more twinning to these actors are important drivers for structural reforms and for fostering EU-NATO-EaP cooperation.

"Restructuring the Eastern Partnership" to further "differentiate between partners with signed Association Agreements" will address ambitions of different EaP partner states in a better way. Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova are showing their determination to continue economic, social, and political reforms in line with their European aspirations. The country reports from the EU institutions on Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova indicate that more progress should be achieved in integrity building of their institutions, countering corruption, judicial reform legislation, and ensuring accountability of their local administrations. The EU and NATO are playing transformative powers for those partner countries and create a degree of interdependence that difficult to reverse as they have an impact on all reforms undertaken by them. Different pilot initiatives and programs within the EU and NATO cooperative instruments are offered to the EaP countries that address systemic governance vulnerabilities and offer a framework of Europeanization.

Further upgrading the EaP policy with security instruments in the coming years will be necessary to make the EU a more assertive geopolitical and security player in the Eastern neighbourhood.⁶⁴ The recently adopted financial instrument 'European Peace Facility' is a right step on the path of the EU's geopolitical and security repositioning in the immediate neighbourhood as it allows the EU not only "to support partner countries bilaterally in military and defence matters but also to provide military equipment to increase partners' defence capabilities".⁶⁵

The development of strategic security partnerships with key neighbours in the East and the creation "of a security compact for the Eastern Partnership, comprising targeted support for intelligence services, cyber security institutions, and armed forces" will be beneficial to the Eastern Partnership countries and provide them with more reassurance.⁶⁶ NATO's further adaptation and a "revision of NATO's mandate to deal with conflict in the grey zone" as well as fostering partnerships and networks on hybrid threats and boosting current initiatives in the Eastern neighbourhood will further foster shared resilience between NATO, the

⁶³ Interview with security experts, March 2021

⁶⁴ Joja, I. (2021). The EU's East: A way forward. Washington, USA: Middle East Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.mei.edu/publications/eus-east-way-forward>

And interviews with security and EU experts and officials, February, and March 2021

⁶⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46286/questions-answers-european-peace-facility_en

⁶⁶ Popescu, N. Gressel, G. (2020). The best defense: Why the EU should forge security compacts with its eastern neighbors. London: European Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-best-defence-why-the-eu-should-forge-security-compacts-with-its-eastern-neighbours/>

EU institutions, and the Eastern Partnership countries.⁶⁷

Conclusions:

In a period of rapid changes in the security environment and external pressures, it is important to intensify cooperation between the EU, NATO, and the Eastern Partnership countries and to make further progress on common collaborative approaches against hybrid threats. Hybrid threats are a permanent feature of today's security environment and a part of the current EU, NATO, and the Eastern Partnership countries security landscape.

NATO, the Eastern Partnership countries, and the EU have a common interest in working closely together in reducing their strategic, operational, and tactical vulnerabilities in different domains of national power and in maximizing their shared resilience efforts to respond to the current challenges of the security environment.

Shared resilience against shared threats can lead to a better synchronization of efforts in countering hybrid threats between the EU and NATO. A further knowledge transfer between the two organizations and a shared awareness and assessment of joint vulnerabilities and security risks will contribute towards the deterrence against hybrid threats.

The EU and NATO are committed to strengthening the resilience of the Eastern Partnership countries through the European Neighbourhood Policy toolkit and NATO's 'Projecting Stability' activities. Creating a better synergy between those mechanisms, tools and financial instruments will further foster security in the Eastern neighbourhood. With regard to countering hybrid threats in the Eastern Partnership region, the EU-NATO tools and instruments combine situational awareness, information sharing, training and exercises, confidence-building measures, building interoperability for operational purposes, security capacity-building and reassurance instruments, and reinforcement of common institutional cooperation. A better synchronization of common efforts in the detection, prevention, and response to hybrid activities in the Eastern Partnership region and the complementary nature of the EU-NATO means will foster resilience of the Eastern partners. A transfer of NATO's resilience guidelines knowledge from NATO member states to the Eastern Partnership countries will improve synergies between institutions and the Eastern Partnership countries. Further outreach to the like-minded community of partners and a tailored communication and outreach campaigns to different audiences such as the private sector, local authorities, civilian and military actors, or the intelligence community can help to form a better public awareness of hybrid threats in the Eastern Partnership countries. Improving institutional governance and the capacity building of local communities, intelligence services, armed forces and anti-corruption authorities are crucial in the Eastern Partnership countries to enhance social resilience. Further differentiating between partners with signed Association agreements and upgrading the Eastern Partnership policy with security instruments will be necessary to make the EU a more assertive geopolitical and security player in the Eastern neighbourhood.

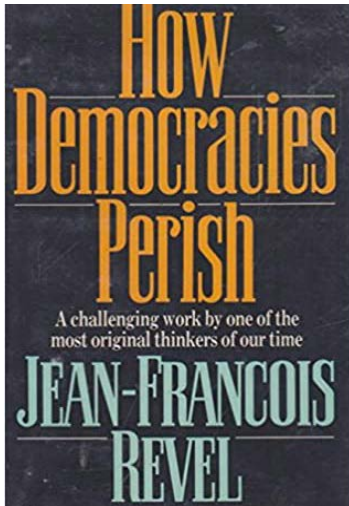
A common adaptation to future challenges will mark a shift to a better common security vision and will reinforce their strategic thinking on shared security threats such as hybrid threats.

⁶⁷ Interview with security official, March 2021

And Ozawa, M. (2021). Adapting NATO to grey zone challenges from Russia. Rome: NATO Defense College.

Book Review: How Democracies Perish

Ibrahim Genc¹



This book by Jean-Francois Revel (1983), is a study that compares communist countries to democratic countries. One can easily see that this book was written at a time that the so-called soviet threat was at its peak as the author constantly reminds the reader of the danger of the Soviet Union. He blames the Western countries to be so naïve thus susceptible to the threats posed by the U.S.S.R. One may choose to dismiss this book rightfully so as Revel appears to make assumptions that none of them are true today. For instance, he argues that, and that attack which is being waged with an unexampled vigour... is catching the democracies in a state of intellectual incompetence ... makes a Communist victory probable, if not inevitable (p.10). This is as we clearly see today could not be farther from the truth as the Soviet Union collapsed only 7 years after this book was published. Such approach, however, will prevent us from learning some of the lessons in this book. First and perhaps the most important lesson of this book is that democracy is not a perfect system. It is a desirable system but by its very nature, it allows sometimes very dangerous political fractions

to be present therefore paving the way towards its own destruction. 32 year later from Revel, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) made a similar argument and said that rules do not enact themselves. Moreover, he points out the issues of international institutions and their unwillingness to intervene when a country slides into authoritarianism. On page 301, for example, he contends that, 'I submit that the mechanisms of international relations and world opinion is so rigged that in almost every situation it imposes an almost insurmountable initial handicap on the West' (Revel 1983). Beyond its value of accurately stating some structural problems in international organisations or in the West, the author, as mentioned above, plays the game of predicting the future in which he fails. In his defence, perhaps, it would be one thing to say that at the time, the Soviet Union was at its peak and people were afraid of its ability to extend its power. This might be true but if this teaches political scientists anything, it would be to avoid predicting the future or attempting to write scholarly pieces on events that are still unfolding. There is, of course, nothing wrong with unpacking events that are unfolding before our eyes. It is, however, dangerous to offer solutions or predictions about them. Though the book offers rich empirical evidence from many countries, the value of each evidence is questionable as the author seems to frame every instance along the lines of the struggle between the Soviet Union vs. the West. For that, the book barely moves further from a propagandist discourse. Overall, though many arguments put forth by Revel seem irrelevant today, there are lessons that we can obtain from this book. First as stated below, democracy is not armed well enough to defend itself against internal and external threats. Second, democracy appears to beat the odds and remain the most common style of government despite many challenges against its existence. For that, it is wise to stay optimistic about the trajectory of democracy while remain educated and alert about any possible threats to it.

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